

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR FESTIVAL
TO KICK OFF ON THURSDAY

The Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Festival, organised by Al Dakhiliyah Governorate in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, will kick off at the main site next to Hail Yemen Park and Seih Qatanah Park on Thursday. The festival aims to attract tourists from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

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HOLDERS
US STUMBLE
INTO LAST
SIXTEEN



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THE RISING
STARS OF
LITERATURE &
MOTIVATION



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OMANI-AUSTRALIAN
JV COPPER
CONCENTRATOR PLANT
NEARS COMPLETION



MUSCAT

HM RECEIVES
THANKS FROM UZBEK
PRESIDENT

Muscat: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Dr Shavkat Mirziyoyev of Uzbekistan in reply to His Majesty's congratulatory cable to him on being re-elected as his country's President. In the cable, President Dr Shavkat expressed his appreciation for His Majesty's heartfelt sentiments. He underscored the importance of boosting relations and cooperation between the two countries to achieve the interests of the two countries' peoples. He also wished His Majesty good health and happiness and the Omani people continuous progress and prosperity.

SHIHAB RECEIVES UK AMBASSADOR



HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received Dr Liane Saunders, Ambassador of the United Kingdom (UK) appointed to the Sultanate of Oman, in Muscat on Tuesday. HH Sayyid Shihab wished the ambassador success in carrying out her duties in Oman. During the meeting, they reviewed bilateral relations and discussed several matters of mutual interest. — ONA

No need to panic due to
India's rice export ban

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Sultanate of Oman has a strategic rice reserve, and there is no reason to worry about any scarcity in the market. The situation will be monitored periodically, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources said on Tuesday.

The ministry confirmed that the rice reserves of the Sultanate of Oman are not affected by the export bans imposed by India and Russia.

"Non-basmati white rice has been banned from exporting by India and Russia, but this won't be a major problem as Oman also imports non-basmati rice from Pakistan and Thailand," an official spokesman said.

He said the Sultanate of Oman has sufficient reserves of white rice, which some residents consume, and there is close cooperation between the government and the private sector. He said rice is not cultivated in the Sultanate as it requires large amounts of water.

Speaking to the Observer, an exporter of various commodities, including rice, said there is no reason to panic as India is not the only source for rice imports, plus it is too early to feel the impact of the ban. "There is no ban on basmati rice that is used in preparing biryanis," he said.

A few restaurant owners also said that there had been no major changes in the prices of rice varieties.

It may be noted that the United Arab Emirates (UAE) banned exporting rice a week after India issued its major prohibition on non-basmati rice exports. The ban covers "various types of rice and their products that do not originate from India," the ministry said in a statement. Those who wish to export or re-export non-Indian rice must submit an application to the ministry to obtain special



Non-basmati white rice has been banned from exporting by India and Russia, but this won't be a major problem as Oman also imports non-basmati rice from Pakistan and Thailand

MINISTRY

permission, it continued. It was not specified why only Indian products aren't part of the temporary ban. India ordered a halt to its largest rice export category in a move that will roughly halve shipments by the world's largest exporter of the grain, triggering fears of further inflation on global food markets. The Indian government said it was imposing a ban on non-basmati white rice after retail rice prices climbed 3 per cent after heavy monsoon rains caused significant damage to crops.

Oman jumps 16 places to 56th rank
on industrial competitiveness index

MUSCAT: Reflecting the acceleration of industrial competitiveness over the past years, Oman jumped by 16 places in 7 years to 56th rank on global Competitive Industrial Performance (CIP) Report 2023 of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO).

The report measures the industrial competitiveness of more than 153 countries around the world.

Oman's rapid strides came on the back of improvement in the diversification of added



value sector industrial activities, coupled with a hike in the size of industrial exports, vis-à-vis the volume of global industrial exports. This is envisaged through the implementation of programmes and initiatives of the

Industrial Strategy 2040.

Oman is expected to maintain the pace in the near future, most notably through the implementation of an industrial strategy developed by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The Industrial Strategy 2040 aims to to upgrade industries through the application of modern technology. The move would bolster the expansion of the industry regionally and internationally and empower it to develop innovative products.

— SEE ALSO P13

BURDEN OF DELICIOUSNESS



Boys carry baskets of dates for drying in the sun in Bidiya. The annual Tabseel began in the Wilayat of Bidiya earlier this month with the dates harvesting. After drying, they will be boiled and packed for sale. PHOTO BY ABDULLAH AL GHAILANI

2-day holiday in Iran
over extreme heat

TEHRAN: Iran on Tuesday declared a two-day holiday for government workers and banks nationwide as searing temperatures sweep across the country, state media reported.

The decision came after the meteorological office forecast temperatures exceeding 40 degrees Celsius (104 Fahrenheit) in many cities, and nearly 50 degrees Celsius (122 Fahrenheit) in the southwest.

"The cabinet agreed to the health ministry proposal to declare Wednesday and Thursday public holidays all over the country to protect public health," the official IRNA news agency quoted government spokesman Ali Bahadori Jahromi as saying.

It said the decision was taken because of "unprecedented heat" sweeping the country.

The ministry has also warned of the risks of heatstroke from

over-exposure to the sun, and urged people to stay indoors between 10:00 am and 4:00 pm.

Health ministry spokesman Pedram Pakain described the number of heat-related illnesses in recent days as "alarming".

In June, Iran changed summer working hours for government employees who now start earlier, in order to save electricity in offices when temperatures peak. The southeastern province of Sistan-Baluchistan has been among the hardest hit by the heatwave.

Around 1,000 people have received hospital treatment there in recent days because of rising temperatures and dust storms, IRNA said.

The region has long faced severe water shortages, which triggered protests on Monday over an upstream dam in Afghanistan restricting water flow, a news agency said. — AFP



Job Announcement



Integrated Gas Company SAOC is seeking to fill the following senior job vacancies (for Omani candidates only):

- Chief Executive Officer
- Chief Financial Officer

Apply through LinkedIn:
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Closing date for submissions: **17 August 2023**
For any inquiries, please contact: **career@igcoman.om**

About the company:

Integrated Gas Company is a state-owned enterprise entrusted with managing all allocations, assets, rights, and obligations of purchasing, selling, importing, exporting, and transporting natural gas and relevant products on behalf of the Government of Oman.



HAS TRAVEL BECOME SAFE AND AFFORDABLE?

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Over the last two decades, travel to and from anywhere in the world has become possible for tourists with the emergence of online platforms that help customers to compare hotel rates, travel packages, and low airfares.

As airfares constitute nearly 40 per cent of international travel expenses, the advent of low-cost or budget airlines made it possible for middle-class tourists to travel anywhere in the world.

According to IATA, over the past three decades, low-cost carriers (LCCs) transformed the air travel market, disrupting the traditional world of the legacy national airlines, and creating a revolution in air travel service.

According to one estimate, low-cost carriers have been carrying over 30 per cent of the scheduled passengers in the world.

Speaking to the Observer, a travel operator, said: “In the Middle East, including in the Sultanate of Oman, we have seen budget airlines making promoting new destinations in Central Asia and East Europe and the Middle East, which are much more affordable



compared to places in West Europe, the United States and even Far East Asia.”

In the Sultanate of Oman, the launch of the budget airline, SalamAir, opened several destinations such as Istanbul, Rize, Trabzon, Baku, Almaty, Prague and Sarajevo among others.

Other airlines in the Middle East too have been offering affordable air travel to tourists to both inbound and outbound tourists.

It is not just the budget airlines that have made travel possible for travellers, platforms such as booking.com and TripAdvisor also play important

roles in making travel safe and customised.

“Travelling with packages is simple but expensive, but tourists have several options to choose destinations as per their purchasing limits. They can choose a one-star hotel or apartment if cannot afford a five-star hotel,” said Ahmed Sharif, who recently made a trip to Vietnam, Cambodia, and Thailand.

“Tourists coming to the Sultanate of Oman also have options to avail facilities such as accommodations of choice, airport pickups, local transportation, and guided tours to anywhere in the

country. The advancement of navigation applications such as Google Maps made it possible for travellers to calculate local commuting time and distance and avoid falling victim to fraudsters,” said Alisah Patel, who arranged a tour of the Sultanate of Oman for friends.

“With online platforms offering the users to review their experience for future customers or travellers, most customers have an idea of the quality of facilities at the place or property well in advance. Customers point out if they have deprived themselves of a service that was offered to our past clients,” said a hotel manager.

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Directors' Report

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we are pleased to present to you the financial results of the Company for the six-month period ended June 30, 2023.

Over the last year, while we have witnessed gradual recovery from the effects of the pandemic, we have also seen the negative impact of the threat of a worldwide recession and higher interest rates resulting in slower growth and restrained business sentiments across the globe. In Oman, we have seen healthier growth rates and inflation is much better controlled than we have witnessed in certain other geographies. We continue to improve our technological capabilities to be aligned with the digital transformation happening across the world, in order to provide solutions that deliver best in class customer experience.

With a well-diversified geographical presence across Oman (21 branches), coupled with a broad product profile, your company is well positioned to provide innovative and financial solutions for both Retail and SME. Your Company has won two awards for Best non-banking financial services Company in Oman and for the Best re-branding in Oman at the New Age Banking Summit 2023 event at Muscat. Your Company was also awarded the 'Leadership in SME Financing' at Muntada Almara event at Salalah. This serves as a testament of our continuous efforts in supporting the growth of the SME

sector in Oman and our leadership position in the industry.

Your Company continues to adopt a prudent approach to credit approvals keeping in view the overall macroeconomic scenario and perceived increase in credit risk. Within this policy, our approach has been to target customers who satisfy our credit risk appetite. We anticipate a reasonable growth to our asset base in the medium term.

The total regulatory capital of Omani Rials 100.59 million post the redemption of the Perpetual Bond issue on the first call date is the highest among Finance and Leasing Companies (FLCs) which gives us a strong base on which to build our business. Your company remains the largest finance and leasing Company in the Sultanate in terms of asset size, branch network, revenues and profit.

The operating profit (profit before provision and tax) was at RO 7.37 million (RO 7.91 million in June 2022) while Net Investment in Lease was at RO 441.22 million (RO 425.45 million in December 2022). Profit after tax was RO 5.41 million as compared to RO 5.01million in June 2022.

Your Company is fully compliant with the provisioning norms prescribed by the Central Bank of Oman and the International Financial Reporting Standards. We have added to our credit reserves through additional

overlay over the IFRS9 requirement in order to be prepared for future challenges given the incremental risk in the portfolio due to the recessionary trends seen in the economy.

Your Company remains committed to Omanisation and as of June 30, 2023, the number of Omani employees was 304 out of the total workforce of 333. The Omanisation percentage works out to 91.29% which is higher than the given target of 90%. Your Company continues to remain committed to providing career growth and development of Omani nationals through ongoing training programs in line with their job requirement. We will continue to maintain momentum on employee engagement initiatives, development of future skills, managerial and leadership capabilities for their professional development.

We extend our sincere gratitude to the Central Bank of Oman, Capital Market Authority, Muscat Stock Exchange, our bankers, depositors, customers and shareholders for the support extended towards the growth of the Company. On behalf of the Board of Directors, we also thank the management and staff for their dedication and hard work which has enabled us to establish ourselves as the most trusted company in the sector.

Hani Muhammad Al Zubair
Chairman

Unaudited Condensed Interim Statement Of Profit Or Loss And Other Comprehensive Income For The			
	Six months ended 30 June 2023 RO '000	Six months ended 30 June 2022 RO '000	
Income			
Income from financing activities	23,088	21,384	
Finance costs	(10,538)	(8,616)	
Net finance income	12,550	12,768	
Other operating income	1,274	1,456	
	13,824	14,224	
Expenses			
Operating expenses	(6,005)	(5,861)	
Depreciation	(270)	(289)	
Amortization	(182)	(162)	
Net impairment loss on finance leases, working capital finance and factoring receivables	(977)	(2,089)	
Bad debts written (off) / back	(28)	75	
Total expenses	(7,462)	(8,326)	
Profit before tax	6,362	5,898	
Income tax expense	(954)	(885)	
Profit after tax	5,408	5,013	
Other comprehensive income			
Items that will not be reclassified to profit or loss			
Movement in revaluation reserve – net of tax	4	4	
Change in fair value of cash flow hedge	(199)	854	
Other comprehensive (loss) / income	(195)	858	
Total comprehensive income	5,213	5,871	
Basic and diluted earnings per share (RO)	0.009	0.008	

Unaudited Condensed Interim Statement Of Financial Position As At			
	30 June 2023 RO '000	30 June 2022 RO '000	31 December 2022 RO '000
ASSETS			
Cash and cash equivalents	9,499	8,662	5,876
Net investment in finance leases	364,479	349,648	355,763
Working capital and factoring receivables	76,742	70,631	69,889
Advances, prepayments and other receivables	4,887	4,007	4,907
Assets held for sale	1,500	1,500	1,500
Goodwill	5,950	5,950	5,950
Intangible assets	623	766	637
Property, equipment and right-of-use assets	6,455	6,634	6,572
Statutory deposit	250	250	250
Total assets	470,385	448,048	451,144
LIABILITIES AND EQUITY			
LIABILITIES			
Creditors and accruals	11,372	9,814	9,018
Tax liabilities	1,902	1,623	2,364
Bank borrowings	320,340	287,908	287,780
Fixed deposits	34,878	34,324	32,091
Deferred tax liabilities	697	533	697
Provision for employees' end of service benefits	610	596	565
Total liabilities	369,799	334,798	332,515
EQUITY			
Capital and reserves			
Share capital	57,370	54,123	54,123
Share premium	5,786	5,786	5,786
Revaluation reserve	1,019	1,027	1,023
Foreign currency reserve	-	4,321	5,319
Voluntary reserve	3,000	3,000	3,000
Cash flow hedge reserve	1,074	281	1,273
Legal reserve	10,376	9,363	10,376
Retained earnings	21,961	17,149	19,529
Total shareholders' equity attributable to the equity holders of the company	100,586	95,050	100,429
Perpetual bonds	-	18,200	18,200
Total equity	100,586	113,250	118,629
Total liabilities and equity	470,385	448,048	451,144
Net assets per share (RO)	0.175	0.176	0.186

Note: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who requests the company in either Arabic or English with 7 days of receipt of the request. The full set of financials are available in the website of Muscat Stock Exchange.



