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SUEZ CANAL AND SCATEC SIGN \$1.1 BLN GREEN METHANOL MOU



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ARSENAL GO FOUR CLEAR, NEWCASTLE DOWN MAN UNITED



P20

THE RISE OF ELECTRIC WATERSPORTS IN OMAN



MUSCAT

OMAN, MOROCCO SIGN ENVIRONMENT DEAL

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Environment Authority, signed a memorandum of understanding in the field of the environment with the Ministry of Energy Transition and Sustainable Development of the Kingdom of Morocco on the sidelines of the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP28) in Dubai. Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, said that the MoU will work to enhance joint cooperation and build strong relationships in the environmental fields and sustainable development programmes, through exchange of experiences, knowledge and science. The memorandum will also contribute to building capabilities and exchanging best practices to raise the level of environmental performance between the two brotherly countries.

‘WE ARE OMAN’ AWARD LAUNCHED

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation on Sunday launched the “We are Oman” award for the academic year 2023/2024. The award comes within the framework of the orientation programme for students of higher education institutions and students with scholarships abroad. The programme aims to raise the awareness of students, support and guide them to showcase their talents. SEE P2

RO 4.65 billion worth projects opened to mark National Day

MUSCAT: The Secretariat-General for National Celebrations concluded the preparation of a programme for opening national projects to mark Oman’s celebration of the 53rd National Day. Within the context of the National Day celebrations programme, Oman Investment Authority (OIA) recently announced the opening of six projects - Duqm Refinery and petrochemical industries project, Duqm Integrated Electricity and Water Station, Ras Markaz crude oil storage project, Khuwaimah Shrimp Farm, an electricity transmission project and JW Marriott Hotel Muscat. Various departments of the State’s Administrative Apparatus will open a number of sustainable development projects worth more than RO 650 million. The projects include the opening of a production assembly station in Greater Saqr area, a fishing jetty, a shipping and customs service station, infrastructure tasks at the government dock in the port of Duqm and other projects. The projects will contribute to enhancing economic diversification and attracting more investments. The total cost of the projects to be opened will stand at RO 4.65 billion. — ONA

DEAL FOR OMAN CULTURAL COMPLEX BUILDING



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Sunday signed an agreement to set up the main building of Oman Cultural Complex to the tune of RO 147.8 million. The project, which will be completed within a maximum period of 3 years, will occupy an area of 400,000 sqm. It will accommodate the National Theatre, the National Library and the National Records and Archives Authority. The agreement was signed with a consortium of two companies. DETAILS ON P2

JABALIA REFUGEE CAMP IN NORTH OF GAZA WAS AMONG THE SITES HIT

RENEWED WARFARE FOLLOWED THE END OF A 7-DAY PAUSE IN FIGHTING

AIR STRIKES DESTROY SEVERAL HOUSES IN AL-KARARA TOWN, SAY OFFICIALS

Israel intensifies Gaza bombing

GAZA/CAIRO: Israeli forces bombed wide areas of the Gaza Strip on Sunday, killing and wounding dozens of Palestinians, as civilians in the besieged territory sought shelter in an ever-shrinking area of the south. The Jabalia refugee camp in the north of the enclave was among the sites hit. A Gazan health ministry spokesperson said several people were killed by an Israeli air strike there. Footage obtained by Reuters of the aftermath of the strike showed a boy covered in grey dust, sitting weeping amid crumbled cement and rubble from collapsed buildings. “My father was martyred (killed),” he cried in a hoarse voice. A girl in a pink sweatshirt, also coated with dust, stood between piles of rubble saying: “No, no, no.” Bombardments from war planes and artillery also concentrated on the cities of Khan Younis and Rafah in Gaza’s south, residents said, and hospitals were struggling to cope with the flow of wounded. END OF TRUCE The renewed warfare followed the end on Friday of a seven-day pause in the fighting which had allowed an exchange of Israeli captives and Palestinian prisoners. The violence took place despite calls from the United States for Israel to avoid further harm to Palestinian civilians. More than 15,523 have been killed, according to Gaza’s health ministry, in nearly two months of warfare that broke out on October 7. Gaza residents said on Sunday they feared an Israeli ground offensive on the southern areas was imminent. Tanks had cut off the road between Khan Younis and Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza, effectively dividing the Gaza Strip into three areas, they said. The Israeli military ordered Palestinians to evacuate several areas in and around Khan Younis. It posted a map highlighting shelters they should go to west of Khan Younis and south towards Rafah, on the border with Egypt. SEE ALSO P6 & 7

SULTAN QABOOS HOLY QURAN COMPETITION WINNERS ANNOUNCED

KABEER YOUSUF @kabeeryousef

Said bin Abdullah al Habsi from the Al Khuwair Centre came in first place in the category of memorising the entire Holy Quran while Mohammed bin Said al Ghamari from the Qurayat Centre came second and Maryam bint Khalid al Najjar from the Qurayat Centre came

in third place, according to the organisers of the 31st edition of the Sultan Qaboos Holy Quran Memorisation Awards.

SECOND LEVEL In the second level of the memorising 24 consecutive parts of the Holy Quran, Muadh bin Said al Dhawayani from Barka Centre won first place, Abeer bint Mohammed al Hamidiyah from the Al

Khoudh Centre came in second place, and Muzna bint Mubarak al Rashidiyah from the Al Khoud Centre took third place. As for the third level of memorising 18 consecutive parts of the Holy Quran, Shihab bin Ahmed al Shehhi from the Khasab Centre came in first place, Rahma bint Saif al Harrasiyah from the Barka Centre came in second place, and Kawthar bint Ali

al Hanaiyah from the Barka Centre came in third place. In the fourth level memorising 12 consecutive parts, Nima bint Saleh al Kindiyah from the Nizwa Centre got first place, Nawfal bin Saleh al Saifi from Al Khoud Centre got second place, and in third place went to Ayman bin Mohammed al Thani from the Nizwa Centre, and Sarah bint Said bin Rashid al Maamriyah. TURN TO P2

Deal signed for ‘green hydrogen route’

DUBAI: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, and Hydrogen Oman ‘Hydrom’ signed a Joint Study Agreement (JSA) with the Port of Amsterdam, Zenith Energy Terminals and GasLog, to collaborate on the development of a liquid hydrogen route to market for green hydrogen produced in Oman and its export to the Port of Amsterdam and Europe. The agreement was signed at Oman’s pavilion in COP28 in Dubai. The signing ceremony was attended by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, and Prince Jaime de Bourbon de Parme, the Climate Envoy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands.



The primary aim of the agreement is to establish a green hydrogen corridor.

The agreement entails conducting a detailed assessment of the requirements to develop an open-access hydrogen liquefaction, storage and export facility in the Sultanate of Oman, along with the provision of specialised vessels for the transportation of the liquid hydrogen, currently under development by GasLog. The primary aim of the agreement is to establish a green hydrogen corridor between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of the Netherlands, with the terminal of Zenith Energy as the destination for the import, regasification and further distribution of Oman-produced hydrogen to both local offtakers within the port of Amsterdam, as well as large industries in the European hinterland. DETAILS ON P13



Palestinians check the damages after an Israeli strike in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip on Sunday. – AFP



Sayyid Theyazin signs agreement to construct Oman Cultural Complex

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Sunday signed an agreement to set up the main building of Oman Cultural Complex to the tune of RO 147.8 million.

The project, which will be completed within a maximum period of 3 years, will occupy an area of 400,000 sqm. It will accommodate the National Theatre, the National Library and the National Records and Archives Authority. The



The project will accommodate the National Theatre, the National Library and the National Records and Archives Authority. – ONA

agreement was signed with a consortium of two companies. Oman Cultural Complex constitutes a modern landmark and an edifice featuring the country's civilisation, culture, scholarly accomplishments and institutional entity.

The complex will contribute to the advancement of cultural, literary, theatrical and research action and support the organisation of cultural programmes and events.

— ONA



OMAN PARTICIPATES IN GCC MINISTERIAL MEETING

DOHA: The Sultanate of Oman on Sunday participated in a meeting of the 158th session of the ministerial council tasked with preparing for the 44th session of the GCC Supreme Council. Oman's delegation to the meeting was led by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister. The preparatory ministerial session dealt with topics of concern to GCC states, as well as issues that will be submitted for discussion at the GCC Supreme Council's 44th session due to be held in Doha on Tuesday. – ONA

Winners of Holy Quran contest announced

FROM PAGE 1

In the fifth level of memorising 6 consecutive parts, Fatima bint Mohammed al Dakhriyah from the Ibra Centre, Maimunah bint Rashid al Maamriyah from the Suhar Centre, Maysam bint Ahmed al Habsiyah from the Ibra Centre are the winners consecutively.



Winners were announced at the event attended by a number of dignitaries

In the sixth level which is memorising 4 consecutive parts, Dana bint Faisal al Saadiyah from Al Suwaiq Centre, Wael bin Hilal al Hassani from the Ibra Centre, Suhaib bin Hilal al Siyabi from the Ibra Centre, and Arwa bint Hilal al Siyabiyah from the Ibra Centre were the winners.

And in the seventh level, memorising two consecutive parts, Zakaria bin Abdullah al Badaei from the Al Suwaiq Centre, Faris bin Ahmed al Furqani from Al Khoudh

Centre, and Radwan bin Nasser al Jabri from Ibra Centre were adjudicated the winners.

There has been as many as 1,638 male and female applicants for the once a year holy Quran memorisation contest through the electronic registration platform between May 9, 2023, and July 16, 2023.

The preliminary qualifiers began on August 14, starting from the Al Suwaiq Centre, passing through the rest of the centres in the governorates of

the Sultanate of Oman, until its conclusion in the Muscat Centre on November 9 where this year's preliminary qualifiers witnessed strong competition among the contestants, and some of them qualified.

For the final qualifiers, the top eight from each level with a total of (56 + 2 repeats) male and female contestants were selected. The final qualifiers were held at the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque starting on November 19 and ended on November 23.



The award comes within the framework of the orientation programme for students of higher education institutions. – ONA

'We are Oman' award launched

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation on Sunday launched the 'We are Oman' award for the academic year 2023/2024.

The award comes within the framework of the orientation programme for students of higher education institutions

and students with scholarships abroad. The programme aims to raise the awareness of students, support and guide them to showcase their talents.

The launching ceremony was held under the patronage of Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-

up Unit, in the presence of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

'We are Oman' award is an annual award supervised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

— ONA





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Lab dedicated to people with disability making good progress



A lab for people with disabilities kicked off on Sunday, coinciding with the international day for people with disabilities

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

A lab on the development of services and programmes for people with disabilities kicked off on Sunday, coinciding with the international day for people with disabilities with a theme that touches on the topic of unity in action to activate Sustainable Development Goals for people with disabilities.

The launching event was held under the patronage of Shaikh Al Fadhil bin Mohammed al Harthy, Secretary-General of the Council of Ministers.

Organised collaboratively by the Ministry of Social Development, the Oman

Vision 2040 Follow-up Unit, and in partnership with the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Labour, private sector entities, civil society organisations, and professionals engaged in the field of disabilities, the laboratory aims to align its services, programmes, initiatives, and projects with the "Oman Vision 2040".

The focus is empowering individuals with disabilities by prioritising health, education, and rehabilitation services incorporating cutting-edge technologies. Furthermore, the laboratory seeks to address regulatory challenges within the sector and propose sustainable

financing programmes for services.

Badr al Yahyai, Assistant General Manager for Persons with Disabilities, said, "The laboratory's goals include designing measurable strategic objectives to fortify the sector of persons with disabilities, spanning quality of healthy life, educational and rehabilitation life, life at work, family, society and state, and the general capabilities pillar." In conjunction with the laboratory's activities, a series of events, seminars, and working papers are being organised to integrate and empower persons with disabilities in society.

This collaborative effort stems from the Forum for

Persons with Disabilities, convened by the Ministry of Social Development in May 2023. The forum aimed to amplify the role of individuals with disabilities in society, foster comprehensive accessibility, and augment the family's role in the early intervention system.

Expectations are high that the laboratory will yield numerous initiatives, projects, and investment opportunities to enhance governance and organisation within the sector. The ultimate objective is to bolster early intervention, empowerment, and integration programmes for people with disabilities across academic, professional, and societal realms.



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Omani innovator secures bronze at SIIF

ARWA AL HASHIMI
MUSCAT, DEC 3

Amna al Rasbi has earned the distinction of being Oman's representative, selected by the Gulf Cooperation Council patent office, at the prestigious Seoul International Invention Fair (SIIF) 2023 in South Korea. Her innovation, titled 'Synthesis and application of silica and calcium carbonate nanoparticles in the reduction of organics from refinery wastewater,' garnered her the bronze medal at the international event.

Furthermore, Amna received the Thailand Award for Best International Invention and Innovation from the National Research Council of Thailand. These accolades were presented during her participation in the delegation of the General Secretariat of the Cooperation Council for the



Amna's innovation focuses on synthesising and applying silica and calcium carbonate nanoparticles to effectively reduce organic pollutants in refinery wastewater

Gulf Arab countries, represented by the Patent Office at the Seoul International Invention Fair, which took place from November 1 to 4. The event showcased the contributions of 484 innovators from around the world.

Amna's innovation focuses on synthesising and applying silica and calcium carbonate nanoparticles

to effectively reduce organic pollutants in refinery wastewater. This groundbreaking approach contributes to the sustainable removal of harmful substances, aligning with Oman Vision 2040's goal of achieving environmental neutrality. The technology developed by Amna revolves around the cost-effective and environmentally



friendly treatment of petroleum water, separating organic materials from water resulting from refining operations. Notably, the results highlight the efficacy of these nanoparticles in treating petroleum water under various pH levels, showcasing their potential to protect the environment.

The Gulf Cooperation Council

Patent Office carefully selected Amna's innovation as one of the best inventions to represent the Sultanate of Oman at the Seoul International Invention Fair. This recognition follows a thorough evaluation by a panel of judges who acknowledged the significance and impact of her work.

In response to receiving these prestigious awards, Amna expressed gratitude, stating that they symbolise recognition for her immense effort and achievement. The accolades serve as a source of motivation, inspiring her to pursue her aspirations and refine her ideas for greater purposes. Amna emphasised the importance of participating in global forums, noting that such events contribute to elevating the stature of Omani innovations on the world stage and showcasing the capabilities of Omani youth.

MoH participates in COP28



Dr Fatima bint Mohammed al Ajmiah

DUBAI: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Health is taking part in the 1st ministerial meeting on health and climate within the activities of the Conference of the Parties of the UNFCCC (COP 28), hosted in Dubai, the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

Oman's delegation in the meeting is headed by Dr Fatima bint Mohammed al Ajmiah, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Administrative, Financial and Planning Affairs, in the presence of several officials from the ministry.

The meeting discusses a spectrum of strategic topics and includes several technical papers on health issues that are related to climate change. It also reviews means of reducing emissions to save peoples' lives and enhance mental health.

Moreover, the meeting touches on the role of development banks and financing institutions in tackling effects of climate change on health, among other topics.

— ONA

Experts discuss angel financing

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahbalushi

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority recently hosted an awareness workshop on angel financing. The event, attended by a European Business Angels Network delegation, served as a platform to explore the intricacies of angel financing and its pivotal role in fostering the growth of innovative startups. The European Business Angels Network, representing the investor community in early-stage ventures, allocates over 13 billion euros annually to technology and innovation-based emerging companies.

