

HM sends greetings to French President

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Emmanuel Macron of the French Republic on the occasion of his country's National Day. His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings to President Macron wishing him good health and happiness and wishing the friendly French people further progress and prosperity. – ONA

SUNRISE - 05:29 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR - 04:03 AM
DHUHR - 12:18 PM
ASR - 03:38 PM
MAGHRIB - 07:02 PM
ISHA - 08:22 PM



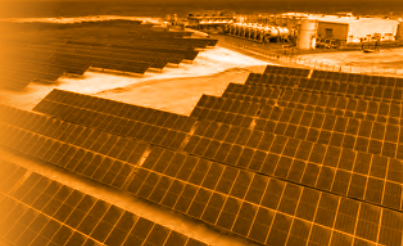
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KREJCIKOVA WINS WIMBLEDON FOR SECOND GRAND SLAM SINGLES TITLE



P13

OMAN'S GREEN DESALINATION SUCCESS STORY FUELS REGIONAL ADOPTION



P20

TRUE COLOURS OF TEETH ARE BEYOND WHITE AND BRIGHT



DHOFAR ALL READY TO RECEIVE VISITORS

SALALAH: Dhofar Governorate has confirmed that all the sites and venues of Khareef Dhofar Season 2024 have been readied and developed to host varied activities following a lengthy preoperational period in cooperation with relevant public authorities and private sector institutions. Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, said that the preparations for the khareef season began early by developing many tourist sites. The Khareef Dhofar Season 2024 activities began on June 21 and will last for 3 months by gradually launching at several venues. **SEE ALSO P2**

STRATEGIC PROJECTS UNDERWAY IN MUSANDAM

KUMZAR DEVELOPMENT PROJECT IN FINAL PHASE

YOUSEF AL HABSI
KHASAB, JULY 13

Work on the integrated housing plan project in Khuwair area located in the village of Kumzar is in full swing. The project comes in as implementation of the Royal orders.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has completed the mountain-coastal road project connecting the integrated housing scheme in the Khuwair area to the village of Kumzar.

The ministry is also working on the final phases of the project and has embarked upon the construction of 20 housing units for eligible people from the village of Kumzar. The first phase of the housing scheme accommodates 150 residential plots in addition to 3 investment sites proposed by the Musandam Governor's Office, 14 industrial plots, a government school, a health centre, a public council and a mosque.

The project also involves the construction of a sewage treatment plant, a water desalination plant and 11 sites designated for electrical transformers and public parking.

Eng Ali al Maashani, Director-



The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has completed the mountain-coastal road project connecting the integrated housing scheme in the Khuwair area to the village of Kumzar. PHOTO BY HUSSEIN AL MUQBALI

90%

OF MAHAS INDUSTRIAL CITY ALONGSIDE THE ROAD AND INFRASTRUCTURE HAVE BEEN COMPLETED AT A COST OF RO 5 MILLION

General of Housing and Urban Planning in Musandam Governorate, said that Musandam Governorate has seen many development projects including the village of Kumzar.

During the Royal visit to Musandam Governorate, Royal orders were issued to implement the first phase of housing units as part of the integrated housing scheme in Khuwair area in Kumzar with a total of 20 housing units complete with the basic services. This project was launched last month at a cost exceeding RO 1.5 million with an implementation rate now standing at 4 per cent. An agreement was reached with the Ministry of Education to establish a government school and another one with the Ministry of Health to establish a health centre.

TURN TO P2

US couple on world tour smitten by charming glory of Salalah

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

Twenty-two countries and counting! A couple from the United States is currently in Salalah, relishing the majestic khareef season.

Jesse Emerson and his wife Catherine embarked on their journey from Oregon, USA, in January 2020 in a '1983 Toyota' camper truck, affectionately named 'The Yoda Home'.

Their travels have required the truck to be shipped three times: Over the Caribbean Sea from Panama to Colombia, across the Atlantic Ocean from Uruguay to South Africa, and then over the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea from Kenya to Salalah.

"It has been a wonderful journey and an amazing lifestyle. We call it a 'vocation-vacation' life as we are always working and always travelling simultaneously. We absolutely love it," the



Jesse Emerson and his wife Catherine embarked on their journey from Oregon, USA, in January 2020 in a '1983 Toyota' camper truck

couple remarked about their overall journey. Commenting on Oman and Salalah, they said, "It's wonderful, and getting ever more magical with the changing season. The Omani people and everyone we have met here from

around the world have always been kind, friendly and helpful. It's truly amazing. It's also much more organised than other places we have experienced, which we really appreciate."

TURN TO P2

'No safe place': Gazans race to collect wounded after Israeli strike

AL MAWASI: Israel had declared Al Mawasi a safe zone as it pushed into Rafah near the Egyptian border, but on Saturday Palestinians raced to collect the dozens of casualties from the army's latest strike.

Sirens wailed and women screamed as children were pulled out of the wreckage and rushed to nearby hospitals following the strike on a displacement camp.

"What did we do? What did we do? We were only sitting near the beach," one woman from the coastal town cried.

The Hamas-run territory's health ministry said more than 71 people were killed and 289 people wounded in what it called a "massacre" at Al Mawasi camp.

AFP could not independently confirm the toll.

The Israeli military said the attack targeted Hamas military strategist Mohammed Deif and Rafa Salama, a brigade commander, describing the pair as "two of the masterminds of the October 7 massacre" which



A Palestinian woman mourns by the body of a relative killed in an Israeli strike which hit a makeshift prayer hall at Al Shati refugee camp west of Gaza City on Saturday. – AFP

set off the war in Gaza.

The camp, near the city of Khan Yunis, was designated a humanitarian area after Israel in May ordered civilians to evacuate other parts of the Gaza Strip.

Hundreds of thousands of displaced people were sheltering there, according to UK-based Medical Aid for Palestinians, which operates health sites in the area.

"We have been warning for

months that there is no safe place for anyone in Gaza amid Israel's military bombardment," the charity said in a statement.

Black smoke billowed behind a wide, ash-strewn street in Al Mawasi where bodies lay in pools of blood, some covered by sheets.

Men struggling to carry the wounded wove through those beyond help to get to ambulances waiting with doors open. Others were piled onto donkey-pulled carts.

Despite the Nasser Hospital reporting it was at full-capacity, ambulances kept arriving with wounded on orange stretchers, including a man with a towel tied to his leg as a makeshift tourniquet.

The Israeli military said Saturday's offensive "struck an open area" that "was not a tent complex but an operational compound".

"According to our information, only Hamas terrorists were present and there were no civilians," it said. — AFP



DHOFAR GOVERNORATE GETS READY FOR KHAREEF SEASON

SALALAH: Dhofar Governorate has confirmed that all the sites and venues of Khareef Dhofar Season 2024 have been readied and developed to host varied activities following a lengthy preoperational period in cooperation with relevant public authorities and private sector institutions.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, said that the preparations for the khareef season began early by developing many tourist sites.

The Khareef Dhofar Season 2024 activities began on June 21 and will last for 3 months by gradually launching at several venues.

Al Ghassani explained that the Awqad Park in Salalah was earmarked for children's activities and includes many international entertainment villages and interactive games. He noted that the UpTown site in Atin Plain in Salalah includes 60 sites designated for entrepreneurs.

Many of the Khareef Dhofar



All sites and venues of Khareef Dhofar Season 2024 have been decked up

Season 2024 venues will be launched in the coming days including the 'Return of the Past' site in its new look. It simulates the local environments in Dhofar Governorate in particular and the



Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani

governorates of the Sultanate of Oman in general.

The venue also hosts live shows

and arts that embody Omani culture. The Atin Square events will open during the coming period and include various international events, he said.

The chairman of Dhofar Municipality touched upon one of the initiatives being implemented this year namely improving the methods of displaying the products of Omani youth by setting up 500 kiosks for restaurants and cafes. There will also be a mobile laboratory for examining the foods provided. — ONA

Council of Oman participates in Arab Parliament meeting in Cairo

CAIRO: The Council of Oman took part in the fifth plenary session of the fourth session of the third legislative term of the Arab Parliament, which was held at the headquarters of the Secretariat-General of the League of Arab States in Cairo, on Saturday.

The Council of Oman was represented at the plenary session and meetings of the standing committees of the Arab Parliament by Shaikh Said bin Hamad al Saadi, Deputy Chairman of Majlis AshShura, Shaikh Dr Talib bin Hilal al Hosni, Member of the State Council, Sariya bint Khalfan al Hadiyah, Member of the State Council, and Humaid bin Ali al Nasser, Member of Majlis AshShura.

The session discussed several topics including reports from the standing committees namely the Foreign Affairs, Political and National Security Committee, the Economic and Financial Affairs Committee, the Legislative,



Legal and Human Rights Affairs Committee, and the Social, Educational, Cultural, Women and Youth Affairs Committee. Also discussed was the report of the Palestine Committee which addressed the developments in Palestine and the efforts being taken to stop the war waged by the Israeli occupation forces in the Gaza Strip.

The Council of Oman's delegation participated in the meetings of the preparatory committees for the general session which discussed the developments in the Arab region at various political, security, social and legislative levels.

Shaikh Dr Talib bin Hilal

al Hosni, Member of the State Council, participated in the meeting of the Foreign Affairs, Political and National Security Committee.

The meeting discussed a number of topics related to political and security developments in the Arab world, the draft comprehensive Arab parliamentary vision to enhance security and stability in the Arab world as well as developments in Sudan, Yemen, Libya, Somalia, Syria and Lebanon.

Humaid bin Ali al Nasser, Member of Majlis AshShura, participated in the meeting of the Economic and Financial Affairs Committee, which reviewed ways

of enhancing Arab economic integration in addition to the Arab Parliament's proposal to prepare the Arab strategy for entrepreneurship.

Shaikh Said bin Hamad al Saadi, Deputy Chairman of Majlis AshShura, took part in the meeting of the Legislative, Legal and Human Rights Affairs Committee which discussed the draft Arab law on combating bullying in the Arab world, and the draft Arab law to combat illegal immigration in the Arab world.

Sariya bint Khalfan al Hadiyah, Member of the State Council, hoped for Arab parliamentary role for cooperation in implementing the Arab strategy to enhance volunteering, examining mechanisms for activating the recommendations of the conference to launch the document for developing education in the Arab world, among others. — ONA

Oman engages in dialogue on Sustainable Development in New York

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman continues its participation in the 12th session of the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) being held under the auspices of the United Nations Economic and Social Council on July 8 to 18. The forum is held under the theme 'Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crisis: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient and innovative solutions.'

The Sultanate of Oman's delegation is headed by Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy. The Sultanate of Oman is taking part in multiple events including public sessions, dialogue sessions as well as an accompanying exhibition within the context of the country's second voluntary national review on the progress it has made in achieving the goals of the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. — ONA



Strategic projects underway in Musandam

FROM PAGE 1

Ahmed bin Mohammed al Kumzari, Deputy Chairman of the Municipal Council of Musandam Governorate, representing the Wilayat of Khasab, said that 90 per cent of Mahas Industrial City alongside the road and infrastructure have been completed at a cost of RO 5 million with investment volume in Mahas Industrial City crossing RO 41.9 million during the first half of this year, a 2.05-per cent increase



compared to the same period of last year.

Mubarak al Ghailani, Acting Director-General of Mahas Industrial City, said: "Within the framework of the Royal interest

of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his directives to enhance socio-economic projects and support owners of small and medium enterprises and entrepreneurs in Musandam

Governorate, His Majesty, during his visit to Musandam Governorate this year, gave his directives to establish 10 ready-made industrial units for small and medium enterprises at Mahas Industrial City. The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madaayn) has embarked upon the implementation of the industrial units immediately after the issuance of the Royal directives with the appointment of a consultant. The preparation of studies and plans is currently underway.

US couple smitten by charming Salalah

FROM PAGE 1

Comparing their experiences with other countries, the couple found the Sultanate of Oman to be "one of the most unique countries in the world! Oman's people are clearly unified and happy, which is a wonderful sight to see. After four years travelling through Latin America and Africa, it is refreshing to be in such a safe, clean and organised community." One of the most interesting aspects of their journey was the birth of their daughter, Prana, during the tour. Born in Ecuador, she holds dual citizenship. The couple arrived in Salalah on April 21 and, captivated by its beauty, decided to extend their stay through khareef to experience the monsoon season. "Almost everyone we met told us about the khareef season, and

being here, we are excited and grateful for everything. This is our first time in Salalah, and we are loving it day and night," Jesse shared.

HAVING A BABY ABROAD

Catherine added, "Actually, this is my first time outside of America, and I have surprised myself with how casual I feel about it all. I wouldn't trade this life of adventure and global connection for anything! Having a baby abroad was also surprisingly comfortable. I find that challenges are manageable with a positive mindset, which is a skill."

Prana is a natural traveller. From the beginning, she has been at peace while experiencing so much of the world. Now two-and-a-half years old, she is showing an interest in making friends.

Community-wide walking event promotes inclusivity

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 13

A community-wide walking event was held yesterday at Muscat Mall as part of the Summer Sports Programme in Muscat. The event saw a wide participation from community members, with more than 400 individuals taking part. The focus of the event was on supporting Omani women and persons with disabilities, with participants covering a distance of over two kilometres. Several associations and diverse sports teams participated in the event, including the Omani Women's Association

in Bausher, Al Qurum, Al Seeb, Al Amerat and Muttrah, alongside specialised teams like the Happiness Ambassadors Voluntary Team for Persons with Disabilities and the Falcon Sports Team for trails.

Ahlam bint Rashid al Khumaisiyah, a sports activity specialist and member of the Muscat Summer Sports team, explained that this initiative builds upon previous efforts, highlighting commercial centres as suitable alternatives due to their amenities such as cooling systems, essential facilities like restrooms, seating areas and cafes, making them conducive



A community-wide walking event was held as part of the Summer Sports Programme

environments for physical activity in hot weather.

Al Khumaisiyah added, "The aim of this event is to instil the importance of physical exercise and promote it as a lifestyle concept, fostering community

partnerships with the private sector and government entities, and spreading the culture of walking as one of the simplest, most accessible forms of exercise in family-friendly and social atmospheres."

She also invited everyone to participate in these activities, emphasising a special focus on Omani women's associations and individuals with disabilities, underscoring their integral role in society and their deserving support in community sports programmes.

This event reflects the ministry's commitment to enhancing health and physical fitness across all segments of society, while positioning commercial centres as platforms to enhance sports and social activities in Oman.

Amal al Ghammari, Head of the Sports Committee, OWA Muscat, thanked the Ministry of

Culture, Sports and Youth for the wonderful initiative as it aims to motivate all to engage in sports due to the physical and mental benefits of walking.

"This initiative is part of the summer programme activities, where there are no barriers that prevent one from practicing sports. At OWA, we always work towards encouraging women to prioritise sports and have a schedule at various locations. This initiative contributes to the continuity of participation with the ministry or with different sports teams. Our motto is always 'Sports for health and fitness.'



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QASIM AL MASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 13

The much-anticipated ‘People — and Khareef 2024’ television programme — part of Dhofar Khareef 2024 media strategy unveiled last week — is set to kick off its programming journey tomorrow starting with a spotlight on Rakhyout, a delightful wilayat in the far west of the governorate. A mobile TV studio, and ‘Ittin Studios’, is at the heart of the production, with its content set to be broadcast daily after the 2 pm news bulletin.

The Wilayat of Rakhyout stands out as a prime tourist destination. Its varied landscape includes mountains, lush plains, and coastal areas, transforming into major attractions during the tourist season.

Rakhyout’s natural beauty, marked by green-cloaked mountains during the Khareef season, is complemented by its rich historical heritage, including ancient mosques and traditional houses. The area of Al Fazayeh, with its lengthy coastline and the Aqishan jebels, are key elements of the wilayat’s splendour.

Located in the foothills of the soaring Ras Sajar In the southwestern part of Rakhyout lies Dhant, a favourite among tourists and photographers. Here, the majestic mountain meets the sea, creating a picturesque spot. Nearby, the ‘Shathi’ sinkhole, located a kilometre south of the ‘Qaifooz’ landscape, adds to the region’s allure.

Visitors to Rakhyout can explore its scenic beauty, especially along the route to the villages of ‘Ajdroot’ and ‘Anzoot’ known for their perpetual mist. The wilayat turns verdant

NUMEROUS VIDEO CLIPS FOR ONLINE MEDIA ARE BEING PRODUCED IN A PHASED MANNER FOR USE ACROSS ALL KINDS OF DIGITAL PLATFORMS

during the Khareef season, particularly around the Jabal al Qamar mountain range and the Aqishan incline.

Other attractions include khawrs (creeks), ancient houses, and notable mosques like the ‘Bin Huwaite Akak’ Mosque or (Alnoor Mosque) and ‘Rakhyout Fort’, which attract many tourists.

In the high mountains of Rakhyout lies ‘Ambruf’, known for its widely shared photographs on social media. Its western view overlooks ‘Wadi Sayq’ in Dhalkout, while the eastern side offers a breathtaking view of ‘Wadi Rakhyout’ and the areas of ‘Akhurot’ and ‘Aqitan’ with their scenic grazing grounds.

According to the Director General of Information in Dhofar Governorate, video clippings from these picturesque parts of the wilayat, among other areas of Dhofar, will go into an extensive library of digital content suitable for social media platforms. The content will encompass the various social, cultural, and tourist facets of the khareef festival, aiming to provide a comprehensive portrayal of the season, the people, and the governorate’s various locale.

Numerous video clips for online media are being produced in a phased manner for use across all kinds of digital platforms. This digital library will supplement content disseminated by television, radio, and newspaper channels, as well as coverage provided by Oman News Agency, *Oman Arabic* newspaper, and *Oman Daily Observer*.

Also as part of the media effort, there will be constant interactions with the local community and all sectors providing services to citizens, tourists, visitors, business people, and investors.

