

HM congratulates Qatar Emir

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar on the occasion of the anniversary of his ascension to the throne. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments along with his best wishes of good health, well-being and a long life to Shaikh Tamim, praying to the Almighty Allah for the return of this and similar occasions on him to achieve further aspirations of progress and prosperity for the people of Qatar.

SUNRISE - 05:22 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR - 03:54 AM
DHUHR - 12:14 PM
ASR - 03:32 PM
MAGHRIB - 07:02 PM
ISHA - 08:25 PM



P12

FUELLKRUG STRIKES LATE AS GERMANY DRAW 1-1 WITH SWITZERLAND TO WIN EURO GROUP



P13

OMANI E-COMMERCE MARKET TO HIT \$1.24 BILLION IN VALUE IN FIVE YEARS



P20

CELEBRATING OMANI CINEMA



Varsities to be in sync with labour market

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
[@afrahbalushia](#)

The government is planning to meet Oman’s labour market needs through foreign scholarships in critical specialisations, according to Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. To this end, the ministry has also introduced many new courses over the past three years like medical laboratory sciences, energy engineering, artificial intelligence, the Internet of Things, data analysis, augmented and virtual reality and robotics.

The minister thanked His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for his continued interest in the education sector, and for reducing the expenses of some students studying in private higher education institutions by granting scholarships from the next academic year.

“The ministry is working on external scholarships in the specialisations needed by the



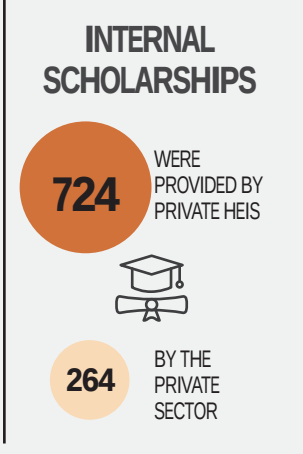
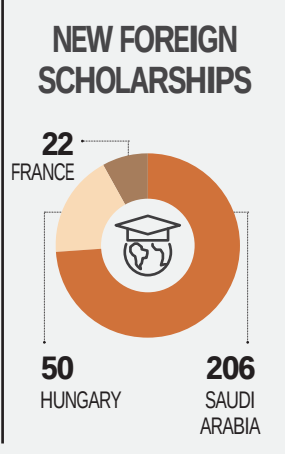
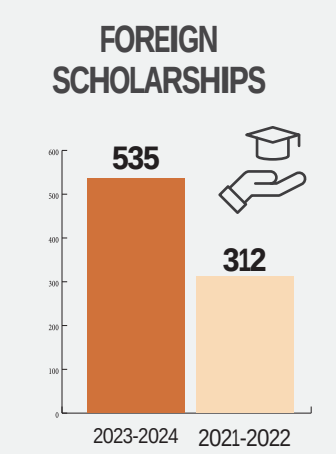
DR RAHMA BINT IBRAHIM AL MAHROUQIYAH

labour market in the Sultanate of Oman,” the minister told Majlis Ash’shura session presided over by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Majli Ash’shura Chairman on Monday. Dr Al Mahrouqiyah also announced forthcoming changes in the executive regulations of the higher education law aimed at facilitating the equivalency of qualifications, promising

NEW COURSES



- MEDICAL LABORATORY SCIENCES
- ENERGY ENGINEERING
- ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE
- THE INTERNET OF THINGS
- DATA ANALYSIS
- AUGMENTED AND VIRTUAL REALITY AND ROBOTICS



ERASMUS+ SCHOLARSHIP



AL BURAIMI UNIVERSITY, THE GERMAN UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY IN OMAN, AND DHOFAR UNIVERSITY

SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES



50 GED HOLDERS TO OBTAIN BACHELOR'S DEGREES IN OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY, PHYSICAL THERAPY, AND SPEECH THERAPY

first time under which students of these varsities took part in student exchange programmes, the minister said.

Dr Al Mahrouqiyah said a joint working group had been formed to review curricula for educational institutions between the Ministry and the Ministry of Education, Sultan Qaboos University, and the University of Technology and Applied Sciences.

The minister said the ministry paid great attention to students with disabilities by providing the large number of opportunities. MoHERI signed a cooperation programme with the Ministry of Social Development and Oman LNG to support 50 General Education Diploma holders to obtain bachelor’s degrees in occupational therapy, physical therapy, and speech therapy.

The minister concluded her statement with the attention given to scientific research and innovation to transform Oman into a knowledge economy and increase its global competitiveness. SEE ALSO P2

streamlined procedures for students.

The ministry is pursuing a multi-faceted general policy in line with Oman Vision 2040 aimed at advancing higher education, promoting research,

fostering innovation and increasing vocational training.

The minister said there is an increase in enrollment rates of Omani students in higher education institutions abroad by instituting 206 annual

scholarships to Saudi Arabia, 50 in Hungary and 22 in France.

Al Buraimi University, the German University of Technology in Oman, and Dhofar University qualified for the prestigious Erasmus+ Scholarship for the

Medics aim to screen thousands of Gaza kids for malnutrition



A Palestinian mother, Samira, holds her daughter Jori al Areer, who suffers from cancer and malnutrition as they wait to be transferred for treatment at Nasser hospital in Khan Younis on Monday. – Reuters

DEIR AL BALAH: Medics in Gaza said on Monday they were working to step up screening of young children for severe malnutrition amid fears that hunger is spreading as people flee to new areas.

Aid group International Medical Corps (IMC) and partners are planning to reach more than 200,000 children under five-years-old as part of a “Find and Treat” campaign, one of its doctors, Munawwar Said, told Reuters by phone.

“With the displacement, communities are settling in new locations that do not have access to clean water, or there is not adequate access to food,” he said.

“We fear there are more cases being missed.”

Over the weekend, families were already coming into an IMC clinic in the central city of Deir al Balah, opened after the agency said it had to shut down two centres in the southern city of Rafah due to insecurity.

Five-year-old Jana Ayad had weighed just 9 kilograms when she arrived, suffering from diarrhoea and vomiting, Nutrition Officer Raghda Ibrahim Qeshta told Reuters as she carefully held the child.

“My daughter was dying in front of me,” said Nasma Ayad as she sat next to the bed. “I didn’t know what to do.” — Reuters

OMAN, DUTCH FMs DISCUSS GAZA IN PHONE CALL

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, and Hanke Bruins Slot, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, discussed over phone on Monday the historical relations and existing cooperation between the two friendly countries.

They stressed the convergence of views on the necessity of immediately ending the humanitarian catastrophe in the Gaza Strip and halting escalation through adopting the two-state solution being the only solution to achieve peace.

Sayyid Badr underscored the significance of respecting international law and holding Israel accountable for its immense violations including siege, genocide and starving the people of Gaza, pointing to the importance and inevitability of recognising the Palestinian state in order to achieve justice and alleviate human suffering.

– ONA

Trump and Biden to square off in first election debate on Thursday

WASHINGTON: Joe Biden and Donald Trump square off for a historic US presidential debate this week, with the stage set for what could be a pivotal moment in the 2024 race as millions of potential voters tune in.

The showdown fires the starting gun on what promises to be a bruising summer on the campaign trail, in a deeply polarised and tense United States still convulsed over the chaos and violence that accompanied the 2020 election.

With only two debates this cycle, Thursday’s high-stakes clash takes on heightened significance, and both candidates have stepped up their personal attacks, with national polls showing the pair neck and neck.

“The debate is important because it’s an opportunity for two well-known candidates to ‘reintroduce’ themselves to a public that knows them well but hasn’t been paying attention,” said Donald Nieman, a political analyst and history professor at Binghamton University in New York state.

“The big question is how much of the public -- beyond political aficionados -- will pay attention to such an early debate.”

For Trump, the 90-minute clash is a chance to drive home worries about 81-year-old Biden’s



Donald Trump (L) and Joe Biden. – AFP file photo

mental alertness -- although the Republican, 78, has faced age concerns of his own.

For Biden, the first ever debate between a sitting and former president will be an opportunity to underline the legal challenges engulfing Trump and to paint him as unfit for office.

The president will also be desperate to avoid any major gaffes — which, on this stage, could lose him the November election.

The debate comes in the wake of a criminal trial that has consumed Trump’s attention for months — with his sentencing on 34 convictions for falsifying

business records scheduled for July 11. Both candidates shunned the bipartisan commission that has run debates since 1988, deciding instead to go with CNN for a first showdown unusually early in the year, and another on ABC on September 10.

Abortion, the state of US democracy and foreign conflicts are all issues of concern to voters, although inflation and border security are likely to loom largest.

The last debates between the two men in 2020 were fraught, with Biden at one point snapping “will you shut up, man?” as Trump repeatedly interrupted him. — AFP



The two sides affirmed that the international community has to shoulder its responsibilities to stop the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip. — ONA

Sayyid Badr receives Palestinian official

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister received at the headquarters of the Foreign Ministry in Muscat on Monday Lt Gen Jibril Rajoub, Secretary-General of Fatah's Central Committee and President of Palestine Olympic Committee.

The meeting dealt with the current situation in Palestine, and the ongoing efforts to achieve national reconciliation for the sake of the justice of the Palestinian cause and the independence of the Palestinian

state with East Jerusalem as its capital in accordance with the 1967 borders, which is the only way to end the Arab-Israeli conflict.

The two sides affirmed that the international community has to shoulder its responsibilities to stop the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip, alleviate the suffering of its residents, and open all crossings for the humanitarian and relief aid.

Sayyid Badr praised the steadfastness of the Palestinian people in the face of the

challenges. He also underlined the Sultanate of Oman's firm stance in support of the Palestinian cause.

On his turn, Lt Gen Jibril Rajoub expressed his appreciation for the great efforts made by the Sultanate of Oman in supporting the Palestinian cause. He valued Oman's stances in support of the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people, and its tireless pursuit of achieving just and comprehensive peace in the Middle East. — ONA

Foreign Minister gets message from Bulgarian PM

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, received a written message from Dimitar Glavchev, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria related to bilateral relations between the two friendly countries.

The written message was delivered to Sayyid Badr by Nevyana Miteva and Maria Anguelieva, deputy ministers of foreign affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria when he received them in his office.

During the meeting, they discussed cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Bulgaria in the economic, cultural, energy, renewable energy, maritime transport and technology fields.

They exchanged views on regional and international issues, foremost of which is the tragic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip resulting from the Israeli aggression. The two sides stressed the need to achieve justice for the Palestinian people

and provide them with relief and humanitarian assistance and the establishment of the independent Palestinian state as per the international law and based on the two-state solution.

The meeting was attended by Shaikh Humaid bin Ali al Maani, Head of the Global Affairs Department at the Foreign Ministry, Roman Petrov, Director of the Middle East and Africa Department at the Bulgarian Foreign Ministry and a number of officials from both sides. — ONA



The written message was delivered to Sayyid Badr by Nevyana Miteva and Maria Anguelieva, deputy ministers of foreign affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria. — ONA

MoHERI keen to promote knowledge-based economy

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahbalushia

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation is keen to transform Oman into a knowledge-based economy.

In her statement to Majlis Ash'shura on Monday, Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, highlighted achievements and goals of the ministry in serving, developing and growing the sectors of higher education, scientific research, innovation and vocational training.

The minister said Oman is giving 100 fee-free scholarships for international students who are residents in Oman to study bachelor's degrees at the University of Technology and Applied Sciences.

Dr Rahma said MoHERI in cooperation with the competent authorities has clamped down on fake degrees and universities. As a result, the number of fake certificates decreased to 10 cases



Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, delivers her statement to Majlis Ash'shura on Monday

in 2023.

Eighteen private universities and colleges were able to obtain institutional accreditation from the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Educational Quality Assurance after undergoing evaluation.

The minister said 22 private

higher education institutions achieved Omanisation in teaching staff between 2.4 per cent and 46.31 per cent. The average general increase reached 15.2 per cent. According to studies conducted by the ministry on the employment and Omanisation policy in private higher education institutions in



the academic years between 2020 and 2023.

The National Programme for Postgraduate Studies (Watan) for Omani teachers, which was proposed by the Ministry, comes as part of the Omanisation plans in private higher education institutions.

She said MoHERI received 2,562 research proposals, of which 1,079 received funding.

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation's Oman Centre for Animal and Plant Genetic Resources (Mawarid) established a gene bank for wild animals in cooperation with the

Environment Authority. More than 300 samples of genetic material were collected, and 200 plant seeds were stored. For the first time, five large fungi were discovered as part of the project funded by the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund in cooperation with Sultan Qaboos University and Dhofar Universities.

Muscat Asia's second cleanest city

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 24

The capital city of Oman, Muscat, was named the second cleanest city in Asia in a recent Numbeo report. The Numbeo Pollution Index assesses a range of pollution-related characteristics in cities across the globe, such as air and water pollution, waste management, hygienic conditions, light and noise pollution, green areas, and overall comfort to pollution levels.

Muscat's excellent rating on the Pollution Index is a testament to the city's efforts to uphold strict sustainability and hygienic standards. An exponential function is used by Numbeo's Pollution Exp Scale to differentiate between cities with high pollution levels and those with low pollution levels.

Muscat has an impressive



This honour demonstrates Muscat's commitment to encouraging a safe and environmentally responsible way of life for both locals and tourists. — Picture © Omar7Albusaidi

score of 36.2 on the Pollution Exp Index, which puts it in the most favourable position relative to other major Asian cities that are well-known for their environmental endeavours. This honour demonstrates Muscat's commitment to encouraging a safe and environmentally responsible

way of life for both locals and tourists.

Muscat scored high in purity and cleanliness categories on air quality, drinking water quality and accessibility, garbage disposal satisfaction, quiet and no problem with night lights and quality of green and parks, among others.

Muscat leads by example in the region with continuous efforts to improve recycling programmes, lower carbon emissions, and support green initiatives. The city's standing as a desirable and livable urban centre is greatly enhanced by its proactive attitude to pollution control and environmental conservation.

The news of Muscat's excellent rating in the Pollution Index has been well received by local authorities and environmental organisations. They have reaffirmed their commitment to putting additional policies into place to protect Muscat's natural beauty, lower pollution levels, and improve citizens' quality of life in general. With a focus on sustainable development techniques and eco-friendly practices, Muscat hopes to become the new standard for environmental excellence in the area.

MOH LAUNCHES NATIONAL GUIDELINE FOR MEDICAL, SURGICAL STERILISATION

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Health (MoH) on Monday launched the first edition of the 'National Guideline for Medical and Surgical Sterilisation'.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health and included a visual presentation on the history of sterilisation in the Sultanate of Oman, its stages of development and the achievements made in this field.

It also outlined the steps made to Omani health workers in accordance with the latest international standards. — ONA





OMAN ‘DISTINGUISHED GUEST’ AT SEOUL BOOK FAIR

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will participate as a ‘distinguished guest’ at Seoul International Book Fair, which will be held from 26 to 30 June to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Omani-Korean cultural relations.

The 2024 Seoul International Book Fair chose the Sultanate of Oman to be a special guest at the book fair, which marks the golden jubilee of Oman-Korea relations. The event offers an opportunity to felicitate every writer, publisher and institution that played a role in developing bilateral relations—locally, regionally and globally.

The book fair also seeks to consolidate the concept of

knowledge as a basic pillar for development, progress and openness. It underscores a common keenness to enhance communication and interaction among all cultures.

During the book fair, the Sultanate of Oman will present a set of cultural programmes, activities and samples of Omani writings. The activities include a discussion panel in which Omani literati will take part, and an exhibition of precious manuscripts.

The Omani pavilion will showcase a variety of publications, including two books translated into the Korean language—one



The book fair seeks to consolidate the concept of knowledge as a basic pillar for development, progress and openness. – ONA

being a novel titled “Celestial Bodies”, authored by Omani writer Jokha Al Harthy. The second translated book deals with the Omani-Korean relations.

Oman’s pavilion comprises

five main sections: · A section for publications of government institutions and civil society institutions (including the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Ministry of

Information, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the Cultural Club the Society for Writers and Literati); · A section for Arabic Calligraphy, which makes live presentations; · A section for Omani Manuscripts and rare artefacts; · A section titled “Omani Majlis” that provides examples about Omani hospitality, customs and traditions; · And a section that presents Omani cultural elements registered in the Unesco World List of Intangible Cultural Heritage (the folklore art of Al Bar’aa, the Omani dagger, hospitality customs associated with Omani coffee. The exhibits can be viewed through the use of

VR technology. Presentations in this section also highlight cultural and tourist sites in the Sultanate of Oman.

