

Free treatment for expats and families

The expatriates employed with the government and their families are eligible for free medical treatment as per the decision (126/2023) issued by Dr Hilal al Sabti, Minister of Health on Sunday. The decision was aimed at regulating fees for medical treatment, affirming the commitment of health institutions to provide treatment services to all citizens and residents of the Sultanate of Oman. **SEE P2**



P11

URUGUAY PREPARES TO CELEBRATE FIRST UNDER-20 WORLD CUP TITLE



P13

INTERNATIONAL EXPERTS DEBATE FOOD SAFETY ISSUES AT KEY FORUM IN MUSCAT



P20

OMAN ACROSS AGES MUSEUM: A PLACE OF MEMORIES AND ENLIGHTENMENT



MUSCAT

ROYAL HOSPITAL DOCTORS CONDUCT RARE LUNG SURGERY

A specialised surgical team at the Royal Hospital succeeded in eliminating a patient's cancerous right lung and part of the trachea. The surgery, the first one of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, was among rare operations in the world. Dr Aziza bint Nasser al Rawahiyah, Consultant of Upper Gastrointestinal and Thoracic Surgeon at the Royal Hospital, said that the removal of the lung was a major surgical task. She added that the trachea reconstruction surgery was also a delicate, complex and uncommon surgery. The operation took 8 to 9 hours, she said. The surgery was conducted on a patient who was suffering from a cancerous tumour centred in the trachea and the bronchi of the right lung, she added. **SEE P3**

ROME

FORMER ITALIAN PRIME MINISTER SBERLUSCONI DIES

Silvio Berlusconi, the former prime minister who reshaped Italy's political and cultural landscape while fending off multiple legal and sex scandals, died Monday aged 86. The billionaire media mogul had been suffering from a rare type of blood cancer. Mourners laid flowers and notes outside Villa San Martino, Berlusconi's home near Milan, with one reading simply "we will miss you". The government has declared a national day of mourning for Wednesday, when Berlusconi will have a state funeral in Milan's gothic Duomo Cathedral. It will be led by Milan Archbishop Mario Delpini. Berlusconi had suffered ill health for years, from heart surgery in 2016 to a 2020 hospitalisation for Covid-19.

To advertise on our social media platforms and website

Please Contact our Team

95210257

OMAN OBSERVER

95210257

95210257



Women from Royal Cavalry set to amaze at Basel Tattoo

LIJU CHERIAN
@lijucherianoman

Women from the Royal Cavalry of Oman are poised to create a sensation at the highly anticipated 2023 Basel Tattoo.

These remarkable female equestrians and guards have been invited to showcase their exceptional talents and cultural heritage on the prestigious stage.

The Basel Tattoo, an annual military tattoo show performed by international military bands, is scheduled for a week from July 14 to 22 in the Kaserne Basel. Based on the British counterpart 'Royal Edinburgh Military Tattoo,' about 1,000 participants are working at the festival this year. According to the organisers, the proportion of women is 40 per cent this year.

Display teams, popular musicians, and tattoo formations will perform along with the international military bands in Basel, Switzerland.

Basel is a city on the Rhine River in northwest Switzerland and is commonly

considered to be the cultural capital of Switzerland.

For the seven-minute show in Basel, around 100 artists will fly in and take almost 50 horses from Oman to Switzerland.

Preparations for the guest appearance in Switzerland are under way and in full swing in Muscat.

Dr Sarhan al Zeidi, Director General at Royal Court Affairs, mentions that a rehearsal arena with the same dimensions as in Basel was specially built.

"We are busy rehearsing and preparing our performance, every day from sunrise to sunset. The artists are particularly looking forward to the trip to Switzerland." "This trip enables us to promote our work and give Switzerland an impression of Omani culture, and also enables us to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the diplomatic ties between Oman and Switzerland and to appreciate and promote the bond of friendship that exists between the two countries." Basel tattoo producer Erik Julliard has described the gig from Oman as a major attraction. **TURN TO P3**

Cyclone threat ends for Oman, heatwave likely

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Just as citizens and residents in Oman were hoping for some rains due to Cyclone Biparjoy this week, Oman Meteorology has sent a warning on the impending heat wave.

In a statement, the Met department said there will be a noticeable rise in temperatures in the coastal areas adjoining the Sea of Oman and mountainous areas, ranging from mid to late 40 degrees Celsius on Tuesday, especially at noon.

While warning of high temperatures (mid to late 40 degrees Celsius) over the desert and open areas during the next three days, the met also ordered to avoid going to the sea as there is a pos-

sibility of high sea waves on the coasts of the Sultanate of Oman and rising water levels in the low coastal areas between June 12 and 14.

Rough waves in the range of 3-5m are expected along the coasts of the Arabian Sea and around 2-4m along the coasts of the Sea of Oman.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Labour has warned all establishments and cautioned them against employing people for outdoor work between 12:30 pm and 3:30 pm. Biparjoy, is expected to make landfall on Thursday between Mandvi in India's western state of Gujarat and Karachi in Pakistan with a maximum sustained wind speed of 125-135 km per hour, gusting up to 150 km per hour. **SEE ALSO P6**

Catch it early and tackle this cancer

FATMA AL MARSHOUDI
Muscat, June 12

Oman joined the global fight against cervical cancer by launching the National Study for Early Detection of Cervical Cancer.

Cervical cancer ranks as the fourth most prevalent cancer among women of all age groups in Oman, and the third most prevalent among women aged 15 to 44 years. Annually, around 88 new cases are identified, resulting in an estimated 50 fatalities in 2020, according to National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The national study was launched at an event presided over by Dr Said bin Hareb al Lamki, Under-Secretary of the Ministry for Health. Dr Badriya bint Mohsen al

Rashidiyah of the Directorate General of Primary Health Care, expressed the significance of the study, stating, "Today, we are launching a study to determine the prevalence of cervical cancer and papillomavirus. This study is aligned with the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to the international strategy in combating cervical cancer and will be implemented across all governorates."

The study holds tremendous importance as its results will provide crucial information regarding the prevalence of cervical cancer among Omanis, as well as the risk factors associated with the infection. By participating in the study, women can understand their health status and receive prompt treatment if the test results are positive. **TURN TO P2**

INSIDE



AHMAD AL HARTHY AS FIRST OMANI TO STAND ON 24H LE MANS PODIUM

P10

Homework will never be the same: Altman

TOKYO: Artificial intelligence tools will revolutionise education like calculators did, but will not supplant learning, ChatGPT's founder Sam Altman (pictured) told students in Tokyo on Monday, defending the new technology.

"Probably take-home essays are never going to be quite the same again," the OpenAI chief said in remarks at Keio University. "We have a new tool in education. Sort of like a calculator for words," he said. "And the way we teach people is going to have to change and the way we evaluate students is going to have to change."

ChatGPT has captured the world's imagination with its capacity to generate human-like conversations, writing and translations in seconds.

But it has raised concern across many sectors, including in education, where some



worry students will abuse the tool or turn to it rather than producing original work.

Altman was in the Japanese capital as part of a world tour where he is meeting business and political leaders to discuss possibilities and regulations for AI.

He has regularly urged politicians to draft regulations for AI, warning "if this

technology goes wrong, it can go quite wrong". "The tools we have are still extremely primitive relative to tools we are going to have in a couple of years," he said on Monday, again urging safety measures and regulation.

He said he felt "positive" about new regulatory frameworks for AI after meeting world leaders, without offering details, but reiterated his fears.

"We will feel super responsible, no matter how it goes wrong," he said.

He also repeated previous attempts to calm fears that AI could make many existing jobs obsolete, though he conceded that "some jobs will go away".

"I don't think it is going to quite have the employment impact that people expect," he added, insisting that "new classes of jobs" will emerge. — AFP



Expats in govt, their families eligible for free medical treatment

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The expatriates employed with the government and their families are eligible for free medical treatment as per the decision (126/2023) issued by Dr Hilal al Sabti, Minister of Health on Sunday. The decision was aimed at regulating fees for medical treatment, affirming the commitment of health institutions to provide treatment services to all citizens and residents of the Sultanate of Oman.

All health institutions must take necessary measures to ensure that the prescribed fees are collected in a manner that does not preclude the treatment of emergency cases, the decision said.

The new decision specified categories that enjoy free treatment services in the Sultanate of Oman — Omanis, and Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) citizens residing in the Sultanate of Oman for a period of no less than three months. The earlier decision did not specify the period of residence for GCC, and foreigners married to Omani women, and this



includes husbands, children, those born to an Omani wife from this marriage, foreign women married to Omanis, foreigners working in the government and their families according to their service contracts, foreign members of the diplomatic corps, and their family members. The new categories also include foreign parents of an Omani residing with him in the Sultanate of Oman, and foreign parents and children of a foreign husband or wife of Omani origin residing with him in the Sultanate of Oman. The decision excluded the category of visiting delegations to

the Sultanate of Oman, including delegations of sports and cultural clubs invited by the official authorities, from free treatment services, but they can avail free treatment provided by primary health care services, emergency and ambulance services, and treatment of critical cases that need to admission to health institutions. New categories of patients have been exempted from paying fees, such as patients with an epidemic or infectious disease that threatens public health and for which a decision is issued by the minister, their contacts and

suspected cases, organ donors for one of the categories specified in the decision, children benefiting from the expanded immunisation programme, all beneficiaries of national vaccination campaigns, and circumcision operations for converts to the Islamic religion in the Sultanate of Oman.

The decision said that the fees for those who are eligible for free treatment have not changed regarding registration, annual renewal, and admission to tertiary, secondary, and primary healthcare hospitals for categories (VIPs, private nursing wards, and a private room in the general ward).

As for the groups who are not eligible for free treatment, these fees have been raised. The decision also set detailed fees according to the services provided.

The decision also includes fees for additional services, for pilgrims and Umrah performers, which are RO 2 for those who are eligible for free treatment.

The decision also set fees for using ambulances in two cases with medical coverage and without medical coverage for those who are not eligible for free treatment.

SAYYID BADR BIDS FAREWELL TO EU AMBASSADOR



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister received on Monday Patrick Simonnet, Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty. Sayyid Badr expressed his utmost appreciation for the efforts of the Ambassador, wishing him success in his future duties. — ONA

Passengers through Oman's airports up by 88 per cent

MUSCAT: The total number of passengers travelling through airports of the Sultanate of Oman until the end of March 2023 grew by 88 per cent to reach 3,287,015 as against 1,746,259 passengers during the corresponding period in 2022, according to the latest reported preliminary data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The total number of passengers via Muscat International Airport stood at 2,959,829 at the end of March 2023, marking a rise of 100.8 per cent compared to the same period of the previous year.

The total number of flights at Muscat International Airport

also rose by 93.9 per cent to 22,145 flights at the end of March 2023, from 11,419 flights for the same period of 2022.

Meanwhile, the number of passengers via Salalah Airport increased at the end of March 2023 by 34.2 per cent to reach 304,538 passengers on board 2,184 flights, with an increase in the number of flights amounting to 33.2 per cent, compared to the same period in 2022.

The total number of passengers via Sohar Airport till the end of March 2023 reached 5,401 passengers on board 76 flights, while the number of passengers via Duqm Airport reached 17,247 passengers on 152 flights. — ONA

Road maintenance projects underway as Dhofar braces for khareef season

SALALAH: The Directorate-General of Roads and Land Transport in Dhofar Governorate, is carrying out road construction and rehabilitation projects with the aim of providing safe infrastructure in preparation for the 2023 khareef season. Engineer Said bin Mohammed Tabouk, Director-General of Roads and Land Transport in Dhofar Governorate, said that cumulative implementation rate reached 31 per cent at the rehabilitation of Argut Sarfeet road in the Wilayat of Dhalkout at a cost of RO 11.36 million. The project is expected to be completed in the middle by the end of next year. The projects involve construction of viaducts at Wadi Adonab in the



Wilayat of Salalah at a cost of RO 1.5 million. The construction of Afoul bridge in the Wilayat of Rakhayout, a RO 3.2 million project, is 60 per cent complete and is expected to be complete at the beginning of the fourth quarter of this year, the official said.



The Directorate-General of Roads and Land Transport has expedited road rehabilitation works at various locations within Dhofar Governorate including the annual maintenance project for the paved road network for a five year period at a cost of RO 3 million, the official said noting that

tender will continue until June 2027. Other projects include the annual maintenance project for the mountainous dirt road network, a RO 2.1 million project and the rehabilitation of the desert dirt road network at a cost of RO 2.4 million, the official concluded. — ONA

Catch it early and tackle this cancer

From Page1

During her speech, Dr Lamia Mahmoud from the Regional Office of the World Health Organization emphasised the significance of addressing cervical cancer as a public health problem. "The World Health Organization recognises cervical cancer as a critical issue that countries must address. In 2020, the World Health Assembly, the highest decision-making body of the organisation, adopted the international strategy to end cervical cancer. This strategy, endorsed by numerous countries, including the Sultanate of Oman, focuses on three pillars:

prevention through vaccination against papillomavirus, early detection through cervical smear tests, and appropriate treatment for diagnosed cases of cervical cancer." The Ministry of Health urged women aged between 25 and 49 to participate in the study, highlighting the opportunity it presents for early detection of cervical cancer. Additionally, the study aims to identify any abnormal changes in cervical cells that may develop into cancer, enabling the prompt initiation of treatment. By detecting the disease at an early stage, women can avoid the complications associated with advanced cervical cancer.

Disability is not a barrier: 84 graduate, 55 secure employment

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The first batch of the 'Be with us for them' initiative graduated as the Ministry of Social Development celebrated the achievement at the College of Banking and Finance Studies. The graduation of 84 male and female graduates from the first batch of the 'Be with us for them' initiative trained persons with disabilities in various professional areas, which included customer service, office management, printing and photocopying of documents, and electronic archiving. The exciting achievement is that 55 of the trainees who have graduated have already been offered jobs by the private sector making them earning members of

the society. The initiative comes in partnership between the Ministry of Social Development, the Human Development Centre for Disabilities and the Omani Energy Association (OPAL). The aim is to improve and develop work systems in the sense of social responsibility, highlight the role of government, private and civil agencies in supporting people with disabilities, and create an integrated institutional community partnership system. The ceremony, which was held at the College of Banking and Financial Studies, was held under the auspices of Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najar, Minister of Social Development, in the presence of the Awatif bint Muharib al Salman, Chairperson of the Board of Directors of the Specialised



Human Development Centre for Disabilities. Awatif stated that the initiative is the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, and was launched last September in a strategic partnership between the Ministry of Social Development and the Centre for the Rehabilitation of

Persons with Disabilities. In its first phase, the initiative targeted people with mental, visual as well as mild and moderate hearing disabilities. She added that the initiative contributes to the job empowerment of persons with disabilities with a number of 500

beneficiaries by the year 2027. In its first year, it focused on training employees in the private sector, and 55 direct job opportunities, paid training, and associated employment were obtained, through the participation of 13 private sector members. "The objective is to support persons with disabilities and to include and empower them in the society. Our plan is to hire every year — that is to train 100 and employ hundred people for five years. We hope we will have some impact on these members of our society especially in integrating them with the community. We are thrilled to see the happiness among the graduates along with their parents, said Abdulrahman al Yahyai CEO of OPAL while speaking to Observer. "It was an emotional event for

the remaining graduates who have not acquired a job yet we are still looking out for job opportunities for them. We also hope to start the next batch soon for another hundred persons with disabilities. We thank the Ministry of Social Development and the private sector for their contribution and support," he added. Shihab bin Hamad al Nasser said, "Today we have embarked on the path of challenge and persistence for a better tomorrow and a more beautiful life for us and the rest of our colleagues, God willing, as we all felt that we were on an equal footing with the rest of society." Kholoud bint Abdullah al Shehiyah said, "This is the precious opportunity that refined our personalities, developed our skills, and strengthened our feet on the path to the future."



Awareness crucial to curb human trafficking

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

As traffickers may continually devise new methods to ensnare victims, there is always a need to create awareness in order to curb the menace, according to experts in the field, who say it is crucial to thoroughly comprehend the occurrence of human trafficking and the repetitive strategies employed by traffickers.

One common tactic frequently employed by traffickers is the use of job recruitment advertisements for specific positions, primarily targeting individuals from foreign countries. Upon arrival in Oman, the victims are confronted with the harsh reality of their situation, as traffickers subject them to threats of police involvement and confiscate their passports and those who manage to escape and report to the authorities are considered fortunate in these circumstances.

The Human trafficking seminar, conducted on Monday at the Ministry of Information, shed light on such practices. The objective of the seminar was to

“
One of the issues that must be highlighted is forced labour where individuals are compelled to work against their will, under threat or coercion

MAISA AL SHIBILI
Second secretary, Human Trafficking Combating office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs

enlighten media specialists and journalists about the significant dangers associated with human trafficking, enabling them to educate the public through the publication of awareness articles and campaigns.

“One of the issues that must be highlighted is forced labour where individuals are compelled to work against their will, under threat or coercion. It involves exploiting people through various means, such as physical or psychological



control, debt bondage, or the confiscation of identity documents. It is a severe violation of human rights and is considered a form of modern slavery,” said Maisa al Shibili, Second secretary, Human Trafficking Combating office, Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Hamad al Ghafri, a certified coach for combatting drugs and crime at the UN, emphasised that human trafficking extends beyond expatriates. He revealed instances where Omani women

were coerced into engaging in prostitution through threats made by traffickers, who would expose their involvement to their families if they resisted. Regrettably, many women have unknowingly fallen into this trap, only realising the gravity of the situation when it is already too late.