Incentives to customers for faster fibre optic, 5G networks

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All-round efforts are being made to make the Internet reliable and affordable in the country, The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) said in its annual report for the year 2022 published on Tuesday.

Efforts have been made to speed up the Internet in the country with the number of 5G stations going up by 2,600 stations, and the number of buildings covered by the fibre optic network is 648,927, while 94 per cent of public schools were covered by fast Internet, compared to 74 per cent in 2021, said the report.

The report said that various incentives have been offered to move subscribers from fibre optic and 5G networks by reducing monthly rents, doubling package speeds, cancellation of service and contract termination fees for subscribers.

TRA said it is reviewing the Retail Tariff Regulations as there will be a single reference document to ensure transparency in fares, to promote fair competition and consumer protection.

The TRA reviews the agreements submitted by



mobile network operators in the Sultanate of Oman with the aim of reducing the cost of building networks by sharing networks, accelerating the deployment of mobile network coverage, and encouraging investment in modern technologies.

In the postal services sector, licenses have been issued to 24 companies to provide postal services; bringing the total number of licensed companies in this sector to 48.

The increase in licensed postal companies is in response to the steady increase in the volume of mail-related e-commerce, as

this contributed to providing more than 144 additional job opportunities with permanent contracts in the postal sector during the year 2022.

To keep pace with the expansion of services, two licenses were issued in 2022 - one to the Oman Technology Infrastructure Company and the Oman Towers Company.

Omar bin Hamdan al Ismaili, CEO of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority, mentioned in the annual report that the Authority continues its ambitious path towards achieving the strategic goals derived from



Oman Vision 2040 towards its institutional vision.

In order to enhance the added-in-country value; the Authority provided training programmes in specialisations related to the provision of services to the telecommunications and postal services sectors, through the Nafath initiative. Small and medium-sized companies and freelancers have also been linked to the opportunities offered in the telecommunications and postal sectors. Six operators and 267 registered in the Nafath platform from individuals, and freelancers.



EA detects 80 cases of encroachment on vegetation cover in Dhofar

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@AfrahAlBalushia

Since the launch of the Environmental Protection Initiative this year for Khareef Dhofar, the Environment Authority has found 80 cases of encroachment on vegetation cover and has received 21 reports from citizens.

The initiative came in its second edition to enhance efforts to protect the environment and preserve the elements of wildlife due to the influx of visitors and tourists to Dhofar Governorate during the fall season. It aims to control the bad practices and behaviours that may harm the environment and its green spaces.

The Authority aims to raise the cultural level of citizens and tourists and monitor practices for a clean, sustainable environment during the fall season. In

addition, it educates citizens, residents and tourists about the impacts of wrong environmental behaviours and practices on the environment.

The Authority calls to raise and strengthen the social responsibility of preserving wildlife and green spaces.

A field team supervises the initiative to monitor and inspect a number of sites targeted by the governorate's tourists. The initiative consists of field teams distributed over several regions in the Dhofar Governorate. Meanwhile, the 'Environment Guardians' campaign is going on to protect the environmental diversity in the governorate, stressing the importance of preserving the environment, not encroaching on green areas, not cutting down trees, and ensuring that waste is not randomly thrown.

Transport Minister, Musandam Governor tour Dibba-Lima-Khasab road project site



KHASAB: Within the context of the attention accorded by the government of His Majesty the Sultan to develop the Governorate of Musandam, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam, today went on tour of strategic projects in the governorate.

During the field visit, the two officials took note of the progress made on paving the Dibba-Lima-Khasab road prior to the implementation of the project. They also listened to the project managers' views about possible challenges, as well as demands made by

Tender for Adam-Thamrait dual road implementation

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, rolled out a tender for consultancy services and supervision of the first and third parts of Adam-Thamrait dual road. The 717.5 km Adam-Haima-Thamrait is one of the strategic projects implemented by the government.

The ministry earlier announced the completion of 280 km of the dual road starting from the Wilayat of

Adam in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate and ending at Umm Al Zamayem in Al Wusta Governorate. Besides, the remaining part up to Haima centre with a total length of 37.5 km has been re-tendered and the execution work will commence shortly.

The remaining parts (3,4 and 5) of the Haima-Thamrait road project with a total distance of 400 km, will be implemented by an Omani-Saudi strategic alliance.

people of the Niyabat of Lima. The visit covered beach sites that would be accessible

by land after the construction of the road. The officials discussed proposed designs for

projects benefiting the Khub Al Shamsi area.

They also exchanged views with government departments about suitable measures to address the difficulties involved in designating areas for contractors' equipment sites in each of Khasab, Lima and Dibba.

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) will be engaged in order to increase the local added value.

The tour included the route of Khor Najd Road and its implementation plans, as well as Mooh tunnel project. The officials listened to a briefing by Hutchison Sohar Company, the new operators of Khasab Port project, who elaborated on future plans to develop the port. — ONA

MoI to launch second edition dialogue space for Shura elections today

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Interior today launches the second edition of the dialogue space through the Intikhab smartphone application with the aim of exchanging viewpoints and suggestions.

This follows the success achieved by the first edition in the third term municipal councils elections and is also in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 to enhance community participation.

The second edition of the Dialogue Space has several characteristics all of which are in line with the development of the electoral process. The

new features include the video dialogue and audio recording which allows direct visual hosting with the interlocutors and enables them to discuss topics related to the electoral process through a live video broadcast with the participation of academics and stakeholders.

The dialogue space, which coincides with the ongoing preparations for the tenth term of Majlis AshShura elections, allows the various society segments to exchange opinions and proposals that would ensure wide participation in the elections. — ONA

New batch joins ROP



MUSCAT: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) on Tuesday completed the recruitment procedures for a new group of male and female nationals having the general education diploma (GED) certificate who passed all evaluation stages. The step comes as a continuation to efforts undertaken by ROP in coordination with the Ministry of Labour to employ Omani youth

as per a plan approved by the ROP general command with the aim of supplying various police units with manpower in line with the expansion the ROP is witnessing. The new batch of police recruits headed to the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences where they will receive training and academic studies at specialised institutes.



ENDANGERED AL KIDHA NEEDS PROTECTION

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, AUG 1

THE Pandanus Odoratissimus tree, locally known as Al Kidha, holds significant importance in biodiversity and cultural symbolism. In the past, this fragrant tree used to grow naturally in abundance, but it has now become endangered due to uprooting. There is concern that without appropriate measures, the tree might face extinction. The Environment Authority is making efforts to promote conservation and expand awareness within the community to safeguard this precious tree.

The early Omanis have been familiar with this aromatic tree since ancient times, and it thrives in Al Batinah, Dhofar and Al Dakhiliyah governorates. Farmers uproot Al

Kidha saplings from the mother tree to sell and cultivate them in other farms.

The therapeutic and aromatic properties of Al Kidha tree have led locals to celebrate it, organising ceremonial dances and songs exclusively performed by women and girls. There is a symbolic connection between the tree and femininity; some see it as a representation of fertility and growth. Small shrubs grow around it, much like offshoots attached to a mother date palm tree.

Al Kidha tree offers numerous benefits; some utilise its fruits, and it serves as a remedy for certain skin conditions. Women also incorporate it into their skincare and haircare routines, applying it to their scalp and hair. Women embrace the tree's distinct fragrance during wedding preparations and celebrations, and it is used in creating exquisite perfumes.



AL KIDHA TREE OFFERS NUMEROUS BENEFITS; SOME UTILISE ITS FRUITS, AND IT SERVES AS A REMEDY FOR CERTAIN SKIN CONDITIONS. WOMEN ALSO INCORPORATE IT INTO THEIR SKINCARE AND HAIRCARE ROUTINES, APPLYING IT TO THEIR SCALP AND HAIR

An ancient belief suggests that Al Kidha tree brings happiness and optimism to the place where it is planted. This belief is especially strong among women in rural communities, where the tree is associated with fertility and reproduction. According to this belief, Al Kidha tree only grows when unmarried girls plant it. Over time, this belief evolved into celebratory ceremonies and traditional musical rituals performed by women, honouring the tree. The practice has been passed down through generations, and people take part in celebrating the planting process.

It takes a full year for Al Kidha tree to grow and bloom, usually during the middle of the Hijri month, precisely when the moon is full. At this time, Al Kidha flower emits a delightful fragrance that spreads throughout the area, adding to the charm and significance of this remarkable tree.



Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Festival 2023 to kick off on Thursday

AMAL AL RIYAMI
AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR, AUGUST 1

On Thursday, the activities of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Festival, organised by Al Dakhiliyah Governorate in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, will kick off at the main site next to Hail Yemen Park and Seih Qatanah Park.

Held from August 3 to August 19, the festival aims to attract tourists from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman. It will highlight the natural beauty and cultural heritage of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and the Sultanate of Oman as a whole, in addition to encouraging entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium enterprises to participate in the festival.

It will also promote tourism and create temporary job opportunities for job-seekers. The festival will include the Bait Al Rudaida exhibition throughout the festival period. This will be next to the Bait Al Rudaida Fort in Birkat Al Mouz.

This is the first stop for visitors to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Festival and tourists looking for services or products. This can make the tourist experience in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar easier and smoother including car rental and maintenance services, tourist offices, travel



equipment, and supplies, as well as an exhibition for families and small and medium enterprises.

In both locations, the festival will include a variety of corners, events, programmes, and family-friendly entertainment. In this area, there is a youth corner to meet their interests and orientations, and a children's corner to create fun and creative exploration.

The festival will also include a corner for Omani food, and a corner for Al Jabal Al Akhdhar farmers to display the various products of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. During the festival, paragliding shows and theatrical performances such as Ala Addin show, the chemical science show, and other shows will be presented.

A group of races and events will also be implemented for adventure sports fans, including the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar mountain bike race. This race is organised by the Oman Cycling Federation.

This is in addition to a tourist walk and the Himam race for mountain running. Festival visitors can also learn about the history of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar by visiting the historical village of Al Soujara where there will also be accompanying events.



Stage set for IronMan Championship

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@Afrahalbalushia

Dhofar Municipality launched the slogan of the IronMan Championship in Salalah, in conjunction with the activities of the Serb Season in Dhofar for this year.

Dhofar Governorate will witness the second edition of the IronMan Championship under the official sponsorship of the Dhofar Municipality. "Dhofar Municipality for IronMan 70.3" championship will happen in partnership with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and many government agencies and private sector institutions. The event's venue will be Hawana Salalah.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, said: "This event, to be held from September 21 to 23, coincides with the start of the Serb Season. The event will activate the sports and cultural tourism movements in Dhofar Governorate." The championship aims to promote tourism and other cultural potentials of Dhofar Governorate through many different activities and



events. Participants and visitors in this race will enjoy this global event's atmosphere and the province's aesthetics and tourist sites.

Many nationalities are participating in this global event. The championship provides an ideal opportunity to introduce the tourism and aesthetic elements of the governorate, in addition to enabling companies, owners of small and medium enterprises, productive families and other groups to interact and benefit from this global event.

Part of the event is pre-race exercises, a race for children, and a village race with many tourist and recreational activities. The IronMan 70.3 race is a triathlon race covering 70.3 miles, equivalent to 113 km involving several activities, including swimming, bicycling and running.

Bahraini delegation explores MoH's experience in WISN system



MUSCAT: A delegation from the Kingdom of Bahrain was briefed on the Ministry of Health's experience in implementing the Workload Indicators of Staffing Needs (WISN) system.

During the visit, the delegation met with Dr Fatima bint Mohammed al Ajmiyah, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Administrative, Financial and Planning Affairs.

The delegation discussed means of applying the WISN system, as well as related challenges and methods of tackling those challenges.

— ONA

SALE OF VEHICLE/EQUIPMENT

Leading Construction Co. in Oman intends to dispose of their used vehicles and equipment, in 'as is where is' condition. The items identified are presently located at their Al Khoud yard and will be offered for inspection to the public on 7/8/2023, 8/8/2023 and 9/8/2023 between 08:00 am to 12:00 pm and 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.

Last date for submission of closed tender is 9/8/2023 at 05:00 pm at our Al Khoud office.

Interested parties may contact at
Tel: (+968) 26983767 / 26983777 / 24525303, Mob: (+968) 91354151

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Sultanate of Oman The Supreme Judicial Council Tender Announcement

The Supreme Judicial Council announces its desire to submit the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Vendor Grade	Tender Document Fee
8/2023 Re-call 1	Supply of New Farewalls	13/08/2023	31/08/2023	Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	RO 25/-
15/2023	Tender for Building Cleanliness of the Supreme Judicial Council for the year 2024	28/08/2023	25/09/2023	Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	RO 26/-
16/2023	Renting a Building for the Primary Court & The Notary Public in Bahla	28/08/2023	25/09/2023	Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	RO 25/-
17/2023	Maintenance & Agriculture Services for Buildings belong to The Supreme Judicial Council for year 2024	28/08/2023	25/09/2023	Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	RO 25/-
18/2023	Supply of Desktop for Supreme Judicial Council	28/08/2023	25/09/2023	Excellent, First	RO 25/-
19/2023	Supply Printers for Supreme Judicial Council	28/08/2023	25/09/2023	Excellent, First	RO 25/-
20/2023	Renewal Forti Mail	14/08/2023	31/08/2023	Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	RO 25/-
21/2023	Supply Scanners for Supreme Judicial Council	28/08/2023	25/09/2023	Excellent, First	RO 25/-
22/2023	Renting a Building for the Primary Court & The Notary Public in Yanqul	28/08/2023	25/09/2023	Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	RO 25/-

Where you can buy the tender documents electronically via the link below website :
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Bidders shall submit bid commitment letter in the name of the Chairman of the Internal Committee of Tenders in the Supreme Judiciary Council based on directives from the General Secretariat of the Tender Board, and the latest updates to the electronic tender system.