Oman’s participation in the event also includes a dialogue session titled “The Novel and the Omani Narrative”, a paper on “translation in Oman and scopes for cooperation within the context of Arabic and Korean languages”, a discussion panel on the outcome of rapprochement between Oman and Korea over the past 50 years and discussion panel on “feminist literature” that highlights the daily lifestyles of women in Korea and Oman.

— ONA

Oman sees surge in some expat nationalities, drop in others

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Sultanate of Oman is seeing a surge in expatriate workers from some nationalities, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The figures show that the number of expatriates from Myanmar has increased by 102.6 per cent in May 2024 to 28,947. There were 23,329 expatriates from Myanmar at the end of 2023.

The number of expatriates from Tanzania has increased by 44.5 per cent to 19,962, while Nepalese expatriates dropped by 2.7 per cent to 20,202. It was only 20,286 at the end of 2023 and 19,262 at the end of April this year.

Among others, there are 26,374 Sri Lankan expatriates (-4.3), 42,219 Egyptians (+8.1), and 45,307 Philippine expatriates (-4.2). Among the major expatriate communities in the Sultanate of Oman, the number of Indians went down by 4 per



Expatriates coming into the Sultanate of Oman for work

cent to 509,006 in May 2024 compared to the same period in 2023.

There were 520,431 Indians employed in the country at the end of 2023. At the same time,

the number of expatriates from Pakistan increased by five per cent to 289,481 in May 2024, compared to the same period last year. There were 288,290 expatriates from Pakistan at the end of 2023.

FALL IN BANGLADESHIS

The biggest drop was seen among Bangladeshi expatriates, which dropped from 719,111 at the end of 2023 to 684,108 in May this year. On a year-to-year basis, there was a drop of 2.8 per cent between May 2023 and 2024.

It may be noted that the Royal Oman Police (ROP) announced the suspension of the conversion of all types of tourist and visit visas to work visas for all nationalities coming to the Sultanate of Oman, as well as the issuance of all types of new visas for Bangladeshi citizens as of October 31, 2023.

But from this month, certain categories were exempted from the visa ban imposed on Bangladeshi nationals. T he exempted categories are family visas, Bangladeshis residing in GCC countries, physicians, engineers, nurses, teachers, accountants, investors, all types of official visas and high-income tourists.

Building code to be ready by end of year

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

To enhance building safety standards, the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MoHUP) entered into an agreement with the International Code Council to design Oman Building Code before the end of this year, with five codes being completed in 2025.

ICC is a non-profit standards organisation that creates the International Building Code (IBC) as well as the International Residential Code (IRC) for countries across the world. The agreement was based on the extensive experience possessed by the ICC in formulating building codes in various parts of the world. This agreement aims to customise the building code compatible with the environment, topography, geological diversity and terrain of Oman. It is also consistent with the Oman Vision 2040, as the project is among the recommendations of the National Urban Development Strategy.

Dr Hanan bint Ameral Jabriyah, MoHUP advisor, said: “The



The codes will be issued in Arabic and English and aim to regulate the buildings sector in Oman.

Omani Building Code is defined as a set of technical, scientific and administrative systems specialised in buildings, based on practical foundations, natural conditions and engineering rules to achieve sustainability, safety and public health.” The building code is based on six sections: the general code, the energy conservation and sustainability code, the code for existing and heritage buildings, the plumbing code, the mechanical code, and the sanitation code.

These codes will be issued in Arabic and English and aim to regulate the buildings sector in Oman.

RAM launches 2nd version of public policy programme

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management (RAM) on Monday launched the second version of the Public Policy and Strategic Planning Programme. This programme targets Under-Secretaries and their equivalents in the government sector.

The programme aims to empower national leaders to design, formulate and implement public policies and strategic plans that enhance national competitiveness. It is implemented in cooperation with Singapore’s Kiwani University and the University of Cambridge in the United Kingdom (UK).

Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour and Member of the Board of Trustees of the Royal Academy of Management, stated in his speech: “The launch of the Public Policy and Strategic Planning Programme - The Path of the Under-Secretaries, in its second version, epitomises its alignment with the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to enable national leaders to develop robust public policies and strategic plans to bolster Oman’s economy. This initiative



Dr Mahad said the programme epitomises its alignment with the directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to enable national leaders to develop robust public policies. – ONA



advances the mission of the Royal Academy of Management and aims to effectively develop public policies to achieve the ambitious goals of Oman Vision 2040.” He added that, “The programme had achieved remarkable successes in its previous version, including the strengthening of institutional ties, the advancement and effective communication of public policies, the optimisation of governmental

procedures and institutional interactions, and the strategic alignment of the government sector towards sustainability and economic growth.”

On his turn, Dr Ali bin Qasim al Lawati, President of the Royal Academy of Management, emphasised the importance of the Public Policy and Strategic Planning Programme in uniting policy and decision-makers

within government agencies. This programme is designed to enhance cooperation across various units of the state’s administrative apparatus to meet the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. Participants will gain insights into global trends, the latest advancements in strategic thinking and planning, and the complexities of crafting and implementing public policies. The programme is developed in partnership with

leading global institutions, focusing on the local context and how global trends and developments impact the Sultanate of Oman, aligning with its national priorities in public policy development and implementation.

Al Lawati also mentioned that the programme aims to equip participating national leaders with strategic solutions by the end of its five-month duration, concluding

in October 2024. Throughout the programme, participants will engage in analytical readings of qualitative data, which will contribute to the formulation of public policies. The curriculum features training and learning modules, alongside dialogues and methodologies designed to enhance the development of dynamic strategies and strategic planning policies based on evidence and data, utilising modern technologies in their formulation. This approach is intended to generate decisions with a strategic dimension.

It is noteworthy that RAM works closely with a range of strategic partners to implement its varied programmes and initiatives, focusing on executive and administrative innovation. A significant collaboration is with Lee Kuan Yew School of Public Policy at the National University of Singapore. Furthermore, the Academy also partners with the Judge Business School at the University of Cambridge, recognised as one of the top 20 global centres for business education. — ONA



PARENTS TODAY HAVE PLENTY
OF OPTIONS TO ENSURE THEIR
CHILDREN ARE ENGAGED
DURING SUMMER BREAK

LANGUAGE LITERACY VS FUTURE SKILLS

SIHAM AL SAIDI

Parents are lost with the decision of choosing the right summer programmes to enroll their children during vacation. The debate often centres on traditional literacy programmes and skill-based programmes, which mainly prepares children for future challenges.

Many parents still prefer traditional language programmes, emphasising the importance of language skills including literacy.

Hajar al Badi, a mother of six, says, “Language is the cornerstone of communication and understanding. Ensuring my children are proficient in Arabic and English languages is non-negotiable as it opens doors to diverse cultures and enhances their cognitive abilities preparing them for the future.”

Language programmes often include activities like storytelling, reading fluency sessions, shared reading, and interactive games, which are designed to make learning enjoyable.

While Rayda Mohammed, an Arabic language teacher, says, “These programmes build a strong linguistic base and help children develop their vocabulary and improve their grammar, which are essential skills for academic success. Unfortunately, many children joined our programmes with no base or foundation. Therefore many parents are keen on developing literacy skills in the programmes

CHOOSING THE RIGHT SUMMER PROGRAMME

- STORYTELLING
- READING FLUENCY SESSIONS
- SHARED READING
- INTERACTIVE GAMES
- CODING
- ROBOTICS
- CRITICAL THINKING
- LIFE SKILLS

we usually offer.” While, an increasing number of parents prefer programmes that focus on future skills such as coding, robotics, critical thinking, and life skills.

Ahmed al Kumi, a father of three, shares his opinion: “The world is changing fast. Our children need to be equipped with skills to make them competitive in the future job market. Programmes that teach coding or robotics give them a good start in the world. I want to prepare my children for the future not for tomorrow only.”

Skill-based programmes are designed to foster creativity, problem-solving, and technological proficiency.

Asma Yusuf, a Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics, (STEM) education coach, said, “These programmes are more than just learning to code they teach children how to think critically, solve complex problems, and work collaboratively.”

Some parents agree with a balanced approach, integrating both traditional language learning and future skills development.

A parent and education expert at Ministry of Education, Maryam al Ansari, suggests children can benefit from strong language skills and also be prepared for technological development.

As Ahmed al Kumi mentions, “Each child is unique, and their needs are different. It’s important to choose programmes that align with their interests and future aspirations.”

Parents today have plenty of options to ensure their children are engaged, learning, and growing during summer break. Through language or innovative realms of technology, the aim is to prepare them towards a successful future with new skills.



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Economy

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Economy
Announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Fees	Last Date For Tender Submission
2024/9	Request for Proposal for Endpoint Devices	LO: 25 SME: 10 RE: 25	8/7 / 2024

First

All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender Board can participate and collect the specifications and conditions of the tender from the following website: www.etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
The bidders must submit their offers electronically via the website and attach an electronic copy of the temporary insurance in the form of a bank guarantee or a cheque certified by one of the banks operating in the Sultanate with a value of (1%) of the value of the tender submitted and valid for (90) days from the last date of submission of bids. It has to be addressed to
HE Chairman of the Tender Committee of the Ministry of Economy.

Second

Tenders that does not meet the above conditions shall not be considered. The ministry shall have the right to reject any tender, and shall not be obliged to award the tender for the lowest bid without giving reasons.

For inquiries regarding tenders, please contact through the website of the electronic tendering system; <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

For inquiries regarding the technical support of the electronic tendering system, please contact via e-mail and phone :

 etenderhd@ta.gov.om
 + 96824166670



DIBBA

A unique archaeological tourism destination



A visitor to this wilayat will be drawn to dozens of ancient houses built of rocks, mud and palm leaves

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY
YAHYA AL SALMANI

The 'Al Sanat' which is located on the costal side of Wilayat of Dibba (Musandam Governorate) is considered one of the oldest marine areas in the wilayat, which is still present in its historical components to this day, with the harmony of its natural components that mix high mountains, sea water, wide sandy beach, and diverse coral reefs.

All these have made it a tourist destination for practicing various activities such as diving, swimming and rowing as well as kayaking and recreation during most seasons of the year.

The area is distinguished by its proximity to the sea cave, or what is locally called



'Al Khaimah' which is literally means 'The Tent', which is carved out by various erosion factors, making it a unique tourist attraction that is visited by tourists from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

Boats can enter this unique

area during 'tidal' times when the sea water recedes and it is classified as one of the idealist diving destination.

In addition, there are many ancient ruins of houses in this wilayat that still bear witness to the ancient history of Oman. A visitor to this wilayat

will be drawn to dozens of ancient houses built of rocks, mud, and palm leaves.

Among the most prominent areas that residents used to resort to are Khor "Ma'lla" and "Al Sal" due to the presence of mountainous plains that include a large number of agricultural areas, where wheat is grown.

Most of the ancient houses and ancient cemeteries were built on the slopes of the mountains. Choosing these areas ensures that they are influenced by the valley streams. Therefore, these ancient houses and tombs are still resilient to the effects of weather and climate over centuries.

Access to these archaeological sites is very easy and many of them can be seen while driving by car.

Al Batinah North Municipal Council holds meeting



SUHAR: The Municipal Council of the Governorate of Al Batinah North on Monday held its 6th meeting for 2024 under the chairmanship of Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North.

The council discussed several matters related to social and development aspects in the governorate, as well as exploring means of enhancing municipal services, among other topics.

— ONA

Tender results of government treasury bills worth RO 32.05 million issued

MUSCAT: The total issuance of Government Treasury Bills amounted to RO 32.05 million. The value of the allotted Treasury bills amounted to RO 5.05 million, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price reached RO 99.640 for every RO 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO 99.640 per RO 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.69221 per cent and 4.70916 per cent, respectively.

Whereas, the value of the allotted Treasury bills amounted to RO 25 million, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached RO 98.728 for every RO 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at RO 98.725 per RO 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.10198 per cent and 5.16771 per cent, respectively.

Meanwhile, the value of the allotted Treasury bills amounted to RO 2 million, for a maturity period of 182 days. The average accepted price reached RO 97.440 for every RO 100, and the minimum

accepted price arrived at RO 97.440 per RO 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.13407 per cent and 5.26895 per cent, respectively.

Treasury Bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and re-purchase facilities (Repo).

It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 6.00 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 6.50 per cent.

Furthermore, Treasury Bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the Government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures.

— ONA

TENDER NOTICE

**The Ministry of Economy
Announces the following tender:**

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Fees	Last Date For Tender Submission
2024/8	Ministry's Site Infrastructure Implementation	LO: 25 SME: 10 RE: 25	8/7 / 2024

First

All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender Board can participate and collect the specifications and conditions of the tender from the following website: www.etendering.tenderboard.gov.om. The bidders must submit their offers electronically via the website and attach an electronic copy of the temporary insurance in the form of a bank guarantee or a cheque certified by one of the banks operating in the Sultanate with a value of (1%) of the value of the tender submitted and valid for (90) days from the last date of submission of bids. It has to be addressed to HE Chairman of the Tender Committee of the Ministry of Economy.

Second

Tenders that does not meet the above conditions shall not be considered. The ministry shall have the right to reject any tender, and shall not be obliged to award the tender for the lowest bid without giving reasons.

For inquiries regarding tenders, please contact through the website of the electronic tendering system; https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om

For inquiries regarding the technical support of the electronic tendering system, please contact via e-mail and phone :

etenderhd@ita.gov.om
 + 96824166670

RAO CELEBRATES GRADUATION OF A NEW BATCH OF SOLDIERS



SALALAH: The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) on Monday celebrated the graduation of a new batch of soldiers from the Firaq Forces under the auspices of Maj Gen (retired) Mahad bin Mubarak al Mashaikhi in the presence of Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of RAO. – ONA

THE ROYAL GUARD OF OMAN

Tenders Advertisement

The Royal Guard of Oman, invites tenders for the following:-

Tender Reference	Subject	Grade	Tender Document Value	Submission Date
01/2024	Supply of Cargo Truck Troop Carrier & 45 Seater Bus	I & above	R.O. 25/- non-refundable	05 th Aug 2024
02/2024	Uniforms and Accessories for Three Years (2025, 2026 & 2027)	III & above	R.O. 40/- non-refundable	05 th Aug 2024
03/2024	Supply of Transport Mode & Equipment	I & above	R.O. 25/- non-refundable	05 th Aug 2024

Specialized Companies registered with the Procurement and Contracts Directorate of the General Directorate of Finance, Royal Guard of Oman and the General Secretariat of Tender Board - Sultanate of Oman, can collect the tender document from the Tender Committee Secretariat, Royal Guard of Oman, Seeb during working hours from **Tuesday 25th June to Thursday 04th July 2024**.

Wax-sealed Tenders addressed to the Chairman - Tender Committee should be submitted to RGO before 1200 hours on the submission date along with a Tender Bond the name of the Royal Guard of Oman equivalent to 1% (One Percent) of the value of the Tender from any registered Bank in the Sultanate of Oman,. The tenderer shall not reveal his identity other than the tender title and the address mentioned below.

No Tender will be accepted after the submission date. The Royal Guard of Oman reserves the right to accept or reject any Tender without giving reasons.

**Tender Committee
P.O. Box 381 C.P.O
Postal Code 111**



UNRWA CHIEF URGES PUSHBACK AGAINST EFFORTS TO DISBAND PALESTINIAN AGENCY

GENEVA: The head of the United Nations Palestinian refugee agency (UNRWA) on Monday called on partners to fight back against efforts by Israel to have the organisation disbanded as it provides humanitarian assistance to Gaza and across the region.

“Israel has long been critical of the agency’s mandate. But it now seeks to end UNRWA’s operations, dismissing the agency’s status as a United Nations entity supported by an overwhelming majority of member states,” UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini said at a meeting of the agency’s advisory commission in Geneva.

“If we do not push back, other UN entities and international organisations will be next, further undermining our multilateral system.”