Al Ghafri highlighted a set of indicators that can help identify potential victims of human trafficking. “It is important to report individuals displaying

these indicators as they may be in need of assistance. In the case of child victims, these indicators are particularly noticeable. They are often denied the ability to contact their families, display consistent fear and exhibit unusual behaviour that is not typical of children,” he said.

According to Al Ghafri, there was a noteworthy incident involving an air hostess who detected a potential case of human trafficking. She noticed a situation

where a silent child was seated beside an adult who only ordered food for himself, seemingly neglecting the child’s needs. Concerned, she approached the child, offering food and water, but the child remained silent.

Recognising the suspicious circumstances, the air hostess promptly informed the captain, who in turn reported the situation to airport security. The intention was to apprehend the trafficker upon landing.

Al Ghafri remarked that the successful intervention by the air hostess in the mentioned incident was a result of her education and awareness regarding such cases.

He further highlighted additional indicators that can help identify potential victims of human trafficking. These indicators include physical bruises on their bodies, residing in unsanitary and unfit living conditions, wearing improper clothing, living and working in the same location alongside others, exhibiting constant fear of police even if their visas are valid, and sometimes lacking proper work visas altogether.

Education ministry launches interactive statistics platform



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education on Monday launched the ‘Interactive Education Statistics for the Ministry of Education Platform,’ in the presence of Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education and Majid bin Said al Bahri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs.

During the event, Dr Madeeha affirmed that launching the Interactive Educational Statistics Platform stems from the pressing need to provide a database and unify it on the various fields as the

real wealth in the current time is data. This platform, she explained, is part of a larger project which is the digital transformation, pointing out that the platform enables access to integration in educational indicators.

The launch ceremony included a visual presentation on the interactive educational statistics platform of the Ministry of Education, presented by Rahma al Mahrouqi, Director of the Department of Statistics and Indicators.

In the presentation, she provided an introductory overview of the platform, in which she explained that the

platform aims to keep pace with the requirements of Oman Vision 2040 and digital transformation, and display educational statistics in an interactive manner. She explained that the platform allows the user to access comprehensive educational data on government schools, teachers, students, and other educational data and information in the Sultanate of Oman.

This data was prepared through the (Power BI) program, which is one of the programs that deal with databases of different sources in a simultaneous and real-time manner. — ONA

Royal Hospital conducts rare operation to eliminate cancerous tumour

MUSCAT: A specialised surgical team at the Royal Hospital succeeded in eliminating a patient’s cancerous right lung and part of the trachea. The surgery, the first one of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman, was among rare operations in the world.

Dr Aziza bint Nasser al Rawahiyah, Consultant of Upper Gastrointestinal and Thoracic Surgeon at the Royal Hospital, said that the removal of the lung was a major surgical task. She added that the trachea reconstruction surgery was also a delicate, complex and uncommon surgery. The operation took 8 to 9 hours, she said.

The surgery was conducted on a patient who was suffering from a cancerous tumour centred in the trachea and the bronchi of the right lung, she added.

Dr Aziza explained that the tumour was diagnosed through CT scans and bronchoscopy. The subsequent tests were performed to stem the spread of cancer, she said, noting that lung function tests were conducted to ensure



that the patient would be able to survive with one lung.

Dr Aziza pointed out that, once the case was presented to the Chest Tumor Board at the Royal Hospital, a decision was taken to perform the resection as a radical treatment for the elimination of the tumour.

She affirmed that, after the operation and follow-up treatment, the patient enjoyed

good health and later left the hospital, without suffering any complications.

The Royal Hospital is keen on providing the best specialised healthcare informed by the latest medical and therapeutic technology in the world. Its operations are conducted under the supervision of a group of highly skilled and well qualified physicians and surgeons. — ONA

Women from Royal Cavalry set to amaze at Basel Tattoo

FROM PAGE1

In an interview with Blick, a Swiss German-language daily newspaper, based in Zürich, he says, “I am looking forward to working with the Omanis and I am convinced that their performance will be a highlight.” Brigadier General Ramis Jamaan al Oweira, Director-General of Music, Royal Guard of Oman (RGO) promises a fantastic show with which the people will enjoy fully.

In May 2022, the Cavalry performed at a star-studded equestrian show celebrating Queen Elizabeth II’s (1926-2022) platinum jubilee. The queen



applauded as The Royal Cavalry Oman performed an expert display of horsemanship.

It was then the organisers of the Basel Tattoo became aware of the group and took note of their performance.

Media spokesman Andreas Kurz informs Blick saying, “What

is special is that two bands, namely the mounted cavalry and the guard, perform together. What is also special is that wind musicians make music together with bagpipe players and that too on horseback.” The fact that women are in the majority of the cavalry from Oman was not a selection criterion. But it is welcomed when women are strongly represented on stage.

“Basically, we don’t select the formations based on their proportion of men or women. The quality of the product and the variety within the programme are very important to us,” mentions Kurz.

GROWTH THROUGH TOURISM

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group) would like to invite competent and experienced companies to participate in the following Tender:

Tender No.	28/2023
Tender Title	Create, Design and Implement the Leadership Development Training Programme (SHIFT)
Tender Submission Closing Date	27.6.2023
Tender Process Details	Please visit: www.omran.om/tenders/



omran.om/tenders/

Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group)
Tel: +968 24 39 11 11
info@omran.om
@omrangroupom





WHO IS TO BLAME

SUNROOFS OR PARENTS



SHADDAD AL MUSALMY
[@shadadm](#)

WHILE on the road, we must have come across a car with sunroof open and children gleefully poking out their heads and sometimes half of their bodies dangling outside the top of the vehicles. This is a common sight especially in Dhofar as the good weather of khareef season kicks in.

According to the laws of physics, a child who is halfway out of the sunroof can collide with the front edge of the sunroof due to the strong and sudden braking. Since the child's body has not yet gone through its growth process, such an encounter can cause severe pressure on the chest, ribs, lungs and even the heart and cause irreparable damage to the child.

"Uneducated or educated but unaware parents are to be blamed. Parent need to be careful about it and failure to adhere to safety measures, the phenomenon might lead to deadly injuries to their children," Ali al Barwani, road safety expert, said, explaining that such behaviours is widely noticed during khareef season in Dhofar.

"There is a traffic law which mandates driver make sure children are in a proper child car seat and also making sure that second row for passengers need to wear seat belts.



As parents, we are always happy when we see our children enjoy but we need to know that with ignorance, we can create a disaster that cannot be compensated for in any way by allowing them to stick out of the sunroofs

**SULAIMAN
MOHAMMED**

A parent

There is a need to take note of this and deviating from such law can lead to dangerous circumstances," Al Barwani said.

In this regard, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) has warned about the hazards of road commuters who open sunroofs noting that passengers, especially young children, are exposed to extremely high risk of severe injury and death in the event of a collision or even a sudden turn or stop. "We should all be responsible and not to allow our children to stick out of the sunroofs of the vehicles which can lead to dangerous event in an event of any accident," ROP official said.

Like in many countries, many in Oman too have undoubtedly faced such scenes. Children's parents think that by doing this, they will bring joy and happiness to their children, but the reality is different.

"As parents, we are always happy when we see our children enjoy but we need to know that with ignorance, we can create a disaster that cannot be compensated for in any way by allowing them to stick out of the sunroofs," Sulaiman Mohammed, a parent said.

He said that parents should not be deceived by the good weather such as the one we have in Dhofar during khareef season to allow them to do so. "We don't want their happiness to turn into sadness," Sulaiman, who goes to Salalah almost every year during khareef season, said.



Green Hydrogen initiatives crucial to meet net zero emission targets

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

As the aviation industry worldwide struggles to source Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) to meet its net zero carbon emissions by 2050, the Green Hydrogen initiatives of the countries like Oman are very crucial.

Speaking to the Observer, Willie Walsh, Director General, International Air Transport Association (IATA), said, “Production of SAF is expensive and it can be sustainable only with green energy, which is in short supply now. Green hydrogen is a big factor and the initiatives taken by Oman are very commendable.” He added that the countries and airlines in the region have taken commendable measures to reduce carbon emissions.

IATA announced its expectation for overall renewable fuel production to reach an estimated capacity of at least 69 billion litres (55 million tonnes) by 2028. Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF) will comprise a portion of this growing output which is being achieved through new renewable fuel refineries and the expansion of existing facilities.

“The expected production increase is extremely encouraging. Seeing this, we need governments to act to ensure that SAF gets its fair production share. That means, in the first instance, production incentives, to support aviation’s energy transition,” Walsh said.

“And we need continued approval for more diversification of methods and feedstocks available for SAF production. With these



two measures successfully put in place, we can be confident that the expected 2028 production levels will be realistically aligned with our recently published roadmaps to net zero carbon emissions by 2050. That is important as we are counting on SAF to provide about 62 per cent of the carbon mitigation needed in 2050,” he added.

In 2022, SAF production tripled to some 300 million litres (240,000 tonnes) and project announcements for potential SAF producers are rapidly growing. IATA counts over 130 relevant renewable fuel projects announced by more than 85 producers across 30 countries. Each of these

projects has either announced the intent or commitment to produce SAF within their wider product slate of renewable fuels.

Typically, there is a 3–5-year lag between a project announcement and its commercialisation date. This implies that further renewable fuel capacity,

out until 2030 could still be announced over the following years.

If renewable energy production reaches 69 billion litres by 2028 as estimated, the trajectory to 100 billion litres (80 million tonnes) by 2030 would be on track. If just 30% of that produced SAF, the industry could achieve 30 billion litres (24 million tonnes) of SAF production by 2030.

“But with governments the world over agreeing at ICAO to a long-term aspirational goal (LTAG) of net zero by 2050, they now share accountability for aviation’s decarbonisation. That means establishing a policy framework to ensure that aviation gets the needed share of renewable energy production in SAF,” said Walsh.

OMAN TAKES PART IN DOHA INTERNATIONAL BOOK FAIR



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) is currently taking part in Doha International Book Fair, which runs from 12 to 21 June. The participation aims at highlighting the cultural, civilisational, literary and historical aspects of the Sultanate of Oman, as well as casting light on the Omani intellectual production. Oman’s pavilion in the book fair includes various literary, artistic, historical, intellectual and scientific books. – ONA



SULTANATE OF OMAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders: -

Tender Ref.	Description	Last Date for Collection of Tender Document	Closing Time/ Day/ Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
2023/2192	Supply, Install, Commissioning and Training of Sterilizer for Bidya Hospital	Before 9 am on Monday 26/June/2023	Before 9 am on Sunday 23/July/2023	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25 Per set
2023/2194	Mudaibi Medical Store Renovation Work	Before 9 am on Monday 26/June/2023	Before 9 am on Sunday 23/July/2023	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25 Per set

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board on the above mentioned Grade may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Any Clarification, you may contact via
Telephone: 24402200
Email id: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

Approved by/director of financial affairs



TENDER

Al Ghubrah Power and Desalination Company (GPDC), invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) -Excluded Transfer Charges
GPDC/2023/01	APPOINTING CONSULTANCY FOR PREPARING RFP	15 June 2023	19 June 2023	25 OMR

- Bids shall be submitted in a single envelope and sealed with red wax addressed to the “Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee” and must write the tender name & number on the envelope.
- 3 separate envelopes shall be included inside the single sealed envelope, and each of these 3 envelopes must be marked with a tender name & tender No. for Al Ghubrah Power and Desalination Company as per the below:
 - Commercial Proposal
 - Technical Proposal
 - Bid Bond
- Bids should be dropped in the tender box at the Nama Holding reception before 02.00 pm, time of the Sultanate, on Monday 19 June 2023.
- Each bid should be accompanied by temporary insurance, in the form of a bank guarantee or a cheque certified from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers, addressed to the “Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee of GPDC. Tenders that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- Interested party to deposit the Tender Fee (Non-Refundable) on Account Name: Al Ghubrah Power and Desalination Company, Bank Muscat: 0423011069510017 (Bidder name and Tender Number to be mentioned). Tender Documents will be received by email.
- The deposit on the last day of purchasing should be before 02.00 pm.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person’s name and the company details.



Nama Holding
In Beach One Building, 3rd Floor (Units 305 & 307), Shatti Al Qurum
P.O Box 850, Post Code 116, Sultanate of Oman.
Phone Number: +968 24559287 / 217
E-Mail: siham.alamri@holding.nama.om



TO ENSURE A SMOOTH OPERATION, UPDATE YOUR DETAILS



TENDER

Nama Institute for Competency Development (NICD) invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR)
NICD/2023/01	Creation of Technical Assessment Question for Nama Group	18 Jun 2023	3 Jul 2023	25 (Plus VAT amount: 1.25 OMR)

- Interested party may purchase the tender through the company website (www.nama.om/ar/new-tenders). Supplier user guide is available to be downloaded at the same page.
- Payment of the tender fees to be done online through the link available in website. The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 12.00 pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through I-supplier portal before 03.00 pm time of the Sultanate on Monday 3-July-2023.
- Each bid should be accompanied with a temporary insurance, in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers. Tenders that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered. The original hard copy of the bid bond should be dropped in the tender box at Nama Holding reception area.
- NICD is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person’s name and the company details.



Nama Holding
In Beach One Building, 3rd Floor (Units 305 & 307), Shatti Al Qurum
P.O Box 850, Post Code 116, Sultanate of Oman.
Phone Number: +968 24559200 / 237 / 356
E-Mail: Ibrahim.alhina@holding.nama.om - Nawahel.AJunaibi@Holding.nama.om



TO ENSURE A SMOOTH OPERATION, UPDATE YOUR DETAILS



Iraq approves record \$153 billion budget including big public hiring



Iraqi lawmakers attend a parliamentary session to vote on the federal budget at the parliament headquarters in Baghdad. – Reuters

BAGHDAD: Iraq’s parliament on Monday approved a 2023 budget of \$153 billion that sets out record spending on a growing public wage bill and development projects to improve services and rebuild infrastructure ruined by neglect and war.

The budget deficit is estimated at a record more than double the last budget deficit in 2021, according to a budget document and lawmakers.

The budget is based on an oil price of \$70 per barrel and projects oil exports at 3.5 million barrels per day (bpd), including 400,000 bpd from the semi-autonomous Kurdistan region, lawmakers said.

The budget sets the exchange

rate for oil revenues in US dollars at 1,300 dinars per dollar. It will remain valid through 2025, though it is subject to amendment, including to the oil price it uses given its near-total dependence on oil revenue.

The budget adds more than half a million new public sector workers, hiring that flies in the face of the recommendations of many observers who say Iraq should tighten fiscal policy.

Mohammed Nouri, a member of the parliament’s finance committee, said ahead of the session more than a million new workers were added, including contractors, daily employees and full-time staff.

Ahmed Tabaqchali, a visiting

fellow at the London School of Economics Middle East Center, put the figure of new employees at about 600,000, which he said would raise the total cost of public wages and pensions to more than \$58 billion.

“The more you increase this kind of spending, the more you increase your vulnerability. The oil price has to go higher and higher just to sustain spending which is crippling and will lead to more and more borrowing,” he said.

The International Monetary Fund in a May 31 note said the increasing public wage bill would contribute to mounting deficits and financial pressure, barring a big increase in oil prices.

“A significantly tighter fiscal policy is needed to strengthen resilience and reduce the government’s dependence on oil revenues while safeguarding critical social spending needs,” the IMF said.

Iraq’s budgets are supposed to be adopted before the beginning of the year they cover but are frequently delayed or not passed at all due to instability and political disputes.

Under an agreement signed between Baghdad and Erbil in April, Iraq’s state-run marketing company SOMO will have the authority to market and export crude oil produced from fields controlled by the Kurdish region.

— Reuters

Pakistan orders mass evacuations ahead of cyclone landfall

SHAH BANDAR: Pakistan authorities on Monday began an evacuation effort to move 80,000 citizens out of the path of an approaching cyclone, which is expected to bring winds of up to 120 kilometres per hour.

The cyclone is making its way across the Arabian Sea towards the coastlines of Pakistan and India, forecast to make landfall later this week.

Swathes of coastal communities in southern Sindh province are set to suffer storm surges up to 3.5 metres, which could inundate low-lying settlements, as well as up to 30 centimetres of rain.

Sindh Chief Minister Murad Ali Shah said an emergency has been declared and the army drafted in to help relocate “more than 80,000 people” at risk.

“We will not request people but demand them to evacuate,” Shah told reporters, adding that the order was being issued

through social media, mosques and radio stations.

A spokesman for Shah said around 2,000 people have already been evacuated to “safe places” from the area of Shah Bandar, a fishing town nestled among mangrove deltas 45 kilometres west of India’s Gujarat state.

However, in the nearby village of Gul Muhammad Uplano, authorities struggled to persuade families to leave. “We will become helpless in the government camps, that is why we are better off at our own place,” said 46-year-old Gul Hasan.

The Pakistan Meteorological Department has warned that traditional mud and straw homes which house the poorest in Pakistan will be vulnerable to disintegration in high winds.

