

His Majesty's greetings conveyed to Iranian President

Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, took part in the swearing-in ceremony of Dr Masoud Pezeshkian, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, which took place in the Iranian capital, Tehran, on Tuesday. During the ceremony, the minister conveyed the greetings and congratulations of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Iranian President along with his best wishes for him and the friendly Iranian people for further progress and prosperity.

SUNRISE - 05:36 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR - 04:14 AM
DHUHR - 12:18 PM
ASR - 03:42 PM
MAGHRIB - 06:55 PM
ISHA - 08:13 PM



P10

OMAN LOSE TO SAUDI IN BASKETBALL MATCH



P15

SALAMAIR ANNOUNCES FUTURE PLANS, INDUCTS NEW CEO



P20

MASIRAH CONTINUES TO BE HOME FOR KITE SURFING CLINICS



MUSCAT
HM THANKED BY ALGERIA PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Abdelmadjid Tebboune in response to His Majesty's cable of greetings on the occasion of his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, President Tebboune expressed his appreciation and best wishes to His Majesty the Sultan. He also prayed to Allah the Almighty to grant His Majesty good health and well-being and the Sultanate of Oman further progress and prosperity.

OMRAN GROUP POSTS RO 31.6M NET PROFIT



Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran Group) announced a record-breaking financial and operational performance in 2023, achieving a net profit of RO 31.6 million (growing by 199 per cent) and a 44.6-per cent revenue growth reaching RO 70.4 million. The group witnessed an 8-per cent growth in the occupancy rate of its resorts and hotels compared to 2022. This rise was reflected in the number of guests, with a total number of 774,881 guests, representing an 11.5-per cent increase compared to 2022.

DETAILS ON P13

Oman for nuclear weapon-free Mideast

GENEVA: The Sultanate of Oman has said that the establishment of a nuclear-weapon-free zone (NWFZ) in the Middle East constitutes an urgent necessity towards the realisation of security and stability, noting that a NWFZ in the Middle East would bring about political, geopolitical, economic and humanitarian benefits to the Middle East and

the world at large. Oman also underlined the importance of an NWFZ in augmenting chances for further regional and international cooperation, building confidence and generating opportunities for investment in civil nuclear technology, while at the same time reducing military spending and creating a more stable political

landscape. A statement to this effect was delivered by Dr Salim bin Issa al Maashani, Director of the Disarmament and Arms Control Affairs Office at the Foreign Ministry. Dr Al Maashani delivered the statement during the meeting of the Second Preparatory Committee for the 2026 Review Conference of the Parties to the

Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) being convened in Geneva from July 22 to August 2 at the United Nations premises. In this context, Oman called on depositary states and sponsoring states of the 1995 resolution to meet their obligations. "Oman regrets the fact that two depositary states of the

treaty (sponsors of the 1995 resolution) obstructed the 2015 conference in favour of Israel, preventing the conference from producing a final document. This action represents disregard for the non-proliferation system, since Israel is not a party to the treaty and its nuclear programme remains ambiguous and lacks transparency.

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THE NEW EDITION OF THE CORRESPONDENT LOOKS AT THE JOURNEY OF DISCOVERY. OMAN HAS ALWAYS PRIDED ITSELF ON BEING ONE OF THE SAFEST DESTINATIONS FOR TRAVEL. IN THE AUGUST EDITION, WE REVISIT OMAN'S APPEAL AS A WELCOMING AND ENRICHING DESTINATION.

Low pressure system to bring rains

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The latest weather updates and analysis of the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre indicate that the Sultanate of Oman will be affected by a low pressure system from the Arabian Sea starting from Tuesday evening till Friday.

Clouds advection is expected over most governorates of the Sultanate of Oman with chances of isolated rains occasionally thunderstorms over Al Sharqiyah South and parts of Al Wusta, Al Sharqiyah North, Muscat



The low pressure could bring rainfall ranging between 10-30 mm on Tuesday and Wednesday.

and Dhofar governorates. Muscat enjoyed overcast skies, but temperatures are expected to cool down for the next few days as the impact of low pressure begins. weather report indicates the impact will be seen in Al Sharqiyah South first.





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Oman wins Dutch laurels in dance championship

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Oman residents' team of young dancers has made the Sultanate proud by winning the Global Dance Open Championship held in Apeldoorn, Netherlands, from July 8 to 13.

In the competitions that hosted teams from 37 countries, including Australia, Canada, USA, Spain, Portugal, Belgium, Gibraltar, the Canary Islands, New Zealand, the UAE, Qatar, Japan and Germany, the team was able to fetch gold and silver along with other titles to the Sultanate of Oman.

The team of 53 people, representing The Dance Destination, embarked on a 10-day trip to the Netherlands. Out of these, 21 students participated in six categories, securing three gold, two silver, and two fourth-place finishes.

Zero Degree Team (Senior Category Group) - a group of students from Indian School Muscat, Indian School Ghubra, ISGI, and Choueifat School Muscat, Sizzlers (Junior Category Group) - students from ISM, ISG, and ISB, and Ashutosh Arun Ganesh (Sub-Junior Solo Category) - Indian School Ghubra bagged gold in



the competition that lasted for days.

Prisha Sivakumar (Senior Category Solo) - Indian School Muscat, and Jashith Manjunatha (Sub-Junior Category Solo) - Indian School Bausher won silver.

Yash Pramod Chinchunsure (Junior Category Solo) of Indian School Ghubra International, and Elina Peter Dsouza (Sub-Junior Category) of Indian School Muscat were adjudicated 4th place in the competitions.

“We are proud to have represented Oman and become the global champions once again on such a significant

platform. We expected to win in our categories as we were thoroughly prepared, and our three months of hard work paid off. It is indeed a proud moment for all of us,” said Deepthi of Team The Dance Destination.

She further said that since 2018, the institution has been providing international exposure and would continue to provide such international platforms for the aspiring students, which helps groom them to be the best not only in Oman but also globally. “It was indeed a proud moment for not only the parents and institute but also the whole community.”

Choice of course major should be based on students’ abilities

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 30

Choosing a university major is a challenging task for high school graduates and their parents. This critical decision often attracts interventions from relatives, friends, and the broader environment, adding to the stress.

Many parents believe their children, at a young age, lack the capacity to make such a consequential decision on their own. They insist that the choice be grounded in sound scientific criteria to avoid future regret.

Seeing themselves as more knowledgeable about labour market demands and having more life experience, parents often push their children to suppress their own interests to satisfy parental expectations and out of respect for them.

Maryam al Ghailani, a recent high school graduate, noted that a significant number of students rely on their families to choose their university majors. She emphasised that the family plays a crucial role in shaping their children's ambitions, highlighting the gap between personal aspirations and achievable goals.



Many parents believe their children, at a young age, lack the capacity to make such a consequential decision on their own

University student Abdullah al Hilali shared that the family's influence is evident through academic results and the alignment between a student's inclinations and their performance, especially at the start of secondary education, a pivotal stage for future specialisation.

Psychologist Abdullah al Araiimi added that parents, driven by their concern for their children's future, often push for majors they believe will secure the best societal positions. This well-meaning interference intensifies after high school, as parents may choose specialisations based on

their own wishes rather than their children's aptitudes.

This mismatch can lead to failure or poor performance, underscoring the grave mistake of imposing a major that doesn't align with a child's desires or abilities.

Al Araiimi advised parents to approach this decision like friends, offering guidance without imposing their will. He urged open communication and mutual understanding between parents and children, emphasising the need for coordination, consultation and discussion to ensure that both parties are satisfied with the chosen path.

SMEDA team concludes textile industry tour in India

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

Halima bint Rashid al Zariyah, Chairperson of Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), recently completed her visit to over eight premier institutes and centres in India specialising in textile design and manufacturing.

The visit was part of SMEDA's ongoing efforts to stay abreast of the latest technologies and innovations in the textile industry and to improve business management practices. It also sought to build robust networks with industry specialists, fostering potential future collaborations and partnerships to localise and transfer textile industry knowledge to Oman.

Highlights of the tour included a visit to the Centre for Incubation, Innovation, Research and Consulting (CIIRC) in Bangalore, where the delegation observed successful incubator models and effective strategies for supporting innovation and transforming ideas into successful projects. This visit also helped expand SMEDA's network with entrepreneurs and investors in the field of innovation.

The delegation visited the National Institute of Design (NID) in Bangalore, known for its longstanding expertise in textile design. Here, they explored the latest methods and techniques, exchanging ideas with the institute's experts to enhance innovation in their projects. Opportunities for cooperation were identified, aimed at boosting the



The visit was part of SMEDA's ongoing efforts to stay abreast of the latest technologies and innovations in the textile industry

competitiveness of SMEs in Oman's textile sector.

The BBC Advanced Research and Translation Centre in Biology was another key stop, where the delegation learned about scientific and cultural programmes and training centres for emerging companies in life sciences. This visit facilitated the exchange of expertise and the formation of effective partnerships to develop the innovation environment within SMEDA's programmes.

At the NIFT-TEA Fashion Institute in Coimbatore, the team was briefed on advanced technologies and training centres in fashion and textiles. They also visited the South India Textile Research Institute (SITRA), which focuses on research and development in the textile

industry, offering advanced training programmes and the latest curricula and technologies.

The programme concluded with a visit to Anna University in Chennai, which promotes innovation in textiles through advanced research and development. The university supports emerging companies by providing guidance and resources to help entrepreneurs transform their ideas into successful projects.

This comprehensive visit was designed to review leading global and regional experiences and markets for textile products, aiming to enhance cooperation, transfer expertise and localise cutting-edge technologies to advance the textile industry in Oman, while also boosting local content.


تثمير
TATHMEER

TANMIA GCC Diversified Equity Fund (TATHMEER)

Board of Director Report For the Quarter ending June 30th, 2024.

Dear Unitholders,

On behalf of the board, I am pleased to present the results of TANMIA GCC Diversified Equity Fund (TATHMEER) for the Quarter ending June 30th, 2024.

The Fund managed to end the quarter in line with the benchmark. This is despite negative sentiments in the market due to certain Saudi Vision 2030 related target revisions and several IPOs/big-ticket (secondary offering of Saudi Aramco) that dampened liquidity and price discovery in rest of the stocks. Meanwhile, our strategy combining fundamental and technical data sets led to the fund's outperformance of 1.74ppts since YTD 24. The Fund's value at the end of the period was USD 22.78mn and the Net Asset Value per unit stood at USD 1.17.

Performance

Period	Fund Performance	Benchmark Performance
YTD- 2024	-2.33%	-4.07%
Full Year 2023	9.84%	6.19%
Full Year 2022	-4.73%	-6.84%
Last 3 Years Annualized	3.46%	-1.88%

Global equity markets demonstrated another resilient quarter in the wake of strong economic start and earnings momentum (DM equities up 2.8%, while MSCI EM up 5.1%), with price growth concentrated in large cap stocks rather than rate sensitive small caps. Companies exposed to Artificial Intelligence largely outperformed while other tech stocks also rallied. On the other hand, news of Chinese support to its real estate sector provided some boost to its real estate sector, the key mover of the economy. The trickle-down effect of Chinese growth subsequently gave hopes to other EM markets as well that were already rising on strong consumer demand and easing monetary policies. All this happened despite FED updating its rate-cut outlook to just one in 2024, instead of three previously, basing its result on further data confirmation.

In terms of comparative performance, the S&P GCC Index retreated by 4.99% during 2Q 2024. Among the constituents, Kuwait's market receded the most with a 6.13% decline, followed by Saudi market at 5.82% and Dubai Market at 5.09%. Abu Dhabi was down 1.81% while Bahrain's bourse declined by 0.84%. Meanwhile, Oman's market went up by 1.11% while Qatar was the most successful market with a gain of 1.22%.

Brief Summary of Accounts

Particulars	30 th June 2024 USD	30 th June 2023 USD
Revenues	(119,952)	1,758,614
Total Comprehensive Income	(554,119)	1,435,932
Net Asset Value	22,775,887	22,650,887
Fund Capital	19,441,242	18,508,452
NAV per unit	1.17	1.22

Interim statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024

30 June 2023	31 Dec 2023	30 June 2024	30 June 2023	31 Dec 2023	30 June 2024
Unaudited RO	Audited RO	Unaudited RO	Unaudited RO	Audited RO	Unaudited RO
ASSETS					
Current assets					
8,034,832	8,377,092	8,441,474	Investments at fair value through profit or loss	21,925,904	21,758,680
482,448	479,065	230,993	Receivables	599,983	1,244,325
246,006	167,567	138,926	Cash and cash equivalents	360,846	435,290
8,763,886	9,023,744	8,811,393	Total assets	22,886,733	23,438,295
UNIT HOLDERS' FUNDS					
7,125,754	7,125,754	7,484,878	Fund capital	19,441,242	18,508,452
1,594,838	1,852,771	1,283,838	Retained earnings	3,334,645	4,812,362
8,720,592	8,978,525	8,768,716	Total Unit holders' funds	22,775,887	23,320,814
LIABILITIES					
Current liabilities					
5,288	7,745	3,396	Accruals and other payables	8,822	20,118
38,005	37,474	39,290	Amount due to a related party	102,024	97,333
43,293	45,219	42,676	Total liabilities	110,846	117,451
8,763,886	9,023,744	8,811,392	Total unit holders' funds and liabilities	22,886,733	23,438,295
0.471	0.485	0.451	Net asset value per unit	1.172	1.260

Outlook

The GCC region is expected to outperform the global economy in 2024, with projected growth of 2.8% compared to the global average of 2.6%. While interest rates are likely to remain elevated due to persistent services inflation and potential supply chain disruptions, the region's economic momentum will be supported by investments in tourism, consumer goods, real estate, and non-oil sectors. Additionally, a potential acceleration of the Chinese economy could further boost the GCC's growth trajectory.

More specifically, 2H24 is likely to be characterized by sector-specific growth in the region. Stretched valuations in certain sectors might cap further upside in the short run, while favorable policies in others such as the IT, real estate, electricals & electronics, tourism and consumer items might open up new avenues of investment. We anticipate increased focus on companies' expansion plans and their impact on investor expectations. We have seen specific stocks catching up to the overall country-investor theme in Qatar which revolves around the North field expansion and LNG development. The same could continue going forward as well as more announcements come through. Meanwhile, market making activities are on the rise in Oman, and we have witnessed the same in other countries as well, which is supportive of the overall market development. Dubai market remains cheap by relative valuation standard, and offers selective opportunities that we continue to evaluate and participate in. Kuwait and Bahrain market may continue moving sideways with stock specific movements specifically after 2024 results. For Saudi Arabia, the largest constituent of GCC index, we foresee market performance to follow movements in index-heavy weights which are more tilted towards oil, petrochemicals and financials. Investors would factor in 2024 results and seek direction from company briefings which would dictate the direction of stocks. Lastly, it is imperative to note that overall market conditions may very well be overshadowed by the upcoming IPOs specifically in Oman, UAE and Saudi Arabia. We continue to deploy our research expertise and filter out lucrative opportunities.

Despite the promising regional development activities, risks persist, including the impact of ongoing conflicts on the tourism sector and different policies that might be implemented as new governments take charge in several countries. On the contrary, global investors are increasingly shifting their attention towards the GCC region, which is not only attractive due to its valuation discount but also provides longer term growth visibility and relative stability. Moreover, after the recent drop in prices, dividend yields have become more attractive, warranting further attention. We keep a close eye on regional and global developments. Our steadfast approach of research-driven stock selection and active portfolio management instills confidence in achieving positive returns over the medium to long term.

We pay our tributes to His Majesty, Hatham Bin Tarik, for his inspiring leadership and vision that will continue to lead us further on the path to greater prosperity. On behalf of the members of the Board of Directors, I would like to acknowledge and thank His Majesty's government and our valued unit holders for their continued support.

Said Hilal Al Habsi Chairperson

Interim statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the period ended 30 June 2024

Six-month period ended 30 June 2023	Six-month period ended 30 June 2024	Six-month period ended 30 June 2023	Six-month period ended 30 June 2024
Unaudited RO	Unaudited RO	Unaudited RO	Unaudited RO
INCOME			
202,049	176,104	457,413	Dividend income on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss
205,828	48,058	128,385	Realised gain on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss
172,008	(244,726)	(635,652)	Unrealised (loss)/gain on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss
(6,635)	(31,967)	(83,032)	Foreign exchange loss
13,817	5,750	14,934	Finance income
677,067	(46,181)	(119,952)	
EXPENSES			
(75,144)	(81,382)	(211,382)	Management and custodian fees
(49,089)	(85,772)	(222,785)	General and administrative expenses
(124,233)	(167,154)	(434,167)	
552,834	(213,335)	(554,119)	Net profit for the period
0.030	(0.012)	(0.030)	Earnings per unit

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Dhofar's baobab trees are found in small quantities in various wilayats, most notably Dhalkout and Mirbat

DHOFAR'S MAJESTIC BAOBAB TREES — A DELIGHT OF THE KHAREEF SEASON

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 30

Dhofar Governorate, located in southern Oman, is a treasure trove of natural delights, with a distinct blend of seasonal climate, colourful fauna and lush greenery. One of the governorate's most notable features is its diversified plant cover, which contains some of the world's most uncommon and valuable trees. Among these is the gigantic African baobab tree, a true natural wonder.

Dhofar's baobab trees are found in small quantities in various wilayats, most notably Dhalkout and Mirbat. These trees grow naturally in these places, with an estimated population of 200. While the baobab is native to Africa, notably Madagascar, it also grows in Australia and Yemen. These trees have found a home in Dhofar, adding to the area's diverse ecosystem.

