

SQU achieves its best, ranks 362

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) advanced 92 places and ranked 362, achieving its best ranking in the QS World University Ranking (QS). SQU witnessed a significant increase in several indicators in QS, including: Academic Reputation, Employer Reputation, Employment Outcomes, and the Sustainability. **REPORT ON P2**

SUNRISE - 05:20 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR - 03:53 AM

DHUHR - 12:11 PM

ASR - 03:29 PM

MAGHRIB - 06:57 PM

ISHA - 08:18 PM



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MUSCAT

HM CONGRATULATES INDIAN PM MODI FOR WINNING THIRD TERM

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Narendra Modi, on the occasion of winning a third term as Prime Minister of the Republic of India. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of success to Modi. His Majesty also wished the Indian people further progress and prosperity, and the relations of friendship and cooperation between the two countries further progress and growth.

HM CONGRATULATES PRESIDENT-ELECT OF MEXICO

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Dr Claudia Sheinbaum of the United Mexican States, on the occasion of her being elected as a new President for Mexico. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments to President Claudia Sheinbaum, wishing her success to achieve aspirations of the Mexican people. His Majesty also wished relations between Oman and Mexico further progress and prosperity.

HIS MAJESTY GREET'S KING OF SWEDEN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Carl XVI Gustaf of the Kingdom of Sweden on the occasion of his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to King Carl XVI Gustaf. His Majesty also wished people of Sweden further progress and prosperity. — ONA

RO 38M WADI ADAI DAM PROJECT KICKS OFF



The dam would have a storage capacity of 23 million cubic metres. — ONA

MUTTRAH: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources began implementing the Wadi Adai Dam project for protection against flood risks. The construction of the dyke, located alongside Wadi Adai valley in the Wilayat of Muttrah in Muscat Governorate, cost an estimated RO 38 million. Nasser bin Mohammed al Battashi, Director General of Water Resources Assessment at the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, said that the construction of the Wadi Adai dam in this important location plays a major role in protecting the target areas against the risks posed by rainwater floods. **SEE ALSO P13**

MOONSIGHTING COMMITTEE MEETS TODAY



MUSCAT: The main moonsighting committee will hold a meeting today (Thursday) at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA) to receive reports about the sighting, if ever, of the crescent moon of the month of Dhul Hijjah 1445 AH. The meeting will be chaired by Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. The ministry calls upon citizens and residents to look out for the crescent moon and report to field teams in the wilayats of Oman or contact subcommittees in the offices of governors. — ONA



Sisters search for missing mother following Israeli strike in Khan Younis. — Reuters

Oman ranks first in EPI

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

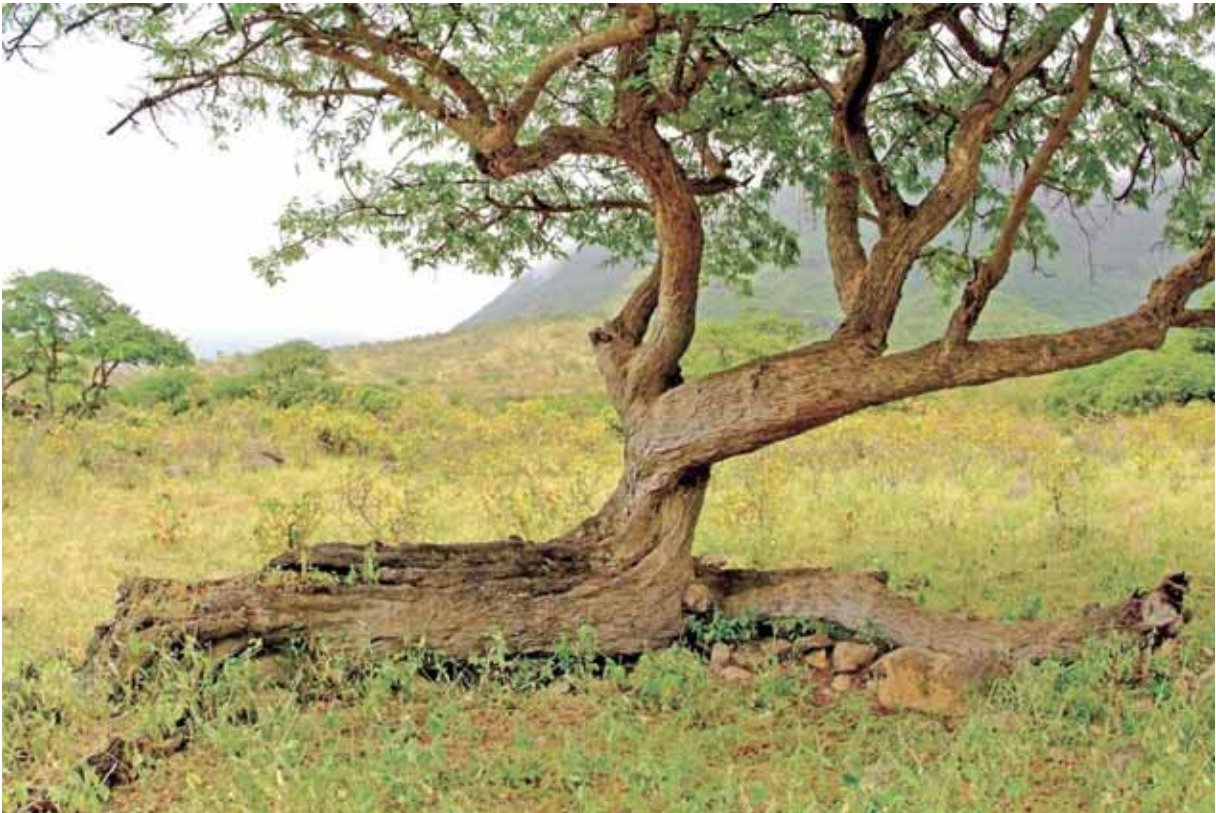
Oman has made a remarkable leap forward in environmental responsibility, securing the number one spot in the prestigious 2024 Environmental Performance Index (EPI). This achievement reflects the country's commitment to safeguarding natural resources and pursuing sustainable practices across the sectors.

One area where Oman shines is marine protection. The country emerged as a leader in marine biodiversity, demonstrating its commitment to preserving the richness of its underwater world.

Stringent regulations and effective policies have ensured the responsible use of marine resources, promoting long-term health for these ecosystems.

Oman's fight against climate change is also noteworthy. The country has effectively tackled black carbon emissions, a major contributor to global warming. Proactive measures have been implemented to curb emissions from various sources, showcasing a comprehensive strategy to combat climate change and its damaging effects.

Similarly impressive is Oman's success in controlling air pollution. Stringent environmental regulations



Oman on Wednesday joined other countries in celebrating World Environment Day, which falls on June 5 every year under the motto 'Our Land, Our Future'. — ONA

and a shift towards cleaner technologies have significantly reduced sulphur dioxide emissions, a harmful pollutant. This accomplishment highlights Oman's commitment to cleaner air and public health.

Sustainable fishing practices are another area of strength for Oman. The country has taken a leading role in managing bottom trawling activities, both within its exclusive economic zone and across the world's

oceans. This leadership ensures minimal disruption to the ocean floor, protecting vital marine ecosystems for future generations. Even in agriculture, Oman demonstrates its commitment to sustainability.

The country excelled in optimising agricultural practices, and achieving higher crop yields while minimising environmental impact. Sustainable farming techniques and efficient resource management have been

instrumental in this achievement.

The EPI considers three key objectives: Ecosystem health, environmental well-being, and climate change. Oman's impressive performance across these categories underscores its holistic approach to environmental sustainability. The country's well-rounded policies and innovative initiatives have solidified its position as a global leader in environmental stewardship.

Oman welcomes Slovenia's recognition of Palestine

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has welcomed and appreciated the decision made by the Republic of Slovenia to recognise the sisterly State of Palestine.

The Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Wednesday encouraging the rest of the countries to follow suit to guarantee the right of the Palestinian people to establish their independent state and to enhance international efforts supporting the two-state solution and establishing lasting and sustainable peace in the region.

Meanwhile, Israel reiterated on Wednesday its refusal to halt the Gaza offensive for a resumption of hostage-release talks with Hamas, after mediator Qatar said it had given the Palestinian fighters a US-backed truce proposal. Efforts to wind down the almost eight-month-old war have stumbled over Israel's declared aim of eliminating Hamas as a governing and military force, while Hamas has given no sign it would step down and wants the Israeli offensive called off.

80 years on, Britain promises to 'always remember' D-Day

PORTSMOUTH/SAINT-LO: Britain paid tribute on Wednesday to those who took part in D-Day, promising to "always remember" the sacrifices made by the Allied soldiers who invaded France by sea and air to drive out the forces of Nazi Germany.

With guests waving British flags, appearances from veterans, recollections and readings — and some tears in Queen Camilla's eyes — the British ceremony took



Britain's King Charles and Queen Camilla attend a UK national commemorative event to mark the 80th anniversary commemorations of Allied amphibious landing (D-Day Landings) in France in 1944, in Southsea Common, in Portsmouth, southern England. — AFP

place in Portsmouth, the main departure point for the 5,000 ships that headed to Normandy for the June 6, 1944, operation.

"Today we come together to honour those nearly 160,000 British, Commonwealth and Allied troops who, on 5th June 1944, assembled here and along these shores to embark on the mission which would strike that blow for freedom and be recorded as the greatest amphibious operation in history,"

King Charles said.