But in the settlement of Haji Ibrahim, a cluster of such structures, fisherman Abu Bakar said concerns over losing their livelihoods prevail. — AFP



Villagers travel on a truck to government relief camps before the due onset of cyclone, in Sujawal district, Pakistan. – AFP

Bodies and burial as Sudan fighting resumes after brief truce

KHARTOUM: Mourners gathered to bury the dead and bodies lay in a Khartoum hospital on Sunday as deadly shelling and gunfire resumed after the end of a 24-hour ceasefire in Sudan.

Fighting has raged in the northeast African country since mid-April, when army chief Abdel Fattah al-Burhan and his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo, who commands the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, turned on each other.

The latest in a series of ceasefire agreements enabled civilians trapped in the capital Khartoum to venture outside and stock up on food and other essential supplies.

They gathered on a sandy plot of

land in the south of Sudan’s capital to bury victims of an artillery strike.

Witness said that only 10 minutes after the truce ended at 6:00 am on Sunday, the city was rocked again by shelling and clashes.

Men in Khartoum’s Azhari neighbourhood carried a woman toward her final resting place, a hole dug out of the soil on bumpy ground across from some houses.

Her own home had been shelled, leaving her among more than 1,800 killed during eight weeks of war, according to figures from the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project.

One relative condemned the



Smoke billows in southern Khartoum as shelling and gunfire resumed after the 24-hour ceasefire in Sudan. – AFP

“unacceptable” act and said: “We pray for an end to this war.”

A pro-democracy neighbourhood group had reported that fighting in Khartoum’s south sent “shells landing in citizens’ homes”.

On beds at a hospital in the area, two bodies lay under coloured cloths.

Heavy artillery fire was heard across greater Khartoum. Residents also reported air strikes and anti-aircraft fire.

The 24-hour ceasefire that ended on Sunday had been announced by US and Saudi mediators who warned that if it failed they may break off mediation efforts.

The two warring sides had

“agreed to allow the unimpeded movement and delivery of humanitarian assistance throughout the country”, the Saudi foreign ministry said.

The mediators said in a joint statement they “share the frustration of the Sudanese people about the uneven implementation of previous ceasefires”.

A record 25 million people — more than half the population — are in need of aid and protection, according to the UN. Fighting has gripped Khartoum and the western region of Darfur, uprooting nearly two million people, including 476,000 who have sought refuge in neighbouring countries, the United Nations says. — AFP

JERUSALEM

Former PM Lapid testifies in graft trial

Israeli opposition leader Yair Lapid on Monday testified at a Jerusalem court in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s ongoing corruption trial. Lapid’s testimony forms part of a case in which Netanyahu is accused of fraud and breach of trust over his relationship with Hollywood producer Arnon Milchan and other wealthy personalities.

According to prosecutors, between 2007 and 2016 Netanyahu allegedly received gifts valued at 700,000 shekels.



Netanyahu denies any allegations of wrongdoing, saying gifts were only accepted from friends and without him having asked for them. Lapid was finance minister when the so-called “Milchan Law” was debated in 2013 and 2014. — AFP

BANGKOK

Thai PM frontrunner faces election probe

The frontrunner to become Thailand’s next prime minister is facing an election probe that could see him disqualified, a senior official said on Monday.

Pita Limjaroenrat’s progressive Move Forward Party (MFP) won the most seats at last month’s election as voters delivered a crushing rejection of army-linked parties that ran the kingdom for nearly a decade.

But he has faced a number of challenges and complaints, and the election commission has



now set up a special committee to investigate whether Pita was qualified to run for office.

It is not clear how long the investigation will take, but if found guilty, Pita could be disqualified and face up to 10 years in jail. — AFP

ALMATY

Kazakhstan mourns 14 forestry workers

Flags were lowered across Kazakhstan on Monday as the country mourned 14 forestry workers killed in a wildfire in the eastern Abai region.

Firefighters were still struggling to contain the blaze raging across 43,000 hectares of land in the Central Asian nation, the government said.

Officials said they had last heard from the workers on Thursday last week and their bodies were found on Saturday.

President Kassym-Jomart



Tokayev sacked Emergencies Minister over the weekend, saying “criminal negligence” was behind the disaster.

The new minister, Syrym Sharipkhanov, said it could still take a few more days to extinguish the blaze. — Reuters



In brief

MADRID



SPAIN BEGINS EXHUMING CIVIL WAR VICTIMS

Experts on Monday began exhuming Spanish civil war victims from a huge basilica near Madrid.

The team will seek to exhume the remains of 128 victims of the 1936-39 civil war from the complex at the Valley of Cuelgamuros, formerly known as the Valley of the Fallen, the democratic memory ministry said.

The aim is to “recover those bodies and deliver them to their families to give them a dignified burial,” the ministry said in a statement.

“This is not about politics, it is simply a matter of pure humanity.” — AFP

ROME



FORMER ITALIAN PM BERLUSCONI DIES AT 86

Silvio Berlusconi, the former prime minister who reshaped Italy's political and cultural landscape died on Monday aged 86. The media mogul had been suffering from a rare type of blood cancer.

Mourners laid flowers and notes outside Villa San Martino, Berlusconi's home near Milan, with one reading simply “we will miss you”.

The government has declared a national day of mourning for Wednesday, when Berlusconi will have a state funeral in Milan's gothic Duomo Cathedral. Berlusconi had suffered ill health for years, from heart surgery in 2016 to a 2020 hospitalisation for Covid-19. Despite being re-elected to the Senate last year, he was rarely seen in public. — AFP

GRETA



10 DEAD IN AUSTRALIA WEDDING BUS CRASH

A bus carrying wedding guests overturned and killed 10 people in an “unimaginable” night-time crash as it travelled through a wine-growing area north of Sydney, police said on Monday, announcing a string of charges against the driver.

The white Linq Buses coach was ferrying 35 passengers from a wedding when it flipped onto its left side, coming to rest on the pavement alongside roadside barriers at the entrance to a major roundabout. It was Australia's deadliest road accident in 16 years. — AFP



Nato officials show during the Air Defender Exercise 2023 at the military air base in Wunstorf, northern Germany. — AFP

Nato begins unprecedented air drill in ‘show of strength’

BERLIN: Nato began its largest ever air force deployment exercise in Europe on Monday, in a display of unity toward partners and potential threats.

The German-led “Air Defender 23” will include some 250 military aircraft from 25 Nato and partner countries including Japan and Sweden, which is bidding to join the alliance. It will run until June 23.

Up to 10,000 service members are to participate in the drills intended to boost interoperability and preparedness to protect against drones and cruise missiles in the case of an attack within Nato territory.

“The significant message we’re sending is that we can defend

ourselves,” Lieutenant General Ingo Gerhartz of the German Luftwaffe said.

He said the exercise would not “send any flights, for example, in the direction of Kaliningrad,” the Russian enclave bordering alliance member states Poland and Lithuania. “We are a defensive alliance and that is how this exercise is planned,” he said.

The first flights began in the late morning at the Wunstorf, Jagel and Lechfeld air bases, a Luftwaffe spokesman confirmed.

Hundreds of demonstrators had gathered at Wunstorf in northern Germany on Saturday against the drills, under the banner “Practice peace — not war”. Protesters called for a “diplomatic solution”

to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and an immediate ceasefire.

US Ambassador to Germany Amy Gutmann said the exercise would show “beyond a shadow of a doubt the agility and the swiftness of our allied force” and was intended to send a message to countries including Russia.

“I would be pretty surprised if any world leader was not taking note of what this shows in terms of the spirit of this alliance, which means the strength of this alliance, and that includes Mr Putin,” she told reporters, referring to the Russian president.

The exercise includes operational and tactical-level training, primarily in Germany, but also in the Czech Republic,

Estonia and Latvia, with a total of around 2,000 flights.

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz will visit pilots based at the Jagel airfield in northern Germany on Friday.

General Michael Loh, director of the US Air National Guard, said Nato's duties were at an “inflection point”.

“A great deal has changed on the strategic landscape throughout the world, especially here in Europe,” he said.

The exercise will focus on “supplementing the permanent United States presence in Europe” as well as providing training “on a larger scale than what was usually accomplished on the continent”, Loh added. — AFP

Germany not isolated on EU debt rules reform, says minister



German Finance Minister Christian Lindner addresses the media during a news conference in Berlin. — Reuters file photo

BRUSSELS: Germany is not alone with its call for strict debt rules in the European Union, German Finance Minister Christian Lindner said and other members of the European Newsroom.

“Germany is not isolated at all. There are many member states that share our concerns,” said Lindner.

Other countries may however be less vocal, Lindner added.

The bloc's strict debt and deficit rules have been suspended since the coronavirus pandemic prompted even frugal countries like Germany to take on large amounts of public debt, prompting calls for reform.

In April the European Commission proposed granting highly indebted countries more leeway in reducing public debt to enable needed investments.

The proposal “is not yet the landing zone” and has to be improved, Lindner said, as it does not guarantee that debt and deficits would decline “in a realistic and reliable manner.” — dpa

Sunak announces new partnership to boost UK-US ties after Biden talks

WASHINGTON: British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak and US President Joe Biden have agreed a new partnership to bolster economic security.

The Atlantic Declaration, announced as the British premier and US president met in the White House, includes commitments on easing trade barriers, closer defence industry ties and a data protection deal.

The agreement comes after hopes of a full-blown free trade deal were abandoned, with UK officials insisting the new, targeted approach was a better response to the economic challenges posed by Beijing and Russia's attack of Ukraine. Sunak said: “The UK and US have always pushed the boundaries of what two countries can achieve together.”

“Over generations we have fought alongside one another, shared intelligence we don't share with anyone else, and built the strongest investment relationship in world history.

“So it's natural that, when faced with the greatest transformation in



US President Joe Biden and British PM Rishi Sunak hold a joint-press conference in the East Room of the White House in Washington. — AFP file photo.

our economies since the industrial revolution, we would look to each other to build a stronger economic future together.

“The Atlantic Declaration sets a new standard for economic co-operation, propelling our

economies into the future so we can protect our people, create jobs and grow our economies together.”

The deal mitigates some of the issues cause by Biden's Inflation Reduction Act (IRA), with proposals for a critical minerals

agreement to remove barriers which affected trade in electric vehicle batteries.

An agreement would give buyers of vehicles made using critical minerals processed, recycled or mined by UK companies access to

tax credits in line with the IRA.

The two nations will also collaborate on key industries — artificial intelligence, 5G and 6G telecoms, quantum computing, semi conductors and engineering biology.

“Together we are providing economic and humanitarian aid and security systems to Ukraine in their fight against a brutal attack from Russia,” Mr Biden said.

In reference to Winston Churchill's wartime visit to the White House, Sunak said: “It's daunting to think of the conversations that our predecessors had in this room when they had to speak of wars that they fought together, peace won together, incredible change in the lives of our citizens.

Before their meeting, Sunak announced the UK will host the first global summit on AI safety.

The summit, which will be held in the autumn, will consider the need for international co-ordinated action to mitigate the risks of the emerging technology.” — dpa

Criteria to choose the right university change



Sandhya Rao Mehta

The writer is Assoc Prof, Dept of English Language and Literature, SQU

It is admission time for colleges and students often follow a variety of websites with suggestions on how to choose the right one for their purpose. Their choice is mainly determined by location, courses offered, fee, and cultural issues.

All these are important, but these criteria are changing considerably with students looking for other factors.

The Universities and Colleges Admission Services (UCAS) in England is said to remove the mandatory personal statement essay from the next academic year, replacing it with multiple choice questions. This is because the essay format is seen to favour students from privileged background, and more specifically, also to native speakers. It is “less about growth and exploration and more about checking boxes and fitting into a narrow definition of success,” according to the Los Angeles Times.

Even without this criteria, students find applying to the right colleges challenging and daunting. There

are the usual tips to look out for: college rankings, accommodation for international students as well as other provisions like multi-faith centres.

Research shows that students are looking for more than rankings and course offerings while looking for the right college. This is because international rankings are based on specific data which is not applicable to everybody, such as research of faculty in English language and student teacher ratio.

The focus on mental health has also ensured that students look for institutions which are now reputed to have a congenial atmosphere and empathetic faculty. The stress of a new place, people and curriculum is already heavy for new university entrants and being bogged down with other issues like social adaptability is not suggested.

Instead, students are looking for a convivial campus and one with opportunities for diverse social interaction, aspects that will add to their network as well as develop soft skills. They are also looking for spaces for cultural interaction and engaging in activities

THE UNIVERSITIES AND COLLEGES ADMISSION SERVICES (UCAS) IN ENGLAND IS SAID TO REMOVE THE MANDATORY PERSONAL STATEMENT ESSAY FROM THE NEXT ACADEMIC YEAR

which help them to keep in touch with their homes.

For international students, the challenge of choosing the right university is more complicated. They have to factor in other issues like visas, cost of travel from home, cost of living and their own capacity to adapt.

Times Higher Education, a British journal specialising in tertiary education, has shown that students used to rely on teachers and family to decide on the university to pursue their studies. Now, the trend is changing, with students taking their own decisions based on university websites, career counsellors in schools, and friends.

Applying to university and college can be a long and arduous process, but it can be immensely satisfying if done in the right way. There is a lot of material digitally available and having to sift through all that to pick the right institution can be daunting. It is clear that new entrants are looking for more than subjects to study and future placements. Larger issues like opportunities for networking, developing soft skills and ensuring mental health are on top of the list for new applicants.

‘Queen of Scots’ turns financial crimes suspect

STUART GRAHAM

Nicola Sturgeon kicked off the year with the vow that she still had “plenty in the tank” after eight years as Scotland’s leader, only to quit her role shortly after.

And her brief arrest on Sunday as part of a financial probe into the Scottish National Party (SNP) capped a spectacular fall from grace for the woman once dubbed by media as the “Queen of Scots.” Questioned for seven hours before being released, Sturgeon emerged proclaiming her innocence.

Regarded as one of Britain’s most formidable politicians, the 52-year-old Sturgeon quit as first minister and SNP leader in February after coming under pressure in a fierce row over transgender rights. She was also struggling to find momentum for the party’s *raison d’être* — Scottish independence.

There were already rumblings about a possible police probe into party finances dangerously close to home.

Those rumours were realised when her husband Peter Murrell was arrested in April, followed soon after by the SNP treasurer.

Sturgeon’s arrest had been largely expected, a blow for a woman once regarded as an almost invincible presence at the head of Scottish politics.

Acknowledging the strains of office, Sturgeon said upon her departure that she felt unable to give “every ounce of energy that it needs” to see out the high-pressure job.

“I am a human being as well as a politician.”

The transgender controversy erupted over a male rapist who had changed gender after being convicted. Under contentious reforms pushed through by her SNP government, they would have been allowed to serve in a women’s prison.

In a move unprecedented since Scotland won back self-government in 1999, the law was blocked by the UK government in London, and Sturgeon’s handling of the affair drew internal SNP criticism.

She also had a very public falling out with her former mentor and predecessor as first minister Alex Salmond over her handling of sexual harassment claims against him.

Above all, Scottish independence had been hitting the buffers despite her attempts to up the ante, after the UK government rejected demands for a new referendum.

Criticism had also mounted over Sturgeon’s intention to turn the next UK general election into a vote to leave, leaving voters with a stark choice that some in the party feared could backfire on the SNP. Several surveys have indicated waning popular support for breaking away, after Scottish voters rejected independence in 2014. — AFP



JAN-WERNER MUELLER

Professor of Politics at Princeton University, is the author, most recently, of Democracy Rules.

THE DESIGN OF A LEGISLATIVE CHAMBER SHOULD SERVE TWO FUNCTIONS: IT SHOULD HELP CITIZENS UNDERSTAND WHO STANDS FOR WHAT IN POLITICAL CONFLICTS, AND IT SHOULD ENABLE DEPUTIES TO HOLD A GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABLE WITH MAXIMUM PUBLICITY.

Is there an ideal design for seats of power?

Is there an ideal design for parliament buildings and legislative chambers? The question seems abstract, but it comes up surprisingly often as a very concrete challenge. It arose in the 1990s, when Scotland needed an assembly following decentralisation in the United Kingdom. It also appears when countries – including Brazil in the 1950s, Nigeria in the 1980s, and Indonesia today – construct new capital cities. And it may emerge when a country decides – as India recently did – that a new parliament building can distance it from the legacy of colonialism.

The new building that Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated is part of a comprehensive redesign of Central Vista, the government district in New Delhi. Modi, a consummate architect of his own personality cult, was heavily criticised for leading the ceremony himself, rather than allowing the president to do it. Twenty opposition parties boycotted the event.

Despite the controversy over the ceremony, and complaints about the project’s costs, the interior of the triangular building – which replaces a structure created during the Raj – appears relatively uncontentious. Nonetheless, one has to wonder how well the edifice represents or, more important, facilitates democratic politics. As Winston Churchill once quipped, first “we shape our buildings, and afterwards our buildings shape us.”

A parliamentary space should serve two functions: it should help citizens comprehend who stands for what in political conflicts, and it should enable deputies to hold a government accountable with maximum publicity. It should thus affirm a legitimate opposition’s crucial role – widely recognised at least since 1826, when the English politician John Hobhouse coined the phrase “Her Majesty’s loyal opposition” during a debate in the House of Commons – as a kind of “government-in-waiting.” Simply put, the physical configuration of government ministers and opposition figures matters.