Baobabs are among the world's largest and oldest trees. They stand as stately sentinels throughout Oman and the Arabian Peninsula, with some trees estimated to be 500 to 6,000 years old. These trees have a distinct seasonal cycle, mature their leaves for three months in

fall before dropping them in other seasons.

Baobabs are renowned for their remarkable physical attributes. With trunk diameters of approximately two metres, they can grow to heights of up to fifteen metres. These enormous trees, also called bottle trees, upside-down trees, baobabs, kalhimah, tebladi and monkey bread trees, are astonishing to see.

During the rainy season, the baobab's trunks can hold significant volumes of water. This ability to store water is critical for survival in arid climates.

Despite their huge trunks, baobabs are only about 22 metres tall and have widely spaced branches. They grow slowly, but their lifespan distinguishes them from other trees.

The natural scenery of Dhofar is enhanced by the presence of baobab trees, especially in the khareef season (June to September). The area is transformed into a lush paradise during this time of year by the monsoon rains, which draw hundreds of visitors. Dhofar's highlands, valleys and coastal regions come alive with verdant foliage, misty streams and

shimmering foliage during the khareef season, offering a surreal experience.

During khareef, the baobab trees provide an added attraction. Their unique beauty and old grandeur entice nature lovers, researchers and tourists alike. These trees can be found in attractive wadis with rich woods and majestic mountain sides facing the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea. The combination of beautiful environment and the presence of these ancient trees creates an unforgettable atmosphere.

During Khareef Dhofar Season, these ancient giants add to the beauty of the governorate, whether you are climbing over the verdant hills, exploring the deep forests, or just taking in the cold, misty air. The region is a must-visit location for everyone looking to enjoy the wonders of nature and history because of its natural beauty and Oman's rich cultural legacy.

The preservation and marketing of Dhofar's distinctive natural resources, such the baobab trees, will guarantee that future generations can continue to enjoy these marvels while the governorate develops its tourism infrastructure.

Salalah magnetic hill phenomenon: Illusion or reality?

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 30

An intriguing occurrence that has been documented in a number of nations, including Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Sweden, Portugal, Poland, Germany, Romania, the United States and China, is the magnetic hill phenomenon, also referred to as 'anti-gravity hill'.

In the Sultanate of Oman, this fascinating phenomenon can be enjoyed just off Mirbat in Dhofar Governorate. It gives the impression that cars and other items can roll uphill defying gravity.

Several efforts have been undertaken to solve the puzzle of this occurrence and offer a rational scientific explanation. There are differing views on this matter; some consider it to be a real natural phenomenon subject to certain rules of physics, while others regard it as an optical trick brought about by the topography of the area.

Geographical characteristics of the site and the surrounding environment are frequently blamed for the production of magnetic



In the Sultanate of Oman, this fascinating phenomenon can be enjoyed just off Mirbat in Dhofar Governorate

hills. These characteristics have the ability to produce an optical illusion in which things appear to be rolling downhill when, in reality, they are going uphill due to a little inclination that is invisible to the naked eye.

According to scientists, the

fundamental reason for this illusion is the surrounding topography and the road's small slope. When one stares down the road, the horizon appears to be flat, giving the impression of a level surface. However, due to the distance and viewing angle, the inclination is quite moderate and difficult to detect.

This modest slope, combined with other factors such as the observer's perspective and the curvature of the Earth, results in an optical illusion in which objects appear to be travelling uphill.

The majority of the evidence suggests that, despite its intriguing nature, the magnetic hill phenomenon is essentially an optical illusion brought on by natural processes. Nevertheless, the subject is still a source of discussion and scientific investigation, which makes it an intriguing field of research.

Visitors to Dhofar during the khareef season make it a point to check out the supposed effects of anti-gravity during their forays into the countryside away from Salalah.

TRADITIONAL TURKISH ARCHERY SHOW ADDS COLOUR TO KHAREEF

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Visitors to the Khareef Dhofar Season have yet another reason to rejoice as a unique event showcasing the strong relations between Omani and Turkish cultures of archery and sessions of archery lessons are set to enthuse visitors.

The Directorate-General of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in Dhofar Governorate is organising an event with support from the Turkish Yunus Emre Institute and Omani Al Bayan Global Business.

This event is part of the Yunus Emre Institute's efforts to establish a cultural centre in Muscat, aiming to enhance cultural ties between the Sultanate of Oman and Turkiye. Visitors to Salalah can learn about traditional Turkish archery from August 1 to 14.

"Khareef is a significant social and natural event in Oman, currently taking place in Salalah, a unique destination. We aim to provide a cultural experience that adds

value to the charm of Salalah and the Khareef Dhofar Season," organisers told the Observer.

The traditional Turkish archery course, also known as the Kemankeş Project, will be held from August 1 to 14 at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment. The course will be inaugurated by Prof Muhammed Hekimoglu, the Ambassador of Turkiye to the Sultanate of Oman, and Omani officials. The course will run from 9 am to 12 pm with promotional hours from 1 pm to 2.30 pm.

The traditional Turkish archery course, featuring a delegation from Turkiye and specialised trainers, aims to promote art, culture, science and education between the two countries. "These collaborative activities will strengthen connections between Omani and Turkish cultures through sports and tradition, introducing a novel and engaging activity to the Khareef Dhofar Season's programmes," he further said.



Crisis Management

SIHAM AL SAIDI
MUSCAT, JULY 30

Adversity tests limits and skills, ultimately enhancing capabilities and fostering unity, critical thinking, and problem-solving skills essential for overcoming crises efficiently and minimising damage.

One notable crisis in recent years was Cyclone Shaheen, which struck Al Khabourah and Al Suwaiq in Al Batinah North with devastating force. The cyclone brought severe flooding that impacted the towns’ commercial centres, affecting the lives and properties of residents. The destruction of homes, shops, and local businesses led to significant economic hardship for many. However, amidst this destruction, the resilience and determination of the affected individuals emerged, offering valuable lessons in crisis management and preparedness. Cyclone Shaheen caused extensive damage, particularly to the economic life of Al Khabourah and Al Suwaiq. Shop owners reported

significant damage to their buildings and stores, with floodwaters ruining inventory, equipment, and infrastructure. Many businesses faced substantial financial challenges due to the loss of goods and the cost of repairs.

A al Bahrani, a local grocery store owner, lost his entire stock in the floods. “The water level rose so quickly that we had no time to move our supplies to a safe place. I never imagined this would happen to my shop and had no plan for such surprises. Now, I have learned to choose better and safer locations for my stores and have relocated my grocery store to a higher area away from Wadi floods,” he said.

Similarly, Fatima al Balushi, who runs a small Abaya boutique, faced severe damage to her store’s interior. “It’s heartbreaking to see years of hard work washed away, and I had no insurance. Although I am still dealing with financial issues from that crisis, I now take precautions and plan everything in advance for my business,” she shared.

Despite the significant impact, the people of Al Khabourah and Al Suwaiq have shown remarkable resilience and adaptability. The experience of Cyclone Shaheen highlighted the importance of unity, crisis preparedness, and effective risk management.

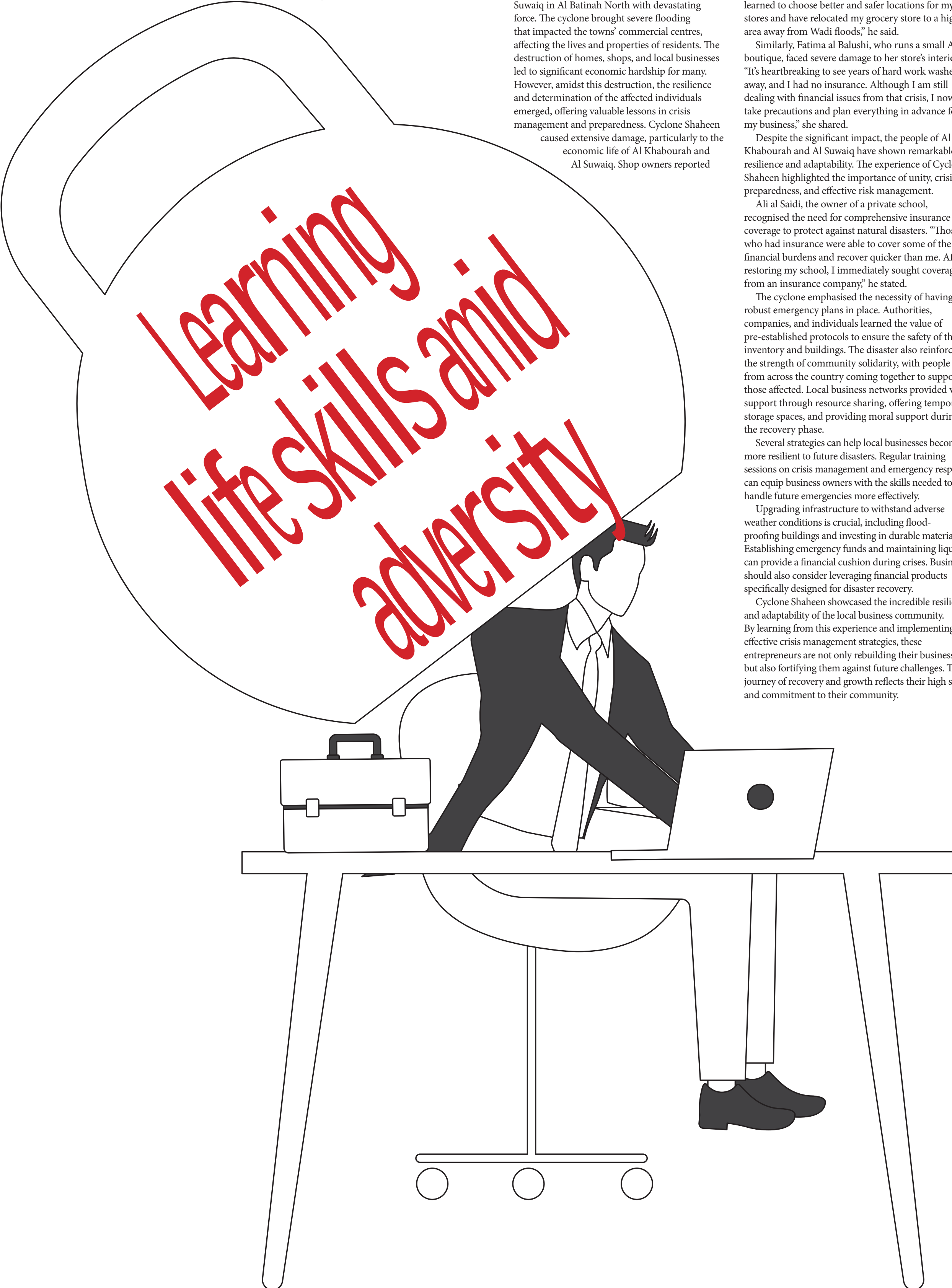
Ali al Saidi, the owner of a private school, recognised the need for comprehensive insurance coverage to protect against natural disasters. “Those who had insurance were able to cover some of the financial burdens and recover quicker than me. After restoring my school, I immediately sought coverage from an insurance company,” he stated.

The cyclone emphasised the necessity of having robust emergency plans in place. Authorities, companies, and individuals learned the value of pre-established protocols to ensure the safety of their inventory and buildings. The disaster also reinforced the strength of community solidarity, with people from across the country coming together to support those affected. Local business networks provided vital support through resource sharing, offering temporary storage spaces, and providing moral support during the recovery phase.

Several strategies can help local businesses become more resilient to future disasters. Regular training sessions on crisis management and emergency response can equip business owners with the skills needed to handle future emergencies more effectively.

Upgrading infrastructure to withstand adverse weather conditions is crucial, including flood-proofing buildings and investing in durable materials. Establishing emergency funds and maintaining liquidity can provide a financial cushion during crises. Businesses should also consider leveraging financial products specifically designed for disaster recovery.

Cyclone Shaheen showcased the incredible resilience and adaptability of the local business community. By learning from this experience and implementing effective crisis management strategies, these entrepreneurs are not only rebuilding their businesses but also fortifying them against future challenges. Their journey of recovery and growth reflects their high spirit and commitment to their community.





The new edition of ‘The Correspondent’ looks at the journey of discovery

MUSCAT: Oman has always prided itself on being one of the safest destinations for travel. Recent international coverage of the country painted it in a different light. In the August 2024 edition of The Correspondent, we revisit Oman's appeal as a welcoming and enriching destination that continues to offer its citizens and visitors a peaceful and safe place

to visit. At the heart of this magazine are the stories of seven women from around the world who now call Oman their second home. Through their experiences, we discover why Oman is an ideal destination for female travellers and how the country's culture, marked by hospitality and respect, ensures comfort and ease, while its stunning



landscapes — including serene beaches, dramatic mountains and expansive deserts — offer diverse and enjoyable experiences. Looking at international travel, The Correspondent explores a diverse range of travel and cultural stories. We highlight Rwanda's remarkable recovery and growth since 1994, including its improved safety and tourism

appeal. We also delve into South Korea's influential K-beauty and K-fashion trends and a former student's transformative experience in Washington State. The Philippines' enchanting islands, including golden sands and mystical caves, are showcased, alongside New Zealand's breathtaking natural beauty and rich Maori heritage. It also delves into Austria's

hiking trails, which offer stunning landscapes and well-maintained trails, and more about Oman, the magazine lists down unique camping spots that you should check out if you're in the country. This new edition can be downloaded for free. On www.omanobserver.om, you can scan the QR code to be directed to the downloadable file.

Students get enriching exposure at ‘Summer of Talents’

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 30

The second edition of the ‘Summer of Talents’ programme, organised by the Cultural Library, concluded on Tuesday. The event, held in collaboration with the Oman Observer newspaper and the Ministry of Information's Media Training Centre, spanned three days and involved twelve enthusiastic children. On the first day, trainer Zainab al Hashimi led various interactive workshops. These included an acquaintance game, memory-strengthening exercises and a practical test to enhance middle-brain activity by recognising colours and shapes. Children also learned the basics of public speaking and presentation through “The Story of the Forest Kingdom”. They engaged with the “Ain” platform, solved puzzles and watched short clips from children's programmes. The day also featured segments on good citizenship, patriotism and



The event, held in collaboration with the Oman Observer newspaper, spanned three days and involved twelve enthusiastic children

an introduction to simplified graphic design. The second day saw the children visiting television studios. Yaqoub al Balushi conducted a workshop, followed by a reading session. The children listened to “Bakhsha,” a popular Omani story, and explored themes of saving and

investing through the story “Adam and the Ornamental Fish.” They also learned about the dangers of electronic games and participated in the Qumrah programme. On the final day, Maitha al Mundhiri from the “Let's Read Library” presented a workshop on the story of Palestine.

Throughout the programme, participants were provided with meals, drinks and valuable gifts. The event concluded with the distribution of certificates and the honouring of participants. Feedback from the young participants highlighted their enjoyment and the valuable skills they gained. Noor al Maamari expressed her delight in the programme, emphasising the reading and comprehension activities. Sarah al Alawi participated to enhance her skills and enjoyed learning about studio filming techniques. Mohammed al Maamari appreciated learning about the story of Palestine and the insights gained from visiting the Ministry of Information studios. He valued the knowledge acquired about journalism, photography and interview preparation. Mohammed noted that the programme was an excellent opportunity to develop talents, such as photography, and to learn effective methods for summarising information and answering readers' questions.

OMANI THEATRE FESTIVAL KICKS OFF

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 30

The press conference for the Eighth Omani Theatre Festival was held on Tuesday at the Omani Society for Fine Arts, chaired by Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture. Sayyid Said unveiled the festival's logo, which reflects the dynamic and vibrant nature of the theatre world. He also announced the theatrical performances that have qualified for the festival. Ibrahim bin Saif Bani Araba, Festival Director, stated that the events will start on September 22 and continue until October 1, with some performances taking place at the Oman Film Society. Around 30 guests from various Arab and Gulf countries will be invited. The festival will feature discussion panels, artistic workshops, theatre performances for children and people with disabilities, and multiple awards such as Best Video (Promo) and Best Theatre Poster. The financial awards will exceed RO 30,000 distributed among the

top three places (Best Script, Best Direction, Best Scenography, and Best Actor and Actress). The festival will also include training workshops, intellectual and practical seminars, diverse performances including classic Omani plays and a musical showcase. Additionally, an exhibition will highlight Omani theatre artists. The festival's jury consists of five prominent members in the field of theatre, including Hussein al Muslim from Kuwait, Abdul Rahman al Mulla from Qatar, Mohammed al Balushi from Oman, Mohammed al Amri from the UAE, and Yusuf al Hamdan from Bahrain. At the end of the conference, it was announced that a seminar titled “Towards an Effective Omani Theatre” will discuss the development of Omani theatre in the early 21st century, focusing on contemporary theatre experiences and Omani theatre's participation in international festivals. The Omani Theatre Festival is a significant opportunity to highlight theatrical creativity in Oman and enhance the cultural scene in the region.



Sayyid Said unveiled the festival's logo, which reflects the dynamic and vibrant nature of the theatre world

OMAN CALLS FOR NUCLEAR WEAPON-FREE MIDDLE EAST

FROM PAGE 1

It constitutes a blatant disregard for efforts aimed at limiting the use of weapons, and this represents a serious violation of the purposes of the international disarmament system and a breach of international law that should be denounced by

the international community,” Dr Al Maashani said. Oman also called upon the global community to exert immediate and sufficient pressure to compel Israel to implement Security Council Resolution No 487 of 1981. The resolution requires Israel to

submit its nuclear facilities to the Comprehensive Safeguards System of the International Atomic Energy Agency (without pre-conditions or negotiations) and join the NPT as a non-nuclear state. The international resolution also stipulates punishment for such irresponsible threats, Oman stressed.