- For inquiries and clarifications on the tender:**
Submit inquiries related to the project electronically through the website of the electronic tender system (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For inquiries and clarifications on the electronic bidding system:**
Submit inquiries regarding technical support for the electronic bidding system via e-mail and the phone number shown below:
Phone: +968 24402200
Email: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om



■ BREAK FROM WHITE HOUSE



US First lady Jill Biden and US President Joe Biden ride bikes through Gordon's Pond State Park in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware on Tuesday. – AFP

Unesco recommends putting Venice on heritage danger list

PARIS/ VENICE: The UN’s cultural agency Unesco on Monday recommended that Venice be added to its list of world heritage in danger, saying the Italian authorities needed to step up efforts to secure the historic city and its surrounding lagoon.

Unesco said in its recommendation that Venice risked “irreversible” damage due to a string of issues ranging from climate change to mass tourism. The recommendation will now go to a meeting of Unesco’s World Heritage Committee in Riyadh in September for adoption.

Venice’s famed Rialto Bridge

was jammed with tourists on Monday, the same day Unesco recommended the watery city be put on its endangered list citing overtourism and other concerns.

Taking selfies, licking gelato and wheeling suitcases, the hordes of visitors seemed happily oblivious to the possible downgrade Unesco said was due to the risk of “irreversible” damage.

New York tourist Ashley Park, 28, said she knew it would be crowded in Venice, but it wasn’t ruining her vacation. “Obviously if we lived here with all these tourists it wouldn’t be fun,” she acknowledged. — AFP



Tourists taking photos on the Tolentini bridge in Venice. – AFP

Myanmar cuts Suu Kyi’s jail term by six years

YANGON: Myanmar reduced ousted civilian leader Aung San Suu Kyi’s 33-year prison sentence by six years in a partial pardon on Tuesday, as the junta struggles to quell bloody resistance to its rule.

The country has been ravaged by violence in the two years since Suu Kyi was deposed in a coup and hit with 19 criminal cases ranging from corruption to breaching Covid-19 rules.

There have been concerns for the 78-year-old Nobel laureate’s health and the junta moved her from prison to a government building last week.

“Six years imprisonment will be reduced,” junta spokesman Zaw Min Tun told reporters after it was announced she had been pardoned in five cases.

Suu Kyi still faces 14 cases despite the pardon. Rights groups have condemned the legal battle against her as a sham designed to remove a popular democratic leader from the public eye.

Former Myanmar president Win Myint, who was also removed in the 2021 coup, was granted a four-year reduction in relation to two cases, the junta spokesman said. Tuesday’s announcement was part of an amnesty of more than 7,000 prisoners to mark Buddhist Lent,



including 125 foreigners who are to be released and pardoned.

An unspecified number of prisoners facing the death penalty also had their sentences commuted to life imprisonment, the announcement said.

David Mathieson, an independent analyst, said the partial pardon was a “cynical ploy to tell the world that there might be some kind of political resolution coming. When we know that there is not”.

“All the charges against her are absurd and shaving six years off 33 isn’t mercy.” Human Rights Watch’s Asia division deputy director Phil Robertson said the junta aimed “to create the impression of moderation and dialogue when in fact there really is none on offer”.

Joe Freeman, a spokesman on Myanmar for Amnesty International, said the reductions showed the arbitrary nature of the junta’s military courts.

“Those swept up in its clutches never know what may happen to them,” he said.

Suu Kyi was detained on the night of the coup in February 2021 and has only been seen once since -- in grainy state media photos from a bare courtroom in the military-built capital Naypyidaw. — AFP

China slaps export curbs on critical metals, drones

BEIJING: Chinese controls on exports of two metals critical to making semiconductors came into force on Tuesday, a day after Beijing imposed curbs on the foreign sales of some drones.

The Biden administration has in recent months stepped up measures to restrict Chinese companies’ access to the most advanced semiconductors.

China, which seeks to become self-sufficient in semiconductor design, says those measures are aimed at maintaining US supremacy in the field.

From Tuesday, Chinese companies seeking to export gallium or germanium will need to obtain a licence, according to a directive from the Ministry of Commerce.

Under the new rules, they will also need to provide information on the final recipient and give details about their end use.

China accounts for 94 per cent of the world’s production of gallium — used in integrated circuits, LEDs and photovoltaic panels — according to a report by the European Union published this year.

For germanium, essential for fibre optics and infrared, China makes up 83 per cent of production. The export curbs “send a clear signal that China holds all of the power in this dangerous game”, analyst James Kennedy said, calling the curbs “an unambiguous message” to the United States.

“If the US chooses further escalation, China’s next response will have consequences.” For now, he said, China “aims to cause a minimum of damage” to the United States, because their needs in gallium and germanium are “low” and the metals can be acquired elsewhere.

The measures come as the Biden administration mulls fresh curbs on Chinese access to high-tech chips, as well as on outbound US investments in China.

They also follow curbs by Beijing on the exports of certain types of unmanned aerial vehicles, also known as drones.

As of September 1, exporters will require a licence laying out their end use as well as other details before they can be sold overseas. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

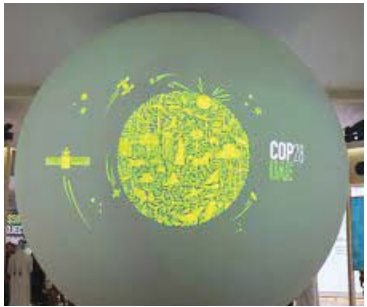
DUBAI

UAE to allow ‘peaceful’ assembly of activists

The United Arab Emirates said on Tuesday it would allow environmental activists to “assemble peacefully” at this year’s UN climate talks, despite a prohibition on unauthorised protests in the Gulf state.

The UAE, set to host COP28 from November to December in Dubai, requires official permission for protests but effectively bans demonstrations it deems disruptive.

The announcement was made in a joint statement with



the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) released on Tuesday and published by the UAE’s official WAM news agency.

PESHAWAR

Pakistan blast death toll rises to 56

The death toll from a suicide bombing in Pakistan that targeted a hard-line religious group’s political rally and raised security concern for a general election due by November has risen to 56, a government official said on Tuesday.

The attack was the deadliest on a political party since campaigning for the last election, in 2018, in the nuclear-armed South Asian nation of the 220 million people.

Militant violence also marred



preparations of a 2013 general election.

The toll from Sunday’s attack in the northwestern district of Bajaur, on the border with Afghanistan, could rise.

MENTOUGOU

20 killed, 19 missing in China rainstorms

At least 20 people were killed and 19 were missing after heavy rains lashed Beijing and surrounding provinces, state media said on Tuesday, in downpours that have submerged roads and deluged neighbourhoods with mud.

Storm Doksuri swept northwards over China after hitting southern Fujian province on Friday, following its battering of the Philippines. Heavy rains began pummeling the capital and surrounding areas on Saturday, with nearly the average rainfall for the



entire month of July dumped on Beijing in just 40 hours.

Swaths of suburban Beijing remain badly hit by the rains — some of the city’s heaviest in years.

Sunset Oasis is a brilliantly imagined tale



The writer is a certified skills trainer and author of *The World According to Bahja*

Between the years 1879-1882, an Egyptian colonel called Ahmed Urabi led a revolution against the invading forces of his country at that time (take your pick between the Ottomans, the British and not forgetting the so-called French influence!). His revolution ebbed between success and failure but had a catastrophic finale: it brought the English rule to Egypt until 1954. Urabi's end was tragic: he was exiled to Sri Lanka for 20 years and came back to Egypt in 1911 to die after being severely ill. This interesting historical background is what Bahaa Tahir (1935-2022) uses for his novel *Sunset Oasis* (2007). The main character of the book is Mahmoud Abdul Tha'hir, a police officer who's been sent to Siwa as a punishment for empathising with the revolutionary ideas of Ahmed Urabi and Jamal El-Deen Al Afghani. He doesn't travel alone; he's accompanied by his Irish wife Catharine who's a history buff and a self-proclaimed researcher. The journey is a treacherous one that takes a few weeks of crossing the desert. Catharine is oblivious to the danger they might face and is obsessing with one idea: she's heading to the place where Alexander the great was claimed the son of Amun — the ancient Egyptian god- by the oracle of Siwa.

The minute she arrives, her romanticism clashes with the harsh reality: she's in a hostile environment where Europeans are not welcomed (after the local's revolution was annihilated by the English a few years back). Nevertheless, Catherine tries her best to discover the place and is appalled to witness the state of ancient Egyptian monuments: mostly looted and turned into common cooking areas. As for her husband Mahmoud, there are many issues that keeps haunting him: Urabi's revolution that he took part in and then had to denounce in order to keep his job, trying to make sense of his new life among the hostility of the tribes in Siwa towards him as he's there to collect taxes for a government they don't support and Catherine's boundless history enthusiasm that keeps putting them in danger and direct conflict with the locals. However, things take a sudden turn with the arrival of Catherine's sister Fiona, whose been recommended the dry climate of Egypt to cure her recurring cough. Mahmoud's burdens increase and soon starts clashing with everyone. The novel is divided into chapters where main characters narrate different parts of the story from their point of view which helps in understanding their perspective on

TAHIR'S LANGUAGE AND DESCRIPTION OF SCENES – ESPECIALLY NATURE- ARE EXCEPTIONAL. THE NARRATIVE IS GRIPPING AND FLOWS SMOOTHLY. YET, THE ENDING IS ABRUPT AND SOMEHOW DISAPPOINTING

different incidents and their emotions. This includes a member of the Siwan tribe Sheikh Sabir, whose narrative helps to understand the strict traditions of the place and the power struggle between the local tribes. However, the impact of the Turks and later the English rule on the locals is expressed through Mahmoud's thoughts and his direct conflict with his superiors and colleagues who support it. The writer includes an interesting chapter where Alexander the great also shares his life story briefly including his visit to the oracle of Siwa. Moreover, a historical claim about his lost tomb being in the same temple where he was claimed a demigod. Tahir's language and description of scenes – especially nature- are exceptional. The narrative is gripping and flows smoothly. Yet, the ending is abrupt and somehow disappointing. The novel won the inaugural International Prize for Arabic Fiction in 2008. It was made into a series that was broadcasted in Ramadan 2017. Tahir's other fictions include *Aunty Saffiya* and *the Monastery*, which won the Italian Acerbi prize in 2000. *Sunset Oasis* is a brilliantly imagined tale. It's splendidly written and unforgettable. Highly recommended to history lovers.

Coup raises doubts about uranium dependence

The military coup in Niger last week raises the question of Europe's dependency on uranium mined in the West African nation for its nuclear power plants. France's nuclear fuel firm Orano, formerly part of Areva, operates a uranium mine in the north of the country, employing some 900 mostly Nigeran staff. The company said last week that it was monitoring the situation closely but that the seizure of power by the military had not for the moment affected the delivery of uranium supplies. Niger accounts for only a small percentage of global production of natural uranium. In 2021, it produced 4.7 per cent of the world's total, far behind Kazakhstan at 45.2 per cent, according to Euratom Supply Agency (ESA), which ensures Europe's supply of nuclear materials. "In 2022, Niger was second largest supplier of natural uranium to the EU, with share of 25.38 per cent," ESA said. "Kazakhstan, Niger, and Canada were the top three countries delivering natural uranium, providing 74.19 per cent of the total," it added. The European Union said on Tuesday the bloc was not at risk of supply problems due to the coup. For France, which operates 56 reactors that provide more than two-thirds of the nation's electricity, Niger was the number three source during the 2005-2020 period, accounting for 19 per cent of the total, behind Kazakhstan and Australia. For uranium, Niger "is no longer the strategic partner of Paris as it was in the 1960s or 1970s", said Alain Antil, head of the Sub-Saharan African centre at the French Institute for International Relations (IFRI). France's energy transition ministry said the situation in Niger doesn't pose any risk for natural uranium supplies as EDF, the operator of France's park of nuclear reactors, has worked to diversify its suppliers, while the foreign ministry said the country's suppliers were "extremely diversified". According to Teva Meyer, a specialist on the civilian nuclear energy sector at the University of Upper Alsace, said EDF has been working on diversifying its suppliers for the past decade, turning to Central Asian nations such as Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, as well as Australia. "The political and economic events in 2021 and early 2022 seriously impacted the global nuclear market and highlighted the relevance and urgency of ESA recommendations" concerning the diversification of suppliers, the head of the agency, Agnieszka Ewa Kazmierczak, wrote last year in the introduction to ESA's annual report. — AFP

The art of stone ax making



Sergey Plekhanov

The writer is the author of 'A Reformer on the Throne: Sultan Qaboos bin Said

In any local history museum a visitor will see fragments of weapons and tools of the Stone Age. Most take a quick glance at these objects and pass by. But don't rush. Stop and look closely at this arrowhead, this skinning scraper. You will be amazed by the quality of the object made by the hands of an ancient man from obsidian or other particularly hard rock. The narrow blade of a knife, once mounted on a wooden base, is something that only a jeweller can do today on a miniature machine. It took students at the University of Exeter 22 months of training to be able to make a stone axe the same as people did 500,000 years ago. Many such perfect products of ancient stone cutters are exhibited in the Frankincense Museum in Salalah. Most of them came from the vicinity of the ancient city of Ubar in old times collapsed into a huge funnel in the middle of a rocky desert. The surroundings of this lost settlement are strewn with various stone products, which were made about 7,000 years ago, which indicates the presence of numerous artisans. Considering that the same stone was used in stone processing, one can imagine how high the craftsman's qualification was, how labour skills were developed, which made it possible to carry out large-scale production of such items as arrowheads. We can also judge how skilful our distant ancestors were in manual work by the finds in the Alps and the Andes, in Scandinavia, where the bodies of people who died long before the emergence of centres of civilisation were found frozen in ice. Their clothes and shoes, weapons and household items were made using the same stone tools or needles from fish bones that are found during excavations. The high quality and durability of products of ancient hands surprises. In those days, they even shaved with stone razors! Speaking of shaving. Even 60 years ago, most men had the skill of using straight razors. Before shaving it was "sharpened" on a leather belt and then slowly driven over face without fear of cuts. Today even a multi-blade shaver from Gillette is a danger to many. It



Stone age tools

KNOWLEDGE OF HISTORY, INCLUDING AWARENESS OF THE CONSEQUENCES OF WORSHIPPING THE IDOL OF PROGRESS, SHOULD WARN MANKIND AGAINST LOSING THE GAINS OF PREVIOUS GENERATIONS

would seem that the loss of a skill should not cause regrets, but this is not an isolated example. The manual dexterity of the current generation is an order of magnitude lower than that of its predecessors. A recent example is the displacement of a manual gearbox by an automatic. The result is not only a significant loss of driving skill, but also atrophy of the calf muscles, leading to leg weakness. The same can be said about the decrease in the adaptive functions of the body as a result of the excessive use of AC. The intellectual resources of the individual are also drying up. If fathers could easily cope with simple arithmetic calculations, then for sons this is beyond their strength because they are used to relying on a calculator. Soon there will be no drivers left who can navigate the map, most of them are already trusting

navigators. Even more sad is the fact that the habit of communicating with a book is disappearing, and this is a powerful tool for the development of human potential! Even reading large texts becomes unbearable for someone who is used to feeding on Facebook, Twitter or WhatsApp messages. It may be said that all these unfortunate facts are an inevitable consequence of technological progress, that it is as ridiculous to be sad about it as to protest against the advent of the steam engine or the telephone. All right, but look at the alarm caused by artificial intelligence (AI) everywhere appearing over the horizon. Even such a standard-bearer of progress as Elon Musk believes that AI has the potential to destroy civilisation. Knowledge of history, including awareness of the consequences of worshipping the idol of progress, should warn mankind against losing the gains of previous generations. It is necessary to accumulate skills and abilities that make a person more powerful and free. Just as in the middle of the 20th century, environmental problems were recognised and acted upon, so the need for the return of the universal personality will inevitably come to the fore.