KHAREEF 2024 UNVEILS SPOTLIGHT ON RAKHYOUT TOMORROW



Verdant settings in Wilayat of Rakhyout.



Mobile division of Ittin Studio to provide daily content on Khareef delights.



Salalah’s dedicated safety team at work during Khareef.

Dedicated team at work for tourists safety

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 14

As Dhofar Governorate transforms into a verdant paradise during the annual Khareef season, so too does the need for a watchful eye over the surge of tourists flocking to its shores.

Amidst the cascading waterfalls and frankincense-scented air, a dedicated team works tirelessly behind the scenes to ensure visitor safety at tourist sites.

“We cover Salalah comprehensively, from the beaches to the eye-watering beauty of the wadis,” says Mohammed bin Saad, Team Leader at the Safety Team. “Our main mission is to protect visitors and make sure they’re aware of the dangers lurking beneath the surface of the seemingly calm waters.”

Saad’s words highlight the ever-present threat of the strong coastal currents that plague Dhofar’s shores. These currents, particularly treacherous during the Khareef, have claimed lives in the past. To combat this risk, the Safety Team maintains a vigilant presence across popular tourist destinations.

“Our team members are deployed from eight in the morning until seven in the evening, every single day throughout the Khareef season,” explains Saad. “We patrol the beaches, constantly reminding visitors of the designated swimming areas and the importance of water safety measures.”

They collaborate closely with local authorities like the Civil Defence, ambulance services, and the Dhofar Municipality, forming a vital network for swift response in emergencies. Their efforts also encompass public education, with team members distributing informative brochures and conducting awareness campaigns to ensure visitors are well-equipped to navigate the natural wonders of Dhofar safely.

The dedication of the Safety Team is a cornerstone of Salalah’s successful Khareef season. Their tireless efforts ensure that visitors can create lasting memories amidst Dhofar’s captivating beauty, returning home with tales of breathtaking landscapes, not harrowing encounters. So, the next time you find yourself swept away by the magic of the Khareef, remember the silent guardians who stand watch, making sure your Salalah experience remains a safe and unforgettable one.

A rip current is a strong, localised water current that flows away from shore, cutting through breaking waves. Formed when water pushed by

THE TIRELESS EFFORTS OF THE VOLUNTEERS ENSURE THAT VISITORS CAN CREATE LASTING MEMORIES AMIDST DHOFAR’S CAPTIVATING BEAUTY

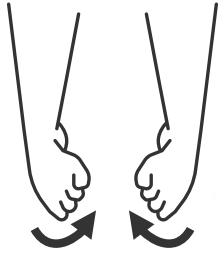
waves over a sandbar returns to sea through gaps, rip currents are hazardous to swimmers, often causing panic and exhaustion.

While Dhofar’s picturesque Khareef season draws tourists, the Safety Team at Salalah’s tourist sites is crucial in safeguarding visitors. “We cover Salalah comprehensively, from beaches to wadis,” says Mohammed bin Saad, the team’s leader.

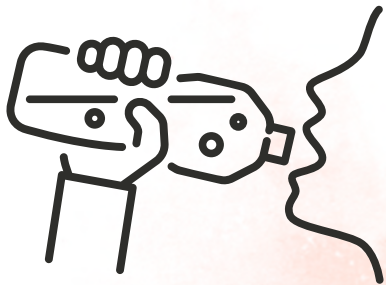
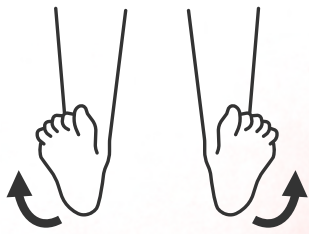
Their main mission is to protect visitors, especially from dangerous coastal currents that are most treacherous during the Khareef. With team members patrolling daily from morning to evening, they ensure swimmers stay in designated areas and follow safety measures.



TRAVEL SMART WITH THESE TIPS



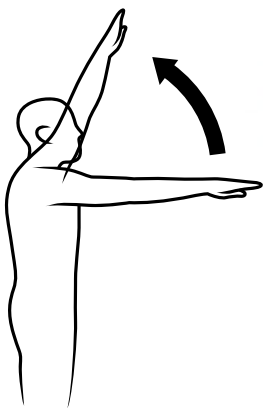
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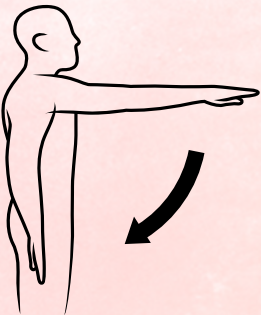
STAY HYDRATED



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REGULAR
MOVEMENT

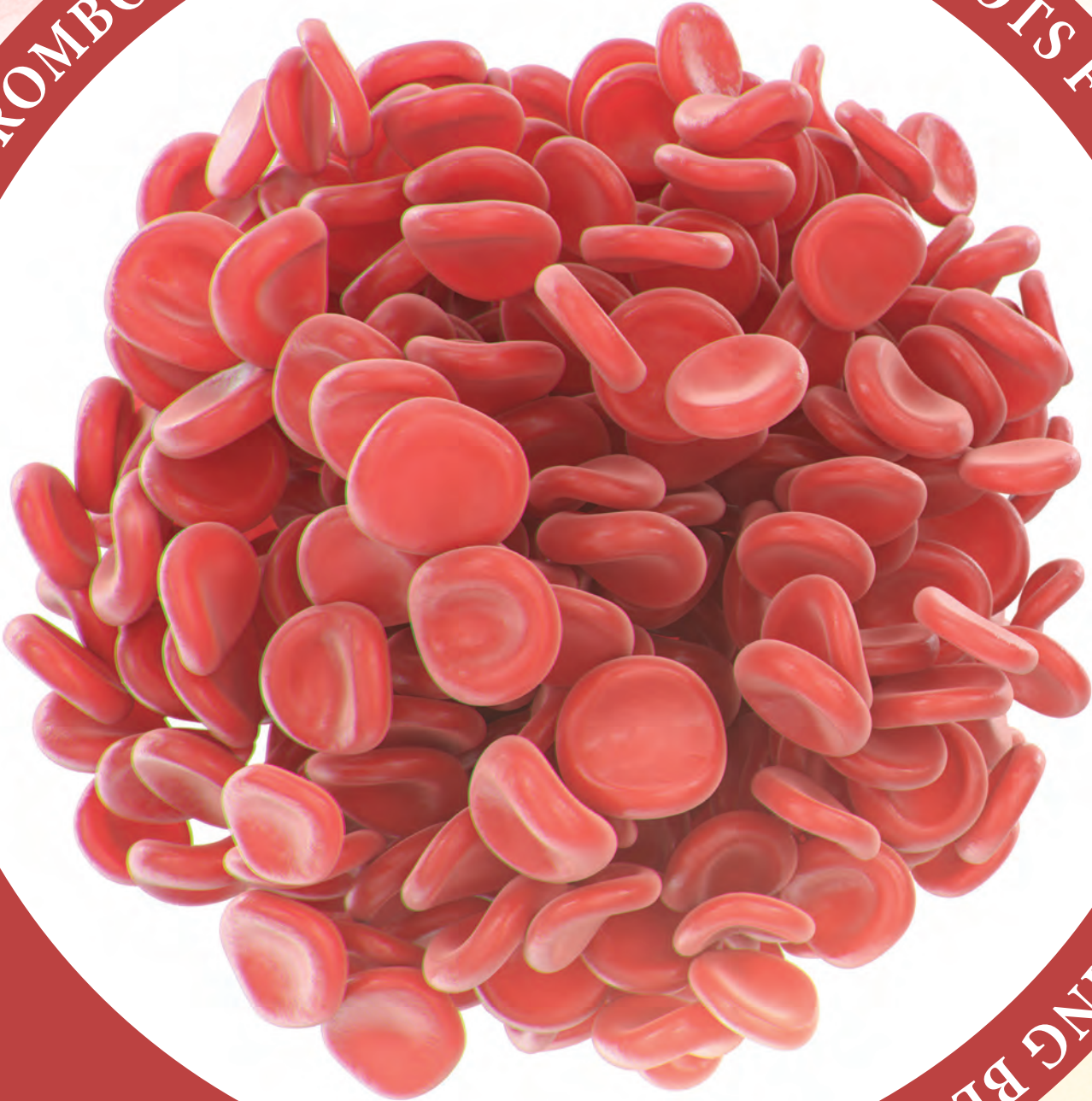


HEALTH
AWARENESS



AVOID
ALCOHOL
AND
CAFFEINE

VENOUS THROMBOSIS OCCURS WHEN BLOOD CLOTS FORM IN DEEP VEINS, OBSTRUCTING BLOOD FLOW



STAY
CLOT-FREE

embolism. Extended periods of immobility, such as during long travel, increase the risk of clot formation.

Several factors heighten the risk of developing venous thrombosis during travel.

Journeys lasting four hours or more significantly raise the likelihood of clot formation. Individuals with a history of venous thrombosis are more prone to recurrence.

Hormonal changes and increased blood volume during pregnancy can lead to clot formation.

A family history of clotting disorders increases the risk, while older adults are more susceptible to venous thrombosis due to decreased mobility and other age-related factors. Excess weight can also hinder blood flow, promoting clot formation.

The ministry emphasised that travellers should follow certain preventive measures. Regular movement, such as standing, stretching and walking every hour, is crucial to encourage blood circulation.

Simple leg exercises, like ankle rotations and calf raises, can also be beneficial. Staying hydrated by drinking plenty of water and fluids keeps blood viscosity lower, reducing the risk of clots.

Avoiding alcohol and caffeine is advisable, as they can cause dehydration.

Wearing loose, comfortable clothing is important, as tight clothing can restrict blood flow, particularly around the waist and legs. Opting for loose-fitting attire helps maintain proper circulation.

For those at high risk, such as individuals with a history of thrombosis or pregnant women, seeking medical advice before travelling is crucial. A doctor may recommend compression stockings or blood-thinning medications as preventive measures.

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, JULY 13

As travel during summer increases, the Ministry of Health has issued health guidelines, particularly those embarking on long journeys.

Prolonged trips can contribute to the development of venous thrombosis, making awareness and proactive measures essential for prevention.

By understanding the risk factors and implementing simple preventive strategies, travellers can protect themselves from this serious condition.

Venous thrombosis occurs when blood clots form in deep veins, obstructing blood flow. These clots typically develop in the legs but can also occur in the lungs, potentially leading to a fatal pulmonary



ENHANCING OMANI-FRENCH TIES

A journey of collaboration and cultural exchange

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JULY 13

Omani-French bilateral relations have grown by leaps and bounds over the past three years, characterised by notable strides made by the French Republic in supporting Oman's developmental ambitions in various fields.

An overview of this significant uptick in bilateral ties between the two friendly nations was shared by Véronique Aulagnon, French Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, in an exclusive interview to mark Bastille Day — also known as French National Day — celebrated on July 14 annually.

Highlighting the depth of Omani-French relations, Aulagnon noted, “While we celebrated the 50th anniversary of our diplomatic relations in 2022, our bilateral ties go back 400 years, based on mutual trust and shared values, including a commitment to dialogue and respect for international law. Together with the Omani authorities, we are taking several initiatives to build on this strong legacy, focusing on diplomacy and security, business, education, and culture.”

The ambassador noted in particular the blossoming of ties across the gamut of the bilateral relationship. Over the past three years, joint efforts have increased the French presence in the Sultanate of Oman, expanding into new priority sectors identified in ‘Oman Vision 2040’, including renewables and green hydrogen, fisheries, tourism, and potentially transport. The contribution of these companies to technology transfer and training is

OBSERVER INTERVIEW WITH FRENCH AMBASSADOR AULAGNON

Historical and diplomatic foundations

Strategic initiatives in ‘Oman Vision 2040’ sectors

Business and investment landscape

Cultural collaboration in perfumery and education

Trade dynamics and economic impact

Community engagement and cultural enrichment

highly recognised, and there are ongoing initiatives to promote joint investments.

On the business front, Aulagnon highlighted efforts to strengthen business-to-business connections and mutual investments between the two friendly countries. More than 40 French companies are currently operating in sectors such as water and waste management, energy, certification, communication, food services, and military and security, reflecting the strength of economic ties between the two countries, she said.

Ambassador Aulagnon pointed out that while bilateral trade remains limited, amounting to around €450 million in 2023, it is an underestimate due to most French merchandise transiting through the UAE. French exports are also more dependent on major contracts compared to those of



French Ambassador to Oman Véronique Aulagnon

other countries, she explained.

Turning to burgeoning ties on the perfumery front, the ambassador pointed out that Amouage enjoys strong cooperation with French perfumers from its inception to the present. She expressed keen interest in reports of a potential partnership with French giant L’Oreal and emphasised that Oman shares a national passion for perfumes and boasts unique ingredients such as Luban and Al Jabal Al Akhdhar roses.

France has always excelled in the creation of perfumes, deeply rooted in its culture, the ambassador noted, adding that there have been ongoing discussions about various perfume deals between France and Oman, including the possibility of a scholarship for an Omani student to study perfumery in France.

Additionally, Ambassador Aulagnon

expressed pride in an array of new initiatives aimed at fostering people-to-people relationships in education and culture. She mentioned in this regard the launch of a joint scholarship program for Master’s degrees, enabling over 20 Omani students to study in France, renowned for its top universities, research centers, and incubators.

In Muscat, the French International School of Muscat has been expanded and now offers a fully accredited bilingual French curriculum, along with the French Omani Cultural Center of Muscat. Numerous initiatives have showcased French culture, including the annual flagship festival, the ‘French Weeks.’ Efforts are also underway to support the development of cultural and creative industries in Oman, particularly in the movie industry and fashion, she said.

In the interview, Ambassador Aulagnon also highlighted the renovation of the French Omani Museum, ‘Bait Faransa. Renovation work was initiated in 2023, with France contributing its expertise to transform it into a vibrant space for young people and artists, she said.

The ambassador reflected on the achievements made over the past three years across diplomacy and security, business, education, and culture. She expressed particular pride in initiatives promoting people-to-people relations, such as the joint Master scholarship programme, the expansion of French language programmes in schools, cross-cultural exhibitions, and collaborations supporting Omani designers and the burgeoning movie industry. She highlighted the Embassy’s active role in cultural exchange, emphasising the importance of fostering invisible yet crucial connections between nations.

Ambassador Aulagnon expressed happiness in exploring Oman’s diverse landscapes and communities, from Muscat to Nizwa, Salalah to Khasab, and many other places. She expressed joy in cultivating ties with Omanis across various sectors and with the international and French communities supporting Oman’s development and embracing French culture.

Ambassador Aulagnon extended gratitude to the Omani authorities, led by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, for their support and friendship throughout her tenure. She conveyed heartfelt wishes for continued peace and prosperity for the Sultanate of Oman and its people.

Al Sharqiyah S launches ‘Mashareq’ app

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 13

Sheikh Dr Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidi, Chairman of the General Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, inaugurated last week the smart device application ‘Mashareq’, for Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, while sponsoring the opening ceremony of the second edition of the Ashkharah Forum.

The application is an integrated digital platform that aims to provide a wide range of electronic and interactive services for citizens and residents of the governorate, and a smart way to access those services provided by the governorate anywhere, with ease.

It’s a distinctive digital experience that meets the daily needs of citizens and residents.

The Al Mashareq platform



The application is an integrated digital platform that aims to provide a wide range of electronic and interactive services for citizens and residents

has multiple advantages. This includes those related to providing integrated electronic and information services, as it allows the user to submit requests, follow them up, obtain permits and licences, and pay bills electronically. This, in turn, contributes to raising efficiency, improving the efficiency of government operations, and saving time.

The effort is for citizens and residents, and to enhance transparency through

its endeavour to provide government services and ease of access to information, in addition to ensuring elements of security and privacy, as it provides high levels of security to protect users’ data and ensure their privacy.

The portal contains a number of windows, including one for electronic services, and others to serve customers.

The launch of this application comes within the framework of the efforts

made by the governorate to achieve goals of ‘Oman Vision 2040’, and within the digital transformation programme adopted by the governorate.

The programme also seeks to simplify procedures, raise work efficiency, increase productivity, enhance transparency, expand the base of participation and communication, and strengthen beneficiaries’ confidence in the institution.

Al Sharqiyah South Governorate participated in an awareness and promotional corner with the government and private participation corner. This comes within the framework of the Governorate’s keenness on community participation, building bridges of communication with society, and introducing its implemented and ongoing projects, in addition to highlighting its prominent achievements.

Nepal Embassy hosts labour awareness and literary programme

MUSCAT: The Embassy of Nepal, Muscat organised Labour Awareness and Literature Programme in collaboration with NRN Social Club Oman and International Nepali Literature Society Oman on the occasion of 211th Bhanu Jayanti.

The programme was held at the Nepal House on July 12 from 3 pm to 6 pm. The main motto of the event was to disseminate information related to Labour awareness through the means of literary presentations and to promote Nepali language, literature and culture as a part of celebration of the Bhanu Jayanti, the birth anniversary of famous poet Adikabi Bhanu Bhakta Acharya.

Dornath Aryal, Ambassador of Nepal to the Sultanate of Oman, commenced the programme with lighting of traditional Panas lamp.

During the welcome speech, Ambassador Aryal remembered the famous Adikabi Bhanu Bhakta Acharya, the first-ever-poet of Nepal and talked about his contribution towards Nepali Literature.

He also highlighted on the importance of literature in human life and how the literary works can



Dornath Aryal, Ambassador of Nepal, addressing the audience during the labour awareness, literary programme

assist in creating awareness on several matters.

Bishesh Kumar Sah, Second Secretary, made a presentation on various important matters related to labour awareness including renewal of Labour permit, newly launched Online Demand Attestation Portal among others.