Participated by entrepreneurs, investors, and industry experts, the workshop aimed to create a global ecosystem connecting participants



Attendees delved into various aspects of startup life cycles

with mentors worldwide. The overarching goal is to catalyse the accelerated growth of emerging companies, drawing in national savings and foreign investments and instilling a culture of innovative financing through committed angel investors.

Over two days, attendees delved into various aspects of startup life cycles, investment standards, and the intricacies of the entrepreneurship system. Presentations included insightful

case studies, shedding light on the nuances of building deals, reputation management, portfolio management, and strategies for sustainable growth.

The second day of the workshop focused on the challenges of evaluating startup companies. Discussions revolved around overcoming evaluation gaps, key evaluation areas, and the governance of startup companies. Angel financing, a form of equity financing, is critical in providing essential capital for startups to initiate operations or expand their reach. Angel investors, individuals with significant capital who seek to invest in innovative startups, receive a share in the company in return. The stakeholders in this field aim to enhance awareness among participants about investing in startups.

Film fest for women, children begins

KABEER YOUSUF
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The second International Women and Children's Film Festival will begin today (Monday), according to the Oman Film Society whose opening ceremony will be held at Oman Film Society headquarters with the screening of 'Clouds' by director Muzna al Musafer and a special segment dedicated to Palestine.

Touted as a significant platform aimed at promoting Omani women in the cinema world, the film festival which is scheduled to be held from December 4 to 6, also aims to establish a film festival catering to the children of all ages from identifying the talent, nurturing the same for the betterment of the future Oman cinema industry.

The festival will also celebrate female artists and directors known for their unique cinematic contributions. Special activities and dedicated spaces for children are a part of the festival's offerings.

Khitam al Sayyed, Director of the film festival said it also aims at hosting the women film-makers and through them helping international film-makers discover new talents, while picturing Oman as a key destination for film-making, tourism and arts.

She further said that the festival is committed to presenting films that celebrate the women's diverse roles in society across various cultures and societal fabrics.

"Not only does the festival endeavour to craft a vibrant space for children's cinema, their creativity, pivoting around stories that talk about their problems and their wellbeing, but will also offer a unique aesthetic perspective into childhood phase with the help of visuals, music, effects, and so on and so forth," she said.

There are as many as 85 films of different lengths falling into diverse genres from 14 countries. From these submissions, nearly 40 feature films and eight documentaries were selected for screening to the public.

Seniors get 'Fitness Forever' lessons at sports event

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, DEC 3

The Ihssan Association in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate recently organised a heartening sports forum in Nizwa exclusively designed for the elderly. It aptly named the event 'Fitness Forever'. The event at the Nizwa Sports Complex brought together a spirited gathering of 100 elderly men and women from Nizwa on a lively Saturday morning.

The Association collaborated with Nizwa Healthy City, the Nutrition Department, the Physical Therapy Department at Nizwa Hospital, and the Nizwa Youth Complex, as the event aimed to honour and uplift the elderly by promoting their health and well-being.

'Fitness Forever' provided a platform for the elderly to revel in enjoyable sports activities, fostering a sense of community spirit. The carefully curated activities catered to

diverse interests, promoting positive interaction with the challenges of ageing and encouraging continuous physical activity. The event created an atmosphere of life and activity, enabling the elderly to forge beautiful memories and engage with peers.

The programme's objectives included reinforcing the importance

of sports for maintaining health among the elderly. It also sought to educate them about the significance of adopting suitable exercises into their daily routines. Expert trainers guided the elderly through exercises tailored to their needs, motivating them to embrace daily physical activity. Additionally, the programme emphasised the

importance of a healthy, balanced diet and its positive impact on overall well-being.

Elderly participants, carefully selected from various villages of Nizwa, underwent initial physical fitness assessments to ensure their suitability for the activities. The association prioritised participants' well-being, striving to exclude those

with specific health concerns.

The day started with measuring body mass and biometrics for all participants, followed by stimulating exercises conducted separately for men and women. Competitive events and entertaining games infused a sense of camaraderie among the elderly, adding a spirited dimension to the sports day.

Complementing the sports activities were awareness corners addressing essential aspects of elderly life, including nutrition, blood pressure, blood sugar, and overall health guidelines. Private institutional bodies engaged in health education, offering valuable insights tailored to the elderly.

The participants were given health consultations. Hamad bin Salim al Kindi, a member of the Ihssan Association, highlighted the significance of these forums as integral to the association's commitment to social, sports, and health activities. He emphasised the importance of providing an outlet for the elderly, enhancing their overall well-being and offering social interaction opportunities.

The Ihssan Association and its collaborators pledged to continue these impactful endeavours, ensuring a brighter and more active future for Nizwa's elderly population.

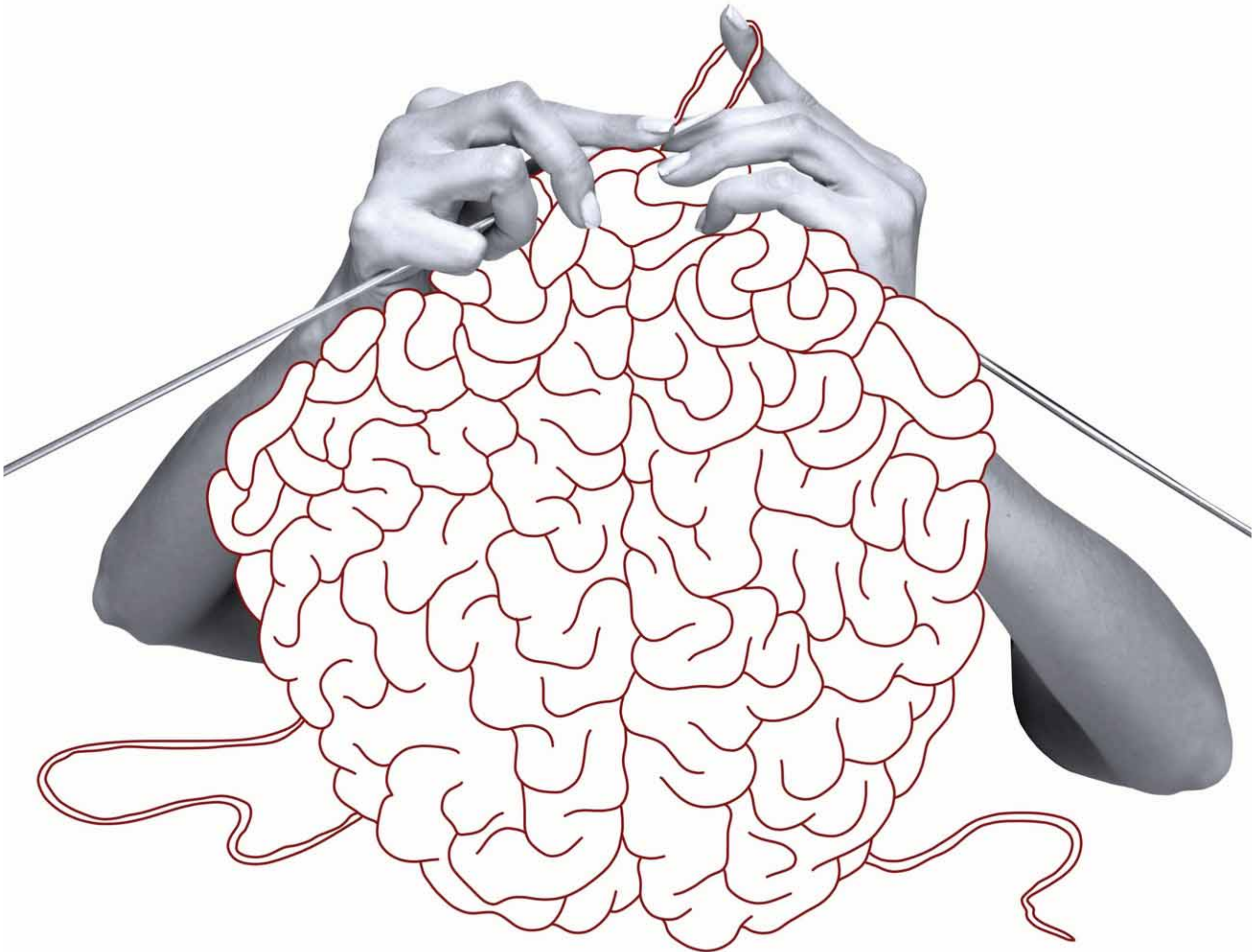


'Fitness Forever' provided a platform for the elderly to revel in enjoyable sports activities, fostering a sense of community spirit





A B A L A N C I N G A C T



MENTAL WELL-BEING IN MODERN LIFE

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Psychiatrists say striking a perfect balance between work and life is crucial for a healthy well-being failing which it will have its own repercussions on one's health. Speaking to one's partner or close friends and opening up can mitigate the pain as we all have to deal with stress which is inevitable in modern day life some way or the other.

Dr Gerald D'Costa, Psychiatrist, Badr Al Samaa Hospital, who spoke to Observer, says that depression among men has grown by 65 per cent in last few years and 49 per cent of the men feel more depressed than they admit to the people in their life.

"Not just that, globally, men account for 75 per cent of al suicide deaths according to the World Health Organisation (WHO) and this is predominantly due to lack of open communication among peers of loved ones in the busy world of

today," Dr Gerald.

"Modern life entails stresses of varying nature and how we deal with the pressures that stress causes helps us to be free from the negative effects and look after our health. It is how we deal with stress which will have a profound impact on our health," he added.

Unfortunately, most men don't talk about the stress or mental transactions and end up bottling them inside themselves causing more negative consequences. Hence, we need to share what we feel with others, importantly with a medical professional.

"The perception of stress is too is important and a positive perception is important. In the light of this, one needs to speak up and seek help from a professional," says Dr Hamed al Sinawi, senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.

"Men and women, it is important to talk about our feelings with our close friends and what we are going through rather than suppressing the

SIMPLE WAYS TO DEAL WITH STRESS

- ACCORDING TO
PSYCHOLOGISTS
- Do we wake up in the morning feeling fresh or not?
 - Are we sleeping enough?
 - Are we exercising at least 30 minutes to one hour every day?
 - Are we able to strike a balance between work and stress ?
 - Are we able to enjoy life?

symptoms or the difficulties we face. It is also important to deal with stress in a positive manner and seek help whatever we feel when we need it," adds Dr Al Sinawi, who is also an expert in Alzheimer's and other dementia, depression, anxiety, obsessive-compulsive disorder (OCD), bipolar disorders and schizophrenia.

However, striking a perfect balance between work and life is very crucial otherwise it invites accumulation of many negative thoughts inside us.

"When we feel the negative effect of stress whether it is stress or anxiety, depression or sleep disturbances or negative thoughts including the thoughts that I don't want to continue in the job or I don't want to live any more. It is important to speak up and seek help and if you need to meet a medical professional, please do so. We are all in this world together to help each other and support because together, we can break the stigma and support one another on this journey towards better mental health," he further added.



Camp fosters innovation for sustainable development

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, DEC 3

The first session of the Arab Innovative Youth Camp kicked off on Sunday at the Avani Hotel under the theme 'Innovation Towards a Better and More Sustainable Future.'

The camp will see about 47 young men and women between the ages of 18 and 24 from 21 Arab countries participating in the event. They are presenting their innovative and entrepreneurial projects that serve local communities and achieve sustainable development goals in areas such as the environment, agriculture, food, as well as health, education, knowledge transfer, and green and purple economies.

The camp is organised by



The Arab Innovative Youth Camp began in Muscat on Sunday under the theme 'Innovation towards a better and more sustainable future'.

the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and the Ministry of Education, represented by the Omani National Committee for Education, Culture, and Science, in collaboration with the Arab Organization for Education,

Culture, and Science (ALECSO). The opening ceremony was sponsored by Dr Muzaher bin Hilal al Busaidy, Deputy Head of the Follow-up Unit for the Implementation of Oman Vision 2040, in the presence of Basil

bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary, and Dr Mohammed Sannad Abu Droush, Director of the Science and Research Management at ALECSO.

The camp which concludes tomorrow, December 5, aims

to foster innovation spirit and exchange experiences among Arab innovators, generating new ideas related to sustainable development goals. The camp also aims to familiarise participants with global innovation indicators

and country rankings in this field.

It also seeks to connect Arab youth with industrial, innovative, and productive sectors capable of adopting and supporting innovative projects, providing them with opportunities to showcase their ideas, exchange experiences, and receive training in teamwork. It also focuses on developing their critical and creative thinking and enhancing their ability to find innovative solutions to problems and face challenges.

Hilal bin Saif al Siyabi, General Coordinator of the General Directorate for Youth, in his speech highlighted Oman's interest, through its various institutions, in talents and innovators, noting Oman's advancement by ten ranks to secure the 69th position globally

OWA event promotes health and sustainability



Omani Women's Association Muscat held a two-day exhibition in Muscat.

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The Omani Women's Association Muscat conducted a two-day event titled Health, Sustainable Environment and Beauty Fair on December 1 and 2.

Volunteer teams, support groups, student associations in addition to governmental and private sector institutions came under one umbrella to spread awareness on various issues.

December 1 being observed as World Aids Day an efficient team from Ministry of Health explained the measures taken in Oman. The United Nations explains that World

Aids Day is an opportunity to highlight the work of eliminating HIV/Aids.

Haleema al Sawafi, staff nurse, at Al Nahda Hospital team explained during a workshop how the virus is transmitted and its impact.

The Department of Nutrition from Sultan Qaboos University was busy answering questions and provided information on attaining nutritional balance.

The exhibitors had on display products from healthcare to food products. A counter that attracted to a lot of attention was Oman Donor Transplant Programme from the Ministry of Health. Visitors could also sign up to be an organ donor. The message that was

conveyed was how one donor could save eight individuals.

"Recently an Indian family contacted us after their family member passed away in Oman and the result was that two young Omani children were saved with kidney transplantation and they are doing very well and in good health," said Shuwaina al Ismaily from the National Organ Donor Programme.

She explained that the role of the programme is to avoid human trafficking. The new measures taken by the Ministry of Health have regulations in place and have created an official channel to address the issue of organ transplant.

'Shabiba' programme advances skills and development in Suhar

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, DEC 3

The General Directorate of Culture, Sports and Youth in North Al Batinah Governorate recently spearheaded a transformative initiative, the 'Shabiba' programme, held at the Lecture Hall of the Sports Complex in Suhar.

This is in alignment with the ambitious goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The two-day event served as a dynamic platform, fostering engagement and learning to equip youth with essential skills required for the evolving job market.

The programme, strategically designed to meet the needs of job seekers, unfolded with a comprehensive agenda aimed at enhancing skills and elevating performance.

The inaugural day focused on 'Future Skills in the Job Market,' led by the insightful trainer Siham al Saidiyah. Concurrently, Dr Ali al Manai delved into 'Performance Development Skills and Personal Growth.' The second day honed in on 'Habit Building Skills and Time Management' with Al Muatasim al Awfi and 'Continuous Learning Skills'



The two-day event served as a dynamic platform and fostering engagement.

with Alia al Harithiyah.

Al Muatasim al Awfi, lecturer, Engineering Department at Sohar University of Technology and Applied Sciences, underscored the significance of 'Shabiba' in motivating job seekers to align their skills with current market demands.