"So, as we give thanks for all those who gave so much to win the victory, whose fruits we still enjoy to this day, let us, once again, commit ourselves always to remember, cherish and honour those who served that day and to live up to the freedom they died for."

"We will always remember those who served and those who waved them off," Prince William said. — Reuters



PACT SIGNED FOR RO 5M SHELLFISH, ALGAE FARMING PROJECT IN MASIRAH

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and Fisheries Development Oman on Wednesday signed in Muscat an agreement in the field of commercial aquaculture (breeding shellfish). The project, which will come up in the Wilayat of Masirah in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, has an investment value of RO 5 million.

The agreement was signed by Dr Saud bin Hamoud Al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and Muneer



bin Ali al Muniri, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Fisheries Development Oman. The project will be implemented by the Blue Waters Company, an affiliate of Fisheries Development Oman.

Net-Zero Solutions (NTZ) Company also signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) in the field of microalgae cultivation with Al Tharmad Business and Services Company and a Saudi firm named Al Khadra Gulf Industries company. — ONA

State Council, Majlis Ash'shura agree on 14 articles, disagree on 62

KHALED AL ADAWI
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

The State Council held its fifth meeting of the first annual session of the eighth term, on Wednesday during which the Council discussed the draft media law referred to it by the Council of Ministers as well as a related report of the Majlis Ash'shura.

The State Council and the Majlis Ash'shura have agreed on 14 articles of the draft Media Law whereas the two chambers are in disagreement with regard to another 47 articles. The State Council added 3 articles and Majlis Ash'shura added 12 articles bringing the total articles of disagreement 62.

This was stated by Khalid bin Ahmed al Saadi, Secretary-

General of the State Council. He added that the articles of the draft Media Law were voted one by one and were approved by the majority of the council members.

The State Council's Social and Cultural Committee which is tasked with studying the draft law presented its report before the council. The committee concluded that two main principles guaranteed by the Basic Law of the State, specifically the freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of the press, were set forth by Articles 35 and 37.

The Secretary-General of the State Council said that the draft Media Law was elaborately discussed by the members of the State Council and all visions and ideas were presented with complete transparency.

SQU climbs historic high in QS world rankings

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) has achieved a remarkable milestone in the QS World University Rankings for 2025, soaring 92 places to secure the 362nd position globally. This ranking marks the highest ever in the university's history, reflecting over a year of sustained efforts and significant advancements.

SQU demonstrated considerable improvement across several key QS indicators, including academic reputation, employer reputation, employment outcomes and sustainability. The university's strategic investment in fostering strong, long-standing relationships with academics and researchers worldwide has positively influenced its academic reputation index.

HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al



HH Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU

Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of SQU, expressed pride in this achievement, emphasising its alignment with Oman Vision 2040. He highlighted that this progress fulfils the university's first strategic goal of ranking among the top 500 universities globally by 2030, setting a strong foundation

for achieving further strategic objectives.

Dr Tariq Mohiuddin Mohamed Ghulam, Director of SQU's Strategic Project on International University Ranking, extended gratitude to the university's administration for their support and guidance, as well as to the



HH Sayyidah Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at SQU

internal and external contributors for their cooperation.

The employment sector's collaboration with SQU has been pivotal, with coordination from the National Records Center of the Royal Oman Police and the National Employment Programme significantly boosting

job reputation and employment outcomes indicators.

Her Highness Sayyidah Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at SQU, highlighted that this advanced ranking underscores SQU's strategic role on the global stage. She stressed

the importance of sustained efforts and continuous improvement to maintain and enhance the university's global standing.

The QS World University Rankings 2025 introduced the Sustainability Index, where SQU ranked 286th globally in 2024. Additionally, SQU's academic programmes achieved notable rankings: petroleum engineering was rated 35th, library management ranked between 51-70, and nursing placed between 51-100 globally.

SQU continues to support and enhance its postgraduate programmes, offering 121 programmes across various colleges with around 1,200 students enrolled. The Deanship of Scientific Research manages 594 ongoing projects with a budget of RO 8.7 million, encouraging research that addresses critical issues and provides practical solutions.

Salalah Port secures 2nd place in global efficiency ranking

SALALAH: The Port of Salalah retained its position as the second most efficient container port in the world according to the 2023 Container Port Performance Index (CPPI). Port of Salalah also claimed the top spot in the West Central and South Asia region.

The CPPI, developed by the World Bank and S&P Global Market Intelligence, is based on an extensive dataset from 405 ports worldwide, the largest to date, comprising over 182,000 vessel calls, 238.2 million moves, and approximately 381 million twenty-foot equivalent units (TEUs) for the full calendar year of 2023.

Port performance is measured by the efficiency of vessel turnaround time, known as 'Total Port Hours' – the total duration from when a ship reaches the port limits, pilot station, or anchorage zone, until it departs the berth after completing its cargo exchange. According to the report, the Port of Salalah, with 1,146 vessel calls, achieved 164.72 index points, ranking second only to Yangshan in China, which had 3,509 vessel calls and an index score of 177.9.

Amidst the changes in global rankings caused by regional disruptions, China's Yangshan Port retained its first-place position,



The Port of Salalah has retained its position as the second most efficient container port in the world.

while the Port of Salalah secured its second-place ranking. The Port of Cartagena in Colombia moved up to third place, Tanger-Mediterranean in Morocco held fourth, and Malaysia's Tanjung Pelepas Port rounded out the top five.

The Port of Salalah's strategic location, expanding connectivity, and world-class operations provide its customers with a significant competitive edge in the region.

As a vital transshipment hub, Salalah also plays a crucial role in boosting the local economy in Dhofar by offering exceptional connectivity for importers and exporters to trade globally. The port's high efficiency enhances local business confidence and

attracts investment, including foreign direct investment (FDI).

The Port of Salalah is currently carrying out a \$300 million container terminal upgrade and expansion project. Next week the port will receive the final four out of 10 new ZPMC ship-to-shore cranes. The first cranes, with a 75 m/26 container outreach, arrived at the start of 2024 are currently being commissioned and tested to start operations.

Once the project is completed in the first quarter of 2025, annual capacity at the terminal will increase from 5 million to 6 million TEU. The extra capacity will allow it to efficiently serve as a key hub for the Gemini Cooperation - a long-term operational collaboration between

Maersk and Hapag-Lloyd, which will start in February 2025, with additional capacity available for other shipping lines.

"Retaining this title for the third consecutive year, reaffirms our strong commitment to continuous performance improvement, even during challenging times," said Keld Christensen, CEO of Port of Salalah.

On his turn, Scott Selman, COO of Port of Salalah, said, "I am pleased to see the Port of Salalah retaining our position despite the challenges to global container trade that have negatively impacted vessel schedules. 2023 has been particularly challenging operationally due to the ongoing Container Terminal upgrade construction." — ONA

213 graduate from Salalah Vocational College



SALALAH: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, under the General Directorate of Vocational Training, celebrated on Wednesday at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah the graduation of the seventh batch of students from the Vocational College in Salalah.

The ceremony was under the auspices of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation.

Dr Saeed bin Masoud Kashoub, Director of the Vocational College in Salalah, in his speech said: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation continues to keep pace with developments and changes in the fields of education, training and scientific research and to encourage innovation and creativity, stressing that the readiness of graduates to integrate into The labour market in various specialisations after the academic training qualification they received in college.

The ceremony included graduates' speeches and a visual presentation about the college, the specialisations offered, and the facilities equipped with the latest technologies, methods and approved devices in line with the standards of the vocational education and training system and the requirements of the labour market.

The number of graduates reached 213 male and female graduates in the professional diploma track, distributed among three specialisations: energy engineering, electronic device maintenance and specialised sales and marketing.

The occasion was attended by Dr Muna bint Salim al Jardaniyah, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Vocational Training, and their excellencies, officials and the college's academic and administrative staff. — ONA



Oman braces for downdraft winds, scattered showers

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The downdraft wind related to the local cloud development over Al Hajar Mountains was the main concern for weather experts on Wednesday and for the upcoming days.

The temperatures recorded were better with 45 degrees Celsius as the maximum recorded in Fahud, but the humidity ranged between 40 to 80 per cent in Muscat and Salalah recorded humidity of 65 to 85 per cent.

While the pre-monsoon showers are expected to continue over Dhofar, the rains from the local cloud formation slowed down on Wednesday but are expected to continue for today and forthcoming days.

Mainly clear skies are expected for Thursday over most of the governorates with chances of convective clouds formation

“Clouds have been forming over parts of Al Hajar Mountains and chances of scattered thunderstorms continue to form with chances of scattered rainfall on the coast of Dhofar Governorate

OMAN MET OFFICE

and isolated rain occasionally thundershower over parts of Al Hajar Mountains and chance of advection clouds and isolated rain over parts of Dhofar Governorate coast. There is also the chance of dust rising over deserts and open areas. Chances of low-level cloud



or fog patches are expected over parts of the Arabian Sea and Sea of Oman coastal areas.

The weather expert at Oman Met Office said cumulus cloud activity may cause dust

and unstable objects to fly, and horizontal visibility may sometimes decrease.

“Currently, the main concern is the downdraft wind. This is a concern with unstable objects,”

said the weather forecaster.

Over the coastal areas of the Sea of Oman winds are reported to be northerly to northeasterly light to moderate changing to variable light at night, and over

the rest of the governorates, winds are expected to be southerly to southeasterly light to moderate occasionally fresh over the desert and open areas. While along the Arabian Sea coasts, winds will be southerly to southwesterly moderate to fresh.