To comment & email: opinion@omanobserver.om

Why I am nostalgic about my typewriter

It's delightful to find something that is believed to be lost! It provides you joy again when you hand on something that is forgotten. And it will be a bonus if you happen to spot a missing item while searching for something else. I was lucky enough to "discover" a forgotten treasure of mine last week while rearranging and cleaning our households. I came across a dusty box hidden among the "hand-me-downs" in the store room. In fact, I must have encountered it dozens of times but couldn't figure it out because of the decades-old dirt on it.

It was my old portable Remington typewriter with which I had very specific and cherished memories as it was part of my life till the mid-90s. When I opened the box I could still smell the ink and machine oil. It reminded me of its click-clack, click-clack and ding sounds in those years!

I remember how the keys under my eager fingers were, tapping out words and paragraphs while learning typing in an institute in the 80s. At those times, learners had to type all styles of letters and had speed tests with time deducted for errors. I still remember the unforgettable phrase "The quick brown fox jumps over the lazy dog" to be typed by learners.

Moreover, whenever typing mistakes were made in those days, the solution was either to change to a new piece of paper or use "Blanko liquid" to erase and to dry up the liquid before typing. Making a single mistake would mean that the work needs to be redone with a high cost for bond papers.

If these are about typing, I have more nostalgic memories of my Remington typewriter. My journalistic foray began on this machine. Those were the days of manual mechanical typewriters. As knowledge of typing was a mandatory criterion to become a journalism aspirant in those days, we had to go through this laborious task.



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp

The writer is author, senior journalist and policy analyst with nearly four decades of experience in editing and reporting for newspapers and magazines in India and the Gulf region

THE PORTABLE REMINGTON TYPEWRITER WAS ALWAYS MY CONSTANT COMPANION! MY JOURNALISTIC FORAY BEGAN ON THIS MACHINE

was always my constant companion. I yearn to use it again, but cannot. I remember having filed my reports and typed all of them on this typewriter. I often had to cut my text to reduce the workload with a self-claimed compromise on details.

THE QUALITY
But the truth is, it never compromised on the quality. It never hurts as well. At the same time typing on manual typewriters made it pleasurable, that too with coffee side by side.

You know journalism has changed since the days of the typewriter. With the advent of computers and other typing gadgets, the once ubiquitous typewriters are a rare sight these days. It was in 1992 when I last used a typewriter.

During those days, every story, even a news story, except for those political outcries, was investigative in nature. Because you had to go out there, find it and pursue it. Telephones were scarce so you had to go and search out where the sources were, and actually talk to them. Press releases were not common in those days. There were no 'newsroom journalists' then, as are so common these days.

I still remember when the first computers were introduced into the Free Press Journal newsroom in 1986, but before that, we all had to use typewriters. On a good newsy day, I remember having heard the thunder of more than a dozen typewriters going at full speed as reporters tried to beat the evening deadlines.

Although I have sentimental and nostalgic memories of manual mechanical typewriters in the past, I realise that there is no way for anyone to return to using these antique typewriters. Time has changed. Thanks to the invention of computers.

However, the lessons we have learnt using old-day typewriters are as useful and applicable as using computers on keyboards.

RUSSIAN SYMBOLS OUT



Workers dismount the hammer and sickle, part of a Soviet emblem, from the shield of the 'Motherland' monument, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, at a compound of the World War II museum in Kyiv, Ukraine, on Tuesday. – Reuters

The case for Russia's expulsion from Unesco

Russian President Vladimir Putin has been particularly angry lately, and the Ukrainian port city of Odesa has been suffering the consequences. In the Kremlin's neo-imperial view, Odesa has long been a symbol of the Russian character of Ukraine's south, because its initial development was led by Catherine the Great. Last year, Putin himself described it as "one of the most beautiful cities in the world," with "wonderful traditions and history." But for Putin's criminal regime, nothing is sacred.

His fury became apparent on July 17, when he terminated the Black Sea Grain Initiative, a United Nations-backed agreement, signed in July 2022, that enabled Ukraine to export wheat, barley, and other foods from the Port of Odesa, as well as the ports of Chornomorsk and Pivdennyi. The notion that Putin has any say over Ukraine's ability to export goods that it produces, on its own ships, from its own ports is absurd. But he gets away with it by threatening to behave even more criminally than he already has: the northwestern Black Sea, Russia's foreign ministry has declared, is "dangerous" again.

That same day, Putin began to rain bombs on Odesa. The missile and drone attacks initially targeted grain terminals and other port facilities, resulting in major economic losses, including the destruction of 60,000 tonnes of grain. Russian strikes have also been directed at several buildings



ANNA HUSARSKA

The writer is a former senior policy adviser at the International Rescue Committee and a former senior political analyst at the International Crisis Group

UNESCO HAS CONDEMNED RUSSIA'S RECENT ATTACKS ON ODESA, NOTING THAT THEY TOOK PLACE JUST TWO WEEKS AFTER THE STRIKE THAT DESTROYED A HISTORIC BUILDING IN LVIV

on Pereulok Nakhimova, a lovely lane located at the end of a fabulous six-mile-long (ten kilometres) tree-lined promenade, often enjoyed by local cyclists like me. From here, Kanatna street – where the Russian poet Alexander Pushkin often visited his friend Ivan Blaramberg – leads to the heart of the city.

The assault shattered the glass of China's consulate on that lane and damaged the nearby archaeological and literature museums. Soon after, Russia destroyed the House of Scientists – formerly the Palace of Count Tolstoy – and 24 other architectural monuments.

On the night of July 22, Russian missiles severely damaged the Transfiguration Cathedral on Soborna Square. It is a place I know intimately: "Soborka," as locals call the square, is my address when I am in town. But Putin, too, has a kind of connection to it. The cathedral, which was destroyed by Stalin in 1936 and later reconstructed on Odesites' dime, was consecrated in 2010 by Putin's (and the KGB's) collaborator Patriarch Kirill of Moscow, a Russian Orthodox bishop and Ukrainian-killing enthusiast. Unlike most Ukrainian churches, the Transfiguration Cathedral remained tied to the Moscow branch of the Orthodox church.

None of this – not Odesa's historical and cultural significance,

nor Russia's deep links to the city – means much to Putin. As Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov made clear, all that matters is getting revenge for Ukraine's drone attack against the Kerch Strait bridge, which links illegally annexed Crimea to Russia. This should enrage all of us – not least the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization.

As of January, Unesco's World Heritage List includes the historic centre of Odesa, which contains Pereulok Nakhimova, the charming lane that Russia just attacked. One can find Pereulok Nakhimova on Google Maps, and even take a virtual stroll down it, as it was before the Kremlin's recent assault. I found it on my old map from 1914, when it was called Baryatinsky.



More importantly, it is on the map of the "historic centre of the port city of Odesa." Shouldn't Unesco be furious that Russia, a member of the organization since 1954, has bombed it? Article Six of the UN's Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage commits the parties "not to take any deliberate measures" that "might damage directly or indirectly the cultural and natural heritage" in other parties' territory. Surely, no damage can be more deliberate than that caused by targeted missile strikes.

Unesco has condemned the Russian attacks on Odesa, noting that they took place just two weeks after the strike that destroyed a historic building in Lviv. But it should go further, expelling Russia for as long as the Kremlin

continues its criminal behavior. (And that behavior extends well beyond destroying Ukrainian cultural and heritage sites: Lest we forget, Putin has been indicted by the International Criminal Court for war crimes.) There is no legal provision for such a move in Unesco's charter. When Unesco was created, nobody imagined that a distinguished member would invade a neighbouring country, murder its people, deport its children, destroy its cities (including those protected by the Convention), and become an international pariah.

But this does not mean that a mechanism for ousting criminal states cannot be created. The UN has improvised before.

Ukraine has been part of Unesco – and the entire UN system – from the very beginning, initially joining alongside the USSR. Russia became a member only after the Soviet Union's dissolution, and there was never any legal provision for Russia to fill the UN Security Council seat that the Soviet Union had previously occupied.

Moreover, unlike Russia, Ukraine has respected all of the agreements associated with its membership in the UN system. There is, in short, a wealth of legal arguments to justify Russia's expulsion from Unesco. With Russia attacking Odesa daily, it is time to invoke them.

sport

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ENGLAND, DUTCH
RAMPANT IN WOMEN'S
WORLD CUP

HOLDERS

US STUMBLE

INTO LAST
16



AUCKLAND: Holders the United States squeezed into the last 16 of the Women's World Cup on Tuesday with a nervy 0-0 draw against Portugal but England and the Netherlands powered through with big wins.

The United States came to Australia and New Zealand as favourites — ahead of European champions England — to win an unprecedented third World Cup in a row.

But they have been nothing like the team that has dominated international women's football for so long and they will need to be a lot better if they are to go much further at the tournament.

Debutants Portugal came within inches of the win they needed to progress — and dump out the Americans — when substitute Ana Capeta hit the post in injury time in front of almost 41,000 in Auckland.

But the US held on and are likely to face a Sweden team in the last 16 who thrashed Italy 5-0 in their last match.

US coach Vlatko Andonovski attempted to put a positive spin on what was an alarmingly poor performance by the team ranked number one in the Fifa rankings.

"The most important thing was to get the job done," he said.

"This is a fairly new team that have not been together for a long time.

"The more time they spend together the more chances will go in."

The Netherlands, who drew 1-1 with the US last week in a rerun of the 2019 final, racked up the biggest win of this World Cup with a 7-0 demolition of already eliminated Vietnam.

Esmee Brugts and Jill Roord both scored twice for the Dutch, who topped Group E with seven points. The US were second with one win and two draws — they have never before won just one group game.

ENGLAND PUNISH CHINA

In Group D, England overran China 6-1 to sail through as group winners and set up a meeting

with Nigeria in the last 16.

Denmark join them from the group after defeating Haiti 2-0 and will face co-hosts Australia.

Chelsea star Lauren James got a brace for England and was at the centre of everything that was good about Sarina Wiegman's team.

She called it "what dreams are made of".

"I felt free, whether I am on the wing or the middle I am just happy to be on the pitch. I think like last game, I thought, why not hit it and see what happens?" said James, who scored a cracker in the win over Denmark.

"Yeah (Nigeria will be) very tough, every team has been tough — teams are catching up with each other."

After stodgy 1-0 wins over Haiti and Denmark, England let loose, albeit against

WOMEN'S WORLD CUP RESULTS ON TUESDAY
Group E
In Auckland, New Zealand
Portugal 0 United States 0
In Dunedin, New Zealand
Vietnam 0 Netherlands 7 (Martens 8, Snoeijs 11, Brugts 18, 57, Roord 23, 83, Van de Donk 45)
Group D
In Adelaide, Australia
China 1 (Wang 57-pen) England 6 (Russo 4, Hemp 26, James 41, 65, Kelly 77, Daly 84)
In Perth, Australia
Haiti 0 Denmark 2 (Harder 21-pen, Troelsgaard 90+10)

limited opposition in Asian champions China.

"I am very delighted. What I said before the game, we are going to do things a bit different. It shows how adaptable this team is. I think today it worked really well, players felt comfortable," said Wiegman.

"I don't think they expected us to play this way and they didn't find a solution."

MARTA'S TEARS

On Wednesday, Brazil will need to beat Jamaica to guarantee their place in the knockout rounds. Jamaica only need a point.

Football legend Marta was moved to tears as the Brazilian reflected on her career and legacy on the eve of what could be her final World Cup appearance.

The 37-year-old Marta — nicknamed "Pele in a skirt" by the late football great — has already said this will be her last World Cup.

She is the all-time leading goal-scorer in World Cups, men's or women's, and if she adds to her tally of 17 she will be the first footballer in history to score at six World Cups.

"You know what's good? When I started there were no idols in women's football," she told reporters on the eve of the match, tears filling her eyes. — AFP

England level Ashes with win

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, AUG 1

The highly anticipated and closely contested Ashes series ended in a 2-2 draw with Australia having retained the Ashes. Resuming on 135 without loss on the fifth morning and needing a further 249 to win the final Test and the series 3-1, Australia were dismissed for 334 leaving England winners by 49 runs and levelling the series.