His workshop on cultivating positive habits aimed to equip individuals with the tools to construct a fulfilling life system and identify and overcome negative habits across short, medium, and long-term horizons.

Saham al Saidiyah, a coach in personal and institutional development, emphasised the programme's ambition to intellectually develop job seekers. She provided valuable insights into future skills demanded globally, drawing on reports from esteemed institutions

such as the World Economic Forum and the McKinsey Global Institute.

The programme's framework acted as a positive catalyst, encouraging participants to arm themselves with the skills necessary for a promising professional future.

Alia al Harithiyah, Head of the Software Development Unit in the Information Technology Department at Sohar University of Technology and Applied Sciences, expressed gratitude for her involvement in the programme.

She stressed the importance of commitment to continuous learning beyond academic certifications and discussed the skills and tools necessary for acquiring such competencies. Alia was delighted to engage with the vibrant minds of 'Shabiba,' recognising their determination to strive for excellence.

Prosthodontist showcases work at Kuwait conference

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, DEC 3

Omani Prosthodontist Dr Abdullah al Ajmi, a specialist in the use of Zirconia in dental restorative treatments, represented the Sultanate of Oman at the 23rd Kuwait Dental Conference (KDC), which was held in Kuwait last week.

Dr Al Ajmi whose extensive academic credentials include qualifications in MClinDent Prosthodontics and an RCSEd Membership in Prosthodontics, is a distinctive voice in the realm of Zirconia-based treatments.

The focal point of his presentation on the topic, 'Zirconia in Dentistry — An Update to the Current Knowledge,' underscored the rising prominence of dental zirconia, attributing its popularity to unparalleled mechanical properties and biocompatibility.



Omani Prosthodontist Dr Abdullah al Ajmi

He expounded on the transformative impact of zirconia in restorative procedures, particularly emphasising its clinical success.

In attendance at the 23rd KDC were a diverse spectrum of dental professionals, including specialists, general dentists, dental assistants,

and dental technicians.

Drawing on his experiences in the dental field in Oman, Dr Al Ajmi reviewed the current knowledge surrounding dental zirconia, offering a comprehensive overview that resonated with the global audience.

From microstructure intricacies to the development and preparation design requirements of dental zirconia, his exploration extended to optical and physical properties, indications for use, cementation protocols, and polishing protocols. He also shared insights into multiple advanced prosthodontic cases, featuring both implant-supported and tooth-supported zirconia prostheses.

The Kuwait Dental Conference not only served as a platform for global intellectual exchange but also showcased the excellence of Omani professionals.

جامعة صحر
Sohar University

TENDER NOTICE No. 003/2023

Sohar University invites sealed tenders from specialized, experience and authorized suppliers for Supply and Delivery of Personal Computers and Laptops.

The tender details are as follows:

Tender Number	Description	Fee OR	Submission Date
003/2023	Supply and Delivery of Personal Computers and Laptops	150/-	26.12.2023

The tender document can be obtained from Procurement and Contracts Department from 03/12/2023 to 11/12/2023 08:00 to 16:00 hrs at Sohar University Main campus in Sohar after payment of RO. 150.000/- (Non-refundable) at the cash counter located in the Al Khauboora Building. The receipt of payment has to be taken to the Procurement and Contracts Department to collect the Tender Document.

Tenders offers must be submitted in closed envelopes sealed, delivered at the Sohar University premises, tender number shall be written only on the envelope, no indication shall be made, and deadline for submission of offers is 26/12/2023 15:30 hours.

Tender should be addressed to PVC Administration & Finance and deposited in the tender Box at PVC, A&F Office as given below during office hours 08:00 to 15:30 Sunday to Thursday

Pro-Vice-Chancellor – Administration and Finance Office
Sohar University
P.O Box 44, P.C. 311, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman.
Telephone: 26850100 Ext.: 421 & 289 (Procurement and Contracts Department)

Sohar University reserves the right to accept or reject any offer without assigning any reason



POPE DEPLORES
END OF TRUCE,
VOICES HOPE
FOR NEW
CEASEFIRE



Pope Francis records a video message to be broadcasted during the inauguration of the "Faith Pavilion" during COP28 in Dubai, at Casa Santa Marta in the Vatican.

— Reuters

VATICAN CITY: Pope Francis on Sunday said it was "painful" to see that the truce between Israeli and Palestinians had been broken, and voiced hope that all parties involved can reach a new ceasefire "as soon as possible".

A seven-day pause in the fighting between Israeli forces and Palestinian groups, which had allowed the exchange of hostages and prisoners, collapsed on Friday. On Sunday, Israel stepped up its bombing campaign.

More than 15,400 Palestinians have been killed as of Sunday, according to Palestinian officials, in the conflict.

"It is painful that the truce has been broken. This means death, destruction and misery," Francis said — his words read out by an aide because of the pope's frail health — during his Sunday Angelus message and prayers.

"Many hostages have been freed but many are still in Gaza. We think of them, of their families, who had seen a light, a hope of embracing their loved ones again."

"In Gaza there is a lot of suffering, there is a lack of basic necessities," Francis said. "I hope that all those involved can reach a new agreement for a ceasefire as soon as possible," he added, and find "solutions other than weapons".

The pope is limiting his public speaking and his appearances because he is recovering from a lung inflammation that forced him, among other things, to cancel a trip to Dubai this weekend for the COP28 UN climate summit.

"Dear brothers and sisters, good morning. Today as well I will not be able to read everything. I am getting better, but my voice is still (not good)," Francis said at the start of the Angelus.

Screens were placed in St Peter's Square so that the faithful, who normally listen to the pope speaking from a window overlooking the square, could follow his message. — Reuters

Pressure mounted
to stop civilian

GAZA: Israel struck Gaza on Sunday as international concern mounted over the spiralling civilian death toll on the third day of fighting after a truce ended.

More than 15,200 people have been killed in the besieged Palestinian territory in more than eight weeks of heavy bombardment.

Israeli air and artillery strikes hit Gaza's northern frontier, throwing thick clouds of smoke and dust into the sky.

At least one rocket salvo fired from the territory at Israel was intercepted by air defence systems, said reporters in Sderot near Gaza.

The UN humanitarian agency OCHA said at least 160 Palestinian deaths were reported in two incidents in northern Gaza on Saturday: the bombing of a six-storey building in Jabalia refugee camp, and of an entire block in a Gaza City neighbourhood.

Repeated bursts of heavy automatic weapons fire were heard over an AFPTV livecam.

Gaza's government on Saturday said 240 people had been killed since the week-long truce expired early on Friday.

Israel unleashed a relentless air and ground campaign that has killed mostly women and children in Gaza.

"We have said it from day one: the price to pay for the release of Zionist prisoners will be the release of all our prisoners — after a ceasefire," Saleh al-Aroui, deputy head of Hamas's politburo, said on Saturday evening.

Israel's army has struck the territory's south and issued warnings to Palestinians trapped there to seek what it said would be safe zones, "if required".

United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights Volker Turk warned that "as a result of Israel's conduct of hostilities, hundreds of thousands are being confined into ever smaller areas in southern Gaza".

"I repeat, there is no safe place in Gaza," he said. Palestinian groups announced "rocket barrages" against multiple Israeli cities and towns including Tel Aviv, and Israel said two of its soldiers had died in combat, the first since the truce ended.

In a summary issued on Sunday, the military said a drone strike had "eliminated" five Palestinian commanders.

In a new estimate, OCHA said around 1.8 million people in Gaza, roughly 75 per cent of the population, had been displaced, many to overcrowded and unsanitary shelters.

Nasser hospital in the southern Gaza city of Khan Yunis overflowed with both the wounded and the dead.

World Health Organization chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Sunday on X platform that a WHO team visited Nasser hospital and found it with 1,000 patients, three times its capacity.

— AFP

As a result of Israel's conduct of hostilities, hundreds of thousands are being confined into ever smaller areas in southern Gaza. I repeat, there is no safe place in Gaza

VOLKER TURK
UNHCR for Human Rights



Palestinian civilians flee Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP



Palestinians seek shelter as Israel

GAZA: Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip sought shelter in an ever-shrinking area of the south on Sunday as Israel stepped up its bombing from air, sea and land across the enclave.

Bombardments were concentrated on Khan Younis and Rafah in the south, residents said. Hospitals were struggling to cope with the flow of wounded, they said.

The renewed warfare followed the collapse on Friday of a seven-day pause in the fighting between Israeli forces and Palestinian groups to allow an exchange

of the captives.

More than 15,400 have been killed as of Sunday, according to the Palestinian Bureau of Statistics, in nearly two months of warfare.

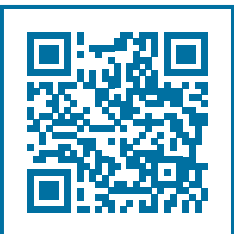
Gaza residents said on Sunday they feared an Israeli ground offensive on the southern areas was imminent. Tanks had cut off the road between Khan Younis and Deir Al-Balah in central Gaza, effectively dividing the Gaza Strip into three areas, they said.

The Israeli military issued a statement ordering Palestinians to

UN officials and residents said it was difficult to heed Israeli evacuation orders because of patchy internet access and no regular supply of electricity



This picture shows smoke billowing over the Palestinian enclave during Israeli bombardment. — AFP



nts on Israel n massacres



Demonstrators rally in support of Palestinians in Washington, DC, on December 2. — AFP

People gather around a crater among destroyed buildings in the aftermath of an overnight Israeli bombing in Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP



annihilates the strip

immediately evacuate half a dozen areas in and around Khan Younis. It posted a map highlighting shelters they should go to west of Khan Younis and south towards Rafah, on the border with Egypt. But residents said that areas they had been told to go to were themselves coming under attack.

Israeli tanks were shelling the eastern sector of Rafah on Sunday morning, residents said. There was no immediate comment from Israel on that development.

There was hardly any space for more

displaced people in the south after hundreds of thousands had fled the Israeli ground invasion in the north of the enclave, the residents said.

“Before, we used to ask ourselves whether we will die or not on this war, but in the past two days since Friday, we fear it is just a matter of time,” said Maher, a 37-year-old father of three.

“I am a resident of Gaza City, then we moved to Al-Karara in southern Gaza Strip and yesterday we fled to deeper shelter in Khan Younis and today we are trying to flee under the bombardment

to Rafah,” he said.

UN officials and residents said it was difficult to heed Israeli evacuation orders because of patchy internet access and no regular supply of electricity.

Palestinian health officials said air strikes destroyed several houses in the Al-Karara town near Khan Younis overnight, killing several people including children.

Residents reported intensive bombing, east of Zeitoun in Gaza City and in Tel Al-Zaatar in northern Gaza Strip. — Reuters

UK TO START SURVEILLANCE FLIGHTS TO HELP FIND HOSTAGES

LONDON: The UK’s military will conduct surveillance flights over Gaza to help locate hostages held in the enclave, Britain’s defence ministry confirmed on Sunday.

Palestinian groups seized around 240 Israelis and foreign hostages, according to Israeli authorities. Around 110 have since been freed, mainly during a recent week-long truce.

Israel’s military said on Friday it had resumed fighting in the besieged Palestinian territory. The resumption of combat has frustrated hopes for the swift release of the more than 130 captives the Israeli army has said are still being held in Gaza.

The UK has said at least 12 British nationals were killed and that a further five are still missing.

But it has not confirmed how many are being held in Gaza.

Israel vowed to eliminate the Palestinian group and its subsequent relentless air and ground campaign has killed more than 15,200 people, also mostly civilians, according to the authorities in Gaza.

London did not reveal when its military surveillance flights over the territory would start but stressed they would be unarmed and focused only on hostage recovery efforts. — AFP



Britain's Health Secretary Victoria Atkins speaks to members of the media in central London. — AFP

ISRAELI SETTLERS ATTACK VILLAGES IN WEST BANK



A Palestinian checks a car burned in Israeli settlers raid near Salfit in the West Bank. — Reuters

RAMALLAH: Israeli settlers attacked two Palestinian villages in the occupied West Bank, killing one man and torching a car, Palestinian authorities said.

The Palestinian ambulance service said a 38-year-old man in the town of Qarawat Bani Hassan, in the northern West Bank, was shot in the chest and died as residents confronted settlers and Israeli soldiers.

The Israeli military said soldiers arrived at the scene and used riot dispersal means and live fire to break up the confrontation between residents and settlers. It said Palestinians shot fireworks in response and an Israeli and four Palestinians were injured. The incident was being examined and had been handed over to police, it said.

In another incident, Wajih Al-Qat, head of the local council of the village of Madama near the northern West Bank city of Nablus, said a group of about 15 settlers burned the car and broke the windows of a house with stones.

The attacks are the latest in a series of similar incidents involving settlers that have drawn condemnation from world leaders including US President Joe Biden, whose administration is set to impose visa bans on extremist settlers.

The West Bank, which the Palestinians want as part of a future independent state, has seen a surge of violence in recent months as settlements have continued to expand and US-backed peacemaking efforts have stalled for nearly a decade — Reuters

ICC PROSECUTOR VOWS TO 'FURTHER INTENSIFY' PROBE

THE HAGUE: The chief prosecutor of the International Criminal Court vowed on Sunday to step up efforts to investigate alleged war crimes, as he wrapped up a visit to Israel and the Palestinian Territories.

Karim Khan stressed his visit was “not investigative in nature” but said he was able to speak to victims on both sides of the conflict.

More than 15,200 people have been killed in the besieged Palestinian territory of Gaza, according to Palestinian government, in more than eight weeks of combat and heavy bombardment.

“My office will further intensify its efforts to advance its investigations in relation to this situation,” Khan said. — AFP



International Criminal Court Prosecutor Karim Khan

How novelists reflect our troubled times



Sandhya Rao Mehta

The writer is Associate Professor, Dept of English Language and Literature Sultan Qaboos University

The most recent Booker prize award for literature went to the Irish author Paul Lynch for his dystopian novel ‘Prophet Song’. This type of literature is becoming very popular, especially among young readers, and the reasons are not difficult to understand.

The Chair of the judges of the Booker award committee, Esi Edugyan, said of Lynch’s novel: “We felt unsettled from the start, submerged in – and haunted by — the sustained claustrophobia of Lynch’s powerfully constructed world”. This is not an unusual feature of a dystopian novel.

Dystopian fiction usually presents a world where humans are living a world of suffering. Margaret Atwood’s ‘Handmaiden’s tale’ or even the popular ‘Hunger games’ series are both examples of literature which is projecting a future world which is dominated by forces beyond human beings.

Dystopia reflects a world gone wrong, while its opposite, ‘utopia’, refers to a perfect world which could never exist.

With climate change, the pandemic, the fear of technological control through artificial intelligence and growing certainty of wars, it is no surprise that fiction writers show a world where everything we take for granted is taken away from us. For young adults, this world does not require much imagination — it is actually staring at them.

One of the reasons why this genre of literature is popular among teenagers and young adults is because it asks the questions which they are asking: who are you? How do you fit in this world? How can you make this world better?

In this sense, dystopian fiction makes young readers aware of challenges that they could face in the real world and how they could deal with them. The pandemic of the last few years showcased just how near and present this kind of world is to us, and how we are not as unconnected to a world of disease and devastation as we thought we were. This is another reason why dystopian fiction is so popular with teenagers: it allows them to play the

DYSTOPIAN FICTION MAKES YOUNG READERS AWARE OF CHALLENGES THAT THEY COULD FACE IN THE REAL WORLD AND HOW THEY COULD DEAL WITH THEM

‘what if’ game, see the devastation it brings, but also point to solutions.