Lazzarini said the agency was being subjected to a “concerted effort” to dismantle it, including through legislative initiatives threatening to evict the agency from its compound and labelling UNRWA as a terrorist organisation.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has for years called for UNRWA to be dismantled, accusing it of anti-Israeli incitement. Last month, Israel’s parliament, the Knesset, passed the preliminary reading of a bill aimed at designating UNRWA as a terrorist organisation. The Israeli diplomatic mission in Geneva dismissed Lazzarini’s statement on Monday. Lazzarini also said the agency, which has provided essential aid to Gazans throughout Israel’s eight-month offensive, was “staggering under the weight of relentless attacks”.



Palestinians search for casualties outside the headquarters of UNRWA following an Israeli strike, Gaza. – Reuters

“Israel has long been critical of the agency’s mandate. But it now seeks to end UNRWA’s operations, dismissing the agency’s status as a United Nations entity

PHILIPPE LAZZARINI
UNRWA chief

“In Gaza, the agency has paid a terrible price: 193 UNRWA personnel have been killed,” he said.

“More than 180 installations have been damaged or destroyed, killing at least 500 people seeking United Nations protection... Our premises have been used for military purposes by Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups.”

Several countries halted their

funding to UNRWA following accusations by Israel that some of the agency’s staff were involved in the Oct. 7 attack on Israel that triggered the Gaza war. Most donors have since resumed their funding.

Lazzarini said that UNRWA still lacked the necessary resources to fulfil its mandate.

“The agency’s ability to operate beyond August will depend on member states disbursing

planned funds and providing new contributions to the core budget,” he said.

Eight Palestinians were killed on Sunday in an Israeli air strike on a training college near Gaza City being used to distribute aid.

The strike hit part of a vocational college run by the UN Palestinian refugee agency UNRWA that is now providing aid to displaced families, the witnesses said.

— Reuters

Strike kills senior health official

CAIRO: An Israeli air strike at a medical clinic in Gaza City killed the director of Gaza’s Ambulance and Emergency Department, the enclave’s health ministry said, while Israel’s military said the strike had killed a senior Hamas armed commander.

The health ministry said the killing of Hani al Jaafarawi brought the number of medical staff killed by Israeli fire since October 7 to 500. At least 300 others have so far been detained.

In a statement, the Israeli military said the strike targeted Mohammad Salah, who it said was responsible for developing Palestinian groups weaponry.

“Salah was part of a project to develop strategic weaponry for the Hamas terrorist organisation, and he commanded a number of fighters squads that worked on developing weapons,” it said.

More than eight months into the fighting, international mediation backed by the United States has so far failed to bring a ceasefire agreement. Hamas says any agreement must bring an end to the war, while Israel says it will agree only temporary pauses in fighting until Palestinian Hamas is eradicated.

In Rafah, near the border with Egypt, Israeli forces which took control of the eastern, southern, and central parts of the city pursued their raid into the western and northern areas, said residents, describing heavy fighting.



A Palestinian inspects the damages at Al Daraj clinic which was hit in an Israeli strike, in Gaza. – Reuters

The health ministry said the killing of Hani al Jaafarawi brought the number of medical staff killed by Israeli fire since October 7 to 500

On Sunday, residents had said Israeli tanks had advanced to the edge of the Mawasi displaced persons’ camp in the northwest of Rafah, forcing many families to leave northward to Khan Younis and to Deir Al Balah in central

Gaza, the only city in the enclave where tanks have not yet invaded.

Israel denies targeting civilians and blames Hamas for provoking civilian casualties by fighting among them, which Hamas denies.

In the north of the enclave, where Israel had said its forces completed operations months ago, residents said tanks had pushed back into Gaza City’s Zeitoun suburb and were pounding several areas there.

Israel’s ground and air

campaign in Gaza was triggered when Palestinians stormed into southern Israel on Oct. 7, killing around 1,200 people and seizing more than 250 captives.

The Israeli offensive in retaliation has killed almost 37,600 people and has left Gaza in ruins.

Since early May, fighting has focused on Rafah, on Gaza’s southern edge where around half of the enclave’s 2.3 million people had been sheltering after fleeing other areas. — Reuters

War blocks exams and shatters Palestinian pupils’ dreams

KHAN YUNIS: Teenagers across the Gaza Strip should have been taking their final exams this month, a last hurdle before university and lifelong dreams, but the war in the Palestinian territory has crushed those hopes.

According to the education ministry in the Gaza Strip, 85 per cent of educational facilities in the territory are out of service because of the war.

“I was eagerly awaiting the exams, but the war prevented that and destroyed that joy”, said Baraa al Farra, an 18-year-old student displaced from Khan Yunis in southern Gaza.

“At first we were waiting in the hope that the war would end and we would catch up,” he said.

But “we don’t know how long it will last or how many years it will deprive us of our educational lives.”

Almost nine months of war in Gaza began with an unprecedented October 7 attack on southern Israel by the Palestinian groups.

The attack resulted in the deaths of 1,194 people, based on Israeli official figures. Israel’s retaliatory offensive has killed at least 37,598 people, mostly civilians, according to the health ministry in Gaza. — AFP



Palestinians search for salvageable items in a garbage dump which sprawls across what used to be the Firas market in Gaza. – AFP



omanobserver.com/podcast

world

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

TUESDAY | JUNE 25 | 2024

7

In brief

■ JAKARTA



CYBERATTACKER HITS INDONESIA'S DATA CENTRE, DEMANDS \$8M

A cyberattack on Indonesia's national data centre compromised hundreds of government offices and caused long delays at the capital's main airport, with the hacker demanding an \$8 million ransom, officials said on Monday.

Long queues formed at immigration gates at Jakarta's Soekarno-Hatta International Airport last week after systems went down in the attack. The attack "affected 210 institutions at the national and local levels," senior official Samuel Abrijani Pangerapan told reporters on Monday, adding a dark web hacker had demanded a \$8 million ransom. — AFP

■ BRUSSELS



EU ACCUSES APPLE OF BREAKING BLOC'S DIGITAL RULES

Apple risks billions of euros in fines after the European Union on Monday accused the iPhone maker of violating the bloc's landmark digital rules by hindering competition. The European Commission informed Apple in a "preliminary view" that the "App Store rules... prevent app developers from freely steering consumers to alternative channels for offers and content". Apple said it would delay rolling out recently announced AI features.

The law seeks to rein in the world's biggest tech firms, including Apple, by forcing them to open up to competition in the 27-country EU. — AFP

■ SEOUL



NORTH KOREA SENDS MORE TRASH BALLOONS TO SOUTH

North Korea is sending more balloons likely to be carrying trash into the South, Seoul's military said late on Monday, continuing a tit-for-tat balloon war between the two Koreas.

Seoul's Joint Chiefs of Staff said that the North "is launching (suspected) trash balloons aimed at the South once again." "Citizens are advised to be cautious of falling debris. If you find any fallen balloons do not touch them and report them to the nearest military unit or police station," it added.

Recently, Pyongyang has already sent more than a thousand balloons carrying trash to South Korea. — AFP

Kremlin warns US after Ukrainian strike on Crimea



Residents clean debris next to heavily damaged houses following shelling in Pokrovsk, eastern Donetsk region. — AFP

MOSCOW: The Kremlin on Monday warned the United States of "consequences" and summoned its ambassador after Moscow said a Ukrainian strike with a US missile on Crimea killed four people.

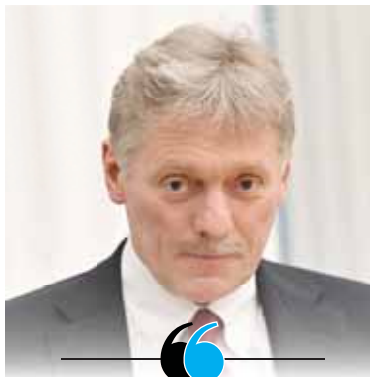
Moscow has increasingly blasted Washington and Kyiv's Western backers for supplying weapons to be fired on Russian targets, calling them direct participants in the two-year conflict.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov called Sunday's strike on Sevastopol "barbaric" and accused Washington of "killing Russian children".

Two of the victims were minors, Sevastopol governor Mikhail Razvozhayev wrote on Telegram.

Peskov also pointed to comments by President Vladimir Putin earlier this month about arming countries to potentially strike Western targets.

"The involvement of the United States, the direct involvement, as a result of which Russian civilians are killed, cannot be without consequences," Peskov told reporters on Monday. "Time will tell what these will be," he said. "Just ask my colleagues in Europe and above all in Washington, ask the press secretaries there why their government is killing



The involvement of the United States, the direct involvement, as a result of which Russian civilians are killed, cannot be without consequences

DMITRY PESKOV

Kremlin spokesman

Russian children," he said.

The foreign ministry said it had summoned US envoy Lynne Tracy. It later issued a statement saying that Washington "bears equal responsibility with the Kyiv regime for this atrocity" and the strike would "not go unpunished".

Russia said the strike on Sunday was carried out with a US-supplied ATACMS missile loaded with a cluster warhead. Local Moscow-installed

officials said the missile hit an area of the port city with sandy beaches and hotels.

Russia said 82 people including 27 children were hospitalised with injuries from the strike.

Meanwhile, Russian strikes on the eastern Ukrainian town of Pokrovsk killed four people and wounded dozens more on Monday, the governor of the Donetsk region said.

Over recent weeks, Moscow has concentrated its firepower on the eastern industrial region of Donetsk, which the Kremlin claims is part of Russia.

"At least four people were killed and 34 wounded. These are the preliminary results of the strike on Pokrovsk," the region's governor Vadym Filashkin said. "Among the wounded are two children aged 12 and 13. They are in a moderate to serious condition," he added in a statement on social media.

Andriy Yermak, the head of the Ukrainian president's office, said on Monday: "Crimea is Ukraine." "Russia must leave the peninsula.

Their army and military objects there must cease to exist," he said on social media. A senior aide to the Ukrainian president, Mykhailo Podolyak, also suggested that Crimea was a legitimate military target. — AFP

Blaze in S Korea battery plant kills 22 workers

HWASEONG: Twenty-two people were killed in a massive fire at a South Korean lithium battery plant on Monday, most of them Chinese nationals, in one of the country's worst factory disasters in years. Over 100 people were working in the factory when workers heard a series of explosions from the second floor, where lithium-ion batteries were being inspected and packaged, firefighter Kim Jin-young told media.

In the massive blaze that ensued, 22 people were killed, including 20 foreign nationals — 18 Chinese, one from Laos, and one of unknown nationality, he said.

"Most of the bodies are badly burned so it will take some time to identify each one," he said, adding that one person was still missing.

Initial investigations indicate that the fire spread in a matter of seconds, with toxic fumes quickly overwhelming workers in the area, said Cho Sun-ho head of the Gyeonggi fire department.

"White smoke began to rise from a battery part, and it took only about 15 seconds to cover the entire space due to the sudden ignition," he said. "It is presumed that the victims inhaled toxic fumes in a short time which

would have suffocated them quickly, and made them lose consciousness," he added.

Dozens of fire trucks were lined up outside the factory with rescue workers carrying bodies, covered by blue blankets, out of the building on stretchers.

Wearing a green jacket which top officials don during emergencies, South Korea's President Yoon Suk Yeol visited the disaster site late on Monday, walking around the charred building in a hard hat and facemask before greeting firefighters at the scene.

Yoon said it appeared that "ignition material was positioned in front of the emergency exit, so workers could not escape and many people died."

He ordered authorities to check similar factories that handle chemicals and take "measures to prevent such accidents from happening again."

The vast factory had an estimated 35,000 battery cells on the second floor in storage, with more batteries stored in other areas, the fire department said. The bodies were found in that area.

Lithium batteries burn hot and fast, and are difficult to control with conventional fire extinguishing methods. — AFP



Firefighters gather at the site of a fire at a lithium battery factory owned by South Korean battery maker Aricell in Hwaseong. — AFP

Modi calls for 'consensus' as parliament opens

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi appealed to an emboldened opposition for "consensus" on Monday, as parliament opened following an election setback that forced him into a coalition government for the first time in a decade.

Expected in the first session, which will run until July 3, is a preview of Modi's plans for his third term and the likely formal appointment of Rahul Gandhi as leader of the opposition — a post vacant since 2014.

Modi's first two terms in office followed landslide wins for his right-wing Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), allowing his government to drive laws through parliament with only cursory debate.

Analysts expect Modi to moderate his agenda to assuage his coalition partners, focusing more on infrastructure, social welfare and economic reforms.

"To run the country, a consensus is of utmost importance", Modi said in a speech shortly before



India's PM Narendra Modi addresses the media before the opening of the first session at the Parliament in New Delhi. — AFP

entering parliament, calling on the opposition to play a constructive role.

"People expect their representatives to debate and discuss issues which are important to the country... they don't expect disturbances or

hindrances in the parliamentary proceedings," he said.

Modi led lawmakers in taking the oath — as his cheering supporters thumped their desks in support, and opposition members waved the constitution in protest.

He said he was "proud to serve" India.

Minister of Parliamentary Affairs Kiren Rijiju on Monday called for a "peaceful and productive" session, but Indian media said they expected lively debate with a far stronger

opposition.

"All set to spar," one headline in the *Hindustan Times* read on Monday. "Resurgent opposition set to push government," said the *Indian Express* front page.

Newly elected lawmakers will take their oaths over the first two days. Many will be watching if two lawmakers elected from behind bars, opponents of Modi, will be allowed to join.

Modi's BJP won only 240 seats in this year's poll, 32 short of a majority in the lower house — its worst showing in a decade.

It has left the BJP reliant on a motley assortment of minor parties to govern. Modi has kept key posts unchanged in this government and the cabinet remains dominated by the BJP.

That includes BJP loyalists Rajnath Singh, Amit Shah, Nitin Gadkari, Nirmala Sitharaman and S Jaishankar — the defence, interior, transport, finance and foreign ministers, respectively — staying on in their jobs. — AFP

Embracing Khareef season amidst climate concerns



The Sultanate of Oman officially announced the start of the khareef season from June 21. There has been high anticipation this year because of the extensive events planned by the local authorities to attract both domestic and international tourists buoyed by the response in 2023.

Regional airlines have announced their schedules to operate direct flights to Salalah from their respective countries.

The hospitality industry and the travel industry are not behind and have lined up several special packages.

Some hotels and hotel apartments have also undergone major renovations in anticipation of tourists who are expected to come in large numbers, with families.

People from the GCC flock to Salalah because of its relatively cool climate, occasional drizzles, green cover, cloud formations, and early morning formations.

At the time of writing, the khareef climate is yet

to set in the Dhofar Governorate, especially in the plains, with daily maximum temperatures in the range of around 32°C, and minimum temperatures around 27 to 30°C.

These temperatures are still relatively pleasant and bearable for those travelling to Salalah from Muscat, Dubai, Riyadh, or Kuwait, where day temperatures are constantly above 45°C.

In that sense, Salalah is a worthy option, and we can hope for temperatures to calm down in the coming weeks if not days.

But our concern is in the right place because 2023 was seen as the hottest year of recent years, and 2024 looks no better.

Many tourist markets, such as those in Thailand, Greece and Turkey, have been reportedly hit due to heatwaves.

Another example is that over 1,000 people lost their lives due to heatwaves during the recent Haj in Saudi Arabia.

In layman’s language, these are direct impacts of global warming and climate change, and we are just clueless about how to deal with it if things

ACCORDING TO A STUDY, AS TEMPERATURES AND SEA LEVELS RISE, THE ATTRACTIVENESS OF MANY DESTINATIONS WILL FADE

start getting worse in the coming years.

High temperatures virtually give no scope for outdoor activities and adventures.

Even now, venturing into waters has been prohibited on beaches of Salalah due to rising levels.

Tourism is also key to job creation because it provides direct or indirect jobs to over 300 million people worldwide, besides contributing significantly to the country’s GDP.

According to a study by the University of Cambridge, as temperatures and sea levels rise, the attractiveness of many destinations will fade.

More importantly, coastal tourism forms nearly 60 per cent of the global tourism industry.

Sustainable measures to mitigate the impact of climate change will not give immediate results but it can be an important step for the future.

Measures include switching to electric-powered vehicles, zero use of plastic, wastage of water and electricity, and what more.

The focus should be on walking instead of burning fuel.

Will Hungary hijack the EU during its presidency?

MAX DELANY

Hungary takes over the European Union’s six-month rotating presidency on July 1, in the face of fears perennial spoiler Prime Minister Viktor Orban could use it to take the bloc hostage at a critical time.