Oman called on the participants in the 2026 Review Conference and its Preparatory Committee to support the implementation of the 1995 resolution on the Middle East and to come up with clear-cut results and acknowledge the progress made in this regard. — ONA

SUMMER GUIDES CAMP CONCLUDES

SALALAH: The 23rd summer scout camp for female guides and advanced students concluded on Tuesday in Jabal Ashur Plain in Dhofar Governorate under the slogan “Our Environment is Diversity and Sustainability”. A total of 230 female guides and advanced students from the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait participated in the camp, which was organised by the General Directorate of Scouts and Guides at the Ministry of Education. — ONA



CPA joins ‘Sports Spark’ for awareness

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahbalushia

As part of the ‘Edraak’ awareness campaign, the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) is participating in the ‘Sports Spark’ 2024 event. The CPA, in collaboration with the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, aims to enhance consumer awareness among participants. This initiative aligns with the Edraak campaign's mission to educate various segments of society about consumer rights and responsibilities, fostering a consumer-friendly environment. The Sports Spark event, organised by the Governorate of Muscat and the Oman Convention and Exhibition



The initiative aligns with the Edraak campaign's mission to educate various segments of society about consumer rights

Centre, is supported by the Omran Group and partnered with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. The CPA's involvement underscores the importance of integration and partnership among institutions in promoting consumer awareness.

Dr Munira al Fikry, a Media Specialist at the CPA's Communication and Media Department, announced that the Authority's participation will span four weeks, with activities held every Monday morning. The sessions will feature visual presentations,

including images and videos tailored to different age groups. The event will also include competitions and cultural activities designed to educate consumers about their rights and responsibilities while shopping. Participants will learn about prohibited goods, their dangers, and the various forms of commercial fraud, along with the penalties for such offenses. The campaign aims to enhance social responsibility, ensuring a safe market environment. It also seeks to inform the public about the CPA's services by focusing on three key areas: Promoting a safe consumer culture, identifying commercial fraud and recognising prohibited goods.

National Real Estate Development and Investments Co. (SAOG)

P.O. Box 84, Muscat-100, Sultanate of Oman - Phone: 24702133/24701454, Fax: 24703826, C.R. No. 1/02478/7

DIRECTOR'S REPORT FOR THE SIX MONTH ENDED 30th JUNE 2024		UNAUDITED & PROVISIONAL BALANCE SHEET AS AT 30th JUNE 2024	
		2024 RO	2023 RO
Respected shareholders,			
On behalf of the Board of Directors, I present herewith the result of National Real Estate Development and Investments Co. (SAOG) for the first Six-month period ended 30th June 2024.			
Operational Result			
The Company recorded an un-audited net loss of RO. 12,231 up to the 2nd quarter ended June 2024 versus (2023: RO.10,137 loss). There was no revenue and no volume up to 30th June 2024.			
Finally, on behalf of the shareholders and the Board I wish to express our sincere gratitude and appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik Bin Taimour for his wise leadership and guidance.			
For the Board of Directors Chairman			
NOTE: The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder on request either in Arabic or English within 7 days of receipt of the request.			
		UNAUDITED & PROVISIONAL PROFIT & LOSS ACCOUNT FOR THE PERIOD 1st JANUARY TO 30th JUNE 2024	
		2024 RO	2023 RO
Sales		-	-
Cost of Sales		-	-
Gross Profit		-	-
Other Operating Income		1,097	1,330
Expenses before Depreciation		(13,329)	(11,467)
Profit before Depreciation		(12,231)	(10,137)
Depreciation		-	-
Net profit/(loss) after Depreciation		(12,231)	(10,137)



Israel strikes weapons depot for Hezbollah in Lebanon

Beirut/Tel Aviv: Israel struck 10 “targets” including a weapons depot for the Hezbollah movement on Tuesday, killing one of the group’s fighters, the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) said. The militant was killed in an attack on the village of Beit Leef in southern Lebanon, the IDF said. The 10 “terror targets” of the militia were attacked in several different areas, it added.

“A weapon’s storage facility, terror infrastructure sites, military structures, and a rocket launcher were struck in southern Lebanon,” the IDF said.

Hezbollah has declared the death of one of its fighters. The militia usually does not elaborate on when, where and how its members died. The state-run National News Agency (NNA) said Israeli planes carried out air raids targeting an uninhabited house in an area between the towns of Jibsheets and Aadchit in south Lebanon with two missiles, causing significant damage to them.

Lebanese Security sources said three Lebanese civilians were wounded in Israeli strike on Jibsheets.

Israeli warplanes broke the sound barrier over the capital and its suburbs causing some panic among its residents.

After a rocket attack on the Druze town of Majdal Shams in the Israeli-annexed Golan Heights killed at least 12 children on Saturday, the Israeli government is preparing for a retaliatory strike.

Israel has blamed Hezbollah for the attack, but the Lebanese movement has denied any involvement.

— dpa

300 killed in Khan Yunis after Israel assault



Palestinians make their way to return to neighbourhoods after Israeli forces pulled out from the eastern side of Khan Yunis on Tuesday. – Reuters

GAZA: Gaza’s civil defence agency said on Tuesday that an Israeli operation in and around the territory’s second city of Khan Yunis killed about 300 people since it began last week.

“Since the beginning of the Israeli ground invasion of the eastern part of Khan Yunis province, the civil defence and medical teams have recovered approximately 300 bodies of martyrs, many of them decomposed,” agency spokesman Mahmud Bassal said.

The Israeli military launched the assault on July 22 to halt rocket fire from the area, which already saw heavy fighting earlier this year.

Last week, it said troops had retrieved the bodies of five Israelis from the area.

They had been killed during the Hamas attacks of October 7 and their bodies taken back to Gaza, the military said.

Thousands of Palestinians returned to their homes in the ruins of Gaza’s main southern city Khan Yunis on Tuesday, after Israeli forces ended a week-long incursion there which they said aimed to prevent Hamas from regrouping.

Palestinian rescue workers and civilians collected dead bodies from the streets of the abandoned battle zone, bringing corpses wrapped in rugs to morgues in cars and donkey carts.

The Gaza media office said Israel’s eight-day-long raid in eastern areas of Khan Yunis killed 255 Palestinians and wounded more than 300 others. At least 30 people remained missing.

The Israeli military said its forces killed more than 150 Palestinian gunmen during the week-long raid, destroyed militant tunnels and seized weapons.

After the Israeli forces left, people streamed back to their homes on foot and with carts carrying their belongings. Many found their houses damaged or destroyed. The Hamas media office said more than 300 homes had been hit by Israeli fire during the raid, at least 30 of them inhabited when they were struck.

Witnesses said army forces had bulldozed the main cemetery in Bani Suhaila, the town on the eastern outskirts of Khan Yunis that was the main focus of the raid, as well as houses and roads nearby.

“I am coming back and I have faith in God. I don’t know whether we will live or die, but it is all for the sake of the homeland,” said Etimad Al-Masri, who had walked for at least five km back to her home.

“Despite the suffering, we are patient and God’s willing we will have victory.”

Many residents said they had been displaced from their homes several times.

“We hope there will be a ceasefire and calm. We hope that they act on a ceasefire so that we can live in security and safety,” said Walid Abu Nsaira, holding some of his belongings on his shoulder as he walked back home.

As the Khan Yunis assault has wound down, Israel has ordered thousands of people out of homes in al-Bureij in the central Gaza Strip, launching strikes there in apparent preparation for a new raid.

Medics said an Israeli air strike in nearby al-Nuseirat killed 10 Palestinians as they fled from Bureij on Tuesday, and another strike killed four other Palestinians inside Bureij.

Ten months into the war, Israeli forces have largely completed their storming of nearly the entire Gaza Strip and have spent the past several weeks launching new assaults on areas where they had already claimed to have rooted out Hamas.

Thousands of people have been ordered to evacuate their homes, most of them previously displaced several times already.

Efforts to negotiate a ceasefire through mediators, ongoing for months, are once again faltering. On Monday, Israel and Hamas traded blame over the lack of progress.

— Agencies

Druze leaders reject Israeli threats to retaliate for strike

MAJDAL SHAMS: Druze leaders in the annexed Golan Heights have distanced themselves from Israeli threats to retaliate against Lebanon’s Hezbollah group for a deadly rocket strike on a Druze Arab town in the territory.

Most of Majdal Shams’s around 11,000 mainly Druze residents still identify as Syrian more than half a century after Israel seized the Golan Heights from Syria and later annexed it in a move not recognised by the international community.

On a visit to the town on Monday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu vowed

Israel would deliver a “severe response” to the strike, which killed 12 children aged between 10 and 16 as they played football in the town on Saturday.

In a statement issued after his visit, Druze lay and religious leaders said the community rejects the “attempt to exploit the name of Majdal Shams as a political platform at the expense of the blood of our children”.

Noting that the Druze faith “forbids killing and revenge in any form”, the community leaders said “we reject the shedding of even a single drop of blood under the pretext of avenging our children”.

— Reuters



Young people look at the pictures of children and teens killed at a soccer pitch by a rocket Israel says was fired from Lebanon, at a roundabout in Majdal Shams on Monday. – Reuters

WHO: Polio cases ‘very likely’ in Gaza strip, but detection difficult

GENEVA: It is very likely that polio has infected people in the Gaza Strip, in what would be a setback for global efforts to eradicate the disease, a World Health Organization spokesperson said on Tuesday.

Gaza’s health ministry declared a polio epidemic across the Palestinian enclave late on Monday after samples of the virus were found in sewage. It has not announced any human cases.

According to the WHO, polio is now endemic only in Pakistan and Afghanistan, but more than 30 countries are still listed as subject to outbreaks, including Gaza’s neighbours Egypt and Israel. Any country risks a return of polio if outbreaks are not contained with mass vaccinations.

The WHO’s Christian Lindmeier told a UN press briefing that people had probably already been infected in Gaza but that detecting cases can be difficult since most cases of the potentially deadly viral disease are asymptomatic.



Palestinians return to the eastern side of Khan Yunis on Tuesday. – Reuters

“Having vaccine-derived polio virus in the sewage very likely means that it’s out there somewhere in people,” he said. “So the risk of (it)... spreading further is there and it would be a setback definitely (for global efforts).”

He said an investigation and risk assessment was under way in Gaza. Poliomyelitis, which is spread mainly through the faecal-

children from being infected in Gaza. Israel’s military, which is fighting Hamas in Gaza after the group killed 1,200 people and kidnapped 253 in October 7 cross-border attacks, said last week it would start offering polio shots to its soldiers there.

James Elder, spokesperson for the UN children’s agency, said that more than nine months of conflict had led to a drop in polio vaccination rates from 99% to 89%. He voiced concerns about vaccines reaching people in need, given humanitarian access constraints into and within the enclave. “The mass displacement, the decimation of health infrastructure, the horrendously insecure operating environment, they will make it much, much more difficult (to do vaccinations), hence putting more and more children at risk.”

Israel, which vets goods entering Gaza and is in charge of granting security clearance for aid convoys within it, blames UN inefficiency for aid delays. — AFP



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In brief

WASHINGTON



KAMALA HARRIS LAUNCHES \$50M AD BLITZ IN US PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris launched a \$500million advertising blitz on Tuesday, capitalising on the momentum of a fledgling campaign against Republican rival Donald Trump with a one-minute spot titled “Fearless.”

It was Harris’ first big ad buy since consolidating support for the Democratic nomination after President Joe Biden dropped out of the race on July 21 and endorsed her.

In addition to garnering the backing of big-money donors, Harris has sparked newfound energy among groups such as young voters that Biden had been struggling to win over.

— Reuters

LONDON



RADICAL UK PREACHER JAILED FOR LIFE FOR TERRORISM OFFENCES

British radical preacher Anjem Choudary, whose followers have been linked to numerous plots around the world, was sentenced to life imprisonment with a minimum of 28 years on Tuesday for directing a terrorist organisation.

Choudary, 57, was convicted last week of directing Al Muhajiroun, which was banned as a terrorist organisation more than a decade ago, and encouraging others to support the proscribed group.

“Organisations such as yours normalise violence in support of an ideological cause,” Judge Mark Wall told Choudary at London’s Woolwich Crown Court.

— Reuters

LONDON



SWIFT ‘COMPLETELY IN SHOCK’ AT ATTACK ON UK CHILDREN

Taylor Swift said she was “completely in shock” on Tuesday after mass stabbings in Southport, northern England, during a dance class themed around the US pop star left three girls dead.

Five young children and two adults remained in critical condition, with police confirming three girls aged six, seven and nine were killed in a stabbing spree at an events space in the seaside town near Liverpool. The third girl, aged nine, died on Tuesday due to her injuries, while the other two died on Monday. “The horror of Southport is washing over me continuously, and I’m just completely in shock.” — AFP

Over 100 people killed in Kerala landslides

BENGALURU: Landslides in India triggered by pounding monsoon rains struck tea plantations and killed over 100 people on Tuesday, with at least 250 others rescued from mud and debris, officials said.

The southern coastal state of Kerala has been battered by torrential downpours, with blocked roads into the disaster area in Wayanad district complicating relief efforts.

“93 dead bodies have been found so far,” Kerala chief minister Pinarayi Vijayan told reporters. “This is one of the worst natural calamities that our state has seen.”

Another 128 people had been hospitalised for treatment after their rescue, he said.

“My thoughts are with all those who have lost their loved ones and prayers with those injured,” Prime Minister Narendra Modi said in a post on social media platform X.

Wayanad is famed for the tea estates that crisscross its hilly countryside and which rely on a large pool of casual labourers for planting and harvest.

Several estates in the district were hit by two successive landslides before dawn when most of their inhabitants were asleep.

Images published by the National Disaster Response Force showed rescue crews trudging through mud to search for survivors and carry bodies on stretchers out of the area. Homes



Members of rescue teams conduct rescue operation at a landslide site after landslides in Wayanad on Tuesday. — Reuters



Members of rescue teams move towards a landslide site. — Reuters



A vehicle damage after landslide

were caked with brown sludge as the force of the landslide scattered cars, corrugated iron and other debris around the disaster site.

India’s army said it had deployed more than 200

soldiers to the area to assist state security forces and fire crews in search-and-rescue efforts.

Kerala state excise minister MB Rajesh said more than 250 people had been rescued so far, *The*

Hindu newspaper reported.

Modi’s office said families of victims would receive a compensation payment of \$2,400 (Rs 200,000). More rainfall and strong winds were forecast in

Kerala on Tuesday, the state’s disaster management agency said.

Indian opposition leader Rahul Gandhi, who until recently represented Wayanad in parliament, told lawmakers that the scope of the devastation was “heartbreaking”.

“Our country has witnessed an alarming rise in landslides in recent years,” he said. “The need of the hour is a comprehensive action plan to address the growing frequency of natural calamities.”

Monsoon rains across the region from June to September offer respite from the summer heat and are crucial to replenishing water supplies.

They are vital for agriculture and therefore the livelihoods of millions of farmers and food security for South Asia’s nearly two billion people.

But they also bring destruction in the form of landslides and floods.

The number of fatal floods and landslides has increased in recent years, and experts say climate change is exacerbating the problem.

“The number of extremely heavy rainfall days have increased,” Kartiki Negi of Indian environment think tank Climate Trends said.

“The atmosphere is quite disturbed,” she said. “Thus we see more and more extreme events these days.” — AFP

Anti-Maduro protests spread as opposition says poll stolen

CARACAS: Opponents and supporters of Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro planned to rally on Tuesday as protests and clashes spread after a weekend election was awarded to the long-ruling socialist despite opposition claims of a landslide victory.

Renewed instability in the South America oil producer brought divided international reaction: the United States said Maduro’s reelection had no credibility and was mulling more sanctions, while China and Russia congratulated him.

Protests began after the election board declared on Monday that Maduro had won a third term with 51 per cent of votes to extend his “Chavista” movement’s quarter-century rule.

The opposition, which considers the election body in the pockets of a dictatorial government, said the 73 per cent of vote tallies to which it has access showed its candidate Edmundo Gonzalez had more than twice as many votes as Maduro.

Many Venezuelans staged “cacerolazos”, a traditional Latin American protest where people bang pots and pans in anger.

Some blocked roads, lit fires and threw petrol bombs at police as protests proliferated, including near the Miraflores presidential palace in Caracas.

“We are tired of this government, we want a change. We want to be free in Venezuela. We want our families to return here,” said one masked protester, referring to the exodus of about a third of Venezuelans in recent years. “I’ll fight for my country’s democracy. They stole the election from us,” said another.



A demonstrator reacts when Molotov cocktails hit the ground in front of security forces during protests against election results after Venezuela’s President Nicolas Maduro and his opposition rival Edmundo Gonzalez claimed victory in Sunday’s presidential election, in Puerto La Cruz on Tuesday. — Reuters

Police with shields and batons in Caracas and the city of Maracay fired tear gas to disperse some protests. Many demonstrators rode motorbikes and jammed streets or draped themselves in the Venezuelan flag. Some covered their faces with scarves as protection against tear gas.

The government calls them violent agitators.

“We’ve seen this movie before,” said Maduro from the presidential palace, pledging that security forces would keep the peace. “We have been following all of the acts of violence promoted by the extreme right.” The armed forces have long supported him and there were no signs generals were breaking from the government.

In Coro, capital of Falcon state, protesters cheered and danced when they tore down a statue depicting former president Hugo Chavez, Maduro’s mentor who

ruled from 1999-2013.

A local monitoring group, the Venezuelan Conflict Observatory, said it had registered 187 protests in 20 states by 6 pm on Monday with “numerous acts of repression and violence” carried out by paramilitary groups and security forces. At least two people were killed in connection with the vote count or protests, one in the border state of Tachira and another in Maracay.