Critics have considered that this form of literature promotes problem solving skills, prepares readers for an uncertain future and gives them an honest perspective. This is even more true now when so many people have experienced empty shelves at a supermarket, or grandmothers being delivered food metres away from them during the pandemic.

Whether it is a world submerged in water, a war on another planet, surviving an apocalyptic event or living in a world of machines, dystopian fiction reflects our own world, only at an extreme.

These stories might have gone too far in narrative and be unsettling, but they also offer hope — a reminder that we can change the world if we have the will and ability.

The challenge of our times is to confront the issues which such fiction poses to us and create the means to face them and solve the problems suggested in such a world.

To greenwash or do the right thing?

MATHILDE DUMAZET

They call the giant climate business expo running outside the COP28 United Nations talks in Dubai the “green zone”.

With the enormous former Expo 2020 site given over to green — and not so green — companies to trumpet their climate credentials, the private sector has never been embraced so warmly at a climate summit as it has been in the oil-rich city state.

An astonishing 400,000 visitors have registered for day passes to the futuristic jamboree, with stands touting the latest carbon capture tech to a vegetable garden trying to hold up under the desert heat. And that is not counting the 80,000 people accredited to the talks themselves.

Corporate pledges have been coming thick and fast, with Dubai-based Emirate Airlines — which has its own pavilion — heralding its first flight with “100 per cent sustainable aviation fuel” and BNP Paribas bank saying they were phasing out financing projects related to extracting coking coal.

Others have been more hazy. The public relations teams of big companies feel they have to “come up with something during COP”, sustainable finance expert Laurent Lascols said. But most of the time they recycle “something they already have on the go”.

But Sanda Ojiambo, assistant secretary-general of UN Global Compact, which tries to spur corporations towards sustainable development, praised the “very active and dynamic business movement that happens at COP.

“As long as it’s credible and tangible and transparent, I think it really continues to demonstrate forward-looking discussion,” she added. But only 18 per cent of big firms worldwide are cutting emissions “fast enough to reach net zero by 2050”, according to a report last month by consultants Accenture.

Another by the Boston Consulting Group found that just 14 per cent had reduced their carbon emissions in line with their own ambitions in the past five years — and only one in 10 measured them precisely.

While COP28’s Emirati president Sultan Al Jaber could not be more business friendly, experts say lingering suspicions of conflicts of interest — Jaber is also CEO of the UAE’s national oil and gas company — put corporations in a complicated position.

It is not as easy to make big announcements in Dubai “where you might be in the firing line” compared with the COP26 in Glasgow, said Lascols, because the UK was “more a model pupil in terms of energy transition”. — AFP

Without insects world is poorer



Sergey Plekhanov

The writer is author of A Reformer on the Throne: Sultan Qaboos Bin Said Al Said, sergey.plekhanov@gmail.com

INSECTS ARE DISAPPEARING EVERYWHERE DUE TO SOME TERRIBLE CHANGES IN NATURE. ACCORDING TO SCIENTISTS, OUT OF 100 MILLION TONNES OF THE TOTAL MASS OF INSECTS, 2.5 DISAPPEAR IRREVOCABLY EVERY YEAR

Summer meadow is full of flowers. The sultry air is saturated with the aromas of wormwood and strawberries. You are lying on the soft grass. High above you is the blue sky, and below, very close to you, someone is flying and buzzing.

There are a lot of them: butterflies, bumblebees, some midges. They are literally swarming around. Beetles and ants scurry in all directions. One has crawled into my ear, the other is trying to get under my shirt. You wave it off, throw someone off, and unwittingly kill someone. It was like that in childhood, one of my dear memories.

As adults, travelling by car across Europe and America, I also constantly encountered — literally encountered — swarms of flies and midges. They remained on the windshield in a thick layer that was difficult to clean off.

When I first arrived in Oman, I was amazed that the windshield remained clean after hundreds of kilometres of travel. I thought it was due to the climate, but then I realised it was because Oman doesn’t have much greenery. After all, all insects live where there is greenery and water. But this is how it happened historically. But when I began to notice that in the northern countries, where there is a lot of greenery and water, the situation is the same, I began to understand that it is not only this. Insects are disappearing everywhere due to some terrible changes in nature. Getting acquainted with the works of recent scientists revealed to me the essence of the ongoing drama: it turns out that out of 100 million tonnes of the total mass of insects, 2.5 disappear irrevocably every year.

Nowadays, insects have become noticeably smaller, so much smaller that their conservation has become a subject of special concern for ecologists. Species are disappearing and populations are declining. Every year by a few per cent. And after them, there are gradually fewer birds, because insects are their main food. And this happens everywhere.

Even in Oman, where there weren’t that many of them anyway — because they need greenery. Twenty or thirty years ago, when I started travelling to Oman, in the lagoons by the sea and in the lakes you could see flocks



Nowadays, insects have become noticeably smaller, so much smaller that their conservation has become a subject of special concern for ecologists. – Photo from Shutterstock

of pink flamingos. Where has this most graceful bird gone? They are no longer there. Apparently, their food supply is disappearing, and there are fewer insects. Thinking about this, you no longer want to mindlessly take the life of some tiny creature with a random clap. She, this little midge, is as necessary a part of nature as a tree, a fish, a parrot or a camel. Without it, our world will become poorer and more boring.

Human activity and sophisticated human imagination lead nature to degradation, to the loss of its original functions, the prototype of existence. And against the backdrop of this tragic situation, you often come across a statement from the progressive public that the main evil is red meat, we need to get rid of it, and artificial proteins from insects should be its replacement.

The beetle, the natural food of poultry, becomes a meat substitute for humans. But if we allow such development, the degradation of the insect world will become even greater. And it will no longer be the cheerful jumping colourful birds that will fill the

world with their songs, but the well-fed rumbling of overfilled stomachs.

Let’s leave our world to the birds, butterflies, and dragonflies the way we saw it at our birth. Man is a sufficiently intelligent being not to start the genocide of farm animals for the sake of the abstract ideas of philosophers, who for some reason have stopped loving meat. Let their fantasies remain fantasies. Can we hope that Greta Thunberg will come to the aid of a bird that has lost its food?

Let us all be a little more attentive and careful to the world around us. It would be a huge loss if bird populations decline these “Forest orderlies.”

Forest fires in Siberia and America led to scorched or millions of hectares, respectively, inhabited by insects, birds, animals.

Although natural disasters will still make themselves felt, today it should be understood that the volume of insect biomass has probably long been less than 100 million tonnes. I don’t want to indulge in calculations when the next catastrophe will occur in small harmless creatures.

To comment & email: opinion@omanobserver.om

A blessing observed over centuries

The Sultanate of Oman has always been blessed and renowned worldwide as a state of peace and stability. This is a blessing, which many people and nations have been fighting for ages. Oman has been bestowed this blessing for many reasons, of which kindhearted personality of Omanis comes on top of the list. This is, obviously, reflected in their considerate attitude, warm welcome and hospitality to residents and visitors, mirroring their genuine generosity.

Being commonly known as kindhearted and benevolent humans, Omanis were blessed by the supplicated dua (prayer) of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) to Oman and its people when they converted to Islam over 14 centuries ago. The prayer goes, “God mercy be on the people of Al Ghubaira (the people of Oman). They have believed in me although they had not seen me”.

Oman was one of the first nations, which voluntarily believed in the Prophet and converted to Islam in ancient ages. They accepted Islam even prior to receiving the Prophet’s Messenger or invitation to convert to Islam. The two brother kings of Oman at that time approached the Prophet and acknowledged Islam on behalf of all Omanis who have not even seen the Prophet. In fact, it was a commendable proactive approach that distinguished Omanis from others and thrilled the Prophet.

Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) warmly welcomed the brother kings and prayed for their country and people. Then, he sent His Messenger to teach them Islam and its principles. Praising the people of Oman as an exemplary model for other nations, the Prophet advised one of his Messengers, who was beaten by other people where he was sent to, “If you approached the people of Oman, you would have been neither cursed nor beaten”. Such a very pleasing and prestigious remark indeed from the Prophet.

Likewise, the Prophet’s dear companions acknowledged the kindheartedness of Omanis. In this regard, Abu Baker al Sidiq said, “People



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An author, columnist, creative writer, translator and a communications professional

OMAN WAS ONE OF THE FIRST NATIONS, WHICH VOLUNTARILY BELIEVED IN THE PROPHET AND CONVERTED TO ISLAM IN ANCIENT AGES

of Oman you; you have entered Islam voluntarily although the Prophet has not come to your land on foot or on horse. You have not opposed him and you have not called for separation or dispersion. May God unite you in benevolence”. This was another testament of the benevolence of Omanis, goodwill and tolerance that have been witnessed since early years of Islam.

Undoubtedly, it is the Prophet’s heartfelt prayers, which still keeps Oman peaceful and prosperous. It had as well pushed away from Oman all sorts of enemies and evil throughout centuries. Most likely, Omanis are living today is evidence of the Prophet’s sacred prayers and the exceptional admiration of his companions too, which blessed Oman and its people. Omanis are so blessed to have the Prophet’s special prayers while no other nation had been granted this honour.

Reflecting on the blessing of being a peaceful country and a spark of peace to the whole world, Oman, for over more than the past five decades, has been playing a significantly remarkable role in promoting peace worldwide. If truth to be told, it has been serving the peace process as high attention is accorded by the Government of Oman both during the reign of the late Sultan Qaboos and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

Oman has introduced many local, regional and international peacemaking gestures and conflict-solving initiatives. Thus, this has become a commendably common talk of politicians, governments and individuals alike. Owing to its far-reaching international accomplishments and visionary leadership in this regard, Oman gained credibility and trust at the regional and international levels. Thus, it has been acknowledged as a worldwide peace-concerned destination.

The country has become an epicentre of peace where conflicts and misunderstandings between nations can be resolved. Thanks to the outstanding foreign policy of Oman, which is undoubtedly distinctive from other parts of the region. It served very well the international peace process and bridged political gaps and conflicts between nations.

SPEWING ASH!



Volcanic ash spews from Mount Marapi during an eruption as seen from Tanah Datar in West Sumatra. A volcano in western Indonesia erupted on Sunday, belching a column of ash around 3 km into the sky and forcing the evacuation of dozens of hikers, officials said. – AFP

What anti-Trumpism is missing

These are unique and troubling times for the United States. A twice-impeached former president who now faces four separate indictments for serious crimes is the de facto leader of one of the two main political parties. Having remade the Republican Party in his image, Donald Trump will almost certainly be its nominee in the 2024 presidential election, despite mounting evidence of his financial misdeeds and role in an attempted coup. While Democrats fared well in various elections this month, polls show Trump leading US President Joe Biden in key battleground states. Clearly, something is rotten in the American Republic.

A second Trump presidency would be a much greater threat to democracy than the first. Trump’s own outlook and rhetoric suggest that he has been radicalised further, and his supporters have now learned from their failed attempt to overturn the 2020 election. Friendly think tanks are drawing up plans to dismantle the US government’s checks and balances, allowing Trump to usher in a police state targeting his political opponents. The Heritage Foundation’s Project 2025 aims to “create a playbook of actions to be taken in the first 180 days of the new administration to bring quick relief to Americans suffering from the left’s devastating policies.” Central to that effort will be to staff



Daron Acemoglu, Institute Professor of Economics at MIT, is a co-author of Why Nations Fail: The Origins of Power, Prosperity and Poverty

WHILE DONALD TRUMP’S PLANS FOR DESTROYING AMERICAN DEMOCRACY MUST BE HIGHLIGHTED CONSTANTLY AHEAD OF THE 2024 ELECTION, THE CENTRE AND THE LEFT NEED TO ACKNOWLEDGE WHY SO MANY PEOPLE STILL SUPPORT SUCH A CANDIDATE

key positions with Trumpian cadres.

While Trump and his enablers in the political establishment obviously bear the blame for this dire state of affairs, so do the American left and the fact-based media, which have failed to develop a well-calibrated response. Reactions vary from implicit normalisation (who can deny a major party’s choice of nominee?) to showing zero tolerance toward Trump’s supporters. But a practical blueprint for addressing the situation is missing, even though the future of American democracy is at stake.

The most promising response would feature two seemingly contradictory stances. First, the centre and the left must unite in declaring Trump and his inner circle a mortal threat to the American Republic. His top lieutenants should be treated as such, rather than as ratings-boosting talking heads. Trump’s clearly stated plans for destroying American democracy must be highlighted constantly.

But the centre and the left also must recognise that most Trump supporters have legitimate grievances. This is the part of a successful response that has been lacking. While there are undoubtedly strong white-

nationalist and racist elements in the MAGA movement, they are far from representing most people who will be voting for Republicans in the next election.

A significant share of the US population has suffered economically over the last four decades. Real (inflation-adjusted) earnings among men with only a high-school degree or less have declined since 1980, and median wages had all but stagnated until the late 2010s. Meanwhile, incomes for Americans with college degrees and specialised skills (such as programming) have risen rapidly.

There are many reasons for this labour-market transformation, and several of

them are rooted in economic trends that establishment politicians and the media long sold as benefits to workers. The wave of globalisation that was supposed to lift all boats has stranded many. The automation that was supposed to make US manufacturing more competitive and help workers is the biggest factor in declining earnings among workers without a college degree. Meanwhile, labour unions, minimum-wage laws, and norms protecting low-pay workers have weakened.

Many workers who have suffered from these trends also sense that they have lost ground socially. Legal, political, and cultural changes that have helped

previously disadvantaged groups have flustered others. In the process, many Americans have grown resentful as they feel their viewpoints and grievances are being ignored by the mainstream media and the educated, technocratic elite.

In a recent paper, the economists Ilyana Kuziemko, Nicolas Longuet-Marx, and Suresh Naidu document a divide between the economic preferences of less-educated workers, on one hand, and the well-educated and the Democratic Party, on the other. Whereas ordinary workers have a strong preference for minimum wages, job guarantees, protections against trade, and stronger unions, elites oppose such programmes as unwarranted interference with the market. The Democratic Party’s preferred method for helping the less advantaged has been to push for redistribution via the tax and transfer system.

This disconnect between workers and centre-left policymakers is not confined to the US. As the economists Amory Gethin, Clara Martínez-Toledano, and Thomas Pikettyshow, a similar political realignment has occurred across 21 Western democracies.



A second Trump presidency would be a much greater threat to democracy

Sport

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Al Nahda, Dhofar clinches semifinal spot in HM Cup

AHMED AL AKAABI
MUSCAT, DEC 3

The defending champion, Al Nahda Club, qualified for the semi-finals of the Sultan of Oman Cup on Saturday, after a goalless draw against Al Seeb in the second leg of the quarter-finals at the Al Buraimi Sports Complex.

Al Seeb entered the match with a high-pressing style, attempting to score a quick goal to reduce the deficit. Meanwhile, Al Nahda relied on counter-attacks. Al Seeb imposed their style and managed to reach Al Nahda's goal through several dangerous opportunities that were thwarted by Al Nahda's defence.

Al Nahda, on the other hand, gained opportunities by relying on counter-attack chances, but luck was not on their side in converting them. Zaher al Agbari missed a scoring opportunity for Al Seeb in the 39th minute when he struck a powerful shot that turned into a corner kick, despite continuous opportunities for Al Seeb, the first half ended in a goalless draw.