EU leaders and diplomats have years of bitter experience dealing with Budapest’s hard-right government on issues ranging from Ukraine aid to migration and the rule of law.

In 14 years as premier, nationalist Orban has become expert in playing hardball — critics call it blackmail — with Brussels and has repeatedly wielded his veto to get more EU funds.

While each EU country fights tooth-and-nail for its own interests, when they take over the presidency they are meant to put their politics aside to take on a more neutral role.

The EU likens heading the European Council, the body comprising the 27 member states, to “someone hosting a dinner”, and the powers it carries are limited. But it does see the country at the helm get to chair meetings, steer the agenda and steward negotiations.

“It will be a presidency as usual, we’ll act as an honest broker,” Hungary’s EU ambassador Balint Odor insisted, as he unveiled priorities focused on bolstering EU economic competitiveness, strengthening the defence industry and curbing illegal migration. But the early signals from Hungary — the self-styled champion of “illiberal democracy” in the EU — did not appear positive.

Budapest riled diplomats by unveiling “Make Europe Great Again” as the presidency slogan — echoing the rallying cry of Orban ally former US president Donald Trump — in a move seen as clear trolling of Brussels ahead of US elections in November.

“It’s trying to annoy people,” said one European diplomat. “But it’s not clever or funny.”

Orban’s key gripe with Brussels at the moment is the fate of some €19 billion in EU funds for Budapest frozen over issues including rights, the treatment of asylum seekers and public procurement.

“We must not be fooled by Orban’s ambitious and soft-spoken programme for the next six months, because at EU level, the government is primarily pursuing one goal: to free up frozen EU funds,” said German MEP Daniel Freund, an Orban critic. “It is to be feared that he will also abuse the powers of the council presidency to achieve this.” Hungary meanwhile is also facing the threat of proceedings under the EU’s Article 7 — a so-called “nuclear option” to strip countries judged to be contravening the bloc’s values of voting rights. — AFP



Hyesha Barrett @coach_hyesha

The writer is a certified Master Life Coach and NLP Practitioner based in Muscat.

Travel to enrich the body, mind and soul

We all know taking short breaks throughout the day helps us to change our thoughts and shift perspectives, which enables more optimal productivity and creativity to flow.

It’s equally as important to take holidays, whether a week-end break or a month long adventure. With the Eid holidays just passed, the whole family feels refreshed and rejuvenated after spending a few days away from the hustle and bustle that the daily grind generates.

Taking a break exceeds mere leisure, as it renders us to delve into habit changing, mental wellness, personal growth and spiritual enrichment. In our fast-paced often stressful lives, travel offers a much needed respite, a way to reconnect with ourselves and the world around us.

Daily life, with its unrelenting cycle of work, chores and responsibilities, can be draining. A change of scenery offers opportunities to step away from the mundane, leading to reduced stress levels as the mind is given a chance to rest and recharge. Being in a new environment stimulates the senses and awakens a sense of wonder, which is often dulled by the monotony of everyday life.

Moreover, travel exposes us to new cultures, ideas and ways of living.

This exposure fosters empathy and broadens our understanding of the world.

Meeting people from different backgrounds and experiencing their traditions and lifestyles can be profoundly enlightening, as our pre-conceived notions get challenged, encouraging us to see the world through a different lens. This cultural exchange is not only enriching but also humbling, reminding us of the vast diversity and interconnectedness of humankind.

SPENDING TIME IN NATURE CAN REDUCE ANXIETY, IMPROVE MOOD LEVELS AND BOOST OUR OVERALL MENTAL HEALTH

Nature, often a significant aspect of travel, plays a critical role in soul rejuvenation. Whether the serenity of a quiet beach, the majesty of mountains, or the tranquillity of a forest - nature has a healing effect on the human spirit.

Spending time in nature can reduce anxiety, improve mood levels

and boost our overall mental health. The beauty and grandeur of natural landscapes can evoke a sense of awe and wonder, reminding us of our planet’s beauty and magnificence.

Travel also fosters a sense of adventure and spontaneity. It pushes us out of our comfort zones while encouraging us to try new things, whether it’s tasting exotic foods, engaging in thrilling activities or navigating unfamiliar cities. This sense of adventure can rekindle a zest for life that might be suppressed in the routine of daily living.

This journey of life becomes ever more exhilarating when encompassing travel, which brings such transformative experiences. It breaks the restraints of routine, expands our horizons, and provides healing through nature while invigorating our sense of adventure and connection.

As we explore new destinations, domestically or internationally, we often find ourselves discovering parts of our own soul that were previously hidden. The rejuvenation that comes from travel is not merely a temporary escape but a profound, lasting enrichment that nourishes the mind, body and soul.

The benefits of travel are manifold, reminding us of the splendour of the world and the endless possibilities for growth and joy within it and in turn, ourselves.



It’s equally as important to take holidays, whether a week-end break or a month long adventure.

Gongora, the Andalusian poet

To enhance my Spanish skills, I borrowed a poetry book called ‘Luis De Góngora: Poetic Anthology’ from a Spanish acquaintance. Studying Spanish in Andalusia meant that I had heard about the poet but never read his work before. The book barely exceeded 80 pages and the cover had the melancholic portrait of Góngora.

It was published by the Andalusian Ministry of Culture in 2007, about 380 years after Góngora’s death with 100,000 copies for distribution purposes only.

The book was divided into two sections: the first is an introduction that includes the poet’s biography and an insight into his poetry and the second is his poems.

The introduction written by Angelina Costa Palacios was very interesting as she included thorough details about the poet’s life which reflected the immense amount of research done to produce this book.

The poems included are his masterpieces and other enjoyable ones that describe nature, different cities in Spain even a critique of a lady in the court who smelled bad!

His simple philosophy of life is described in the poem “Let Me Go Warm” where he lists simple pleasures of life such as sitting beside a chimney and eating an apple tart compared to pleasure gained from money and power, ending each verse with: “And let the world laugh, and it will.”

But who was Luis De Góngora? He was born in Córdoba in 1561 to a noble family. His father was a judge and his mother was of a pure Christian lineage. He was given her surname to secure future education and job prospects. He produced his first and famous poem ‘Sister Marica’ in 1580, a heartwarming composition narrated by a child who shares his festivity plans for the next day with his sister Marica including games that they’d play and food that they’d eat.



Rasha Al Raisi

rashabooks@yahoo.com

The writer is the author of The World According to Bahja

In 1586, Góngora was appointed a priest, which made him travel around different cities in Spain such as Granada, Salamanca and Madrid.

During his residency in Valladolid in 1603, he met the famous poet Quevedo, his lifetime opponent as both belonged to different Baroque movements. Quevedo accused Góngora of imitating his style and wrote many satiric poems, making fun of Góngora’s gambling habits as well as of his large nose - describing him as a man stuck to a nose.

Nevertheless, Góngora’s linguistic skills were so exceptional that his writing style became known as ‘Góngorismo.’ It was characterised by its ‘syntactic complexity and a large number of metaphors and literary words.”

This was embodied in two of his masterpieces namely Solitude (1613) and the Fable of Polyphemus and Galatea (1627) which was published after his death. His influence was not only restricted to Spain but exceeded to Hispanic poets such as the Mexican Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (1651-1695).

Góngora revived words that were little used and made them part of the common language used until now such as adolescent, eclipse, and portion. Despite his genius, Góngora’s life took a tragic turn after the death of three of his defenders in the Spanish court.

Consequently, his work did not get published but was circulated and compiled in songbooks for free. Moreover, his love of cards and bullfights caused his bankruptcy and made him sell his house to Quevedo before returning to Córdoba, his birthplace. In his final days, Góngora suffered from memory loss and died in 1627.

Three hundred years later his work was revived by the Generation of 27 - that included Lorca and Alberti - who named themselves that as a tribute to the tricentennial anniversary of Góngora’s death. All in all, Góngora’s poetry was a delightful discovery and a pleasure to read.

GÓNGORA REVIVED WORDS THAT WERE LITTLE USED AND MADE THEM PART OF THE COMMON LANGUAGE USED UNTIL NOW NAMELY ADOLESCENT, ECLIPSE AND PORTION

LET THE GAME BEGIN



The Paris 2024 Olympics mascot Phryge is seen on a balcony during the inauguration Olympic village “Olympium”, in Villeneuve d’Ascq near Lille in the north of France on Monday. Olympium has 495 rooms with a capacity of 550 beds and will accommodate the basketball and handball teams during the upcoming Paris 2024 Olympics. – AFP

The healing power of nature

In our busy modern lives filled with screens and concrete, nature’s a perfect antidote. Humans have always found peace and countless benefits in the great outdoors since ancient times.

Studies support what people have always known: spending time in nature improves mental and physical health. Living in nature reduces stress, s mood, and enhances overall health by encouraging physical activity and fresh air.

The beauty and simplicity of nature provide a break from busy urban life, helping us recharge and find balance.

Natural environments offer shelter, lowering stress levels and improving mood. ‘Forest bathing,’ a practice from Japan, involves immersing oneself in the forest’s sights, sounds, and smells, which lowers blood pressure, reduces stress and s the immune system.

Green spaces in cities, like parks, provide a break from urban life, reducing stress and improving mood even during short visits. Sunlight s serotonin, enhancing well-being and happiness, and helps regulate sleep patterns. Activities like walking in nature reduce anxiety and depression as exercise and a quiet environment lift mood.

Nature also helps restore focus and concentration. The calm of natural



Dr Khalfan Hamed Alharrasi

Country Manager (Oman/MENA) University of Cambridge khalfan.alharrasi@cambridge.org

TIME SPENT IN NATURE HAS BEEN LINKED TO IMPROVED COGNITIVE DEVELOPMENT IN CHILDREN, ENHANCING THEIR LEARNING CAPABILITIES AND ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE

settings reduces cognitive load, leading to clearer thinking and better decision-making.

Outdoor activities like hiking and biking improve fitness and overall health, as exposure to phytoncides and organic compounds from trees and plants s the immune system.

Social connections are fostered through group activities like hikes and outdoor festivals. These interactions build relationships and reduce isolation. Spending time in nature deepens our connection to the environment, encouraging a sense of belonging and purpose and increasing awareness of environmental issues. Mindfulness practices such as meditation and yoga are perfect in natural settings, reducing anxiety and enhancing emotional regulation.

Engaging in outdoor activities promotes movement and exploration, improving cardiovascular health, strength, and endurance. Exposure to natural sunlight facilitates vitamin D production, which is essential for bone health and immune function.

Exposure to natural light also helps regulate sleep patterns, improving sleep quality. Research suggests that exercising in natural

environments enhances feelings of vitality and energy, leading to greater motivation and adherence to physical fitness routines.

Compared to indoor exercise settings, outdoor workouts are often perceived as more enjoyable and stimulating, leading individuals to exercise for longer duration and greater intensity.

Nature walks and outdoor activities enhance circulation and reduce the risk of heart disease. Fresh air in natural settings, free from urban pollutants, improves lung function and respiratory health.

Forest environments, in particular, have cleaner air which

benefits people with respiratory issues.

Living close to nature increases environmental awareness and encourages sustainable behaviours. Experiencing nature firsthand fosters respect for the environment and inspires conservation efforts.

Nature provides spiritual nourishment, offering spaces for contemplation and wonder. Whether through solo meditation or communal worship, nature supports spiritual renewal and connection to something greater than oneself.

Moreover, community-based outdoor initiatives such as park clean-up efforts or tree-planting

campaigns benefit the environment and promote a sense of collective responsibility and stewardship.

By working together to preserve and protect natural spaces, communities cultivate a shared sense of purpose and belonging. Camping, fishing, or exploring nature together can create lasting memories and improve family dynamics.

Recent studies have highlighted additional benefits of nature exposure for mental health. For example, time spent in nature has been linked to improved cognitive development in children, enhancing their learning capabilities and academic performance. This indicates that incorporating nature-based activities in education can substantially benefit young learners.

Additionally, ‘nature therapy’ has gained traction in clinical settings. Therapists now incorporate nature walks, horticultural therapy, and animal-assisted therapy into treatment plans for patients with various psychological conditions, such as PTSD and ADHD. These therapies use the calming and relaxing effects of nature along with regular therapy to help improve well-being.



sport



Oman face Kuwait in West Asian opener

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 24

Oman National under-19 football team eyes to win the start against Kuwait when they commence their campaign at the 2024 West Asian Championship in Saudi Arabia on Tuesday. The King Fahd Sports City in Riyadh will host the match of the national team against Kuwait, the match will start at 6:00 pm (Oman time).

Oman team head coach, Ahmed al Alawi, will no doubt target for full points in the opening game as this victory will encourage and empower the team's to show their best in the forthcoming matches at group stage.

Oman drew in Group A

alongside with the hosts Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Yemen team. While group B comprised Lebanon, Iraq, Jordan and Albania. Syria will compete against Bahrain, UAE and Palestine in group C.

Oman boys were under perfect technical preparations for this tournament as they went through comprehensive preparatory external camps in Iraq and Bahrain. The coaching staff worked hard in doing many improvement in the team in terms of the understanding levels of the players and their fitness levels beside the technical and tactical sides.

The West Asian event will act as essential participation to warm up



for the main assignment at AFC U20 Asian Cup 2025 Qualifiers which will take place in September in Tajikistan. Oman, Tajikistan, Malaysia, Sri Lanka and North Korea are in Group E.

The qualifiers will be played during September 21 to 29. The 10 group winners and five best second placed teams will advance to the finals as China will host the tournament during February 6-23, 2025. Oman will meet Yemen in the second match of West Asian tournament on Thursday before concluding its group matches against the hosts Saudi Arabia on Saturday. The group matches format will be played as one round league system and the topper from each group will advance to the semis. The best second placed team among the three groups will join the group toppers to the semifinal which will start on July 3. The finals will be held on July 5.

Oman squad: Majid al Farsi, Ghassan al Masroori, Shihab al Mukhaini, Ahmed al Shanfari, Mohammed al Sameen, Fahad Abdullah, Abdulaziz al Shaqsi, Adnan al Mushefri, Said al Ghanbousi, Jawad al Azi, Al Hussain al Qasmi, Al Harith al Mashaikhi, Mohammed al Maqbali, Ali al Alawi, Momen al Solui, Oadi al Manwari, Muhannad al Saadi, Yousef al Shabibi, Fahad al Mukhaini, Rabee al Sunaidi, Abdullah al Jabri, Abdullah al Maamari and Ziyad al Jaalani.

Oman gear up for Asian Handball Championship

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 24

The Oman national team is undergoing extensive training ahead of the 8th Asian Youth Handball Championship, which will be held in Jordan capital Amman from July 14 to July 25. The three-day internal camp will start on July 1, followed by the external camp in Egypt from July 4 to 11, where the team will play friendly matches against the Egyptian youth team and some local clubs.

Oman will open its campaign in the championship against India on July 14 and Jordan on July 15. Two teams from each group will qualify for the second round of the championship.

Currently, the team is training in the main hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher under the leadership of national coach Yahya al Maashari and his assistant Hassan Al Maamari, with a focus on raising the physical fitness level and applying tactical plans to reach full readiness before the competitions.

The team aims to have a distinguished participation and qualify for the second round, with a focus on the qualifying stage for the finals of the World Youth Handball Championship.

The Asian Championship includes 13 teams divided into four groups. Group A includes Bahrain, Saudi Arabia, and Hong Kong, while Group B includes Kuwait, Iran, and China. Group C consists of Oman, Jordan, and India, while Group D includes Japan, South Korea, Chinese Taipei, and Qatar.

The championship will be played in a single round-robin system in the first stage, with the top two teams from each group qualifying for the second stage.

The technical staff has reduced the number of players to 17 who will participate in the championship

Al Maashari also confirmed that the team's training is proceeding according to the plan approved by the federation's board of directors, with a focus on technical and tactical training and increasing physical fitness doses.

Al Maashari pointed out that the external camp in Egypt will be an opportunity to test the players and identify the team's strengths and weaknesses to address them before the championship.

He added that the friendly matches in the Egypt camp aim to enhance the understanding between the players and train them on the atmosphere of the matches.





CHIEF OF ASIAN SPORTS PRESS FEDERATION VISITS OMAN

MUSCAT: Taha bin Sulaiman al Kishri, Secretary-General of Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), met in his office Amjad Malik Aziz, Secretary-General of the Asian Sports Press Federation on Monday, who is visiting Oman, in the presence of Ahmed bin Saif al Kaabi, member of the Executive Office of the Asian Sports Press Federation, and Salim al Habsi, President of GCC Sports Media Federation.