Maduro, a 61-year-old former union leader and foreign minister, won election after Chavez’s death in 2013 and was re-elected in 2018. The opposition said both votes were rigged.

He has presided over an economic collapse, mass migration, and deteriorating relations with the West including US and EU sanctions that have crippled an already struggling oil industry. — Reuters

PM declines to testify in wife’s graft probe

MADRID: Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez refused on Tuesday to answer question from a judge investigating alleged influence-peddling by his wife, a case that has put pressure on his fragile minority government.

Judge Juan Carlos Peinado, who is heading the preliminary inquiry, went to Sanchez’s official residence to question the Socialist prime minister as a witness but he invoked his right not to testify, lawyers who were present at the hearing told reporters.

Under Spanish law, one can refuse to answer questions in a case affecting close family members, including spouses.

“The hearing lasted exactly two minutes,” Antonio Camacho, the lawyer for Sanchez’s wife Begona Gomez, told reporters outside the residence, adding that Sanchez was “absolutely calm”. Gomez also invoked her right to remain silent under questioning by the judge earlier this month.



Spain’s Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez (R) and his wife Begona Gomez. — AFP

She has not spoken publicly about the case but Sanchez has denied any wrongdoing by his wife and dismissed the allegations as part of a right-wing smear campaign against his left-wing government.

The case has stoked acrimony and the main opposition conservative opposition Popular Party (PP) has urged Sanchez to resign. “Sanchez has not wanted to testify before the courts but he will answer to the Spanish people,” PP leader Alberto Nunez Feijoo wrote on social network X shortly after the hearing ended.

— AFP

2 killed, 20 injured in India train derailment

PATNA: An Indian passenger train derailed and several of its cars overturned on Tuesday, killing at least two people and injuring 20 others.

The Howrah-Mumbai Express derailed near Jamshedpur in the eastern state of Jharkhand before dawn. “At least two people were killed and 20 injured,” Indian Railways spokesman Om Prakash Charan said. The accident happened at around the same time a goods train coming from the opposite side derailed,

possibly colliding with the passenger train when it passed by. “There was another derailment of a goods train nearby, but it was unclear if the two accidents occurred concurrently,” Charan said. Eighteen train coaches were thrown off the tracks, Charan added, with rescue operations ongoing to clear the site.

India has launched a \$30-billion railway infrastructure modernisation in a bid to boost the economy and connectivity. — Reuters

How to choose your university specialisation



Dr Amani al Jalbubi

Selecting a university specialiation is a critical decision that shapes one’s academic journey and future career. It requires careful consideration of personal interests, career goals, market demand, and academic strengths. This article provides a comprehensive guide to making an informed choice, supported by research and expert insights.

1. Interests and strengths

The first step in choosing a university specialisation is self-assessment. Understanding one’s interests and strengths is crucial as it influences motivation and success in the chosen field. According to JL Holland’s Theory of Career Choice, individuals are more likely to succeed and feel satisfied in careers that match their personal interests and strengths. Reflect on subjects that excite you and areas where you excel. Take personality and career aptitude tests to gain further insights into suitable specialisations.

2. Career goals and opportunities

Aligning your specialisation with long-term career goals is essential. Research potential career paths and industries related to different

specialisations. The job market is continuously evolving, and certain fields may offer more opportunities and higher demand than others. According to a report by the World Economic Forum, future job growth is expected in areas such as data science, artificial intelligence, healthcare, and renewable energy. Investigate industry trends, job prospects, and salary expectations to make an informed decision.

3. Courses and curriculum

The quality and structure of courses vary across universities. Explore the curriculum, faculty expertise, research opportunities, and facilities available for the specialisations you are considering. University rankings and accreditation can also provide insights into the programme’s reputation. According to a study by the National Center for Education Statistics, students who thoroughly research academic programmes and curriculum are more likely to be satisfied with their choice and complete their degree on time. Talk to current students and alumni, and review course outlines to understand what each specialisation entails.

4. Seeking Advice and Mentorship

BY CONDUCTING A THOROUGH SELF-ASSESSMENT, RESEARCHING CAREER OPPORTUNITIES, EVALUATING ACADEMIC PROGRAMMES, AND SEEKING ADVICE, STUDENTS CAN MAKE AN INFORMED CHOICE THAT ALIGNS WITH THEIR ASPIRATIONS AND STRENGTHS.

Seeking advice from mentors, career counsellors, and professionals in the field can provide valuable perspectives. Mentors can offer insights based on their experiences and help you navigate the decision-making process. Career counsellors can assist in matching your interests and strengths with suitable specialisations.

Networking with professionals through internships, informational interviews, and industry events can also provide a realistic view of different careers. Mentorship plays a crucial role in career development and decision-making, offering guidance, support, and industry insights.

Choosing a university specialisation is a significant decision that requires careful consideration of personal interests, career goals, academic programmes, and mentorship.

By conducting a thorough self-assessment, researching career opportunities, evaluating academic programmes, and seeking advice, students can make an informed choice that aligns with their aspirations and strengths. This decision will not only shape their academic journey but also set the foundation for a successful and fulfilling career.

Candidacy rules mar Tunisia’s presidential race

FRANÇOISE KADRI

Tunisia has kicked off candidacy submissions for its upcoming presidential election on October 6, amid what experts say are significant constraints on hopefuls challenging incumbent President Kais Saied.

A number of conditions and requirements to run for office have changed under Saied, 66, who was democratically elected in 2019 but orchestrated a sweeping power grab in 2021.

To qualify to appear on the ballot, candidates are required to gather “an enormous number” of signatures, said Amine Kharrat, a political analyst at independent observatory Al Bawsala.

“The conditions have been hardened,” Isabelle Werenfels, North Africa expert at the German Institute for International and Security Affairs, said. Not to mention, a number of would-be candidates will not be able to even obtain the initial candidacy form because they are in prison.

Among them are Issam Chebbi, leader of centrist party Al Joumhour, and Ghazi Chaouchi, head of the social-democrat party Democratic Current.

Detained for “plotting against the state,” the two politicians are among over 20 of Saied’s opponents held since a flurry of arrests in February 2023.

Abir Moussi, a vocal critic of Saied and head of the Free Destourian Party, has also been detained on similar charges since October last year.

Amnesty International labelled the arrests a “politically motivated witch hunt”.

An expert speaking on condition of anonymity told AFP “everything has been set up to push aside credible candidates who can represent a real danger” for Saied. In 2022, Saied led a revision of the constitution, concentrating executive power firmly in the presidency’s hands and reversing hard-won rights in the birthplace of the Arab Spring uprisings. Kharrat said many factors are “reducing the credibility” of the upcoming election, referring to the candidacy criteria, the delayed announcement of the election day, and a 2022 law punishing “spreading false news”.

The law, Decree 54, has been used to prosecute more than 60 journalists, lawyers and opposition figures, according to the National Syndicate of Tunisian Journalists (SNJT).

Amnesty International Secretary General Agnes Callamard said last week that since Saied’s power grab, “violations that we thought part of Tunisia’s past are becoming more and more discernible and systematic”. “Instead of the vibrant debates of a pluralist political scene, I observed government repression, fuelling fear and dread about what’s to come.” Yet many still aspire to submit their candidacies.

— AFP

Triumph over tragedy in a brave stand against extremism



Dr Khalfan bin Hamed al Harrasi

In a world where peace is often overshadowed by conflict, Oman has long been a beacon of stability and harmony. Yet, on July 15, this serenity was brutally disrupted by a tragic shooting at the Imam Ali Mosque in Al Wadi Al Kabir. The attack, which claimed the lives of six individuals, including four Pakistani nationals, an Indian citizen, and an Omani police officer, and left dozens injured, has shaken the nation to its core. However, in the face of this heinous act, the resilience and unity of the Omani people have shone brighter than ever.

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) swiftly responded, neutralising the attackers and highlighting the nation’s unwavering commitment to safeguarding its citizens. This rare and shocking incident has not only underscored the bravery and solidarity of Oman but also serves as a powerful reminder of the importance of vigilance and proactive measures against extremism.

Officer Yousif al Nadabi, a member of the ROP, tragically lost his life during the incident. Remembered for his bravery and quick actions in securing the mosque and protecting worshippers, his sacrifice has been widely recognised and honoured by both local and international communities.

In the aftermath of the Al Wadi Al Kabir shooting, Oman has taken significant steps to support the victims and their families. The government and various organisations swiftly mobilised resources to provide comprehensive assistance. The Royal Oman Police and Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority offered immediate medical aid and transported the injured to hospitals.

The government has pledged financial assistance to cover medical expenses and provide economic support to families facing the sudden loss of income and other challenges. Reflecting deep respect and reinforcing community solidarity, the Pakistani Ambassador visited the family of a martyred police officer. The collaboration between public

and private sectors, including private organisations and charities, has been evident in delivering a comprehensive support system to address the needs of those affected.

The tragic shooting incident offers several lessons for the future, emphasising the importance of recognising any unpredictable threats to community security and safety, even in well-known safe regions like Oman. Evaluating and enhancing emergency response protocols is essential, as demonstrated by the rapid and efficient actions of the Royal Oman Police (ROP) and other security agencies, who crucially minimised casualties by quickly taking control and neutralising the assailants.

LAUNCHING EDUCATIONAL CAMPAIGNS TO RAISE AWARENESS ABOUT RADICALISATION AND RECOGNISING SIGNS OF EXTREMIST BEHAVIOUR CAN EMPOWER CITIZENS TO ACT AS THE FIRST LINE OF DEFENCE

Addressing religious extremism, or any form of extremism, is vital to prevent future tragedies, as extremism thrives in the shadows of ignorance and intolerance. Promoting education and community engagement can help build a society resistant to radicalisation. Such incidents underscore the need for a multifaceted approach involving community engagement, educational initiatives, and robust law enforcement to counter extremist ideologies and ensure the safety and security of all citizens.

Governments should invest in enhanced surveillance technology and intelligence-gathering capabilities, collaborating with international agencies for better insights. Promoting community policing and integration programmes, where appropriate, fosters unity and cooperation among different community groups. Launching educational campaigns to

raise awareness about radicalisation and recognising signs of extremist behaviour can empower citizens to act as the first line of defence. Additionally, reviewing and updating legal frameworks related to counter-terrorism is of paramount importance to ensure they are robust, rigorous, and capable of addressing the threats posed by extremism. Effective counter-extremism strategies must involve all sectors of society, including government, law enforcement, educators, community leaders, and the media.

Technological advancements should be harnessed to monitor and disrupt extremist activities, as well as to spread positive, inclusive narratives. Religious extremism often stems from the manipulation of beliefs to justify violence and intolerance. Oman follows a school of Islam known for its moderate and tolerant views. However, external extremist ideologies can infiltrate through various channels, including social media and foreign influences.

The Al Wadi Al Kabir shooting, influenced by such ideologies, likely sectarian in nature, underscores the need for religious education that promotes tolerance and counters extremist narratives. In this regard, engaging religious leaders in spreading messages of peace and moderation is vital.

In the wake of the tragedy, Oman has demonstrated an unbreakable spirit of triumph and unity. The profound grief felt by our nation is matched only by our collective determination to heal and emerge stronger. The bravery of Al Nadabi and the swift actions of our security forces have shown that, even in the darkest of times, courage and solidarity light our way.

As we support the victims and their families, we reaffirm our commitment to combating extremism through education, community engagement, and unwavering vigilance. Together, we honour the memory of those lost by fostering a future rooted in peace, tolerance, and shared strength. Let this tragedy not define us but inspire us to build a safer, more harmonious Oman.

Scams take the fun out of Internet!

Not a single day now passes without headlines about online scams. If you ask anyone around you; they will have a story to tell you about being fallen prey to online financial fraud!

Interestingly, the word “scam,” that too online, is on the lips of almost everyone involved in the use of the computer and Internet, be it individual, corporate, organisation, national, multinational, or international!

No doubt, technological advances have made our lives safer than ever before. However, along with this digital growth, “faceless” criminals have made their way in, and are exploiting the vulnerability of human emotion.

Finally, these scams leave their victims financially drained and emotionally stressed! In most incidents, social media is the key avenue for conversations around scam tactics and fraud awareness to take place.

Look at dating scams; they have reached an epidemic level in the cyber world. Crooks make fake profiles on dating apps and pretend to have romantic feelings for victims. With emotional manipulation, they extract money from their potential vulnerable victims.

Leave alone the psychological damage of such intimate betrayals; financial losses are so high that, in some cases, they are impossible to measure. According to the Federal Trade Commission, those involved lost \$1.14 billion to the so-called ‘romance’ scams in 2023.

Reports indicate that online shopping scams — the most common form of online fraud — averaged 68,190 incidents a year on shopping websites. With the help of social media ads, experts foresee these scam schemes may reach millions of consumers worldwide.

According to data presented by the Atlas VPN team, based on the GoodFirms online survey, 47 per



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cent of social media users have fallen victim to shopping scams before.

“We are facing an epidemic in the growth of financial fraud, leading to individuals, often vulnerable people, and companies being defrauded on a massive and global scale,” laments the International Criminal Police Organisation (Interpol) in a report in March last year.

The masked identity of the criminals, along with the lack of a common international legal framework to handle those cyber offences, is one of the hurdles in the effective adjudication of such cases.

In Oman, online fraud is a criminal offence under its cybercrime law that seeks to address a wide array of illegal activities involving a computer device, computer system, or network. The law defines each form of cybercrime and prescribes a penalty, which ranges from a fine to imprisonment for a month to 15 years.

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) in association with the Central Bank of Oman and other regulators are working together to identify vulnerable victims who are being defrauded. Still, cybercriminals continue their attacks without fear of arrest or punishment.

What is more supportive is the fact the Royal Oman Police is vigilant and prepared to respond to any fraud reports, providing round-the-clock support to the community, with the overarching goal of ensuring public safety and security.

In a recent note, the ROP warned the public of a new fraud through social media platforms that the Central Bank of Oman is providing opportunities to obtain easy loan facilities and invite them to register by opening attached links.

There were 140 cases of cybercrime in the Sultanate of Oman in 2023, compared to 126 in 2022, while cases related to online content increased to 2,686 in 2023 from 2,519 in 2022. These cases included misusing financial cards, attempting, assisting, or agreeing to commit information technology fraud.

IN OMAN, WHAT IS REASSURING IS THE FACT THE AUTHORITIES ARE VIGILANT AND EQUIPPED TO RESPOND TO ANY FRAUD REPORTS, PROVIDING ROUND-THE-CLOCK SUPPORT TO BOTH CITIZENS AND RESIDENTS ALIKE

FEATS IN THE AIR!



Germany's Kim Lea Mueller competes in the Women's Cycling BMX Freestyle Park qualification during the Paris 2024 Olympic Games in Paris, on Tuesday. – AFP

Minerals race could fuel global inequality

Global efforts to combat climate change are primarily focused on phasing out fossil fuels and shifting to renewable energy. The accelerated pace of this transition, particularly in high-income countries, has led to a growing demand for critical metals and rare minerals, which are crucial for clean-energy infrastructure like batteries and semiconductors. According to the World Bank, more than three billion tonnes of minerals and metals will be needed by 2050 to develop the technologies required to limit the global temperature rise to 2° Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

As highlighted in a recent article, securing mineral rights has thus become a top priority for policymakers around the world. Leading countries such as the United States and China are seeking strategic partnerships with resource-rich countries, many of them low- and middle-income economies grappling with competing priorities and limited financial resources. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, for example, remains the world's leading source of mined cobalt, an essential input for electric-vehicle batteries. According to the United States Geological Survey, the DRC accounts for more than 70 per cent of the world's mined cobalt production.

But the absence of robust governance and accountability structures in mineral-rich countries prevents the equitable distribution of the gains from mineral extraction, driving local communities



Tom Achoki

The writer is a former Sloan fellow at MIT, is an adjunct faculty member at Baylor University and Co-Founder of the Africa Institute for Health Policy in Nairobi, Kenya

WITHOUT ROBUST ENVIRONMENTAL AND PUBLIC-HEALTH PROTECTIONS, ONLY A PRIVILEGED FEW WILL REAP THE REWARDS OF THE CLEAN-ENERGY TRANSITION

into poverty and fuelling violent conflicts. Despite their vast mineral wealth, countries such as Angola, Chad and the DRC have been plagued by incidences of corruption, authoritarian repression, militarisation and civil wars. Moreover, mining operations often take place in remote locations, where marginalised local communities lack the necessary negotiating power and tools to deal with well-resourced and sophisticated multinational corporations, resulting in lopsided deals with far-reaching economic and environmental implications. Consequently, unscrupulous extractive-industry actors may cut corners or do the bare minimum to comply with regulatory frameworks aimed at protecting the environment and the health of the communities in which they operate.

Without robust environmental, social and public-health protections, the harmful effects of mining operations can erode the green transformation's expected economic benefits. There are many examples of communities around the world whose livelihoods have been adversely affected by social and environmental degradation caused by reckless resource-extraction practices. If allowed to continue, this could result in a pyrrhic victory, with a privileged few reaping the rewards of the

clean-energy transition while most of the world is left behind.

Crucially, unregulated mining can have far-reaching public-health implications for low-income countries. Viral epidemics such as Ebola and yellow fever have often been linked to environmental degradation, which forces local communities to venture deep into wildlife sanctuaries to make a living. A 2021 Stanford University study, for example, identified gold mining in the Brazilian Amazon as a major contributor to malaria outbreaks across the region. Moreover, environmental pollution caused by mining operations, including so-called “artisanal” mining, negatively affects workers’ health both directly and indirectly, reducing overall productivity.