To be sure, in presidential systems like the United States, the cabinet does not appear in the legislature at all, and US presidents do not subject themselves to direct and public questioning by elected representatives. When then-Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi



View of India’s new parliament building in New Delhi.

ripped up a hard copy of Donald Trump’s 2020 State of the Union address, it was a rare display of a direct, public critical interaction between Congress and the president.

But in parliamentary systems, government ministers face the opposition in the legislative chamber, dramatising political differences in a straightforward way. That explains Churchill’s conviction that British parliamentary democracy, with its two-party system, crucially depended upon the fact that the House of Commons had an oblong structure – in which political positions are starkly apparent – rather than a semi-circular one. He also insisted that “a small Chamber and a sense of intimacy are indispensable,” because it enabled politicians to address each other face to face with “quick, informal interruptions and interchanges” during “free debate.”

Not everyone would agree with Churchill. Former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, for example, wanted the reconstructed Reichstag in re-unified Germany to include more space between government officials and others than originally planned.

The shape of Russia’s Duma follows the even more authoritarian “classroom model,” in which deputies sit in rows before the government like obedient pupils. In Austria, speakers must turn away from the assembly to address government ministers, who are seated behind the dais.

In France, ministers sit awkwardly in the first row of semi-circular benches, with the rest of the parliament behind them – a structure dating from the 1830s. A somewhat similar set-up can be seen in today’s Potemkin parliament in Hungary. In Israel’s Knesset, government ministers sit around a table, with their backs to deputies.

Contrary to Churchill’s assessment, however, semi-circles have an advantage, at least in principle. Lawmakers can observe one another, say, reacting to speeches – a benefit valued by male citizens attending the Ekklesia, the governing body in ancient Athens.

Of course, it would be naive to think that a semi-circular setup – or even a fully circular arrangement, as was attempted in West Germany, before the parliament was moved to Berlin – would necessarily make for more harmonious politics. One need only witness South Korean lawmakers pushing one another, even pulling hair, in a favourable semi-circular setting. Remember also that the first hémicycle was introduced under the Jacobins.

With this in mind, we should avoid being taken in by the elegance of India’s state-of-the-art new parliament building. Instead, we should look out for signs of the anti-democratic tendencies of Modi and his BJP. India’s government has, after all, espoused an aggressive Hindu-nationalist ideology and sought to suppress the opposition. Just this past March, opposition leader Rahul Gandhi was removed from parliament over a highly dubious court judgment.

© *Project Syndicate*, 2023.

Soaring temperatures, temperaments

The cats on the streets are looking out for cool corners in the compounds, and the wasps want to mark their territories where there is the slightest sign of water and plants.

Plants on the other hand are almost giving up under the glaring heat. They have no choice when their leaves are turning brown and crispy.

“It’s summer and this is how it is,” some people say.

In summer we also get to see people growing impatient especially motorists whether they are in the parking or driving on the road.

Honking is not entertained in Oman but you hear it more often in summer.

“Stop complaining,” say others. There is a reason behind everything. We might go through a shock but nature needs it this way for the sake of dates.

As I write, we are enjoying Rathab Naaghaal. This is one of the popular dates to be harvested first as it gets ready by May or surely by June.

“Wadi al Tayeen tends to get the first dates harvested. The ones who greatly benefit are the ones who get them first. It fetches a good amount of money,” said my friend.

If the heat is good for the dates, it is not so good for the cars. And every time we have to enter the parked vehicle we remember it is summer. We feel it is hotter than before and others say it is expected.

And then our attitude — the energy level is not the same, we often feel tired.

With heat comes irritability and anger. Apparently exposure to summer heat could increase the heart rate thus the feeling



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

STAYING COOL AND HYDRATED IS GOOD FOR OUR TEMPERAMENT TOO. THE BEST PRACTICE WOULD BE TO FORGIVE AND FORGET AND BLAME IT ON SUMMER HEAT

of discomfort. This obviously leads to our crankiness and moodiness. Don’t forget stress hormones are at play and could make you aggressive. Staying cool and hydrated is good for our temperament too. The best practice would be to forgive and forget and blame it on summer heat.

Feeling tired also has an impact on our motivation.

But there are many positive sides to summer.

Summer also makes us realise there is nothing as precious as water. That is not to say we will say no to Kahwa or a cup of Karak tea. Watermelons are a relief and they seem to be in abundance from Oman and other countries.

When we consume seasonal fruits we are also being environmentally conscious as we would be actually helping in reducing greenhouse emissions.

Summer also reminds us it is the season for mangoes. The place to be is Qurayat where the farms with mango orchards thrive. Of course the farmers work whether the temperature is high or not. When we run for cover they are ready for harvest.

A few decades ago, if you drove past Sidab you would see young children waiting on the sides of the road with jasmine flowers packed in Almond tree leaves stitched together by natural fibre. There was no usage of plastic bags then. Somehow they felt better. The jasmynes make summer even more beautiful.

The sun does make us happy. And remember the people of the desert mastered the lifestyle of summer, they used to move to the coast or to the edge of the desert. So enjoy the summer, the sand, the shore, the sea when the time is right, jasmynes, the dates and coconut water.

TOMATO FEST



Children participate in the 10th annual Tomato Fight Festival, known as “Tomatina”, in Sutamarchan, Boyaca Department, Colombia, on Monday. This year’s festival is the first held since the lifting of the Covid-19 pandemic restrictions. – AFP

Turning the tide on animal suffering

In 1971, a half-dozen graduate students at Oxford University held what was perhaps the first protest of the modern animal rights movement. They insisted that respecting animals was a moral imperative.

And the world changed. No, not right away. But one of those students, a young Australian philosopher named Peter Singer, turned his ideas into a transformative 1975 book, “Animal Liberation,” that was initially mocked for overreach. “The animal movement was still widely seen as crackpot,” Singer recalls.

Yet to anyone who thinks that ideas are irrelevant in a practical age, think again. His arguments stirred a slow-motion revolution that has changed the way we treat other animals.

Singer has just issued a new edition of the book, updated and titled “Animal Liberation Now.” It’s a monument to the remarkable spread of the ideas he articulated in 1975. At least nine states and the European Union now ban veal crates, hen cages or tight stalls for sows. The top supermarket chains in America have agreed to sell only cage-free eggs by 2026, and McDonald’s has done the same.

A court in Argentina accepted that habeas corpus rights apply to a chimpanzee. Israel and California have banned the sale of fur coats. Pope Francis has suggested that animals go to Heaven and that



Nicholas Kristof

WHEN ANIMALS ARE REDUCED TO WIDGETS TO MAXIMISE QUARTERLY PROFITS, IT’S INEVITABLE THAT THERE WILL BE MISTREATMENT

the Virgin Mary “grieves for the sufferings” of mistreated livestock.

How times have changed. When Mary Wollstonecraft advocated for the rights of women in 1792, that seemed to some so ridiculous that a satirist mocked her by calling for the rights of animals as well. Now it’s unquestioned (at least in the abstract) that rights extend to people of all races and religions, including women, and in some cases to animals as well. When voters face referendums on animal rights, they often approve them by large margins.

Yet there’s so much more to be done, as the new edition of Singer’s book documents.

Agribusiness has been very successful at two things: producing very cheap protein and hiding from public view the cruelty that has been ingrained in factory farming to cut costs.

An individual seen whipping a dog risks arrest, but CEOs whose companies in effect torture chickens are celebrated for their business acumen. Individualised animal abuse is a crime; systematic animal abuse is a business model.

Singer writes about how poultry have been bred so birds grow extremely quickly and with huge breasts, since breast meat is particularly valuable. By one estimate, if human babies grew at

the same pace as today’s broiler chickens, at two months they would weigh 660 pounds — so it’s no surprise that chickens’ legs often give out and that by some accounts they suffer chronic pain.

When animals are reduced to widgets to maximise quarterly profits, it’s inevitable that there will be mistreatment. A farm in San Diego reportedly disposed of 30,000 live, squirming hens (who apparently were no longer producing sufficient eggs) by feeding them into a wood chipper. It was cost-effective.

For the last half-dozen years,

I’ve avoided meat, in part because of Singer’s writing, in part because of my experience raising livestock and poultry on our family farm, and in part nudged by my daughter. But I puzzle over the complexities.

I don’t eat factory-farmed food, but is it OK to eat farm animals that have been humanely raised? (I could be open to that; after all, I do eat animals like elk that have been hunted, partly because natural predators are rare.) I stopped eating octopus after reading a book about their intelligence and empathy, but what about shrimp? (For

now, I do eat shrimp and other shellfish.) To me, the central issue is as the philosopher Jeremy Bentham expressed it in the 18th century: “The question is not, can they reason, nor can they talk, but can they suffer?” And the answers for, say, oysters, aren’t always obvious.

We haven’t figured out our moral obligations to fellow humans, so perhaps it’s understandable that we haven’t worked out our obligations to shellfish. But the way people struggle with these questions strikes me as a measure of moral progress — and of the power of ideas.

“The ideas of economists and political philosophers, both when they are right and when they are wrong, are more powerful than is commonly understood,” wrote John Maynard Keynes. “Indeed the world is ruled by little else. Practical men, who believe themselves to be quite exempt from any intellectual influences, are usually the slaves of some defunct economist.”

And so it is that a philosopher’s book originally published almost half a century ago prodded our consciences and changed what will be on summer barbecue grills around the world. That is the moral force of an idea whose time has arrived.

— The New York Times



Individualised animal abuse is a crime; systematic animal abuse is a business model

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



LE MANS, FRANCE: Ahmad al Harthy and the Oman Racing with TF Sport team rewrote the endurance racing history books once again in remarkable style over the weekend, 10th/11th June, with a truly exceptional performance to finish second in the GTE Am class on their 24H Le Mans debut.

Hailing the proudest day of his glorious motor racing career so far, an ecstatic Al Harthy scaled the Le Mans podium on Sunday afternoon with team-mates Michael Dinan and Charlie Eastwood to put the icing on the cake of an outstanding performance in the 100th anniversary 24H Le Mans.

Dedicating the dream runner-up finish to His Majesty the Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, and expressing immense gratitude to his partners Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS, Al Harthy also saluted the whole Oman Racing with TF Sport squad for exceptional work.

In addition to the prestige of finishing second on his debut in the world-famous endurance racing classic, in the Centenary event no less, the performance elevates Al Harthy and his team-mates from eighth to second in the FIA World Endurance Championship standings – the race also forming round four of the WEC season.

AHMAD AL HARTHY: “This is the first time I think I’ve ever been truly speechless – wow! What a dream come true this is, to finish on the podium in P2 at the world’s largest and greatest event ever in endurance racing, and at our first attempt as well, is something I can’t describe. This is the big one, the Le Mans 24 Hours, and we got it – we got onto the podium!

“The race had everything you could think of, from the beginning to the end, it was one of the most challenging races and for it to be at the 100 year centenary race, it’s amazing. I am so proud of everyone, Michael, Charlie and everybody at the team for an amazing job all week here in Le Mans.

“I dedicate this win to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, the Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, for their unwavering support over the years. We dreamt of this day, we managed to make it happen and we saw the flag of Oman flying at Le Mans! It’s a very proud moment for me, the proudest day of my racing career, so I say a huge thank you to all of our supporters and everybody back home in Oman, this is for everyone.”

Omani racing star conquers world’s most challenging 24hr race

The scene was set perfectly



for a major challenge by Oman Racing during Le Mans week build-up, with excellent pace and performance from the opening test sessions the weekend prior. Continuing to impress in free practice, Eastwood then qualified fourth quickest to progress to Hyperpole.

Al Harthy was charged with

taking the wheel of the No.25 Aston Martin Vantage for the final pole position shoot-out, and he emerged from his first ever Hyperpole session with an outstanding second fastest time around the 8.4-mile (13.6-kilometre) Circuit de la Sarthe.

The track was declared wet

2023 FIA WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP GTE AM DRIVER STANDINGS:

2ND AHMAD AL HARTHY / MICHAEL DINAN / CHARLIE EASTWOOD, 59PTS

2023 FIA WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP GTE AM TEAM STANDINGS:

2ND OMAN RACING WITH TF SPORT, 59PTS

ahead of the start of the race at 16.00 local time on Saturday, and it wasn’t long before the first Safety Car appearance. Eastwood began for Oman Racing and took the opportunity to pit while racing was under caution early on, slipping down to 14th position, but the Northern Irishman soon began to recover

places quickly.

Torrential rain arrived in the early evening, making for an unbelievably tricky situation for all concerned, and as American racer Dinan and Oman’s Al Harthy took their first mileage of the race after the various pit-stops, the podium bid became stronger and stronger

Even with a puncture during the night and a few other dramas, and the time lost as a result, the focus and determination of the drivers and pit crew ensured Oman Racing would battle all the way to the finish at 16.00 on Sunday afternoon.

Outstanding driving from all three team-mates through the small hours and into the early morning meant the squad actually led GTE Am at the end of hour 18, with Al Harthy soaking up every last bit of enjoyment from performing so strongly in his maiden Le Mans 24 Hours.

In the end, Eastwood took the final portion of the race and brought the eye-catching orange Aston Martin to the chequered flag in a remarkable second place – just reward for one of Oman Racing’s greatest performances yet.

Following the biggest adventure of his motor racing career to date, Al Harthy now returns home to Oman – for a hero’s welcome – before the FIA World Endurance Championship season resumes on 8th/9th July for round five of the season at Monza in Italy.



Al Ahly win African Champions League with draw at holders Wydad Casablanca

CASABLANCA: Egyptian giants Al Ahly won the African Champions League after scoring a late equaliser to grab a 1-1 draw against Wydad Casablanca of Morocco in the second leg of the final on Sunday that secured a 3-2 aggregate victory.

Defender Mohammed Abdelmoneim flicked on a corner from Ali Maaloul with 13 minutes remaining, with the ball looping over the home defence and into the corner of the net to hand the Cairo club a record-extending 11th title.

After losing 2-1 in the Egyptian capital in last Sunday's first leg, Wydad had been on course to win on the away goals rule after fullback Yahya Attiat Allah scored a 27th-minute free kick to hand the home team the lead in front of an expectant 50,000-strong crowd at Casablanca's Mohammed V Stadium.

Wydad were looking to complete a dream season for Moroccan football, after the heroics of their national team in reaching the World Cup semifinal in December, but the Cairo club reaffirmed their status as Africa's top side after losing to Wydad in last year's final.

Al Ahly have now won more than double the number of titles in Africa's top club competition than their nearest rivals. This was

their fourth successive final and sixth in the last seven editions.

Abdelmoneim's decisive goal came as time was running out and with Wydad looking firmly in control.

Wydad's goal evaded the defence as Attiat Allah's free kick was missed by both attackers and defenders in the penalty area before nestling in the back of the net.

Striker Mohammed Ounajem tried to claim a touch but after watching television replays, officials credited the goal to the fullback.

Sunday's final proved a typically testy affair, full of gamesmanship, repeated bickering with the referee and some horrendous tackling as the cacophony of noise from the Wydad fans often reached eardrum piercing decibel levels and created an intimidating atmosphere.

The smoke from flares set off in the stands caused a temporary halt midway through the second half before the game resumed against a backdrop of a green haze.

This season marked a return to a two-legged final after the last three editions had been decided by a single match.

Wydad had beaten Al Ahly 2-0 in the decider in Casablanca last year. — Reuters

Taylor wins Canadian Open to end 69-year Canada win drought

TORONTO, CANADA: Nick Taylor sank a stunning 72-foot eagle putt on Sunday's fourth playoff hole to defeat England's Tommy Fleetwood and become the first home-nation player since 1954 to win the Canadian Open.

Taylor ended the 69-year drought for Canadians at their championship after a tension-packed extra session with a dramatic putt on the par-5 18th hole at Oakdale for his third career US PGA Tour title.

"I'm speechless," Taylor said. "This is for all the guys that are here. This is for my family at home. I'm speechless. This is the most incredible feeling ever."

Taylor was in tears as spectators raced out of the grandstands and onto the green to celebrate the victory after he had fired a six-under par 66 to match Fleetwood on 17-under 271 for 72 holes.

"This was incredible," Taylor said. "This is an unbelievable moment. It was such a special day. This was amazing."

Spectators cheered him all around the course, giving him the energy to outlast Fleetwood.