Bikal Jha, Krishna Bhusal Pyasi and other members shared their views on the importance of Labour Awareness and usage of literature to understand life and livelihood far away from homeland.

Students weigh AI impact on academic lives, future expectations

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY13

With the emergence and advancements in Artificial Intelligence (AI) across various fields, its impact is becoming increasingly evident. This is being noticed widely in academic life and it is a matter of research how AI has influenced students’ academic lives and what are their expectations for the future from the technology.

Ali al Balushi, a student at

the College of Engineering, who shared his insights says, “I expect that AI will significantly influence the future job market by altering industrial and corporate operations, developing new jobs, and creating employment opportunities in fields like robotics, data analysis, and AI itself.”

“On the educational front,” he continues, “inclusion of AI lessons in school curricula is crucial. This helps students understand how advanced technology works and its applications across various



fields. They can develop skills vital for future job markets, such as analytical thinking, innovation, and problem-solving.”

“Like with any new technological advancement, there are always concerns regarding its proper use, social impact, and ethical considerations. We need to adopt a balanced approach that involves developing technology responsibly and raising awareness about the challenges and opportunities associated with it,” he said.

According to Al Anoud al Maskari, a student in the Media Department, the impact of AI is inevitable with both positive and

negative aspects.

“On the negative side, AI possesses significant capabilities to perform tasks with more accuracy and speed than humans in many fields, potentially leading to the disappearance of certain jobs.”

“I believe that Artificial Intelligence has ushered in a new era of developments, skills, and tools that were previously unknown. Its inclusion in school curricula is crucial for the educational process to keep pace with technological advancements

worldwide. The rapid pace of technological advancement urges us to educate students on how to interact with and optimise it effectively.”

Similarly, Ahmed al Farsi, a photojournalist, says “I believe that AI will have a significant impact on the future job market, contributing to increased productivity in various fields such as medicine, engineering, and sciences. For example, in medicine, AI can improve diagnosis and provide better personalised treatments.”



Israel kills dozens in new Gaza massacre

GAZA: Gaza's health ministry said dozens were killed on Saturday in an Israeli strike on a displacement camp in an area where Israel said it targeted Hamas group military.

It is the latest mass-casualty incident in the Al Mawasi area, where many Palestinians had fled, and came as international mediators pushed on with efforts to halt the nine-month war.

A statement from the Gaza health ministry said there were more than "71 martyrs" and 289 people wounded in what it called a "brutal massacre by the occupation", a reference to Israel, at Al Mawasi camp.

The Israeli military said it had targeted Deif and Rafa Salama, a brigade commander, calling them "two of the masterminds of the October 7 attack" which sparked the Gaza war.

"The area that was struck is an open area, surrounded by trees, several buildings and sheds. It was not a tent

Gaza health ministry said there were more than 71 martyrs and 289 people wounded in a brutal massacre by the occupation at Al Mawasi camp.

complex, but an operational compound," it said.

A Hamas statement called the claim that Deif had been targeted "false allegations" intended "to cover up the magnitude of the horrific massacre".

Footage showed sirens wailing and smoke rising in the distance as men used blankets to collect victims. Some were clearly beyond help and lay dead on the road.

Israel in May had told Palestinians in the Rafah area to move to a designated humanitarian area in Al Mawasi on the coast as troops



Palestinians react near damage, following an Israeli strike at a tent camp in Al Mawasi area. — Reuters

moved in to the southern city of Rafah near the Egyptian border.

There has been widespread global outrage over the war's civilian toll. In late June, the International Committee of the Red Cross said 22 people were killed by shelling that damaged its Gaza office, which is surrounded by hundreds of

displaced people who sought shelter there.

UN chief Antonio Guterres appealed to donor governments on Friday to resume funding the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, warning there was no alternative to UNRWA as a conduit for aid to Gazans despite longstanding Israeli opposition to the agency.

"Just when we thought it couldn't get any worse in Gaza — somehow, appallingly, civilians are being pushed into ever deeper circles of hell," he said.

UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini said later that the agency now had enough funds to operate through September. Israel and Palestinian

Hamas have engaged in months of indirect talks via Qatari, US and Egyptian mediators to reach a still elusive truce and captives release deal.

Talks took place in Doha on Wednesday, while Israel said it was sending a delegation to Cairo on Thursday evening for further negotiations. — AFP

Kremlin warns US missile deployment

MOSCOW: The Kremlin on Saturday warned the deployment of US missiles in Germany could make European capital targets for Russian missiles in a repeat of Cold War-style confrontation.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov spoke of a "paradox" in which "Europe is a target for our missiles, our country is a target for US missiles in Europe."

"We have enough capacity to contain these missiles but the potential victims are the capitals of these countries," he said, speaking to Russian state television channel Russia 1.

Peskov also hinted that such a confrontation could undermine Europe as a whole.

"Europe is not living its best moment. In a different configuration, a repeat of history is inevitable," he said when the channel's anchor Pavel Zarubin pointed out that the Cold War had ended with the Soviet Union's collapse.

The White House announced on Wednesday during a Nato summit that it would periodically



Volunteers carry a sack with debris in Okhmatdyt, the biggest children's hospital in Ukraine, in Kyiv. — AFP

station long-range weapons including Tomahawk cruise missiles in Germany from 2026 as a deterrent.

"Exercising these advanced capabilities will demonstrate the United States' commitment to Nato and its contributions to European integrated deterrence," the White House said.

The Kremlin criticised the move, accusing Washington of

taking a step towards a new Cold War and of directly participating in the conflict in Ukraine.

Russia's defence ministry said on Friday that Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov held a telephone call with his US counterpart Lloyd Austin where they discussed lowering the risk of "possible escalation". Nato countries — spearheaded by the United States — have bolstered

Europe is a target for our missiles... We have enough capacity to contain these missiles but the potential victims are the capitals of these countries

DMITRY PESKOV
Kremlin spokesman

their defences in Europe following the start of Russia's military campaign in Ukraine in 2022.

Meanwhile, North Korea has denounced a declaration at a recent Nato summit that condemned Pyongyang's weapons exports to Russia, calling the document "illegal", state media said on Saturday.

Pyongyang has repeatedly denied allegations that it is shipping weapons to Moscow, but in June leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin



Onlookers gather at the dumpsite where six bodies were found in the landfill in Mukuru slum, Nairobi. — AFP

Kenya police search dumpsite after mutilated bodies found

NAIROBI: Kenyan police were searching on Saturday through a rubbish dump in a Nairobi slum watched by angry crowds after a number of mutilated bodies were found discarded there in plastic sacks. Kenya's police watchdog has said it was investigating whether there is any police involvement in the gruesome discovery on Friday in Mukuru in the south of the capital.

The Independent Police Oversight Authority (IPOA) is also looking into claims of abductions of demonstrators who went missing after widespread anti-government protests.

Kenyan media reports said on Saturday that more bags containing human remains had been recovered by police from rubbish-strewn waters at a garbage site in an abandoned quarry.

On Friday, police said the severely mutilated bodies of six women tied up in plastic bags were found in the dumpsite, causing shock and anger among locals.

The IPOA said later that the remains of at least nine people had been recovered, seven of them female.

"The bodies, wrapped in bags and secured by nylon ropes, had visible marks of torture and mutilation," it said, noting that the dumpsite was less than 100 metres from a police station.

Kenyan police are already under sharp scrutiny after dozens of people were killed during the demonstrations last month, with rights group accusing officers of using excessive force.

National police chief Japhet Koome, the target of much public anger over the protest deaths, has resigned after less than two years in the post, Kenya's presidency announced on Friday. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

ISLAMABAD

Pakistani court overturns ex-PM Khan's conviction

A Pakistan court overturned ex-prime minister Imran Khan's conviction on illegal marriage charges on Saturday, though he remains jailed over allegations of inciting riots. Khan was slapped with a trio of convictions in the days before February elections.

Islamabad Additional District and Sessions Court announced that the "appeals of both Imran Khan and Bushra Bibi are accepted". Khan remains locked up, though, with a spokesman for his Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf



(PTI) party saying a court in eastern Lahore had approved his arrest over three cases alleging he incited riots in May 2023. It was "yet another gimmick to keep the illegal imprisonment prolonged". — AFP

MOGADISHU

8 people killed in Mogadishu prison break shootout

Five inmates said to be from Somalia's Al-Shabaab group and three guards were killed in a blaze of gunfire during an attempted breakout from the main prison in the capital Mogadishu on Saturday. "Violent elements tried to stir terror in the central prison," Colonel Abdiqani Khalaf, spokesman for the Somali Custodian Corps, said at a brief press conference, adding that the situation has now returned to normal. "Five prisoners and three soldiers died and



18 other prisoners and three soldiers were wounded," he said. Witnesses living near the compound reported hearing the sound of grenade explosions and machinegun fire. — AFP

PARIS

French PM eyes rebuilding political force

France's prime minister on Saturday was elected leader of his party's National Assembly lawmakers as politicians from all sides jockeyed for position to form the next government. Gabriel Attal was the only candidate in the vote by the Renaissance party parliamentary group, which he plans to use as the base from which to rebuild the political force that got roundly beaten in a snap election called by President Macron. Of the 98 Renaissance deputies



registered to vote, 84 backed Attal, who will start in his role next week. Macron's allies came second with 164 seats and the far-right National Rally (RN) third at 143. — AFP

Biden uses Nato summit to assail Trump



David E. Sanger

The writer is the White House and National Security Correspondent for The New York Times

The biting comparison, with its suggestion that Trump admires only brute force and is in Putin’s pocket, was the kind of attack on his opponent that Biden’s supporters were hoping for in the debate

President Joe Biden used the closing of the Nato summit to issue a blistering attack on Donald Trump’s rejection of the value of alliances, and he declared for the first time that he had developed a strategy to interrupt the growing military and technological relationship between Russia and China.

In a wide-ranging news conference being watched to see how he handled himself amid questions about his age and acuity, Biden mixed defiance of his critics with several flubs.

But the session also served as a platform for him to show a command of foreign policy, including describing in detail the decisions he has made over 3 1/2 years that have been punctuated by wars in Ukraine and the Gaza Strip.

He took credit for warning the Europeans of an impending war of Ukraine in late 2021 and early 2022, and for preparing Nato to provide arms and intelligence as soon as war broke out. And he used the moment to remind American voters that Trump’s first reaction to the attack was to praise President Vladimir Putin.

The biting comparison, with its suggestion that Trump admires only brute force and is in Putin’s pocket, was the kind of attack on his opponent that Biden’s supporters were hoping for in the debate between the two men two weeks ago but never heard.

Pressed about whether he believed he would be able, in a second term, as he approached his mid-80s, to handle a one-on-one negotiation with Putin or President Xi Jinping of China, Biden shot back, “I’m ready to deal with them now and three years from now.”

He said he remained in “direct contact” with Xi, whom he last saw in person in California, at a summit last November, leading to a brief warming of relations. But he made clear that he was refusing to talk to Putin.

“I have no good reason to talk to Putin right now,” he said. “There’s not much that he is prepared to do in terms of accommodating any change in his behaviour.”

And he expressed regret that he could not persuade Israeli leaders to listen to him when he warned them, soon after the October 7 attacks by Hamas, that they should not overreact.

“I said, don’t make the same mistake we did,” Biden said, referring to the United States’ war of Afghanistan after the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. He added that he had offered to help Israel “find the bad guys, Sinwar and company,” a reference to the Hamas leader, Yahya Sinwar, who planned the attack.

“So there’s a lot of things that, in retrospect, I wish I had been able to convince Israelis to do, but the bottom line is we have a chance now,” Biden said. “It’s time to end this war. It doesn’t mean walk away from going after Sinwar and Hamas.”

He said that “there was no reason to occupy anywhere,” drawing a comparison — somewhat elliptically — between how Israel seeks to oversee Gaza after the war to the failed American effort in Afghanistan.



President Joe Biden speaks during a working session at the Nato summit in Washington.

His answer about Israel was revealing of his political strategy as well. If Biden remains in the race, as he vowed to Thursday night, he knows he will continue to be squeezed between the progressive wing of his own party, many of whose members believe he has abetted Israel’s killing of innocent Palestinians, and pro-Israel Democrats who are demanding that he remain resolute in support of the Israeli government by providing whatever weapons it needs to eradicate Hamas.

Biden’s news conference came at the end of a 2 1/2-day summit of the 32 leaders of Nato. The leaders ranged from those who are on the front line of the effort to push Putin’s forces out of the roughly 20 per cent of the country they now occupy, to some, like President Viktor Orban of Hungary, who just saw Putin and appears to be pushing for a settlement that would

reward the Russian leader with much of the territory he has already seized.

Orban, whom Trump has repeatedly praised for his iron rule over Hungary, was reportedly leaving the summit for another visit to Mar-a-Lago, Trump’s Florida home.

But it was on the question of Russia’s rapidly expanding relationship with China — and its alignment with North Korea, other arms supplier to Russia — that Biden broke the most new ground.

Until the news conference, he had never conceded that the United States was seeking to disrupt the relationship between the two countries, just as president Richard Nixon and his secretary of state, Henry Kissinger, did a half-century ago, by surprising the world with a diplomatic opening to Beijing.

Chandra Observatory captures two supernovas



Dennis Overbye

The author is the cosmic affairs correspondent for The New York Times

For the past quarter-century, Nasa’s Chandra X-ray Observatory has been recording the roiling aftermath of two mighty supernova explosions that occurred hundreds of years ago, far out in space. This spring, the astronomers who operate Chandra combined its X-ray images into videos that document the evolution of two astrophysical landmarks: the Crab nebula, in the constellation Taurus, and Cassiopeia A, a gas bubble and hub of radio noise in the constellation Cassiopeia.

The videos show twisting, drifting ribbons of the remains of the star being churned by shock waves and illuminated by radiation from the dense, spinning cores left behind.

Earlier this year, Nasa proposed cutting Chandra’s operating funds. More than 700 astronomers signed a protest letter and created a website asking the agency to change its mind. Federal lawmakers from Massachusetts also joined the protest.

Lately things have been looking up. In July, a draft of a House appropriation bill for Nasa’s 2025 budget expressed support for the continued operation of Chandra, “which continues to deliver discoveries addressing a wide range across astrophysics.”

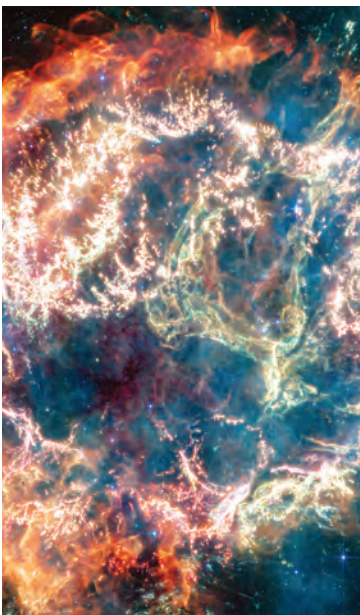
Chandra was one of four “Great

Observatories” that Nasa launched in the 1990s. Chandra’s job is to observe the cosmos through X-ray goggles and study its hottest and most violent phenomena, like black holes, exploding stars and blazing-hot intergalactic gas. Because X-rays are blocked by Earth’s atmosphere, these astrophysical events can be studied only from space. Chandra was the dream-child of Riccardo Giacconi, a physicist who pioneered the field of X-ray astronomy and won the Nobel Prize in physics in 2002.

Astronomers now have a multispectral view of some of the weirdest events in the universe thanks to Chandra, the Hubble Space Telescope, which sees ordinary visible light, and the James Webb Space Telescope, which sees infrared light.

Chandra’s X-ray observations have also revealed that enigmatic flecks of light in the early universe, initially detected by the Webb telescope, were actually quasars — young galaxies harbouring supermassive black holes. That finding caused some astrophysicists to reconsider their ideas about how and when such massive black holes form.

In June, Chandra scientists announced the discovery of a black hole with a mass of 80 million suns that was kicking up a rumpus back when the universe was only a half-billion years old. Scientists can’t



Cassiopeia A in infrared, captured by the James Webb Space Telescope.

The videos show twisting, drifting ribbons of the remains of the star being churned by shock waves and illuminated by radiation from the dense, spinning cores left behind

explain how it got so big so fast.

The Crab nebula was created in the year 1054 in an explosion that was seen by Chinese and Japanese astronomers and recorded in Native American pictographs. The nebula harbours one of the first known pulsars — a spinning neutron star that flicks a pulse of radio energy 30 times per second like a superfast lighthouse beam.

Cassiopeia A, located about 11,000 light-years away from Earth, is the remains of a star that exploded as a supernova about 340 years ago. Nobody seems to have observed it at the time, but astronomers have recently pinpointed a bright dot at its centre, a dense neutron star that is the squished leftover core of the original star.

As Chandra’s time-lapse movies show, these stars are still exploding, in a sense. Newly minted elements like iron, oxygen, calcium and silicon are still being shed into space to fertilise the next generations of stars. Chains of supernova explosions have acted as thermonuclear foundries over the course of cosmic history, progressively transforming a simple baby universe of hydrogen and helium into a more complex mix of the heavier elements needed for life as we know it. The past marches on, in our cells as well as in the sky.

Why do people protest?



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
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The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

We watch social media videos of people protesting the genocide in Gaza by marching in big cities, gathering in universities demanding ceasefire, or boycotting products that support the occupation.

We also watch videos of people spilling milk in supermarkets because they are vegetarians standing for the rights of cows not to be milked, while others would spray paint on historical landmarks in protest for the lack of climate change policies.

Thanks to modern technology social media has become a powerful tool for protesting by posting videos to expose a certain behaviour to millions of viewers around the globe hoping someone would bring up change.

Perhaps the most famous activist is the 22-year-old Swedish woman Greta Thunberg who dedicated her life to human-cause of climate change.

Regardless of the cause or the behaviour, people protest to express their content with a certain behaviour or policy.