“Clouds have been forming over parts of Al Hajar Mountains and chances of scattered thunderstorms continue to form with chances of scattered rainfall on the coast of Dhofar Governorate,” Oman Met Office said.

The sea state will be moderate to rough along the Arabian Sea coasts with a maximum wave height of 3.0 metres and slight over the rest of the coasts with a maximum wave height of 1.25 metres.

Meanwhile, rainfall continued on parts of the coast and mountains of Dhofar Governorate and is expected to continue.

Oman takes part in Cairo meet on Arab Forum for Equality

CAIRO: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Social Development, participated in the 3rd Arab Forum for Equality, held in Cairo under the theme “Addressing Inequality in Times of Multiple Crises”.

Oman’s delegation was headed by Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development.

The forum was organised by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) in cooperation with the Sawiris Foundation for Social Development and the Pathfinders Group “For Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Societies”.

It aimed to involve specialist policymakers, decision-makers and civil society organisations in the Arab region to find practical solutions to address the lack of equality in times of crises, and



The Ministry of Social Development, participated in the 3rd Arab Forum for Equality, held in Cairo.

identifying the links between inequality and multiple crises.

The forum reviewed best practices in regions that were able to reduce inequalities in times of crises and developed long-term policies to confront crisis risks and ensure stability.

The forum included the holding of the tenth meeting of ESCWA’s Expert Group on Social Protection Reform in the Arab region.

The forum reviewed best practices in regions that were able to reduce inequalities in times of crises and developed long-term policies to confront crisis risks and ensure stability

Moreover, the meeting discussed the progress made by member countries in developing country profile reports for their comprehensive social protection systems.

Representatives of these countries also provided a brief overview of their experiences, challenges and best practices that were gained during this process.

— ONA

OMAN VISION 2040 STRATEGIC PLANS, PROGRAMMES REVIEWED

MUSCAT: Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit on Wednesday held its second annual meeting with members of government-unit-based-offices tasked with implementing the vision.

The meeting, held in Muscat, reviewed strategic plans and programmes to achieve the vision’s objectives, the progress made in related projects and proposed solutions to address the challenges posed to the project’s implementation.

During the meeting, a “Vision Offices Guide” was issued to streamline the efforts of Oman Vision 2040 offices that are based in government departments.

Sayyid Dr Munthir bin Hilal al Busaidy, Deputy Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, said that the meeting was a step forward in ensuring the alignment of plans and programmes to achieve the objectives of the vision.

The participants in the meeting listened to progress reports



During the meeting, a “Vision Offices Guide” was issued to streamline the efforts of Oman Vision 2040 offices that are based in government departments.

— ONA

and presentations made by representatives of the Ministry of Education, the Development Bank and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

They spoke about performance indicators, achievements made in cooperation with the private sector and investment cooperation departments.

The meeting was attended by Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, and heads and representatives of the vision’s offices in government units.

— ONA

Italian Embassy marks National Day



Italian National Day was celebrated at Grand Hyatt Muscat Hotel recently.

MUSCAT: The Ambassador of Italy accredited to the Sultanate of Oman, Pierluigi D’Elia, celebrated the Italian National Day at Grand Hyatt Muscat Hotel under the auspices of Khalid bin Hashil bin Mohammed al Muselhi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs, accompanied by an official delegation including members of the State Council and Majlis AshShura, the Armed Forces, the Foreign Ministry and other government entities.

The reception highlighted 52 years of

friendship, mutual understanding and cooperation in many fields, including diplomatic relations, education, culture, economy, technology, sport and people. The event was attended by over 400 guests including officials, personalities and members of the Italian and Omani community.

On this occasion, Pierluigi D’Elia, Italian Ambassador to Oman, said: “Today we celebrate a successful 52 years old story of friendship, bilateral cooperation and harmony between two countries with a

shared mission towards a solid commitment to international peace and security, prosperity, justice and human development.”

This Italian National Day celebration was supported by the Omani Foreign Ministry, Ajwaad Palace, Cantina Caleffi, Sager, Al Rofoof Hotel Supplies & Trading representing finest Italian Coffee from Illy Café Catering Solutions Trading representing ‘Barilla’, Mohsin Haidar Darwish representing ‘Alfa Romeo’, Al Maya International representing ‘Lago’, Al Seer Group representing ‘Ferrero’, and Grand Hyatt Muscat Hotel.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

HASIS intends to construct of external play area at HASIS Complex near the City Walk at Sur, in East Sharqiya Region.

All contractors registered under grade 1 & 2 in Ministry of Commerce & Investment/ Oman Chamber of Commerce, with relevant experience, are invited to purchase a tender document by depositing the tender amount of OMR.25/- to the below bank account number and send receipt along with your Company name, Mobile contact number and email address to the below email and then the tender document will be forwarded electronically in your provided email.

Closing Date for deposit the tender fee will be on Thursday 13th June 2024.

Bank Account Details:

Account Name	HAI AL SHROOQ INTERNATIONAL LLC
Account No.	0050-2004-2811
Bank Name	Bank Sohar
Branch	Shatti Al Qurum, Oman
Swift Code	BSHROMRXXX

Please send your receipts to the following e-mails:-

- HASIS Operation Manager : ralaraimi@hasis.om
- HASIS Account Officer : aalfarsi@hasis.om

Once we confirm receiving the payment, we will send you a link for required tender documents. For any technical clarification of the projects, you may send all your queries to our project consultant e-mail:-

- info.accoman@gmail.com

Date of site visit of the project will be determined later. Further information and details will be provided after registration.



OMAN HALTS MID-DAY OUTDOOR WORK



AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@Afrahalbalushia

With the soaring temperatures in Oman, the government has taken decisive action to protect workers from heat stress by suspending work for three hours each afternoon.

The Ministry of Labour announced that from June to August, outdoor work is banned from 12.30 pm to 3:30 pm. This policy aims to safeguard workers from the dangers associated with heat exposure, allowing them to resume outdoor activities only after the designated hours.

The meteorological authorities have cautioned against exposure to direct sunlight during these extreme temperatures, highlighting risks such as sunstroke, heat exhaustion, and other heat-related illnesses.

These conditions are particularly prevalent in fields requiring prolonged outdoor activity.

Experts predict that 2024 could mark the first year in human history where the global average temperature exceeds the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold.

Consequently, occupational safety and health are gaining heightened attention worldwide, emphasising the protection of both workplaces and workers to enhance productivity and overall development.

Heat exhaustion, a common result of high temperature exposure and dehydration, can significantly impair workers' health.

In adherence to the Omani Labour Law, the Ministry of Labour underscores the importance of implementing measures



VIOLATIONS OF THESE REGULATIONS CAN LEAD TO SEVERE PENALTIES, INCLUDING FINES RANGING FROM **RO 100 TO RO 500** IMPRISONMENT FOR UP TO ONE MONTH, OR BOTH, WITH DOUBLED PENALTIES FOR REPEATED OFFENSES



EXPOSURE TO DIRECT SUNLIGHT CAUSES

- SUNSTROKE
- HEAT EXHAUSTION
- HEAT-RELATED ILLNESSES

HEAT STRESS SYMPTOMS INCLUDE

- INTENSE SWEATING
- INCREASED HEART RATE
- LOW BP UPON STANDING
- FATIGUE
- DIZZINESS
- NAUSEA
- HEADACHES
- MUSCLE CRAMPS

to halt afternoon work in the private sector.

Such compliance is crucial for fostering a safe and healthy work environment, improving worker-employer relations, and reducing occupational accidents related to heat stress.

The construction sector is particularly vulnerable, with workers frequently exposed to direct sunlight. Thus, the ministry has enforced stringent regulations to ensure their protection, reflecting Oman's commitment to international labour laws and conventions.

Violations of these regulations can lead to severe penalties, including fines ranging from RO 100 to 500, imprisonment for up to one month, or both, with doubled penalties for repeated offenses.

The Department of Occupational Safety and Health is actively conducting inspections to enforce these measures and promote safer working conditions.

Medical professionals note that heat stress symptoms include intense sweating, increased heart rate, low blood pressure upon standing, fatigue, dizziness, nausea, headaches, and muscle cramps.

Therefore, occupational safety regulations stress the importance of preventive measures, such as wearing light, loose, light-coloured clothing, using sunglasses and wide-brimmed hats, and staying well-hydrated.

Overall, these proactive steps aim to protect its workforce, ensuring their well-being and maintaining productivity during the harsh summer months.



MINISTRY OF INFORMATION TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee at Ministry of Information announces its Tenders for the following works:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Class & Grade	Last Date For Collection	Submission Date	Purchase Fees (R.O.)
4/2024 (207/2024) at E-Tendering	Development and Implementation of the Electronic Portal and Mobile Application for the Government Communication Center	Excellent Frist	15/6/2024	30/7/2024	25/-
5/2024 (212/2024) at E-Tendering	Supply, Delivery and Commissioning of Two Identical Outside Broadcasting Vans each with Five 4K UHD IP Cameras and Accessories	International Excellent Frist	15/6/2024	30/7/2024	80/-

- All specialized companies in the field of the tender shown above and are registered with the Tender Board to the degree indicated above, may obtain tender documents, against non-refundable fees, from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
 - Companies and institutions are exempted from providing a temporary insurance of 1% when submitting their bid, provided that they sign a document committing themselves to the submitted bid for a period determined when the bidding strategy is approved in accordance with the document attached to the Isnad platform. As for international companies that do not have a headquarters in the Sultanate of Oman, they are required to provide temporary insurance of 1%.
- (For more information, please see the original circular issued by the Tender Board on the Isnad platform.)
- Note that the last date for accepting bids as mentioned above is before 10:00 am . Any bid received after the time and date mentioned in the submission date will be rejected automatically. You are requested to provide 2 hard copies for your offer after the submission in Projects Department at Ministry of Information.
- The Ministry has the right to:
 - Add or Cancell some works in the tender if necessary.
 - Cancellation of the tender without giving reasons.