While at the start of the fifth day's play three results, a win for either side or a draw were, possible, by the end of the first hour's play, England had put themselves in a better position to force a win. During that period, in fine bowling conditions of heavy cloud cover, they had removed the top three in the batting order.

Chris Woakes, who had three for 61 in the first innings, produced another fine spell of pace bowling. In his second over – the fourth of the morning – he had David Warner held behind with the batsman having added just two runs to his overnight score of 58. The ball was not far short of a length but bounced a bit and took the outside edge.

A run later, Australia were two down for 141 when Woakes, in his next over, trapped Usman Khawaja in front of the stumps after an addition of three runs to his overnight score of 69. Considering he is a batsman who can occupy the crease for long periods, it was an important wicket, under the circumstance, that England claimed.

Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne could only advance the total by 29 runs when Mark Wood having been brought into the attack struck with the wicket of Labuschagne for 13 as he edged to second slip. The three wickets had fallen in a space of 29 runs in



England's Jonny Bairstow takes a catch to dismiss Australia's Mitchell Marsh off the bowling of Moeen Ali. – Reuters

SCOREBOARD	
England 1st Innings	283
Australia 1st Innings	295
England 2nd Innings	395
Australia 2nd Innings (target 384)	
D Warner c Bairstow b Woakes	60
U Khawaja lbw Woakes	72
M Labuschagne c Crawley b Wood	13
S Smith c Crawley b Woakes	54
T Head c Root b Ali	43
M Marsh c Bairstow b Ali	6
A Carey c Bairstow b Broad	28
M Starc c Crawley b Woakes	0
P Cummins c Stokes b Ali	9
T Murphy c Bairstow b Broad	18
J Hazlewood not out	4
Extras (b10, lb10, nb2, w5)	27
Total (all out, 94.4 overs)	334
Fall of wickets: 1-140, 2-141, 3-169, 4-264, 5-274, 6-274, 7-275, 8-294, 9-329, 10-334	
Bowling: Broad 20.4-4-62-2, Anderson 14-4-53-0, Woakes 19.4-50-4, Ali 23-2-76-3, Root 9-0-39-0, Wood 9-0-34-1	
Result: England won by 49 runs	
Series: Five-match series ends level at 2-2	
Player of the match: Chris Woakes (ENG)	
Overall player of the series: Chris Woakes	
England player of the series: Chris Woakes	
Australia player of the series: Mitchell Starc	
Previous Results	
June 16-20: First Test, Edgbaston: Australia won by two wickets	
June 28-July 2: Second Test, Lord's: Australia won by 43 runs	
July 6-9: Third Test, Headingley: England won by three wickets	
July 19-23: Fourth Test, Old Trafford: Match drawn	

seven overs.

Smith and Head settled in well for a while. A lovely drive for four to mid-off from Smith off Wood took him to 32 but on 39 he was fortunate to be dropped by Stokes at backward short leg off Moeen Ali. Stokes had taken a right-handed catch above his head but bringing his arm down he hit his knee and the ball fell out. As he did not have control of the ball in completing the catch Smith was given not out, as confirmed by the third umpire on review.

Lunch followed at the end of that over 66th over on 238 for three with Smith on 40 and Travis Head on 31. Thereafter, with a steady downpour, no play was possible for the next two-and-a-half-hours and a strong possibility loomed of a drawn Test. However, the picture changed rapidly, and not surprisingly, bearing in mind the uncertainties of cricket and of England's weather.

At 4.20pm local time play resumed under a clear sky and in bright sunshine with England

gradually taking control. It began in the eighth over when Travis Head, on 43, was beaten by a prodigious off break from Moeen and he edged his drive to second slip for Zak Crawley to take the second of his four slip catches in the innings.

Along with Smith he had added 95 for the fourth wicket raising Australia's hopes of forcing a win. But ten runs later, on 274 the fifth wicket fell. Smith, having brought up his 38th Test half century in a little under two-and-a-half-hours from 94 balls, played defensively at a ball from Woakes that seamed away from him taking the outside edge for Crawley to take the catch.

On the same total, Moeen struck again with Mitch Marsh held behind superbly by Jonny Bairstow as he dived to hold a deflected edge off Marsh's pad. Woakes and Moeen then removed Mitchell Starc and Pat Cummings respectively leaving Broad to claim the last two wickets as he ended his Test career having announced his retirement the previous day.

140 players from 22 clubs to take part in National Club Chess Championship

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUG 1

As many as 140 players will take part in the National Club Chess Championship for seniors category which will be held at the main indoor hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex from Thursday onwards and will run for seven days under the organisation of Oman Chess Committee (OCC).

A total of 28 teams from 22 clubs across the Sultanate of Oman have confirmed their presence in senior category including: Salalah, Masirah, Saham, Qurayat, Taqah, Ibri, Mirbat, Al Rustaq, Al Salam, Al Shabab, Samayil, Al Suwaiq, Dima W'attayeen, Al Seeb, Nizwa, Al Nahdha, Al Ittifaq, Al Itihad, Al Kamil W'al Wafi, Bidiya and Nakhl. The top domestic chess event will feature for first time participation of the newly established club namely: Nakhl, Dima W'attayeen, Taqah and Izki.

Masirah club broke the domination of Salalah club last year as Dhofar-based team were the champion for four times while Masirah club managed to overcome by ending as defending champion in 2022. It is expected this year championship will feature strong competitions among the participants as some foreign players will join the national clubs.

The seven-day chess event will be conducted on latest Fide (world chess governing body) rules and regulations and will be played on a classic chess league format from nine rounds with 90 minutes for each player and additional of 30 seconds after each movement. Each team comprises four main players and one substitute.

The national clubs have been informed by the OCC to participate with two teams in case if they have 10 qualified players. Moreover, one expatriate player is allowed to join the domestic club if he is a classified



player in classic chess. This step was taken by the OCC to increase the technical performance of the tournament. A total of 14 international players will play with the local clubs including seven Indian players, two players from Egypt and Jordan and one player each from the Philippines, Turkiye and Yemen.

The championship will act as a suitable opportunity for the national players to prepare for the forthcoming regional and international chess championships like the 2023 World Amateur Chess Championship which will be held in Muscat next November. The local tournament will help the national players to build up their experience, increase the technical performance and shape their readiness for the international assignment. The Omani players will look to improve their international ranking.

The championship will be technically officiated by a group of national umpires under the chairmanship of international referee Musallam al Wadahi in presence of Ruqaiya al Balushi, Khalid al Wadahi and with assistant national umpires.

No handshake, no problem as Svitolina downs Azarenka



WASHINGTON: Ukraine's Elina Svitolina grabbed a second straight victory over Victoria Azarenka of Belarus at the WTA Tour DC Open in Washington on Monday, weeks after the duo's Wimbledon clash was marred by a handshake controversy.

Azarenka was booed off court at Wimbledon earlier this month after her defeat to Svitolina, with fans apparently perceiving she had snubbed her Ukrainian opponent by not advancing to the net for a handshake.

In fact, Svitolina did not offer a handshake — something she has declined to do with players from Russia and Belarus ever since the invasion of her homeland. Belarus is a key military ally of Moscow.

On Monday, tournament organisers in Washington aimed to pre-empt any possible repeat of the controversy by informing fans before the match there would be no handshakes.

"At the conclusion of the match there will be no handshake between the players," a message on an arena screen said beforehand.

"We appreciate your respect for both athletes during and following the match, and for your understanding during these difficult circumstances."

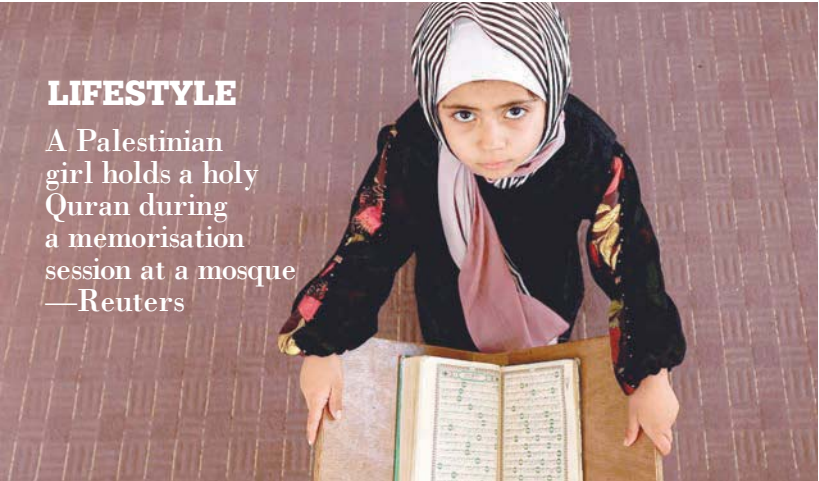
With that issue settled, it was left to the two rivals to serve up a hard-fought if error-strewn battle that saw no fewer than 17 breaks of serve before Svitolina finally prevailed 7-6 (7/2), 6-4. Svitolina clinched victory by breaking Azarenka's serve in the 10th game of the second set.

A wild Azarenka backhand presented Svitolina with a match point which she duly converted on the first attempt after bludgeoning a forehand winner into the corner.

Azarenka saluted Svitolina's victory with a fleeting thumbs up before heading off the court. — AFP

ATP/WTA Washington results Men (first round)
Michael Mmoh (USA) bt Bradley Klahn (USA) 6-3, 6-3; Emil Ruusuvuori (FIN) bt Constant Lestienne (FRA) 6-4, 6-4; Yosuke Watanuki (JPN) bt Wu Yibing (CHN) 1-4, retired; Alexander Shevchenko bt Maxime Cressy (USA) 6-3, 7-6 (10/8); Shang Juncheng (CHN) bt Emilio Gómez (ECU) 6-3, 6-3; Aslan Karatsev bt Kiranpal Pannu (NZL) 7-6 (7/3), 6-1
Women (first round)
Belinda Bencic (SUI x6) bt Anastasia Potapova 6-5 retired; Liudmila Samsonova (x8) bt Danielle Collins (USA) 6-1, 6-3; Marta Kostyuk (UKR) bt Bianca Andreescu (CAN) 2-6, 6-3, 7-6 (7/5)





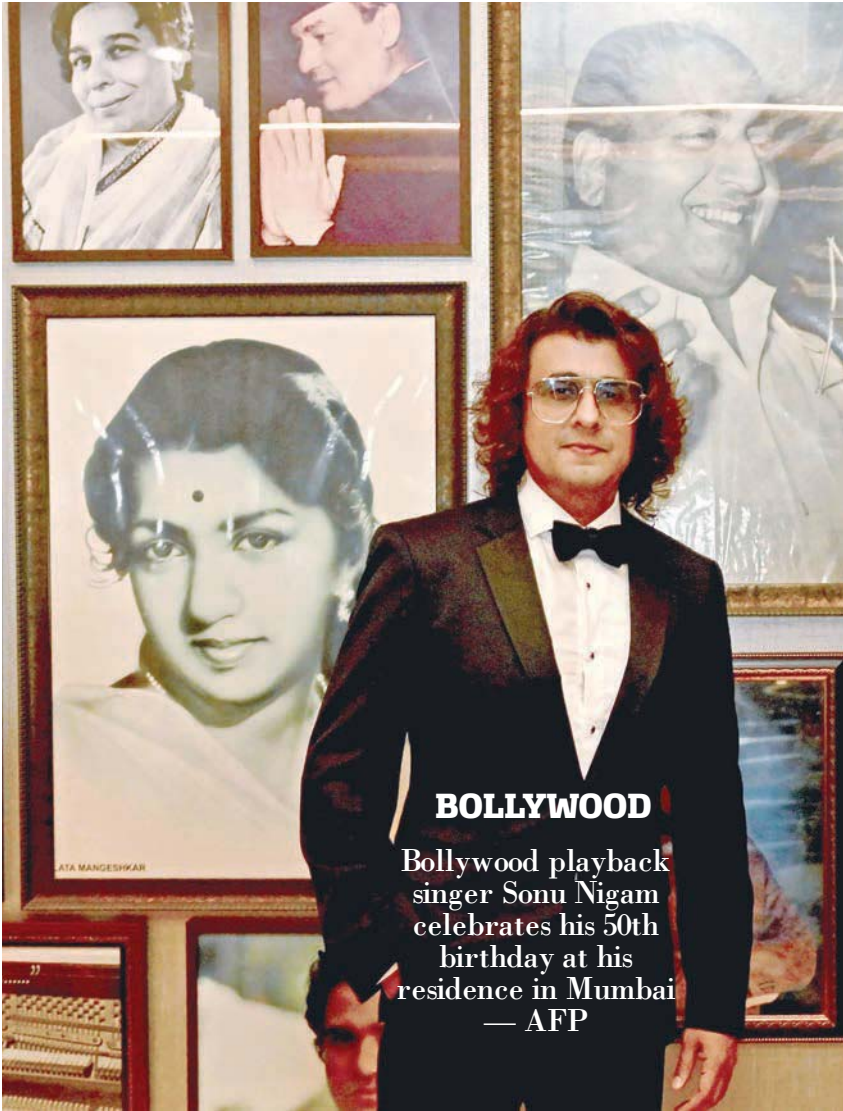
LIFESTYLE

A Palestinian girl holds a holy Quran during a memorisation session at a mosque —Reuters



TRAVEL TALES

Hot air balloons rise during the 40th annual New Jersey Lottery Festival of Ballooning —AFP



BOLLYWOOD

Bollywood playback singer Sonu Nigam celebrates his 50th birthday at his residence in Mumbai — AFP



WEATHER

A local stands by the overflowed Yongding river, after heavy rains in Mentougou district in Beijing —AFP



THEATRE

During a rehearsal of the drama “Amour” (Love) from the movie by Michael Haneke, prior to the premiere in the Salzburg State Theatre. — AFP

art & life

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The Rising Stars of Literature & Motivation

By Kabeer Yousof

Two young, resident sisters have caught the attention of the literary world with their uncanny ability to give wordy life to concepts and images and author diverse titles at a tender age. Meet award-winning author and motivational speaker Zunaira Waheed and young author and passionate equestrian Aysal Waheed, who have recently participated in Logos Hope, the world's largest floating book fair that is currently docked at the Port of Salalah after welcoming avid readers at the Port Sultan Qaboos in Muscat from July 13 to 24.