In addition to these public-health effects, environmental

degradation caused by harmful mining practices has also been linked to reduced economic opportunities for local communities in affected countries. Research shows that unregulated mining can lead to a wide range of negative consequences, including reduced food production, poor nutrition, social apathy, delinquency, forced migration of large populations and violent conflicts.

Considering the far-reaching effects of mineral extraction, national governments and international policymakers must take steps to safeguard vulnerable communities throughout the broader value chain. While wealthy countries go to great lengths to procure, develop and adopt clean-energy technologies for their citizens’ benefit, mineral-producing

countries could face devastating consequences if adequate protective measures are not implemented.

Given this reality, countries benefiting from mineral extraction must ensure that affected communities can also enjoy the fruits of the clean-energy transition. Existing global frameworks, such as those addressing conflict diamonds, could be easily adapted to maintain the integrity of such initiatives. Similarly, emerging technologies like blockchain could help provide clear visibility and accountability, ensuring that the minerals essential for a lower-carbon future are sourced and distributed ethically.

Encouragingly, many stakeholders have recognised the urgent need to bring this issue to the forefront of global policy discussions. Through its Climate-Smart Mining Initiative, the World Bank supports investment and provides technical assistance to mineral-rich developing countries, facilitating the sustainable extraction and processing of essential minerals and metals and minimising mining's social and environmental impacts. Similarly, the World Economic Forum recently launched a global multi-stakeholder platform aimed at promoting the green agenda by facilitating collaborative risk management and international cooperation.

@Project Syndicate, 2024



Mining operations often take place in remote locations.

sport



Oman lose to Saudi in basketball match

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 30

Oman lost to Saudi Arabia 55-102 in the Gulf Youth Basketball Championship for under 18 years, which qualifies for the Asia Cup. The tournament is hosted by Kuwait from July 29 to August 3 at the Sheikh Saad Al Abdullah Al Sabah Complex Hall.

The championship is a qualifier for the Asian Cup finals to be held in the Jordanian capital, Amman.

Despite a balanced start in the first quarter, where Omanis tried to keep up with the Saudis, the latter managed to end the first quarter with a score of 25-12 in their favour, benefiting from the speed of their attacks and the accuracy of their shots.

In the second quarter, Oman tried to reduce the gap, but defensive and offensive mistakes continued, allowing Saudi to end the second quarter with a score of 19-15, increasing the gap to 17 points by the end of the first half.

In the third quarter, the gap increased significantly as the Saudi team completely dominated the court, benefiting from fast break attacks and three-point shots, ending the quarter with a score of 32-15 in favour of the Saudi team, which significantly doubled the gap.

In the fourth and final quarter,



the Saudi team continued to impose their rhythm on the game, while the national team tried in vain to reduce the gap, ending the quarter with a score of 26-13, and the match ended with a significant margin in favour of the Saudi team.

Most of the national team's points were scored by Abdulrahman al Maamari and Qaisar al Balushi with 11 points

each, in addition to Asim al Bahlani who scored 8 points, and Azzan al Ajmi who scored 7 points.

In the second match, Kuwait managed to achieve a well-deserved victory over its Bahrain counterpart with a score of 85-66. The Kuwaiti team presented an outstanding performance throughout the match, surpassing the Bahrain team by 19 points. The Kuwaiti players stood

out due to their strong defensive and offensive organisation, allowing them to control the course of the game and score a large number of points.

The Oman national youth team will meet its Bahrain counterpart in the next match on Wednesday, in an attempt to compensate for the loss. Meanwhile, the Saudi team will meet the Qatari team on the same day.

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Arsenal sign Italy defender Calafiori from Bologna

ARSENAL: Arsenal have signed Italian defender Riccardo Calafiori from Bologna on a long-term contract, the Premier League club said on Monday.

The details of the 22-year-old's transfer were not disclosed, but according to Italian and British media, Arsenal will pay Bologna around 40 million euros (\$43.26 million) plus an additional five million in add-on fees.

Calafiori excelled at Bologna under Thiago Motta last season, playing a pivotal role in their historic campaign where they finished fifth in the Serie A standings and qualified for the Champions League for the first time since 1964.

The defender made 30 Serie A appearances for Bologna last season having joined from AS Roma.

He made his international debut in June and played in three of the four matches in the European Championship. He is the second-youngest Italian to play in the Euros, behind Paolo Maldini.

"We welcome Riccardo and his family to Arsenal. He is a great signing and gives us huge strength to reinforce our defence," Arsenal manager Mikel Arteta said in a statement.

"Riccardo is a big personality



Italian defender Riccardo Calafiori (R)

and character, with specific skills which will make us stronger as we push to win major trophies...

"We're looking forward to working with Riccardo, integrating him into the squad, and supporting him in the years to come."

Arsenal begin their Premier League campaign on August 17 against Wolverhampton Wanderers. — Reuters



Southampton sign forward Brereton Diaz, midfielder Matsuki

S O U T H A M P T O N : Southampton have signed Chile forward Ben Brereton Diaz from Villarreal and Japanese midfielder Kuryu Matsuki from FC Tokyo on four-year contracts, the newly-promoted Premier League club announced on Tuesday.

The South Coast side did not disclose the financial details of either of the deals, but British media reported that 25-year-old Brereton Diaz's move from LaLiga club Villarreal is worth around seven million pounds (\$8.98 million).

Born in Stoke-on-Trent, Brereton Diaz qualified to represent Chile through his mother and has been capped 33 times. A product of Nottingham Forest's academy, he joined Villarreal last year before moving on loan to Sheffield United in January.

"He (Brereton Diaz) is a strong, powerful runner and a confident finisher with a good goalscoring record, including last season's spell in the Premier League in which he adapted to the level extremely quickly," Southampton manager Russell Martin said in a statement.

Meanwhile, 21-year-old Matsuki will spend the 2024-25 season on loan at Turkish Super Lig club Goztepe.

Matsuki has represented Japan at various youth levels



Japanese midfielder Kuryu Matsuki



Chile forward Ben Brereton Diaz

and helped them win the 2024 AFC Under-23 Asian Cup. He was also named the AFC Youth Player of the Year last year.

Southampton will begin their Premier League campaign away against Newcastle United on August 17. — Reuters



Fermin Lopez in action with Mahmoud Saber of Egypt. – Reuters

Egypt stun Spain to join them in men’s football knockouts

PARIS: Egypt reached the quarter-finals of the men's Olympic football after completing the group stage with a surprise 2-1 win over already qualified Spain on Tuesday, with Ibrahim Adel scoring both goals. Adel gave Egypt the lead in Bordeaux with a superb strike late in the first half and added another on 62 minutes, pouncing to score after possession was given away by Spain's Jon Pacheco. Samu Omorodion pulled one back late on for Spain, but Egypt held on for the win that allowed them to leapfrog their already-qualified opponents and snatch first place in Group C. Egypt, captained by former Arsenal midfielder Mohamed Elneny, will play their quarter-final on Friday in Marseille against the runners-up in Group D, which contains Japan, Paraguay, Mali and Israel. Egypt lost in the quarter-finals three years ago to Brazil, who went on to beat Spain in the final. Spain's last-eight tie will be in Lyon against the winners of Group D. Hosts France and two-time gold medallists Argentina are among the other teams hoping to secure progress to the quarter-finals on Tuesday. — AFP



Egypt team applaud fans after the winning. – Reuters

Canada beat Australia to set up final against NZ

PARIS: Canada followed up their emotional victory over France by stunning Australia 21-12 on Tuesday to earn a shock place in the women's Olympic rugby sevens final against holders New Zealand, who earlier beat the United States 24-12. Four years ago, as defending champions, Australia lost to Fiji in the quarter-finals but seemed destined to return to the final in 2024 after an imperious run through their first four games, having arrived as newly-crowned grand final champions. Everything seemed to be going to plan as they totally dominated the first half in brutal heat at the Stade de France. It took Maddison Levi all of a minute to show her class as she eased through an invisible gap to extend her freshly-claimed record for tries in a single Games to 12. Sariah Paki got the second but Charity Williams then went 75 metres in Canada's only attack of the half to cut the deficit to 12-7. Canada, who played with amazing confidence and aggression to down France on Monday, came out with much more energy in the second half and Asia Hogan-Rochester scored with Olivia Apps converting for a 14-12 lead. Canada continued to press and, with Australia struggling to get out of their own 22 for long spells and getting ever more desperate, a dropped ball allowed Piper Logan to sidestep her way over for a famous win. Having claimed bronze in 2016 the Canadians are assured of at least silver but, on the back of two incredible performances, will be thinking only of gold. That is always the case for New Zealand, who reached the semis with an Olympic record 55-5 win over China on Monday — their fourth straight big win — but were given a stiffer test by a US team playing in the semis for the first time. Alev Kelter put the underdogs ahead but New Zealand worked space for Stacey Waaka to cross for a 7-5 halftime lead. — Reuters





PARIS: Carlos Alcaraz shrugged off an injury scare to reach the last 16 of the Olympic singles tennis on Monday and said he will fight to be "100 per cent" for doubles with Rafael Nadal.

The world number three from Spain beat Tallon Griekspoor of the Netherlands 6-1, 7-6 (7/3) to stay on course for a gold medal to add to his four Grand Slam titles. The 21-year-old Alcaraz is back on court on Tuesday alongside Nadal when he will again face Griekspoor, who partners Wesley Koolhof.

"It's a pain that I've been dealing with the last tournaments so I know what I have to do," Alcaraz said. "It's normal for a tennis player as this game is so demanding. "I will try to recover and be ready and at 100 percent in the doubles."

Alcaraz, the reigning French Open and Wimbledon champion, needed to leave the court to have treatment on his right leg late in the second set and then had to save a set point. In the next round of singles he will face Roman Safiullin, the Russian player competing at the Olympics as a neutral. Earlier on Monday, Alcaraz had seen Nadal swept off court by old rival Novak Djokovic in straight sets in the pair's 60th meeting. The defeat ended injury-plagued Nadal's outside hopes of winning a second singles gold after his 2008 triumph in Beijing. But Alcaraz can still help his compatriot win a second doubles gold after Nadal teamed with Marc Lopez at the 2016 Rio Games. "When Djokovic is playing at this level it's really, really difficult to play against him," said Alcaraz. "He was really aggressive, made no mistakes, moving very, very well. I saw Rafa playing let's say not his best tennis for sure. "But when Djokovic is like this, he was the better one." — AFP

Carlos Alcaraz shrugs off injury, hopes to be 100% with Rafael Nadal

SWIMMER ISSA AND SHOOTER SAID BOW OUT

ADIL AL BALUSHI
PARIS, JULY 30

Oman's shooter Said al Khatri and swimmer Issa al Adawi concluded their campaign in the Paris 2024 Olympic Games. Al Adawi finished as sixth in the preliminary heats of the 100m freestyle swimming event after clocking 53.19 Seconds. Al Khatri finished the preliminary qualification of Men's Trap event in 30th place with 114 points.

The 25-year-old swimmer was looking to break his personal best of 51.69 seconds but it was a disappointing show as he could not get a better score than Tokyo Olympics 2020 which was 51.81 seconds. Speaking after the event, Al Adawi said, "My goal was to register a better show but this did not happen. However, I will continue working hard to improve myself and learn from

this Olympics. The Olympic Games featured attendance of world's best swimmers with large experience beside the huge crowd and energy at the main venue. All these added as valuable experience for my future assignments. I am still looking forward to delivering my best in the upcoming events." In the heats two at the 100m freestyle event in Paris 2, swimmer Ovesh Purahoo from Mauritius took first place with a timing of 52.22 seconds followed by Nixon Hernandez with 52.73 seconds. The finals for the 100m freestyle will take place on Thursday to determine the top three winners.

Saeed al Khatri completed the second day of the qualification with fourth and fifth rounds qualifiers at the main range of the Châteauroux Shooting Center on Tuesday. He suffered in the fourth round as he scored 21 out



of 25 points while he managed to earn 23 out of 25 points in the fifth and final round.

China's Qi Ying and Britain's Nathan Hales each scored 123 points to advance

from the qualifiers along with Australia's James Willett with the same score. The top six shooters advanced to the finals where the gold, silver and bronze medalists to be determined in



coming days. Sprinter Ali Anwar al Balushi and runner Mazoon Khalfan al Alawi are undergoing intensive training ahead of their competitions that start on Friday and Saturday. Al Alawi will begin

her third Olympics campaign in the preliminary heats of the 100m event on Friday while Al Balushi, who qualified with his record, will participate on Saturday in the same category.

O'CALLAGHAN AND POPOVICI FIRE UP AGAIN AFTER GOLD WIN

PARIS: Mollie O'Callaghan and David Popovici backed up from winning 200m freestyle gold with strong 100m heat swims on Tuesday, as French hero Leon Marchand dived into the Olympic pool twice in his bid for more glory.

Dominant American great Katie Ledecky was also back in action at La Defense Arena, cruising through her 1,500 freestyle heat as she bids to defend her title.

Australia's O'Callaghan upset defending champion Ariarne Titmus to clinch the 200m crown on Monday, while Romanian teenager Popovici won by a fingertip in a frenetic men's race.

They both returned barely 12 hours later, with Australian two-time world champion O'Callaghan fifth fastest through the heats behind pace-setting world record holder Sarah Sjoestroem (52.99sec) and Hong Kong's Siobhan Haughey.

Popovici — also a former world champion — was third best after timesheet-topping American Jack Alexy (47.57), with Chinese world record holder Pan Zhanle just scrapping through in joint 13th.

With reigning champion Emma McKeon failing to qualify at the Australian trials, O'Callaghan has a golden opportunity to secure the revered 100-200 double.

She has not lost a 100 free in a major final since 2021, although Haughey came to Paris as the top seed after her 52.02 last year made her fastest since McKeon's 51.96 at the Tokyo Olympics.

The men's 100m is also without a defending champion after Caeleb Dressel's failure to make the grade at the US trials, leaving it wide open.

After standing for 13 years, Cesar Cielo's world record was finally topped by Popovici in



Chuqin Wang in action with Yingsha Sun. — Reuters

2022. But less than two years later Pan bettered it again, clocking 46.80.

Pan, though, seemed out-of-sorts and failed to make it through the 200m heats, only surviving the 100m by 0.06.

Dressel's long-time rival Kyle Chalmers — who won gold in Rio and silver behind the American in Tokyo — was sixth fastest and fancies his chances again.

"I feel like I'm in as good a shape as I could possibly be in for Olympic Games, definitely better than what I was in Tokyo," said the Australian.

"Every race I enter I back myself. I think I got to have the confidence, and belief in myself that I can."

Marchand was again greeted by huge roars after he won France's first pool gold in 12 years in the 400m medley on Sunday.

His brutal schedule meant he was up in both the 200m butterfly

and 200 breaststroke heats.

He clocked 1:55.26 to be sixth fastest in the butterfly, then posted 2:09.55 in the breaststroke behind only South Korea's Cho Sung-Jae and Australian defending champion Zac Stubblety-Cook.

"I'm using all the energy from the stadium and just trying to swim as fast as possible in every race," said Marchand.

"Tonight will be very exciting for me," he added, looking ahead to the semifinals.

He faces a huge butterfly hurdle in Hungarian Olympic champion and world record holder Kristof Milak, who topped the times in 1:53.92

Milak broke Michael Phelps' 10-year old world record in 2019 and then smashed it again in 2022, but took a break last year.

In his absence, Marchand won the 2023 world title and is the third-fastest swimmer in history behind Phelps and Milak.

A key casualty in the heats was Tokyo silver medallist Tomoru Honda of Japan.

On paper, Marchand also faces a stiff breaststroke test from China's Qin Haiyang, who won all three gold at the 2023 world championships and shattered Stubblety-Cook's world record.

But Qin — reportedly among 23 Chinese swimmers who failed doping tests before the Tokyo Games — only came 15th, after fading to finish seventh in the 100m final.

A relaxed Ledecky, who has set the last six world records, was fastest by nearly four seconds in the 1,500m, touching in 15:47.43 ahead of Italian Simona Quadarella as she targets an 11th Olympic medal.

Britain qualified first for the men's 4x200m relay final later Tuesday ahead of the United States. — AFP

North Korea win first medal in eight years with table tennis silver

PARIS: North Korea won their first Olympic medal in eight years on Tuesday in Paris but had to settle for silver after defeat in mixed-doubles to table tennis superpower China.

China arrived in Paris as the world's undisputed table tennis kings, having won 32 of the 37 available golds since it became an Olympic sport.

They failed to claim the mixed doubles title when it was introduced three years ago in Tokyo but Wang Chuqin and Sun Yingsha set the record straight with an 11-6, 7-11, 11-8, 11-5, 7-11, 11-8 win over North Korea's Ri Jong Sik and Kim Kum Yong.

It was the first gold of what China hope will be a clean sweep of table tennis in the French capital.

For North Korea, they skipped the pandemic-postponed Tokyo Olympics in 2021 over coronavirus concerns.

Ri and Kim will be on the medals podium with the South Korean duo Lim Jong-hoon and Shin Yu-bin, who won bronze.

The Chinese pair had overwhelming support from the red-clad fans inside the standing room-only South Paris Arena, who cheered and chanted throughout the match.

Wang and Sun, who have not lost outside China for four years and are the world's number one-ranked pair, took control early by winning the first game.

North Korea battled back to even things up but China took the next two games to put themselves on the brink of gold.

North Korea pulled a game back to stay in it but China saw out a tense end to the match to take the title.

Japan won the inaugural Olympic mixed doubles final in Tokyo, beating China in the final.