The second half saw continued pressure from Al Seeb, attempting to score. Ibrahim al Makhini, Al Nahda's goalkeeper, made crucial saves to deny Al Seeb's dangerous attacks. Al Nahda improved slightly



Al Nahda team celebrating after the wining

in the second half, creating some threatening counter-attacks. They successfully defended against Al Seeb's continuous assaults, leading to a goalless draw at the end of the match.

Al Nahda had won the first leg 2-1, and with this result, they secured a spot in the semi-finals where they will face Al Nasr in the HM Cup.

Dhofar Club Secures Semi-Final Berth in HM Cup



Al Nahda club goalkeeper Ibrahim al Mukhaini, Abdullah Fawaz and Ghanem al Habashi during the celebration of the qualification



Al Nahda Club player, celebrating after the wining

In another match, Dhofar Club qualified for the semi-finals of the Sultan Cup after a 2-2 draw with Oman Club. Dhofar benefited from their 2-0 victory in the first leg, played at the Al Seeb Stadium as the host for Oman Club.

Oman Club entered the match with a sole opportunity, needing to secure a victory by a two-goal margin to offset their loss in the first leg with two goals conceded.

On the other hand, Dhofar's team approached the game with three clear chances, making the match more comfortable for them. Oman Club dominated the proceedings in the first half, attempting to score a goal and narrow the gap, and had several opportunities thwarted by Dhofar's defenders. Meanwhile, Dhofar did not pose any significant threats to Oman Club's goal, resulting in a goalless draw at the

end of the first half.

In the second half, Dhofar Club surprised everyone with a fast-paced style of play and managed to score two quick goals. Striker Sultan al Marzouqi scored the opening goal in the 46th minute, followed by Hussein Bin Said in the 49th minute, giving Dhofar a two-goal lead. Midway through the second half, the match intensified as Oman Club succeeded in reducing the

gap to one goal through a penalty converted by Mahmoud Al Hasani in the 72nd minute. In the 80th minute, Abdulwahid al Hina'i scored the equalising goal for Oman Club. The final minutes witnessed opportunities for Oman Club, but they were unable to capitalise on them, while Dhofar managed the time as they desired, securing qualification. The match concluded with a 2-2 draw.

AL ZUBAIR, KONRAD AND CHILLER FINISH FOURTH IN MALAYSIA



Al Manar Racing action from Sepang

SEPANG: The Al Manar Racing by Getspeed trio of Al Faisal al Zubair, Martin Konrad and Fabian Schiller finished fourth in the GT class in both four hour races at the opening round of the 2023-24 Asian Le Mans Series at the Sepang International Circuit.

The Omani, the Austrian and the German entered a Mercedes-AMG GT3 Evo and visited the rain-soaked Malaysian circuit for the first time.

The second of the weekend's races on Sunday afternoon finished under a yellow flag with victory going to the Pure Rxcing trio of Klaus Bachler, Joel Sturm and Alex Malykhin in a Porsche 911 GT3 R. Schiller brought the Al Manar Racing by Getspeed car home in fourth in the final stint behind a Sainteloc Racing Audi and the Optimum Motorsport McLaren 720S GT3.

Al Zubair said: "Fourth place today but, to sum it up, it was a very positive result after everything that happened. Martin had contact with two cars and we got a drive-through penalty and a stop-and-go penalty. Bringing that into account, it was a very good result. We got a bit lucky with the safety car timing but we had a great pit stop in the end to jump five cars and be in P4.

"But, unfortunately, with the damage we had on the car, it was difficult to go up to P3. Nonetheless, after being last with a drive-through we should be very happy with the results. We leave here third in the championship going on to our strong tracks in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. Overall, I think we should be happy"

The trio overcame appalling track conditions and late heavy rain to finish fourth in race one when the heavens opened and a deluge ruined racing in the last 30 minutes. Track conditions deteriorated quickly and the race was red-flagged with 10 minutes to run.

Victory in the GT class went to Christopher Haase, Gilles Magnus and Alban Varutti in the Sainteloc Racing Audi R8 LMS GT3 Evo II, with



Al Faisal al Zubair

Dylan Pereira, Alex Aka and Andrey Mukovoz finishing second in the Attempto Racing Audi. The second Sainteloc Racing Audi finished third in the hands of Dennis Marschall, Paul Evrard and Zhou Bihuang.

Al Zubair said: "Martin had a bit of contact at the first corner but the car seemed okay. We were fourth after the start and then I felt the car was quite good in my stint. Unfortunately, I made a little mistake passing a car under a safety car restart, which had slowed down enough for me to think there was a problem and I wanted to avoid an accident. We got a drive-through penalty for that and finished fourth in the race. Nonetheless, it's good points for the championship for a track where we came for the first time."

Dry conditions prevailed for much of the opening four-hour race on the 5.543km circuit where the Al Manar Racing by Getspeed Mercedes was in contention from the outset.

Torrential rain began to fall with just over half an hour to run. Al Zubair had built up a lead of around five seconds when he pitted for a change

from slick tyres to full wets and handed over to Schiller for the final stint in very tricky and deteriorating track conditions. He also incurred a drive-through penalty for overtaking a slowing LMP1 car during his stint.

Schiller initially slipped back to eighth place but began to climb through the field as the clock ticked down. He moved up to sixth and then to fifth with 24 minutes remaining and began to pressurise Pereira in the fourth-placed Attempto Racing Audi. Both Pereira and Schiller found a way past Marco Mapelli's Leipert Motorsport Lamborghini and had their sights on the leading two Sainteloc Racing Audis in heavy rain.

With 18 minutes to run, Pereira overtook Marschall to snatch second place behind Marschall's team-mate and leader Haase. Schiller also began to close in on the third-placed Audi with 93 laps run and 16 minutes on the clock.

Konrad took the wheel during the opening free practice session on Friday afternoon and ran the Mercedes for 31 laps with a best time of 2min 05.415 seconds that put him eighth of the GT entrants. Davide Rigon topped the session in the AF Corse Ferrari 296 GT3 with a best tour of 2min 04.476 seconds. Twenty-three cars competed in the GT class.

The fastest lap in the late afternoon's second practice session went to the Al Manar Racing by Getspeed Mercedes with a best run of 2min 04.901 seconds. Again the team carried out 31 laps of practice and the Team Project 1 BMW M4 GT3, driven by Maxime Oosten, was the closest challenger with a best lap of 2min 05.487 seconds.

The Sainteloc Audo topped the times in Saturday morning's Q1 qualifying session with a best run of 2min 03.998sec. Al Manar Racing was fourth and then finished second behind Craft-Bamboo Racing's Mercedes in Q2 with a run of 2min 04.889sec.

The championship continues with the 4H of Dubai on February 4th, 2024.

GEORGE LIFTS CLIPPERS OVER WARRIORS, LATE SURGE CAN'T SAVE MAVS

LOS ANGELES: Paul George came through in the clutch for the Los Angeles Clippers on Saturday, but fourth-quarter heroics couldn't save the Dallas Mavericks in a 126-120 NBA loss to Oklahoma City.

George scored a game-high 25 points and drilled the game-winning three-pointer over Klay Thompson as the Clippers rallied from a 22-point third-quarter deficit to stun the Golden State Warriors 113-112.

"It felt good as soon as I released it," George said of the basket that put the Clippers ahead for the first time in the contest. "I got a good look at the basket, thank God it went in."

The Warriors had a final chance, but Draymond Green missed a three-point attempt at the buzzer.

George said the comeback was especially meaningful against the Warriors' potent offence.

"They can put points up so quick," he said. "The fact we were able to come back, it just shows a lot -- this group is ready to fight and play all the way until the end."

James Harden added 21 points and Kawhi Leonard chipped in 20 for the Clippers, who withstood 17 three-pointers from the Warriors.

Stephen Curry scored 22 points and handed out 11 assists for Golden State.

In the day's second game at Crypto.com Arena, Anthony Davis scored 27 points and grabbed 14 rebounds in the Los Angeles Lakers' 107-97 victory over the Houston Rockets.

LeBron James, who celebrates his 39th birthday this month,



Paul George (13) controls the ball against Klay Thompson (11) during the second half at Crypto. – USA TODAY Sports

added 16 points, including a spectacular 360-degree aerial spin for a layup.

In Dallas, a remarkable 30-0 fourth-quarter scoring run and new dad Luka Doncic's triple-double of 36 points, 15 rebounds and 18 assists weren't enough for the Mavericks.

Doncic returned after missing a game to welcome the birth of his

baby daughter, but Kyrie Irving was sidelined with a sore foot and Tim Hardaway Jr. was out with back spasms.

Jalen Williams scored 23 points to lead eight Thunder players in double figures.

The Mavs, trailing 111-87 early in the fourth, scored 30 unanswered points -- the longest such streak since the NBA began

tracking play-by-play data in 1996.

They seized a 117-111 lead but couldn't make it last.

"That's just the way the game is," said Mavs centre Dereck Lively, who scored 20 points and pulled down 16 rebounds. "Basketball is a game of runs. We were fortunate enough to be able to fight back, bring it back to a close game, but we've got to be sure we practice

more on trying to close out the end-game situations."

Denver star Nikola Jokic's triple-double of 36 points, 13 rebounds and 14 assists also came in a losing effort as the Nuggets fell 123-117 to the Sacramento Kings, who had 26 points from both DeAaron Fox and Malik Monk.

Giannis Antetokounmpo's first triple-double of the season -- 32

points, 11 rebounds and 10 assists -- helped the Milwaukee Bucks finally see off the Atlanta Hawks 132-121 in a game that featured 17 lead changes.

Damian Lillard added 25 points and nine assists for the Bucks, who were tied 114-114 with less than six minutes remaining but outscored the Hawks 18-7 the rest of the way. — AFP

Marsa, Muscat triumph at Al Mouj Muscat basketball tourney



AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, DEC 3

The Marsa team clinched victory in the men's 3X3 basketball competition, while the Muscat team secured the girls' title at the Championship, organised by the Oman Basketball Association with the support of Delil Oil Company.

The championship unfolded from December 1 to 2 at Al Mouj Muscat, featuring eight competitive teams to promote and expand 3X3 basketball among the youth.

The awards ceremony was under the auspices of Engineer Khalfan bin Saleh al Naabi, President of the Oman Basketball

Association and Dr Ali al Yaribi, Vice President of the association.

The tournament played in a round-robin format, showcased strong and exciting matches among the eight participating teams divided into two groups. The matches provided plenty of excitement and competitiveness, delighting the spectators at Al Mouj Muscat. Following the competitions, Eng Khalfan al Naabi awarded the gold medals and the first-place trophy to the Marsa team, consisting of Said al Saadi, Bassam al Busaidy, and Mahmoud al Suli.

The GHOSTS team, Mike Gacil Qamar, and Mohamed Hussain secured the silver medals, while the Oman Club

team, consisting of Basim al Muslimi, Jalal al Muslimi, Mohsen Khairallah, and Fahad al Ajmi, received the bronze medals.

In the girls' competition, Muscat team composed of Abeer al Ismailiyah, Fatima al Numaniyah, Shams al Dhahha al Khunji, and Reema al Mughairiyah, clinched the first-place trophy and the gold medals, while Bellte team secured the second-place position.

After the awards ceremony, Eng Khalfan al Naabi, praised the artistic level of the championship. He highlighted that the Al Mouj Muscat 3X3 Basketball Championship was the first tournament organised

by the association to promote the game, especially in a public venue frequented by many families and young people. This provided an opportunity for people to become familiar with the game and its rules, particularly those related to 3x3 basketball.

Al Naabi added that the tournament's success was attributed to the partnership with Al Mouj Muscat and the support from Delil Oil Company. He emphasised that the tournament produced several promising players, both resident players and amateurs, who could become valuable assets for clubs looking for male and female players.

Al Busaidy secures bronze at first Gulf Rapid Chess Championship in Kuwait

SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, DEC 3

The Oman National chess player Hamoud al Busaidy secured the bronze medal in the First Gulf Rapid Chess Championship for Men in the 2200 category in Kuwait, while Anaa al Eissaia claimed the fifth place in the 2000 category for girls,

The championship took place at the Kuwait Mind Games Club from December 1 to 2, with participants of 112 players, including 85 male and 27 female from GCC countries including Iraq and Yemen.

The Omani national player, Hamoud al Busaidy managed to clinch the third position in the 2200 category, while Moez Dhaher from Iraq secured the first place, and Ammar al Sadrani from the UAE claimed the second position.

In the girls' 2000 category, Omani player Anaa al Eissaia secured the fifth position, while the UAE players dominated the top three spots, with Wafia al Maamari taking the first place, Anoud Issa securing the second position, and Ahoud Issa claiming the third position.

Musallam al Wadai lead the Oman's delegation to the Gulf Rapid Chess Championship for Men and Girls in Kuwait, which included 13 players: Anaa al Eissaia represented the girls' team, where the men's team included Salem al Omari, Hamoud al Busaidy, Fahim al Muqabali, Rashid al Balushi, Manal al Kathiri, Mina Beit Saeed, Hamdan al Hinaai, Saif al Hraisi, Kamal al Hinaai, Said al Maamari, Mazen al Hanthali, and Ali al Maamari.

The tournament followed the Swiss system with a rapid classic format consisting of 9 rounds, with a playing time of 10 minutes and a 3-second increment. The championship was conducted under the supervision of the International and Asian Chess Federations.



Hamoud al Busaidy in action at Kuwait Championship



Arsenal's Bukayo Saka celebrates scoring their first goal. – REUTERS

ARSENAL GO FOUR CLEAR, NEWCASTLE DOWN MAN UNITED

LONDON: Arsenal took the chance to open up a four-point lead at the top of the Premier League with a 2-1 victory over Wolverhampton Wanderers on Saturday and Newcastle beat Manchester United 1-0 to climb above them in the table.

Everton enjoyed their first win since being docked 10 points as they beat Nottingham Forest 1-0, while Burnley earned home points for the first time this season by hammering Sheffield United who ended the day rock bottom after a 5-0 thrashing.

Early goals by Bukayo Saka and Martin Odegaard put Arsenal in control against Wolves at The Emirates but Mikel Arteta's side had to withstand a late rally by the visitors.

Arsenal now hold their largest lead of the table since April when they were five clear of eventual champions Manchester City.

Arteta needs no reminding of how that title race panned out with his side ultimately collapsing, but they are again showing the consistency to sustain a long challenge.

Arsenal have 33 points from 14 games with City on 29 ahead of their home game against injury-hit Tottenham Hotspur on Sunday. Liverpool and Aston Villa, who have 28 points, are also in action on Sunday against Fulham and Bournemouth.

"It's been a good week with some good results. We're there at the top and we have to keep improving and keep pushing," Arsenal skipper Odegaard said. "The schedule is tough, but almost the whole season is tough."

NEWCASTLE DOMINATE

Anthony Gordon scored the only goal in Newcastle's deserved 1-0 victory over Manchester United that propelled them up to fifth in the table on 26 points.

The Red Devils fell to seventh after a lacklustre performance from the visitors until the final desperate minutes.

It marked the first time since January 1922 the Magpies have won three consecutive games in all competitions against Manchester United.

Newcastle's victory capped a solid eight days that saw them beat Chelsea 4-1 and then draw 1-1 with Paris St Germain in the Champions League.

"I couldn't be happier with the players tonight," manager Eddie Howe told TNT Sports. "The performances we put in against three top teams were brilliant so that will give confidence, and when we get some players back we can push on even further."