I have always been interested in what motivates people to protest.

According to social and psychological studies, people’s motivation to protest depends on the movement, the specific protest event, and the larger political context behind it.

A research study asked protesters “Why are you participating in this protest? The answers showed that people participate because they want to, because they can and because they are being asked.

Overall motives vary from wanting a particularly valuable policy change such as ending wars or social injustice to having a nice day out with friends. The act of protest can be gratifying on its own as you feel that you are doing something.

Another possible explanation is that protesting gives people the opportunity to express their opinions, anger, or dissatisfaction.

For example, people protesting against a war may want to show that they are angry and disagree with the war even if they know that their protest will not stop the war.

There is also the fact that people tend to protest with those who share their interests, feelings, and values.

Protesters can be motivated by personal or

SOCIAL MEDIA HAS BECOME A POWERFUL TOOL FOR PROTESTING BY POSTING ABOUT A PARTICULAR SITUATION TO RAISE PUBLIC AWARENESS

collective reasons.

It is more common to see people protesting to improve their own lives, asking for better jobs and salaries, better schools for their kids, and others acting on behalf of minority ethnic groups such as the “black lives matter” and the “Me too” movement.

Most protests are peaceful but sometimes they turn violent causing damage and destruction of public properties.

This can be due to several reasons such as provocation by the authorities by using use of tear gas, rubber bullets or physical force. The presence of counter-protesters with opposing views, or the presence of groups with a different agenda to infiltrate peaceful protests to incite violence or create chaos.

Protests without clear leadership or communication channels can lead to confusion, unintended violence, and the presence of mob mentality, where individuals act in ways they wouldn’t normally do alone. Therefore, authorities must understand crowd behaviour when responding to a protest.

Madiba shirts keep Mandela’s legacy alive

ZAMA LUTHULI

In his workshop stocked with piles of fabric and sewing machines, Sonwabile Ndamase is proud that the Madiba shirts he designed for Nelson Mandela 30 years ago endure as a legacy of South Africa’s first democratically elected leader. Worn untucked and without a jacket, the loose Madiba shirts remain a favourite among South African politicians, making a statement 10 years after Mandela’s death.

Madiba is the clan name by which Mandela is known in South Africa.

Ndamase’s clients include South Africa’s current president, Cyril Ramaphosa, as well as his predecessors, Thabo Mbeki and Jacob Zuma. The country’s political and business elite — including ministers, government spokesmen and local politicians — regularly place orders.

Even former US president Bill Clinton and boxing great Mike Tyson have a Madiba shirt.

“Anybody who wants to live a Mandela legacy or who wants to live Mandela ethos in life, guess what they are doing? They will go and pick up Madiba shirts,” Ndamase said.

The jovial 64-year-old designer recalls when he was contacted by Winnie Mandela soon after the apartheid government released her husband from prison in 1990.

Having spent 27 years in jail, the hero of the fight against white-minority rule and South Africa’s soon-to-be president needed new clothes.

Ndamase met Mandela in his home Johannesburg’s Soweto. “He started to tell me that he wanted something that could look conservative enough for him to go and address the captains of industry and... then also to address the masses without having to change,” he said.

Mandela wanted a style that would make him stand out among other statesmen and did not require a tie.

The self-taught designer came up with the loose-fitting, casual-but-smart silk shirts with bold patterns that are associated with Mandela even after his death in 2013 at the age of 95.

The shirts often feature oriental-style patterns. Some boast deep colours such as burgundy, dark grey and royal blue, with playful designs; others are of cooler, tan hues, depicting elements from nature like leaves or twigs.

All are recognisable as the signature Mandela look. It is a style that Ndamase, who suffered a mild stroke in March 2024, is passing on to a new generation of garment-makers. The jocular designer — whose perfect impersonation of Mandela is a testament to their time spent together — is taking his know-how to New York in September when he will host a masterclass for young designers. — AFP



Mohammed Anwar Al Balushi

The writer is an academic lecturer and advisor, Oman College of Management and Technology

The new wave of female leadership

WHAT are the criteria for a woman to become a CEO?

In a world that moves so fast, if thousands of men can become CEOs, why can’t at least one woman out of every hundred men achieve the same? If a woman can fulfil the same task just as well, if not better, why is she not given the opportunity to become a CEO?

Let me share one of my experiences where a female bank branch manager outperformed her male counterparts.

Here’s the story.

As a newly joined staff member serving customers with the bank’s products and services, I had the opportunity to work under three different branch managers. The first was a very polite, educated man who left no room for audit observations. Despite his meticulous nature, the management decided to move him out of the branch. Can you guess why? Because he was not business, marketing, sales, and profit oriented. Simply put, he was not innovative.

The second branch manager was appointed to increase sales and profitability. He put all his efforts into the bank branch business, used his entire network to attract new customers, and excelled in marketing. He achieved and exceeded business targets, but again, the management decided to move him out. Why? Because he was not compliance-oriented, leading to numerous high-risk audit observations.

Then came the third branch manager, a woman. She started by identifying the mistakes of her predecessors and worked diligently with the team to rectify all audit observations and errors, which took her two weeks. Afterward, she focused on business and marketing.

To attract customers, she placed a red flower with chocolates near the entrance — something new for traditional customers. This simple yet innovative gesture brought noticeable changes.

During her tenure, the branch consistently met targets, ranked number one in customer service, and achieved high employee



Some of the 10 women changing the landscape of leadership according to The New York Times.

satisfaction.

This experience raises an important question: why do some men believe that women cannot perform better in leadership roles? In today’s world, leadership is not about physical strength but about strategy and a creative mindset. Why do men continue to dominate leadership positions in the corporate world?

IN TODAY’S WORLD, LEADERSHIP IS NOT ABOUT PHYSICAL STRENGTH BUT ABOUT STRATEGY AND A CREATIVE MINDSET

According to research, women hold about 15 per cent of CEO positions in Fortune 500 companies, marking a gradual increase over the years. In March 2023, there were 74 female CEOs in the Fortune 500, compared to only 7 in 2002 (World Economic Forum).

This number has further grown, with women now leading over 10 per cent of Fortune 500 companies (Women Business Collaborative). Despite these gains, the vast majority of CEO positions remain occupied by men. The broader corporate landscape reflects similar trends, with men dominating leadership roles globally.

The notion that women cannot lead organisations as effectively as men is outdated and unsupported by evidence. What about other leadership roles in organisations where some might still believe a woman cannot excel, such as Chief Risk Officer, Chief Internal Auditor, Chief Compliance Officer, Chief Operating Officer, Chief Digital Officer, Chief Regulatory Officer, and Chief Retail Banking Officer?

The question is not about capability but about opportunity and breaking down the persistent barriers that prevent women from reaching the top.

For organisations to thrive in the modern world, they must recognise and embrace the potential of female leaders. Women should be encouraged to dream big and pursue their career goals without being hindered by gender biases.

At the same time, men should move away from the mindset of commanding and undermining women, acknowledging that leadership is not about gender but about skill and vision.

If a weak man can become a CEO, there is no reason a strong woman cannot achieve the same. It is time for the corporate world to catch up with the reality of women’s capabilities and provide them with the opportunities they rightfully deserve.

By doing so, we can ensure a more diverse, inclusive, and successful future for businesses worldwide.

Can the faith make itself heard abroad?

The United Kingdom has expressed its dissatisfaction, no, its lack of trust, in returning to a left-of-centre political model, in a humiliating result for Rishi Sunak’s Conservative party. It is almost ironic that a knight of the realm, ‘Sir’ Keir Starmer led the Labour resurgence, just twisting the knife just a little more within the echo of Big Ben. However, as the dust settles on an election that was such a foregone conclusion there was no drama at all in the event, an opportunity has arisen to ask what the future under the new Prime Minister holds for the UK’s four million Muslims, and how they can positively influence their communities and societies.

This, in a world where sectarian and cultural diversity have been seen for decades as having only disruptive and self-serving ideologies that have about as much political and social effect as a mosquito on a dinosaur, which is, when you think about it, as an apt metaphor for the political duopoly of successive Labour and Conservative governments that have shamelessly neglected the needs of their constituents.

Muslim bloc voting initiatives are by no means a new idea. Indeed, there have been several iterations over the years seeking to harness the power of a collective voice to engage tactically with an electoral system designed to exclude dissent and maintain a political status quo.

Khadijah Elshayyal, writing in the Middle East Eye, is of the opinion that, “the media and political establishment have attempted to portray independent campaigns more generally, and Muslim voters in particular, as sectarian and separatist or as boorish and barbaric.” She alludes to an entrenched fear of organised ‘resistance’, as being something to be feared, as in Islamophobia, the topic of a parliamentary debate on the 20th of March this year.

Seeking a definition of Islamophobia from the incumbent Conservatives, Debbie Abrahams, the Oldham East and Saddleback MP (Lab), questioned the “indifference to fear, discrimination,



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and hatred, that thousands of Muslims experience,” which, on the face of it, appears to be itself to be coming from its own latent extremist perspective.

That word ‘hate’ just seems motivated, and un-necessary, and almost inextricably linked to a very ‘British’ unease, not maybe of the faith, but a fear of Islamists evolving to become a valued socio-political entity, with a legitimate contribution to the nation. It will not be easy, but the alternative is to see Elshayyal’s ‘Muslim bloc’ become, like every other minority throughout history that goes from being relevant and heard today, to gone tomorrow.

Again, we could ask why? It is hesitation that will emasculate the voice of Islam in Britain because the other 96.4 per cent of the population is being educated, not to know or understand your faith, but to hesitate every time it confronts them. They do not see every Muslim as a terrorist, any more than they see every doctor as Harold Shipman, who killed fifteen of his elderly patients, or every nurse as the murderer of seven infants, Lucy Letby. But they will hesitate, because they do not know your goodness of heart. They do not understand that through sincerity — al ikhlas — , honesty — al sidq — and goodwill — al nasihah, relative to Allah, and those around them, which guide them through the mundane to the exotic, the banal to the spiritual, and from joy to love.

I believe the Islamic entity will never become as strong as it needs to be in the UK.

However, it is in good company. After all, the most recent iteration of a socio-political entity, the environmental lobby has been encouraged towards social disobedience, to the extent that their lunatic fringe believes it has a legitimate right to deface priceless national treasures and artworks, and that will stop oil exploration!

Their credibility, their voice, and ultimately, their message, is consequently being lost to those they profess to represent because of their misguided extremism. They still have a presence, but their voice is lost in the noise of the machine.

I BELIEVE THE ISLAMIC ENTITY WILL NEVER BECOME AS STRONG AS IT NEEDS TO BE IN THE UK. HOWEVER, IT IS IN GOOD COMPANY

PATRIOTIC KIRBY ESTATE



St George's flags, the national flag of England, fly from residents' homes at the Kirby Estate in Bermondsey, south London, ahead of the UEFA Euro 2024 final between Spain and England. – AFP

Global warming: separating fact from fiction

Whilst it is of course important to prevent the deforestation of the Amazon rain forest and the destruction of any habitat which supports our wildlife and indigenous people, the view that such human activities will cause global warming and climate change is based on the false premise that human actions are responsible for global warming.

Moreover the proposition that global warming may destroy the world is alarmist.

The reputable Nature Magazine has bought into the Greens’ propaganda. It published an article warning us that the future of our planet depends on whether or not we reduce global warming.

The title of this article is ‘Earth Is Warmer Than It’s Been in 125,000 Years.’ This isn’t true and Nature Magazine should be ashamed for publishing this untruth.

Professor Dr Jan Esper of Johannes Gutenberg University in Mainz, Germany, headed a group of scientists looking into the history of global temperatures.

Using tree-ring density methods from sub-fossil pine trees he discovered that in the past during the Middle Ages and the Roman epoch people enjoyed temperatures higher than today and that over the last 2,000 years the earth has been cooling not getting warmer.

The recent rise in global warming still hasn’t reached temperatures achieved then.



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IT SEEMS GLOBAL WARMING IS HEALTHIER, WHILE EXCESSIVELY HIGH TEMPERATURES CAN CAUSE DEATHS FROM HEAT STROKE FOR EXAMPLE, IT IS THE COLD THAT KILLS MOST PEOPLE

During these two periods of higher temperatures, according to historians and archaeologists at Stanford University, people lived longer, enjoyed better nutrition and multiplied more rapidly than during epochs of colder weather. It seems global warming is healthier. Whilst excessively high temperatures can cause deaths from heat stroke for example, it is the cold that kills most people.

Thomas Moore, the Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution Stanford University, studied more recent effects of different climates on humans which supported this view.

He stated that while advocates of the theory that global warming would be catastrophic and result in an increase in disease and deaths worldwide, in fact a warmer world would be a world with fewer deaths.

Professor Moore’s evidence comes from monthly death rates in Washington DC from 1987 to 1989 and an analysis of deaths in 89 large counties across the US.

Those statistical evaluations showed that warmer weather cuts death rates, not only in Washington but throughout the US. Taking into account variables this was shown to be likely worldwide. Similar studies in the UK support his viewpoint. It would appear that the Green Party’s “prophets of doom and gloom” may have got it

wrong.

The Green Party’s take on global warming is now an accepted fact. To deny their theory is to risk social ostracism. Even cows don’t escape the moral condemnation of these zealots. Cows are unwittingly guilty because methane gas is emitted from their burps and manure and these emissions are said to increase the greenhouse effect.

The Green movement states “the science is clear, we cannot continue burning coal, oil and gas if we are to avoid the worst impacts of global warming.”

However scientific evidence would suggest that their science is at the very least questionable. We are continually told by the western media and by the BBC in particular that “fossil fuels (such as natural gas and petroleum) are unethical because their pollution contaminates the cleanliness of the natural environment” and further that “in using fossil fuels we are violating a common moral principle by harming innocent people.”

It is therefore with some trepidation and with the risk of social ostracism that I put forward the argument that the Green movement’s alarmist statements in relation to global warming should be ignored.

Perhaps those who use morality to promote the idea that using

fossil fuel harms innocent people should consider the following. The World Health Organisation estimates that around a third of people worldwide cook using open fires or inefficient stoves fuelled by biomass (energy from burning dead animals and plants), wood, animal dung, and crop waste.

The use of these “sustainable “ fuels generates harmful household air pollution and was responsible for an estimated 3.2 million deaths in 2020, including over 237,000 deaths of children under the age of 5. These deaths could be avoided by using electricity generated by cheap fossil fuels.

The Greens on their high horses demand that everyone switches to using power sources such as wind power, solar power and tidal energy. Offshore wind turbines create noise pollution affecting marine life such as whales, dolphins and seals that rely on sounds to communicate for navigation.

They also cause the displacement and destruction of marine life habitation.

Sea birds are amongst our most endangered species and wind turbines are displacing them from their usual feeding areas. Solar energy is expensive and highly inefficient compared to electricity produced by cheap fossil fuels. I won’t insult you by explaining why energy produced by sea tides is not

a serious contender to produce sufficient energy for the world’s needs.

The Green Party’s drive to reduce the supply of fossil fuels harms the poorest people.

A reduction in supply, based on the economic principle of supply and demand, has increased the price of oil and gas.

Consequently the hike in oil prices has massively increased the profits of oil companies causing hardship for ordinary people in the West and especially Africa.

The least able to afford it are obliged to pay exorbitant prices for their energy needs. The oil companies, on the back of the largest profits in their history are expanding their business activities rather than decreasing them.

The theory that global warming is caused by human actions rather than Nature is a fiction. Equally fictional is the proposition that a hotter world will catastrophically impact us.

The historical periods of global warming must have resulted from natural causes including the real possibility of a shift in the earth’s rotation. Unless of course I missed that part of my school history lesson which talked about Romans driving Lamborghinis and Ferraris. You can fill up your cars with petrol comfortable in the knowledge that you are on the right side of history.

sport

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Argentina seek ‘triple crown’ but Colombia aim for upset in Copa final

MIAMI: Argentina can become the first South American team to win the ‘triple crown’ of three straight major tournament titles if they can overcome a formidable Colombia in Sunday’s Copa America final.

Inspired by Lionel Messi, Argentina followed up their 2021 Copa America title with the World Cup triumph a year later and have advanced with little drama to this weekend’s showpiece with the Colombians.

Spain are the only other team in international football to have won a World Cup in between two straight continental titles when they clinched Euro wins in 2008 and 2012 either side of the 2010 World Cup.

As well as achieving that landmark for the squad coached by Lionel Scaloni, a win would also give the ‘Albiceleste’ a record 16th Copa America title — they are currently tied with Uruguay on 15 Copa wins.

But Colombia have an impressive streak of their own, heading into what should be a fiery and passionate night at Hard Rock Stadium, home of the NFL’s Miami Dolphins.

Colombia are unbeaten in 28 matches, a record for the team, and have arguably had the tougher route to the final.

While Argentina took care of business against surprise package Canada in their semi, enjoying a comfortable 2-0 win in New

Jersey, Colombia had to battle past Uruguay on Wednesday in Charlotte, winning 1-0 despite being down to ten men for the entire second half.

PERFECT FINAL

In many ways, Sunday’s is the perfect final for the tournament.

Few would dispute that the two best teams in this year’s 16-nation competition will fight for the title and there should be an electric atmosphere with both sides able to draw on support from large communities in Miami.

Argentina, ranked number one in the world by Fifa and with a team that has been together for several years, are favourites, but few expect a one-sided game.

“Scaloni knows them all by heart. Argentina today have a solidity that is foolproof and they have the added bonus of having the best player in the world, which is why they are the big favourites,” said former Chile and Inter Milan striker Ivan Zamorano, who is covering the tournament is a television pundit.

But former Colombia star midfielder Carlos Valderrama believes a surprise could be on the cards.

“I see Colombia winning on Sunday,” he said, “We have a great team to dream about.

“I am optimistic about the national team, because of the



process and the results they have been getting, and also because of the way they are playing.