During the meeting, it was emphasised that the Asian Sports Press Federation is keen to communicate with various national Olympic committees and various

sports bodies and institutions in the Asian continent, and to learn about their programmes and activities in the media field in general, and sports journalism in particular, with the aim of strengthening partnership and exchanging experiences.

The attendees also discussed the opportunities available to enhance the role of sports media in the region and develop sports media relations. Emphasising the importance of the role of the media in promoting sports culture and spreading Olympic values among young people.

OMAN BASKETBALL ASSOCIATION HOLDS GENERAL ASSEMBLY



SPORTS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 24

The General Assembly of the Oman Basketball Association (OBA), in its extraordinary meeting, approved the Federation's statutes and athletes' regulations.

The meeting was chaired by Eng Khalfan bin Saleh al Naabi, President of the Association, in the presence of Dr Ali al Yaarubi, Vice-President, Secretary-General, and members of the Board of Directors. The meeting was also attended by Dr Amer al Touqi, Director of the Sports Institutions Department, Shaikh Mohammed al Saadi, Director of the Legal Department, representatives of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and representatives of the Al Seeb, Oman, Nizwa, Ahli Sidab, Qurayat, Al Bashayer, Salalah and Dhofar clubs. The meeting was held at the premises of the Oman Olympic Committee.

The meeting was opened by Mohammed al Hassani, Acting Secretary-General, announcing the

completion of the legal quorum with the presence of club representatives, and the agenda was approved.

Eng Khalfan al Naabi praised in his speech the ministerial decree issued by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, which aims to improve the work and organise relations between the Association and institutions, and to strengthen the role of sports bodies to enable them to perform their role at the local and international levels.

During the meeting, the new statutes were approved, which included updates covering the scientific qualifications and technical and administrative experience of the members of the Board of Directors and the Secretary-General. The statutes consist of nine chapters covering definitions and general provisions, membership and its conditions, regulations for acceptance, suspension, and expulsion, the relationship with specialised committees for sports disputes, obligations of members, honorary membership, and the General Assembly of the Federation.

Lyles wins 100m at US trials to qualify for Paris Olympics



Noah Lyles (7) wins the 100m. – USA TODAY Sports

EUGENE: World 100 metres champion Noah Lyles claimed a measure of redemption by winning the 100m at the US athletics trials on Sunday, booking his ticket to the Paris Olympics.

Three years after failing to reach the Tokyo Olympics in the 100m over a trials finals flop, Lyles won in a personal best 9.83 seconds at Hayward Field in Eugene, Oregon.

"Three years ago I got second to last. This year I came and won it," Lyles said.

"Part of the plan. Nothing changed. Might be a shock to everybody else but when you know the goal, you know the goal," Kenny Bednarek, the 200m Olympic runner-up at Tokyo, ran a personal best of 9.87 to finish second with Fred Kerley, the 2022 world 100m champion, third in 9.88. "On to the next one at the Olympic Games," Kerley said.

"We're ready to go put on a show," Christian Coleman, the 2019



Noah Lyles poses with gold medal. – USA TODAY Sports

world 100m champion, missed out on a chance at 100m gold, finishing fourth in 9.93 in a race with a wind at 0.4m/sec.

Lyles settled for 200m bronze at Tokyo after being the favourite for gold but last year captured world titles in the 100m, 200m and 4x100m relay and is fancied for gold once more in France.

"If I didn't get that third place

in Tokyo, I wouldn't have had that desire, I wouldn't have had that fire burning, I wouldn't have accomplished what I have accomplished in the past," Lyles said.

"And now we constantly look to the future with open eyes because anything can happen."

Lyles, 26, led all semi-final qualifiers from Saturday

preliminary heats in 9.92 then won his semi-final heat in a wind-aided (3.0m/sec) 9.80 to lead all eight qualifiers for the final.

Bednarek reached Paris after a near miss in the Tokyo trials. "I just stayed calm and collected and executed my race. That's all I needed to do," Bednarek said.

"I got edged out in the Tokyo Olympic trials but I'm finally getting the hang of the 100 and the sky is the limit for me."

MU SETS 800 SEMIS PACE

Athing Mu, the Tokyo Olympic women's 800m champion who returned to competition in heats after a nine-month hiatus, was the fastest qualifier for Monday's final, winning her semi-final heat in 1:58.84.

"I felt way more in control this race," Mu said. "It was helpful this one was at a faster pace so I know what it's going to be like in the final."

— AFP

Oman Volleyball Assembly approves athlete charter

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 24

The Extraordinary General Assembly of the Oman Volleyball Association (OVA) held its meeting on Monday at the headquarters of the Oman Olympic Committee, under the chairmanship of Eng Ibrahim bin Abdullah al Maqbali, President of the Association in the presence of 14 members of the Board of Directors and members of the General Assembly.

A large number of members of Salalah, Bahla, Al Bashayer, Al Seeb, Sohar, Taqah, Marbat, Oman Club, Qurayat, Saham, Al Ittihad, Al Nasr, and Al Shabab clubs, in addition to Al Salam Club, attended the meeting, which fulfilled the legal quorum for the meeting.

In his opening speech, Eng Ibrahim al Maqbali welcomed all members and declared the opening of the meeting after



the legal quorum was met. This was followed by the approval of the agenda and the ratification of the proposed amendments to the articles and provisions of the Association's statute, the appointment of three members to audit the meeting minutes, and the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting.

The General Assembly approved the holding of elections for the Board of Directors of the OVA for the electoral cycle

2024-2028 next September. The President of the Association also stressed the need for members of the General Assembly who wish to run in the upcoming elections to withdraw from the current Association committees and appoint new members.

OPENING THE FIELD FOR NEW CLUBS

The discussion of opening the field for clubs that have recently been approved for

membership in the Association to participate in the upcoming elections was discussed. The President of the Association explained that the new club is not entitled to vote according to the statute, and the matter will be reviewed and referred to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The General Assembly adopted the Athletes' Charter in the Association's statute, which is an advisory committee

that represents athletes before the Board of Directors and works to protect their rights. The Committee's tasks include representing the rights and interests of athletes, conveying their views on the Association's decisions, raising awareness of laws related to athletes, and working with sports clubs to protect the rights of club and national team players.

The General Assembly will elect the Board of the Athletes' Committee consisting of a President, Vice-President, Secretary and two members, with specific eligibility criteria, including that the applicant be of Omani nationality, of good character and conduct, and a retired player or player for a period of not less than two years and not more than ten years, and that the applicant not be less than 30 years old.

After being elected by the General Assembly, the Board

of the Athletes' Committee will determine who will hold the positions of President, Vice-President, and Secretary, in addition to appointing the other two members, either by vote or by acclamation. The approved names are submitted to the Association's General Secretariat for approval by a decision of the Board of Directors.

The term of office of the Athletes' Committee Board shall be four years, starting from the announcement of the election results and ending at the end of the term of the Association's Board of Directors during the electoral cycle. Elections for the members of the Athletes' Committee for the upcoming electoral cycle shall be held before the elections for the Board of Directors of the Association, by the dates specified in the statute and regulations of the Association.

FUELLKRUG STRIKES LATE AS GERMANY DRAW 1-1 WITH SWITZERLAND TO WIN EURO GROUP

FRANKFURT, Germany: Striker Niclas Fuellkrug scored a stoppage time equaliser as hosts Germany rescued a point after a 1-1 draw with Switzerland on Sunday to seal top spot in Group A and maintain their momentum going into the last 16 of Euro 2024.

Swiss forward Dan Ndoye had threatened to spoil the party with a first half opener, but Germany, who had already sealed a last-16 place before kickoff, are now on a seven-game unbeaten run stretching back to November and kept plugging away until the equaliser eventually came through Fuellkrug's powerful header.

The home side had a goal disallowed and several penalty appeals rejected by Italian referee Daniele Orsato, and it looked to be a frustrating night before Fuellkrug finished one of their 18 attempts at goal in a feverish atmosphere in Frankfurt.

It denied the Swiss what would have been a second win over Germany in 22 competitive matches dating back to 1959, but their passage through to the last-16 is also secure.

Germany top the pool with seven points from their three games, two ahead of Switzerland, while Hungary (three points) must wait to see if they will advance as one of the best third-placed teams following a 1-0 win over eliminated Scotland (one).

Kai Havertz's early header from a corner was saved by the Swiss keeper and then a shout for a penalty when he was bundled over the box was dismissed on a frustrating evening for him that may draw attention to his effectiveness in the team.

Germany thought they had the lead on 17 minutes when Robert Andrich's shot from 30-yards somehow beat Switzerland goalkeeper Yann Sommer at his near post but the latter's blushes were spared when the goal was ruled out for a foul by Jamal Musiala.

Instead it was the Swiss who scored just before the half-hour mark. Musiala was bundled off the ball in midfield and when Remo Freuler was found on the left-hand side of the box, his low cross was turned into the roof of the net by Ndoye.

— Reuters



Fuellkrug celebrates scoring his team's first goal. — AFP

Hungary score last-minute winner to send Scots home

STUTTGART, Germany: Hungary snatched a 100th-minute winner to beat Scotland 1-0 and put themselves in contention for a last-16 spot at the European Championship while condemning the Scots to yet another failure at a major tournament.

Kevin Csoboth's breakaway goal with almost the last kick of the match ensured Hungary finished third in Group A with three points while Scotland, yet to reach the knockout phase of either the Euros or World Cup, end in last place on two points.

Hungary must wait to see whether they will qualify for the last 16 in one of the places reserved for the best four third-placed finishers.

Their progress now rests on results from other groups going their way over the next three days. However, for now Marco Rossi's side will revel in their dramatic victory that rescued their hopes just as they thought they were heading home.

"It was unbelievable. We never achieved nothing in the past without big, big suffering. Today was no different. I think that we played the match that we needed to play," Rossi said.

"We created many options, many situations. We also left some (chances) to them. But overall, I think if I say that it was a deserved win, I'd be right," he added.

The match was a scrappy affair, with both teams struggling to



Ryan Christie and Lewis Morgan look dejected after the match. — Reuters

exert any kind of control despite each being desperate for a win to continue their stay in Germany.

Steve Clarke's Scotland did dominate possession in the opening 25 minutes but could not fashion any clear-cut chances. Indeed, they had no shots at all in the first half despite having 61 per cent of the ball. They ended the match without a shot on target.

Hungary, meanwhile, grew into the game and began threatening on the break and making quick transitions, with captain Dominik Szoboszlai in particular threatening from set pieces. The midfielder's freekick to the far post in the 41st minute was met by an unmarked Willi Orban but his poor header clipped the top of the bar from

close range. Che Adams had Scotland's first shot shortly after the break but he blasted it over.

The game was paused for a lengthy period in the 68th minute after a horrible clash between Scotland goalkeeper Angus Gunn and Barnabas Varga from another Szoboszlai freekick.

Varga appeared to be knocked out cold and needed urgent treatment, and Hungary players erected blankets around him as a screen while they looked in distress, with Szoboszlai in tears.

The forward was carried off the field on a stretcher to applause from the crowd. He was taken to Stuttgart Hospital, the Hungarian Football Federation said, adding that he was in a stable condition.

— Reuters





Ladies Account

Empowering you more than ever!

[f](#) [@](#) [in](#) Dhofar.islamic [X](#) Dhofar_islamic [2477 5777](#) [www.dhofarislamicbank.com](#)



ظفار الإسلامي
DHO FAR ISLAMIC

Investment opportunities worth RO 1.2 bn identified in Oman’s maritime sector

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JUNE 24

The total value of cargo handled by Omani ports amounted to RO 15.986 billion in 2023, according to data shared by Captain Majid bin Saif al Barhi, Director-General of Maritime Affairs at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

Speaking to the *Observer* during celebrations marking World Seafarers Day, held yesterday June 24, the official underscored the significant role maritime transport plays in the country’s economy.

In volume terms, Omani ports handled 97.113 billion tonnes of cargoes last year, with imports amounting to 37 billion tonnes, exports 59 billion tonnes, and re-exports 1 billion tonnes. Capt Al Barhi revealed that

THE OPPORTUNITIES INCLUDE THE CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE OF MEDIUM AND LARGE SHIPS, SHIP FUELLING BUNKERS, ALUMINIUM BOAT CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE, SHIP RECYCLING, AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF DRY DOCKS

the maritime transport sector accounted for a 11.78 per cent share of the overall transport sector’s GDP contribution amounting to RO 2.25 billion. The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has identified 5 investment opportunities within the maritime sector valued at around RO 1.2 billion as a result of previous investment laboratories.

According to Capt Al Barhi, the



Captain Majid bin Saif al Barhi, Director-General of Maritime Affairs at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology.

ministry is currently in the process of collaborating with stakeholders to move them forward.

The opportunities include the construction and maintenance of medium and large ships, ship fuelling bunkers, aluminium boat

construction and maintenance, ship recycling, and the construction of dry docks.

In 2023, the ministry signed eight cooperation agreements related to maritime transport, ten agreements with international

classification societies, and 11 MoUs for mutual recognition of seafarers’ certificates. Furthermore, the ministry issued 734 seafarers’ certificates and conducted 628 exams.

Celebrations of the World Seafarers Day were held under the patronage of Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Za’abi, Secretary General of the Ministry of Defence. Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, was also present.

The event featured workshops tackling various maritime topics, a parallel exhibition, and an award ceremony honouring achievements and personnel in the maritime sector. Additionally, a new online service for renewing seafarers’ certificates was launched during the event.

OQ appoints new Group CEO



MUSCAT: OQ, Oman’s global integrated energy group, has announced the appointment of Ashraf bin Hamed al Maamari as its new Group Chief Executive Officer.

Al Maamari brings a wealth of experience to his new role, having held prominent leadership positions in both international and national oil companies.

He is an active member of several boards.

Throughout his career, he has consistently demonstrated exceptional capabilities in leadership, business strategy and change management.

Omani e-commerce market to hit \$1.24 billion in value in five years

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 24

Oman’s e-commerce market is projected to balloon in value to \$1.24 billion in 2029 from around \$660 million presently, per growth targets envisioned under the National Programme for the Digital Economy.

According to a report compiled by Oxford Business Group, a global publishing, research and consultancy firm, the sector is anticipated to expand at a compound annual growth rate of 13.54% over the next five years through to 2029.

Fuelling this growth, it said, is a new government-led Executive Programme for E-Commerce supported by a number of ministries, public and private sector stakeholders.

“While still in its early stages, the e-commerce market in Oman represents a significant opportunity,” said OBG in its report titled ‘Oman’s Digital Future — Paradigm Shift Under Way Across Government, Business and Society’.

“Despite the country boasting one of the highest levels of smartphone usage in the Middle East, only 8% of the population currently engages in mobile shopping.

Consequently, e-commerce represents just 1% of total retail sales. This is primarily due to consumers’ preference for in-



Multiple government ministries are collaborating to fuel the growth of Oman’s e-commerce sector.

person shopping. However, the government-led EP for E-commerce, bolstered by support from government-related corporations such as Asyad Group, holds promise for the future growth of this market.”

Significantly, a number of legislative initiatives and enablers introduced by various government stakeholders are helping underpin the growth of e-commerce in Oman, according to the report.

It includes regulatory frameworks, streamlining of registration methodologies, and the rollout of support infrastructure in the form of private data centres and technical platforms.

In addition, several pivotal initiatives are planned for implementation over the next three years to help accelerate

the adoption of e-commerce, says OBG. Key among them are proposals for the implementation of electronic know-your-customer (E-KYC), electronic payment transaction fees, and the launch of dedicated e-commerce parks and logistics centres.

A number of government ministries and institutions are collaborating to drive the growth of e-commerce in Oman. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has implemented legislation requiring e-commerce players to be registered.

Likewise, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology is collaborating with Oman Investment Authority (OIA) in formulating a roadmap for the development of support infrastructure, as well as enhance

the IT competencies of Omani cadres.

The Central Bank of Oman, for its part, is enabling the rollout of electronic payment platforms, eKYC procedures, and cost-competitive electronic payment transaction fees.

Similarly, the ROP Customs authorities are focused on speeding up clearances, logistics and cross-border cargo flows, while the SME Development Authority is supporting the growth of 150 Omani startups that plan to operate in this field.