For clarifications you may contact via:
Telephone : 24943785, 24943177, Email: (Moi.Tenders@omaninfo.om)

Sohar University Entered the World University Rankings

Sohar University is the 2nd University in Oman to be Ranked in QS World University Rankings



Sohar University ranked second locally, and the first university among private universities and colleges to enter the QS World University Rankings, as it was included in the category (1001-1200) universities worldwide. This achievement comes as a translation of the efforts made by the university at various academic and research levels, which contributes to achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040. We dedicate this global achievement to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, may God protect him, and to the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, represented by Her Excellency Prof. Dr.

Rahma bint Ibrahim Al-Mahrouqi, for the unlimited support for the higher education, research and innovation sector, which contributed to Sohar University obtaining this global position in the global rankings of universities. We are extremely grateful to the Chairman and Members of the Board of Directors, the Chairman and Members of the Board of Governors, our students, our alumni, our partners in the public and private sectors, the community and to our highly efficient Sohar University team for their contribution to this global achievement.



RO 3M POULTRY PROJECT TO COME UP IN AL BURAIMI

AL BURAIMI: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning in cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and Al Buraimi Governor's Office, on Wednesday signed an investment for the establishment of a poultry farm project to the tune of RO 3 million.

The project envisages the production of more than 6 million birds per annum. The agreement's signing ceremony was attended by Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Governor of Al Buraimi. — ONA



Horeca Oman showcases excellence in hospitality and food services

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

The Horeca Oman exhibition which began on June 4, on Tuesday, as a significant annual event for the hospitality and food services sectors. Hosted at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, this premier event concludes today, June 6.

This year's exhibition promises to be more captivating than ever, featuring an array of activities including innovative competitions and interactive events tailored for industry specialists and enthusiasts. It boasts a diverse mix of over 200 local and international participants from 14 countries, covering an area of 5,000 square metres. The event is expected to draw between 7,000 and 8,000 visitors, highlighting its growing significance.

Organised by Hospitality Services Company and Tiger Expo Company, Horeca Oman offers a unique opportunity for business networking, exploring partnerships, and showcasing the latest advancements in hospitality and food industries. The exhibition also facilitates the exchange of ideas and technologies, underscoring its role as a vibrant hub for industry



The Horeca Oman exhibition concludes today at the OCEC



professionals. Jumana Damous Salamah, General Manager of Hospitality Services, emphasised the cultural and professional exchange facilitated by the event, noting the participation of Guillaume Gomez, the French

President's representative for food and gastronomy. His involvement underscores the event's importance in fostering Omani-French relations in hospitality and culinary arts. The exhibition includes a dynamic programme with highlights such as a

hospitality salon, barista and mocktail competitions, and a bed-making contest. The cooking competition, a key attraction, features teams competing under the scrutiny of internationally certified judges, with prizes including cash awards and opportunities to enter international contests like Top Chef.

Notable participants such as Oman Mills Company and Oman Fish Development are also showcasing their contributions to the food sector. Oman Mills is presenting products made from locally grown wheat, aiming for self-sufficiency and improved product quality.

Oman Fish Development is promoting its premium seafood products, enhancing the local and international seafood market.

The Oman Tourism College, the sole institution specialising in tourism and hospitality in Oman, is participating to highlight its educational contributions to the industry. College students are preparing meals at the exhibition, demonstrating their culinary skills.

Horeca Oman 2024 stands out as a leading event that not only showcases the latest in hospitality and food services but also strengthens economic and cultural ties within the region and beyond.

Sohar University gets QS World University rankings

MUSCAT: Sohar University ranked second locally, and the first university among private universities and colleges to enter the QS World University Rankings, as it was included in the category (1001-1200) universities worldwide.

This achievement comes as a translation of the efforts made by the university at various academic and research levels, which contributes to achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Sohar University adopted a focused approach to reach this milestone. It analysed the methodology of the QS World University Rankings and the QS

Arab Rankings. It also concentrated its efforts on the following key areas namely Research and Citations. Sohar University has been dedicated to research since its inception. In the latest QS Arab Rankings, Sohar University was ranked 17th in the Arab region for citations per faculty and 35th for papers per faculty.

Sohar University's global engagement, particularly with international faculty earned the university the 38th place worldwide. The International Research Network, was pivotal in elevating Sohar University's world rankings.

— ONA



ABA Oman Intl School celebrates 2024 graduation



MUSCAT: ABA Oman International School celebrated the Class of 2024 graduation with Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Humaidi, Chairman of Muscat Municipality, as the esteemed guest of honour who expressed his delight in being an integral part of the graduation ceremony, especially as his daughter Dureen al Humaidi was among the graduating cohort.

Addressing the Class of 2024, he encouraged the graduates to "go forth into the world with a positive outlook; which has the

power to transform challenges into opportunities and setbacks into success."

Puja Khimji, Chair of the ABA Board of Directors, complimented the graduates on successfully completing the rigorous IB Diploma Programme.

Craig Williamson, ABA Head of School and Simon Walker, Assistant Head of School and High School Principal, also commended the graduates for their dedication and perseverance.

Researcher brings hope to Oman's renewable future

MUSCAT: Santrupth G R Vedanthi, a graduate in BS Energy Engineering from Pennsylvania State University (PSU), is engaged in groundbreaking research on chalcogenide perovskites, focusing on the promising material barium hafnium sulfide (BaHfS₃).

His research, which is soon to be published and funded by the US government, explores the potential of perovskite materials, particularly chalcogenide perovskites like BaHfS₃, to revolutionise solar panel manufacturing.

These materials offer exceptional light absorption, tunable bandgaps, and lower production costs compared to traditional silicon-based solar cells. The simpler, less energy-intensive fabrication processes of perovskites could significantly reduce solar panel costs, making them more accessible



Santrupth G R Vedanthi (right) with Dr Nelson Dzad

and economically viable. Santrupth highlights the benefits for Oman, a nation rich in sunlight and committed to alternative energy sources.

"Integrating perovskite-based solar panels can enhance Oman's renewable energy infrastructure, reduce reliance on fossil fuels, and support sustainable development. This transition aligns with global environmental goals and boosts the

local economy through job creation in the renewable energy sector, fostering energy independence," he elaborates.

He credits Dr Nelson Dzade, Assistant Professor of Energy and Mineral Engineering at PSU, for his exceptional guidance and support in researching chalcogenide perovskite materials as part of the Material and Mineral Theory Group (MMTG).

"Working under his mentorship at this cutting-edge intersection of technology and research has been truly enlightening. I am grateful for his inspiration to push the boundaries of innovation," says Santrupth.

Santrupth is now heading to California to pursue his MBA at California State University. He plans to enter the fields of energy investing and business development, aiming to further his impact on the renewable energy sector.

MOORE STEPHENS LLC
NOTICE ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF LIQUIDATION OF ETHOENERGY AND PARTNER LLC
(AS APPEARED IN OFFICIAL GAZETTE NO 1548)

Moore Stephens LLC, announces the liquidation process of EthosEnergy and Partner LLC, bearing commercial registration number 1039728, in accordance with the decision taken by the Company's members on 15 May 2024. The liquidators alone have the right to represent the Company under liquidation before third parties, and all parties are to confirm with the liquidator for all matters concerning the company's business at the following address:

Office No. 41, 4th Floor, Building No. 1022, Way No.1013; Al Walaj Street, Al Qurum
P O Box 933, Ruwi, Postal Code 112, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24061000, Fax: 24061099, Email: liquidation@moore-oman.com

By this announcement, the liquidator calls the company's creditors to submit their claims against the company, together with the supporting documents, to the above address within 180 days from the date of publishing this announcement for the first time, and any debtors should settle the company's rights with the liquidator on the address above.

Moore Stephens LLC
Official Liquidators of ETHOENERGY AND PARTNER LLC
(Under voluntary liquidation)

BOMBS HIT GAZA AS MEDIATORS DISCUSS TRUCE

GAZA: Israel’s military pounded central Gaza with heavy air strikes on Wednesday as US, Qatari and Egyptian mediators planned to resume talks on a truce and captives release deal.

Tensions were high in annexed east Al Quds where thousands of police were deployed to guard Israel’s annual “flag march” that has sparked clashes between Jews and Arabs in previous years.

The bloodiest ever Gaza war, sparked by October 7 attack on southern Israel, raged on unabated with jets bombing targets overnight and Palestinian officials reporting yet more deaths.

Urban combat and shelling rocked Gaza’s southern city of Rafah near the Egyptian border, the last area hit by the Israeli ground invasion launched in northern Gaza in late October.

But fighting has also flared again in central areas, where the army said “troops have started targeted operational activity in the areas of Bureij and eastern Deir al Balah, both above and below ground”.

“The activity started with a series of air strikes on targets,

including compounds, weapons storage facilities and underground infrastructure,” it said.

Bombardment of central Gaza killed 11 people near the Al Maghazi camp and two near Deir al Balah, said witnesses and Palestinian civil defence and hospital officials.

Families rushed the wounded, including children, to hospitals in the area, where reporters said civilians were once more packing their belongings on pickup trucks and onto wheelchairs to flee.

Almost eight months into the war, global outrage has spiralled over the soaring death toll and the destruction in Gaza, where UN data suggests more than half of all buildings are destroyed or damaged.