— AFP



Gold medallist Mollie O'Callaghan celebrates with silver medallist Ariarne Titmus and bronze medallist Siobhan Bernadette Haughey. — Reuters

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Omran Group achieves RO 31.6 million record profit

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 30

Omran Group reported a significant financial performance boost in 2023, achieving a net profit of RO 31.6 million. This represents a remarkable 199 per cent increase compared to the previous year, 2022.

The group's revenues also showed substantial growth, rising by 44.6 per cent to reach RO 70.4 million. The total value of Omran Group's assets reached approximately RO 671 million.

Additionally, the group experienced an 8-per cent increase in the occupancy rates of its resorts and hotels compared to 2022.

This improvement was reflected in the number of guests, which reached 774,881, marking an 11.5-per cent increase over the previous year. The group also achieved a notable performance in the local added value index, which stood at about



The total value of Omran Group's assets reached approximately RO 671 million.

51 per cent.

This was evidenced by spending over RO 8.5 million on national products and approximately RO 14.5 million on local services. Furthermore, the total public spending on small and medium enterprises (SMEs) during 2023 amounted to around RO 15

million.

Omran Group emphasised its ongoing commitment to enhancing financial and operational performance.

The group aims to improve operating expenses, bolster the competitive capabilities of its assets and maximise the sector's

potential. A key focus remains on achieving tourism diversification through investing in sustainable projects.

These projects are designed to



The growth represents a remarkable 199 per cent increase compared to the previous year, 2022.

enhance recreational, agricultural, environmental and adventure tourism, aligning with global trends in tourism development.

This approach aims to optimise the rich natural and cultural resources that the Sultanate of Oman offers.

BP acquires 49% stake in Oman's Hyport Duqm green hydrogen project

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 30

Energy major BP is acquiring a 49-per cent stake in Hyport Duqm, a gigawatt-scale green hydrogen and green ammonia project planned for implementation at Duqm in the southeast of the Sultanate of Oman.

An announcement to this effect came in BP Group's financial results for the first half of 2024, published on Tuesday, July 30, 2024.

Importantly, BP is also assuming operatorship of the project, which is on track to rank among the first crop of large-scale green molecule projects globally that are slated to be operational before 2030.

"On June 13, BP signed an agreement with OQ and Dredging, Environmental and Marine Engineering NV (DEME) to acquire a 49-per cent stake and operatorship in the Hyport green hydrogen project in Duqm, Oman, subject to regulatory approvals, which could produce around 57,000 tonnes per annum of green hydrogen," the energy giant stated in its financial report.

OQ is the integrated energy group of Oman, wholly owned by Oman Investment Authority (OIA). Its Alternative Energy arm (OQ AE) is a pivotal player in Oman's green hydrogen industry, with interests in a number of the giga-scale green molecule schemes currently in the early stages of development in Oman.

Hyport Duqm was among the first to sign agreements with Omani authorities aimed at establishing an export-oriented renewable hydrogen scheme in Duqm. Spearheading the project from the outset were the partnership of Belgian-based DEME Concessions and OQ AE.

Hyport Duqm is being developed on an area of 150 km² within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. The production of green hydrogen to green ammonia will be powered by both wind and solar energy, with a combined capacity of around 1.3 GW under Phase



BP will also assume operatorship of Hyport Duqm.

1 and potentially more than 2.7 GW on completion of Phase 2.

The first phase of the project, which is part of Oman's ambitious green energy targets (Vision 2040), is set to produce approximately 330,000 tonnes of green ammonia.

The Project Development Agreement (PDA) signed with Hydrom, the orchestrator of Oman's green hydrogen industry, grants Hyport Duqm a 47-year licence to develop and operate the project.

Hyport Duqm is among eight green hydrogen projects that have signed firm agreements with Oman's authorities to date with a goal to achieve an annual production capacity of around 1.38 million tonnes of renewable hydrogen by 2030. Total investments in the projects are estimated at \$48 billion.

In June last year, BP had signed a separate project development and land use agreement with Hydrom for a potential 150,000 tonnes a year green hydrogen project near Duqm.

"The project is currently in the concept development stage, and we continue to progress our data collection campaign using LiDARs (light detection and ranging devices), solar stations and met masts," said BP Oman in its 2023 Socioeconomic Review published earlier this year.

Al Kawthar Islamic Shariah Compliant Fund

Board of Director Report For the Quarter ended June 30th, 2024.

Dear Unitholders,

On behalf of the board, I am pleased to present the results of Al Kawthar Fund (Shariah Compliant) for the Quarter ended June 30th, 2024.

The Fund managed to outperform the benchmark by 14bps over the period of 2024Q2. This is despite negative sentiments in the market due to certain Saudi Vision 2030 related target revisions and several IPOs/big-ticket (secondary offering of Saudi Aramco) that dampened liquidity and price discovery in rest of the stocks. Meanwhile, our strategy combining fundamental and technical data sets led to the fund's outperformance of 1.75ppts since YTD'24. The Fund's value at the end of the period was R.O 5.81mn and the Net Asset Value per unit stood at R.O 1.088.

Market Performance

Period	Fund Performance	Benchmark Performance
Second Quarter-2024	-4.49%	-4.72%
Year-to-date 2024	-1.87%	-3.62%
Full Year 2023	10.09%	5.71%
Full Year 2022	-7.10%	-6.78%
Last 3 Years Annualized	1.99%	-2.89%

Global equity markets demonstrated another resilient quarter in the wake of strong economic start and earnings momentum (DM equities up 2.8%, while MSCI EM up 5.1%), with price growth concentrated in large cap stocks rather than rate sensitive small caps. Companies exposed to Artificial Intelligence largely outperformed while other tech stocks also rallied. On the other hand, news of Chinese support to its real estate sector provided some boost to its real estate sector, the key mover of the economy. The trickle-down effect of Chinese growth subsequently gave hopes to other EM markets as well that were already rising on strong consumer demand and easing monetary policies. All this happened despite FED updating its rate-cut outlook to just one in 2024, instead of three previously, basing its result on further data confirmation.

In terms of comparative performance, the S&P GCC sharia index retreated by 4.72% during 2024Q2. Among the constituents, Kuwait's market receded the most with a 6.13% decline, followed by Saudi market at 5.82% and Dubai Market at 5.09%. Abu Dhabi was down 1.81% while Bahrain's bourse declined by 0.84%. Meanwhile, Oman's market went up by 1.11% while Qatar was the most successful market with a gain of 1.22%.

Brief Summary of Accounts

Particulars	30 th June 2024 RO	30 th June 2023 RO
Revenues	217,818	147,721
Total Comprehensive Income	167,155	101,966
Net Asset Value	6,053,404	6,087,614
Fund Capital	5,087,223	5,542,374
NAV per unit	1.190	1.098

Outlook

The GCC region is expected to outperform the global economy in 2024, with projected growth of 2.8% compared to the global average of 2.6%. While interest rates are likely to remain elevated due to persistent services inflation and potential supply chain disruptions, the region's economic momentum will be supported by investments in tourism, consumer goods, real estate, and non-oil sectors. Additionally, a potential acceleration of the Chinese economy could further boost the GCC's growth trajectory.

More specifically, 2H24 is likely to be characterized by sector-specific growth in the region. Stretched valuations in certain sectors might cap further upside in the short run, while favorable policies in others such as the IT, real estate, electronics & electronics, tourism and consumer items might open up new avenues of investment. We anticipate increased focus on companies' expansion plans and their impact on investor expectations. We have seen specific stocks catching up to the overall country-investment theme in Qatar which revolves around the North field expansion and LNG development. The same could continue going forward as well as more announcements come through. Meanwhile, market making activities are on the rise in Oman, and we have witnessed the same in other countries as well, which is supportive of the overall market development. Dubai market remains cheap by relative valuation standard, and offers selective opportunities that we continue to evaluate and participate in. Kuwait and Bahrain market may continue moving sideways with stock specific movements specifically after 2024 results. For Saudi Arabia, the largest constituent of GCC index, we foresee market performance to follow movements in index-heavy weights which are move tilted towards oil, petrochemicals and financials. Investors would factor in 2024 results and seek direction from company briefings which would dictate the direction of stocks. Lastly, it is imperative to note that overall market conditions may very well be overshadowed by the upcoming IPOs specifically in Oman, UAE and Saudi Arabia. We continue to deploy our research expertise and filter out lucrative opportunities.

Managed By:
Oman National Investment Development Company SAOC
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www.tanmia.om

Despite the promising regional development activities, risks persist, including the impact of ongoing conflicts on the tourism sector and different policies that might be implemented as new governments take charge in several countries. On the contrary, global investors are increasingly shifting their attention towards the GCC region, which is not only attractive due to its valuation discount but also provides longer term growth visibility and relative stability. Moreover, after the recent drop in prices, dividend yields have become more attractive, warranting further attention. We keep a close eye on regional and global developments. Our steadfast approach of research-driven stock selection and active portfolio management instills confidence in achieving positive returns over the medium to long term.

On behalf of the members of the Board of Directors, I would like to acknowledge and thank our valued unit holders for their continued support.

Rawan Ahmed Al Said
Chairperson

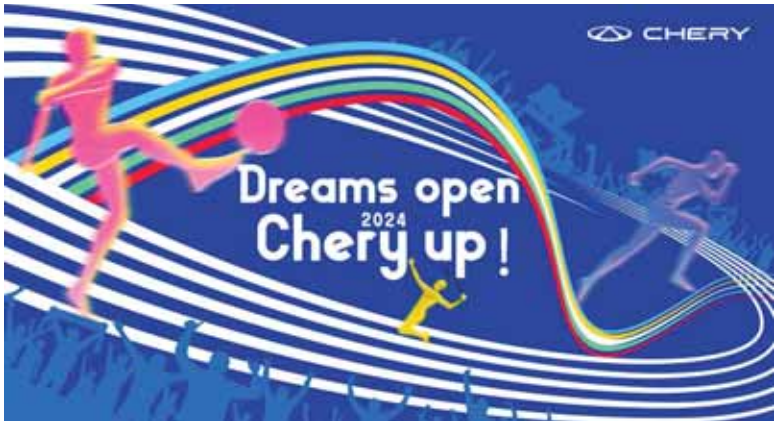
Interim unaudited statement of financial position as at 30 June 2024 (Expressed in Omani Rials)

	30 June 2024 Unaudited	31 December 2023 Audited	30 June 2023 Unaudited
ASSETS			
Current assets			
Investments at fair value through profit or loss	5,260,330	5,750,576	5,372,137
Receivables	167,491	132,852	271,469
Cash and cash equivalents	473,470	329,132	610,919
Total assets	<u>5,901,291</u>	<u>6,212,360</u>	<u>6,254,525</u>
UNITHOLDERS' FUNDS			
Fund capital	5,337,729	5,091,592	5,493,866
Retained earnings	467,975	799,777	672,608
Total Unitholders' funds	<u>5,805,704</u>	<u>5,891,369</u>	<u>6,166,474</u>
LIABILITIES			
Current liabilities			
Redemption payable	-	232,420	-
Accruals and other payables	50,688	61,342	45,974
Due to a related party	44,899	27,229	42,077
Total liabilities	<u>95,587</u>	<u>320,991</u>	<u>88,051</u>
TOTAL UNITHOLDERS' FUNDS AND LIABILITIES	<u>5,901,291</u>	<u>6,212,360</u>	<u>6,254,525</u>
Net asset value per unit	<u>1.088</u>	<u>1.157</u>	<u>1.122</u>

Interim unaudited statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the quarter ended 30 June 2024 (Expressed in Omani Rials)

	Quarter ended 30-Jun-24 Unaudited	Quarter ended 30-Jun-23 Unaudited
INCOME		
Dividend income from financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	140,645	158,245
Realised gain on sale of financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	101,930	206,039
Unrealised gain on financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	(196,617)	156,357
Foreign exchange gain	1,944	(1,125)
	<u>47,902</u>	<u>519,516</u>
EXPENSES		
Management, performance, custodian and fund administration fees	(62,597)	(63,815)
General and administrative expenses	(61,880)	(55,665)
	<u>(124,477)</u>	<u>(119,480)</u>
Net profit for the period	<u>(76,575)</u>	<u>400,036</u>
Earnings per unit	<u>(0.015)</u>	<u>0.073</u>

تنمية
TANMIA
الشركة العامة لتنمية الاستثمارات الوطنية
Oman National Investment Development Company



Chery: Taking sports as a bridge and making friends with the world

MUSCAT: As the Paris Games draw global attention, Chery proudly embraces the motto “Dreams Open, Chery Up”. In its global sports marketing journey, Chery bridges connections through sports, fostering profound friendships worldwide.

This journey signifies not just a commercial expedition but a brand pilgrimage of attentive listening and sincere communication.

With over two decades of global expansion, Chery has orchestrated a series of cross-border sports marketing initiatives, deepening cultural resonance in local markets.

Chery has conquered 80 markets worldwide, guarding 14 million users and embodying the spirit of the Paris Games.

Chery products are sold in over 80 countries and regions globally, with 27 production bases and eight major R&D centers worldwide.

Their product range spans ICE, PHEV, and BEV, showcasing significant global market influence.

Chery’s global footprint spans continents, from the passionate soccer fields of South America to the refined golf courses of Europe and the dynamic marathon tracks of Asia.

Chery has significantly enhanced its brand visibility by leveraging sports marketing in soccer-loving nations like Chile, Brazil, Argentina, Ecuador, and Costa Rica. Since 2013, Chery has proudly served as the official sponsor of the Chilean national football team and has partnered with esteemed clubs like Brazil’s Santos.

In 2016, Chery sponsored and named five teams in Egypt’s

football league.

In 2019, Chery sponsored Ecuador’s IDV team, celebrating their first Champion of Copa America, marking a historic achievement for the country.

Chery places customers at the forefront of its sports marketing endeavors, emphasising interaction and experiential engagement.

During the Fifa World Cup Brazil, Chery launched the “Find 11 Players” campaign, engaging countless football aficionados. Ahead of the Copa America, Chery conducted the “Crazy Football” online campaign on a global scale.

In the Ecuadorian market, the whimsical appearance of the robotic dog Dorry as an honorary team member at football matches.

These activities ensure every customer experiences Chery’s vibrancy and creativity.

These initiatives not only bridge the gap between the brand and consumers but also integrate Chery into people’s daily lives.

Looking forward, Chery will continue to uphold the motto “Dreams Open, Chery Up,” advancing with renewed vigor along its path of globalisation.

With strengthened brand prowess and ongoing expansion in global markets, Chery is poised to shine brightly on the international automotive stage, bridging diverse cultures and promoting global exchange and collaboration.

Chery aims to drive progress and elevate the automotive industry through relentless innovation and breakthroughs, delivering enhanced travel experiences for global consumers.

Bank Muscat extends strong support to Khareef Dhofar 2024

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to participate in different local events and extend support to tourism promotion initiatives, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, extended its support to Khareef Dhofar 2024 activities through providing a wide range of banking facilities to offer customers the best services possible during this popular season.

Bank Muscat has taken a lot of efforts to enhance its partnership with various government and private institutions in different sectors including tourism; aiming to uphold its social and developmental responsibilities, striving to collaborate with all segments of society and serve the community.

Participating in such events confirms the Bank’s commitment to translate the goals of Oman Vision 2024. Bank Muscat is keen to provide customers with the best services possible by ensuring the availability of banking facilities and services through branches, ATMs, and CDMs in Dhofar as well as those situated on the highway between Adam and Thamrait, in addition to the online services.

On this occasion, Taya Eid Bait



Sabeea, Deputy General Manager — Interior Regions, Bank Muscat, said: “We are pleased to continue our support to Khareef Dhofar by offering a suite of financial services and facilities for all visitors.

Bank Muscat has invested heavily in cutting-edge technology to provide all our customers with banking services through multiple channels.

I would like to take this opportunity to reaffirm that we will continue to develop our services to ensure that they reach everyone in the Sultanate of Oman; a key goal that comes in line with our vision “To Serve You

Better, Everyday”.

To have easy access to banking services 24/7, the bank maintains more than 60 ATMs, CDMs, FFMs, BCDM, Multi-Function Kiosk and statement printers, in addition to the ATM mobile unit currently located in Ittin area and 14 branches in the Governorate of Dhofar, including the recently inaugurated branch in Sahalnoot.

These branches are distributed based on population density as well as economic and commercial growth in the governorate.

Considering its leadership position in the Sultanate of Oman, Bank Muscat has a total of 185 branches and over 828

touchpoints including Automatic Teller Machines (ATMs), Cash Deposit Machines (CDMs) and Full Function Machines (FFMs) installed across the country.

With the large number of visitors in the governorate, there is a higher demand for banking services and the bank is sparing no effort in ensuring that its ATMs and CDMs are available to customers 24/7, offering various financial services.

Also, the bank is continuously upgrading its Internet and mobile banking services and Call Centre to offer customers a fast, comfortable and secure banking experience.

OOMCO opens new service station and first two Café Amazon outlets in Salalah

MUSCAT: Under the auspices of Shaikh Mohammed bin Saif al Busaidy, Wali of Salalah, Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) officially inaugurated the Al Redha service station in Al Haffa, raising the total number of stations in the Governorate of Dhofar to 25.

On the heels of the opening, the company also introduced the first two Café Amazon outlets in Salalah, perfectly timed for the much-anticipated Khareef season.

The new Café Amazon outlets at the Al Haffa and Awqad service stations bring the popular café renowned for its variety of beverages and snacks, including rich coffee blends, refreshing healthy juices, and chilled iced teas. Complementing this latest addition, the Al Redha service station now also features a newly designed Ahlain convenience store to provide customers with a one-stop shop for all their on-the-go needs.

Tarik al Junaidi, CEO of OOMCO “As part of our commitment to offering a seamless and



superior experience to our customers, OOMCO continues to transform the industry’s landscape through upgrades, expansion, and innovation.