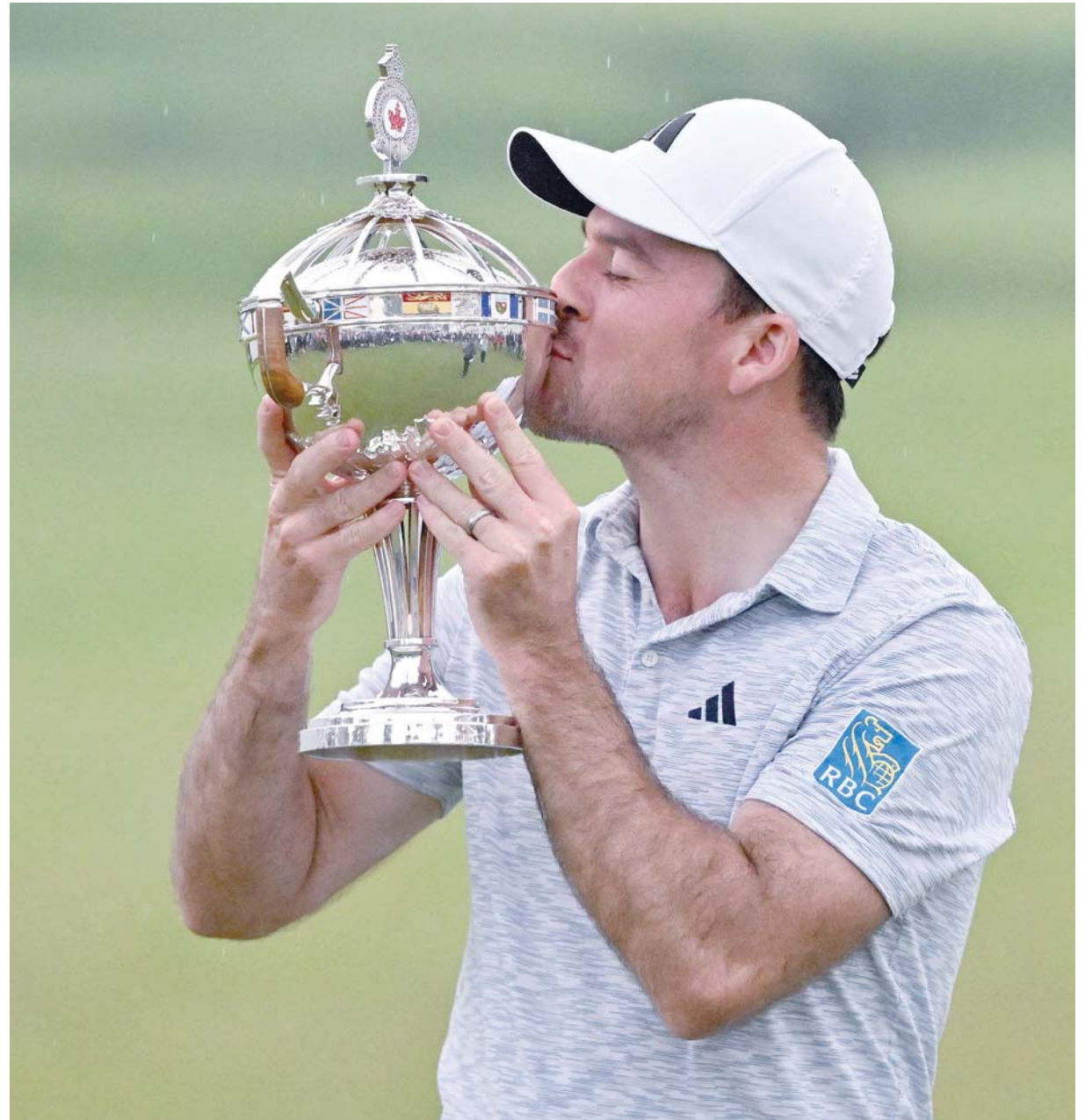
"Every hole they were egging you on," he said. "Then in the playoff when the rain was coming down, it gives you the energy to keep going, keep focused. This is for all of them."

After each man birdied the 18th to open the playoff, parred it on the second extra hole and parred the par-3 ninth, the playoff returned to 18 for the emotion-packed finish.

World number 23 Fleetwood found a fairway bunker and blasted out short of the green while 69th-ranked Taylor was on the green but 72 feet from the hole.

Fleetwood dropped his approach 12 feet from the hole and Taylor then rolled in the longest putt of his PGA career to become the first Canadian to be a Canadian Open champion since Pat Fletcher in 1954.

"I had a similar line in the second playoff hole," Taylor said. "I knew it was going to be slow with how much rain we've had.



I wanted to get as close as I can because Tommy, I thought he's going to make it.

"For that to go in, it was unbelievable."

Fleetwood, a six-time European Tour winner, settled for his fifth PGA runner-up finish. No Englishman has won the Canadian Open since 1981.

"Nice moment for Nick and the fans here," Fleetwood said. "It's great to be a part of that. I had my chances, really. It wasn't to be this time. But congratulations to him."

'CAN'T DWELL ON IT'

Fleetwood will try to pick himself up for next week's US Open at Los Angeles Country Club.

"I had my chances and didn't take them," Fleetwood said. "I

just have to keep practicing, keep playing.

"Have to take the positives from it and start practicing tomorrow. I got a major next week. So can't dwell on it too much."

Taylor, who set a course record of 63 on Saturday, had his right foot in a bunker when he punched from greenside sloped rough to five feet on the first playoff hole at 18. But he watched Fleetwood make a tense 20-foot birdie putt and then sank his putt to extend the playoff.

Rain began as they played 18 again, Fleetwood sending his second shot into the right grandstand but recovering to have an 11-foot birdie putt to win only to miss and stretch the drama.

At the par-3 ninth, Taylor

landed 14 feet from the hole on the right fringe while Fleetwood was 13 feet away on the green. Taylor's putt came up short and he tapped in. Fleetwood missed left and tapped in and back they went to 18.

England's Tyrrell Hatton birdied the last four holes to shoot 64 and share third on 272 with countryman Aaron Rai, who shot 67, and 54-hole leader Pan Cheng-tsung of Taiwan.

Erik Cole, who birdied the last four holes to match Taylor's course record 63, shared sixth on 274 with fellow American Mark Hubbard. England's Justin Rose, the 2013 US Open champion, was eighth on 275.

Two-time defending champion Rory McIlroy shot 72 to share ninth on 276. — AFP

Uruguay prepares to celebrate first Under-20 World Cup title

LA PLATA, ARGENTINA: Uruguay on Monday prepared to welcome home their latest, and long-awaited, world champions, as the under-20 team headed home after winning their age-group World Cup in Argentina.

Luciano Rodriguez scored the winner in the 86th minute as Uruguay beat Italy 1-0 in the Diego Maradona stadium in La Plata, some 60 kilometres from Buenos Aires, on Sunday night.

It was Uruguay's third appearance in the under-20 final after losing in 1997 to Argentina and on penalties in 2013 to France.

Uruguay have won two senior World Cups and two men's Olympic football golds, but the last triumph was in 1950.

It was Italy's first final in a competition started in 1977 and dominated by South American teams. Argentina have won six times and Brazil five times.

As fans filled the Montevideo

streets to celebrate, the Uruguayan Football Association said on Sunday that the winning squad would arrive on Monday at 11:30 local time (1430 GMT) at Carrasco International Airport, from where a motorcade would take them on a tour of the capital.

In the final, Uruguay pressed from the start and created the best chances. Anderson Duarte forced a flying save from goalkeeper Sebastiano Desplanches from a first-half corner.

After a largely uneventful second half, Uruguay struck with four minutes to play when a corner caused chaos in the Italian goalmouth and the ball bounced up to Rodriguez, who nodded in at the far post.

Desplanches prevented a worse defeat in the dying seconds when, without a defender in sight and four Uruguayans bearing down on the penalty area the keeper saved at the feet of Franco Gonzalez.



Chelsea midfielder Cesare Casadei won the golden boot with seven goals and was voted golden

ball as the tournament's best player but struggled to make an impact in the final.

"Uruguay champion," tweeted Uruguay president Luis Lacalle Pou from the United States.

"Congratulations to the players, coaching staff and all those who made this dream possible."

Earlier, Israel had achieved their best-ever result at a World Cup, beating South Korea 3-1 to take third place.

World football's governing body Fifa moved the competition to Argentina in April, after removing Indonesia as host following local protests against Israel's participation.

Ran Binyamin opened the scoring in the 19th minute with an acrobatic volley.

Lee Seung-won equalised from the penalty spot five minutes later. Omer Senior restored the Israel lead after 76 minutes and Anan Khalaili finished the scoring with a close-range shot at the far post from an 85th-minute corner.

Israel upset Brazil in the quarterfinals but lost to Uruguay in the last four on Thursday.

—AFP

UZBEKISTAN TROUNCE OMAN IN CAFA CUP OPENER

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

Oman's Red Warriors suffered to 3-0 loss against the hosts Uzbekistan in the opening match of both teams in group A of the Central Asian Football Association (Cafa) Nations Cup 2023, At Bunyodkor Stadium in Tashkent. The coach Branko Ivankovic's men did not show their awaiting performance as they goes down fighting to Uzbekistan in the opener. The triumph meant, the hosts moved a step ahead and are inch closer to meet the topper of group B in the final while the send placed in each group will play the third and fourth playoff.

Tajikistan and Turkmenistan matched ended in a 1-1 draw in another earlier game of group A. The draw provided both teams one point in the tally. Oman will meet Tajikistan on Wednesday in their second match while the group topper will take on Turkmenistan. Red Warriors will conclude their group games against Turkmenistan on Saturday.

Uzbekistan, ranked 74th in the world, produced an excellent show in the beginning of the match against Oman as it was only seven minutes from the game start to score the opening goal by Jaloliddin Masharipov. The same player doubled the hosts lead as he netted the second goal in the 24th minute. Uzbekistan led 2-0 at half-time. Oman players tried to bounce back to the match in the second half but their attempts did not find the net. The captain of Uzbek team, Akbar Alijonov, sealed the win for his team as he scored the third goal in the dying minutes. Jaloliddin Masharipov was named as the most valuable player in the match.

Post the match, the head coach of Oman team, Branko Ivankovic congratulated Uzbekistan team for their victory. "They deserved the win as they showed a top game, "I believe we have to prepare better for the next match against Tajikistan, winning the forthcoming match will be the target," he added

The Croatian coach clarified that the team prepared well for the first game. "The opponent's preparation for the match was better than us. The domestic league in Uzbekistan is underway as their players showed top performance in the game," he said

Taking part in the Central Asian Football Association (Cafa) Nations Cup 2023 will act as a great preparatory station for the upcoming crucial assignments in AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 finals and the qualifiers for Asian teams on road to the Fifa World Cup 2026 as well as the AFC Asian Cup 2027.

RED
WARRIORS EYE
TO FIRST WIN
AGAINST
TAJIKISTAN ON
WEDNESDAY



Oman Sail's youth team brace for 2023 Pan Arab Games

MUSCAT: Fifty sailors from Oman Sail's youth sailing squad have arrived in Ras Al Hadd for a summer training camp to prepare for upcoming 2023 Pan Arab Games in Algeria from July 8 to 13, as well as national championships. Starting on 1 June and running through until the end of August, sailors in the Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6 and ILCA 7 classes will take part in daily fitness sessions with Oman Sail coaches, as well as learning about nutrition and boat safety.

A select group of 15 Optimist, iQFOiL, ILCA 4, ILCA 6 and ILCA 7 sailors will also be heading to Türkiye for a specialist training camp to hone their skills and make final preparations before the Pan Arab Games get underway. During this time the squad will also take part in a local championship in Izmir.

Mohsin al Busaidy, Oman Sail's Head of Performance, said, "The experience of training in Ras Al Hadd and Türkiye will help create an encouraging environment for our sailors ahead of a busy period. We have a plan in place and the experience of training and learning from each other helps to foster a sense of camaraderie within the squad. This group of sailors is very talented and determined, and we are confident the team will be fully prepared to represent Oman."

Oman Sail's Head of Sailing School, Ahmed al Qasbi, added, "There is great depth in our youth squad across all five classes and we are committed to ensuring the sailors are well prepared for the upcoming season and beyond. Instilling technical and behavioural habits at an early stage helps to create the positive

mentality that will prepare the team for competition both now and in the coming years as part of Oman Sail's national team squad."

The training camp in Ras Al Hadd will also see Oman Sail launch a new community sailing programme to help introduce local children to the sport. Up to 100 children will have the opportunity to try sailing with free lessons from the Oman Sail coaches for the three-month duration of the training camp.

Sailing at the 2023 Pan Arab Games will be held on the coast of Algeria from 5-13 July with sailors from member nations of the Arab League competing in six events. The season continues with the Oman Sailing Championship in Ras Al Hadd from 24-28 August, and Al Musannah Race Week at Barceló Mussanah Resort from 18-24 October.





Take advantage of Higher Profit Rates up to 3.75%
With High-Yield Savings Account
To apply, simply visit your nearest branch.

2477 5777 | www.maisarah-oman.com | /MaisarahOman | @MaisarahIslamic | @Maisarah.Islamic



CBO launches platform to help banks fight money laundering



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) is launching phase one of an advanced electronic programme this week for the use of banks and other licensed financial institutions in the operations of analysing Money Laundering / Terrorist Financing risks, jointly with the Capital Market Authority (CMA).

The programme is used in gathering and analysing data in high quality. It is also used for analysing data collection results, providing comprehensive analyses of risks and relevant factors apart from being a risk-based classification system. This is one of the major programmes encompassing the features of the digital solution in the papers issued by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

CBO is dedicated to enhancing its systems based on the outcomes of the national and sectoral assessment, offsite analysis and onsite inspection it conducts for the financial sector together with any risks emerging at the local and international levels.

As part of the preparations, CBO has conducted a series of introductory workshops for all licensed institutions for the purpose of training their employees on efficiently and effectively using this programme.

Manjam Lab seeks to speed up delivery of Omani government services

Digitalisation: First phase of Manjam Lab sets out strategy for simplifying procedures for availing government services

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

The first phase of the Manjam Lab, a pivotal initiative to reduce bureaucracy in government services, began here on Monday with the attendance of a number of ministers and high-level government and public sector officials.

The initiative, which was first unveiled in January with the participation of 22 government institutions, has successfully simplified the procedures for 145 government services, reducing the average number of steps by 53 per cent and the average time for providing these services by 73 per cent.

The first phase of the Manjam Lab targeted various government institutions, including the Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Public Authority for Economic Zones and Free Zones, Capital Market Authority, Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Environment Authority, Civil Aviation Authority, Supreme Judicial Council, as well as the governorates and municipalities



of the Sultanate of Oman.

A team of 17 specialised trainers in continuous improvement and Lean methodology participated in the first phase of the Manjam Lab.

Over 300 participants from the main and supporting institutions, along with more

postponements, amending beneficiary data, inquiring about financial dues, obtaining bank commitment letters, acquiring temporary workers' camp permits, classifying hotel facilities, issuing guide and advertising signs, licensing the import, transport, export, and re-export of radioactive sources, managing the recruitment of non-Omani manpower, publishing advertisements and registering job services, updating commercial registry mortgages, granting conditional approval for the import of valuable metals and stones, registering licence issuance bodies for conformity assessment certificates.

It also includes manufacturing licenses for hazardous chemicals, operating combustion sources under environmental regulations,

obtaining waste management licenses, transforming and liquidating public shareholding companies, acquiring permanent registration certificates and navigational licenses for ships and marine units, registering new affiliation certificates, requesting data for private sector companies, recruiting non-Omani manpower, obtaining ship or temporary marine unit registration certificates, and renewing navigational licenses for ships and marine units (permanent and temporary).

In addition to the simplification efforts, the Manjam Lab conducted activities to empower national competencies in managing change and fostering innovation within government services. Specialised courses were provided on design thinking, process engineering, and business analysis.

Eight national competencies received training in business analysis, simplification techniques, and procedure re-engineering to enhance their capabilities and develop national expertise.

Phase 1 of the Manjam Lab also involved active community participation, with 126 individuals contributing to the process. They visited service delivery centres and engaged with various institutions on eight different occasions.

(Picture: Faisal al Balushi)

Experts debate food safety issues at key forum in Muscat

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

The Oman International Food Safety and Qualities Conference began here yesterday under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The three-day conference, held as part of the Food Safety Week organised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, offers a platform for scientific discussions, working papers, and panel discussions. Collaborating with the ministry are Sultan Qaboos University, Quebec-based Laval University, and the International Association for Food Legal Sciences, among numerous other international bodies.

It aims to address various themes, including artificial intelligence and modern technologies in food safety, managing food risks for food



security, the role of food safety and quality in promoting sustainability in the economic sector, and contemporary challenges in the field of food safety and quality.

Dr Hussain al Masroori, Director General of the Food Safety and Quality Center, emphasised the ministry's belief in the importance of scientific research in enhancing food quality and safety. "The organisation of this conference, of course, comes from the belief of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, represented by the Food Safety and Quality Centre (FSQC) in the importance of scientific research.

There is indeed a remarkable development in scientific research. This development has naturally led to the presence of modern products that are easy to manufacture and also in the operations of supply chains and

IT AIMS TO ADDRESS VARIOUS THEMES, INCLUDING ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND MODERN TECHNOLOGIES IN FOOD SAFETY, MANAGING FOOD RISKS FOR FOOD SECURITY, THE ROLE OF FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY IN PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY IN THE ECONOMIC SECTOR, AND CONTEMPORARY CHALLENGES IN THE FIELD OF FOOD SAFETY AND QUALITY

which requires compatibility of standards. In addition to the antibiotic resistance, which threatens public health. So the process does not stop and scientific research must continue."

Several international bodies have participated in the conference, including the GCC Standardization Organization (GSO), the United States Department of Agriculture, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, and the International Union of Food Science and Technology. Shaikh

Saud bin Nasser al Khusaibi, CEO of the GCC Standardization Organization (GSO), stressed the importance of the conference during his keynote speech "The organisation of this conference represents an open opportunity for experts, specialists, stakeholders and partners from all sectors to exchange global, regional and national knowledge, experiences and practices on global developments in the field of food safety and quality.

Streamlining trade, enhancing food safety, nutrition and food security, enhancing transparency with regard to food control legislation, keeping abreast of modern technologies, and increasing capacity building programmes for specialists, residents, auditors and inspectors in the legislative and oversight agencies to keep abreast of the latest developments in this field."