“The team is unbeaten, is playing well in the Copa, with James (Rodriguez) as the best player in the tournament, so we can dream of being champions because we have a great team,” he added.

Rodriguez, who grabbed global attention with his

performances in the 2014 World Cup in Brazil, has never truly lived up to expectations at club level but at 34 is producing some of his best football in the yellow jersey of his country.

Colombia’s sole Copa America title came in 2001.

There is an emotional factor for Argentina with Sunday’s game also a farewell to the national team for 36-year-old winger Angel Di Maria.

“I’m not ready for my last game with the national team, but it’s time,” he said this week.

“A thousand things can happen, but I think that whatever happens I can go out on a high note. I’ve done everything to be able to leave through that door,” added the Benfica midfielder.

While defender Nicolas Otamendi may also depart, it remains to be seen if this will be the last tournament for Messi, who will turn 39 during the 2026 World Cup.

“I’m living it like everything else in recent times: enjoying it very much and being aware, like Fideo (Di Maria) and Ota (Otamendi), that these are the last battles,” the eight-times Ballon d’Or winner said after the semi-final win.

Organisers CONMEBOL will be hoping that, unlike in Charlotte, the battles will be purely of a footballing nature.

There were violent clashes between Colombia and Uruguay fans at the end of the game with Uruguayan players storming into the crowd and joining the fighting.

“We want to reaffirm and warn that no action will be tolerated that tarnishes this global football celebration,” CONMEBOL said in a statement on Thursday.

The incidents tarnished a tournament which has been viewed as a test for venues which will host games at the 2026 World Cup which is being hosted by the USA with Canada and Mexico.

While Charlotte is not a host city for 2026, Miami will host seven games including a quarter-final and the third-place game.

— AFP

Oman Rugby Team prepares for UK Touch Rugby World Cup

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 13

The Oman national rugby team departed for the United Kingdom on Saturday to represent Oman in the Touch Rugby World Cup, which will be held from July 16 to 20. The tournament is the largest and most challenging in the history of touch rugby, with a record-breaking 40 countries and 180 teams competing for the title.

The Oman team will face strong challenges in its group, which includes nine countries namely Lebanon, France, Scotland, Australia, Hong Kong, England, US and Papua New Guinea. The tournament will be played in a single round-robin format, with each team aiming to collect the most points to top their group.

Mohammed al Hashami, team’s leader, expressed his great confidence in the Oman team’s



Oman national team at the Touch Rugby World Cup

ability to achieve positive results and represent the country in the best possible way. Al Hashami said: “We are very proud to be participating in a world championship of this size. We have worked hard to prepare for this moment, and I expect our team to perform in a way that befits Oman’s reputation.”

Al Hashami added: “From the outset, our vision is very clear.

We developed a comprehensive plan that included intensive training camps in Abu Dhabi and Dubai, in addition to closed and open internal camps. We focused on all aspects of physical fitness and tactics, and designed a daily training programme that included three training sessions per day for 30 consecutive days.

“This tournament will not

just be a participation, but an opportunity to prove that the Oman team is capable of competing at the highest levels. We are proud to be the only Gulf team participating, and this gives us an extra motivation to give our best. The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth has provided the team with all the facilities to train and prepare in the best possible way,” he said.

For his part, Haitham al Harthy, the team captain, said: “The idea of participating in the World Cup started in 2022, and we had one goal: to build a strong team that can compete on the world stage. Over the past two years, we have undergone intensive training focused on improving speed, endurance and physical fitness.”

Al Harthy added: “Our

training was not easy, but the team spirit and high commitment of all the players made it a special experience. Every player on the team knows the size of the challenge, and we are excited to represent Oman in the best possible way. The recent training sessions have been tough and intensive, with us training daily for the past month at three sessions per day, to ensure our physical and mental readiness.”

He further added that the tournament is an opportunity to show how far rugby has developed in Oman. “We are determined to perform in a way that befits our country’s reputation, and the players are ready to make every effort to achieve positive results. The players feel the great responsibility on their shoulders, and we are all determined to achieve the goals we have set for ourselves,” he concluded.



Barbora Krejčíková kisses the Venus Rosewater Dish trophy. – Reuters

KREJCIKOVA WINS WIMBLEDON FOR SECOND GRAND SLAM SINGLES TITLE

LONDON: Barbora Krejčíková of the Czech Republic defeated Italy's Jasmine Paolini to win the Wimbledon women's title on Saturday for her second Grand Slam singles triumph.

Krejčíková, the 31st seed, won 6-2, 2-6, 6-4 to add the 2024 All England Club crown to her 2021 French Open victory.

Her win comes 26 years after her mentor Jana Novotná, who died of cancer in 2017, claimed the Wimbledon title.

"Before she passed away, she told me to go and win a Slam. I did that in Paris in 2021 but I never dreamed of winning the same trophy that Jana did," said the 28-year-old Krejčíková, who secured the title in a nervy final service game on a third championship point.

"It's unreal what just happened. The best day of my tennis career and the best day of my life.

"I was just telling myself to be brave. It was such a difficult match, a great final, a great competition and I'm super happy to be standing here enjoying this moment."

I was just telling myself to be brave. It was such a difficult match, a great final, a great competition and I'm super happy to be standing here enjoying this moment

BARBORA KREJCIKOVA
Czech professional tennis player

Krejčíková, who will return to the top 10 following her victory, came into Wimbledon after a testing season.

A back injury and illness meant she went winless on the tour from February until June.

"I was injured and ill and didn't have a good start to the season and now I'm Wimbledon

winner. How did that happen?"

"I think nobody's going to believe I won Wimbledon. I still can't believe it. Two weeks ago (first round) I had a very tough match, 7-5 in the third set and I wasn't in good shape."

The result means seventh-seeded Paolini has lost two Grand Slam finals back-to-back after coming off second best to Iga Swiatek at the French Open last month.

"I'm a little bit sad but I try to keep smiling. I have to remember today is still a good day," said Paolini, who had never won a grass-court match in her career until last month.

"I remember watching Wimbledon as a kid cheering for Roger Federer, so to be here now is crazy. It's been a beautiful two weeks."

She added: "Barbora, you played unbelievable. You play such beautiful tennis. Congrats to you and your team."

Krejčíková set the tone at the start of the match by breaking the Italian in the opening game and backing up the advantage with a hold to love. — AFP

Alcaraz and Djokovic set up Wimbledon blockbuster final repeat

LONDON: Carlos Alcaraz and Novak Djokovic will lock horns in a sequel to last year's Wimbledon title blockbuster after producing commanding displays to ease through their semi-finals on Friday.

Spain's defending champion Alcaraz took a hammer to the wall that is Russia's Daniil Medvedev as he beat the fifth seed 6-7(1) 6-3 6-4 6-4 before seven-time champion Djokovic clinically disposed of Italian Lorenzo Musetti 6-4 7-6(2) 6-4.

Neither match truly captivated the Centre Court crowd but Sunday's final promises a fitting climax to a soggy Championships, especially if it scales anywhere near the dizzy heights of last year's classic won by Alcaraz in five sets.

That defeat was Djokovic's first defeat on Centre Court for a decade and the clinical way he disposed of the 22-year-old Musetti suggests he is hungry to seize back his crown.

"I am satisfied and pleased, but I don't want to stop here - hopefully I get my hands on the trophy," Djokovic, who used his racket to play an imaginary violin after winning match point but this time avoided picking a fight with the crowd, said on court.

"(Alcaraz) is one of the greatest 21-year-olds we've ever seen in this sport and he will win many more Grand Slams but hopefully not this one on Sunday."

Despite his valiant attempt to emulate compatriot Jasmine Paolini, who will contest Saturday's women's final, 25th seed Musetti never really looked like preventing Djokovic reaching his 10th Wimbledon and record-extending 37th Grand Slam final.

"I have to say today was really a joke at the end how he was returning my serve," Musetti said. There were rays of hope. The stylish Musetti recovered from a break down in the first set and had Djokovic in trouble at 5-5 in the second with the Serb 0-30 down on serve.

But Djokovic, as so often, flicked the emergency switch, banged down three aces to avert the danger and then cruised through the ensuing tiebreak for a two-set lead.

Even then Grand Slam semi-



Alcaraz celebrates after winning his semi-final. – Reuters



Djokovic celebrates after winning his semi-final. – Reuters

final debutant Musetti, the clear fans' favourite, refused to throw in the towel.

But when Djokovic is in the mood for business, nothing stands in his way and on Sunday he will have more history to write with a record 25th Grand Slam title within touching distance.

There is still the small matter, however, of containing Alcaraz who will be seeking to retain the title on what could be a momentous day for Spain whose soccer team will kickoff later that evening against England in the Euro 2024 final.

That clash in Berlin, just like

the one in London's leafy SW19, looks too tight to call.

But Alcaraz, bidding for a fourth Grand Slam title, will need to avoid the wobbles that have seen him drop sets in every match from the third round onwards.

The third seed was overwhelming favourite to beat Medvedev after outclassing him at the semi-final stage last year.

Watched by Real Madrid's Luka Modric, Alcaraz started slowly to trail 5-2. He worked his way back into the set but was wrong-footed by Medvedev's pinpoint hitting in a one-sided tiebreak. — Reuters

England wrap up first Test with innings victory

ANDY JALIL
ENGLAND, JULY 13

West Indies suffered a comprehensive defeat by an innings and 114 runs within two days and an hour of play on the third day against England in the first Test of the three-Test series. With four overnight wickets remaining, the tourists needed a further 171 only to make England bat again. But that wasn't to be as West Indies could only add 57 to their overnight 79 for six against England's excellent pace attack of James Anderson and Gus Atkinson.

Within ten minutes of the start of play, Anderson struck in the third over with a lovely out swinging ball that Joshua Da Silva could only edge behind the

stumps and that was 88 for seven.

It was then left to Gus Atkinson to add three to his two of the previous day and, indeed, five to his seven wickets – for 45 – of the first innings to finish with match figures of 12 for 106. Anderson's four wickets in the match took his tally of Test wickets to 704. While Atkinson's was the best figures by an England player on Test debut since 1890.

It was no surprise that he was named player of the match. But all eyes were on Anderson on his farewell to Test cricket in the presence of his family. It will no doubt remain as his most memorable Test match.

As he took the field for the final time as a Test cricketer, 7722 days on from his debut against



James Anderson (R) and captain Ben Stokes react. – AFP

Zimbabwe, Anderson had to endure further ceremony - this time a guard of honour formed by players on both sides. The skies above were grey but there was a hint of a smile as he doffed his cap in appreciation of the crowd's applause.

The next wicket to fall was on 96 when Atkinson had Alzarri Joseph caught for 8 and he then went on to uproot Shamar Joseph's off stump for 3 just after the hundred of the innings had come up on the board.

A late flourish by Gudakesh Motie who remained unbeaten with 31, top scorer of the innings, in fact, it was the top score by a West Indies batsman in either innings of the match, took the innings total to 136 all out in just 47 overs when the last man

Jayden Seales' powerful pull shot was held right on the boundary at square leg as he managed to keep his balance to not go over the ropes.

Among the many tributes to Anderson was one from the Chairman of the England and Wales Cricket Board Richard Thompson: "I was lucky enough to be at Lord's when Jimmy made his Test debut 21 years ago and while his prodigious talent was immediately obvious as he took a five-wicket haul, no-one could have predicted the significance and sheer longevity of his bowling genius. Seeing him then get his 700th wicket at Dharamshala and now as the curtain comes down at Lord's I feel very privileged to have seen how his extraordinary career has unfolded."



UEFA
EURO2024
GERMANY

SPAIN, ENGLAND

GO HEAD TO HEAD IN EURO 2024 FINAL

BERLIN: A brilliant Spain team featuring teenage sensation Lamine Yamal stands between England and a first major men's international trophy in almost 60 years in Sunday's Euro 2024 final at the Olympiastadion in Berlin.

Spain have been the outstanding side at this European Championship, their run to the final taking in wins against title-holders Italy, hosts Germany and pre-tournament favourites France.

England, in contrast, have laboured their way to Berlin, going four straight games without winning inside 90 minutes before a stunning last-minute strike by Ollie Watkins gave them a 2-1 semi-final victory over the Netherlands.

But a team led by Jude Bellingham and Harry Kane contains enough match-winners to believe it can go toe to toe with Spain and end England's wait for glory which goes back to the 1966 World Cup.

Unlike the country's women, who won their equivalent competition two years ago, England's men have never won the European Championship.

Back-to-back Euros finals



This, however, is their second straight continental final after their agonising defeat on penalties against Italy in 2021,

and the memory of that will help drive them on in their first ever final on foreign soil. "Seeing Italy lift that trophy



England's midfielder #11 Phil Foden and England's defender #03 Luke Shaw attend an MD-1 training session at the team's base camp in Blankenhain, on the eve of their UEFA Euro 2024 final football match against Spain. — AFP

will haunt me forever," midfielder Declan Rice told the BBC.

"We are now presented with another opportunity where we can write our own history but we are up against another top side who we have to massively respect."

England produced their best football at the tournament against the Dutch in Dortmund, even if they needed a controversial Kane penalty to cancel out Xavi Simons' opener before substitute Watkins won it at the death.

Since beating Serbia 1-0 in their first game, Gareth Southgate's side have been ahead in normal time for a combined total of about 20 minutes across five matches.

They had unconvincing draws with Denmark and Slovenia before overcoming Slovakia in extra time in the last 16, only after being rescued by a Bellingham bicycle kick in injury time.

They came from behind against Switzerland in the last eight before progressing

on penalties, but the Dutch performance should give them real belief.

"We've come here to win. We play the team who've been the best team in the tournament and we have a day less to prepare so it's a huge task," admitted Southgate, whose future beyond Sunday's final is currently uncertain.

SPANISH REVIVAL Spain's form means they are the favourites going into the first meeting of the nations at either a World Cup or Euros since 1996.

While England have consistently reached the latter stages of tournaments under Southgate, Euro 2024 has confirmed the revival of the nation that dominated international football just over a decade ago.

La Roja won back-to-back European Championships in 2008 and 2012, either side of their triumph at the 2010 World Cup. They didn't win another knockout game at a tournament until a run to the semi-finals of Euro 2020, but that was followed by a last-16 exit at the last World Cup. — AFP

THE BEST AND WORST OF EURO 2024

THE EURO 2024 FINAL BETWEEN SPAIN AND ENGLAND IN BERLIN WILL BRING THE CURTAIN DOWN ON A MONTH-LONG FESTIVAL OF FOOTBALL ON SUNDAY. THE NUMEROUS MOMENTS OF DELIGHT AND TRIUMPH, AND FRUSTRATION AND FAILURE, HAVE HIGHLIGHTED THE GOOD AND THE BAD FROM THE TOURNAMENT.

THE GOOD

STADIUM ATMOSPHERE AND FANS: Staging games in regular clubs' football stadiums that provide a fantastic atmosphere makes a difference. From the Tartan Army of Scotland to the Orange Wall from the Netherlands, and the joyous Romanian and Albanian fans, the crowds brought incredible colour and passion.

LAMINE YAMAL: It might not have been foremost in his mind, but the young Spaniard, who turned 17 on Saturday, had been waiting for his school exam results earlier in the tournament. From his performances, and superb goal against France, he looks mature beyond his years and broke the record for youngest player and scorer at a Euros.

SPAIN: More wins (6), goals (13), attempts on goal (108) and attempts on target (37) than any team in the tournament. Virtually every other big team struggled for a recognisable shape or pattern of play, but Spain arrived looking like a well-oiled machine.

REFEREEING: The standard of officiating has generally been superb with mostly unfussy referees in tune with the players and spirit of the game. A viewers' highlight has been the disdainful "get up off the floor" hand gesture from officials. The players soon got the message that going to ground too easily received no reward.

GIORGI MAMARDASHVILI: The Georgia goalkeeper made 29 saves in four games, by a distance the most in the competition so far and ahead of Dutch keeper Bart Verbruggen with 18 in six matches. Mamardashvili's reputation has been greatly enhanced.

GEORGIA: Reaching the last-16 with their seat-of-the-pants style, debutants Georgia were handsomely rewarded as billionaire former Prime Minister Bidzina Ivanishvili pledged \$10.7 million to the team after they beat Portugal 2-0 to make the knockout rounds.

MINNOWS NO MORE: The so-called smaller football nations stood up to the big guns and caused several surprises. Georgia, Albania, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Ukraine and Turkey all produced eye-catching results.

ARDA GULER: The "Turkish Messi" was masterful in orchestrating his side's midfield while several key players came and went because of suspension. His poise was remarkable for a 19-year-old.

INJURY-TIME: It was good for some ... 12 goals scored in injury-time is a record for a Euros finals, and many were decisive, providing vital wins or draws, none more so than Jude Bellingham's over-head kick for England against Slovakia.

ENGLAND'S PENALTY-TAKERS: England transformed themselves from a team traumatised by penalties to one playing for spot-kicks and dispatched them with confidence in the quarter-final against Switzerland.

KYLIAN MBAPPE: By his own admission, Mbappe had a tournament to forget, largely hindered by a broken nose and a face mask that he never looked comfortable wearing. He had only a penalty to show for his 24 attempts at goal, the most by any player, and one more than similar struggler...

CRISTIANO RONALDO: Did we witness the end of an era? Portugal persisted with the 39-year-old but he looked a shadow of the player once considered by many the best in the world, and was unable to find the back of the net in open play.

KAI HAVERTZ: After Germany's 1-1 draw with Switzerland in the pool stage, newspaper Bild ran a poll of 160,000 readers asking whether Havertz or Niclas Füllkrug should start. Fully 90% sided with the latter. Havertz scored two penalties, but missed some sitters as Germany bowed out in the quarter-finals.

BELGIUM: This was supposed to be a new dawn for Belgium under

coach Domenico Tedesco, but the same problems at major finals persisted as they could not turn dominance into goals and went out meekly in the last-16.