US President Joe Biden last Friday outlined what he called a three-phase Israeli plan that would halt the fighting for six weeks while captives are exchanged for Palestinian prisoners and aid is stepped up.

G7 powers and Arab states have backed the proposal, although sticking points remain — Hamas insists on a permanent truce and

Urban combat and shelling rocked Gaza’s southern city of Rafah near the Egyptian border, the last area hit by the Israeli ground invasion launched in northern Gaza

full Israeli withdrawal, demands that Israel has flatly rejected.

Brett McGurk, Biden’s top Middle East adviser, was also headed to Qatar, according to news site Axios which quoted an administration source as talking of a “full-court press... to get a breakthrough”.

Egypt’s state-linked Al Qahera News said an “Egyptian security delegation will meet with its Qatari and US counterparts in Doha on Wednesday to discuss the mechanism of restoring the truce talks”.

Qatar said on Tuesday it had yet to see statements from either side “that give us a lot of confidence”, but that Doha was “working with both sides on proposals on the table”. — AFP



Displaced Palestinian civilians flee from the east of al Bureij in the central Gaza Strip due to Israeli bombardment. — AFP

■ HEALTH LOSS OVER HUNGER



Hana Abdelrahman al Rai, a four-year-old child suffering from malnutrition and displaced from Gaza City’s eastern suburb of Shujaiya, reacts as she is carried inside a tent in Zawayda in the central Gaza Strip on June 4. — AFP

Total of 146 countries now recognise a Palestinian state

PARIS: The Mideast war, raging in Gaza since October 7 attack, has revived a global push for Palestinians to be given a state of their own. Slovenia on Tuesday became the latest country to recognise a state of Palestine, breaking with the long-held view of Western powers that Palestinians can only gain statehood as part of a negotiated peace with Israel. This follows the same move made last week by Spain, Ireland and Norway.

Their action, which has infuriated Israel, means that 146 out of the 193 UN member states now recognise a Palestinian state. They include most Middle Eastern, African, Latin American and Asian countries, but not the United States, Canada, the majority of western Europe, Australia, Japan or South Korea.

In April, the United States used its veto at the UN Security Council to prevent a Palestinian bid to become a full UN member state.

Israel’s relentless offensive in Gaza, which has left at least 36,586 people dead, according to the health ministry in the Palestinian territory, has boosted support in Europe for Palestinian statehood. — AFP



People hang a Palestinian flag in front of the Parliament building recognising the Palestinian state in Ljubljana, Slovenia. — AFP

Israeli white phosphorus rockets stalk south Lebanon

BEIRUT: The Israeli military and Lebanon’s powerful movement groups have been exchanging near-daily fire since Palestinians unprecedented October 7 attack on Israel sparked the Gaza war.

Lebanon has accused Israel of using controversial white phosphorus rounds, in attacks authorities say have harmed civilians and the environment.

White phosphorus, a substance that ignites on contact with oxygen, can be used to create smokescreens and to illuminate battlefields.

But the munition can also be used as an incendiary weapon

and can cause fires, horrific burns, respiratory damage, organ failure and death.

“Israel’s widespread use of white phosphorus in south Lebanon is putting civilians at grave risk and contributing to civilian displacement,” Human Rights Watch said in a report released on Wednesday.

The rights watchdog said it “verified the use of white phosphorus munitions by Israeli forces in at least 17 municipalities across south Lebanon since October”, including five where it was “unlawfully used over populated residential areas”.



Smoke billows during Israeli bombardment on the southern Lebanese border village of Khiam. — AFP

Photographs taken on at least 10 separate occasions between October and April show eerie, octopus-like smoke plumes consistent with white phosphorus.

Lebanon’s official National News Agency has repeatedly reported Israeli phosphorus bombing in south Lebanon, including in recent days, sometimes causing fires.

The agency said “phosphorus shells fell between the houses” in Hula on January 28 after “enemy artillery” targeted the village.

The hospital said that four civilians, two of them women,

were admitted to intensive care for “asphyxiation and severe shortness of breath due to white phosphorus”, including a man in his 70s and a woman in her 60s.

Lebanon’s health ministry said on Wednesday it had registered 178 people as suffering from “chemical exposure due to white phosphorus” since October, a figure that does not distinguish between fighters and civilians.

Doctors at three other hospitals in south Lebanon said their facilities had treated people with respiratory symptoms of white phosphorus exposure. — AFP



In brief

■ ABIDJAN



RUSSIA TO DEPLOY MORE INSTRUCTORS TO BURKINA FASO

The number of Russian military instructors in Burkina Faso “will increase”, Moscow’s Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov said on Wednesday. “Russian instructors work here, and their number will increase,” Lavrov told a news conference in the capital Ouagadougou.

“At the same time, we are training in Russia representatives of the armed forces and security forces of Burkina Faso,” he added. “This type of partnership is very concrete and has greatly progressed.” He arrived in the West African nation on Tuesday evening and held talks with the head of the military regime Captain Ibrahim Traore. — AFP

■ KYIV



UKRAINE OFFICIAL URGES BEIJING TO JOIN PEACE SUMMIT

A Ukrainian foreign ministry official in Beijing on Wednesday urged Chinese officials to participate in a Ukraine peace summit in Switzerland this month. The Ukrainian foreign ministry issued a statement on Wednesday.

“The Ukrainian side expressed hope that China’s participation in the event would be a good opportunity to make a practical contribution to achieving a just and lasting peace in Ukraine,” the Ukrainian ministry said. “As noted by the parties, mutual respect for sovereignty and territorial integrity is the foundation on which bilateral relations are based.” — AFP

■ BERLIN



CANDIDATE FOR GERMANY’S AfD WOUNDED IN CLASH

German police said on Wednesday that a local election candidate for the far-right Alternative for Germany (AfD) was hurt in the country’s west after confronting a man taking down the party’s posters.

A 25-year-old suspect has been arrested but showed no signs of knowing that the victim, Heinrich Koch, was an AfD politician, police said.

The incident threatened to inflame tensions in Germany ahead of local and EU elections this week, following a fatal stabbing. Police said they were alerted to a man taking down posters in the Rehinau district of Mannheim. — AFP

Biden in France to mark D-Day anniversary



US President Joe Biden (C) is welcomed by France’s Prime Minister Gabriel Attal upon arrival at Paris Orly airport. — AFP

PARIS: US President Joe Biden on Wednesday began a state visit to France marking 80 years since the World War II D-Day landings, with a new war shadowing Europe as Ukraine battles Russia’s attack.

Along with French President Emmanuel Macron, British King Charles III and Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Biden will remember the heroism of the Allied troops who gave their lives often far from home in the landings on June 6, 1944, to free Europe from Nazi occupation. For King Charles, it will be his first overseas visit since his cancer diagnosis.

While the sacrifice of Allied soldiers will be centre stage, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Italian President Sergio Mattarella will also be present as a sign of international post-World War II reconciliation.

Flying aboard Air Force One, Biden touched down at Paris Orly airport and, sporting his trademark aviator sunglasses, was welcomed by Prime Minister Gabriel Attal.

Biden was also expected to promote the United States as a defender of democracy and international alliances during his state visit until Sunday, contrasting himself against election rival Donald Trump.

But the war that has raged in Ukraine since Russia’s February 24, 2022, attack will also be at the forefront, with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky also attending and scheduled to meet with Biden, according to the White House.

No official from Russia has been invited, after Paris reversed plans to host lower-level representatives in recognition of the Soviet Union’s immense contribution in World War II. The most honoured guests will be the

surviving veterans: Around 200 are expected, a number that is dwindling every year with most at least in their late 90s and some over 100.

Macron kicked off the commemorations on Wednesday with a ceremony

Biden was expected to promote the United States as a defender of democracy and international alliances during his state visit until Sunday

in Brittany to honour French paratroopers in the British Special Air Service (SAS) who died during the battle to retake France. Biden, Macron and Zelensky are coming together at a critical moment in the Ukraine conflict, with Kyiv warning that Russia risks gaining the upper hand without a significant increase in Western help.

US National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan told reporters travelling to Paris that Biden would tell Zelensky “how we can continue and deepen our support for Ukraine”.

Macron has already sought to break taboos by refusing to rule out sending troops to Ukraine, a position that unsettled some EU allies. Welcoming veterans as they arrived by air in Normandy, the French leader’s wife Brigitte Macron expressed France’s “deepest respect and deepest love”, in a video posted on Macron’s X account. — AFP

Gunman fires shots at US embassy in Lebanon, says army



Lebanese army forces deploy near the US embassy in Beirut. — AFP

BEIRUT: A gunman fired shots at the US embassy in Lebanon on Wednesday and was wounded in an exchange of fire with troops, the Lebanese army said.

The army said the attacker, a Syrian national, was detained and taken to hospital for treatment and soldiers were searching through the area for other gunmen.

The US embassy said small arms fire was reported near its entrance in the morning but that the facility and staff were safe. US ambassador Lisa Johnson is currently travelling outside Lebanon, according to diplomatic sources.

A Lebanese security source said on Wednesday morning that a member of the embassy’s Lebanese security team was lightly wounded. White House national security adviser Jake Sullivan later confirmed to NBC News that a Lebanese guard

was wounded and was receiving treatment.

The embassy said it would remain closed to the public, but planned to be open for business as usual on Thursday, June 6.

There was no immediate claim of responsibility for the attack, but another senior Lebanese security source said that the army was investigating possible links to the IS group.