Gordon netted his sixth league goal this season in the second half, with a simple finish at the far post from a Kieran Trippier cross after United's defence switched off.

EVERTON WIN

By the time Everton kicked off at the City Ground, they were bottom — courtesy of Burnley's win and the 10-point sanction for breaking Premier League financial sustainability rules.

Sean Dyche's team responded with a battling victory secured by Dwight McNeil's powerful finish in the 67th minute and resolute defending as Forest



Newcastle United's Anthony Gordon celebrates scoring their first goal. – REUTERS

threw everything into attack.

"Our mentality was excellent," Dyche told the BBC. "It's a restart. It's a step in the right direction, but there are plenty more steps to go."

"I think we're having a solid season. Seventeen points would have been a fairly healthy return. Of course it's changed, but the mentality and the performance levels are right."

Burnley could hardly have had a better opportunity to register their first points at Turf Moor since gaining promotion and they took it in emphatic fashion, their 5-0 win the joint best by a side starting the day bottom of the Premier League.

Vincent Kompany's side, the only one in the top four divisions without a home point, needed only 15 seconds to take the lead as Charlie Taylor's cross was glanced in by Jay Rodriguez. Jacob Bruun Larsen made it 2-0 before Sheffield United's Oli McBurnie was sent off on the stroke of halftime after his second yellow card for an elbow.

Zeki Amdouni and Luca Koleosho stretched Burnley's lead after the break and Josh Brownhill completed their biggest-ever Premier League win.

"The lads deserve all the credit they can get. It's not been a one-off. We've had performances like that this season," Kompany told Sky Sports.

Brentford bounced back from their defeat by Arsenal to beat Luton Town 3-1 at home to move 10th — all the goals coming in the second half. — Reuters





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Hydrom signs joint study agreement with Netherlands to market green hydrogen

BUSINESS REPORTER
DUBAI, DEC 3

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals and Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom) signed a Joint Study Agreement (JSA) with the Port of Amsterdam, Zenith Energy Terminals and GasLog, to collaborate on the development of a liquid hydrogen route to market for green hydrogen produced in the Sultanate of Oman during the CO28 conference in Dubai.

The Agreement was signed at the Omani Pavilion in the conference, by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi Minister of Energy and Minerals and the Climate Envoy of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Prince Jaime de Bourbon de Parme, as official witnesses during the ceremony. The Agreement entails conducting a detailed assessment of the requirements to develop an open-access hydrogen liquefaction, storage and export facility in the Sultanate of Oman, along with the provision of specialised vessels for the transportation of the liquid hydrogen, currently under development by GasLog. The primary aim of the agreement is to establish a green hydrogen corridor between the Sultanate of Oman and the Netherlands, with the terminal of Zenith Energy as the destination for the



Eng Salim al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of Hydrom Oman



The Government of Oman, Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), Port of Amsterdam, Zenith Energy Terminals and GasLog agree to study the development of a liquid hydrogen supply chain, to deliver Omani green hydrogen to the Port of Amsterdam and onwards to Europe.

import, regasification and further distribution of Oman-produced hydrogen to both local offtakers within the port of Amsterdam, as well as large industries in the European hinterland. The open-access liquefaction facility will also enable the government of the Sultanate of Oman to explore cost effective hydrogen export corridors to other global markets. Guided by Oman's Vision 2040, which is anchored on diversifying its economy away from oil and gas, as well as the country's long-term goal to reach Net-Zero by 2050, the government of the Sultanate of Oman has pursued a hydrogen strategy that seeks to capitalise on the country's abundant (wind and sun) natural resources and existing port and industrial infrastructures. Moreover, its geographical location

puts Oman in a prime position to supply the European and the Asian markets. Hydrom is orchestrating the overall development of the Omani hydrogen sector and is responsible for master-planning, managing the allocation of government lands to hydrogen developers and overseeing the execution of projects. The open-access facility for liquefaction would unlock great potential for these projects, offering liquid hydrogen as a viable vector that can be utilised by individual projects for export. Managing Director of Hydrom Abdulaziz al Shaithani, shared the following "As countries around the world race to achieve a hydrogen-based economy, the fundamental challenges of storing and transporting hydrogen on large scale remain open,"

at this year's edition of COP28 constitutes a new milestone in Omani-Dutch relations, where the Omani government, Hydrom, Port of Amsterdam, Zenith Energy Terminals and GasLog will work on the realisation of the envisioned import/export corridor. Dorine Bosman, Chief Investment Officer at Port of Amsterdam, said, "Both Oman and the Netherlands are clearly in the vanguard in the development of the global hydrogen market. The complementarity between both nations offers a strong foundation for a fruitful collaboration, as evidenced by the MoU signed by both governments during COP27. We are proud that Port of Amsterdam, together with Zenith Energy Terminals and GasLog, can now, at this year's edition of COP28, take next steps towards the realisation of a liquid hydrogen corridor between the Sultanate of Oman and our port. Oman's natural blessings and the passionate leadership of Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi Minister of Energy and Minerals on green hydrogen mean that the Omani Ministry of Energy and Minerals and Hydrom are fitting partners. We look forward to establishing the port of Amsterdam as the gateway for Omani-produced green hydrogen to the European market."

MoHT launches survey to assess tourism promotion effectiveness



The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the NCSI started conducting surveys to assess the landscape of tourism in Oman

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, DEC 3

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has commenced a fieldwork survey to assess the effectiveness of its promotional activities, prompted by scrutiny from the State Audit Institution. Earlier in October, the State Audit Institution questioned the effectiveness of the Ministry's tourism promotional activities despite an expenditure of approximately RO 3.4 million from 2017 to 2021. According to the report, the Ministry failed to identify the effectiveness of its promotional campaigns in introducing and promoting the Sultanate of Oman as a tourism destination. As a result, the Ministry proposed the creation of tools to measure the effectiveness of tourism promotion activities and programmes in collaboration with the National Centre for Statistics and Information. The survey, which began on Friday, December 1, will target departing visitors to the country and returning locals and residents, according to an ONA report. It will be conducted by the National Centre for Statistics and Information in collaboration with the Royal Oman Police and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. The surveys will take place at Muscat International Airport, Salalah Airport, and the land border crossings, spanning 232 working days throughout the rest of this year and until the end of 2024. The State Audit Institution also noted difficulty in measuring the efficiency and effectiveness of the Ministry's foreign tourism representation offices in attracting tourists, stating that the Ministry spent 33 per cent of the total funds allocated to its tourism promotion programme on these offices (RO 5.6 million).

Muscat International Jewellery Exhibition 2023 to launch at OCEC

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, DEC 3

The 12th edition of the Muscat International Jewellery Exhibition (MIJEX) opens on December 5, 2023 at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

In the 2023 edition, OCEC — a project by Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN) — in collaboration with VEGA Inter Trade Exhibitions, is hosting a diverse



range of exhibitors from local, regional, and international domains. These exhibitors will present a captivating showcase featuring stunning jewellery, authentic gemstones and pearls,

gold ornaments, an impressive array of diamonds, fashion items, and various other luxury products for the visitors. This five-day event promises to be a spectacular showcase of

opulence. Eng Said al Shanfari, CEO of OCEC, expressed excitement about the exhibition, emphasising the opportunity for the public to explore and acquire exquisite jewellery and luxury goods from leading brands in the region. A total of 45 exhibitors from over 10 countries, including renowned brands like Bhasker Devji Jewellery, Kriedy Jewellery Blue Diamond, and Demanto Jewellery, will grace the event.

Each exhibitor will unveil their latest collections, showcasing iconic designs and timeless classics for the season. Commenting on the significance of MIJEX, Eng Said al Shanfari stated, "This prestigious exhibition provides an exclusive platform for jewellery enthusiasts to immerse themselves in the finest creations while engaging with designers, innovators, influencers, and brand representatives shaping the industry's trends."

New GCC award to recognise research on social insurance

MUSCAT: The Social Protection Fund, in collaboration with the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), has announced the inaugural edition of the Gulf Research Award for Civil Retirement and Social Insurance Systems 2023. The award focuses on research related to the social protection system, civil retirement, and social insurance. It aims to uncover key challenges faced by civil retirement and social insurance systems in the GCC, providing solutions in line with various variables. The

goal is to contribute to enhancing retirement and social insurance awareness using the latest research methods. It also aims to establish research platforms that nurture Gulf scientific talents by addressing relevant areas related to retirement and social insurance, aligning with contemporary social, demographic, economic, and political changes in the Arabian Gulf region. The award aims to support scientific research in social protection areas, offering a platform for researchers across GCC



countries to study contemporary issues related to social protection systems. It encourages researchers and those interested in research fields to continue their initiatives, enriching knowledge related to civil retirement and social insurance in the Gulf.

The outcomes of the research are expected to contribute as inputs to the strategic plans of various civil retirement bodies and social insurance institutions. Covering various fields such as actuarial sciences, investments in civil retirement systems, social

insurance laws, the economic risks and the role of civil retirement and social insurance systems in economic development, the quality and development of insurance services, strategic planning support for civil retirement and social insurance systems, and the use of technology and artificial intelligence in the evolution of these systems, the award targets researchers with doctoral and master's degrees, as well as undergraduate students from GCC countries and resident foreigners.

The award process includes a two-month period for submitting research proposals, followed by an announcement of qualified research proposals for study preparation. Subsequently, a period of no more than nine months is allocated for the submission of comprehensive research. The results of the winning research will be announced in the first quarter of 2025. This award serves as a crucial contributor to the development of civil retirement and social insurance systems in the region. — ONA

NBO’s Rawabit programme builds strong connections to better serve its customers



MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) continues its Rawabit Programme, a thorough series of interactive workshops focusing on reinforcing the bank’s values to deliver superior services. Launched in 2022, the Rawabit

Programme focuses on how NBO employees interact with the bank’s values and shape the workplace culture by promoting teamwork and collaboration, embracing change and engaging effectively. The programme also aims to

promote professional conduct in the workplace, integrate the bank’s values into day-to-day operations, and create linkages between employees from different regions. NBO strives to connect, build and grow with its customers, and

for 50 years the bank has built strong bonds with customers by delivering more intuitive and seamless banking. Enhancing the capabilities and effective deployment of NBO’s people through empowering career

development programmes have been identified as key to achieving and delivering the bank’s strategic and business objectives. The bank will continue to equip its employees with the skills required to better serve its customers.

National Finance renews pact with SignBook to provide instant translation for the disabled

MUSCAT: Establishing a benchmark of excellence in championing inclusivity, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading finance company, has consistently sought to support initiatives that enhance the well-being of diverse segments in the community. In line with this aim, the company extended its support to ‘Village of Happiness’, a two-day entertainment carnival tailored for individuals with disabilities and their families.

Hosted by Her Highness Sayyidah Hujaija al Said, Founder of Links Oman, the festival, marking the International Day of Persons with Disabilities, took place at The Civil Aviation Club on December 1 and 2, and was graced by Guest of Honour His Highness Sayyid Mohammed bin Thuwaini al Said. Under the illustrious leadership of HH Sayyidah Hujaija al Said, Links plays an essential role in fostering awareness and embracing individuals with disabilities through events designed to bring them joy, instill hope, forge meaningful connections and create opportunities.



National Finance partners with SignBook Oman.

A noteworthy highlight at the event was the renewal of National Finance’s partnership with SignBook Oman, the developers of the first Omani smartphone application that caters to individuals with hearing impairments. The agreement was formalised by Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer at National Finance, and Sultan al Amri, Chief Executive Officer at SignBook Oman. This partnership

further empowers National Finance to offer advanced services such as video calls with live sign language translation at branches to customers with hearing impairments, thereby facilitating seamless communication. Additionally, SignBook Oman’s services will enhance the accessibility of National Finance’s website for individuals with special needs. Commenting on the occasion,

Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi said, “It is an honour to support initiatives that cultivate happiness and give individuals with disabilities and their families the opportunity to partake in enjoyable activities that elevate spirits and champion inclusivity. At National Finance, we treasure our position as reliable partner to individuals with disabilities, and through our endorsement of ‘Village of Happiness,’ we aspire to create a lasting positive impact in their lives.”

He added, “Our collaboration with SignBook Oman further exemplifies our dedication to fortifying our services, making them more flexible and easily accessible to all. It is deeply ingrained in our corporate ethos to not only make our services available to individuals with disabilities, but also to provide them with the support needed to realise their lifestyle and entrepreneurial aspirations.

In partnership with SignBook Oman, we will persist in simplifying processes for our customers with hearing impairments.”

National Finance’s storied legacy of social welfare and upliftment initiatives, undertaken through its ‘Imtidad’ social responsibility arm, underscores the company’s earnest efforts to contribute tangibly and in an impactful way to the community. Affirming its position as advocate for individuals with disabilities, the company has previously backed initiatives such as the Greenhouse Project in collaboration with Dar Al Atta’a, aiming to create meaningful employment opportunities for individuals with special needs.

By extending its continued support to initiatives such as ‘Village of Happiness’, National Finance assumes the pivotal role as agents of hope in endeavours that pave the way for individuals with disabilities to envision futures filled with promise.

The company ardently encourages organisations across the nation to embrace the responsibility of spreading joy and prioritising inclusivity, thereby affording individuals with disabilities the opportunity to thrive and prosper.

Indonesia, ADB, owners agree to shutter first coal-fired power station early

DUBAI: Indonesia and the Asian Development Bank have agreed a provisional deal with the owners of the Cirebon-1 coal-fired power plant to shutter it almost seven years earlier than planned, the ADB’s senior climate change energy specialist told Reuters.

The deal, announced during the COP28 climate talks in Dubai on Sunday, is the first under the ADB’s Energy Transition Mechanism (ETM) programme, which aims to help countries cut their climate-damaging carbon emissions.

Supporting a \$20 billion Just Energy Transition Partnership agreed last year that aims to bring forward the sector’s peak emissions date to 2030, the ADB hopes to replicate it across other countries in the region.

“If we don’t address these coal plants, we’re not going to meet our climate goals,” David Elzinga said on the sidelines of the conference.

“By doing this pilot transaction, we are learning what it takes to make this happen,” David Elzinga said. “We’re very much shaping this as something we want to take to other countries.”

ADB also has active ETM programmes in Kazakhstan, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Vietnam, and is considering transactions in two other countries, it said. — Reuters



Smoke and steam billows from the coal-fired power plant in Suralaya, Indonesia. — Reuters

Regulators for tougher scrutiny of carbon markets

LONDON: A global securities watchdog proposed 21 safety measures on Sunday to improve integrity, transparency and enforcement in voluntary carbon markets (VCMs) in a sector of growing importance to efforts to combat climate change. IOSCO, which groups market watchdogs from Asia, Europe, Latin America and the United States, launched a 90-day public consultation on a set of good practices for national regulators to apply. “VCMs have gained significant importance in recent years. But for these markets to succeed, they need integrity — both environmental and financial,” Rodrigo Buenaventura, chair of IOSCO’s sustainable finance taskforce, told an event at the

COP28 climate summit in Dubai on Sunday. The two weeks of UN talks, which began on November 30, are addressing debate over whether ending the use of fossil fuels in the first place should be prioritised over promoting technologies that can capture emissions. VCMs cover pollution-reducing projects, such as reforestation, renewable energy, biogas and solar power, that generate carbon credits companies buy to offset their emissions and meet net-zero targets. Banks, investment funds and speculators also buy credits in the hope of re-selling them at a higher price, IOSCO said. IOSCO last year raised the



Energy crisis fuels ‘burn anything’ policy, raising health concerns in central Europe. Smoke billows from a chimney in Zurowa, Poland.

prospect of closer scrutiny of carbon markets when it said it was concerned the quality and

double counting of credits left the sector open to fraud. IOSCO, whose members

commit to applying agreed rules, seeks to standardise terminology in VCMs, a sector that Morgan

Stanley bank expects to grow from \$2 billion in 2020 to about \$250 billion by 2050. National regulators could require companies to disclose their use of carbon credits, and platforms that trade credits to have better anti-fraud and market manipulation safeguards, IOSCO said. VCMs are separate from government-regulated carbon markets, such as the emissions trading scheme in the European Union, the world’s largest. Good practice could include “comprehensive disclosures on the project development process, verification and auditing methodologies, and the entities responsible for measurement, reporting, and verification,” IOSCO said.