As a 17-year-old high school student at the International School of Choueifat, Zunaira Waheed has excelled as a young author in her 'writing path' while creating a remarkable mark as a motivational speaker and activist. Her published works include a mystery book titled 'That Night' and a collection of motivational articles named 'Nobody Told You This Before'. Zunaira has collaborated with other writers on several anthologies and has written numerous motivational articles for magazines across the world.

"Writing is my passion and is a way for my emotions to take wings and scale the horizons," said Zunaira, who made reading a habit at a very tender age.

As a speaker, she delivered a TEDx Talk on redefining leadership and its profound impact on personal growth and success. She runs a podcast called RealWithUs, which raises awareness about societal issues and advocates for the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals.

Zunaira's dedication to making a



positive impact has earned her prestigious awards and recognition, including the Educational Leadership Award by Global Youth Awards UK.

Aysal Waheed, Zunaira's younger sister, has so far, at 13 years of age, written 7 books, each focusing on a unique message for the youth, and one of which has earned her the 'Author of the Year' award in 2022.

This young author, who is an 8th grade student and an equestrian as well, has also written several articles, which were published in different mag-

azines and websites. In her TEDx speech, the young author spoke about the importance of staying determined throughout the journey of achieving a goal.

The young leaders left a lasting impact on the youth and fostered a sense of personal growth and global solidarity. The extraordinary journey allowed them to instill the essence of leadership in young minds and create meaningful connections with people from diverse cultures. Over the course of several days, Zunaira and Aysal

embraced the privilege of being part of the Logos Hope community, engaging in mentorship, and inspiring the youth. This unique opportunity was met with excitement and a deep sense of responsibility to impart valuable life lessons to the young participants.

"My inspiration to be a writer and a speaker is my parents and, of course, my elder sister, who continuously encourages me to read and write," a chirpy Aysal said.

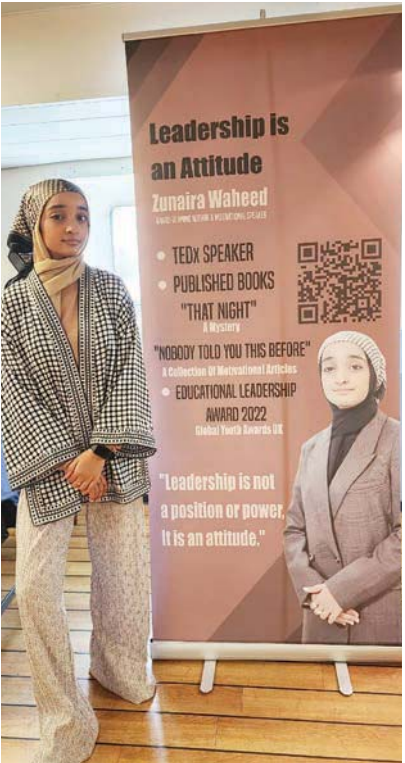
Their parents, Mohammed Waheed, a UK-certified Chartered Accountant,

and Shan E Zehra Waheed, who is pursuing her PhD, spare no stones unturned in helping their children pursue their passion of reading and writing at a time when there are wild cries from different corners that reading is dying among our children.

A primary focus was instilling leadership qualities that transcend mere authority or power. Zunaira and Aysal emphasised the significance of empowering others, cultivating empathy, and embracing responsibility for collective well-being.

Encouraging the youth to recognise and harness their individual strengths and talents to inspire and motivate others was a central theme throughout the engagement.

Zunaira and Aysal's journey at Logos Hope showcased the power of youth leadership and inspiration. They instilled empathy, empowerment, and responsibility among the young participants, fostering personal growth and global solidarity. Their impact left a legacy of hope and optimism for a brighter world.



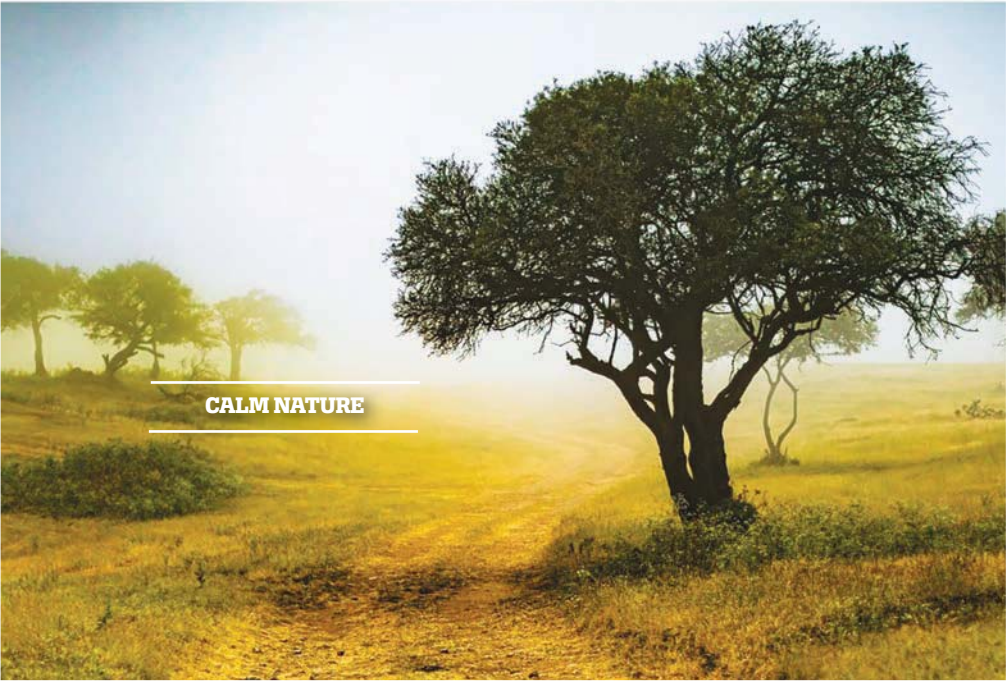


INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

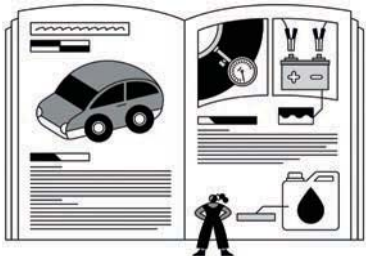
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Keep Your New (Used) Car Running

SALES OF USED CARS have, in particular, boomed in the last few months. If you're among the buyers, you should have obtained the Carfax report documenting the vehicle's history before your purchase, and had an independent mechanic inspect it. But from there, its care is on you. Here's what you need to know.



START WITH A READING ASSIGNMENT

Many people don't read instructions for appliances until they've made a mistake and are forced to pull out the owner's manual. When purchasing a car, which may be the most expensive appliance you'll ever buy, don't wait until you make a mistake: Read the manual cover to cover on Day 1. For older cars, it's probably a paperbound book. For newer cars, it's most likely offered in digital form. If a manual doesn't come with your car, you can almost certainly obtain one from an online source, regardless of the vehicle's age.

The owner's manual will tell you when the various systems must be serviced. It will also show you how to find things like the oil-level dipstick, the coolant tank and the power-steering reservoir. Some provide instructions for maintenance jobs you can do yourself.



TIRES COME BETWEEN YOU AND THE ROAD.

They are critical. Check air pressure weekly with a reliable gauge. Simply unscrew the tire's valve cap, place the gauge over the valve and press down. Do it before driving because pressure will rise with tire temperature.

Inflate the tires to the vehicle manufacturer's specification. You'll find it in the owner's manual and, in many cases, on the door jamb. Check the spare as well. You might need it someday.



CHECK THE OIL; CHANGE THE OIL.

For owners of vehicles with internal combustion engines, oil keeps things humming. All cars use some in normal driving, and a used car may use a quart or slightly more between oil changes. If you allow the oil level to drop well below what is prescribed, it could damage your engine and void any warranty. To check, simply pull out the dipstick. It probably has a colourful

handle to help you find it. Wipe it, stick it back in and pull it out again. The correct level will be indicated on the dipstick. Don't add oil until it's at least a quart down. Use the type prescribed by the vehicle manufacturer. This recommendation will come in the form of a viscosity number, such as 5W-30.

Oil becomes contaminated over time, so it must be changed regularly. For cars driven largely on high-mileage trips, an interval of 6,000 miles is sufficient. If you drive only one or two miles every time you use your vehicle, an interval of 4,000 miles is better, as moisture contamination is a problem when engines rarely reach operating temperature.

Newer cars have a system that monitors oil condition and tells you when it's time for service. Make sure the mechanic resets the monitoring system when the oil is changed. Check other fluid levels as well, including coolant, brake, power-steering and transmission fluid.

month. Some bulbs are easily serviced. Others such as complex LED arrays and headlights may require more disassembly work than you want to tackle. But don't drive without a full complement of lights. That could earn you a ticket or cause an accident.

DON'T BE CAUGHT DEAD.

A set of jumper cables can help you start your car if its battery is drained and won't turn the engine. But if the failure is because of a charging system problem or battery defect, a jump won't help.

If you have to jump your car from someone else's, make sure the transmissions of both vehicles are in Park, and shut off the donor car. Attach the red clip to the positive terminal of your battery. Connect the other red clip to the positive terminal of the donor car. Attach one black clip to the negative terminal of the donor car before connecting the other one to an unpainted steel part of your car (connecting it directly to the battery is not recommended because it can sometimes spark, causing fumes from the battery to explode). Start the donor car and give it five minutes to charge your battery before starting your car.

Of course you can't always find a good soul who will give you a jump. That problem can be resolved by purchasing an emergency jump starter. Many of these portable power packs sell for less than \$100.

Although gas/electric hybrids have a high-voltage circuit for powering the electric motor, they also have a 12-volt circuit that handles other chores. In many cases, starting the engine is among them. A hybrid's 12-volt battery can be jump-started, but take care that you make the right connections. See your owner's manual.

EYES ON THE ROAD.

If your windshield streaks when you turn on the wipers, it's time to replace them. You'll find instructions in your owner's manual. Make sure you get the correct blades for your car. If you don't want to attempt the job, most service stations will do it while you wait.

KEEP IT CLEAN.

Washing your car will keep it looking good and protect it. Insects, tree sap and other nefarious substances can damage paint and speed corrosion. So regular washing is recommended. Doing it yourself with a bucket, sponge and garden hose may appeal to your self-reliant instincts, but it's not the green way to go. You'll waste far more water and do more damage to the environment washing your car in the driveway than you will by going to a reputable carwash that recycles water and safely disposes of waste. — **NYT**

LET YOUR LIGHTS SHINE.

Before purchasing a used car, make sure the lights work — high- and low-beam headlights, taillights, turn signals and brake lights. Thereafter, check them once a



WELLNESS



Why Sunscreen Is the Only Anti-Aging Product You Need?

HAVE YOU EVER looked at the skin on the buttocks of a 90-year-old? Dr. Fayne Frey has. "It's beautiful," said the dermatologist and author of the book "The Skincare Hoax." "There's very little pigment, there's very little wrinkling, there are very few blood vessels."

Compare that to the skin on a nonagenarian's face, where you'll likely see brown spots, scaliness, visible blood vessels, much more wrinkling and a generally sallow appearance. Some signs of aging, namely fine lines, happen naturally over time. But Frey said that as much as 80 per cent of the skin changes we associate with age are actually caused by the sun's ultraviolet rays. The best way to avoid them, aside from staying indoors, in the shade or permanently covered up? Sunscreen. Sunscreen's ability to block sunburns and prevent skin cancer is well known, but many dermatologists say it's also the best skin care product for slowing signs of aging. Here's what to know about how UV rays cause the skin to age and how sunscreen helps to minimise those effects.

HOW UV RAYS DAMAGE THE SKIN

There are two categories of ultraviolet light: A and B. UVB wavelengths are shorter and primarily affect the top layer of the skin. UVA rays are longer and can penetrate deeper (they can also travel through glass, so don't assume a window keeps you safe from sun damage).

Years of exposure to both UVA and UVB rays damages cells on the top layer of the skin, called keratinocytes. When that happens, the skin starts to look red, rough and scaly in patches — a condition called actinic keratosis.

"It's due to DNA mutations that occur specifically in the keratinocytes, and they then proliferate and become abnormal," said Dr. Lena Von Schuckmann, a dermatologist and clinician researcher at the University of Queensland in Australia. In some cases, actinic keratosis can become cancerous. Below the keratinocytes are the melanocytes — the cells that produce melanin and cause the skin to darken. UVA rays primarily activate these cells, resulting in a suntan. (Sunburn is different; it's caused by UVB rays injuring the top layer of the skin.) With long-term UV exposure, the melanocytes become damaged, resulting in permanent hyperpigmentation. These brown spots are sometimes called sunspots, age spots, liver spots or their technical name,

solar lentigines.

Collagen and elastin, which keep the skin elastic and supple, reside in the next layer down. UVA rays trigger the breakdown of those proteins, causing wrinkles as the skin loses its elasticity, as well as the thinning of skin, making blood vessels more visible. There's no real way to boost collagen and elastin artificially (there's scant evidence for the power of supplements and creams), but cells called fibroblasts do continue to make the proteins as you age, although production slows down. As a result, some dermatologists say it may be possible to reverse some signs of aging.

If you start using sunscreen early and consistently enough, "and the fibroblast is still young enough or healthy enough to be able to produce more collagen," the appearance of wrinkles could diminish over time, said Dr. Henry Lim, a dermatologist at Henry Ford Health and a former president of the American Academy of Dermatology. The key is making sure collagen levels aren't depleted further by sun exposure while the cells work to replenish the protein.

But Von Schuckmann said the jury is still out: "We certainly have studies to show that sunscreen used on a daily basis reduces skin aging. Whether or not it reverses skin aging, that's a little bit tricky to differentiate."

HOW SUNSCREEN PREVENTS SIGNS OF AGING

Sunscreen stops damage by blocking UV rays from reaching and penetrating the skin. There are two types of sunscreen ingredients: mineral and chemical.