ITALY: The defending champions also bowed out with a whimper having scraped into the last-16 with a 98th minute equaliser against Croatia, only to be outclassed by Switzerland. The bizarre press conferences of coach Luciano Spalletti added to the drama.

MERIH DEMIRAL, JUDE BELLINGHAM AND MIRLIND DAKU: When you know the eyes of the world are on you, it is best to cut out the controversy. Inflammatory goal celebrations, crotch-grabbing and leading fans in xenophobic chants respectively drew UEFA sanctions for this trio.

STEWARDS BEHAVING BADLY: Generally authorities handled fans in and around the stadiums well, but a steward was caught on camera beating a Portugal supporter while two colleagues held him down. A poor image for

the tournament and Germany.

CUP COMMOTION: It seemed to be a regular thing during the tournament as fans of many teams threw plastic cups at players taking corners or goalkeepers about to launch goal kicks.

TRAVEL WOES: Cancelled trains and public transport unable to cope, there were scenes of chaos before and after some matches. Even the teams were disrupted as the Netherlands had their train to Dortmund for their semi-final cancelled. Deutsche Bahn came in for criticism from transport minister Volker Wissing for its poor performance during the tournament.

BIKING BLOOPER: It ended in smiles but could have been much worse as a battered, bruised and embarrassed England forward Anthony Gordon came off his electric bike while trying to take a picture with his phone. Two British journalists jokingly later presented Gordon with a bike helmet and training wheels. — Reuters





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Islamic banking assets surge to RO 7.5 billion

MUSCAT: By the end of April 2024, the combined total assets of banks and Islamic windows in the Sultanate of Oman reached approximately RO 7.500 billion, accounting for 17.7% of the total banking sector assets.

This marks a 13.2% increase compared to the same period last year. Data from the Central Bank of Oman revealed that the total balance of financing provided by Islamic banking units rose by 12% to RO 6.300 billion by the end of April.

Additionally, deposits at Islamic banks and windows saw a 15.9% increase, totalling about RO 5.800 billion by the end of April. — ONA

MSX lists new bonds and sukuk worth RO 362.400 million

MUSCAT: In the first half of this year, the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) saw the listing of new bonds and sukuk worth RO 362.400 million, issued by the Central Bank of Oman, local banks, and various public joint-stock companies.

The MSX aims to stimulate trading activity by diversifying its investment instruments, encouraging both corporate and individual investors to expand their investment portfolios.

Currently, the exchange lists 36 bond issues, including 16 government development bonds, and 13 sukuk issues, of which 6 are sovereign sukuk. Bonds are debt instruments used by governments or companies to borrow funds, pledging to pay holders a fixed interest over the bond's duration and to return the bond's nominal value upon maturity.

Some companies convert bonds into shares to bolster their capital. Sukuk, on the other hand, are financing instruments compliant with Islamic Sharia, providing profits to their holders from the issuing entity.

Listing these instruments on the exchange allows holders to sell



MSX lists 36 bond issues, including 16 government development bonds, and 13 sukuk issues, of which 6 are sovereign sukuk.

them before maturity and enables other investors to purchase them and benefit from the profits.

In the first half of the year, significant bond listings included government development bonds: Issue No. 69 (RO 100 million) and Issue No. 70 (RO 125 million).

Additionally, the Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest) issued free bonds worth RO 13.300 million, convertible into ordinary shares after three years, distributed as non-cash dividends to shareholders at a rate of one bond for every five ordinary shares owned.

In the banking sector, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) issued free bonds worth RO

10.300 million, compulsorily convertible into shares, listed on the MSX on May 6.

The finance sector saw the National Finance Company issuing permanent unsecured secondary bonds worth RO 35 million, while the Omani Company for Financing Services issued free unsecured bonds worth RO 1.500 million, redeemable after five years but not convertible into shares.

In the insurance sector, Liva Group issued bonds worth RO 4.700 million, convertible into ordinary shares after three years and listed on 5 June.

Dhofar Insurance Company restructured its bonds, reducing the size from 20 million to 10

million bonds with a nominal value of 100 baisas per bond, following the General Assembly's decision to convert part of the bonds into shares.

Consequently, the MSX reduced the number of Dhofar Insurance Company bonds listed starting June 2, until their maturity on June 30, 2025.

In the sukuk sector, the MSX listed Tilal Sukuk worth RO 55.900 million and the third issue of Meethaq Sukuk worth RO 16.500 million during the first half of the year.

At the end of June, the total market value of the bonds and sukuk market stood at RO 4.355 billion, a decline of RO 76.100 million from the end of last year.

This reduction followed the cancellation of bond listings worth RO 120 million, including perpetual bonds issued by Sohar International Bank (RO 100 million) and the NBO (RO 20 million) in 2019, as both banks chose to redeem these bonds.

The bonds and sukuk market represents approximately 18 per cent of the total market value of securities listed on the MSX, which amounted to RO 24.280 billion at the end of June. — ONA

Broad money supply in Oman grows by 12 per cent

MUSCAT: The broad money supply in Oman grew by 12 per cent year-on-year, reaching about RO 23.600 billion by the end of April 2024.

This growth resulted from a 7 per cent increase in cash and a 13.9 per cent rise in cash equivalents, which include savings deposits, time deposits in Omani rials, certificates of deposit, security margin accounts, and all foreign currency deposits with the banking sector.

Despite a 7 per cent decrease in public cash by the end of April, demand deposits increased by 11.2 per cent.

The weighted average interest rates on Omani rial deposits at traditional commercial banks rose from 2.192 per cent in April 2023 to 2.580 per cent in April 2024, while the weighted average interest rates on Omani rial loans increased from 5.366 per cent to 5.604 per cent over the same period.

Overnight interbank lending rates also rose to 5.212 per cent in April 2024, compared to 5.147 per cent in April 2023.

Oman's green desalination success story fuels regional adoption

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JULY 13

In a part of the world where water is incredibly scarce, Oman is making significant progress in meeting its water needs through advanced desalination technologies. Erwan Rouxel, CEO of Veolia Oman, recently discussed these efforts and the broader impact of desalination in the Middle East on the "Let's Turn the Tide" podcast hosted by Nadine Zidani.

Water scarcity is a pressing issue affecting half of the world's population, with the Middle East being home to over ten of the 25 most water-stressed countries globally.

The rapid economic and urban growth in the region has exacerbated the gap between water supply and demand.

Coupled with the effects of climate change, the need for sustainable water solutions has never been more critical.

Desalination, the process of converting seawater into potable water, has emerged as a vital technology to meet the growing water demands in the Middle East.

According to Rouxel, nearly



Veolia has already set a precedent with the Sur desalination plant, the first of its kind to be powered entirely by solar panels during daylight hours.

90% of the region's drinking water is sourced from desalination, underscoring its importance.

The desalination process involves four main steps: intake pumping, pre-filtration, reverse osmosis, and remineralisation.

In the reverse osmosis stage, seawater is pushed through membranes at high pressure, separating salt from water. The pure water is then remineralised and disinfected, making it

suitable for consumption. Veolia is a key player in Oman's water desalination sector, operating three major plants in Barka, Sur, and Salalah.

These facilities collectively produce enough drinking water to meet the needs of around one-third of Oman's population daily.

This significant contribution highlights Veolia's critical role in the country's water infrastructure.

Rouxel emphasised the

DESALINATION, THE PROCESS OF CONVERTING SEAWATER INTO POTABLE WATER, HAS EMERGED AS A VITAL TECHNOLOGY TO MEET THE GROWING WATER DEMANDS IN THE MIDDLE EAST.

world in the UAE, which will also be the largest powered by solar energy.

This project exemplifies Veolia's commitment to integrating renewable energy into desalination processes, making them more sustainable.

In Oman, Veolia has already set a precedent with the Sur desalination plant, the first of its kind to be powered entirely by solar panels during daylight hours. This landmark project, inaugurated last year, underscores the company's dedication to green desalination.

While desalination offers numerous advantages, it is not without its challenges.

Critics often point to the high energy consumption required by desalination plants and the potential environmental impact of brine discharge on marine life.

However, Rouxel highlighted the progress made in reducing

energy consumption, noting that average energy usage has decreased by almost 30% in the past decade.

Additionally, Veolia takes the environmental impact of brine discharge seriously. In Oman, the company has engaged consultancy firms to monitor and mitigate any adverse effects on marine life, ensuring that their operations remain environmentally responsible.

Veolia's efforts in Oman and the broader Middle East illustrate the critical role of desalination in addressing water scarcity in one of the world's most water-stressed regions.

By continuously innovating and integrating sustainable practices, Veolia is not only meeting the growing water demands but also paving the way for a more sustainable future.

As Rouxel aptly put it, "Veolia has a big responsibility in this country. We are in a strategic sector, and it's for us a very important footprint that we are trying to make as efficient as possible." With such commitment, Veolia is indeed turning the tide in the battle against water scarcity in Oman and beyond.

Muscat Stock Exchange index reaches 4,700 points

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange's (MSX) main index rose to 4700 points last week, gaining 11 points as investors reacted to preliminary half-year financial results from listed companies.

Sembcorp Salalah's profits increased to RO 11.4 million, up from RO 10.5 million last year, while Oman Cables Industry Company's net profits rose to RO 11 million from RO 9.4 million.

Phoenix Energy's profits grew from RO 10.1 million to RO 10.3 million, and Al Suwadi Power's profits increased from RO 6.9 million to RO 7.7 million.

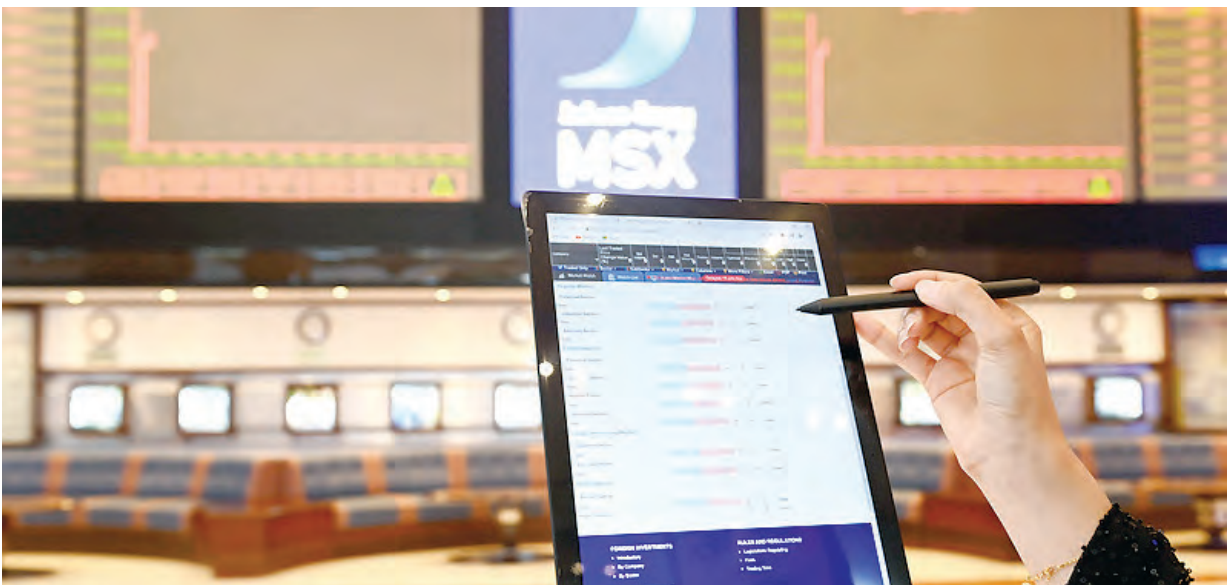
The International Hotel Management Company reported a rise in net profits from RO 0.301 million to RO 0.498 million. The National Biscuit Manufacturing Company reversed losses of RO

0.018 million to post net profits of RO 0.070 million in the first quarter.

Al Anwar Investments Company saw a decline in net profits to RO 0.679 million from RO 0.947 million, while Oman Refreshment Company recorded losses of RO 2.3 million, down from profits of RO 2.8 million last year.

Although banks and investment companies had yet to announce their preliminary results, the financial sector index rose by 28 points after four weeks of losses.

The industrial and services sector indices fell by 46 and 5 points, respectively, while the Sharia index declined by 9 points. The market value of securities on the stock exchange increased to RO 24.373 billion, with weekly



MSX gains 11 points as investors reacted to preliminary half-year financial results from listed companies.

gains of RO 21.9 million.

This rise coincided with the listing of the Jabal Real Estate Investment Fund units, which

have a capital of RO 17.4 million. Last week saw cautious trading, with the number of transactions falling to 2,156, the lowest since April 8. The trading value also hit a yearly low of RO 7.6 million

The Pearl Real Estate Investment Fund topped trading

values with RO 0.928 million, followed by Oman Cable Industry Company and Sohar International Bank with RO 0.882 million and RO 0.864 million, respectively.

Out of the traded securities, 21 rose in price, 35 declined, and 22 remained stable. Oman Mills stock saw the highest increase, rising by 6.9% to close at 460 baisas. Oman United Insurance stock rose by 4.2% to 245 baisas, and Building Materials Industry shares increased by 4% to 52 baisas.

In contrast, Al Batinah Development and Investment shares fell by 22.2% to 70 baisas, National Gas Company shares dropped by 15% to 102 baisas, and Shell Oman Marketing shares declined by 10.3% to 818 baisas.

— ONA

MHD AUTOMOBILES UNVEILS EXCLUSIVE SUMMER OFFER FOR INEOS GRENADEIER

MUSCAT: MHD Automobiles is thrilled to announce an exclusive summer opportunity for adventure enthusiasts to own the Ineos Grenadier.

A true testament to rugged British spirit and German engineering excellence, the Grenadier is designed to conquer any terrain with finesse and reliability, making it the ultimate companion for journeys both near and far. Seek out new adventures with the Grenadier. Book yours today and enjoy:

- 5 years / 75,000 kms service package
- 5 years unlimited mileage warranty
- 5 months' fuel
- Complimentary insurance & registration

Crafted under the visionary



leadership of Ineos Chairman Jim Ratcliffe, the Ineos Grenadier was born from a passion for uncompromising performance and reliability.

Assembled by a team of automotive professionals with a fresh perspective on 4X4 development and manufacturing, the Grenadier

embodies a perfect blend of British heritage and modern engineering.

Launched in 2022, the Grenadier quickly established itself as a global leader in the 4X4 segment, offering unparalleled off-road capability, durability, and reliability.

Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani,

CEO of MHD ACERE, added, "The Grenadier has clearly established itself as one of the best 4x4s on the market.

With its ladder-frame chassis, durable ZF 8-speed automatic transmission, and powerful BMW 3.0L straight-six engine, the vehicle provides outstanding comfort even in the toughest of conditions."

He also remarked, "We aim to make your Ineos journey more convenient with the new summer offer." Join us this summer in embracing simplicity and adventure with the Ineos Grenadier.

Born in Britain. Built in France. For more information and to avail of this exclusive offer, visit the Ineos showroom in Ghala or contact 80080666.

Sohar International celebrates graduation of 'Financial Explorer' programme



MUSCAT: Sohar International, Oman's best bank, proudly participated in the graduation ceremony of the 'Financial Explorer' programme organised by the College of Banking and Financial Studies.

As the exclusive banking sponsor, this strategic initiative underscores Sohar International's unwavering commitment to the socioeconomic advancement of the Sultanate of Oman and aligns seamlessly with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. Representing the bank, Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Government and Private Banking Officer, attended the graduation ceremony and delivered a keynote address.

Held at the College of Banking and Financial Studies premises, the ceremony was under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, and attended by parents, and college management and faculty.

In his speech, Al Hedaifi emphasised the importance of the programme in imparting essential knowledge and skills related to financial literacy, financial technologies, and entrepreneurship.

He stated, "In our ever-changing world, early education in financial concepts has become pivotal for developing financial acumen and making informed decisions about money management. At Sohar International, we continuously align with national efforts to enhance educational

opportunities for our youth. By nurturing inclusive and accessible programmes that focus on providing students with practical entrepreneurial skills while broadening their financial literacy, we contribute to creating a youth workforce that is empowered, inspired, and skilled to lead transformational change."

The 'Financial Explorer' programme marked the culmination of an intensive two-week curriculum designed to equip 60 school students from across Oman with critical skills and knowledge in financial literacy, financial technologies, and entrepreneurship.

The curriculum encompassed three core themes: financial literacy, financial technologies (Fintech), and entrepreneurship. Participants also benefited from a variety of cultural and sports activities, as well as scientific visits.

Dr Zahran bin Salim al Salti, Dean of the College of Banking and Financial Studies, stated, "The programme aims to equip students with fundamental knowledge and skills in financial literacy, technologies, and entrepreneurship, while also instilling positive money management behaviours to enhance banking and financial culture among the young generation. We express our gratitude to Sohar International for sponsoring the programme.

Sohar International's support exemplifies how public-private partnerships can drive national progress. We hope to continue this collaboration and create a long-term impact on society."

Bank Muscat launches new payment solution with Samsung Pay

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced the launch of Samsung Pay, offering enhanced convenience and security to its valued customers.

This step will be an addition to the digital payment acceptance solutions offered via mobile phones. Furthermore, offering seamless payment options ensures that customers don't need to carry their cards while shopping.

The new addition came as part of Bank Muscat's strategy to enhance digital transformation, financial inclusion and contribute to achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040. Samsung Pay is a digital solution that provides mobile payment services for customers to complete secure contactless transactions at several online, on-site and in-store outlets around the world.

It is equipped with new features to enhance security and safely store sensitive information in the device, including fingerprint recognition and encryption.

The platform is protected by



strong hardware and Samsung's Knox-based security technology to safely store sensitive information in the device.