Meeting held to review water and sanitation projects in Musandam



Governor of Musandam meets with Chairman of the Authority for Public Services Regulation to discuss water and sanitation projects in the Wilayat

BUSINESS REPORTER MUSANDAM, DEC 3

A meeting was held on Sunday morning between Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said bin Ibrahim al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam, and Dr Mansour bin Talib al Hinai, Chairman of the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR).

The meeting focused on the most recent developments, projects, and programmes related to water and sanitation in Musandam Governorate. Both sides sought to identify suitable mechanisms to address challenges in this sector while adhering to the highest technological standards.

The implementation of the non-treated wastewater services expansion project in Governorate, carried out by Nama Water

Services Company, was discussed in detail. The company presented the project's primary objectives, anticipated outcomes, and the most significant challenges encountered. They also proposed appropriate solutions aligned with global advancements in this field.

Additionally, the company outlined the procedures for handling customer complaints and the efforts undertaken to monitor water quality and provide comprehensive services within the governorate, all in accordance with established regulatory frameworks.

The meeting also delved into APSR's endeavours and clarified its regulatory role in overseeing the performance of companies in accordance with their assigned responsibilities.

China has more space to cut reserve ratio instead of interest rates

BEIJING: China is likely to implement proactive fiscal policy next year as there is still a need for the world's second-biggest economy to realise stable growth, a former central banker was cited as saying in state-owned media on Sunday.

The comment comes as the economy struggles for momentum after being hobbled by lengthy pandemic-busting measures, while market watchers fear severe debt woe among major property developers could spill over to other sectors.

"It is expected that next year China will continue to implement positive fiscal policy, monetary policies that are in line with positive fiscal policy, with a relatively large policy space to



Paramilitary police officers stand guard in front of the headquarters of the People's Bank of China, the central bank (PBOC), in Beijing, China September 30, 2022. — Reuters

lower the reserve requirement ratio," Sheng Songcheng, a former statistics and analysis director of the People's Bank of China, said in comments reported by Shanghai

Securities News.

With interest rates and loan prime rates at low levels, there is more space to cut banks' reserve requirement ratio (RRR) than to

cut interest rates, Sheng said.

The central bank lowered the RRR in September for the second time this year to boost liquidity and support economic recovery. Analysts expect another cut by year-end.

The weighted average RRR for financial institutions was around 7.4 per cent after the cut.

China is prudent in cutting interest rates as its monetary policy needs to consider internal and external balance, Sheng said.

"It is expected that the interest rate differential between China and the US will enter a period of stabilisation, so the renminbi (yuan) is likely to maintain a mild appreciation trend, but the appreciation is limited."

Suez Canal, Scatec sign \$1.1bn green methanol MoU

CAIRO: Egypt's Suez Canal economic zone and Scatec ASA have signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) worth \$1.1 billion to supply ships with green fuel, a Suez Canal statement said on Sunday.

The MoU agreed on the sidelines of the COP28 conference held in Dubai envisages production of 100,000 tonnes of green methanol per year by 2027, the statement said.



An aerial view of the Gulf of Suez and the Suez Canal are pictured through the window of an airplane on a flight between Cairo and Doha.

No science that oil phase-out will fix climate: COP28 chief

DUBAI: The UAE's COP28 president says there is no science to show that phasing out fossil fuels would achieve the world's climate goals, but acknowledge that it is "inevitable," a report said on Sunday.

Sultan Al Jaber — who also heads state oil giant ADNOC — made the comments during a testy exchange with former Irish leader Mary Robinson during an online forum, video published by The Guardian showed.

The 50-year-old, who is also the United Arab Emirates' climate envoy, added that removing fossil fuels would take the world "back into caves".

"I'm not in any way signing up to a discussion that is alarmist," Jaber told the SHE Changes Climate online conference on November 21.

"I am factual and I respect the science, and there is no science out there, or no scenario out there, that says that the phase-out of fossil fuels is what's going to achieve 1.5."

The landmark 2015 Paris climate conference outlined the goal of restricting global warming to 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels to avoid catastrophic environmental fallout.

A United Nations assessment of climate pledges released last month found the world was way off-track in hitting this target.

"1.5 is my North Star and a phase-down and a phase-out



A man walks next to flags during the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai. — Reuters

of fossil fuels in my mind is inevitable, it's essential," Jaber told the forum on women leading climate action.

"But we need to be real, serious and pragmatic about it."

He added: "Show me a road-map for a phase-out of fossil fuels that will allow for sustainable socio-economic development, unless you want to take the world

back into caves."

Specifying a "phase-out" or weaker "phase-down" of fossil fuels is one of the main battles facing negotiators at COP28 in Dubai, where they will try to reach a new agreement to deal with global warming.

Jaber has repeated since June that phasing out hydrocarbons is inevitable, but that it cannot

happen before viable alternatives are in place -- and that developed nations must lead the way.

A COP28 spokesperson said the report was "just another attempt to undermine the presidency's agenda, which has been clear and transparent and backed by tangible achievements by the COP president and his team."

"The COP president was

unwavering in saying reaching 1.5C involves action across a number of areas and sectors. The COP president is clear that phasing down and out of fossil fuels is inevitable and that we must keep 1.5C within reach."

Joeri Rogelj, professor of climate science and policy at Imperial College London, said last month's report by the UN's IPCC climate

Specifying a 'phase-out' or weaker 'phase-down' of fossil fuels is one of the main battles facing negotiators at COP28 in Dubai, where they will try to reach a new agreement to deal with global warming

change panel backed a phase-out.

"I strongly recommend (Jaber) asking around for the latest IPCC report," he said.

"That report, approved unanimously by 195 countries including the UAE, shows a variety of ways to limit warming to 1.5C -- all of which indicate a de facto phase-out of fossil fuels in the first half of the century."

Meanwhile, the head of Germany's Environment Agency, Dirk Messner, said in Dubai that 16 per cent of global greenhouse gas emissions were linked to methane, which is 30 times more aggressive than carbon dioxide.

Messner called for binding regulations to limit methane emissions, particularly in countries where oil and gas are extracted..

Wenzel pointed to new European Union rules requiring operators of fossil fuel infrastructure to monitor leaks and to repair them, and to limit the release and flaring of gas. The rules go into effect next year.

— AFP/dpa

US to limit China’s ability to benefit from electric vehicle industry

ANA SWANSON, JACK EWING AND ALAN RAPPEPORT

The Biden administration proposed new rules on Friday aimed at shifting more production of electric vehicle batteries and the materials that power them to the United States, in an attempt to build up a strategic industry now dominated by China.

The rules are meant to limit the role that Chinese firms can play in supplying materials for electric vehicles that qualify for federal tax credits. They will also

discourage companies that seek federal funding to build battery factories in the United States from sourcing materials from China or Russia.

The rules could encourage shifts in automotive supply chains, which continue to rely heavily on China for materials and components of electric vehicles.

Automakers are also facing intense cost pressures as they try to modify their factories to make electric cars; China offers some of the most advanced and lowest-priced battery technology in the world.

The Biden administration is trying to use billions of dollars

in new federal funding to change that dynamic and create a US supply chain for electric vehicles.

The climate law President Joe Biden signed in 2022 includes up to \$7,500 in tax credits to consumers who buy electric vehicles made in the United States, using largely domestic materials.

The law also included a general ban on Chinese products. Lawmakers mandated that firms in China, Russia, North Korea and Iran be prohibited from providing certain materials to cars that received those tax breaks.

But the law left open several questions, including what

THE RULES ARE MEANT TO LIMIT THE ROLE THAT CHINESE FIRMS CAN PLAY IN SUPPLYING MATERIALS FOR ELECTRIC VEHICLES THAT QUALIFY FOR FEDERAL TAX CREDITS. THEY WILL ALSO DISCOURAGE COMPANIES THAT SEEK FEDERAL FUNDING TO BUILD BATTERY FACTORIES IN THE UNITED STATES FROM SOURCING MATERIALS FROM CHINA OR RUSSIA

constitutes a Chinese or Russian company. Administration officials said those definitions included any entity that was incorporated or had headquarters in China or Russia, as well as any firm in which 25 per cent of the board seats or equity interest was held by Chinese or Russian governments.

Chinese companies that set up operations outside China appear to be able to benefit from the rules, as long as the Chinese government is not a significant shareholder. That provision came as a relief to automakers, which feared that the Biden administration might ban them from contracting with Chinese-

owned mines or factories in the United States or other parts of the world.

The law also requires battery makers that strike contracts or licensing agreements with Chinese firms to ensure that they are retaining certain rights over their projects. That provision is intended to make sure a Chinese firm is not effectively in control of such a project.

Some conservative lawmakers had challenged Ford Motor Co’s plans to licence technology from the Chinese battery giant known as CATL for a plant in Marshall, Michigan, arguing that such a partnership should not be eligible for federal tax credits. — NYT

Don’t put your eggs in one basket. That investing principle still holds

Strategies.

It isn’t dead. It’s more important than ever.

I’m talking about the 60/40 portfolio, which has sometimes been considered the living heart of investing. Those specific numbers — which refer to 60 per cent stock and 40 per cent bonds as core investment holdings — aren’t significant. They are merely a convenient starting point for thinking about investing and not an exact, general-purpose prescription for everyone. Nor have they ever been.

But they do represent a fundamental principle. While it’s more complicated, it comes down to this: Don’t keep your eggs in one basket. Diversify rigorously and systematically among stocks and bonds, and do it for the long haul.

The claim that this concept is dead doesn’t make sense. Diversification in investing is as important now as it ever was, even if it hasn’t paid off lately.

But what is true is that both stocks and bonds performed poorly over much of the past two years, especially in 2022. Soaring inflation and rising interest rates led to bond losses along with a drop in the stock market. If you held a broad portfolio of stocks and bonds in 2022 — whether your mix was 60/40 or some other variant — you probably lost money. Neither the stocks nor the bonds helped.

That was awful. But the solution isn’t to abandon diversification. It is to stick with it, and maybe even diversify further.

Harry Markowitz was a giant of finance. He was also an earthy Chicagoan, who told me back in 2012 that he was comfortable with using eggs in a basket to describe his work, for which he won a Nobel Prize in 1990.

“What I did was a lot fancier than that,” he said. “It needed a lot of math.” But the basic concept is that if all of your investments are the same and something bad happens to any one of them, you will be in, let us say, deep trouble. Don’t let that happen to you.

Harry died in June. In 2012, he explained how you could reduce total risk by combining a lot of individually risky assets. If their price movements are



JEFF SOMMER

writes Strategies, a column on markets, finance and the economy. He also edits business news. Previously, he was a national editor. At Newsday, he was the foreign editor and a correspondent in Asia and Eastern Europe.

I'M TALKING ABOUT THE 60/40 PORTFOLIO, WHICH HAS SOMETIMES BEEN CONSIDERED THE LIVING HEART OF INVESTING. THOSE SPECIFIC NUMBERS – WHICH REFER TO 60 PER CENT STOCK AND 40 PER CENT BONDS AS CORE INVESTMENT HOLDINGS – AREN'T SIGNIFICANT. THEY ARE MERELY A CONVENIENT STARTING POINT FOR THINKING ABOUT INVESTING AND NOT AN EXACT, GENERAL-PURPOSE PRESCRIPTION FOR EVERYONE. NOR HAVE THEY EVER BEEN



The storm over the so-called 60/40 investment portfolio misses the point, Jeff Sommer writes. – The New York Times

poorly or even inversely correlated — so that some rise while others fall — your portfolio will become more stable. This is the core of what has become known as “modern portfolio theory.”

It emphasises asset allocation over individual stock and bond picking, and accepting only the risk you can handle by selecting your investment mix along what he called “an efficient frontier.”

This gets wonky, but in simple terms, he advised setting up your portfolio for the long haul, so you could ignore the constant financial crises that obsess so many people on Wall Street.

Is the market up or down today? Don’t even think about it. That’s advice that I have taken to heart. Now, though, this core approach to investing has come under criticism. Why? The stock market, as represented by the S&P 500, lost 18 per cent in 2022. The bond market, defined by a popular benchmark, the Bloomberg US Aggregate Bond Index, lost 13%.

Diversification didn’t protect

you in 2022.

Popularising 60/40

Benjamin Graham, a Columbia University finance professor who taught Warren Buffett about value investing, suggested, in various editions of “The Intelligent Investor,” that a stock and bond portfolio should be at least 20 per cent stock and perhaps as much as 80%. He settled on a 50/50 split, not 60/40, as a reasonable starting point, altering the stock allocation depending on market conditions.

But 60/40 became reasonably popular late in the 20th century. Peter L. Bernstein, the economic historian, once explained the logic of a 60/40 allocation this way: Long-term investors should favor the stock market over bonds because stocks have a higher ceiling, but bonds are a balm because they are safer. So tilt towards stock, while holding a lot of bonds, leaving a 60/40 allocation, as a starting point.

John C Bogle, the founder of Vanguard and the creator of the first commercially available,

broad, low-cost index funds, popularised the 60/40 portfolio as much as anybody when he created the Vanguard Balanced fund — a simple 60/40 blend of a broad Vanguard US stock fund and a US bond fund. (It lost almost 17 per cent in 2022.)

Even Jack, as he insisted I call him, said 60/40 wasn’t the only way to go. Vanguard’s oldest fund is a balanced fund, the Wellington Fund, and it contains 65 per cent stock and 35 per cent bonds. Other Vanguard funds have different allocations. All had big losses in 2022 but have done well over long periods.

So what mix is ideal? I don’t know. One notion is to hold more stock when you are young and more bonds as you age, though Jack himself didn’t do that. He was a risk taker, and held well more than 60 per cent stock in his personal portfolio, he told me, when he was well into his 80s.

The important issue isn’t whether a 60/40 portfolio mix is best. It may not be. But all traditional balanced portfolios are mixtures of stocks and bonds

seeking to lower risk through diversification. And they are all open to the main complaint. Diversification didn’t work well in 2022.

One answer is to diversify even further. The Vanguard Balanced and Wellington funds are both US-only funds. But modern portfolio theory suggests that you hold a piece of the entire investable publicly traded stock and bond universe.

In other words, go global. Use low-cost index funds (or actively managed funds, if that’s your preference) that range across the whole planet. That’s the approach I take and that academic finance generally recommends.

It hasn’t helped, though, if your goal is to minimise losses and maximise gains. The US stock and bond markets have outperformed the rest of the world’s markets for years. At some point, I assume that this will turn around and that global diversification will pay off in the long run, as academic theory suggests. But it hasn’t been a satisfying solution lately.