Commenting on the outlook for this sector, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, added: “Thanks to its strategic location, Oman has the potential to become a regional e-commerce centre.

We have established a comprehensive regulatory framework to ensure transparency and minimise fraud.

Both Omani and foreign-owned online businesses need to obtain commercial licences, available via the Oman Business Platform.

These measures aim to tackle potential commercial challenges. Given the growing consumer interest in e-commerce and the wide range of goods produced in Oman, the opportunities for entrepreneurs catering to both the domestic and export markets are substantial.”

Equal National Opportunities forum showcases innovative entrepreneurial experiences



Dignitaries at the opening of the 2nd Equal National Opportunities Forum.

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 24

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, organised the second edition of the “National Equal Opportunities” initiative.

The forum showcased 11 innovative experiences of Omani entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium enterprises.

The presentations shed light on the thriving Omani SME ecosystem nurtured by a supporting business environment, and the proliferation of special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities. A public exhibition enabled SMEs to display their innovative goods and services.

Through networking, knowledge-sharing, and experience-sharing with officials and personnel, this show aided SMEs in selling their goods and services.

“The primary objectives of OPAZ are to plan and develop, organise and supervise, facilitate and provide post-service care, market and attract investment, operate and accelerate and achieve institutional excellence,”

stated Saleh bin Hamoud al Hassani, Adviser to the Chairman of OPAZ.

“This initiative aims to create a fair and equal business environment that expands the role of the private sector in sustainable development, encourages innovation and entrepreneurship, boosts investment and economic growth in special economic zones and free zones, and helps build a supportive and encouraging business environment for SMEs.”

Hussam bin Salam al Kharusi, a senior official at the Oman Future Fund, said that 10% of the fund’s capital has been allocated to investments that fall within the umbrella of small and medium enterprises and venture capital.

He added that the fund targets various investment sectors with the exception of the oil and gas sectors and the real estate sector.

Supporting the Equal National Opportunities Forum were the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), Salalah Free Zone, Sohar Free Zone, Khazaen Economic City, Al Mazunah Free Zone, Development Bank, Future Fund Oman, and the Directorate General of Agricultural and Animal Research.

Bank Muscat recognised as the best retail bank in Oman

MUSCAT: In recognition of the Bank's achievements underscoring its excellence in customer service through offering a full suite of banking products and facilities to customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has recently received the prestigious Best Retail Bank in Oman Award for the year 2024.

MENA Banking Awards from MEED recognise the leading banks in the retail banking sphere across the region and which stand out in terms of providing customers with innovative banking solutions aiming to enhance their banking experience. Bank Muscat emerged as a winner after an extensive selection process and consultations with experts and analysts across the globe.

Speaking on the occasion, Abdulnaser al Raisi, General Manager, Personal Banking, Bank Muscat, said: "We would like to thank MEED for recognising Muscat Bank as the best retail bank in the country. The constant recognition which the Bank continues to receive every year comes as a result of the stance of excellence which the Bank is committed to upholding through the delivery of innovative banking services tailored to the recent needs of customers.



The Bank remains dedicated to its customer-centric vision by introducing value-added banking services and products that meet the diverse needs of customers.

Abdulnaser al Raisi added: "Bank Muscat is keen to contribute to the ongoing digital transformation of Oman, strategised as a part of Oman Vision 2040 and this is reflected in the continuous launch of a diverse range of products and services for different customer segments.

We would like to extend our sincere thanks and gratitude to

all our valued customers for their continuing trust and confidence in our services and products.

The Bank will continue its commitment to developing more innovative services in the future to fulfil customers' needs and aspirations."

Emphasising its commitment to scaling its services to a wider customer segment, Bank Muscat is committed to its strategy of expanding its branch network across the Sultanate, considering that these branches represent the Bank's main interface and a major

channel for customer service.

The Bank currently has 183 branches and service centres distributed across the governorates, backed with a dedicated team who deliver the Bank's services to customers, aiming to meet their evolving needs. During the past period, the Bank inaugurated a number of branches in Muscat, Sohar, and other locations and relocated some of its branches which feature high bespoke design standards to keep pace with the present and future advancements.

BankDhofar opens new branch in Ibri

MUSCAT: BankDhofar, a leading financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, opened Al Murtafa branch in the Wilayat of Ibri in the Governorate of Al Dhahirah. This expansion is in line with the banks strategy of getting closer to its customers.

The expansion process reflects the bank's commitment to enhance in-country value addition. It has, time and again, affirmed its intent to partner with the government in bringing to fruition the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, while augmenting the Omanisation drive by offering employment opportunities to talented individuals. The new branch in the Wilayat of Ibri, will provide specialised services to the SME sector. The Bank is offering specialised Al Rifaa preferred banking, Al Riadah priority banking services.

The branch was officially opened by Najeeb bin Ali al Rawas, Governor of Al Dhahirah, and in the presence of a number of bank officials.

As the second largest bank in the Sultanate of Oman by the number of branches, at a total of 124 branches, the bank also operates 360 ATMs, multi-use cash deposit machines, and multi-service interactive machines. Notably, customers can perform banking transactions via ATMs using just their mobile phone numbers, eliminating the need for a card.

BankDhofar is dedicated to implement digital enhancements through significant investments in technology based on customers evolving needs and ensure an enhanced user experience. Through its mobile banking application, customers can manage accounts, pay bills, transfer money, and invest in various financial products.



Win amazing gifts with Toyota's Summer Delights campaign

MUSCAT: Buy the Toyota of your dreams this season to win exciting gifts by availing exclusive offers through the 'Toyota's Summer Delights' campaign. Toyota offers its new customers the benefits of free service from 3 years/30,000 km, 10 years/100,000 km (whichever is earlier), free 1st-year insurance or a cash gift up to RO 450 in lieu. Also, grab the incredible opportunity for an EMI holiday for up to 3 months.

All new customers will also be eligible to enter the grand raffle draw, where they will have the chance to win an all-inclusive trip to Turkiye (3 nights and 4 days) for a family of four and 10 iPhone 15 Pro max. The campaign begins on June 3, 2024 and runs until August 1, 2024. So head to your nearest Toyota showroom and take advantage of this amazing opportunity.

Toyota offers an impressive product line-up in Oman. Toyota is a popular household name known for its durability, reliability, and quality products. Offering simple yet sophisticated designs, the Corolla is one of Toyota's most popular vehicles. It is powered by a 2.0-litre, four-cylinder Dynamic Force engine, which produces 168 hp and 20.39 kg/m of torque paired with a Direct Shift CVT transmission. Customers looking for a more fuel-efficient option can choose the 1.6-litre, four-cylinder Corolla engine that produces 121 hp and 15.7 kg/m of torque, also paired with a CVT transmission.

The Camry, with its stylish outlook, makes a fine impression. It is available with a choice of three powertrain options. It is powered by a 2.5-litre, four-cylinder Dynamic Force engine that produces 204 hp

and 24.8 kg/m of torque paired with an eight-speed direct-shift multi-mode automatic transmission

The legendary Toyota Land Cruiser is made to tackle tricky terrains and provide an off-roading experience of a lifetime. Powering the Land Cruiser is a choice of two powertrain options. The V6 twin-turbo 3.5-litre petrol engine achieves class-leading performance that surpasses a conventional V8, producing 409 hp and up to 650 nm.

The all-new Toyota Yaris promises a dynamic driving experience thanks to its four-cylinder engine equipped with a 16-valve DOCH and dual VVT-I. The vehicle is available with a 1.5-litre capacity engine that delivers smooth acceleration and a quick response, producing 105 horsepower and 138 Nm of torque with a fuel consumption of 20.5 km/l.

Exclusive to the Toyota Crown, the vehicle is built using the Toyota New Global Architecture (TNGA-K) platform. The new Crown features two choices of environmentally friendly powertrains. The first hybrid electric powertrain consists of a front electric motor and Toyota's first-ever 2.4-litre inline four-cylinder turbo engine with All Wheel Drive, paired with a direct-shift six-speed automatic transmission with a combined power of 340 HP and 40.7 kg/m of torque.

Specifications of vehicles imported from Toyota Motor Corporation are as per the GSO Conformity Certificate applicable to the model/grade. Parameters such as vehicle weight, dimensions & fuel economy could vary from the GSO Conformity Certificate due to the fitment of dealer-installed accessories.

The all-new Jeep Wrangler 2024 in Oman: A new era of power and performance

MUSCAT: MHD Automobiles is delighted to announce the exceptional reception of the newly launched 2024 Jeep Wrangler, which has been making a significant impact and impressing all who experience it.

Recently introduced in Oman, the 2024 Jeep Wrangler upholds the esteemed legacy of the Jeep brand, renowned for producing the most off-road-capable and recognised SUVs in the world.

This latest model seamlessly combines unparalleled off-road capability, authentic Jeep design, open-air freedom, advanced powertrain technology, superior on- and off-road dynamics, and an array of innovative safety and technology features.

The 2024 Jeep Wrangler debuts the highly anticipated new 2.0L Turbo engine, available on the Sport and Sahara trims, which ensures greater torque, enhanced efficiency, and accelerated performance.

This engine sets a new benchmark in powertrain technology for the Wrangler lineup, reaffirming Jeep's commitment to delivering cutting-edge advancements and unmatched performance to its customers.

Test drivers of the 2.0L Turbo engine variant in Oman have been astounded by the torque and power delivered by this innovative powertrain. The new 2.0-litre turbocharged inline four-cylinder engine commands an impressive 270 horsepower and 400 Nm of torque, offering enhanced efficiency and accelerated performance.



This engine, combined with a standard eight-speed automatic transmission, establishes a new benchmark in powertrain technology for the Wrangler lineup.

Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD Automobiles, expressed his enthusiasm for the new model, stating, "The 2024 Jeep Wrangler not only enhances the iconic Wrangler legacy but also introduces unmatched capability, state-of-the-art technology, and advanced safety features to our valued customers in Oman.

This latest evolution stays true to the Wrangler DNA, providing enthusiasts with the freedom to conquer any terrain and embark on extraordinary journeys. It's not just an SUV; it's a symbol of limitless possibilities and unrivalled off-road prowess."

The 2024 Wrangler features a new iconic seven-slot grille.

Its exterior includes a windshield-integrated trail-ready stealth antenna, all-new wheel designs, and multiple open-air freedom options, while the refined interior boasts more technology and amenities, including water-fording-tested power seats, an all-new instrument panel featuring the Uconnect 5 system with a state-of-the-art 12.3" touchscreen radio, and standard wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto.

Safety remains a top priority, with over 85 available advanced safety and security features. Standard for 2024 are first- and second-row side curtain airbags, automatic emergency braking, forward collision warning, adaptive cruise control, and a ParkSense front and rear park-

assist system. The 2024 model year also brings structural improvements for enhanced side-impact performance.

The 2024 Wrangler enhances its legendary capability with new features, including the all-new next-generation Dana 44 HD full-float rear axle on Rubicon models.

This axle design, typically found on heavy-duty commercial trucks, ensures exceptional strength and robustness by transferring the vehicle's weight to the axle tube rather than the axle shaft itself, offers a towing capacity up to 2267 kg.

This upgrade, combined with Wrangler Rubicon's existing off-road features like the Rock-Trac part-time transfer case and Tru-Lok front and rear-axle lockers, sets a new standard for off-road performance.

Pact signed to enable AI revolution in Mena region



Aziz Aluthman Fakhroo, Ooredoo Group CEO and Ronnie Vasishta, Senior Vice President of Telecom, NVIDIA, signed the agreement.

MUSCAT: Ooredoo Group announced it is becoming an NVIDIA Cloud Partner (NCP), aligned with its strategy of becoming the leading digital infrastructure provider in the Mena (Middle East and North Africa) region.

Through this collaboration, Ooredoo is leveraging NVIDIA's advanced accelerated computing platform to help enable the AI revolution in the region.

Capitalising on the significant market demand for accelerated computing and hyperconnectivity across its Mena footprint, Ooredoo is developing an AI-ready platform powered by NVIDIA's full-stack innovation across systems, software and services.

This platform will serve as a valuable resource, supporting governments and empowering enterprises and startups to securely process their private datasets, as well as produce valuable insights as tokens that power innovations for its users.

Aziz Aluthman Fakhroo, Group CEO, Ooredoo, said: "Implementing NVIDIA's full-stack platform for accelerated computing and generative AI, Ooredoo is equipped to be at the forefront of the AI revolution in Mena, driving digitalisation and innovation as the leading digital infrastructure provider in the region.

Working with NVIDIA, we aim to meet the significantly growing demand for accelerated computing infrastructure to support advanced AI models."

Through this collaboration, governments, enterprises and startups in Qatar, Algeria, Tunisia, Oman, Kuwait and the Maldives will have access to NVIDIA's latest full-stack AI platform.

Ooredoo plans to deploy thousands of NVIDIA Tensor Core GPUs in its AI data centres to support the region, enabling customers to leverage a state-of-the-art AI platform with advanced infrastructure, tools, and software. This will optimise processes and drive operational efficiencies across industries.

Ronnie Vasishta, Senior Vice President of Telecom, NVIDIA, said: "As a trusted regional telecommunications provider, Ooredoo Group combines deep enterprise and consumer relationships with the ability to invest in and deploy AI infrastructure and services. By providing NVIDIA's full-stack AI computing platform to customers, Ooredoo will help make it easier for their customers to deploy generative AI applications and services."

Taqah forum stresses key role for farm groups in sustaining Oman's agri sector growth

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JUNE 24

The Wilayat of Taqah, in collaboration with the Directorate General of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources in Dhofar Governorate, hosted a significant forum focusing on initiatives to support sustainable agriculture, enhance food security, and introduce modern farming technologies.

The forum, held under the auspices of Shaikh Tariq bin Khalid bin Al Waleed al Hinai, Wali of Taqah, also featured an exhibition of a variety of agricultural products, machinery and supplies.

As part of the initiative, free seedlings and fertilisers were provided to local farmers. Participants had the opportunity to engage in discussion sessions led by experts, addressing crucial topics such as sustainable agriculture practices, modern farming techniques and investment opportunities within the agricultural sector.

Dr Ahmed al Hadhari, head of the Agricultural Society in Dhofar, said that local farming associations can play a crucial role in supporting farmers and bolstering the nation's agricultural sector.

However, he cautioned that the associations face a multitude of challenges that hinder their ability to achieve their full potential.



Representatives from the agricultural and farming sectors taking part in the Taqah forum.

One of the primary hurdles is the dual supervision by the Ministry of Social Development and the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries and Water Resources. This overlap hinders smooth decision-making, he said.

Additionally, the lack of administrative offices in governorates and a central headquarters creates communication gaps between farmers and associations, making it difficult to deliver essential services effectively, Dr Al Hadhari noted.

The high rental value for agricultural land and the rising cost of energy (fuel and electricity) squeeze farmers' profit margins. This is further compounded by the high cost of agricultural inputs like fertilisers and pesticides, often purchased from abroad due to the absence of local production facilities.

Furthermore, inefficient marketing systems make it challenging for Omani agricultural products to reach consumers at fair prices. The influx of imported goods further

saturates the market, driving down prices and discouraging local production. This lack of market coordination threatens Oman's food security, participants said.

Despite these challenges, opportunities exist to revitalise Oman's agricultural landscape. Streamlining oversight by placing agricultural associations under a single ministry would enhance coordination and expedite decision-making. Establishing administrative offices throughout the country and a central

headquarters would improve communication and streamline service delivery, it was stressed.

Supporting farmers through measures like reducing land lease costs and subsidising energy prices would alleviate their financial burdens and encourage increased production.

Additionally, ensuring fair pricing for agricultural inputs would boost profit margins and incentivise production. Investing in post-harvest infrastructure would significantly reduce product spoilage and enhance overall quality. Enhancing marketing systems would connect farmers directly with consumers, ensuring fair prices.

Strengthening coordination between stakeholders within the agricultural sector, including farmers, importers, and marketers, would regulate the market and prevent oversaturation with imported goods.

Developing local industries for producing agricultural inputs and processing agricultural products would not only create jobs but also create a more self-sufficient and competitive agricultural sector.

By fostering these advancements, Oman's agricultural associations can empower farmers, ensure food security and contribute significantly to the nation's economic growth.