Mineral ingredients, namely zinc oxide and titanium dioxide, act as a physical barrier, reflecting the ultraviolet light off the skin. (Our eyes can detect that reflection of light, which is why these sunscreens appear to leave a white cast.) Chemical ingredients — such as avobenzone, oxybenzone and homosalate — absorb the UV rays. Both types of sunscreen can degrade or wash off over time, so it's important to reapply every two hours, and more frequently if you're swimming or sweating.

In general, sunscreens are more effective at stopping the shorter UVB rays than the longer UVA rays. Sun protection factor, or SPF, only refers to how well the sunscreen prevents a sunburn, meaning how well it blocks UVB. Frey said that just a few ingredients approved for use in the United States — namely avobenzone, oxybenzone, zinc oxide and, to a lesser degree, titanium dioxide — block UVA. To make sure a sunscreen provides UVA protection, look for one with these ingredients, or check that it's labeled "broad spectrum," which means that it stops the longer wavelengths from penetrating. (Newer ingredients available in Europe are more effective against UVA; some are in the pipeline for review by the Food and Drug Administration.)

When it comes to choosing the best sunscreen to prevent signs of aging, Von Schuckmann advised looking for one that's broad spectrum and SPF 50 or higher; whether it's a chemical or mineral formulation doesn't matter. The most important thing, she added, is that it "actually goes onto the skin every single morning." — **NYT**



Oman ranked 5th in Arab region in competitive industrial performance



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUG 1

The Sultanate of Oman achieved significant progress in its industrial performance, ranking 56th globally and 5th in the Arab world in the Competitive Industrial Performance Report for 2023. This improvement reflects its efforts to diversify industrial activities, increase industrial exports and add value to the sector.

Over the past seven years, Oman has risen from 72nd place in 2016 to its current position.

The report, issued by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation, assesses the industrial competitiveness of over 153 countries through the Competitive Performance Index (CIP).

Oman's ascent of 16 places in just seven years showcases its growing industrial competitiveness, with even more growth expected in the future, supported by the industrial strategy set by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Dr Saleh bin Saeed Masan (pictured), Trade and Industry Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, emphasised Oman's commitment to increasing industrial competitiveness.

The country is actively implementing programmes and initiatives outlined in the Industrial Strategy 2040.

The ministry is currently developing additional initiatives to enhance the efficiency of the industrial sector, adopt Fourth Industrial Revolution technologies in production, and empower national industries in global markets.

The Competitive Industrial Performance Index report evaluates global economies based on three main axes: the ability to produce and export manufactured goods, technological upgrading, and global impact.

These three axes, with eight sub-indicators, have been integrated into the Sultanate of Oman's industrial strategy.

New labour law will encourage Omanis to join private sector

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, AUG 1

The newly released Labour Law was established to encourage citizens to join the private sector, according to several government officials.

Last week, the Under-Secretary of Economy, Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Maawali, expressed that the new provisions in the law "will empower the private sector to lead economic growth and achieve the desired integration" while offering solutions to "empower the sector to overcome the challenges it faces."

Maimuna al Sulaimani, Commercial Lawyer and Member of the Oman Human Rights Commission, a consulting body in the law drafting process, expressed a similar sentiment.

"In any society or state, the most sustainable employability is from the private sector and companies, not from government. The private sector has the potential of offering bigger opportunities and more flexible benefits," she said.

The new provisions introduced a set of mandates to specific to citizens within the private sector. These include requiring employers to develop employee retention plans, and to develop plans to appoint and train employees to occupy leadership positions within establishments with more than 25 employees according to Article 22.

Furthermore, the law will also require establishments to train their Omani employees



IN ANY SOCIETY OR STATE, THE MOST SUSTAINABLE EMPLOYABILITY IS FROM THE PRIVATE SECTOR AND COMPANIES, NOT FROM GOVERNMENT. THE PRIVATE SECTOR HAS THE POTENTIAL OF OFFERING BIGGER OPPORTUNITIES AND MORE FLEXIBLE BENEFITS.

"to develop their skills and efficiency."

It also requires employers to set up a human resources fund that will specialise in funding programmes and policies for "employment, rehabilitation and empowerment" of workers in the private sector.

Al Sulaimani believes that the new provisions

will enable recruitment and promotion based on merit while simultaneously offering mentoring opportunities.

"[Based on the new law] people are recruited and promoted based on their credibility and productivity."

"Because for example, one of the articles in the law right now states that a person who is underperforming is given six months' notice with areas of improvement and is given six months to improve on himself.

"If those six months elapse and he hasn't improved then the employer is entitled to replace him with another Omani with the same profession."

AlSulaimanireferredtoArticle (43), which requires employers to notify underperforming

employees of their shortcomings while offering them a grace period of six months to perform at the required level. The article stipulates that if an Omani employee is terminated, another citizen must fill their position.

Article (39) mandates that terminated employees will be entitled to up to 10 paid hours per week during their notice period to look for alternative employment.

Based on recent data from National Centre for Statistics and Information, the number of Public Authority for Social Insurance (PASI) registered Omani workers in the private sector totalled 275,623, while the number of expatriate workers stands at 1.79 million.

Omani-Australian JV copper concentrator plant nears completion

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, AUG 1

Alara Resources, a leading international minerals exploration and development company, is inching closer to completing its state-of-the-art 1 million tonnes per annum (MTPA) copper concentrator plant in Oman.

The Al Wash-hi-Majaza copper and gold JV project, which has been progressing steadily, has now reached an impressive 95 per cent completion.

Meanwhile, the civil works of the projects are at 88 per cent complete.

Al Hadeetha Resources LLC, a partnership of Alara Resources of Australia and Omani-based investors, is the developer of the project.

The copper concentrator plant, located at Al Mudhaibi in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, is part of Alara Resources' strategic plan to expand its presence in the Middle East and capitalise on the region's abundant mineral resources.

The facility is designed to



extract and process copper ore from Al Hadeetha Mine, one of the largest copper deposits in the Sultanate of Oman.

Last week, Al Hadeetha Resources has already signed an offtake deal covering the production of copper concentrate from the project.

With the construction phase almost finalised, Al Hadeetha Resources is now focusing on the installation of critical equipment and commissioning processes.

The company aims to commence production at the copper concentrator plant in the coming months, marking a significant milestone in its operational timeline.

The 1MTPA copper concentrator plant incorporates advanced technologies to optimise mineral recovery and reduce environmental impact.

Al Hadeetha Resources has implemented stringent environmental management

practices, ensuring compliance with international standards and local regulations.

The company's commitment to sustainability extends to minimising water and energy consumption, as well as managing waste and emissions effectively.

Upon completion, the copper concentrator plant is expected to yield high-grade copper concentrates, contributing to both domestic and international markets.

TURN TO P14

Sharp growth in MSX trading volumes in July



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUG 1

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) experienced significant growth during the month of July, with a trading volume of RO 67 million, marking a rise of over 26 per cent over the previous month. Trading volumes doubled compared to the previous month.

The MSX 30 Index concluded its 30-month trading on a positive note, closing at 4776.098 points. Ominvest 2023 Perpetual bonds were the most traded securities by value, totalling RO 8.8 million, representing 13.5 per cent of the total trading value.

Bank Muscat followed with RO 7.2 million, and Abraj Energy Services, listed on the exchange last March, saw trades worth RO 5.9 million.

Oman Telecommunications secured the fourth spot in terms of trade. Bank Muscat, Al Anwar Investment, and Abraj Energy Services were the top three most traded securities based on the number of trades.

Majan Glass, Al Madina Investment Holding, and Oman Investment and Finance had the lowest percentage change in share price. On the other hand, Oman Chromite, Voltamp Energy, and National Finance had the highest share price change.

During July, 91 securities were traded, with 32 recording an upward trend, 44 experiencing price declines, and 15 maintaining their previous levels. The total number of transactions executed during the month reached 10,914, showing a 31.4-per cent increase compared to June.

In June, the Muscat Stock Exchange, in collaboration with the National Financial Sustainability Programme, introduced six initiatives to boost investment, including enhancements to the market industry, securities lending and borrowing, the promising corporate market, pooled trading accounts, triangular governance, and the liquidity fund.

1st Duqm Economic Forum to review prominent investment opportunities

DUQM: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) will organise the first Duqm Economic Forum on October 16, 2023. The aim of the forum is to highlight the investment opportunities available in the zone, which is witnessing rapid economic and urban growth.

The organisation of the forum comes within the efforts of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and a number of other government agencies to attract more investments to SEZAD.

The forum will discuss many issues related to investment in SEZAD, most notably investment in green industries, renewable energy projects, and other industries.

The Forum, which will highlight the growth opportunities available



to small and medium enterprises, is expected to witness the signing of a number of agreements and memorandums of understanding.

The Forum will allow investors to closely view the economic projects in SEZAD, learn about the investment opportunities available, and the possible areas of partnership. Many major local and international companies are expected to

participate in the Forum to showcase their capabilities, key projects and experiences in various economic sectors.

The SEZAD has recently emerged as a hub for renewable energy, green hydrogen and green iron projects. SEZAD currently includes a variety of investment projects with an investment volume of about RO 3.6 billion, most notably: Duqm Refinery, Ras Markaz Terminal, dry dock, integrated power and water station, and many projects in the industrial, tourism, commercial, real estate development, logistics, transportation and services sectors.

The Zone also has high quality infrastructure project such as Duqm Airport, Duqm Port, and a multi-purpose fishing port.

Omani-Australian JV copper concentrator plant nears completion

FROM PAGE 13

The production capacity of 1MTPA positions Al Hadeetha Resources as a key player in the global copper industry, further strengthening Oman's position as a prominent copper producer in the region.

The completion of Al Hadeetha Resources' 1MTPA copper concentrator plant in Oman will not only bolster the company's growth strategy but also contribute to the overall development of Oman's mining sector.

The project's successful execution showcases Al Hadeetha Resources' expertise in delivering complex mining projects on schedule and underscores its commitment to sustainable and responsible mining practices.

Bank Muscat customers still have the chance to win a DTO Motorsport drive package experience

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to providing top-of-the-line features, services, and rewards to its Premier Banking customers, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, is delighted to remind Bank Muscat Private Banking and Asalah Priority Banking Credit Cardholders that the 5-special-motorsport-experience packages offered in partnership with Visa are still in place and that the promotional period is valid until August 31, 2023.

The chance for entering the draw to win one of these "once in a life-time" packages will



be given to Private Banking and Asalah Priority Banking Credit Cardholders who spend a minimum of RO 500, whether online or internationally, on the international e-commerce sites.

Five lucky winners, including

2 Asalah Priority Banking Credit Cardholders and 3 Private Banking Credit Cardholders will have the chance to visit the Circuit de Spa-Francorchamps track in Belgium.

All Bank Muscat customers having the Private Banking Infinite credit card and Asalah Visa Signature credit card will be automatically entered into the draws once they meet the eligibility norms. Further to this, they will get additional chances every time they spend an additional amount of RO 500 during the promotional period.

More interestingly, Bank Muscat allows more entries into the draw for its customers by counting their

cumulative registered spends.

The five winners will embark on an extraordinary and exciting experience where they will enjoy a two-day motor experience package from 8 -10 October 2023 including a track experience at the Belgian racetrack famous for hosting Formula 1 races.

Not only this, but those very winners will get a privilege of a two-night hotel stay which will be characterised with multiple advantages as part of the winners' package such as dinner, transfers to and from the circuit, 5 1-1 coaching drive sessions, 5 data analysis sessions, as well as business-class air tickets.

Citizen watch unveils new sustainable timepieces inspired by May bells

MUSCAT: Citizen, a renowned leader in the watch industry, is proud to announce the launch of eight new models from its environmentally-conscious Citizen L brand.

These timepieces celebrate the beauty of our planet while embracing sustainability and eco-friendly practices. Inspired by the delicate May bells, flowers symbolising happiness and the arrival of spring, the new watches from Citizen L are a harmonious blend of elegance and environmental responsibility.



The new Citizen L models showcase a stunning combination of design elements that reflect the delicate beauty of May bells. The gently curving lines of the case, accompanied by a lustrous mother-of-pearl dial, evoke the charm of these exquisite flowers.

A sparkling diamond at the 8 o'clock position resembles a glistening raindrop on one of the plant's bell-shaped blooms, further accentuating the timepieces' elegance.

Additionally, the EM1060-87N, EM1063-89D, and EM1062-57D models boast four diamonds at the 3 o'clock position, adding a touch of glamour and sophistication reminiscent of fine jewellery.

"We are thrilled to introduce these new Citizen L models, which encapsulate the joy and happiness associated with the blooming of May bells," said Sanjeev Awasthi, Chief Executive Officer of Al Seeb Technical Establishment (SARCO) LLC.

"Each timepiece in this collection is a testament to our commitment to sustainable practices and our passion for creating watches that reflect the beauty of our planet."

Citizen L's dedication to sustainability goes beyond design inspiration. All models are equipped with the innovative light-powered Eco-Drive technology, harnessing sunlight and artificial light to generate energy and power the watches.

This revolutionary feature eliminates the need for regular battery changes, reducing the environmental impact caused by

discarded batteries.

"We are proud to be part of Citizen's initiative in producing watches that are not only visually captivating but also environmentally responsible," stated Mohamed Meeran Faisal, Senior Manager — Sales and Marketing of Citizen Watches Gulf Co.

"By incorporating sustainable materials like apple leather and recycled polycarbonate, these timepieces align with our vision of a greener and brighter future."

The commitment to environmental conservation extends to the materials used in the watches. Straps crafted from sustainable materials, such as environmentally-friendly apple leather and ECOPET, make a notable contribution to reducing the environmental footprint.

The base of the dial is also made from 100 per cent recycled polycarbonate, further enhancing the eco-friendliness of these timepieces.

Citizen L has been a pioneer in creating sustainable watches with elegant designs since 2016.

With the launch of these new models, the brand reiterates its dedication to caring for both people and the planet, encouraging wearers to celebrate the beauty of nature every time they glance at their wrist.