An exhibition is taking place alongside the conference.

China's Unipec emerges as major seller of August-loading Oman crude

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

China's Unipec, the trading arm of top Asian refiner Sinopec, has emerged as a major seller of August-loading Oman crude this month, according to a new report. The move has helped cap benchmark prices despite plans by a key Opec member to cut output next month. Unipec has sold 8 million barrels of Oman crude since the start of June on S&P Global's trading platform, Reuters said.

This is a significant increase in sales compared to previous months. Unipec's decision to sell large volumes of Oman crude is likely due to tepid fuel demand from a slower-than-expected economic recovery that has squeezed refining margins in China. Additionally, Unipec and other Chinese refiners have been bringing in more barrels from Russia, West Africa, the United States and Brazil.

Oman crude is a medium-grade crude oil that is produced in the Sultanate of Oman and is



similar in quality to Dubai crude oil. It is used as a benchmark for pricing Middle Eastern crude oil exports to Asia.

Unipec's decision to boost Oman crude sales could be seen as an attempt to diversify its crude oil supply sources and reduce its reliance on Saudi Arabia, say experts.

China has been the top importer of Oman crude, reaching almost 85 per cent of Oman's total crude oil production. By end of April 2023, China imported 93.1 million barrels of oil, according to data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). Unipec's move has helped cap

benchmark prices despite Saudi Arabia's plans to cut output next month. Saudi Arabia has announced that it will cut its oil output by 1 million barrels per day (bpd) in June and July 2023.

However, Unipec's sales of Oman crude have helped offset the impact of Saudi Arabia's production cuts on benchmark prices.

Unipec sold the Oman cargoes to Totsa, trading arm of TotalEnergies, PetroChina Hong Kong, Shell and Trafigura, the data collated by Reuters showed.

Oman holds talks with British Foreign Trade Minister

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, held a high-level meeting on Monday, with the British Minister of Foreign Trade, Nigel Huddleston.

The meeting, which took place in the presence of Dr Saleh bin Said Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, aimed to strengthen bilateral trade and investment relations between the two countries.

The discussions focused on exploring opportunities to enhance joint investment cooperation and stimulate direct investment in various sectors and investment activities.

Both sides highlighted the importance of complying with the laws and regulations of their respective countries to ensure a mutually beneficial environment for investment.

Hydrogen production costs in Oman to hit cost-competitive \$1.6/kg by 2030: IEA

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

Cheap renewable electricity made possible by an abundance of solar and wind resources, alongside the availability of near limitless land blocks for development, will together enable the production of green hydrogen in Oman at a globally cost-competitive \$1.6/kg by 2030, according to a key report published on Sunday.

The report, titled 'Renewable Hydrogen from Oman: A producer economy in transition', issued jointly by the International Energy Agency (IEA) and the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, ranks the Sultanate of Oman among the world's leading producers and exporters of renewable hydrogen by the end of this decade.

"The country is well placed to produce large quantities of renewable hydrogen and hydrogen-based fuels," the Paris-based intergovernmental agency announced in its 54-page report.

"Oman benefits from high-quality renewable resources (both solar PV and onshore wind) and



a convenient location, well-placed to access the main import markets like Europe and Japan.

The country also has vast amounts of land for large-scale project development, and existing fossil fuel infrastructure that can be directly used or repurposed for low-emission fuels. The country has extensive expertise in handling and exporting both

LNG and ammonia that are directly applicable to renewable hydrogen and hydrogen-based fuels," it further stated.

Boding well for Oman is the presence of all of the key enabling conditions to become "one of the most competitive producers of renewable hydrogen", according to the report. Together with projected reductions in the capital

cost of electrolyzers, Oman is well-positioned to produce renewable hydrogen for as low as \$1.6/kg by 2030, it said.

Importantly, cheap renewable electricity is a "precondition for competitive hydrogen exports" from Oman, the report points out.

"Hydrogen production costs depend heavily on the costs of

electricity generation. Ensuring that these are as low as possible will be a significant advantage for the competitiveness of hydrogen both domestically and abroad.

Increasing project development and large-scale deployment of renewables can contribute to lowering the soft costs (i.e., non-equipment expenses associated with design, permitting, installation, and financing), having a major influence on the competitiveness of local electricity generation from renewables," it explained.

Oman is targeting the production of around 1 million tonnes/annum of renewable hydrogen by 2030, which will necessitate a staggering 50 terawatt-hours (TWh) of captive renewable electricity to meet this goal.

Investments required to develop this capacity are estimated at around \$33 billion by 2030, comprising \$20 billion for captive renewable power dedicated to hydrogen production and \$13 billion for electrolysis and ammonia conversion, the report added.

Make every drive fun in the Kia Cerato

MUSCAT: The powerful and stylish Kia Cerato takes the immersive and fun experiences to the next level with a powerful performance, impressive fuel-efficiency, space, features and more.

Highlighting the Cerato's appeal are LED headlights which appear as slender lines with the radiator grille to underline the redesigning of the face of the model, defining the car's sporty exterior.

At the rear, strong horizontal lines add a bold appearance with depth to the fluid exterior design. The Cerato offers thrilling driving experiences with a powerful 150 HP 2.0L Euro 4 engine that is paired to a 6-speed automatic transmission.

The Cerato is also available with 1.6L, 126 HP Euro 4 engine which is paired to a 6-speed automatic transmission. For a more exciting time on the road, the Cerato is equipped with a range of features that include a high-resolution 8-inch display screen and a 4.2-inch colour TFT LCD cluster for an improved,



convenient driving experience.

The model also features rear AC vents, Alloy Pedal, Paddle Shifter, Power Sunroof, Remote Engine Start, providing advanced solutions to everyday inconveniences.

The Cerato has a range of advanced safety features like Electronic Parking Brake and Auto Hold braking systems to support secure parking. Equipped with Electronic Stability Programme (ESP), Anti-Lock brake System

(ABS), Driver & Front Passenger Airbags, Rear Parking Assist System, Tyre Pressure Monitoring System and more to ensure a smooth driving experience on the road.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers. Excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities easily ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way.

NBO provides OOMCO with medium-term financing facility

MUSCAT: Catering to the diverse financial needs of its customers across all segments, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has signed an agreement with Oman Oil Marketing Company SAOG (OOMCO) to provide a medium-term financing.

The credit facility will enable the expansion of the OOMCO' investment portfolio across strategic segments in Oman and support the group's business and investment activities.

The signing ceremony took place at NBO's head office in Azaiba and was signed by Abdullah bin Zahran al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer of NBO and Tarik bin Mohammed al Junaidi, CEO of Oman Oil Marketing Company.

Abdullah bin Zahran al Hinai, Chief Executive Officer at NBO, said "We remain dedicated to forging partnerships that drive progress, contributing to Oman's economic growth. The



collaboration with OOMCO showcases NBO's unwavering commitment to delivering exceptional financial services to its customers and supporting the development of the local economy."

Tarik bin Mohammed al Junaidi, CEO at OOMCO, said, "We are pleased to strengthen our relationship with NBO this partnership, which reinforces our commitment to growth and expansion.

The medium-term financing provided by NBO will empower us to further strengthen our business and investment across

key sectors."

NBO's capabilities and expertise in structuring innovative and tailored financing solutions have been instrumental in facilitating this support.

The bank's thorough due diligence and credit assessment techniques ensure the soundness of such deals, further reinforcing NBO's commitment to supporting businesses across various sectors. The focus remains on making banking more convenient and accessible for all customers.



Integrated residential neighbourhoods offer investment avenues for private sector: OCCI

QASIM AL MAASHANI

MUSCAT, JUNE 12

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) is hosting a symposium on investment opportunities linked to the National Initiative for Integrated Residential Neighbourhoods (Sorouh) on Tuesday, June 13, 2023. The event will take place at 9am in the Al-Nu'man Palace Hall located in the Wilayat of Barka.

Held under the auspices of Shaikh Saif bin Hamyar al Shehi, Governor of South Al Batinah, the symposium aims



to provide insights to private sector real estate developers interested in the initiative and its potential for investment.

Sorouh, a government-led initiative, focuses on the construction of fully serviced residential neighbourhoods with

modern specifications.

The symposium will specifically highlight three key sectors: real estate development, construction, and engineering consultancy. Distinguished speakers will be present at the symposium, including: Wisama bin Nasser al Huraibi, Director of the Integrated Residential Neighbourhoods Department at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, who will shed light on integrated residential neighbourhoods (Sorouh); and Ali bin Mohammed al Lawati, Chairman of the Real Estate Development Committee

at the OCCI, who will share the private sector's vision for the national initiative of integrated residential neighbourhoods.

The symposium is free of charge and open to all interested parties. Online registration is required, and interested individuals can register through the OCCI website.

This symposium is part of the OCCI's ongoing efforts to promote investment opportunities in Oman and support the government's initiatives aimed at providing affordable housing for its citizens.

CMA workshop preps securities market for new IPO season



BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 12

The Capital Market Authority conducted a panel discussion on regulations governing public offerings ahead of the season of IPOs anticipated in the Sultanate of Oman. Participated in the forum were representatives of Oman Investment Authority, Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), Muscat Clearing and Depository, OQ, Omani Securities Association and other related entities.

Ahmed bin Ali al Maamari, CMA's Executive Vice President, initiated the panel discussion's agenda with an opening speech saying that this panel is based on the community partnership adopted by the CMA when reviewing and assessing the legislative and regulatory frameworks of the financial services market in the Sultanate of Oman.

He also pointed out that this meeting aims at reviewing and assessing the procedures for conversion into public companies and streamlining such procedures in order to achieve the aspirations of companies and MSX traders, as a preparation for the upcoming IPO and with participation of institutions directly related to the upcoming IPO.

Such participation will assist in achieving convergence of views that ensure the success of the upcoming IPO as well as enhancing the MSX performance.

Al Maamari also stressed that new IPOs always contribute to providing new investment opportunities for local and international investors and clears the way for new investors to join the market.

This eventually boosts the ratios of free shares in the market and increases trading activity. The discussion will focus on several topics like assessing listing requirements, pricing mechanisms, allocation policies and other topics related to technical and legislative aspects.

He said that the government has adopted a national policy aiming at privatising part ownership in state-owned enterprises to accomplish financial and economic objectives that serve the public interest.

The Oman Investment Authority supervises the implementation of such policy after it announced its intention to exit 35 owned companies and its affiliates within five years.

Renewable hydrogen from Oman: A producer economy in transition

PARIS: Oman is a producer economy with net zero ambitions. Hydrocarbon production has a dominant role in Oman's economy with oil and gas representing around 60% of the country's total export income in recent years. Currently, Oman's energy needs are almost entirely met by domestic fossil fuel resources, with natural gas accounting for over 95% of electricity generation.

In 2022, Oman announced a target to become net zero by 2050. It also aims to significantly ramp up domestic production of hydrogen from renewable electricity. This commitment is in addition to earlier targets to increase the use of renewables in the power mix.

Long-term targets for renewable hydrogen exceed the size of current LNG exports.

The country has set targets to produce at least 1 Mt of renewable hydrogen by 2030, up to 3.75 Mt by 2040 and up to 8.5 Mt by 2050. Achieving this would make renewable hydrogen a significant new source of export revenue. Meeting Oman's 2040 hydrogen target would represent 80% of today's LNG exports in energy-equivalent terms, while achieving the 2050 target would almost double them.

The country is well placed to produce large quantities of renewable hydrogen and hydrogen-based fuels.

Oman benefits from high-quality renewable resources (both solar PV and onshore wind) and a convenient location, well-placed to access the main import markets like Europe and Japan. The country also has vast amounts of land for large-scale project development, and existing fossil fuel infrastructure that can be directly used or repurposed for low-emission fuels.

The country has extensive expertise in handling and exporting both LNG and ammonia that are directly applicable to renewable hydrogen and hydrogen-based fuels.

Oman has the potential to become one of the most competitive producers of renewable hydrogen.

Under the current global pipeline of hydrogen projects, the total installed capacity of electrolyzers is expected to increase by a factor of almost 300 by 2030,



leading to capital cost reductions of 70%. With this trend, the cost of producing renewable hydrogen in Oman could be as low as \$1.6/kg H₂ by the end of the decade, positioning Oman as one of the most competitive producers of renewable hydrogen globally.

Oman is on track to become the sixth largest exporter of hydrogen globally by 2030.

According to the IEA's global assessment of announced hydrogen projects as of end 2022, Oman could become the largest exporter of hydrogen in the Middle East this decade.

Oman is actively working to realise its renewable hydrogen targets. In 2022, the government established an independent entity, Hydrogen Oman (HYDROM), to lead and manage the implementation of its hydrogen strategy. So far, 1,500 km² of land has been put aside for development with a potential to produce around 1 Mt/yr of renewable hydrogen. By April 2023, HYDROM had released the result of the first auction for land allocation to renewable hydrogen projects, with six projects being awarded.

The total amount of land identified by Oman as suitable for renewable hydrogen production in the long term is 50,000 km², an area the size of Slovakia. This amount of land would be enough to potentially produce 25 Mt of hydrogen, three times Oman's 2050 targets.

Renewable hydrogen exports are likely to be transported initially in the form of ammonia.

Based on globally announced export-oriented projects, ammonia seems to be the carrier

of choice for marine transport of hydrogen until at least 2030 due to the lack of suitable infrastructure for handling and transporting liquid hydrogen in large quantities.

Given the anticipated reductions in the cost of hydrogen and the relatively low cost of transporting ammonia by sea, the supply cost of renewable ammonia from Oman could be as low as \$450/tonne (over a distance of 10,000 km) by the end of this decade. This would make renewable ammonia cost comparable with the higher end of ammonia market prices over the period of 2010-2020, and well below the record levels of more than \$1,000/tonne experienced globally in 2022 due to price hikes of natural gas.

Ammonia infrastructure needs to significantly expand to facilitate anticipated export volumes.

Oman already exports around 0.2 Mt/yr of ammonia, but this must expand if its hydrogen targets are to be realised in the form of ammonia. Depending on the share of domestic H₂ use, by 2030 Oman could need up to 20-30 times more ammonia export capacity than today.

This would require significant growth in new export infrastructure, in particular storage tanks and dedicated deepwater jetties. As the completion of ammonia infrastructure usually takes more than three years, the planning and construction of export facilities would need to begin in the next few years for them to be operational by 2030.

Developing a domestic market for renewable hydrogen can strengthen Oman's position

while international demand develops.

Currently, only 17% of planned global export projects for 2030 have potential off-takers. The infrastructure for transporting fast growing trade volumes needs time to scale. Domestic demand for renewable hydrogen can start with the refining sector, which uses around 0.35 Mt of fossil hydrogen today and which could be replaced by renewable hydrogen at a production cost of \$1.6/kg by 2030.

Unlike exports, domestic use of renewable hydrogen will also reduce Oman's emissions. Displacing fossil hydrogen in refining would cut emissions by more than 3 MtCO₂/yr, or 4% of current domestic emissions.

Renewables can also benefit the power system, as solar PV and onshore wind can produce cost-effective electricity today.

Meeting Oman's hydrogen targets requires massive build-out of renewable captive power. Around 50 TWh of electricity would be already needed to meet the 2030 target, more than the current size of the electricity system. This will have positive implications for cost-effectively achieving Oman's renewables targets, respectively 20% by 2030 (10 TWh), rising to up to 39% by 2040, which take into account technical and contractual flexibility constraints in the power system. Based on the recently awarded bid prices in the region, utility solar PV and wind are likely already competitive with natural gas in Oman. Simultaneous large-scale deployment of

captive renewables for hydrogen production can further improve the competitiveness of renewables in the power mix. A secure system integration of the 20% renewables target can be achieved via more flexible operation of gas-fired power plants, renewables forecasting and grid expansion.

Scale-up of renewable hydrogen production requires significant investments.

Cumulative investment needs by 2030 would be around \$33 billion, respectively \$20 billion for captive renewable power dedicated to H₂ production and \$13 billion for electrolysis and ammonia conversion, with an additional \$4 billion required for achieving the 20% renewables share target in the power mix.

Renewables and domestic use of hydrogen reduce the need for natural gas.

By 2030, total annual gas savings could be 3 bcm, of which half could be saved annually by replacing 20% of natural gas in power generation with renewables and further half by replacing fossil hydrogen in refining. These savings would be equivalent to roughly 20% of 2021 LNG exports. Oman may consider expanding its LNG infrastructure to increase export volumes, depending on LNG demand and supply trends in the coming years.

Renewable hydrogen can bring multiple benefits to Oman's net zero transition.

Already in this decade, a large-scale roll-out of renewable hydrogen and renewables in the power mix would require an investment of \$37 billion, reduce domestic need for natural gas by 3 bcm/yr and avoid Oman's total CO₂ emissions by 7 MtCO₂, equivalent to 7% of baseline emissions by 2030. By then, ammonia export and domestic replacement of fossil hydrogen could generate an economic value of more than \$2 billion a year, which could rise to double-digit USD billion levels in the long term.

Regardless of the eventual allocation of renewable resources between electricity production and hydrogen for domestic use or exports, renewable hydrogen is set to bring multiple benefits as Oman transitions towards a net zero economy. (This is a reprint of the Executive Summary of IEA's report of the same title)

Opportunity Oman: Tourism sector's growth potential is vast and diverse



DR YOUSUF BIN HAMED AL BALUSHI

The author is the founder and CEO of Smart Investment Gateway; email: yousufh@omaninvestgateway.com

There is no doubt that the Sultanate of Oman with its picturesque landscapes and hospitable people is truly a distinctive tourist destination. Oman's tourism sector is growing quickly, reflecting the country's appeal to regional and international tourists.