Contracts awarded for construction of AIDA Phase 1

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 24

Dar Global, the London-listed luxury international real estate developer, is excited to announce the awarding of the main works construction contract for the villas in the first phase of AIDA, a landmark urban development in Oman.

This milestone underscores Dar Global's vision to create a world-class real estate marvel in Oman, working with best-in-class partners to deliver unmatched luxury and value.

AIDA, a joint venture with Omran Group, Oman's primary organisation for tourism development, integrates luxury golf, residential and hospitality components.

Set for Phase 1 completion in 2027, AIDA is strategically located by the sea and 130 metres above sea level, offering unparalleled sea views and residences that harmonise with the cliffside environment.

The main works construction contract for Phase 1 villas has been awarded to Towell Construction & Co LLC, with a contract value of RO 14,242,810. Towell Construction will oversee the construction of the townhouses and villas, ensuring meticulous attention to detail and adherence to optimal quality standards.

On the other hand, the infrastructure work for AIDA's first phase has been awarded



Set for Phase 1 completion in 2027 AIDA will offer unparalleled sea views and residences that harmonise with the cliffside environment.

to Oman Shapoorji Company LLC. The contract, valued at RO 9,345,653, entails designing and constructing essential infrastructure, including roads, water, and electricity networks, utility installations, drainage, and sewage systems as well as developing the surrounding road network within AIDA.

These efforts ensure the highest technical standards, seamlessly complementing AIDA's luxurious offerings and supporting its residential and commercial phases.

Ziad El Chaar, CEO of Dar Global, commented: "The villas will epitomise luxury and exclusivity, featuring modern designs and premium finishes that seamlessly complement AIDA's unique natural surroundings and topography.

This contract marks a major leap forward in our mission to provide a world-class living experience in AIDA, reflecting

our steadfast commitment to enhancing Oman's residential offerings and strengthening our portfolio of luxury developments in key global locations."

He added, "Announcing the infrastructure contract marks a significant step towards realising our ambitious vision for AIDA.

We are excited to reach these pivotal stages of the project, which exemplifies our unwavering commitment to elevating Oman's tourism and real estate sectors.

This contract strategically strengthens our portfolio of luxury developments in prime global locations. AIDA will set new benchmarks for luxury and innovation, reinforcing Oman's position on the global stage."

Spanning 5 million square metres and situated just 10 minutes from Downtown Muscat, AIDA aims to redefine standards in architectural excellence, environmental sustainability and bespoke living.

Oman's oil production dips 5.5 per cent during Jan – May period

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 24

The oil and gas sector has experienced a notable decline in oil production since 2023, as detailed in a recent report released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The decline is primarily attributable to production curbs agreed by Oman in support of efforts by the Opec+ Alliance to buoy international oil prices.

By the end of May 2024, total oil production had fallen to 151.401 million barrels, down by 5.5 per cent from 160.145 million barrels recorded by the end of May 2023.

The daily average production followed the same downward trend, averaging 996.1 thousand barrels per day in May 2024, a reduction of 6.1 per cent from 1,060.6 thousand barrels per day in May 2023.

Despite the decrease in production, the average prices per

barrel of oil (US\$/BBL) remained relatively stable over the period. Contrary to the production figures, total exports saw a slight increase.

By the end of May 2024, exports totalled 129.031 million barrels, marginally higher than the 128.070 million barrels exported by the end of May 2023. This increase is primarily driven by a surge in exports to China.

Exports to China rose significantly, reaching 125.041 million barrels by the end of May 2024, compared to 117.120 million barrels during the same period in 2023.

This surge underscores China's growing demand for Omani oil, reflecting a positive trend in the bilateral trade relations between the two countries. In contrast, exports to Japan have decreased.

The figures show a decline to 2000.7 thousand barrels by the end of May 2024, from 4,783.5 thousand barrels in May 2023.



Middle East countries' currency strength



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

Dr Mythili Kolluru is a National-Level Award-Winning Outstanding Women Educator and Scholar in Strategic Management. She is an assistant professor at the marketing and management department of the College of Banking and Financial Studies in Muscat and a member of Knowledge Oman.

The country with the strongest currency in the world is the Kuwaiti Dinar (KWD), followed second by the Bahraini Dinar (BHD), third by the Omani Rial (OMR), and fourth by the Jordanian Dinar (JOD). The World Bank classifies Kuwait and Oman as high-income economies and Bahrain and Jordan as upper-middle-income economies. The stability and strength of their currencies are a testament to the robustness of their economies and the political stability they enjoy.

These countries have managed to maintain a delicate balance of stable governance, which has not only sustained investor confidence but also bolstered the value of their currencies.

These nations tend to have well-managed economies with low inflation rates. This keeps the purchasing power of their currency strong.

Oil wealth and stable economies make them attractive to foreign investors. This inflow of capital further strengthens their currencies.

The global investment

landscape is thus paradoxical, with these countries boasting the world's strongest currencies, a deviation from the conventional association of strong currencies with established and advanced economies.

The fundamental principle of supply and demand primarily determines the value of a currency. When the demand for a currency outstrips its supply, its value will naturally rise.

Conversely, if there is excess supply compared to demand, its value will correspondingly decrease.

This basic economic principle is at the heart of currency valuation, and understanding it is critical to comprehend the paradox of strong currencies in Middle East countries.

Most of these Middle East countries possess massive oil reserves, so when the oil prices are high, the exports will skyrocket. The economic prowess of these Middle East nations is not solely a result of their vast oil reserves. It's their unique economic strategies that truly set them apart.

As oil prices surge, these currencies witness a boost

in export revenue, thereby augmenting their foreign reserves.

The surge in demand for their currency from international oil buyers is a crucial driver of their currency strength. These countries hold massive reserves of oil and gas, which are in high demand globally.

This gives them a solid export base and brings in significant foreign currency. While the strength of their currencies may make imports cheaper, it can pose significant challenges to the export competitiveness of non-oil goods produced in these countries.

In the international market, the exchange rate can make their exports relatively expensive, potentially hampering their global trade and economic growth.

This could also stifle their diversification endeavours beyond the oil sector, a crucial aspect of long-term sustainable growth for these countries.

Another aspect to remember is that reliance on a pegged currency can expose these economies and make them vulnerable to external shocks.

The decline in oil prices and fluctuations in pegged currency value can also indirectly influence currency strength and stability.

The role of their currency peg mechanism, a key strategy they employ, is also significant. Unlike free-floating currencies, which are subject to market forces, these countries peg their currency to a stable currency like the US dollar or a basket of currencies.

This means that the value of their currency is directly linked to the value of the currency they peg to.

This peg acts as an anchor, safeguarding against sharp fluctuations and devaluations, thereby ensuring exchange rate stability. This stability not only attracts foreign direct investment but also maintains investor confidence, bolstering the strength of the pegged currency.

This unique interplay of oil reserves, currency pegs, and currency strength is a fascinating aspect of these countries.

In conclusion, the combination of stable economies, fixed exchange rates, political stability, historical factors, and effective economic policies contributes to the strength of the currencies

of Kuwait, Bahrain, Oman, and Jordan.

These factors ensure these currencies remain highly valued and stable globally. The massive oil wealth and currency peg mechanism fuel the robust Middle East currencies.

This is similar to a two-edged sword, with the advantages of import affordability and global currency strength. However, limited expert competitiveness and vulnerability to external shocks are also drawbacks.

Over a decade, these countries have aggressively strategised their diversification vision through investment in knowledge-based industries, manufacturing, tourism, and hospitality sectors, free trade agreements, export incentives, workforce upskilling, and a focus on research and development.

These countries have successfully embarked on strategically utilising their oil revenue to fuel longer economic diversification and reduce dependency on a single resource to build a robust and sustainable pathway for economic growth and export competitiveness in the global marketplace.

China, EU agree to talks in bid to head off trade war



KEITH BRADSHER

The author is the Beijing bureau chief for The New York Times, part of a team of Times reporters covering a wide range of news in China.

With billions of dollars in trade at stake, China and the European Union have agreed to engage in talks to try to resolve an escalating dispute over tariffs.

China's commerce minister, Wang Wentao, and Valdis Dombrovskis, the European Union trade commissioner, will hold discussions on the European Union's plan for tariffs on electric cars from China, the Chinese Commerce Ministry said late on Saturday.

Hours earlier, Robert Habeck, Germany's vice chancellor and economic minister, said that the European Union was willing to hold consultations, and he expressed a hope that tariffs could be avoided.

This month, the European Commission, the executive body of the European Union, proposed tariffs of up to 38 per cent on electric cars from China, atop an existing 10 per cent tariff on imported cars.

The commission said it found that China's electric car sector was heavily subsidised by the government and state-controlled banking system.

China's exports of electric vehicles pose a growing challenge to Europe's automakers.

Habeck, speaking in Shanghai after meetings in Beijing, defended the tariffs.

"These tariffs are not punitive," he said, adding that the tariffs are intended to offset subsidies that violate World Trade Organization rules. It is unclear what a possible trade deal might look like.

Executives at Volkswagen and other European automakers have called for Chinese manufacturers to build cars in Europe with European workers earning European wages, instead of importing cars from China.

But Chinese automakers have already built dozens of electric car factories in China with what



New Volkswagen cars sit in a parking lot in Changchun, Jilin province, China. – Reuters

the EU describes as extensive subsidies, and are still building more factories.

Before agreeing late on Saturday to talks, Wang, China's commerce minister, who had met with Habeck, accused the EU of violating WTO rules.

The National Development and Reform Commission, China's top economic planning agency, said in a statement that "China will take all measures to safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of Chinese companies."

It added that the tariffs were inconsistent with international efforts to address climate change. The tariffs would put Germany in a tricky position. German automakers have extensive operations in China and worry that they will be hurt by retaliatory trade actions by Beijing.

On Saturday in Beijing, Habeck visited several Chinese economic ministries but did not meet with Premier Li Qiang, China's No. 2 official. Habeck then flew to Shanghai to hold a news conference and meet with

German businesses leaders there. He declined to comment on why he had not met Li, who in some ways is his counterpart.

Habeck criticised China for supplying Russia with goods that have both civilian and military applications for its war on Ukraine. China's trade with Russia increased more than 40 per cent last year, and half of the increase was related to these dual-use goods, he said.

"These are technical goods that can be used on the battlefield, and this has to stop," he said. But the focus of Habeck's trip was the trade dispute.

He visited a BMW research centre in Shanghai on Sunday before heading to nearby Hangzhou, a tech hub. WTO rules allow tariffs intended to offset the effects of subsidies.

For its part, China denies that it improperly subsidises its electric vehicle companies and says that its leading role in the industry worldwide is a result of efficient manufacturing and innovation.

Anticipating the tariffs, China's

Commerce Ministry in January took the first steps toward imposing tariffs on imports of cognac and other wine-based spirits, produced mainly by France, one of the countries that has led calls for tariffs on China's electric cars.

On Monday, China's Commerce Ministry threatened to impose tariffs on pork imports from Europe.

And state-controlled media in China has reported in the past week that the Chinese auto industry is asking the Commerce Ministry to impose tariffs on imports of gasoline-powered cars from Europe, a move that would chiefly affect German automakers.

Wang called on Germany to help end the EU's tariffs. "It is hoped that Germany will play an active role in the EU and promote the EU and China to move toward each other," the ministry said in a statement on Saturday.

China, the world's largest car market, has nearly halved its imports of German cars in the

past five years as its domestic automakers have become increasingly competitive.

China's car companies dominate the worldwide production of electric and plug-in hybrid gasoline-electric vehicles, which now nearly match sales of gasoline-powered cars in China.

But many of China's wealthiest customers still covet German brands. Mercedes-Benz sells more of its most luxurious cars, German-built Maybachs, in China than in the rest of the world combined.

German automakers also have joint ventures with Chinese companies to assemble cars in China. Volkswagen is making further large investments in manufacturing and engineering in China while beginning to cut staff in Germany.

To block the tariffs, Beijing would need to persuade a majority of EU countries, representing at least 65 per cent of the bloc's population, to overrule the European Commission.

— The New York Times

CHINA'S CAR COMPANIES DOMINATE THE WORLDWIDE PRODUCTION OF ELECTRIC AND PLUG-IN HYBRID GASOLINE-ELECTRIC VEHICLES, WHICH NOW NEARLY MATCH SALES OF GASOLINE-POWERED CARS IN CHINA.

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat: 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar: 9731 6218 Salalah: 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

• Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
• Choose from a wide range of brands & models
• PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
• Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

اوربيت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

URGENT HIRING

LEADING LAB CHEMICAL/CONSUMABLE/
EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION COMPANY IN OMAN
URGENT HIRING
TECHNICAL SUPPORT ENGINEER

- More than 2-year work experience in Oman/GCC
- Degree of bachelor of Mechanical Engineering
- Driving license in Oman preferred.

Suitable candidate can send CV to:
recruitment74@gmail.com

TUESDAY

JUNE 25, 2024 | DHUL HIJJAH 18, 1445 AH

Auditors & Accountants

• Audit & Accounting • CFO Services • Secondment
• VAT & Tax Return Filing • VAT Refund Assistance

Contact: 92182750 • Email: contact@umpauditors.com

UMP
UNITED MAWA PROJECTS

ROYAL CARGO

ALL OVER INDIA
INDONESIA ► NEPAL
AIR EXPORT (Port to Port)
SEA EXPORT (Container Booking)

SERVICES BY AIR & SEA

FOR MORE INFORMATION JUST DIAL
CUSTOMER CARE **93213207**

PICK UP FREE ANYWHERE IN MUSCAT **93213206**

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

SIT. WANTED

LOOKING for job 2 years experienced Mechanical Engineer available in Muscat.
vineeshvijay98@gmail.com
79527123.

INDIAN male 6 years experience in accounts/automobile/admin. Seeking for suitable opening in any field, currently in Oman. Contact: 78988055/ 92850930, email: ullasmon8@gmail.com

PLANNING Engineer, PMP. Indian male 11 years experience in Construction Projects. Well versed with Primavera P6 Software, strong communication skills, Interpersonal skills, EDT Claims, Recovery schedules, project control. Having Omani Driving License. Contact: 78002582, email: engineer4planning@gmail.com

INDIAN male 14 years experience light/ heavy driver. Looking for suitable opening currently in Oman. Contact: 77050986/ 91280205, email: kokkadmou@gmail.com

B. COM. 35 years of experience in accounts, sales coordinator, admin, HR, personal assistant, document controller with Oman D/L, looking for a job. Contact: 92558734

29 YEARS old Indian female, MBA holder with 2 years experience. Seeking a suitable position. Currently in Muscat on visit visa. Contact: 78641071, shazashakeel@gmail.com

SIT. VACANCY

MECHANICAL/ TECHNICAL
REQUIRED service technician for air compressors with D/L. Send your CV to denny@pumpsoman.com. 79119341

SIT. VACANCY

WANTED Sales & Service engineer for laboratory
sales@alchemyarabia.com
96654041.

Looking for a candidate having minimum 5 years of Oman experience in accounts and administration. Knowledge of Oracle/ Tally accounting & inventory package is must preferable experienced in Trading of Building Materials, Tools etc e-mail CV to jobvacancyoman2023@gmail.com

BACHELOR degree in mechanical or electrical engineering ASNT level 2 (NDT), ASNT level 3 (NDT) additional advantage. LEEA foundation, LEEA lifting accessories diploma (LAC). Contact: pipe2566@yahoo.com

SALES Executive required for building materials, hardware items and similar items. Driving licence necessary. E: sangita@dhiyahilal.com. M: 93559800

FOR RENT

400M RENTAL space Ghubra 18 Nov Street second line suitable for all commercial use. Tel: 92408308

WAREHOUSE / workshop 2,600 sq metres for rent in Misfa near Oman Cement Factory including accommodation contact: GSM 98286899, email: sales@jetsoman.com

3BKH- Ghubra 18 Nov Street. Tel: 92408308

IN Ruwi, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, hall, kitchen, with car parking. RO 150 monthly only. Tel: 94402003.

SIT. WANTED

28 YEARS Experience in Oman in sales, marketing and management, Indian with DL and release. Looking for a good job change. Contact: 78501743.

A Sudanese resident in Salalah, Bsc of administrative sciences with 21 years of experience in the fields of (sales/ management/ logistics and fleet). Contact: +968 98510880.