The new Citizen L models are set to be available in stores nationwide starting July 25, 2023.

Embrace elegance and sustainability with these exquisite timepieces that capture the essence of happiness and the beauty of May bells.

BMW Series 7 offers exceptionally smooth driving experience

MUSCAT: The BMW Series 7 is a flagship luxury sedan that offers a driving experience characterised by exceptional smoothness. Recently, BMW and Al Jenaibi International Automobiles — the official BMW importer in the Sultanate of Oman, invited media persons to test drive the latest models of BMW. Mohammed al Rashdi had the opportunity to experience this remarkable car firsthand during a drive from Chedi Hotel Muscat to the BMW Showroom in Wattayah, Muscat.

"From the moment I settled into the driver's seat, it was evident that the BMW Series 7 was designed with utmost attention to detail and comfort.

As I embarked on my journey, the car's sophisticated suspension system immediately made its presence felt. The adaptive air suspension effortlessly absorbed the bumps and undulations of the road, ensuring a smooth and comfortable ride throughout the entire journey," Mohammed said.

The BMW Series 7's cabin was a haven of tranquillity, shielding the car from the outside world. Thanks to the advanced noise-cancelling technology and



meticulous insulation, road noise was noticeably muted, allowing me to enjoy a serene and peaceful drive. The cabin exuded luxury and refinement, with high-quality materials and exquisite craftsmanship adding to the overall sense of elegance.

"As I navigated through the streets of Muscat, I couldn't help but appreciate the seamless power delivery and effortless acceleration of the Series 7's engine. Whether it was merging onto the highway or overtaking slower vehicles, the car responded with remarkable poise and grace.

The smooth-shifting automatic gearbox further enhanced the

driving experience, seamlessly transitioning between gears to maintain a refined and composed ride," he added.

Throughout the journey, the BMW Series 7's driver-assistance systems proved to be invaluable companions. Features such as adaptive cruise control and lane-keeping assist worked harmoniously to assist me, reducing the need for abrupt movements and ensuring a smoother, more relaxed drive.

These technologies not only enhanced safety but also contributed to the overall smoothness of the journey. "Upon arriving at the BMW



Showroom in Wattayah, Muscat, I couldn't help but reflect on the impeccable smoothness of the drive in the BMW Series 7.

From the luxurious cabin to the advanced suspension, refined engine, and innovative driver-assistance systems, every aspect of the car was meticulously engineered to provide an extraordinary level of comfort and refinement.

My drive from Chedi Hotel Muscat to the BMW Showroom in Wattayah, Muscat, in the BMW Series 7 was a testament to the exceptional smoothness and driving experience that this flagship luxury sedan offers. It truly embodies BMW's commitment to excellence and driving pleasure, providing an unforgettable journey that is both comfortable and exhilarating," Mohammed concluded.

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MTCIT enhances maritime affairs services, records growth during H1

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) enhanced maritime affairs services and recorded growth during the first half of this year by issuing 406 marine activities services, an increase of 81 per cent compared to the same period last year.

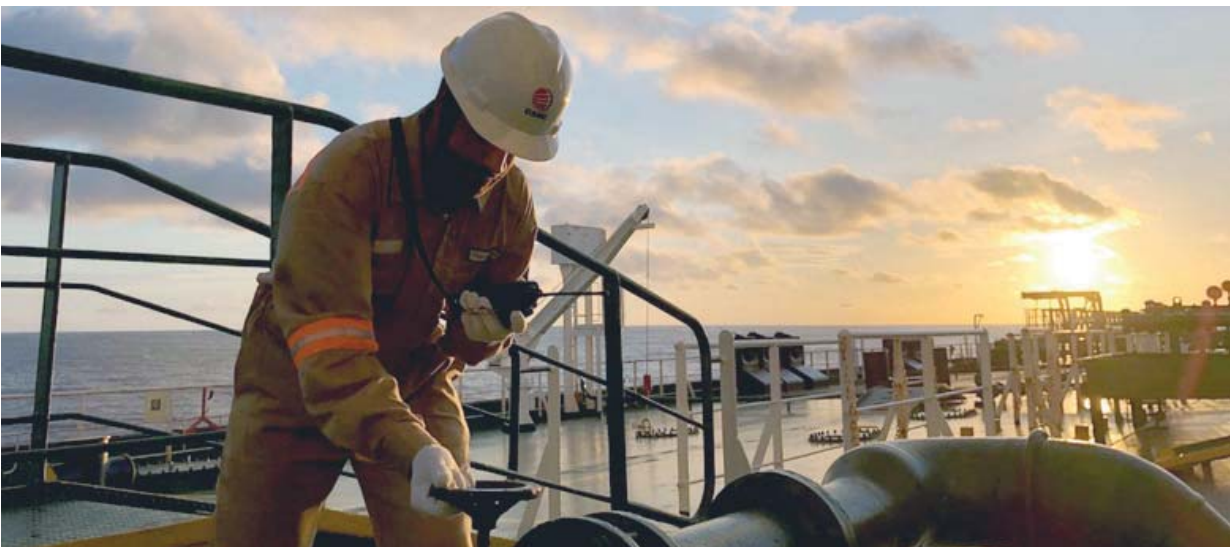
The Ministry issued 217 marine unit registration certificates and 622 renewed marine unit certificates.

The Ministry also issued 165 navigational permits for foreign

ships to operate in the territorial waters of Oman during the first half of this year, compared to 167 permits during the same period last year.

The permits granted for ships include: tugs, yachts, dry bulk, oil tankers, trucks and ships tourist.

With regard to the certificates issued to seafarers, 357 certificates were issued during the first half of this year, with a decrease of 9 per cent compared to the same period last year. Nine security compliance certificates for port facilities, 9 permits for diplomatic ships and



108 permits, including 63 permits for Sultan Qaboos Port and 45 permits for Salalah Port were also issued.

On the other hand, the number of foreign vessels operating in the territorial sea of Oman that were inspected and their data entered into the MOU and Riyadh Memorandum of Understanding database during the first half of this year was 153 vessels, an increase of 13 per cent compared to the corresponding period last year, while the number of offending vessels was 90.

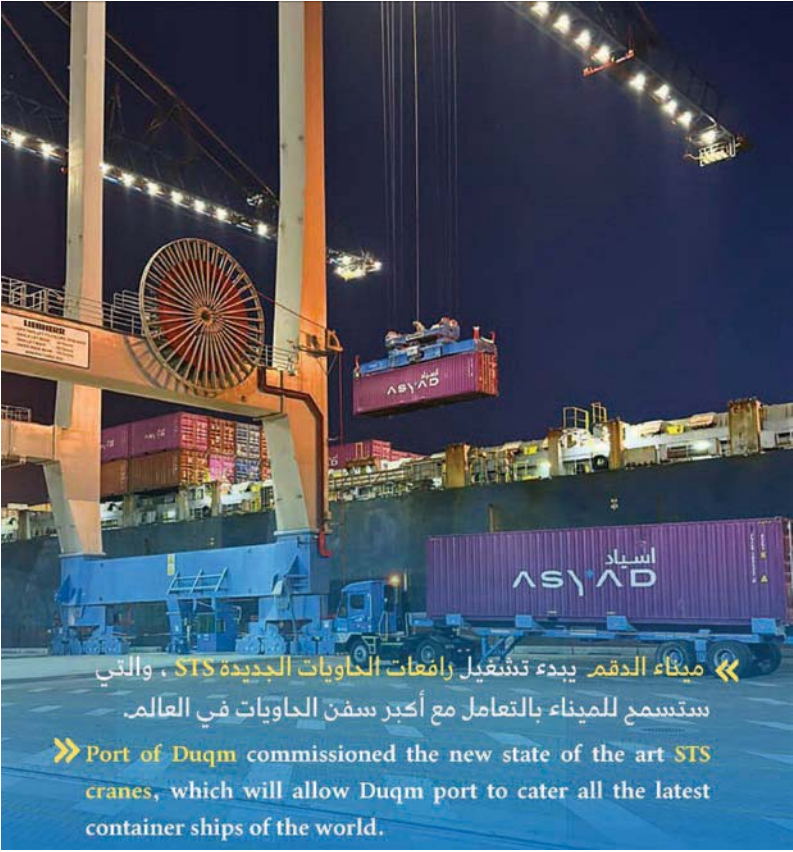
Port of Duqm commissions ship-to-shore container cranes

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 1

Adding new heft to its cargo handling capabilities, Port of Duqm has announced the successful commissioning of its fleet of Ship-to-Shore (STS) cranes designed to enable a new generation of mega containerships to call at Oman's biggest industrial and maritime hub.

Designed, manufactured and installed by leading Irish crane manufacturer Liebherr, the fleet of four STS cranes is among the most-modern of its kind currently in operation around the world.

With a forward reach of 71 metres and a back reach of 18 metres, they are equipped to handle port calls by giant container vessels with capacities in excess of 20,000 TEUs.



"Port of Duqm commissioned the new state-of-the-art STS cranes, which will allow Duqm Port to cater to all the latest containerships of the world," the port stated in a recent post.

The new STS cranes supplement a large array of container handling hardware that was procured in recent years and is currently in various stages of installation and operationalisation.

It includes a fleet of 12 rubber-tired gantry cranes, also from Liebherr, and forklift trucks.

With the commissioning of the STS cranes, Port of Duqm is

preparing to bring into operation part of its dedicated Container Terminal, which is being developed in two phases across a 1,600-metre section of the Commercial Quay.

The facility will not only drive the growth of localised containerised cargo traffic linked to Duqm SEZ's growing industrial and economic base, but also unlock new opportunities in transshipment volumes.

Given Duqm's strategic location abutting key international shipping lanes serving the

wider Middle East, Indian sub-continent and East Africa, the port is well-positioned to attract container transshipment volumes particularly cargoes destined for the Arabian Gulf.

Aggregate capacity of the Container Terminal, across the two phases of its development, is envisioned at 3.5 million TEUs per annum.

As revealed earlier by Asyad Group, representing the Omani government's stake in the port, plans are afoot to appoint an

WITH THE COMMISSIONING OF THE STS CRANES, PORT OF DUQM IS PREPARING TO BRING INTO OPERATION PART OF ITS DEDICATED CONTAINER TERMINAL, WHICH IS BEING DEVELOPED IN TWO PHASES ACROSS A 1,600-METRE SECTION OF THE COMMERCIAL QUAY.

international port operator with expertise in the operation of container terminals to work in partnership with a subsidiary of Asyad Group to develop and operate the first phase of the Container Terminal.

Asyad Terminals-Duqm, a partnership of Port of Duqm Company and Asyad Ports-Duqm, is currently operating three other commercial berths at Duqm: the multi-use general cargo berth, the bulk cargo berth, and the Ro-Ro berth for vehicles.

Significantly, the Ship-to-Shore cranes now installed at Port of Duqm are high-tech.

Featuring 5G technologies, remote control and other high-tech capabilities, the cranes are part of a package that includes an automatic driving system, yard monitoring system, and automatic landing system.

They are the first cabinless STS cranes to be deployed in the region, each connected to its own dedicated remote operator station.

Oman crude tops \$85.79/barrel

MUSCAT: The official price of Oman oil yesterday, for delivery next October, reached \$85. 79 per barrel.

The price of Oman oil rose by 73 cents compared to the price

on Monday.

The monthly average price of Omani crude oil for August delivery was \$74.78 per barrel, down 16 cents compared to the July delivery price. — ONA

OABC appoints new Chief Executive Officer

MUSCAT: The Oman American Business Centre (OABC) has announced the appointment of a new Chief Executive Officer, Rebecca Olson (pictured), effective from August 1. Rebecca previously served as the Executive Director for the OABC for 5 years before departing in July 2022, and now returns to lead the organisation as CEO.

In her new role, Rebecca will be responsible for overseeing the execution of the OABC's mission: implementing new initiatives to improve trade, develop bilateral relations, and establish a stronger presence promoting Oman trade and investment in the United States.



OABC President and Chairman Emeritus, Ali Daud, expressed his appreciation for Rebecca's leadership during her previous period as Executive Director: "We're ushering in a new era for OABC and for the business relationship between Oman and the US over the coming years. Rebecca has a wealth of experience and earned the respect of our business community members, and we are confident she will lead OABC to accomplish our objectives. In line with Oman Vision 2040, and the country's plan to diversify its economy, we intend to establish new avenues to seize the potential US-Oman Free Trade Agreement, one of only four such agreements in the entire MENA region."

"There has never been a better time to focus on trade and investment between Oman and the US", says

Fouad Eid, Vice President of the OABC.

"OABC will work in partnership with MoCIIP, OCCI, the US Embassy Muscat, and other key stakeholders to promote some very exciting opportunities for Omani, American and foreign companies.

For example, Oman recently signed a MoU with the US EXIM Bank for \$500 million in financing for those seeking to purchase US products at competitive rates. We aim to help companies' access information and practical support surrounding this and other benefits of the FTA."

Rebecca expressed her gratitude upon returning to the OABC: "I am honoured and privileged to serve as CEO of the OABC, the country's leading business networking organisation and the official affiliate of the US Chamber of Commerce in Oman.

I look forward to working together with the Board, our members, and our dedicated staff to ensure we continue contributing to the growth of an active business community in Oman, building bridges for trade and investment with the US, and fulfilling the expectations of our members."

Oman exports 153 million oil barrels in H1

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman exported 152,963,300 barrels of oil until the first half of 2023. By calculating the average price per barrel at \$81.40, oil exports accounted for 79.9 per cent of the total oil production of 191,351,100 barrels.

The data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicated that the total production of crude oil decreased by 0.4 per cent, to reach 149,814,500 barrels, while the total production of oil



condensate increased by 6.3 per cent, recording 41,536,600 barrels.

Meanwhile, the average daily production of oil reached 2, 057,200 barrels until the end of June 2023.

China topped the oil-importing countries from the Sultanate of Oman, with total exports of 140,781,300 barrels, followed by Japan with 4,783,500 barrels, then India with 2,716,200 barrels, while exports to other countries reached 3,732,200 barrels. — ONA