Famed for its culture and hospitality, Oman offers diverse experiences for visitors and residents alike. From its maritime heritage to its miles of golden beaches and from its green inland wadis to its deserts and mountains, Oman is truly unique.

A country rich in history and culture, the capital city of Muscat is home to several historical landmarks and cultural attractions.

The Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque is one of the largest mosques in the world, and a popular destination for visitors and the residents. Al Alam Palace, the official residence of the Sultan of Oman, is also a must-visit destination for those interested in the country's history and culture.

The country is home to rugged mountains, pristine beaches, and vast deserts, making it a perfect destination for nature lovers.

Not far away from its capital is the mountainous region of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, offering breathtaking views of the surrounding landscape and a popular destination for hikers and adventure seekers. Rimal Al Sharqiya (previously known as Rimal Al Wahiba) is another



bucket-list destination for those who want to experience the beauty of the Arabian desert.

For beach lovers, Oman's coastline offers a plethora of activities for tourists, including snorkelling, scuba diving, and surfing.

Offering an escape from the summer heat, Salalah in the southern part of Oman welcomes many visitors during the Khareef season from the end of July to the beginning of September.

During this season, the Indian Ocean monsoon visits the shores of Dhofar, turning the coastal plain of the governorate green and providing a welcome respite from soaring temperatures witnessed elsewhere in the GCC. Besides attracting visitors from other GCC and Arab countries, khareef is particularly popular with Omani visitors too.

Welcoming visitors to experience such vibrant experiences, the Omani government has made it easier for tourists to visit the country introducing a new visa system that allows tourists to apply for visas

online, making it more convenient to travel to the country.

Oman has also taken steps to improve its infrastructure, including the expansion of its international airports. The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, as well as the Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN) are leading the charge in promoting the country's tourism industry and is working to drive tourist inflows.

Oman also has several high-end resorts and hotels catering to luxury travellers, with the country's natural beauty and rich cultural heritage making it an attractive destination for this market.

Opportunities in the tourism sector of Oman present themselves in many forms, amongst them are:

■ **Accommodation and Hospitality:** Establishing high-quality hotels, resorts, guesthouses, and boutique accommodations that offer specialised services like eco-tourism or luxury hospitality can cater to specific market segments. By providing unique and tailored experiences,

these establishments can attract discerning travellers seeking exceptional accommodations.

■ **Adventure and Eco-Tourism:** Starting adventure tour companies that offer activities such as hiking, camping, desert safaris, wildlife exploration, and water sports can attract both domestic and international tourists interested in sustainable tourism experiences. Oman's diverse landscapes and natural beauty provide an ideal backdrop for thrilling adventures and eco-friendly exploration.

■ **Cultural and Heritage Tourism:** Initiating guided tours, cultural experiences, and organising events that celebrate Oman's rich cultural heritage can capitalise on the country's cultural tourism potential.

Visitors are eager to immerse themselves in Oman's traditions, customs, and historical landmarks, making cultural tourism a promising investment opportunity.

■ **Medical and Wellness Tourism:** Developing specialised medical tourism services,

including wellness retreats and rehabilitation centres, can attract visitors seeking unique health and wellness experiences. Oman's tranquil environment, coupled with its modern healthcare facilities, creates a conducive setting for medical and wellness tourism development.

■ **Gastronomy and Culinary Tourism:** Establishing restaurants focusing on local specialties, offering food tour packages, cooking classes, and hosting food-focused events can cater to the growing interest in culinary tourism. Oman's rich culinary heritage, influenced by Arabic, Persian and Indian flavours, presents an opportunity to showcase its gastronomic offerings to food enthusiasts.

■ **MICE (Meetings, Incentives, Conferences, and Exhibitions):** Starting event management companies that provide specialised services for corporate events can leverage Oman's modern infrastructure and world-class venues.

The country's strategic location and well-developed facilities make

it an ideal destination for hosting business conferences, exhibitions, and incentive trips.

■ **Sustainable Tourism Initiatives:** Initiatives such as eco-lodges, nature conservation projects, sustainable transportation options, and community-based tourism can attract environmentally conscious travellers.

Investing in sustainable tourism not only preserves Oman's natural beauty but also appeals to the growing demand for responsible and eco-friendly travel experiences.

■ **Tourist Transportation and Travel Services:** Providing transportation services like car rentals, tour buses, or chauffeur-driven services, as well as offering tour packages, travel agency services, and destination management, can cater to tourists' transportation and travel needs. Seamless and efficient travel services enhance the overall visitor experience.

■ **Souvenir and Handicraft Businesses:** Starting businesses that produce and sell traditional Omani handicrafts, textiles, jewellery, or souvenirs can tap into the demand for authentic local products.

Tourists often seek unique mementos to commemorate their visit and appreciate locally crafted items.

■ **Online Travel Platforms:** Developing online platforms or mobile applications that offer comprehensive travel information, booking services, and personalised itineraries can simplify travel planning and cater to tech-savvy travellers.

Providing user-friendly and efficient digital solutions enhances the overall visitor experience and facilitates tourism growth.

As Oman continues to attract a growing number of tourists, investors have the opportunity to contribute to the country's thriving tourism sector.

With its natural beauty, cultural richness, and government support, Oman presents an enticing landscape for those looking to capitalise on the potential of the tourism industry.

Shipping tax could yield \$100 billion climate windfall



HUGO DIXON

The author is a British business journalist and the former editor-in-chief and chairman of the financial commentary website Breakingviews which he co-founded.

The shipping industry emits 2.9 per cent of the world's greenhouse gases. It has also largely escaped taxation because what happens on the high seas is not in the jurisdiction of any single government.

These two facts represent an opportunity. If the International Maritime Organisation (IMO) - the United Nations body which regulates shipping - taxed carbon emissions, it would encourage shippers to go green faster. The body could then channel the money raised, perhaps \$100 billion a year, to poorer countries to help them cope with climate change.

The shipping industry's tax-free status is already facing challenges. The European Union has agreed that from next year all ships will have to buy permits for their emissions within the EU, and half of what they spew out while travelling between the bloc and other countries.

The time is ripe to push for a global levy. This will be one of the ideas on the agenda at French President Emmanuel Macron's summit on a "new global

financial pact" in Paris later this month. The IMO, which has the power to impose a tax, will then meet in early July. Although it's unlikely to agree to a levy, it could set a timetable to introduce one. The shipping industry uses fossil fuels to power its boats. Although there are alternatives, mostly based on green hydrogen, these are two to three times the price of hydrocarbon-based fuels, so many shipowners don't see the point in using them.

That said, industry leaders such as container giant Maersk are moving into green shipping. The Danish company's first vessel capable of running on clean fuels will arrive next month. Part of Maersk's motivation is that many customers, particularly in the fast-moving consumer goods sector, want to cut emissions in their supply chains and are prepared to pay a premium for

greener transport.

A tax on the industry's fossil fuels would bring the cost of clean and dirty combustibles into line, accelerating the energy transition. Though this would push up the cost of traded goods around the world, Maersk estimates it would only add a few cents to the price of a pair of sneakers.

It's true that countries which send their products long distances would be at a disadvantage to those which are closer to their customers, says Tristan Smith, a shipping and energy expert at University College London. But the proceeds from the tax could be used to manage this issue.

International shipping emits about 740 million tonnes in greenhouse gases (GHGs) each year. A group of Pacific nations led by the Marshall Islands is proposing that a levy starts at \$100 a tonne and then ratchets

upwards to make dirty fuels roughly as expensive as cleaner ones. Such a tax could raise as much as \$100 billion a year in the medium term - although the sum would eventually fall if the tax was successful in getting shippers to switch away from hydrocarbons.

This potentially large sum is attracting the attention of people outside the shipping industry, especially those focused on climate change. Rich countries have made various promises to help poor nations meet the costs of transitioning to a zero-carbon economy, but have so far struggled to find enough money to do the job.

An annual pot of up to \$100 billion from shipping is one of the few practical large new sources of funding. That's why it's on the agenda for Macron's summit. Although this meeting will not

have the power to impose a tax, it could build momentum for one.

The group led by the Marshall Islands is arguing that the majority of the funds from a shipping tax should go to countries especially vulnerable to climate change. They could invest the cash in areas such as rolling out green energy and building flood defences.

The Marshall Islands wants another chunk of money to go to developing countries to help them build green shipping industries so they can keep up with rich countries which would otherwise decarbonise their fleets faster.

The cash could help poorer countries invest in innovations such as clean-fuel ships and green hydrogen. The IMO could channel the proceeds of a tax through existing institutions, such as the UN's Green Climate Fund and the World Bank. — Reuters

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

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

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

أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds



To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER,

WhatsApp
 <your name> to
96473232

OMAN OBSERVER

Observer Classified Section

TUESDAY

JUNE 13, 2023

DHUL QAADA 24, 1444 AH

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
95919344

94501166
24649593
24649595



النماني للشحن
AL NAMANI CARGO
DOOR TO DOOR AIR AND SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE

DOOR TO DOOR CARGO



INDIA BANGLADESH NEPAL PHILIPPINES UAE INDONESIA EUROPE UK CANADA USA

WHATSAPP **96353654**
TOLL FREE NUMBER **80066766**
Follow us:  www.alnamanicargo.com

Driving School

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

Contact No: 99074072

سماء الخضراء للتجارة
SAMA AL KHADRA TRADING

SERVICES:

PIPING SYSTEMS	VALVES
DRAINS	INTERCEPTORS

Tel: 24501568, 24502479 • Fax: 24503566
Email: sales@samaalkhadra.com
Website: www.samaalkhadratradingco.com

FOR RENT

Flat for rent

- 1) Darsait, near Indian School: Two bedroom flat, bath attached. Hall, kitchen and guest toilet.
- 2) Al Khuwair, near Rawasco: One bedroom, bath, kitchen, AC, curtains.
- 3) Al Ghubrah near Mars Hypermarket: Two bedroom flat with attached bath, hall, kitchen and guest toilet. One bedroom flat with attached bath, hall, kitchen and guest toilet.
- 4) Al Ghubrah near Indian School: Two bedroom flat with attached bath, hall, kitchen and guest toilet.

*All flats provided with airconditioners, contact GSM: 91473374/97886085.

FLATS 2BHK and 1 bhk in Mumtaz. Contact 99341138 and 90991079.

SIT. VACANT

Ticket Travel & Tourism is looking for you!

- IT Specialist - Website development skill - Programming knowledge (2 Years minimum experience)
- Ticketing and Reservations Agent (2 Years minimum experience)
- HR Officer (2 Years minimum experience)

Send applications to: jobs@ticket-trv.com

SIT. WANTED

SRI LANKAN quantity surveyor 20 years middle-east experienced, transferable visa. Contact: 96044310, jayalal765@yahoo.com

INDIAN male, 20+ years of experience in Supply Chain Procurement, Operations, Logistics in India and Oman. MBA, CISC and CISC certifications in Supply Chain Management, is looking for suitable opportunities in Oman. Contact: 99014627.

I AM looking for a driver job, light licence. Experience 5 years. 97689517.

EAGLE FREIGHT EXPRESS
DOOR TO DOOR COURIER SERVICES
INDIA | NEPAL | BANGLADESH

WORLD WIDE CARGO SERVICE Tel.: 99432926, 78211708, 92319472, 93350126
Head Office (H.O.) Room No.: 218, 1st Floor, Aircargo Complex, Branch Al-Hail, Email: eaglefreightexpress@gmail.com

25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE FAST DELIVERY EXCELLENT SERVICES
AIR & SEA CARGO FREE PICKUP 24/7 SERVICE

AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION

Contact: 97239696 95355638

Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit
Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Sur

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN, male, Sales Executive with 15 years experience in tiles & sanitary ware, looking for sales executive job. Please contact 78756721 & 97099059.

CIVIL engineer with masters in construction management having total 9 years of Gulf experience in construction (as site engineer) & telecom industry (as design review engineer) is looking for suitable job. Ready to join. Email: syed.faraazuddin@gmail.com Contact: +968 99433023, Whatsapp: +91 9052755276.

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

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

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

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309
pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN male graduate Executive Secretary/ Stenography/ Oman DL and Muscat experience available. Contact: 79256679.

INDIAN chef, 27 years experience. (20 years with Ministry, Oman). Seeks job. Contact: 92141722.

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: **99639264**

URGENTLY REQUIRED
Aluminium Fabricator looking for

SALES EXECUTIVES (With own car)
PRODUCTION MANAGER

Candidates with relevant experience only can apply
Email: aluminium@shanfari.com
Whatsapp Number: 99256757 / 99422814

FOR SALE

RESTAURANT equipment for sale. Contact: 77260040.

To advertise on our social media platforms and website

Please Contact our Team
95210257

OMAN OBSERVER
www.omanobserver.om



OMAN OBSERVER DAILY

Observer

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadiameeh@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suhar Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com

FRIDAY, JULY 10, 2020 DHUL QAADA 18, 1441 AH

OMAN OBSERVER DAILY

Observer

ESTABLISHED IN 1981 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: ABDULLAH BIN SALIM AL SHUELI VOL. 39 NO. 239 | PAGES 16

Be Careful, Be Responsible! #Living_with_COVID19

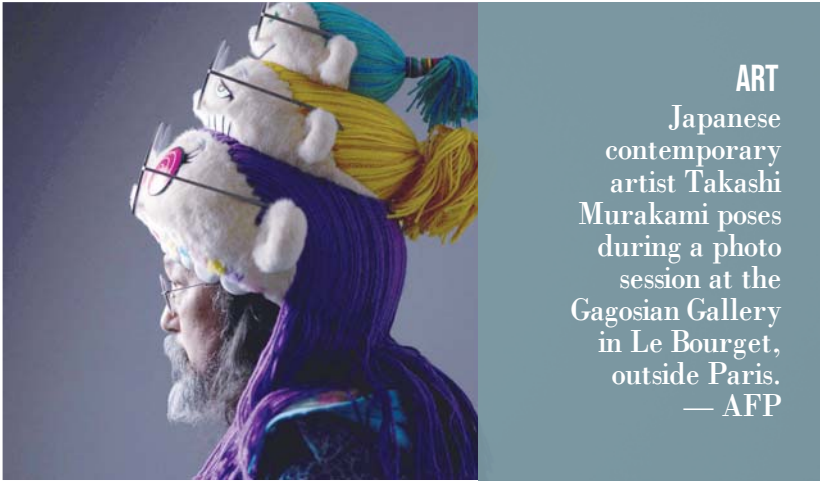
HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

UN HAILS OMAN'S SUPPORT FOR PEACE IN YEMEN

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS



ART
Japanese contemporary artist Takashi Murakami poses during a photo session at the Gagosian Gallery in Le Bourget, outside Paris. — AFP



LIFESTYLE
A woman cooks on a griddle the traditional Venezuelan food known as arepas (stuffed cornmeal tortillas) at a food truck parked on a street of the popular neighbourhood of Santa Rosalia, located in the historic centre of Caracas. — AFP



FASHION
Models present creations for British designer Daniel W Fletcher during his Spring/Summer 2024 catwalk show on the first day of London Fashion Week June Edition, in London. — AFP



MUSIC
US rapper Kendrick Lamar performs during the 2023 Governors Ball Music Festival at Flushing Meadows Corona Park in New York City. — AFP



CULTURE
People take part in the Cavallhada of Mateus Leme festival in Mateus Leme, Minas Gerais state. Composed of 24 riders, the Cavallhada of Mateus Leme is a link that unites past and present. — AFP

art & life

TUESDAY | JUNE 13, 2023 | DHUL QA'ADA 24, 1444 AH

OMAN OBSERVER [f](#) [t](#) [@](#) [v](#) [y](#) [u](#) [e](#) [t](#) [w](#) [w](#) [w](#) [.o](#) [m](#) [f](#) [e](#) [a](#) [t](#) [u](#) [r](#) [e](#) [s](#) [@](#) [o](#) [m](#) [a](#) [n](#) [o](#) [b](#) [s](#) [e](#) [r](#) [v](#) [e](#) [r](#) [.o](#) [m](#)

Oman Across Ages Museum: A place of memories and enlightenment

The successful opening of the Oman Across Ages Museum marks a new milestone for Oman. Not only a centre of the country's historical treasures, it is also a space dedicated to making an impression. The Correspondent talked with the museum's general director to unveil some of its best-kept secrets... **p20**

TRAVEL TALES

Lithuania capital turns pink for love of beetroot soup

LITHUANIA'S CAPITAL was flooded with pink food, decor, and colourful outfits on Saturday, as residents celebrated the Baltic nation's love for a cold beetroot dish commonly known as "pink soup".

While beetroot soup is beloved in many eastern European nations, Lithuania lays claim to Saltibarsciai — made of kefir, cucumbers, beetroot, and dill — eaten cold and a favourite on a hot summer's day.

"It's not just soup - it's a way of life," said the city's tourism agency

Go Vilnius, which organised the first-ever festival in its honour.

French student Victor Delcroix came dressed as a bowl of "Pink Soup."