Job Vacancy

Candidates with at least 5-10 years of experience are urgently needed for the following positions in a multinational company in Oman

- **Electrical Engineer** (O & M experience)
- **DCS Engineer** (Honeywell DCS experience)
- **Planning Engineer**
- **Quantity Surveyor**
- **Draftsman**

Interested candidates can send CVs to **recruitment2024n@gmail.com**

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocoraches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

Now get news on the go

To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER

WhatsApp <your name> to **96473232**

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?



Advertise with us.

Contact us on: **99639264**

SIT. VACANCY

****HIRING: Cake & Pastry Chef****

We're looking for a talented chef skilled in cakes, pastries and a variety of sandwiches. Join our dynamic team today!

Apply now by emailing your CV:ALSTROMERIA6660@GMAIL.COM

SIT. WANTED

ACCOUNTANT & sales Executive, Indian male, 31 years, BA English, specialised in Accounting, 2 years experience in India & 6 years experience in Oman. Seeking position in Accounts/Sales fields (has Oman licence). Mob: 78805951. Gmail: akhilgopinath2017@gmail.com

To advertise on our social media platforms and website

Please Contact our Team

95210257

OMAN OBSERVER
www.omanobserver.om

OMAN OBSERVER

we shall

Observer

OMAN DAILY

Observer

FREE* CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

* NOW FREE CLASSIFIED IN OMAN DAILY OBSERVER ON THE ABOVE CATEGORIES ONLY

Send your advertisement (Only one per coupon & no photocopies), either by mail or in person, with your local identity.

To advertise please contact:
Tel: 71455532/ 71455531/ 71455530
Email: adv@omaninfo.om

To advertise in Information Ministry channels



To contact

71455532- 71455531- 71455530
adv@omaninfo.om
izdiyar_info izdiyar.info

اردھار izdiyar





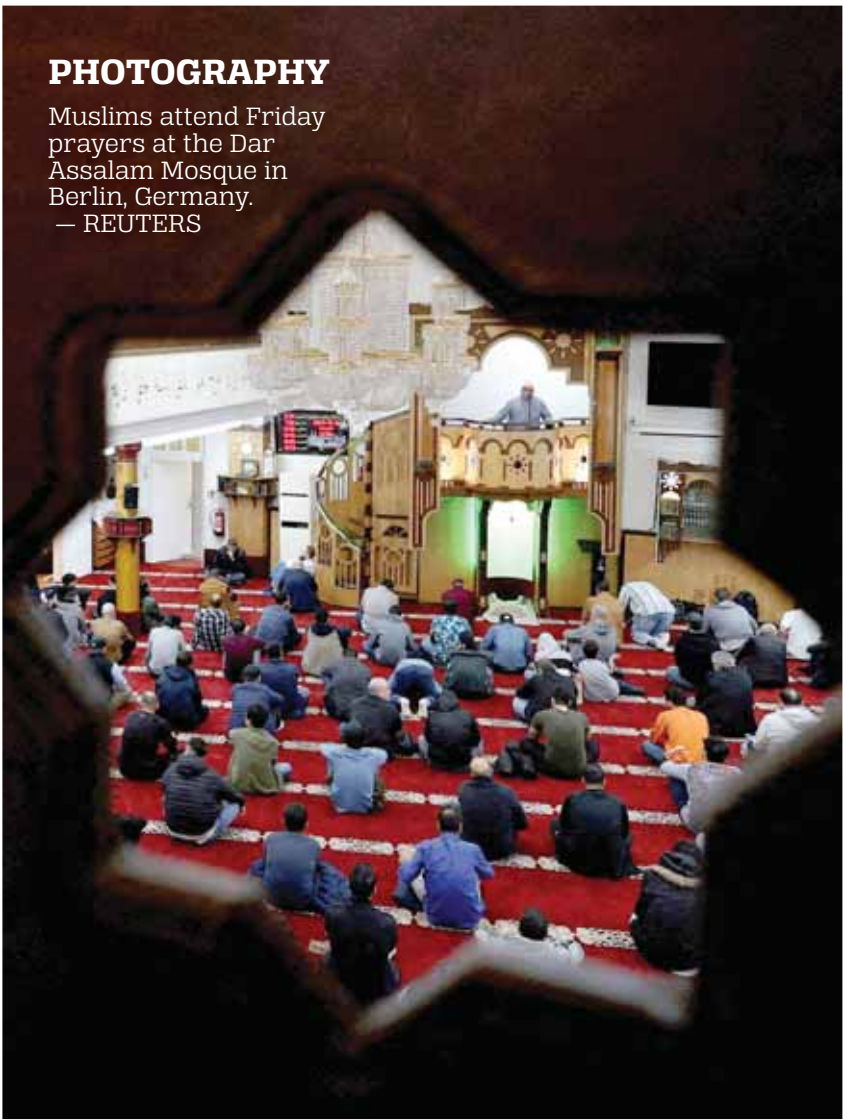
FASHION

A model presents a creation by Georges Hobeika during the Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2024 show as part of the Paris Fashion Week in Paris. — AFP



WEATHER

A member of the public eats an ice cream by the River Thames in Richmond, south west London. — AFP



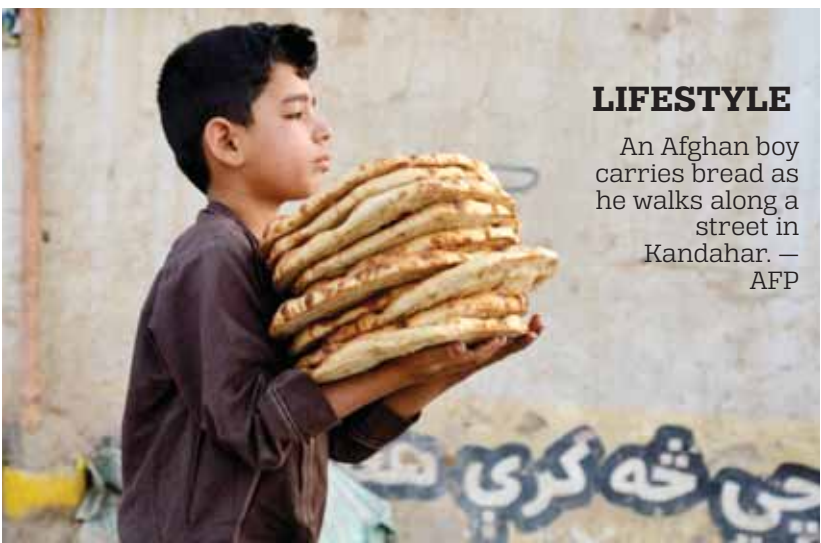
PHOTOGRAPHY

Muslims attend Friday prayers at the Dar Assalam Mosque in Berlin, Germany. — REUTERS



OPERA

French opera director Raphael Pichon poses during a photo session, ahead of the opening of the Aix-en-Provence festival, devoted to opera and lyrical arts, southern France. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

An Afghan boy carries bread as he walks along a street in Kandahar. — AFP

art & life

TUESDAY | JUNE 25, 2024 | DHUL HIJJAH 18, 1445 AH | OMAN OBSERVER | www.omanobserver.om | features@omanobserver.om

CELEBRATING OMANI CINEMA

Join us for a remarkable cinematic experience as the Omani Film Society presents 19 award-winning Omani short films, featuring 11 documentaries and 8 feature films... P20

A LOOK AT THE ACADEME



DR. ZAINAB AL-AJMI

Critical thinker and critical listening: An academic approach

Dr Zainab al Ajmi, an erudite academic and dedicated educator, brings insightful perspectives to her columns. With a wealth of experience in teaching and research, her writings delve into the intersection of academia and societal issues, fostering intellectual discourse with clarity and depth. For feedback, you can email her at zeinbf@moe.om

THE FACT THAT individuals have acquired some theoretical knowledge does not mean that they will use them effectively in their lives" (Erkek& Batur, 2019). the increasing prevalence of misleading content in contemporary media environments, researchers confirm that listening skills are rarely taught within formal educational frameworks. This educational gap coincides with a growing need for individuals to effectively evaluate and discern information. Therefore, critical listening skills are of great importance to students, and field experts believe that critical listening skills can be developed through class-

room activities. "Listening is described as a deliberate interpretative action of a listener to understand and draw meaning from a spoken or uttered wave (sound); the spoken word is processed by alerting, deciphering, and comprehending the production and the effect of such sounds. Listening comprehension is gradually becoming an active and interpretive language procedure where listeners are animatedly tangled in the construction of meaning" (Muhammad, 2018, p. 6). According to (Mansour, 2022, p. 418) critical listeners are required to consciously comprehend and interpret the meaning of what is said. They can analyse the text by examining ideas, feelings, and gestures, as well as gaining a greater understanding of the subject, and the way it is delivered. They examine the language used (formal, informal technical), sentence types and the flow of ideas. In addition, they efficiently observe and accurately decode non-verbal cues (proxemics, facial expressions, appearance, pitch, stress, tone and speed of speech). They explain what they think and how they arrive at their conclusion. Subsequently, critical listeners can recognise debatable

issues, and figure out unstated assumptions, they make reasonable and intelligent decisions about what to believe and how to act. From the above listening is described as a "deliberate interpretative action of a listener to understand; the spoken word is processed by alerting, deciphering and comprehending the production and the effect of such sounds. Listening can be any of the following: A. Discriminative listening: occurs when distinct sounds are identified, it is through the amplification of these differences that we make sense of the expression, discriminative listening can be an advantage at early stages of development as it aids in the understanding of language phonemes. It is also a disaster at later stages of human development as it becomes a barrier mostly in the understanding of a second language. B. Listening for comprehension: it will come immediately after discriminative reading. It is the capacity to comprehend the meaning of words by understanding the rules of grammar, lexicon and syntax. As an important aspect of human communication, it benefits from the extraction of key facts and meaning from a long article.

It is also referred to as content, informative, or full listening. C. Critical listening: refers to the act of listening for the purpose of evaluation, judgment and opinion. It entails the assessment of the strengths and weaknesses, agreement approval, and disapproval of an argument or claim. The listener requires cognitive dexterity to analyse and relate spoken words to existing knowledge, while concurrently engaging with the speaker. E. Evaluative listening: is a combination of critical listening and biased listening" (Muhammad, 2018, p. 6) In conclusion, critical thinking and critical listening are two essential skills that are complementary and work together to foster effective communication and learning. Critical thinking allows individuals to analyse information and arguments objectively, while critical listening allows them to deeply understand the information being presented. Hence, the need for further research on the best ways to teach and develop critical thinking and critical listening skills in a world full of misleading advertisements and biased media sources.



find us on



Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

TUESDAY | JUNE 25 | 2024

19

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



krishnaraj_jayaram

🎵 B. Ajaneesh Loknath, Sai Vignesh · Varaha Roopam...



viatjabe and pablocaraips



seeso_varghese

As Salalah, Zūfār, Oman



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use #OmanObserver and #BeAnObserver.



Star classical pianist Lang Lang among Opus Klassik award 2024 winners

WORLD-FAMOUS pianist Lang Lang will be honoured this year with an Opus Klassik award, the Association for the Promotion of Classical Music announced on Monday.

Lang, 42, will be honoured for the album "Saint-Saëns," released in March. Other top winners include violinist Isabelle Faust and cellist Gautier Capuçon in the Instrumentalist of the Year categories.

The Opus Klassik will be awarded on October 13 at the main awards ceremony in the Konzerthaus Berlin.

Awards will be presented in a total of 27 categories.

A jury selected the Austrian soprano Anna Prohaska and Konstantin Krimmel will be honoured as

the singers of the year. Finland's Klaus Mäkelä won the Conductor of the Year category.

The Association for the Promotion of Classical Music has been awarding the Opus Klassik since 2018, when music companies, record labels and concert organisers created it as the successor to the Echo Klassik.

Lang became perhaps publicly best-known for his performance at the opening ceremony of the 2008 Olympic Games in Beijing.

In the years that followed, the Chinese pianist played at the Nobel Prize ceremony for former US president Barack Obama, for Queen Elizabeth II's 60th anniversary and for Pope Francis in the Vatican. — **DPA**

Historic tall ship to bring touch of Italy to foreign shores

THE AMERIGO VESPUCCI, which Italians call the world's most beautiful ship, is taking a taste of its homeland on a round-the-world tour, with temporary expositions at several stops showcasing Italian products and heritage, authorities said.

Tall ship Vespucci, named after the explorer who gave his name to America, is a navy boat that entered service in 1931. Some 2,700 square metres (29,000 square feet) of sails are tied to its three masts, and it has a crew of over 260 sailors, supplemented by trainees.

It set off from Genoa in northern Italy last July for its first world tour in 20 years, which will take it to over 30 ports in five continents to help provide training for those onboard.

The national expos, dubbed Italy villages, will be established in eight ports and the first is to be set up in Los Angeles next week, the defence ministry said on Monday.

"We managed to link the history of the Vespucci to Italy, to turn an ancient thing into something that can be a driving force for the present," Minister Guido Crosetto told a news confer-

ence.

Other events will be staged in cities including Tokyo, Singapore, Mumbai and Darwin, in Australia.

Pavilions will overlook the main square of the Italy villages, where visitors will be able to watch cooking shows, conferences and exhibitions, while also getting onboard the Vespucci.

The Los Angeles expo will also feature a show by the Freccie Tricolori, the aerobatics team of the Italian air force, the ministry said.

The Vespucci has completed



about half of the tour stops and is expected to return to Italian waters in March 2025. In April, it passed through Cape Horn, the closest land mass to Antarctica at the tip of South America, for the first time in its history.

Ship commander Giuseppe Lai, who was connected via a video link from the vessel currently sailing off Mexico, said the Vespucci was receiving particular attention from people of Italian origins living around the world.

"We have what it takes to represent Italy," he said. — **Reuters**

CINEMA

BALQEES AL ORAIMI

The Omani Film Society's celebrations of the 22nd anniversary of its founding began on Sunday when it hosted cinema nights at the society's headquarters.

The three-day screening will conclude on June 26, Wednesday.

19 Omani short films that won various international awards will be screened during the three days, including 11 documentaries and 8 feature films.

These films varied between productions by the Omani Cinema Society and productions by other parties.

On the first day, the film 'Sultana' by director Dr Khalid al Zadjali was screened. This was followed by a screening of the film 'Alpha and Beta' by director Asim al Hashmi, the film 'Bo' by the director Yousef al Hosani, and the film 'Long Distances' by directors Ali al Bimani and Hamad al Qasabi on the first day.

On the second day, the director Sulaiman al Khalili's film 'Ashes', film 'Beta Carotene' by director Mohammad al Darwashi, the film 'A Child's Cry' by the director Saleh al Muqaimi and director Fahd al Maimani's film 'You Will Not Dive Alone' will be screened.

On the third day, they will show the film 'Blue Maybe' by director Mohammed al Kindi, the film Al Maniwar by director Mohammed al Ajmi, the film Al Duruj by director Dr Hamid al Amiri, the film Birds' Paradise by director Abdullah al Raisi, the film 'The Missing Piece' by director Hussein al Balushi.

The movie nights will continue on the fourth day with the films 'Al Zij' by director Salah al Hadhrami, the film 'The Religion of Water' by director Haitham Suleiman, the film 'Man from Jabal Qahwan' by director Mohammed al Rasbi and the film 'Athar' by director Buthaina al Kindi.

During the cinema nights, the book Omani Film Between Reality and Ambition written by Dr Humaid bin Said al Amri and Tunisian journalist Noura Badawi and produced by the Omani Film Society

will be launched.

It includes critical readings of Omani cinema by several Arab critics, in addition to the ambitions that he aspires to. The book enriches the cinematic and critical library in the Sultanate of Oman and is considered one of the first books that dealt with criticism and

reading of Omani cinematic works.

During the screening nights, the association plans to launch the 'Support and Production Fund' for 2024, which is concerned with supporting and financing film production for Omani filmmakers who are members of the association.

This is part of the association's interest in strengthening the cinematic movement and supporting it with the production of new cinematic projects. The cinematic nights will also include the signing of a cooperation agreement between the association and the law firm of Ahmed al Jahwari and legal

consultations.

The screenings will be held at the headquarters of the Omani Film Society and begin at 7 pm. This is part of the cultural cinematic events that it organises monthly, where several Arab and international cinematic films are screened every month.



CELEBRATING OMANI CINEMA