This includes fingerprint recognition and encryption to ensure users' important data are protected.

The platform also replaces sensitive data with unique identification symbols, which offers an extra layer of protection against potential digital and physical hacking attempts.

To activate Samsung Pay, customers can download

Samsung Wallet App from Galaxy Store, log in to their Samsung account directly from Samsung Wallet App to set their PIN and fingerprint, then tap on 'add card' and scan or manually enter their card number.

Abdullah bin Hamood al Jufaili, Assistant General Manager – Digital Banking, Bank Muscat, said: "We are pleased to announce the innovative addition to the wide suite of digital payment solutions provided by the Bank. This step aims to enhance customer experience by providing a new remote payment option to offer a fast and seamless experience while shopping online or in stores.

Bank Muscat is keen to harness modern technology to provide the best services possible and keep up with the modern trends in the banking sector.

I would like to take this opportunity to invite our customers to take advantage of the new payment service and we assure them that the Bank will continue to work on adopting the latest innovative services to meet customers aspirations and needs."



Waste recycling sector moves into higher gear in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 13

Spurred by its strategy to divert solid waste away from landfills and into commercially viable recycling activities, be'ah — the solid waste management entity of Oman — says it has made significant strides in driving the growth of a circular economy in the country.

Initiatives launched by be'ah over the course of 2023 have focused on harnessing Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF), Electrical & Electronic Waste, and Green Waste, among other recyclable commodities, from waste streams that have hitherto ended up in the country's landfills.

Notable is its success in unlocking the use of scrap automotive tyres — currently stockpiled at key locations around the country — as an energy source in the form of Tyre Derived Fuel (TDF).

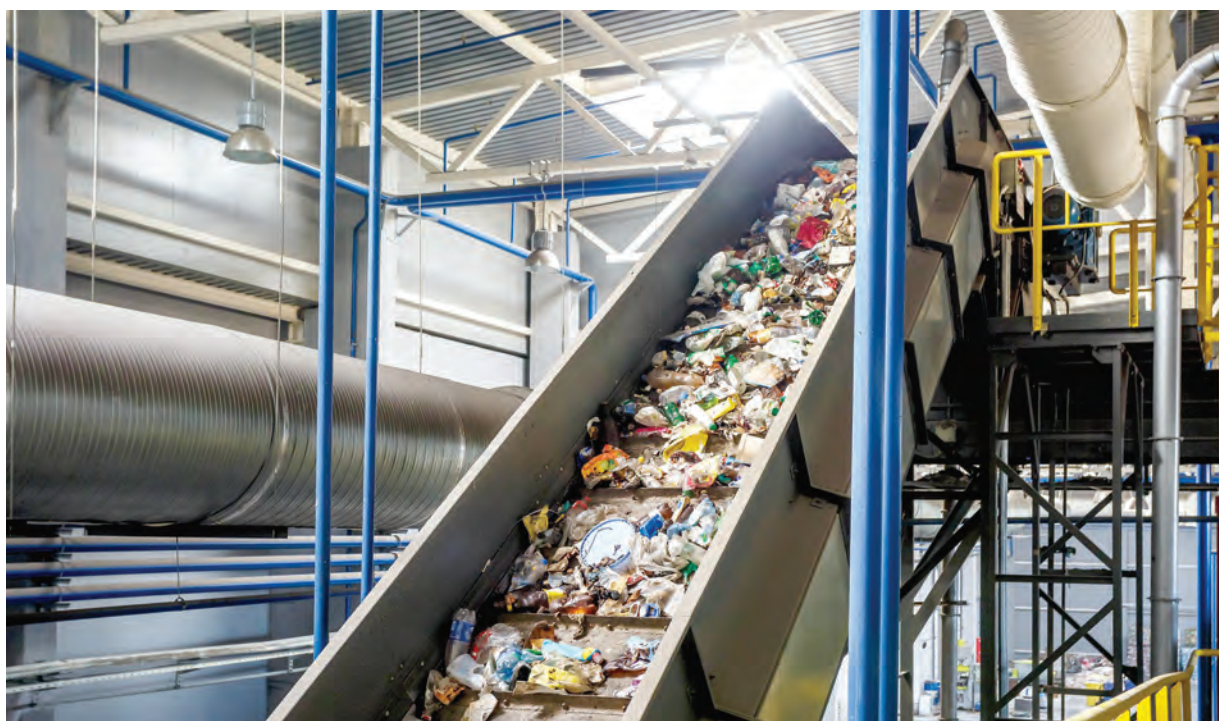
Under an agreement signed with Oman Cement Company, be'ah currently facilitates the supply of TDF to help meet the cement manufacturer's expanding energy needs — a move that will

be expanded to include Refuse Derived Fuel (RDF) as well.

"Building on the success of the TDF supply, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed with Oman Cement during the OSW to explore the utilization of Refuse-Derived Fuel (RDF) as an additional alternative fuel source," be'ah stated in its recently published 2023 Sustainability Report.

RDF, as an alternative energy resource, is produced from combustible components of municipal and commercial solid waste. General waste, once stripped of its organic and recyclable components, is then further desegregated into streams comprising mainly paper, cardboard, waste packaging, non-recyclable plastics (except PVC), wood chips and other corrugated materials.

It is then shredded, dried, mixed and processed into bales or pellets, primarily to feed cement kilns. Furthermore, in a bid to recover valuable metals and other recyclable ingredients from Waste Electrical and Electronic Equipment (WEEE), be'ah has



be'ah is targeting the utilisation of at least 60% of municipal waste via a number of energy and material recovery initiatives by 2025.

signed an agreement with Sohar University to conduct a survey to quantify the prodigious volumes of WEEE being generated annually in the country.

"The agreement includes carrying out dismantling activities to understand the types of WEEE generated and the specific waste

streams that can be extracted from the WEEE," said be'ah.

WEEE spans the complete spectrum of electrical and electronic equipment types, including home appliances such as fridges and freezers, ACs, washing machines and dishwashers, batteries, telecoms and computers,

clothes irons, radios and hair dryers, light bulbs and fluorescent tubes, TV and monitors, mobile phones, and printer cartridges.

Emblematic of be'ah's success on the recycling front has been automotive batteries (Lead Acid Batteries — LAB), with an estimated 470 tonnes of

LAB waste channelled towards recyclers in 2023. LAB recycling enables as much as 97% of an automotive battery to be salvaged and reconverted back into commercially valuable ingredients such as lead, sulphuric acid, and polypropylene plastic.

Paper and cardboard waste — a significant component of commercial waste — is also the focus of a be'ah-led recycling strategy. "be'ah is collaborating with relevant stakeholders to develop paper and cardboard management guidelines aimed at supporting local recycling efforts and In-Country Value (ICV).

Oman has two private recycling facilities located in Suhar and Barka, with a combined capacity of 190,000 tonnes per year," it stated.

Ahmed al Subhi, be'ah Chairman, commented: "We take pride in our strategic resource management initiatives, having set ambitious targets for transitioning to a circular economy, including achieving 60% waste utilisation by 2025 and 80% by 2030, alongside reducing the average daily waste per person from 1.2 kg to less than 1.0 kg by 2040."

Ministry of Economy to represent Oman at key UN sustainable development forum

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JULY 13

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Economy, is among 37 countries that will present their Voluntary National Reviews at the UN High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), currently under way in New York.

Deliberations during the 10-day-long forum, which began on July 8, are focused around the theme, 'Reinforcing the 2030 Agenda and eradicating poverty in times of multiple crises: the effective delivery of sustainable, resilient, and innovative solutions.'

In a post on X, the Ministry of Economy said it would be participating in the activities of the high-level forum. It includes a crucial three-day ministerial segment from Monday, July 15, to Wednesday, July 17, integrated into the Council's



High-level Segment.

The final day of the ECOSOC's High-level Segment will conclude on Thursday, July 18, 2024. The United Nations has outlined the focus areas for the 2024 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF), emphasising its commitment to the integrated and indivisible nature of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

Focusing on key goals, the forum aims to eradicate global poverty (Goal 1), ensure food security, improved nutrition, and sustainable agriculture (Goal

2), take urgent action against climate change (Goal 13), foster peaceful and inclusive societies with access to justice (Goal 16), and strengthen the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development (Goal 17).

These efforts underscore the forum's role in advancing a sustainable and equitable future.

The forum, which will focus on five key Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), namely Zero Hunger, Climate Action, Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions, aims to foster global dialogue and collaboration towards achieving these critical milestones.

Participants will delve into strategies aimed at addressing poverty eradication amidst ongoing global challenges. The Voluntary National Reviews to be presented by participating countries will showcase their progress, challenges, and lessons learned in implementing the SDGs.

This sharing of experiences is expected to provide valuable insights into effective approaches and initiatives that can be scaled globally.

With partnerships being a cornerstone of the SDGs, the forum will also emphasise the importance of collaborative efforts among governments, civil society, and the private sector in driving sustainable development forward.

This year's event is anticipated to serve as a platform for fostering innovative solutions and resilient strategies to overcome current and future socio-economic and environmental challenges.

Automotive fuel production sees 1.8 per cent increase



Premium automobile fuel (95) production increased by 12 per cent to 5.401 million barrels, with sales of 5.310 million barrels.

MUSCAT: The overall production of refineries and petroleum industries in Oman fell by 0.4 per cent until the end of May 2024 compared to the same period in 2023, while automotive fuel production rose by 1.8 per cent, according to preliminary statistics from the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

Regular automobile fuel (91) production decreased by 5.2 per cent to 6.677 million barrels, with sales of 5.678 million barrels. Conversely, premium automobile fuel (95) production increased by 12 per cent to 5.401 million barrels, with sales of 5.310 million barrels.

Diesel production fell by 8.8 per cent to 13.281 million barrels, with sales of 5.683 million barrels. Aviation fuel production went up by 13.5 per cent to 4.758 million barrels, with sales of 1.667 million

barrels. LPG production stood at 3.786 million barrels, with sales reaching 4.258 million barrels.

In petrochemicals, gasoline production increased by 8.7 per cent to 68,500 metric tonnes, while paraxylene production rose by 2.6 per cent to 217,200 metric tonnes. Polypropylene production decreased by 9.7 per cent to 100,500 metric tonnes, although sales surged by 22.6 per cent to 15,000 metric tonnes.

Oman's exports of automotive fuel (91) increased by 8.6 per cent to 1.312 million barrels, and fuel (95) exports soared by 153 per cent to 572,800 barrels by the end of May 2024. Diesel exports reached 7.641 million barrels, aviation fuel exports totalled 2.898 million barrels, and LPG exports amounted to 237,000 barrels.

— ONA

Credit Oman achieves 18% growth in Q1 insured sales

MUSCAT: Credit Oman, the leading credit insurance agency of the country, has reported an 18% uptick in insured sales for both domestic and export markets in the first quarter, with total sales reaching RO 104.069 million, up from RO 88.347 million during the same period last year.

Omani non-oil exports grew by 45% by the end of March 2024, reaching RO 2.33 billion compared to RO 1.61 billion in March 2023, as reported by the National Center for Statistics and Information.

Credit Oman's insured export sales constituted 6.18% of these eligible non-oil exports, amounting to RO 57.752



Shaikh Khalil bin Ahmed al Harthy
CEO, Credit Oman

million, an increase from RO 48.312 million in the previous year.

Shaikh Khalil bin Ahmed al Harthy, CEO of Credit Oman, remarked on this progress: "Our persistent efforts to support Omani manufacturers and exporters are paying off. By offering a variety of insurance services, we help them enhance their local and



Goods and services valued at RO 104.069 million secured credit insurance coverage from Credit Oman in Q1 2024.

CREDIT OMAN'S INSURED EXPORT SALES CONSTITUTED 6.18% OF THESE ELIGIBLE NON-OIL EXPORTS, AMOUNTING TO RO 57.752 MILLION, AN INCREASE FROM RO 48.312 MILLION IN THE PREVIOUS YEAR.

international sales, allowing them to navigate commercial and non-commercial risks confidently and enter global and non-traditional markets."

The food and consumer goods sector saw a 32% increase in insured sales, reaching RO 57.223 million, compared to RO 43.329 million last year. The petrochemicals and plastics sector experienced an impressive 134%

growth, with sales totalling RO 11.323 million.

Al Harthy attributed this growth to substantial projects initiated in recent years within these sectors, in line with Oman's strategy to leverage its oil and gas resources for high-value economic contributions.

Despite the overall positive trend, the mining and textile industries sectors saw a decline in insured sales in the first quarter.

However, Al Harthy emphasised that these results underscore the broader development and growth within the Omani economy, driven by ongoing governmental reforms and enhancements. — ONA

Markets react to cooling US inflation and German Bitcoin sell-off



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The author is a member of the International Press Association

Bitcoin (BTC) experienced a price dip on Monday afternoon as the German government off-loaded over \$900 million worth of the cryptocurrency onto exchanges and market makers. This move, revealed by blockchain data, added further downward pressure to an already strained crypto market. Arkham Intelligence, a blockchain analytics platform, detailed the distribution of the government's Bitcoin sales: 133,722 BTC to market maker Cumberland DRW,

5,200 BTC to Flow Traders, 4,200 BTC to the B2C2 Group, 2,350 BTC to Bitstamp, 2,050 BTC to Coinbase, and 1,250 BTC to Kraken. This strategic approach, spreading the sales across multiple platforms, likely aided in the market's absorption of such a large volume of Bitcoin, mitigating a steeper price decline. This latest transfer signified the continuation of a significant sell-off by the German government. The government, which initially held 50,000 BTC from seized assets, had now reduced its holdings to 23,788 BTC, worth approximately \$1.3 billion at the time. This indicated that the government was over halfway through its process of liquidating these assets. The timing of this sell-off came during a relatively quiet summer season for the crypto market, which was already grappling with significant supply overhang. The German government's actions, combined with potential sales of seized assets by the

US government and ongoing repayments by the defunct Mt. Gox exchange, amplified concerns about excess supply and downward price pressure on Bitcoin. In contrast to the crypto market's volatility, the US stock market experienced its own fluctuations. The Nasdaq Composite, heavily weighted towards tech stocks, dropped nearly 2% following a cooler-than-expected monthly inflation print. Big Tech companies like Nvidia, Alphabet, Amazon, and Meta saw declines, with Tesla experiencing a particularly sharp drop of more than 8%. Meanwhile, the S&P 500 retreated from record highs, slipping nearly 0.9% and falling below the 5,600 mark. As Bloomberg reported, this sell-off was driven by "investors flocking to interest rate-sensitive stocks after the Consumer Price Index report showed inflation fell last month for the first time since May 2020." This volatility in traditional markets, however, is often

dwarfed by the price swings seen in the crypto world. Bitcoin's price trajectory remains shrouded in uncertainty. No one possesses a crystal ball to definitively predict when Bitcoin will hit its peak or bottom, or whether its long-term trajectory is upward or downward. This usual unpredictability is both a source of excitement and anxiety for investors and traders alike. While tales of early Bitcoin adopters amassing fortunes abound, it's highly unlikely that anyone who bought Bitcoin 15 years ago still holds all of it — and if they do, they've likely lost access to their wallets. The temptation to cash in on substantial gains, coupled with the practical challenges of secure storage for over a decade, makes this scenario improbable. Even if such individuals exist, they may have lost access to their wallets due to forgotten passwords or lost keys, adding another layer of complexity to the narrative of long-term Bitcoin holders. For day traders, the inherent volatility of the crypto

market, particularly Bitcoin, is a double-edged sword. It presents immense opportunities for profit, especially for those who employ leverage to amplify their gains. However, this amplified potential for profit comes with a commensurate increase in risk. The very volatility that fuels the dreams of quick riches can also lead to devastating losses, particularly for those who are inexperienced or overconfident. Compared to traditional financial markets, the volatility of cryptocurrencies, especially altcoins and meme coins, is on a different scale altogether. Stock markets experience fluctuations, but they pale in comparison to the dramatic price swings that can occur in crypto within a single day or just a few hours. Even forex markets, known for their dynamism, rarely witness the kind of jumps and crashes that have become commonplace in the crypto world. Forex movement in the double percentage digits are seen as black swans.