"I fell in love with Saltibarsciai and I felt obliged to wear this to honour it," he said before jumping on a giant pink slip-and-slide covered in foam.

Elsewhere some festival-goers prepared to set a record with the largest-ever bowl of Saltibarsciai.

Topped with sour cream and



boiled eggs and served with boiled or fried potatoes, "pink soup" is a summer staple in Lithuania.

"There are bars ... that prepare them in interesting ways, like a sushi place that makes it with wasabi," said Ricardas Andrijauskas, at

the festival.

"We usually make it more traditionally."

He was not entirely convinced by all the innovations, he confessed. "Not with wasabi," he said, shaking his head.

INSTAGRAMMABLE' SOUP

Elsewhere at the festival vendors were selling pink ice-cream, coffee, cocktails and perfumes.

Go Vilnius wants the soup to boost food tourism to the city.

"Our city's gastro scene has sky-

rocketed in the past years," Inga Romanovskiene, director of Go Vilnius, said.

"Historical cuisine recipes from the 700 years of the capital's multi-cultural heritage, which celebrate a unique local fusion of Lithuanian, Jewish, Polish cuisine, have also settled in the menus of the city's restaurants."

According to Lithuanians, the dish originated in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, which existed until 1795 and included swathes of territory in present-day Belarus, Russia and Ukraine.

However, Poland and Belarus are among those who contest its heritage.

Pink soup has also become a star on social media.

"It's called one of the most 'instagrammable' soups," said Dovile Seliuke, spokeswoman of the country's tourism promotion agency, Travel Lithuania.

The Pink Soup Fest is taking place against the backdrop of hundreds of Ukrainian flags fluttering around the capital.

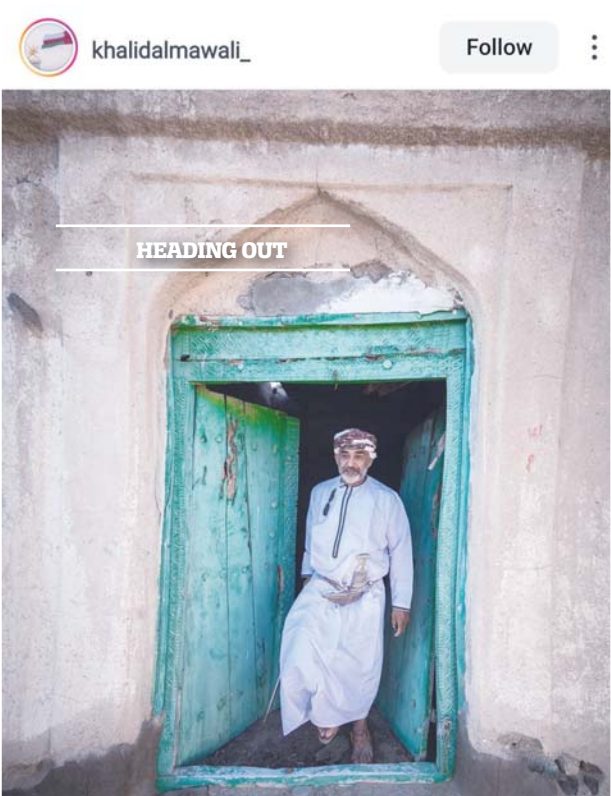
Over 80,000 Ukrainians have now sought asylum in Lithuania, a Baltic country of 2.7 million people.

"The celebration helps take your mind off [...] the war in Ukraine," said Rasa Kasitiene, who with her daughter was dressed up all in pink. — **AFP**



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

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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



AT HIS WORKSHOP in Tunisia's capital, Khaled ben Khemis pieces together a type of bagpipe once banned from airwaves but now embraced by artists infusing its sound into new musical styles.

Known as a "mizwad", it "must be made from natural elements", the 50-year-old craftsman said, taking two cow horns and connecting them to pieces of river reed and a goatskin

other genres, including hip-hop and jazz.

The increased popularity has seen commercial manufacturers turning out mizwads.

But modern variations that replace natural materials with plastic "do not have the soul of those made with reeds", ben Khemis said of the new models, which cost up to 1,000 dinars (\$320).

hol, drugs and prison — where many songs were composed.

"It was a musical genre whose reputation was bad just like those who played it," said Noureddine Kahlaoui, a self-described mizwad "activist" aged in his seventies.

"Criminals and those on the run were always found by authorities at mizwad concerts," said the popular artist who has played the instrument

New life breathed into Tunisia's bagpipes

considered rude, drawing resentment from families and sometimes triggering brawls at parties.

These elements combined to see Tunisia's authorities ban the mizwad on public television channels until the 1990s — leading folk artists to undertake a restoration of the instrument's image.

In July 1991, a "Nouba" concert that mixed folk, popular and Sufi music

too prestigious to host such a concert.

JAZZ AND RAP

"Despite the criticism, we have worked so that this original heritage can progress," said Kahlaoui, who describes the mizwad's evolution as "dazzling".

For the researcher Cherif, "the mizwad occupies a prominent place in the history of Tunisian popular music"

"Thanks to what I learnt during my studies, I understood what could be done with this instrument," said Montassar Jebali, 32, who plays mizwad in several jazz and hip-hop ensembles.

Jebali studied Arabic music at the Higher Institute of Music of Tunisia, where the mizwad is not taught.

"I used my academic knowledge to find out which instrument it went well



bag for producing the musical notes.

He has made the instrument for 30 years.

Most musical historians agree the mizwad first appeared in Tunisia at the beginning of the 20th century and was confined to working-class suburbs for decades before growing in stature to now be incorporated into

He acknowledged the instrument has, however, evolved.

"Before we played out of tune, and we made it in a hurry," he said.

BAD IMAGE

The mizwad spawned its own musical style that was frowned upon by authorities for associations with alco-

for 40 years.

The songs address "daring subjects criticising society, politics, migration and racism", said Rachid Cherif, a musicology researcher.

Mizwad concerts are traditionally held in poor and marginalised neighbourhoods, particularly for weddings.

Song lyrics can be abrasive and

was staged in Carthage's ancient Roman amphitheatre and broadcast on television, marking a fundamental step in the mizwad's rehabilitation.

But some snobbery toward the instrument remains.

In 2022, officials from Tunis's municipal theatre refused to allow a mizwad show, deeming the institution

due to its fundamental identity. It "consolidates the idea of belonging to a nation, an ethnic group and a culture", he said.

In recent years, a new generation of musicians has taken up the instrument, mixing it with contemporary genres offering more room for creativity such as rap and world music.

with," he said.

Jebali's concerts and those of other contemporary mizwad players have been popular with young Tunisians.

"The mizwad is gaining ground" and will have its international breakthrough, he said. "Perhaps not tomorrow, but after tomorrow." — **AFP**

ART

Hit Vermeer show ends in Amsterdam

AMSTERDAM'S FAMOUS Rijksmuseum drew the curtain on Sunday on its "most successful" exhibition featuring paintings of Dutch master Johannes Vermeer, saying hundreds of thousands of art lovers flocked to the capital for the blockbuster show.

Long queues formed daily outside the Rijksmuseum since the exhibition opened on February 10, boasting the largest collection of works by the 17th-century artist ever gathered under a single roof.

"Despite having carefully limited numbers to give visitors the best experience possible, the Rijksmuseum's Vermeer exhibition finished as the most successful exhibition in its history," the museum said.

Some 650,000 visitors from 113 nations came to wonder at Vermeer classics such as "Girl with the Pearl Earring" and "The Milkmaid", which



were among the 28 masterpieces on display.

The exhibition borrowed from galleries and private collections around the world — from the United States to Japan. Other highlights included three works from the Frick Collection in New York, the newly restored "Girl Reading a Letter at the Window" from Dresden, and "Woman Holding a Balance" from Washington's National Gallery of Art.

The exhibition also cast new light on Vermeer's techniques used in "The

Milkmaid" in which researchers discovered a hidden jug holder and basket, later painted over by the enigmatic artist.

For those who missed the chance of wondering at more than two dozen Vermeers at once, a small consolation remained: six Vermeers will remain in place at the museum from June 7.

"The Girl in the Red Hat" and "Young Woman at the Virginal" will hang in the museum's gallery of honour with four Rijksmuseum Vermeers until October 10. — **AFP**

DISCOVERY

Prehistoric bird-wing flutes music to the ears of archaeologists

MINIATURE FLUTES crafted 12,000 years ago from bird bones and discovered in northern Israel may have been used for bird calls at a time when humans were refining their interactions with animals, a team of scientists said.

Seven small wing bones uncovered at a dig site in the Hula Valley — a popular bird watching spot to this day — were identified to have tiny holes bored into the bones for finger placement and as a mouthpiece.

The research team made replicas of the fragile originals, which they found emitted high-pitched trills resembling the calls of birds of prey.

One theory is that the flutes were used to attract the birds of prey — namely the Eurasian Sparrowhawk and the Common Kestrel — to frighten waterfowl, making them easier to catch.



The findings were published in the journal *Nature Scientific Report* by researchers from Hebrew University of Jerusalem, the Centre de Recherche Français à Jérusalem, the Centre nationale de recherche scientifique, and the Israel Antiquities Authority.

Over 500 million birds pass through the Hula Valley each year as they migrate between Europe and Africa, making it a popular destination for bird watchers.

The flute bones, which came from Eurasian coots and Eurasian teals, were found in the Eynan/Ain Mallaha

dig site linked to hunter-gatherers from the final Natufian period 12,000 years ago.

That was a period when our ancestors were beginning to settle down, farm and domesticate animals, said forensic anthropologist Tal Simmons of Virginia Commonwealth University, who identified the type of birds.

The use of flutes to communicate with the birds, Simmons said, was "really cementing that transition to a time when the relationship between humans and animals began to change". — **Reuters**

art & life

f t i y @omanobserver

TUESDAY | JUNE 13 | 2023

CULTURE

Oman Across Ages Museum: A place of memories and enlightenment



By Yeru Ebuén
Instagram: @yru_here

By design, the Oman Across Ages Museum was built to represent many things: the importance of the country's history, the triumph of Oman from past to present, a subtle summary of Oman's building policy, and a celebration of its bright future. It was designed to become an architectural wonder, taking inspiration from the pronounced beauty of the Al Hajar Mountains and boldly representing the Oman environment and its geographical traits while bestowing modern and futuristic characters, all merging so well that the lines between the past and the present are well represented almost in every corner.

With an area of 300,00 sqm and the building being 66,000 sqm wide, it takes hours just to explore the installations from one end to the other.

regardless of the time of day, the museum offers a comfortable space for its visitors.

WHAT'S INSIDE?

The museum is consists of two halls: the History Hall and the Renaissance Hall.

Once a visitor sets foot inside, they are taken on a journey through the geography and history of Oman; the oldest items in the museum date back to prehistoric eras.

The History Hall consists of a series of pavilions, each dedicated to a particular subject: The Land of Oman, Early Settlers, The Civilisation of Majan, The Kingdom of Majan, Maritime Heritage, Aflaj Irrigation, Embracing Islam, The Al Ya'aruba Dynasty, and The Al Busaidy Dynasty. In this way, visitors can travel through time and space, from the country's geological formation, through the experiences of the early settlers to the modern Renaissance age.

with the years of the Blessed Renaissance. This explores various aspects of the social, economic, industrial, and political transformation experienced by Oman, while at the same time preserving its authentic identity and cultural traditions.

The Hall comprises interactive digital exhibits that display the speeches of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said. It also explores fundamental aspects of the Blessed Renaissance such as education, healthcare, infrastructure, foreign relations, tourism and the economy.

The Oman Across Ages Museum houses 310 video exhibits and 1,200 interactive, 2D and 3D screens, map projection technology, as well as 1,300 antique exhibits, 80 replica exhibits, 500 text panels and drawings, 150 display boxes, 61 km of fibre-optic cables, and 21 km of audio-video cables.

Notable exhibits in the museum include the jaw of the Omantherium, a type of huge primitive elephant that lived on the land of Oman about 35 million years ago, and trilobites found in the Wilayat of Mahout in the Al Wusta Governorate, which date back to 250 million to 500 million years ago.

The Museum also contains the Majan Ship, which is a reimagining of the vessels of the Majan Civilisation made of reed bundles tied with ropes of palm fibres and woven mats sealed with black tar.

Another notable exhibit is a message from His late Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said to his teacher in the month of Rajab 1374 AH, corresponding to February 1955.

The museum includes educational games for children with modern interactive technologies that provide a unique museum experience.

The museum also contains the Knowledge Centre, which is an information resource for students, researchers, and readers. The Centre represents a key feature of the Oman Across Ages Museum and comprises a rich source of information that contributes to building knowledge for all, from children to researchers.

The Centre provides equal opportunities for all to benefit from its facilities, equipment and services, promoting and developing cultural and historical knowledge by providing life-long learning opportunities via



For those who are curious about its technical parts, it uses steel-coloured glass, four layers of it, about 6 cm thick each, and is about 5 metres high. Its glass facade rises as high as 25 metres, and while its clear silhouette dominates the Manah landscape, its builders have successfully blended it with its surrounding landscape.

To achieve the design intent of a weathered steel appearance, the about 2000 aluminium panels used underwent a process called double anodization. Quoting the report from the experts who worked on the project, Grankraft mentioned, "The different colours on the panels are produced with the electrochemical deposition of metal salts in the pores of the anodizing layer. The aluminium is durable, corrosion-resistant, UV-resistant, and has a life expectancy of over 80 years, without losing gloss or colour."

While everyone will have the opportunity to gawk at the different halls, pavilions, and displays, only a very few know the best-kept secrets of what makes the museum a true wonder. Eng Al Yaqdhan bin Abdullah al Harthy, Director General of the Museum, was at every step of the museum's construction.

The late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos laid the foundation stone of the museum in 2015, and within the last eight years, he accomplished some of the most amazing engineering and architectural feats inspired by the traditional building methods in Oman.

"One of the true wonders of the museum will remain unseen by the public," Al Harthy shared.

"Below the floors of this building is a labyrinth that allows for airflow that helps cool down the building all year round," he shared.

He said that a specially built tunnel was filled with containers that are naturally frozen by the cooler night temperature, with the stored energy being released later in the form of latent heat to the air supply system to cool the incoming air for the outside air supply.

"The museum was also built for maximum natural light, but not so much that it becomes too bright," he said.

The museum has a low profile on its eastern side, which shields the inside from direct sunlight during sunrise. On the museum's western side, the windows are built into sloped walls, which block direct sunlight and lower the energy needed for illumination.

What is most remarkable is that this technique was inspired by the building techniques used for the ancient castles and buildings of Oman, with walls clad by high-quality Omani stones taken from governorates of Al Dhahirah and Al Batinah North that help cool down the surrounding air.

Al Harthy was proud that,

The History Hall also relates various events to their historical epochs, with two basic features taking prominence: maritime heritage and aflaj (a traditional irrigation system). The geological formation of the Land of Oman and the Stone Age is represented in the Early Settlers pavilion, the Bronze Age is seen through the Civilisation of Majan pavilion; and the Iron Age is represented in the Kingdom of Oman pavilion. The pavilions for different ages exhibit various aspects of daily life. These are evident in the settlements of Ras Al Hamra and Ras Al Jinz and their relationship with seasonal migrations, maritime communication, copper trade, and the construction of the aflaj system.

The pavilions offer a high-definition environment showcasing the contribution of the



people of Oman to Islam, in addition to different aspects of intellectual, political, and social life and economic life.

Exhibits are introduced via digital media to create multi-dimensional environments that enable the visitor to experience each era in virtual reality.

Through the use of high-definition audio-visual presentations and virtual maps, the History Hall also explores the eras of the Al Ya'aruba Dynasty and the Al Busaidy Dynasty. This chronicles the period of the state's establishment, the period of the Omani Empire, the period of division of government between Muscat and Zanzibar, and the period that led to the Renaissance. The emphasis is on aspects of daily life and achievements in various fields of life during the rule of the Imams and sultans of the Al Busaidy Dynasty.

The Renaissance Hall consists of pavilions titled Dawn of the Renaissance, Building A Nation, Our Society, Healthy Environment, Peace and Stability, Towards A Sustainable Economy, Infrastructure and Connectivity, Ash'shura, Oman, and the World, Inspiration, Creative Expression, and Media and Communications.

The hall's entrance is an open space in the centre of gigantic columns, which form an interactive space with a panoramic view of presentations via a high-resolution audio-visual display system that deals

interactive educational programmes, training workshops, lectures and seminars.

The Knowledge Centre, spread over three floors occupies a total area of 6,000 square metres. The ground floor houses the Ideas Lab and the Innovation Lab, which are equipped with tools and books suitable for children from 3 to 14 years old.

The first and second floors house the library of Hisn Al Shumoukh. The library contains more than 46,000 titles in various areas of science and knowledge. It is equipped with technology that allows researchers to access their desired titles and references, in hard copies or electronic form.

The Library provides services in person to visitors or remotely via a digital reference service operating through the Centre's website, an instant chat service and an "Ask the Librarian" form. Services are also available via email, smartphone applications and social media. The Library's facilities also include a lecture hall, a multi-purpose hall and facilities for disabled people. The Museum has a shop, which offers a wide range of exclusive gifts with attractive designs, many of which are inspired by the history, heritage and culture of the Sultanate of Oman.

Oman Across Ages Museum is located in the Wilayat of Manah in the heart of the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.