The opening of our new service station in Al Haffa, along with Salalah’s first Café Amazon outlets, marks yet another milestone in our journey to connect with our customers and meet their expectations.”

With the launch of these new facilities, OOMCO will continue to deliver on its promise to enhance the travel experience for the many visitors during the Khareef season and beyond.

This expansion reinforces the company’s dedication to providing exceptional service and convenience throughout the Governorate of Dhofar, ensuring that both locals and visitors enjoy a superior and seamless experience renowned from OOMCO.

Beyond the expansions, OOMCO has also planned a series of activations during the Khareef season.

Aiming to promote safety awareness within the community, a dedicated Safety Village at Salalah Gardens Mall will welcome visitors from August 5 to 8.

In addition, OOMCO has teamed up with Lamborghini Club Oman and Lamborghini Club Saudi Arabia for a thrilling journey from Muscat to Salalah, powered by Ultimax 98 fuel.

BankDhofar inaugurates two new branches in Suhar

MUSCAT: Bank Dhofar has opened two branches in Suhar aimed at meeting the needs of both individuals and large corporations. The opening of a new branch at Sohar Port, located within the free zone, reflects the bank’s commitment to enhancing customer relationships and providing banking services to all segments of the population.

Through the opening of these two branches, BankDhofar is extending its services to a wide range of customers, including large multinational firms, owners of small and medium-sized companies operating within the free zone.

This move aligns with the Sultanate of Oman’s focus on attracting domestic and Foreign Direct Investments to drive economic progress and accelerate



growth across sectors, especially the energy sector, industry, logistics, tourism, and others.

Bank Dhofar is committed to providing specialised banking solutions to all segments of society including women, children, minors, youth, affluent

and ultrahigh networth group of customers.

In an effort to better meet the needs of Ultra high net worth clients, business owners, and their families, the bank has also recently introduced specialised private banking services.



These services include investment solutions managed by a team of highly qualified relationship managers, investment experts. The bank has also entered in to partnerships across global fund houses to provide access to investments, including mutual

funds, bonds, and stocks.

Through Private Bank, its ensures that clients legacy goes beyond just financial success.

BankDhofar’s Mobile Banking app offers a wide range of features that allow customers to manage their accounts, make payments,

and stay updated on their financial activities with ease.

Whether travelling abroad, working at a summer internship, or enjoying the picturesque Salalah or Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, BankDhofar’s Mobile Banking app ensures that your financial needs are always within reach.

With the opening of these two branches, the number of branches of Bank Dhofar and Dhofar Islamic Bank reaches approximately 126 branches distributed in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to 360 ATMs and cash deposit machines that operate around the clock.

Bank Dhofar is the second largest bank in Oman in terms of the number of branches, and the first bank in Oman and the Middle East to implement cash recycling technology.



MSX Index closes up 0.26 per cent



MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) Index 30 closed yesterday at 4,664.11 points, up 12.03 points and 0.26% compared to the last trading session on Monday which reached 4652.08 points.

The trading value amounted to RO 2,089,556, down by 67.96% compared to the last trading session which amounted to RO 6,522,712.

The report issued by Muscat Stock Exchange indicated that the market value increased by 0.085% from the last trading day and amounted to approximately RO 24.35 billion.

The value of non-Omani purchases on the stock exchange amounted to RO 135,000, representing 6.46 per cent, while the value of non-Omani sales amounted to RO 222,000, representing 10.61 per cent, while the net non-Omani investment decreased by RO 87,000, or 4.15 per cent. — ONA

Oman oil price drops by \$1 per barrel



MUSCAT: The official price of Oman oil yesterday, for delivery in September, reached \$79.56. The price of Oman oil yesterday witnessed a decrease of \$1 per barrel compared to Monday's price which amounted to \$80.56.

The monthly average price of Omani crude oil for delivery in July reached \$83.89 per barrel, down by \$5.41 compared to the price of delivery in June.

— ONA

Risk management crucial for ensuring sustainability in energy, minerals sectors

JOMAR MENDOZA

MUSCAT, JULY 30

Risk management in the energy and minerals sectors is crucial for business continuity and sustainable development. These sectors encounter numerous challenges, including environmental issues, facility encroachments, unusual weather conditions, and global political and economic fluctuations.

By identifying and assessing potential risks, organisations can develop effective strategies to manage crises and minimise their negative impact, thereby maintaining operational stability and achieving organisational goals.

As Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, states, "Safety and security is one of the most important aspects enhanced by risk management."

In the oil and gas sector, preventive measures protect facilities and workers from environmental accidents and leaks, covering onshore and offshore production plants, pipeline networks and petroleum refineries.

In the metals sector, risk management "improves indoor



Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami
Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals

safety standards and reduces accidents through a safe engineering design and periodic training of personnel," ensuring a safer and more efficient working environment.

In the electricity and renewable energy sector, risk management is essential for the reliability and continuity of energy supply.

This sector faces risks such as integrating renewable energy plants with the electrical grid and managing fluctuations in energy production due to climate change.

Risk management strategies, developed in coordination with stakeholders, ensure the reliability of the production network, the use of reserve fuels, and the implementation of periodic tests for rapid switching between different energy sources, thereby ensuring the stability and safety of



In the oil and gas sector, preventive measures protect facilities and workers from environmental accidents and leaks, covering onshore and offshore production plants, pipeline networks, and petroleum refineries.

the electrical grid.

With technological advancements, cybersecurity has become a critical component of risk management. Digital transformation increases reliance on electronic systems, making them vulnerable to cyber attacks.

Cyber risk management includes "protecting sensitive data and operating systems from digital threats, updating the information security risk

management framework and implementing cyber resilience strategies," Al Hadhrami added.

This ensures business continuity and reduces the likelihood of technical and financial damage. Risk management promotes collaboration between government and private institutions to ensure information exchange and the effective implementation of contingency plans.

It also improves the financial performance of companies by reducing potential losses and increasing investments, supporting financial stability and market competitiveness.

Ultimately, risk management "contributes to confidence between investors and partners, and supports efforts to achieve economic and environmental sustainability in the Sultanate of Oman," Al Hadhrami concluded.

Workshop promotes 4th Industrial Revolution in Omani factories

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, through its Directorate-General of Industry and in cooperation with the Gulf Organisation for Industrial Consulting (GOIC), organised a workshop aimed at empowering Omani factories to adopt Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) applications.

The workshop sought to raise awareness among Omani factories about the significance of adopting 4IR applications.

It covered the operational mechanism of the Smart Production Factories Project, the digital maturity assessment process and its components.

The workshop also aimed to



The workshop sought to raise awareness among Omani factories about the significance of adopting 4IR applications.

assist companies in developing digital transformation plans and inform them about the incentives and facilities available to support this transition.

The Smart Production Factories

Project's primary goal is to evaluate a group of factories in the targeted industrial sectors using the Smart Industry Readiness Index. Based on this evaluation, the project provides recommendations to

facilitate technology adoption in manufacturing.

The initiative aims to transition factories to 4IR applications in their operational, administrative and technical processes over time.

Mazen bin Humaid al Siyabi, Assistant Director-General for Industry at the ministry, highlighted that the workshop aligns with the ministry's efforts under the Industrial Strategy 2040.

This strategy emphasises enhancing the competitiveness of the industrial sector by adopting 4IR applications and fostering innovation.

Al Siyabi noted that the ministry, in collaboration with GOIC, aims to enable 20 factories

this year to begin adopting 4IR applications in production. The process includes raising awareness about the evaluation elements, which is the workshop's goal, and conducting actual evaluations in coordination with factories.

This will involve preparing detailed reports for the targeted factories, diagnosing their current use of 4IR tools and identifying requirements to improve their general index within the Smart Industry Readiness Index. Subsequently, a detailed transformation plan will be prepared.

The session also introduced participants to the components of the index and the evaluation process for factories. — ONA

SalamAir announces future plans, inducts new CEO

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT, JULY 30

SalamAir, Oman's budget airline, celebrated successful July and introduced the new CEO at its headquarters in Muscat Hills on Tuesday.

Currently flying to 39 international destinations and bringing passengers from 4 regional destinations to Salalah, it also revealed its ambitious growth plans at a media gathering.

The low-cost carrier of Oman added two new destinations to India to the existing 8 destinations in the south Asian country, Mumbai and Bangalore.

There will be four flights a week to Mumbai starting from September 2, and from September 6, flights to Bengaluru will run twice a week.

Introductory one-way fares



SalamAir added two new destinations to India to the existing 8 destinations in the south Asian country.

start at RO 19 for Mumbai and RO 33 for Bengaluru on the "Light Fare," including a 7-kg hand luggage allowance. Passengers can customise their travel experience with

meals, extra baggage and travel insurance.

This expansion is part of SalamAir's strategy to offer low fares consistently and provide travellers with more choices.

Our "Light Fare" allows customers to stretch their travel budget by paying only for the needed services, ensuring significant savings while discovering new destinations.

Speaking to the *Observer* on the sidelines of the event, Adrian Hamilton-Manns, CEO of SalamAir, said, "The Indian subcontinent is a key region for us, and we are committed to strengthening our connections and providing affordable travel options."

"We are proud of our expansion to Mumbai and Bengaluru, alongside the recently launched routes to Delhi, Chennai, Islamabad and Lahore. This growth aligns with Oman Vision 2040 and supports our strategic goals."

"Additionally, in support of the khareef season, we have enhanced connectivity to Suhar, Fujairah, Baghdad and Bahrain, resulting in a 9-per cent increase in capacity to Salalah compared to the same period in 2023."

He added that right now

the airlines has 13 planes and by next year two more will be added.

There are also plans to increase the frequency to the destinations.

In July this year, the airline achieved a 24-per cent increase in operational capacity compared to June and with these additions, SalamAir now serves eight destinations in India, including Delhi, Calicut, Chennai, Lucknow, Jaipur and Hyderabad.

The expansion plan has led to a 14-per cent increase in operations in India and a 29-per cent increase in Pakistan compared to previous periods.

Recently, new seasonal destinations connecting Suhar, Fujairah, Baghdad and Bahrain to Salalah and direct flights to Baku, Almaty, Tirana, and Trabzon were introduced.

Boost for new chancellor as economy gets stronger



ANDY JALIL
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

The chancellor, Rachel Reeves, just days into the job, already knew the economy had jumped into growth back in May, according to official figures earlier this month. GDP was up by 0.4 per cent

in that month — boosted by a big bounce back in construction output, which had been depressed by prolonged wet weather earlier in the spring — according to the Office for National Statistics (ONS). This compared to the economy flatlining in April, as per data published shortly before the general election on 4 July. Responding to the latest figures, Ms Reeves said: “A decade of national renewal has begun, and we are just getting started.” The 0.4 per cent growth was twice as good as expected by most firms in the financial district of London, known as the ‘City’. Rob Wood, chief UK economist at Pantheon Macroeconomics, said: “The economy is well and truly putting last year’s minor recession behind it. But these

growth numbers feel a bit too good to be true, so we assume some payback.” The strong growth may delay the Bank of England’s (BoE) monetary policy committee (MPC) from cutting interest rates. Suren Thiru, economics director at accountants group ICAEW, said: “These GDP figures may make an August rate cut less likely.” The services sector remained a key driver for economic growth, the ONS said, with its fifth consecutive monthly increase. Retailers had a particularly strong month, reporting a 2.9 per cent increase in trade for May. Accommodation and food services, which includes hotels and restaurants, was another strong performer, with 2.4 per cent growth.

The construction industry saw output grow by 1.9 per cent, with an increase in both new work and maintenance. The strong data means that City markets now see another hold in rates at the current level of 5.25 per cent as the slightly more likely outcome when the Bank of England’s Monetary Policy Committee meets this week. That is a turnaround from earlier this month when they had ranked the chances of a cut at 60/40. The BoE chief economist Hugh Pill said underlying inflation pressure still showed “uncomfortable strength” despite the headline rate falling back to its 2 per cent target, and that it was still an “open question on whether the timing for a rate cut is now.” City economists said the

strong ONS numbers suggested September might now be the more likely date for a first cut of borrowing. Rob Morgan, chief investment analyst at investment management firm Charles Stanley, said: “Robust wage rises and sticky services prices have prevented the Bank (BoE) from acting earlier to cut rates, but with Consumer Price Index (CPI) inflation falling back on line with the 2 per cent target, a tentative first of 0.25 per cent reduction from the current 5.25 per cent is around the corner. “However, this more robust growth picture may just tilt the balance away towards September rather than August for the first cut. We will then likely see a shallow trajectory of cuts, perhaps at a roughly quarterly pace, towards the 4 per cent level.”

Chief economist at investment bank Investec, Philip Shaw, said that “while one should not read too much into one month of GDP data, the economy has been performing more strongly than expected over the year so far. Our base case is still that the MPC will cut rates by 25 basis points on 1 August, but the case for an easing looks more finely balanced than it did previously.” Meanwhile, economists also expect a long-term boost to growth from the new Labour government, with analysts from Goldman Sachs raising their growth forecasts for 2025 and 2026 by 0.1 percentage points. “We continue to expect that Labour’s fiscal policy agenda will provide a modest boost to demand growth in the near-term,” they wrote.

The role of carbon offset in balancing industrial growth and environmental sustainability



NAJAH AL RIYAMI

The author is a Media and Communication Master’s graduate skilled in diverse writing formats, specialising in storytelling, branding, and in-depth journalism

The industrialisation of the late 19th century and the continued expansion of fossil-fuel-reliant industries throughout the 20th century have led to our growing awareness of its consequences and an urgency towards its regulation. Faced with the challenge of balancing industrial development with environmental sustainability, we collectively pursue advancing technologies and policies aimed at reducing CO₂ emissions, fostering innovation, and transitioning to renewable energy sources with carbon budgets, an integral part of the Paris Agreement, guiding our approach as the finite amount of carbon dioxide that can be released into the atmosphere while still limiting global warming to specific thresholds. Carbon credits support this budget by providing organisations the opportunity to offset their emissions with credits generated by projects that reduce or remove greenhouse gas emissions; companies exceeding their allocated emission limits can purchase these credits to compensate for their excess emissions, effectively offsetting their carbon footprint. From forestry projects that focus on tree planting and reforestation such as Oman’s Blue Carbon project, methane capture efforts that target this potent gas to reduce its

emissions from landfills and agriculture, renewable energy projects such as the wind farm of Dhofar with its generation capacity of 50 MW, and also direct carbon capture, our local and global efforts towards achieving our carbon budgets and net zero goals continue to expand. Projects such as Oman’s Blue Carbon project highlight the significant role carbon credits play in steps towards carbon neutrality. Aiming to transform Al-Sawadi Creek into an 88-hectare mangrove forest by planting 100 million mangrove trees along 20,000 hectares of coastline. This initiative targets a CO₂ reduction of 14 million metric tonnes in four years, aligning with Oman’s National Zero Carbon Strategy 2050, and potentially generating \$150 million through carbon credits while reviving the endangered Avicennia marina species. However, the carbon market faces challenges such as credibility and regulatory uncertainty. “Carbon credits undoubtedly play an increasingly large role on our path to worldwide decarbonisation,” Fabian Mueller, Managing Director of Green Tech, explains; “however, there is currently no functioning international carbon exchange, and private markets are in disarray. It will take intense and disciplined collaboration from the international community to ensure that carbon trading projects and their platforms can effectively contribute to climate change mitigation.” Despite the challenges faced by the carbon market, managing it remains critical to mitigating climate change, and, as the landscape evolves, the goal is to establish a more impactful and credible carbon market, contributing to a sustainable future, with international agreements and policies playing a crucial role in guiding and regulating efforts to manage and reduce carbon emissions globally.



ALAN RAPPEPORT

The writer is an economic policy reporter at the New York Times, based in Washington. He covers the Treasury Department and writes about taxes, trade and fiscal matters.