When crypto price drops, or for the casual traders when Bitcoin's price goes down by a few percentage points, have divergent effects on different groups of market participants. For active traders who diligently manage their portfolios, these dips can represent buying opportunities, allowing them to accumulate more Bitcoin at a lower price. However, for those who invest with a long-term perspective or trade infrequently, these sudden drops can lead to substantial losses and a strong sense of regret. The key takeaway is that one's approach to Bitcoin investment and the frequency of trading activity significantly shape how price fluctuations are perceived and experienced. *Disclaimer: The information provided in this article should not be considered financial advice. The cryptocurrency market remains dynamic and carries risks. It's essential to conduct your own thorough research and consult with qualified professionals before making any investment decisions.*

The global shipping industry: A sea of transformation



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

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

The fruits and vegetables we consume, the clothes we wear, the cars we drive, and many other goods and products we consume daily travel many nautical miles to come into our hands. Today, 90% of the world's goods are transported by sea, making shipping a practical option for various goods and products. Despite its complex challenges, the shipping industry remains the fulcrum of international trade and the global economy. The international shipping industry is transforming; the Covid-19 pandemic, disruptions in global logistics, changing trade patterns, geo-political tensions, ongoing wars in Europe and the Middle East, changing globalisation patterns, decarbonisation, and emerging technologies like artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), and blockchain are reshaping the contours of the shipping industry towards a new

sustainable future. International seaborne trade volume contracted by 0.4% in 2022, a trend that began in 2020 with the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. Several factors, including consumer spending, Covid-19 constraints, and weaker economic growth, have contributed to this slow growth. However, geopolitical tensions have significantly impacted the global shipping industry, posing unique challenges and making stakeholders more aware of the industry's complexities. The international shipping industry also had to navigate the demand and supply situations of the carriers. While carriers experienced a peak in 2021 and 2022 with record profits, global economic tensions and elevating inflationary pressures are now leading to a sharp decline in demand. This could lead to an oversupply worldwide, triggering intense competition and affecting the container industry's profitability. The Ukraine conflict led to the closure of the Black Sea ports, which caused transportation delays and a substantial decline in Ukraine's exports, especially grains and food exports, resulting in global price hikes. The Israel-Palestine war has further affected the shipping industry, posing challenges to crucial shipping routes, including the Suez Canal and the Strait of Hormuz. Now, firms must reroute the vessels through the Cape of Good Hope. The number of container ships diverted from the Red Sea to the Cape of Good Hope has doubled since 2023. The Strait of Hormuz is a strategic route with approximately 20 million barrels, or 20% of the world's oil



Despite its complex challenges, the shipping industry remains the fulcrum of international trade and the global economy. Image for illustration only.

shipping, passing through this strait daily. The Panama Canal has experienced historically low water levels since 2023 due to a severe drought. As a result, the daily vessel transit was restricted to 24 compared to 34 in regular conditions. This affected global trade, and vessels were routed through the longer Cape of Good Hope. The situation has improved in 2024, showing signs of recovery with a gradual increase in daily transit. Some trade diversifications and shifts in the geography of trade result in new importers and exporters. These changes are cyclic, induced by war and tension, and do not represent structural trade pattern shifts. BRICS has expanded, and new members, such as the UAE, Saudi Arabia, Ethiopia, Egypt, and Argentina, have joined. This development is expected

to introduce significant shifts in international trading routes, and the BRICS will now present more challenges and opportunities for the global shipping industry. It will open new alternative payment systems and support regional infrastructure development. The China Plus One strategy adopted by many companies will establish a manufacturing presence in these regions and influence the decision on the global shipping route. There have also been changes in the shipping companies' alliance structures. The Ocean Alliance will be operational from 2025 until 2032, making it the world's largest alliance, holding 29.10% of the market share. Another major alliance is that of Gemini Corporation (Maersk and Hapag Lloyd), with 21.8% of the market share. These developments show how

shipping competitive forces adapt to escalating tensions and supply chain disruptions. The new India-Middle East-Europe (IME) corridor, launched on September 10, 2023, during the G-20 summit in New Delhi, is a game-changer. It is a multi-modal network of railways, shipping routes, and digital infrastructure designed to create an effective trade route between India, the Middle East, and Europe. Presently, transit time via traditional shipping routes takes 30–40 days. This corridor is expected to reduce the transit time significantly to as little as ten days. This will reduce shipping and logistics costs, making the trade more cost-competitive, and challenge the dominance of the Suez Canal and traditional shipping checkpoints, altering the strategic prominence of many

ports and logistics. More importantly, it will develop the relationship between India, the Middle East, and Europe, reshaping the region's power dynamics and underscoring the corridor's strategic importance. These multifaceted trends are poised to significantly expand and reshape global shipping into uncharted waters in 2024 and beyond. The geography of shipping and trade is shifting primarily due to geopolitical tension, energy security goals, and low-carbon energy sources. As further escalating tensions and economic fallout cast dark clouds, the global shipping industry adjusts operations and routes to mitigate heightened risks. The industry's remarkable resilience in manoeuvring challenges is a testament to its stability and strength.

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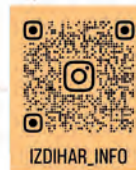
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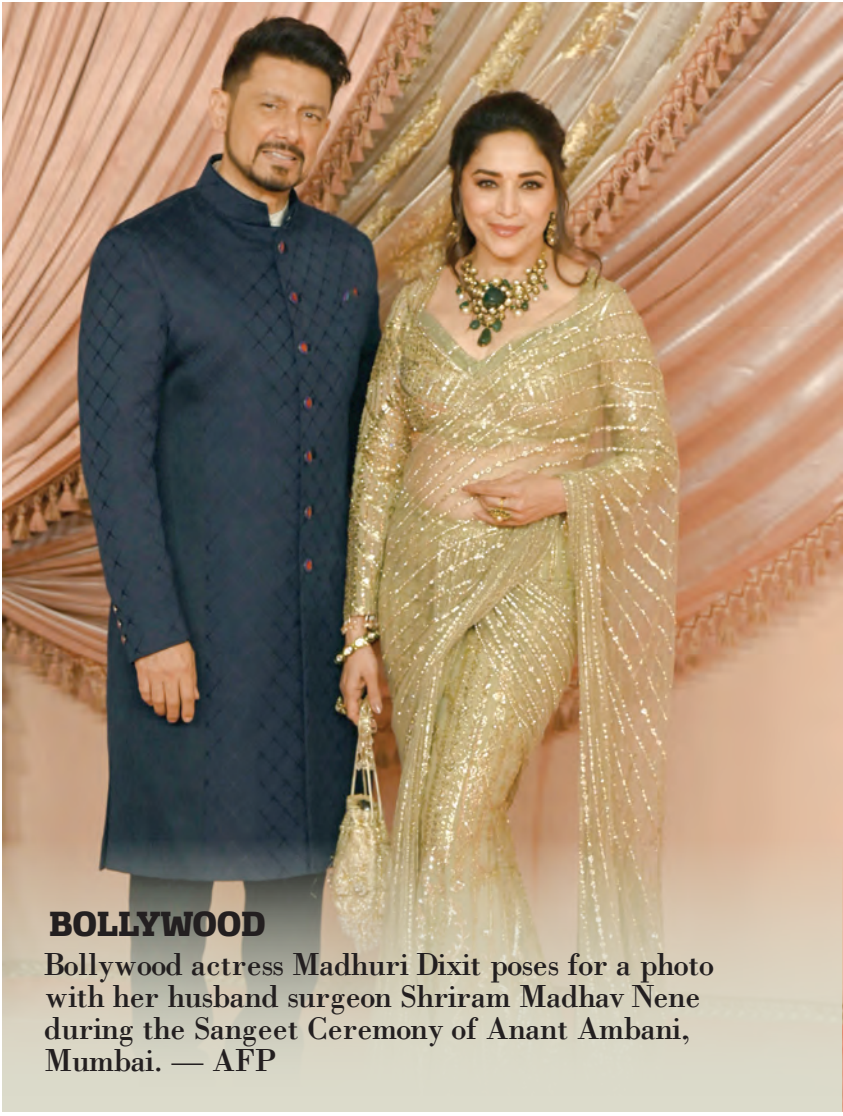
ART

An artist paints a landscape on a canvas on the hill of Montmartre, in Paris. — AFP



MUSIC

A musician plays the violin in the street, on the Montmartre hill in Paris. — AFP



BOLLYWOOD

Bollywood actress Madhuri Dixit poses for a photo with her husband surgeon Shriram Madhav Nene during the Sangeet Ceremony of Anant Ambani, Mumbai. — AFP



WEATHER

People protect themselves with an umbrella during hot weather on the "Promenade des anglais" on the french riviera city of Nice. — AFP



SHOW

A handler waits with a horse before it is judged on the third day of the Great Yorkshire Show in Harrogate, northern England. — AFP

art & life

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True colours of teeth are beyond white and bright

In a world obsessed with pearly white teeth where flawless smiles often dominate our screens and advertisements, the true colours of our teeth often remain a mystery hidden behind these dazzling smiles and glossy advertisements... **P20**

South Korea names K-pop group NewJeans as tourism ambassadors

SOUTH KOREA ON Thursday appointed K-pop girl band NewJeans "honorary ambassadors" as part of a drive to promote tourism, joining a long list of Korean celebrities to take up the role.

South Korea has seen tourism figures recover to nearly pre-pandemic levels this year, with around a third of visitors citing K-pop or K-drama — the so-called "Hallyu" or Korean wave — as a major motive for travelling to the East Asian country.

Tourist arrivals are at "about 90 per cent of pre-pandemic levels," said culture minister Yu In-chon.

"With NewJeans as tourism ambassadors, I expect even more people from all over the world to visit Korea," he added.

The group will serve as ambassadors with no actual diplomatic responsibilities for a year, succeeding previous representatives such as "Squid Game" star and Emmy-winner Lee Jung-jae and K-pop

megastars BTS.

Members of the band shared their personal recommendations for visitors to the South, including eating "Gimbap dipped in Tteokbokki sauce" and taking "a photo a day", which is an "unspoken rule among young Korean generations".

More than 11 million tourists visited South Korea last year, a 245 per cent increase compared to 2022, when some pandemic restrictions were still in force.

Chinese and Japanese tourists made up the majority of the visitors.

NewJeans recently held their first fan meet at the Tokyo Dome, just nearly a year after their debut — the fastest Tokyo Dome debut for any foreign artist. Tickets were sold out in minutes.

The group's Japanese debut single "Supernatural" sold over a million copies as of Thursday, marking their fifth million-seller. — AFP



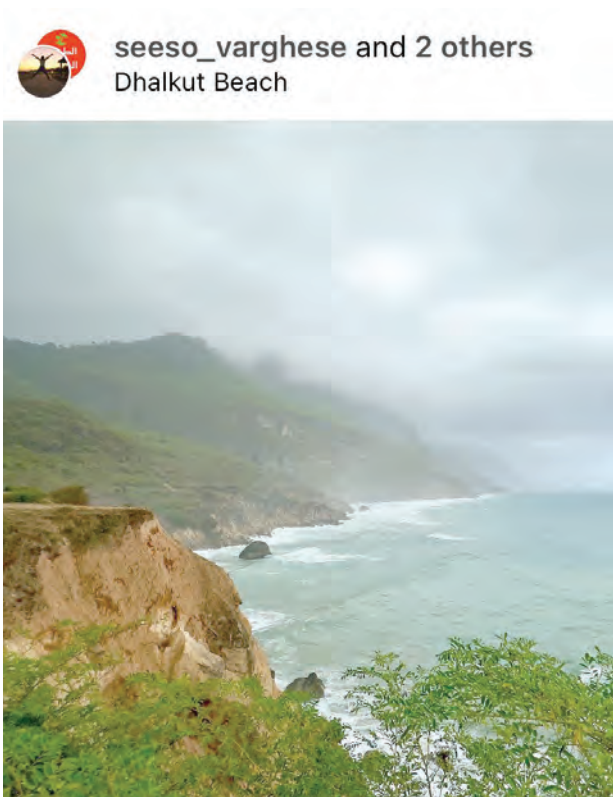


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Megan Stalter's Scorpio Ring

Megan Stalter has lost almost every piece of jewellery she's ever owned. But she's determined to flip the script on the Scorpio signet ring that she wore for a recent interview with *The New York Times*. Stalter's girlfriend wears another ring just like it.

Stalter found the matching rings at a store in Hollywood that sells jewellery, greeting cards and crystals. She was looking for a piece she could wear to pay homage to her girlfriend while filming "Too Much," a forthcoming Netflix series by Lena Dunham in which Stalter has a starring role.

Stalter also stars as the titular, leopard-coat-wearing character in the recently released film "Cora Bora." And she has stolen many scenes in her supporting role on "Hacks" in the comedy series' three seasons on Max.

The 33-year-old actress, in an interview that has been edited and condensed, talked about the ring that she has refused to lose and why it is worth holding on to.

Q: Tell me about the jewellery you're wearing.

A: It's a Scorpio ring that matches a ring I gave to my girlfriend, who is a Scorpio. It was a secret sign to show her that I was thinking of her in all of the scenes in the last show I did.

Did you wear it while you were filming?

I made it a really big deal on set for me to be able to wear the ring. I said, "I really need my character to wear this ring; it's really important to me that the character has this ring because someone in the character's life must have given it to her."

Everyone was kind of like, why does she care about that ring so much? It wasn't something the char-

acter naturally would wear. So I had to have a whole story about it, and I was like, "Yeah, I feel like someone gave it to her."

They didn't mind if I wore it, but they wanted to find a replica ring because they want to have backup stuff in case you lose the original. But they couldn't find one; I even told them what store I bought it at. They couldn't get another one. And I'm like, "OK, I guess we have the only two."

Your girlfriend is a Scorpio. What's your sign?

I'm a Virgo, but they didn't have that option.

Had you been searching for a ring for the two of you specifically? Or did you come across the Scorpio ring and get that idea?

I wanted to get something for us that's matching because I was going away for a big job. I wanted us to have the same thing to look at. It reminded me of her, so I wanted to be wearing it.

I'm not a ring person. It's nice to have one that means a lot. I'm really proud of myself that I haven't lost the ring because it's important to me.

Did wearing the ring while filming "Too Much" ever take you out of character? Did it help you get into character?

I'm wearing it during earlier parts of my character's life in the show, not in the whole show. So wearing the ring actually did make me think, this is her, younger. But the ring's real meaning is for me.

The costume is such a big part of the character. When you put on the stuff, it feels different than your own clothes. My dresser in the show actually told me that people are warmer in their own clothes. Costumes are not yours, so you don't feel as warm. — **NYT**



CINEMA

Strong German showing at 77th Locarno Film Festival

FIVE GERMAN FILMS or films made with German involvement will compete for the Golden Leopard at the Locarno Film Festival in August. Seventeen films from around the world will vie for the top prize in the international competition, according to Locarno organisers.

The 77th edition of the festival will take place from August 7 to 17 in the famous Swiss holiday resort on Lake Maggiore. German film-makers and actors will be represented in various sections in domestic, international and co-productions. For example, actresses Maren Eggert and Luise Heyer can be seen in "The Sparrow in the Chimney" by Swiss director Ramon Zürcher, and Helena Zengel in "Transamazonia" by German director Pia Marais.

Munich-born director Christoph Hochhäusler, awarded at the Berlinale 2023 for the thriller "Till the End of the Night," will present his gangster drama "Death Will Come" ("La Mort viendra").

Locarno, a major European film festival alongside Cannes, Berlin and Venice, will screen 225 short, feature and documentary films over its customary 11-day duration. — **dpa**



MUSIC

Shirley Bassey: Honour from King more nerve-racking than singing

DAME SHIRLEY BASSEY has said she was more nervous receiving an honour from King Charles than singing for him as she picked up her latest royal award at Windsor Castle in England.

The Welsh singer, 87, was made a Companion of Honour in the New Year Honours list for her services to music, having become a dame in the 1999 honours list.

After receiving the award on Tuesday, Dame Shirley said it was her first time meeting Charles as King.

She said: "I think it's more nerve-racking to receive the award from him than to sing in front of him. I



mean, it's new, different, whereas singing I've been doing since I was a child.

"I forgot to curtsy, but that's why I grabbed his hands because I forgot to curtsy. Instinctive."

Asked what it was like to be dubbed an icon, she said: "It can be very nice, and it can be very isolating and a nuisance — especially if you're in a restaurant and people come and sit at your table uninvited."

ed."

She said the most glamorous moment of her life was the first time she sang for the late Queen at the Royal Variety Performance.

"I've had 70 years of glamorous moments," she said.

"I think the first time I sang for the Queen at the Royal Variety — my very first show. And then I did quite a few after and was very blase about it." — **dpa**

True colours of teeth are beyond white and bright

AMAL AL RIYAMI

In a world obsessed with pearly white teeth where flawless smiles often dominate our screens and advertisements, the true colours of our teeth often remain a mystery hidden behind these dazzling smiles and glossy advertisements.

As we delve into the realm of tooth colour, we uncover a story shaped by biology, cultural perspectives, and personal dental habits, which determines the shape of our smile. The colour of the teeth comes from the enamel layer, which is the hardest tissue in the human body because it is saturated with minerals, which not only affects its hardness but also its shine.

Tooth enamel is a transparent layer, and therefore the dentin layer that follows it is what determines the colour of the teeth. Depending on the composition of the dentin layer, it may lead to teeth. Not completely white.

The natural colour of enamel can vary from person to person. Healthy teeth do not necessarily have to look radiant white. Teeth can have a slight yellow, brown or gray shade and be just as healthy or healthier than the whitest enamel. The colour of a person's teeth is determined by his or her genes.

Dr Bargavi, general dentist, practicing for more than two decades, explains: "As a dentist I would say that a healthy natural tooth/ teeth has a pearly white colour... also the colour of the teeth and gums depends on the person's skin colour. More than the colour of the tooth, the gums explain a healthy mouth. There should be no inflammation."

Across cultures and centuries, perceptions of tooth



colour have evolved. While some societies historically prized slightly darker teeth for their perceived strength, today's global beauty standards often favour brighter,

whiter smiles. This shift reflects not only aesthetic preferences but also advancements in dental hygiene and care.

Beyond cosmetic appeal,

tooth colour is a vital indicator of oral health. Dr Bargavi emphasises: "Tooth discoloration is a concern as it can be a sign to many issues. The main causes of tooth discoloration are as many of us know is dental caries, fluorosis in children and some external causes are smoking, chronic tobacco usage, drinking too much tea, coffee. And some internal factors can be erosion of teeth attrition due to aging or bruxism. These can be avoided or reduced by fibrous diet and avoiding sugars, brushing teeth regularly, avoiding sticky foods."

The rise of teeth whitening procedures underscores society's desire for a gleaming smile. From over-the-counter kits to professional treatments, the industry offers various options to brighten enamel.

Dr Bargavi said: "As we see people in professions where aesthetics have a major concern do teeth whitening at least three times in two years. Tooth whitening should not be done very regularly, as it contains acid, though in small quantities."

Whether embracing natural hues or opting for cosmetic enhancements, prioritising oral care ensures smiles that radiate confidence and vitality.

According to what dentists said you should be more careful about the food: no coloured drinks, no tobacco usage, no fizzy drinks, no excess coloured food, not too hot or too cold food because it will spoil the enamel.

General oral hygiene, brushing the teeth twice a day, eating fibrous food, avoiding sweets and chocolates. They advise everyone to visit the dentist at least once a year, clean the teeth once a year, and maintain a good diet.