The source said the attacker had “ISIS” in English and “IS” in Arabic written on clothes he was wearing. Lebanese security forces have detained two sheikhs as well as the attacker’s family, the source added.

Reuters verified pictures of the suspected attacker circulating online and geolocated them to near the embassy.

A cameraman saw Lebanese security forces setting up checkpoints around the embassy as a US-made helicopter provided

to the Lebanese army circled above.

Lebanon’s caretaker prime minister Najib Mikati said he was following up on the incident with the defence minister and security forces.

The US embassy lies north of Beirut in a highly secured zone with multiple checkpoints along the route to the entrance. It moved there from Beirut following a suicide attack in 1983 which killed more than 60 people.

In September, shots were fired near the embassy with no injuries reported. In mid-October, in the early days of the Gaza war, scores of protesters gathered outside the embassy to demonstrate.

Lebanon has been the scene of conflict between Lebanese groups and Israel since October in parallel to the Gaza war. The United States has been making diplomatic efforts to ease violence along the border. — Reuters

South Africa’s ANC wants national unity government

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa’s ruling ANC said on Wednesday it had reached out to rivals to form a government of national unity, after failing to win an outright majority in last week’s general election.

The final tally gave President Cyril Ramaphosa’s African National Congress 159 members in the 400-seat National Assembly, its lowest score in a general election.

ANC spokeswoman Mahlengi Bhengu-Motsiri told reporters the party held “explorative” talks with several others, as it attempts to secure enough parliamentary support to form a government and elect a president.

Its decision making body was to meet on Thursday to vet all options, including trying to form a minority government, she said. But the conversation was focusing “on a government of national unity because this is what the people of South Africa

said to us,” she said.

“We have been meeting with all parties that are keen to contribute ideas on how we can collectively move our country forward and form a government that ensures national unity and stability,” said Bhengu-Motsiri.

Among those consulted were parties with radically different agendas, such as the centre-right Democratic Alliance, the leftist Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and the Zulu nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party.

Bhengu-Motsiri named the EFF, which supports land redistribution and the nationalisation of key economic sectors, and the anti-immigration Patriotic Alliance, as the parties that so far appear willing to join a broad coalition.

Which groups would “finally form part” of such a government was however “a function of ongoing negotiations”, she said.

— AFP



A woman walks past a logo of The African National Congress, at Luthuli House, in Johannesburg. — Reuters

A critical analysis of key elections in 2024



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The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

It is almost as 2024 is refusing to go down in history as just another year in our calendar. Nothing can prove this more than at least seven upcoming elections, that will determine directly the leaderships over the lives of our planet's seven billion people.

Thankfully, voters made sure some of these election results are good for them and humanity, however, some are turning out to be bad and others ugly.

We as human beings are always in a struggle on our planet to satisfy our needs for survival and thriving, and if we are not careful the upcoming elections in these seven nations risk reversing humanity's progress all the way back to square one: India, US, Mexico, Iran, UK, South Africa, and Tunisia.

Claudia Sheinbaum, Mexico's newly elected president is not only the first female president in the whole of North America, she is the also the first environmental scientist and former Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) to become president.

As the leader of the leftist Morena Party, she is likely to continue supporting an international policy favouring self-determination and diplomacy over violence, which means a continuing tension with the US over immigration and the support for genocide.

Tunisia successfully held presidential elections and upheld the rule of law. While the opposition to the current President Qais Said claims he is following pages from another long hot summer of a

president-for-life playbook including inciting hatred and racism against his fellow Africans, there is still hope that there will be an upcoming election that restores a system of checks and balances.

South Africa chose to uphold the legacy of the world's most respected freedom fighter and former president, the late Nelson Mandela.

His African National Congress first loss of majority in three decades is a lesson in peaceful power-sharing, especially for the so-called Global South.

In addition, South Africans chose to continue fighting against racism and apartheid by standing by the Palestinian people's struggle against the US-backed most racist and violent ongoing occupation in modern history in Palestine.

The International Court of Justice (ICJ) ruling, and the International Criminal Court (ICC) arrest warrants against the accused political leaders in the occupied territories are evidence that South Africa is not only on the right side of history but also deserves to be a global moral leader.

In less than one century, the UK has turned from the most culturally influential Empire that colonised almost two thirds of the world, to a superpower's poorer sidekick and enforcer.

Based on a decade of less capable Prime Ministers, it is likely that UK voters will only have one of two choices; an ideologically Islamophobic Conservative PM or an opportunistic Islamophobic Labor PM.

Two factors that would turn any democracy

THERE IS A GREAT
DEAL OF OBJECTIVE
CRITICISM OF
UNIVERSAL HUMAN
VALUES AROUND
THE WORLD
BECAUSE OF OUR
COLLECTIVE
FAILURE TO UPHOLD
INTERNATIONAL
LAW AND STOP
CONFLICTS AROUND
THE WORLD

into a toxic democracy are an insurrection against the rules-based order, and projecting centuries of racism that cannot be practiced internally, against the rest of the world, and the US is suffering from both.

As US democracy was recovering from the January 6, 2020 insurrection by the former President Trump's supporters, its centuries long struggle with racism reared its head again, this time externally targeting people who are anti-genocide with bombs or the threat of bombs.

India's charismatic leader and Prime Minister for the past decade Modi has led the country's conservative BJP party in a winning streak against the less charismatic opposition Congress Party.

This election marks a breakaway from India's thousands of years a world leader in tolerance and science.

There is a great deal of objective criticism of universal human values, such as democracy, around the world because of our collective failure to uphold international law and stop conflicts around the world.

While we blame the United Nations Security Council (UNSC) and its veto powers for this, a better solution starts with choosing and supporting better global leaders, who do not incite hatred for the sake of holding on to power.

While in 1945 our world came together to say Never Again, in 2024 we owe it to current and future generations to end genocides once and for all.

Women journalists defied Allies to cover D-Day

ANAIS LLOBET

Eighty years ago, women reporters overcame restrictions barring them from the frontlines to cover the Allied landings in France but they have not enjoyed the acclaim enjoyed by their male counterparts.

On the morning of June 6, 1944, journalist Martha Gellhorn learned that the Allies had launched Operation Overlord, the largest seaborne invasion in history.

"I do not feel there is any need to beg as a favour for the right to serve as the eyes for millions of people in America," she had written to military authorities ahead of the landing.

But Allied forces forbade women reporters from the front lines, unlike their male colleagues, who were invited to join the troops.

To get around the ban, the US journalist slipped on board a hospital ship bound for Normandy "by pretending to be a Red Cross nurse", according to her biographer, Caroline Moorehead.

"Martha seems to have been the only woman journalist who got on the beaches of Normandy," said Moorehead.

Gellhorn later paid for her ingenuity when the Allied military authorities arrested her and forbade her from returning to Normandy.

Women journalists faced the same threats as any reporter covering the war, but sexism made it even harder, said journalism historian Denis Ruellan.

"The army had a fear that a woman journalist would die at the front, which would mean the men had failed to protect her," he said.

The military worried these same troops would be "disturbed" by the journalists, Ruellan added.

Correspondents like Gellhorn, Lee Carson, and Lee Miller "often had to disobey and fight" against the orders of generals and commanders just to do their job, he said.

Fellow American Lee Carson was "punished for daring" after she convinced a fighter pilot to fly her over the beaches of Normandy on D-Day, said Nancy Caldwell Sorel, author of The Women Who Wrote War. "Sure, I knew it (was forbidden), but it was my job to get the news," said Carson, quoted by Sorel. — AFP



Dr Khalfan Hamed Al Harrasi

The writer is the Country Manager (Oman/MENA) University of Cambridge

Transforming education with smart tech

Smart learning apps are changing the education game. They use technologies like AI, machine learning, and big data to create personalised, interactive learning experiences for each student.

According to MarketsandMarkets (2018), the global smart education and learning market is expected to grow from \$191.32 billion in 2018 to \$586.04 billion by 2023 - that's some serious growth!

These apps make learning fun and effective with quizzes, games, and simulations. Platforms like Kahoot! and Quizlet are changing how students study and learn by making it feel like a game. Smart learning apps can help students learn at their own pace and get instant feedback, which is way better than the old one-size-fits-all approach.

According to a study by the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, personalised learning can boost student performance in subjects like math and reading. These apps make education more accessible to students in remote areas and encourage a love for learning outside of regular school hours. Learners can access educational materials, attend virtual classes, and collaborate with peers and instructors from anywhere in the world.

However, one of the biggest challenges is keeping students engaged in a remote learning environment. Without the physical presence of a teacher and peers, students may find it hard to stay motivated and focused.

Effective communication can also be a hurdle since virtual interactions often lack the immediacy and personal connection of face-to-face conversations. The shift to distance education has highlighted several challenges for both students and educators. For students, the lack of a structured learning environment can lead to procrastination and decreased academic performance.

Technical issues such as unreliable



internet connections and inadequate access to digital devices can further hinder their learning experience. Educators, on the other hand, face the challenge of adapting their teaching methods to an online format and ensuring they can effectively engage and support their students remotely.

BY INVESTING IN
INFRASTRUCTURE, DIGITAL
LITERACY PROGRAMMES,
AND RESEARCH INITIATIVES,
GOVERNMENTS CAN HELP
ENSURE EVERYONE HAS ACCESS
TO TECHNOLOGY-ENABLED
LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

According to a survey by the Educause Center for Analysis and Research (2020), 70 per cent of students have reported finding it challenging to stay motivated in an online learning environment.

This highlights the need to develop strategies to boost engagement and motivation in distance education.