— The New York Times

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TRAVEL TALES

A pedestrian records with her mobile phone during a snow fall in Lille, northern France. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

A runner dressed in a Santa Claus outfit participates in the Race of the Santas in Breckenridge, Colorado. — AFP



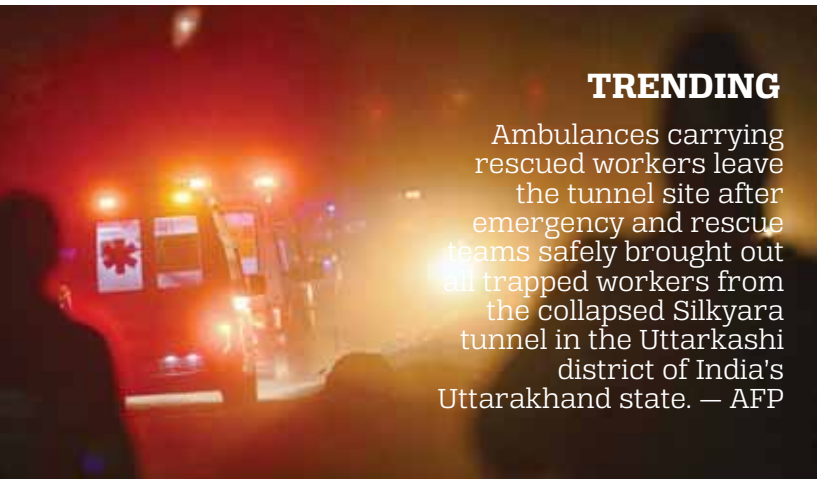
ENTERTAINMENT

French-US actor Timothee Chalamet poses on the red carpet upon arrival for the Premiere of the film "Wonka" at the UGC Normandie cinema in Paris. — AFP



FASHION

A model presents a creation made by an Iraqi fashion designer during a fashion show promoting locally made brands in Iraq's southern city of Basra. — AFP



TRENDING

Ambulances carrying rescued workers leave the tunnel site after emergency and rescue teams safely brought out all trapped workers from the collapsed Silkyara tunnel in the Uttarkashi district of India's Uttarakhand state. — AFP

art & life

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The rise of electric water sports in Oman

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DISCOVERY

Astronomers surprised to find planet 'too massive for its star'

OUR MILKY WAY GALAXY'S most common type of star is called a red dwarf - much smaller and less luminous than our sun. These stars - or so it was thought - simply are not big enough to host planets much larger than Earth.

But the discovery of a planet at least 13 times Earth's mass orbiting very close to a red dwarf only 11 per cent of the sun's mass

has astronomers going back to the drawing board on planetary formation theory involving this prevalent type of star. The mass ratio of this planet with its star is more than 100 times greater than that of Earth and the sun.

"We discovered a planet that is too massive for its star," said Penn State astronomer Suvrath Mahadevan, one of the leaders of the study published this week in the journal Science.

The star, called LHS 3154, is relatively close to us, about 50 light years from Earth. A light year is the distance light travels in a year, 5.9 trillion miles (9.5 trillion km).

The sun is about a thousand times more luminous than this star.

"It is barely a star," said Princeton University astronomer Guðmundur Stefánsson, the study's lead author. "It has a mass just above the cutoff of supporting hydrogen fusion to be considered a star."

The planet, called LHS 3154 b, orbits at about 2.3 per cent of Earth's orbital distance from the sun, circling its star every 3.7 days. It is much closer even than our solar system's innermost planet Mercury is to the sun.

The planet may be similar in size and



composition to Neptune, the smallest of our solar system's four gas planets. Neptune's diameter is about four times that of Earth. The method employed to study the planet did not enable the researchers to measure its diameter, but they suspect it is about three to four times that of Earth.

Neptune, which lacks a solid surface, possesses a dynamic atmosphere mainly of hydrogen and helium, atop a mantle mostly of slushy ammonia and water and a solid core. Based on its probable Neptune-like composition and closeness to its star, it is unlikely to support life, Stefánsson said.

Stars form when dense clumps of interstellar gas and dust collapse under their own gravitational pull. Once a star is born at the centre of such a cloud, leftover material forms a swirling disk around it that feeds stellar growth and often gives rise to planets.

So why should a red dwarf not be able to host a planet the size of the newly described one?

"The planet-forming disk around stars is only a small fraction of the stellar mass, and is expected to scale with that mass. So a very low mass star should have a disk that is also low mass. Such a disk should

not be heavy enough to birth the planet we discovered," Mahadevan said.

"This planet raises questions of how planets form around the lowest mass stars, because such stars were previously thought to primarily only be able to form small terrestrial planets similar in mass to Earth," Stefánsson said.

The researchers discovered LHS 3154 b by detecting a subtle wobble in the host star caused by the planet's gravitational effects during its orbit. They used an instrument called the Habitable Zone Planet Finder (HPF), built by a team led by Mahadevan, on the Hobby-Eberly Telescope at the University of Texas' McDonald Observatory.

It was designed to find planets that orbit relatively cool stars and have the potential for liquid water on their surfaces, a key factor for life.

"As we build new instruments, and as our measurement precision increases, we see the universe in new, unexpected ways," Mahadevan said. "We built HPF to detect terrestrial planets around these cool stars. This discovery is another in the constant stream of surprises showing how much we still have to learn about planets and planet formation." — Reuters

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After success abroad, Saudi designers hit the runway at home

COUTURIER ADNAN AKBAR'S past clients included Princess Diana and two French first ladies, but until recently he had never staged a major fashion show in his native Saudi Arabia.

The 74-year-old, dubbed the "Saint Laurent of the Middle East", was among the most decorated designers at this year's inaugural Riyadh Fashion Week.

On a runway set up in Riyadh's financial district, in front of a mixed-gender crowd of Instagram influencers and diplomats, models donned more than two dozen of Akbar's floor-length gowns, and one wedding dress sewn from French lace.

It was a world away from most prior fashion shows in the Gulf kingdom.

"It's a huge change, what's happening now," said Abdullah Akbar, Adnan's son and managing director of the family brand.

"I think the world is seeing how creative we are, the strength of the designs that we have."

But as the government extends sup-

port to veterans like Adnan Akbar along with up-and-comers bringing out their first collections, it remains to be seen whether authorities can develop the infrastructure needed to support them.

'BUILD LOCAL ECONOMY'

The Saudi fashion industry last year accounted for \$12.5 billion, or 1.4 per cent of national GDP and employed 230,000 people, according to a report by the official Saudi Fashion Commission.

Under the right conditions, the report argues, the industry could become "a major driver" under Vision 2030 reform agenda, which aims to transition the world's biggest crude oil exporter away from fossil fuels and transform it into a business, sports and tourism hub.

One challenge will be lowering the current dependence on imports. In 2021, the kingdom spent \$7.3 billion on imported fashion goods, the fashion commission report said.



With that in mind, Riyadh Fashion Week was structured to showcase local talent rather than well-known international designers. Beyond Adnan Akbar and Mohammed Ashi, who has dressed celebrities including Beyonce and Zendaya, the line-up was rounded out by Saudis with much less visibility overseas.

"We are basically creating curiosity around a group of designers that have never been explored and seen from outside," said fashion commission chief executive Burak Cakmak.

The fact that these designers already have "healthy businesses" at home points to the strength of the local market, Cakmak said.

Projects like a new manufacturing space, the commission's first, expected to open in Riyadh next year, will help keep more of these brands' value chains in the country, Cakmak said, potentially making fashion more of a force for the non-oil economic growth authorities want to see.

"Ultimately, our goal is to build the local economy," he said.



'GAP IN THE MARKET'

Broader societal changes introduced have also created new opportunities for Saudi designers.

The push to get more Saudi women working exposed "a gap in the market", said Mona Alshebel, who contributed a ready-to-wear collection to Riyadh Fashion Week.

"There are a lot of women in very high professions... who want to look professional, and they want to look respected, so I started designing suits and long blazers," she said.

In recent years, the introduction of attractions like cinemas and music festivals have created new wardrobe needs.

"Especially in a city like Riyadh, you can expect that everybody after work



is spending time with friends and family outside until late hours in public spaces, which means that people are dressing differently than they would for an occasion at home," Cakmak said.

Demand for street-wear has skyrocketed among new brands, yielding sweatshirts and jackets.

"And they all have a local twist," Cakmak said, citing hoodies inspired by traditional Saudi thobes, the traditional white robes worn by men, and garments incorporating Arabic calligraphy.

During a meet-up with investors in New York in October, one such street-wear brand — 1886 — sealed an investment deal with Turmeric Capital, whose chairman Ravi Thakran compared what's happening in Saudi Arabia's fashion industry to what he witnessed in China two decades ago.

"A decade from now," Thakran said, "I believe books will be written about the colossal changes as Saudi increases its economic presence across Asia."

— AFP

TRAVEL TALES

Peru boosts Machu Picchu access up to 5,600 visitors a day

PERU IS SHARPLY boosting access to its top attraction Machu Picchu, officials said on Saturday, in an effort to revive tourism that has yet to rebound from the pandemic.

Access to the Inca citadel has been increased to 4,500 per day "and on very specific dates may be increased to 5,600" from January 1, a Culture Ministry statement said.

The site currently allows 3,600 to 3,800 visitors per day. Last September Peru temporarily closed three sectors of Machu Picchu due to the impact of the heavy volume of visitors at the site.

Machu Picchu, 130 kilometres (80 miles) from Cusco, was built in the 15th century at an altitude of



2,500 metres (8,200 feet) on orders from the Inca ruler Pachacutec.

It is considered a marvel of architecture and engineering and was declared a UNESCO World Heritage site in 1981.

Tourism is key to Peru's economy, with the country attracting about 4.5 million visitors prior to the Covid pandemic in 2020. It's

expected to finish this year with about half that, 2.2 million.

Known as "the lost city of the Incas," Machu Picchu was stumbled upon in 1911 by the American explorer Hiram Bingham.

On the silver screen, the character of the adventurer Indiana Jones is partially inspired by Bingham. — AFP

DISCOVERY

Penguins snatch 11 hours of sleep through seconds-long micronaps

IN HUMANS, NODDING off for a few seconds is a clear sign of insufficient sleep — and can be dangerous in some situations, such as when driving a car.

But a new study published on Thursday finds chinstrap penguins snooze thousands of times per day, accumulating their daily sleep requirement of more than 11 hours in short bursts averaging just four seconds.

The flightless birds might have evolved this trait because of their need to remain constantly vigilant, according to the authors of the paper in *Science*.

The researchers argued that the findings show, contrary to prior assumptions, the benefits of sleep can accrue incrementally, at least in some species.



Chinstrap penguins (*Pygoscelis antarcticus*), named for the thin black band of plumage that extends from ear to ear, may be the most abundant species of penguin. Their current popula-

tion is estimated at nearly eight million breeding pairs that are found mainly on the Antarctic Peninsula and South Atlantic Ocean islands.

When nesting, single parent penguins have to keep watch over their eggs, guarding them from predatory birds called skuas while their partners are away on foraging trips that last several days.

They also have to defend their nests from other penguins that might try to steal nest material. Once a penguin partner finally returns, the couple switch roles.

A team led by Paul-Antoine Libourel of Lyon Neuroscience Research Centre implanted electrodes on 14 birds at a colony on King George Island in December 2019. They recorded electrical activity in the brain and neck muscles, and they used accelerometers and GPS to study body movement and location.

Combined with video recordings and direct observation over multiple days, they were able to identify numerous peculiarities.

The penguins' sleep occurred while standing or while lying to incubate their eggs, with the average bout lasting 3.91 seconds. In total they slept more than 10,000 times a day. — AFP

The rise of electric water sports



BY ALANOOD AL WAHAIBI

Bassam bin Hamad al Jabri, the visionary behind Wave Summit Watersports and Adventures, has been making waves in Oman since 2016. As the pioneer of specialised kayaking experiences in the region, Al Jabri's company initially launched daily kayaking trips in iconic locations like Qurum beach, Bandar Khairan, and Qurum Nature Reserve.

Now, breaking new ground at Almouj Marina, Wave Summit has introduced the latest in watersports innovation by becoming the first in Oman to offer e-foil and e-surf experiences.

Electric foils (e-foils) and electric surfboards (e-surf) are revolutionising water sports. The e-foil, a hydrofoil surfboard with an electric motor, offers a controlled, smooth glide above water.

Meanwhile, the e-surfboard, a self-propelled board with an electric motor, grants

sports opportunities invites travellers to immerse themselves in an adventure-packed journey along the mesmerising Arabian coastline, promising unforgettable moments and cherished memories for those seeking both excitement and serenity.

The country's coastline, adorned with an array of dive sites, appeals to both novice and experienced divers, featuring vibrant coral reefs and a rich tapestry of marine life. Consistent winds in areas like Muscat create an ideal environment for kitesurfing, while surfers revel in the varied waves along the coastal regions. Serene lagoons and bays provide perfect avenues for kayaking and paddleboarding, allowing enthusiasts to glide through clear waters while relishing stunning coastal vistas.

Reflecting on the journey, Al Jabri highlighted the company's evolution. "Four years ago, we introduced jetsurf, but the reliance on petrol engines proved challenging for the

Omani market's needs. We waited until this year, conducting trials and comprehensive training in collaboration with UAE-based company eSurf UAE, to master the new electric technology."

Emphasising the motivation behind these pioneering initiatives, Al Jabri stated, "I wanted to introduce something novel and unparalleled in Oman's watersports scene, especially as numerous companies offer similar activities. Our soft opening since mid-August has presented operational challenges due to the novelty of our processes. However, the response has been promising, leading to our official opening slated for October 2023."

Acknowledging the hurdles faced, Al Jabri elaborated, "We are navigating challenges related to sports registration

within government sectors, safeguarding the boards against potential damages, and communicating the premium nature of these watersports. While the price may seem steep, it mirrors the value and care required for operating these boards. We are also actively dispelling misconceptions, assuring customers that learning e-foiling or e-surfing requires no prior experience."

Customers eager for a premium watersports adventure can expect the pinnacle of technological innovation at Wave Summit. Al Jabri affirmed, "Our offerings provide unique experiences yet to be found elsewhere in Oman, boosting confidence and dispelling water-related fears."

To ensure safety and proficiency, Wave Summit invests in thorough training. "New riders receive comprehensive briefings on onboard usage and safety protocols. Our dedicated instructors and assistants guide them through tailored training packages involving daily tasks and exercises," Al Jabri added.

Highlighting the environmental advantages of electric Watersports, Al Jabri likened their impact to the rise of electric cars. "These innovations are game-changers due to their eco-friendly nature, minimal pollution, reduced noise, enhanced efficiency, and overall user-friendliness. Participants can now revel in nature without the distractions of engine noises and fume smells."

Looking ahead, Al Jabri envisions expanding the sport's reach across Oman. "Our goal is to introduce these experiences to various locations, allowing both locals and tourists to embrace the thrill of watersports while discovering Oman's stunning natural landscapes."

For Al Jabri and his team, Oman offers an exceptional e-surfing and e-foiling experience due to its pristine beaches, crystal-clear waters, and consistent wind conditions. The combination of breathtaking scenery, reliable wind patterns, and a serene atmosphere makes Oman an enticing destination for those seeking thrilling and unforgettable water sports escapades.