America’s gross national debt topped \$35 trillion for the first time Monday, a reminder of the nation’s grim fiscal predicament as legislative fights over taxes and spending initiatives loom in Washington. The Treasury Department noted the milestone in its daily report detailing the nation’s balance sheet. The red ink is mounting in the United States more quickly than many economists had predicted as the costs of federal programs enacted in recent years have exceeded initial projections. The leading presidential candidates, Vice President Kamala Harris and former President Donald Trump, have said little about the nation’s deficits on the campaign trail, suggesting that the economic problem will only worsen in the coming years. Deep differences between Republicans and Democrats on policy priorities and resistance within both parties to enacting cuts to the biggest drivers of the national debt — Social Security and Medicare — have made it difficult to reduce America’s borrowing. The Congressional Budget Office said last month that the US national debt is poised to top \$56 trillion by 2034, as rising spending and interest expenses outpace tax revenue. High interest rates have made it harder for the United States to manage its debt burden. Some federal programs created during the pandemic,



People cross the street next to a bus stop with a sign that shows a US national debt figure in Washington. – Reuters

such as the Employee Retention Tax Credit, have been more costly than budget experts predicted because of fraud and abuse. There has also been stronger-than-expected demand for tax credits that have been offered through the Inflation Reduction Act of 2022, inflaming annual deficits. The Treasury Department said Monday that it borrowed \$234 billion from April to June, which was less than it anticipated, and that it expects to borrow \$740 billion from July through September. Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said in June that the US debt load remained reasonable given the size of the economy and that she was focused on keeping interest costs stable. The Biden administration in its most recent budget proposed \$3 trillion in deficit reduction over a decade, largely from raising taxes on high earners and corporations. The White House argued Monday that Republicans would worsen the national debt if they take power in Washington. “While congressional Republicans want to blow up the debt again with \$5 trillion in more Trump tax cuts — while making hardworking families pay the price by cutting Social Security, Medicare and the Affordable Care Act — President

Joe Biden’s budget would lower the deficit by \$3 trillion by making billionaires and the biggest corporations pay their fair share and cutting spending on special interests,” Jeremy M. Edwards, a White House spokesperson, said in a statement Monday. Republican lawmakers disagreed with that assessment. Rep. Jodey Arrington, R-Texas, the Republican chair of the House Budget Committee, said Monday that Republican leadership next year is “our last best hope to restore fiscal responsibility before it’s too late.” The budget office predicts that annual interest costs will rise to \$1.7 trillion in 2034 from \$892 billion this year. At that point, the United States would be spending about as much on interest payments as it does on Medicare. In January, lawmakers in Congress will have to once again find a way to raise the nation’s debt limit, which was temporarily suspended last year after a protracted fight between Republicans and Democrats over spending priorities. Congress will also be scrambling next year to decide what to do about expiring tax cuts that Trump enacted in 2017. Trump has called for extending the tax cuts, which budget groups say would cost about \$4 trillion

over 10 years. Democrats want to preserve the ones that have benefited the middle class while increasing taxes on companies and the rich. Harris has yet to unveil an economic plan, and it is unclear how her policy priorities might diverge from those of the Biden administration. As a presidential candidate in 2019, she called for raising the corporate tax rate to 35% from 21%, but she also proposed new tax credits for the middle class and pay increases for teachers, which would be paid for by increasing the estate tax. At the Republican National Convention this month, Republicans made no mention of the national debt in their party platform. Trump suggested that he would simultaneously cut taxes while reducing the debt, an approach that failed during his first term. Trump has proposed raising revenue through higher tariffs on imports, but those would probably be used to help offset tax cuts. The nonpartisan Committee for a Responsible Federal Budget said in a report last month that Trump approved \$8.4 trillion in new borrowing while in office. Biden has approved \$4.3 trillion during his first three years and five months in the White House. — The New York Times

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LIFESTYLE

Spiderman cosplayers fix their masks outside the convention centre during Comic Con International in San Diego, California. — AFP



FILM

Bollywood actress Janhvi Kapoor attends an event for the promotion of her upcoming Indian Hindi-language spy thriller film 'Uljah' in Mumbai. — AFP



CHANGING WORLD

A vendor with cooling-face-powder reacts while selling goods on their wooden boats during Lok Baintan Floating Market Festival at Martapura river, near Banjarmasin, South Kalimantan province, Indonesia. — Reuters



ENTERTAINMENT

Dancers Shmuel Dvir and Sharon Fridman perform in "Go Figure" by the Company of Israel during the Dance Festival Malta in Valletta, Malta. — Reuters



MUSIC

Guilherme Peixoto, a priest and DJ, performs on stage during a popular fair in Coimbra, Portugal, seduces young people and makes crowds dance to transmit the Church's message of faith and hope. — AFP

art & life

WEDNESDAY | JULY 31, 2024 | MUHARRAM 25 , 1446 AH OMAN OBSERVER www.omanobserver.om features@omanobserver.om



MASIRAH CONTINUES TO BE HOME FOR KITE SURFING CLINICS

Masirah is a prime kite surfing destination known for its perfect wind conditions and stunning scenery. Swiss pro Marc Ramseier's recent clinic drew international participants, showcasing the island's appeal for the sport... **P20**

FILM

Robert Downey Jr set to return to Marvel as Dr Doom

ROBERT DOWNEY JR IS going from superhero to supervillain. The actor, who entertained audiences as Iron Man for more than a decade in several Hollywood blockbusters, is returning to the Marvel cinematic universe as the villain Victor von Doom in two upcoming movies. "New mask, same task," Downey announced at a Comic-Con event in San

Diego on Saturday, after he unveiled the character's signature silver mask and green cloak to the roar of a cheering crowd. "What can I tell you?" he said. "I like playing complicated characters." Downey is set to appear as the character, simply known as Dr Doom, in "Avengers: Doomsday," which is expected to be released in May 2026, and "Avengers: Secret Wars" a year later. Downey, 59, has been a prolific actor since the 1980s, portraying characters both serious and comedic. He received Academy Award nominations for his portrayal of actor Charlie Chaplin in the 1992 film "Chaplin," and for his role in the 2008 war comedy "Tropic Thunder." After multiple probation violations stemming from an arrest on drug and weapons charges, he was sentenced to prison in 1999 and overcame a long battle with substance abuse. This year, he won the Academy Award for best supporting actor for his role in "Oppenheimer," Christopher Nolan's film about the making of the atomic bomb during World War II. Downey played the titular character's political rival, Lewis Strauss. But audiences best know him for helping to start an era of blockbuster superhe-



ro movies that began in 2008 with the first "Iron Man" movie. He played the charismatic genius-inventor-billionaire-arms dealer Tony Stark, who becomes Iron Man and eventually leads a team of heroes, the Avengers,

who protect the world against dark forces. He played the character in sequels and spinoffs including "Iron Man 2," "Captain America: Civil War" and "Spider-Man: Homecoming." He last appeared as Iron Man in the 2019 film, "Avengers: Endgame," in which the character was killed off. And now Downey is going back to the popular superhero realm with Dr Doom, a megalomaniacal villainous tycoon from the Marvel comic book series "Fantastic Four," which was created by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby in 1961. In the series, Dr Doom wore a threatening silver mask to hide his scarred face. The character was previously played by Julian McMahon in the 2005 film "Fantastic Four" and in the 2007 sequel "Fantastic Four: Rise of the Silver Surfer." A reboot in 2015 featured actor Toby Kebbell as Dr Doom. The casting news comes as Marvel Studios, which has been trying to reverse recent box office misses, brought back two of its most popular characters, Deadpool and Wolverine, with the movie "Deadpool & Wolverine." The movie was expected to sell roughly \$205 million in tickets in the United States and Canada over the weekend, box office analysts said Saturday. — **NYT**

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7 REASONS WHY SHANGRI-LA AL WAHA IS THE PERFECT SUMMER GETAWAY



BY YERU EBUEN

As summer temperatures in Oman rise, choosing the right hotel becomes crucial for a comfortable stay. Effective air conditioning and ventilation in rooms and public areas are vital for comfort, as temperatures can exceed 40°C (104°F). When selecting a hotel, opt for those near the coast or in the mountains, where cooler breezes offer relief. Proximity to beaches or natural attractions provides additional recreational options.

Access to swimming pools or water features is essential for cooling off, and hotels with shaded or indoor pools offer added comfort. Various indoor facilities, such as spas, fitness centres and restaurants, ensure guests can enjoy their stay without exposure to the heat. Hotels with shaded gardens and terraces provide comfortable outdoor areas for relaxation, while those offering water sports like snorkelling or diving provide refreshing experiences despite the heat.

Room comfort is also important, with features like blackout curtains, comfortable bedding and insulation helping to maintain a cool environment. For families, look for hotels with children's activities and family suites to ensure a comfortable stay for everyone. Considering these factors, travellers can enjoy a pleasant and refreshing summer experience in Oman.

With the challenges of summer, Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah is an ideal destination for those seeking a luxurious summer staycation. Nestled between the rugged mountains and the serene sea, the resort provides an oasis of tranquility and comfort. Guests can enjoy a range of luxurious amenities, including spacious rooms, multiple swimming pools and a private beach, all designed to provide a relaxing escape from the intense summer conditions.

GREAT FAMILY-EXPERIENCE AT ITS HEART

A sprawling complex, Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah offers the perfect escape with

its wide array of amenities that make for an unforgettable stay.

Developed in the traditional Dhofari architectural style and comprised of 262 rooms that offer sparkling sea or lush garden views from either a private balcony or furnished floor-level patio, Al Waha features oasis-like swimming pools, a children's pool and a splash pad.

Guests are welcomed into beautifully appointed living spaces featuring tasteful furnishings, rich textiles and charming Arabian accents that create an ambience of understated opulence.



DIVERSE AQUATIC ADVENTURES

Al Waha's pristine beaches and crystal-clear waters are perfect for both relaxation and aquatic adventures. Guests can enjoy activities like kayaking, snorkelling and scuba diving. Young adventurers can play in the Splashpad, a mini water park with interactive areas, slides and fountains for endless fun. Younger guests also have access to dedicated pool areas with shallow depths and engaging water features. Additionally, the

resort offers a range of activities for families, including wakeboarding, stand-up paddleboarding, jet skiing, snorkelling and tours with the Turtle Ranger to discover turtle nests. You might even witness baby turtles hatching.

ENCHANTING LAZY RIVER

Inspired by Oman's historic aflaj or water irrigation system, one of the property's unique offerings is the resort's lazy river, a favourite among families that allows guests to relax and leisurely float through the beautifully landscaped gardens. The Lazy River at Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah is a unique and captivating feature that elevates the resort to a league of its own. Its serene ambience, picturesque views, family-friendly appeal and seamless integration with the surrounding natural beauty make it a cherished and sought-after experience, setting Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah apart as a destination that offers the perfect balance of luxury and enchantment in the heart of Oman.



HABIBI THE SEA TURTLE

As an amazing activity for kids, Habibi – The Sea Turtle – is inspired by the loggerhead sea turtle and is the entertaining mascot of Shangri-La. Habibi symbolises the resort's dedication to marine conservation, making it a standout programme in Oman. As an engaging feature for kids, Habibi welcomes guests at check-in. In their rooms, children receive goodie bags, and art materials, and enjoy their teepee tents. Outdoors, kids can witness sea turtle hatchlings on the resort's beaches (seasonally), providing a unique chance to learn about marine life preservation. The resort's dedicated Turtle Rangers are available daily for private tours discovering the turtle nests and educating guests on how to care for baby turtles coming to life. This programme offers a memorable and educational experience for young guests.



INDULGE IN MOUTH-WATERING DISHES

As home to some remarkable restaurants, summer is also the perfect opportunity to indulge in mouthwatering dishes. Samba creates that family-friendly ambience where even kids can indulge in delicious, well-thought-out dishes. From

Saturday to Thursday, Samba offers a buffet of International Favourites with an alternative offering of Tenderly Grilled The Asado Way every Friday, both of which can be availed by Oman residents with a 20-per cent discount. For those who love quick bites, Surf Cafe offers a great array of burgers, salads and pizzas, and to push its family-friendly theme, it even has play areas inside the cafe. There are also live pizza-making outdoor activities by the pool, and if you pass by Assira, the pool food outlet, you can also enjoy popsicles and ice creams throughout the day.

In the evening, there is also Capri Court, a fine dining Italian restaurant which offers A la Carte, and two other offers at the moment; alternatively, guests can also dine at Sultanah, which offers Mediterranean cuisine.

SUMMER RELAXATION

The scorching summer heat can cause a lot of stress if not heat stroke. In this sweltering condition, Chi, The Spa is the perfect destination for summer relaxation, offering a luxurious escape from the heat. The spa's serene and air-conditioned environment provides a refreshing contrast to the hot summer temperatures, while its lush surroundings and tranquil atmosphere create an ideal setting for unwinding. You can also opt for a jacuzzi, steam sauna and private villa for your spa experience. Tailored treatments specifically designed to soothe sun-exposed skin and rejuvenate tired bodies ensure a customised experience. The focus on holistic well-being, combined with the expertise of skilled therapists, enhances relaxation and comfort, making Chi, The Spa a perfect summer retreat.



A GREAT ESCAPE JUST WITHIN THE CAPITAL

The resort is a short drive from Muscat, Oman's capital, offering easy access to cultural landmarks and attractions. Families can explore the historic Muttrah Fort, stroll along the corniche, and visit the Al Jalali and Al Mirani forts. The National Museum, opposite Al Alam Palace, is also nearby.

With its offer of great accommodations, multiple swimming pools and family-friendly features including a lazy river, a kids' adventure zone and marine conservation programmes with interactive activities, Shangri-La Barr Al Jissah Resort & Spa is a premier choice for a summer escape in Oman.

LIFES



Princess Beatrice named the best-dressed person in Britain for 2024

BRITISH PRINCESS BEATRICE has been named the best-dressed person in Britain for 2024.

The 35-year-old topped Tatler's best-dressed list, despite going viral for the bizarre fawn-coloured hat she wore at the Prince and Princess Of Wales' wedding, which inspired numerous memes.

Tatler praised Beatrice for being "a beacon of sartorial elegance" by "pairing vintage-inspired cuts with fresh-from-the-catwalk glamour", although it did note she was the "subject of much jest" for the Philip Treacy hat.

Both Beatrice and her sister Princess Eugenie are reported to have cried over articles criticising their hats at the wedding.

The list also featured Victoria Starmer, the wife of prime minister Sir Keir Starmer, in the fitting position of number 10.

Tatler said she had an "unfussy chic" style, and praised her for "championing local labels like Edeline Lee".

British fashion designer Jade Holland Cooper came in second place, with Tatler praising her for her own label's "tantalising tweed numbers", and for being "dressed to thrill" in Dolce and Gabbana.

The highest placed man on the list was David Beckham's son Cruz, who was in third, and praised for his "uber-cool in sports-luxe silhouettes", which Tatler said were "tailored like a rock star".

In fourth was Lord William Gordon-Lennox, son of the 11th Duke of Richmond, who Tatler said had a "penchant for Savile Row's finest", which gave him "sartorial bliss".

Queen Camilla's sister Annabel Elliot came fifth for her "suitably grand" appearance, made up of "graceful satin sets and velvet suits". Finishing sixth, fashion designer Anu Hinduja was praised for her "riotous glamour", and just behind her in seventh was Jack Grealish's girlfriend Sasha Attwood, with Tatler saying her style is "a cut above the rest". Socialite and teacher, Lucy Van Straubenzee, who is close friends with the Prince and Princess of Wales, came in eighth place, with Tatler saying her style was a "masterclass in elegance".

England and Chelsea footballer Ben Chilwell came ninth, and was praised for his "retro riffs", which Tatler said was "bringing fashion back to the beautiful game".

The full top 25 list can be seen in the September issue of Tatler, which will go on sale on Thursday, August 1, both on newsstands and via digital download.

— PA Media/dpa

MASIRAH CONTINUES TO BE HOME FOR KITE SURFING CLINICS

art & life

f X @ omanobserver

WEDNESDAY | JULY 31 | 2024

BY NAJAH AL RIYAMI

Masirah Island remains a premier destination for kite surfing, renowned for its consistently favourable wind conditions, particularly from May to September. The island's warm waters provide a comfortable experience for kite surfers, while its steady and predictable cross-shore winds create ideal conditions for the sport.

In addition to its excellent wind and water conditions, Masirah Island boasts stunning natural landscapes and pristine beaches, offering breathtaking backdrops that enhance the overall kite surfing experience. The island features a range of spots catering to various skill levels, making it an exceptional environment for kite surfing enthusiasts.

Kite surfing, also known as kiteboarding, is an exhilarating water sport that combines elements of surfing, windsurfing, and paragliding. Participants use a large kite to harness the wind's power and propel themselves across the water on a board. With control over the kite using a bar, riders can perform jumps and manoeuvres. This sport is gaining popularity in Oman.

Swiss professional rider Marc Ramseier recently held his fourth Kitesurf Wave Clinic in Masirah, sponsored by the international kiting brand North. The clinic, which took place from June 22-29, attracted students from around the world. Among the eight attendees were three French, two German, one British, and

one Dutch participant, along with a photographer and videographer.

The clinic addressed the needs of kitesurfers seeking to enhance their wave-riding skills and gain a deeper understanding of techniques. Participants, many of whom travelled from Europe, found the desert island adventure to be both unique and memorable. Chris Hodge, who managed logistics and provided local knowledge, commented, "The Clinic was excellent. Conditions were great, with wind and waves every day, followed by a feast each night. It was perfect."

Marc Ramseier provided his own teaching materials and brought a dedicated videographer to record the clients' sessions. This footage was used for individual feedback. Prior to the trip, Ramseier sent an information list detailing required gear, additional items, and cultural considerations for visitors to Oman.

Masirah Island has established itself as a sought-after destination for kitesurfing and other wind-related water sports, attracting tourists seeking consistent wind conditions and exceptional locations from early June through August. Chris Hodge notes, "The wave clinic is held on Masirah due to the summer monsoon winds, which guarantee consistent wind and waves for about three months each year, with the strongest winds typically occurring in July. The island offers easily accessible wave riding spots and a selection of accommodations."

Since founding the first kitesurf wave-riding clinic in 2002, Marc Ramseier has conducted advanced

courses in various countries. Upcoming clinics will be held in Indonesia, Dakhla, and Peru.

Clinics like these attract professional experts and students from around the globe, highlighting Oman's unique kite surfing conditions. Globally renowned kite surfing destinations include Tarifa, Spain, celebrated for its consistent winds and diverse spots; Maui, Hawaii, known for its strong trade winds and warm waters at Kanaha Beach; Cabarete, Dominican Republic, favoured for its wind conditions and vibrant local scene; Cumbuco, Brazil, with steady winds and shallow waters ideal for all skill levels; and Bonaire, Caribbean Netherlands, which attracts kite surfers with its clear lagoons and reliable trade winds.

Kite surfing in Oman began gaining popularity in the early 2000s, driven by the country's ideal coastal conditions. Initially, enthusiasts from the global kite surfing community were drawn to Oman's pristine beaches, such as those in Muscat and Salalah. The sport's growth was further supported by local initiatives and the establishment of kite surfing schools and rental services, which began appearing around 2008. These developments made it easier for both locals and tourists to access the sport.

While kite surfing's popularity continues to grow, Oman is working to enhance the sport. However, many enthusiasts believe that dedicated infrastructure and supportive local environments are needed for the sport to reach its full potential in the country.