Teachers are now moving from being the primary source of knowledge to becoming guides in the learning process, helping students along personalised learning paths and providing assistance when necessary.

The classroom is changing to fit in with new technology. Instead of just lectures, fun digital activities and classrooms are turning into more flexible and collaborative spaces.

According to a study by the Center for Digital Education (2016), 74 per cent of teachers think that technology helps them better meet their students' different needs. This shows how great smart learning apps are for the classroom. The future of education will be affected by even more amazing smart learning apps and distance education.

With these technological advancements comes data analytics that can help educators make informed decisions, ultimately improving the quality of education and student outcomes by, for example, integrating Internet of Things (IoT) devices in classrooms to create smart learning environments that make it easier for students and teachers to communicate and collaborate.

Another trend in education is the rise of blended learning models, where traditional classroom instruction is combined with online components.

They need to be able to use new teaching methods, tools, and technology in their lessons. That's where professional development programmes, workshops, and online courses come in – they help teachers learn the skills and knowledge they need to use technology to improve learning.

Governments and policymakers play a crucial role in supporting and regulating technology integration in education. By investing in infrastructure, digital literacy programmes, and research initiatives, governments can help ensure everyone has access to technology-enabled learning opportunities.

Spotlighting hypocrisy

The normalisation of criminal behaviour is spreading across the globe. Trying to pretend everything is OK in life when it is not an exhausting experience. Not just assassination, territorial invasions, killing of journalists, massacre of innocent people and human trafficking are occurring. The list can go on and on, including hidden and ambiguous situations.

The growing disregard for international laws and rules demonstrates fast geopolitics in the making in which those already in power feel entitled to twist entire societies within their goals of vanity. The less advantaged people must comply with the laws, while those with money and political influence have flexibility to shape the world to fit their interests. Examples can be drawn from different parts of the world.

Unfortunately, crimes against humanity have recently increased while voices condemning wars, indiscriminate shelling, or increased executions are fewer.

It is not that the technicalities of laws no longer work; it is more about complacency, inefficiency, or omission.

The theoretical perspective on the relationship between law and social regulation is going through changes, with business misconduct becoming less of a crime and more of a tailored narrative.

Despite existing ethics and compliance rules, business misconduct has grown over the years. Overlooking intentional wrongdoing opens the door for bigger and bolder criminal attitudes. After all, shortcuts can be used to protect business; while violence does not solve problems, it can be lucrative!

We are witnessing the normalisation of an abnormal world. Here, I am not talking about violence in street culture, in which peer influence is appointed as the cause, and a range of literature can offer a broad range of explanations and solutions. I am talking about something bigger in which not one or two people but thousands, if not millions, are affected by criminal behaviour.

Forcible transfer of population, severe deprivation, torture, enforced prostitution, forced disappearance,



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THERE IS A SHIFT IN SOCIAL PERCEPTION AND VIOLENCE BECOMES NORMAL. EVENTS THAT WOULD BE IGNORED OR NEVER REPORTED ARE NOW RECEIVING BROAD MEDIA ATTENTION AND GLOBAL EXPOSURE

etc, are all becoming normalised. The desperate need for medical aid, lack of education and continuous displacement in several parts of the world are becoming part of an everyday reality.

Generally speaking, ordinary individuals feel weak and helpless towards the crimes committed by leaders, presidents, organisations, corporations, etc, against humanity or the environment.

So, are psychopaths ruling the world? Are dark souls taking the world over? From one point to the other and crisscrossing the globe, we learn about sinister crimes. It is incredible how artful and Machiavellian are the engines behind diplomacy, negotiation and vested interest.

Governments are bent on normalising state violence. But what we are seeing nowadays is not new. We had several crimes, such as the Cambodian genocide, Rwandan, Rohingya, Yazidi and Bosnian, to mention a few.

There is a kind of desensitised approach to violence and tragedy. Unfortunately, causes and consequences have been purposefully overlooked. Stathis Kalyvas, a political scientist, has argued that violence involves more than just aggressors and victims. It involves collaborators and sympathisers who are central to the process of violence.

It seems the world is sliding into the unknown. We hear about violence in schools, domestic abuse, and the media perpetuating violence in drama series and games.

The more violence and killings, the easier it becomes accepted; there is a shift in social perception and violence becomes normal. Or perhaps not. Events that would be ignored or never reported are now receiving broad media attention and, therefore, global exposure.

Journalism and media have evolved, and we are now inundated with more news and misleading information than ever. However, social media platforms are taking down posts that could be used later as evidence of the atrocities.

We see cruelty being ignored, while governments, media, and organisations openly approve of criminal behaviours. Allies in politics, interests, and business. Hypocrisy and moral evasiveness can cause revulsion.

MYANMAR MOURNS HERO



A car carrying the coffin of the late Myanmar general turned democracy activist Tin Oo makes its way to the cemetery during his funeral in Yangon. Hundreds mourned the death of Tin Oo, a Myanmar general turned democracy activist and confidante of Aung San Suu Kyi, in Yangon on June 5 amid tight junta security. – AFP

From wave to washout? Greens face tough time at EU vote

Five years ago Green parties swept to their best results ever at elections for the European Union's parliament, before helping to push through a sweeping raft of landmark legislation.

But this time around, as people across the 27-nation bloc cast ballots later this week, Greens are expected to suffer heavy losses in the face of a right-wing backlash and voter fatigue.

Opinion polls predict the coalition of Green parties could lose one-third of the 72 European Parliament seats they currently hold -- and in France they risk dropping from 12 to zero.

While the last EU Parliament election in 2019 was accompanied by mass rallies over climate change, environmental issues have slipped down the pecking order this year as voters grapple with an array of other global crises.

Top concerns now include the economy, unemployment and security as wars rage in Ukraine and the Middle East and the EU struggles to revive growth after record inflation.

"Environmental issues remain important, but no longer strongly enough to determine the vote," said Phuc-Vinh Nguyen, a researcher at the



JULIEN GIRAULT

The writer is a EU correspondent at AFP

A RECENT POLL FROM EU POLLSTER EUROBAROMETER FOUND THAT 84 PER CENT OF RESPONDENTS BELIEVE LEGISLATION TO PROTECT THE ENVIRONMENT IS NECESSARY — EVEN IF IT IS NOT THEIR PRIORITY

Jacques Delors Institute think-tank.

Backing up that assertion, a recent poll from EU pollster Eurobarometer found that 84 per cent of respondents believe legislation to protect the environment is necessary -- even if it is not their priority.

"But the election result will send a political signal, with the risk of interpreting the weakness of the Greens as a rejection of climate policy in general," Nguyen said.

But it's not just that other major issues are diluting the Green vote in the race for the 720-seat EU parliament. As the EU has pushed through its mammoth package of "Green Deal" laws, right-wing parties have seized on discontent to turn it into a political football.

Nathalie Brack, a political scientist at Belgium's ULB university, said the conservative European People's Party (EPP) -- the biggest grouping in the EU parliament -- had set about "discrediting the ecological agenda".

After watering down or rejecting several green laws over the past year, election favourites EPP are now openly calling for a "pause"

on any more such legislation to concentrate on competitiveness.

"The centre-right changed its tune and began to present things more and more as a dilemma of choosing between the economy on the one hand and the environment on the other," Brack said.

"That has amplified the far right's message that people are more interested in making ends meet at the end of each month than in the end of the world."



A woman sits on a bin as demonstrators hold a banner reading 'stop the green communism' during a demonstration called by Farmers Defence Force to protest against European regulations in Brussels. – AFP

Most prominent in the pushback against the EU's environmental law have been a wave of farmer protests across the bloc that have been fuelled by ire at the perceived excessive regulations.

Philippe Lamberts, co-president of the Green grouping in parliament, said other political factions across the spectrum had increasingly lost the stomach to push through tough reforms. "They initially supported the

Green Deal when it was politically costly to oppose it, before changing course when it was no longer electorally promising and we were entering the hard part of the transition," Lamberts said.

But Green parties also have themselves to blame for their declining poll numbers as their involvement in a number of coalition governments across Europe has forced concessions that angered their base.

For example in Germany, where the Greens are in a three-party ruling coalition, they appear set to see their vote drop from 20.5 per cent in 2019 to 14 per cent after accepting the reopening of coal power plants in the wake of Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

As they struggle at the polls, the Greens are pinning their hopes on mobilising voters by emphasising the threat posed by a likely surge in the far right to the EU's environmental ambitions. That is a real risk as numerous laws in the Green Deal have revision clauses or will need to be adapted to match the EU's yet-to-be-adopted 2040 climate goals. — AFP

sport

Red Warriors eye crucial victory against Chinese Taipei



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

Oman will aim for registering their fourth triumph to seal spot for the next stage of the Preliminary Joint Qualification of the Fifa World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 as they will take on Chinese Taipei in the penultimate match of Group D on Thursday at the Taipei Municipal Stadium. The match will kick off at 3:00 pm (Oman Time).

The Jaroslav Silhavy-coached side will look for a win that will ensure reaching to 12 points in the group ahead of the forthcoming's crucial tie against Kyrgyzstan on Tuesday in Muscat. The group topper Kyrgyzstan will take on Malaysia in a home match at Dolen Omurzakov Stadium in Bishkek on Thursday. The triumph in Thursday's assignment will mean Oman will book their slot in

AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027.

Silhavy sounded confident in the press conference on Wednesday ahead of the match that the team is looking forward for this crunch game to register a positive result. "We have observed Chinese Taipei in several matches and we respect them as a team. I can understand the difficulty of the match but our focus is to continue registering victories," he said.

The 62-year-old affirmed that the team is in best shape for the encounter. "The team is currently in good position after recent wins and we would like to run in this victorious path. This is a crucial match but we should not forget the upcoming crucial game against Kyrgyzstan which is expected to be very tight," the Czech coach added.

"I hope the weather will be perfect tomorrow and all the

circumstances will encourage to show top game. We are fully focused on today's match," he said.

Oman captain Harib al Saadi said that the match against Chinese Taipei will be an important game. "Our target is to win the match and proceed in the qualifiers campaign to the next stage. It is expected not to be an easy game and we are responsible to show top game to claim a win," he added.

The team completed all their tactical training sessions on Wednesday and the players are in good shape to face Chinese Taipei. Silhavy will depend on many key players including Mohsin al Ghassani, Omar al Malki, Issam al Subhi, Salah al Yahyaei and besides the other names. Red Warriors will eye to return back to Muscat with the winning points and gear up for the concluding match against Kyrgyzstan.



S H O R T T A K E S



Oman attends West Asian wheelchair basketball meeting

MUSCAT: The Oman Paralympic Committee (OPC), represented by Mohammed bin Abdullah al Hinai, Secretary-General of the OPC, participates in the meeting of the West Asian Wheelchair Basketball Federation held in Jordan from June 5 to 7. The meeting is attended by Shafi al Hajri, President of the



Asian Wheelchair Basketball Federation, and President of West Asia, Mohammed al Khazaaleh.

Mohammed al Hinai said the meeting will discuss many aspects related to wheelchair basketball in the West Asian region. The meeting will include the approval of the Executive Board of the West Asian Federation, as well as a

discussion on the formation of working committees, the federation's regulations, the federation's timetable for the next year, and the approval of the federation's logo.

This meeting comes to unify the efforts of the national paralympic committees in the West Asian region in the field of wheelchair basketball and to raise it in various fields of work in the game, including coaches, technicians, classifiers, and referees, in addition to development programmes that will contribute to the advancement of wheelchair basketball in the West Asian region, through the organisation of various tournaments and competitions.

Al Salimi to compete in Asian Handcycling Championships

MUSCAT: Oman national Paralympic team athlete Sami bin Salim al Salimi will participate in the Asian Handcycling Championships, which are being hosted by the Kazakh capital Almaty from June 4-7. Al Salimi will be accompanied by his national coach Ali al Anqoudi, while the delegation will be headed by Dr Mansour bin Sultan al Tooqi, Chairman of Oman Paralympic Committee.

The Oman Paralympic Committee is hoping that Al Salimi will achieve an advanced position in this championship. He previously participated in the same championship two years ago in Thailand and won first place in his category. Therefore, the committee hopes for a top performance in the second championship. Al Salimi conducted light training on Wednesday under the guidance of coach Al Anqoudi in preparation for the start of the race on Thursday.



OMAN BRACE FOR BIG CLASH AGAINST MIGHTY AUSSIES

BRIDGETOWN: In every sport, the thrill of witnessing an underdog triumph over a heavyweight always evokes a sense of pure elation - John Madden, American sports commentator.

In cricket, especially within the annals of T20 World Cup history, such moments of unexpected victory have been plentiful across various editions. From Namibia's stunning victory over Sri Lanka to Scotland's triumph against West Indies during the ICC T20 World Cup in 2022, these results continue to resonate over the years.

It may be early to expect such upsets early in the ongoing ICC Men's T20 World Cup in West Indies and the USA, but the stories of shock victories and David versus Goliath tales within the T20 World Cup form a backdrop ahead of Oman's Group B clash against defending Test and ODI World Cup champions Australia at the Kensington Oval on Wednesday, 8.30 pm (Thursday morning, 4.30 am, Oman time).

It will be a historic encounter for Duleep Mendis' Men in Red as they clash with cricketing behemoth Australia for the first time.

Oman's skipper Aqib Ilyas didn't show any nerves at the pre-match press conference on Tuesday and said: "It will be a great experience to play at this stage against Australia that boasts of some of the biggest names in modern-day cricket." Ilyas said: "Though we've never encountered such formidable opposition in any ICC tournaments before, we approach this match with a positive mindset and utmost respect for our opponents. We are certainly not overawed to play them at this stage."

Acknowledging the magnitude of the challenge ahead, Ilyas



emphasised, "Our coach, Duleep Mendis, has instilled in us the importance of playing with courage and heart. We have nothing to lose and everything to gain from giving our best effort against a world-class side like Australia."

Reflecting on the significance of the match, Ilyas remarked, "If we perform well tomorrow, we could very well find ourselves making headlines."

"When you come up against the top sides, that is when you get highlighted all over the world. The boys have a lot of opportunity. Every time there is a World Cup, there is an upset... the weather, how it is behaving, anything can happen."

Ilyas added: "We are aware of the experience and the class of Australia. We will try to take a cue from their mindset that has led them to become world champions."

Drawing inspiration from their previous match against Namibia, Ilyas expressed pride in his team's resilience after going down in a

Super Over. "The fightback of our boys after falling short by 20-30 runs is commendable. To defend a modest total of 109 required unity and determination until the very end."

Addressing concerns about key players, particularly pace spearhead Bilal Khan, who was off-colour in the Super Over, Ilyas offered his unwavering support.

"Bilal is our strike bowler, and while he faced challenges in the previous match, we stand behind him. Every cricketer encounters off-days, but I'm confident he will bounce back stronger."

He added: "We qualified to this World Cup in a thrilling Super Over win over Nepal in Nepal. It was Bilal who led us to the win as we defended 21 runs."

As anticipation mounts for the showdown, Ilyas hinted at possible line-up adjustments while expressing the team's readiness to adapt to pitch conditions.

"The opening game defeat highlighted the importance of assessing pitch conditions, but against Australia, we are better

prepared to tackle any challenges that may arise."

On the eve of one of Oman's biggest ever matches, Ilyas believes the spin attack of his side will be a bit handy for the Aussies to tackle, citing the example of how Papua New Guinea threatened to against West Indies two days ago on a slow pitch in Guyana.

He said that weather conditions and slower pitch may work in their favour. "With the Australian team, they used to have a few players with good techniques in the past like Steve Smith and Marnus Labuschagne. But I don't think they have many now. They look to hit big. They only try to go for sixes," Ilyas told reporters.

"But everyday is not the same day, and if we get the same wicket (as the one against Namibia) maybe it could be a problem for them."

"Just like the way you saw how difficult it was for the West Indies against PNG. They struggled to chase 130-odd despite them having some of the biggest hitters in the side."

Head's hands-on approach: Australia ready to tackle Oman in WC opener

BRIDGETOWN: He has been in roaring form at the recently concluded IPL in India. Opening batter Travis Head, who was one of the few Australian players to arrive late in West Indies for the T20 World Cup, admitted that he knows very less of their opponents, Oman, as they open their campaign in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup on Wednesday (Thursday, 4.30 am, Oman time).

On Tuesday, speaking at the pre-match press conference at the Kensington Oval after rains washed out the training session, the in-form opening Australian batter said: "I don't have much knowledge about the Oman bowlers. But, at some stage over the next sort of tonight or tomorrow I may have a quick look at some of the guys."

Head, whose recent form saw him plunder a pile of runs in the IPL, said: "I will be provided with footage of the Oman bowlers, but I prefer to get an up-close look when they go through their warm-ups."

"You'll get heaps of footage, but for me personally, I'll probably just watch a little bit in the warm-up, sort of try and get a rough idea on who's who. A little bit like I was in India [during IPL] as well, just sort of see the bowlers going through, stand somewhat near them in the warm-up and have a look at what's going on around the bowling stuff and then stay pretty calm and relaxed."

Head added: "I will talk to Tom, the analyst here, about how they sort of stack up in the power play and I'll try and worry about that part and then take it from there. Try and get a rough idea who those guys are and then probably just watch them live in the warm-up and get a feel for what I'm coming in to expect"

Head is among the lot of late-



arriving Australians after making a quick trip home from India. It meant he missed both warm-up games and the final practice session was rained out on Tuesday.

It's the first T20 World Cup for Head, who was player of the match in Australia's ODI World Cup triumph in India last year, having also been player of the match in the World Test Championship final, showing he was a man for the big events.

Head said it was important not to get too fired up too early.

"The one-day World Cup didn't really feel like a World Cup until we get down to the business end of it, so a little bit the same here," he said. "You want to be winning every game. You want to be peaking at the right time, so for us, we start tomorrow, but also, we want to do the right things, get the Super Eights and be peaking in the back end. I think we did that really well in the one-day tournament. We want to be going fine at the right time."

"So, we want to get everything right in these first few games and make sure we're in the right position to accelerate in the back half of the tournament"

It may be mentioned that Australia had only nine of their squad available for their official warm-up matches in Trinidad and the whole squad assembled on the weekend, just a handful of days before their opening match against Oman.

O'Dowd half-century steers Netherlands past Nepal

DALLAS: Max O'Dowd hit an unbeaten half-century to steer the Netherlands to a six-wicket victory over Nepal in their T20 World Cup Group D clash on Tuesday.

Set a target of 107 to win, O'Dowd anchored the Netherlands' run chase with 54 off 48 balls to see the Dutch over the line at the Grand Prairie Stadium in Dallas.

The Netherlands finished on 109-4 off 18.4 overs, with Bas de Leede hitting the winning runs with a boundary to seal victory.

Vikram Singh supported O'Dowd with 22 runs while Sybrand Engelbrecht was the only other Netherlands batsman to make it into double figures with 14.

Nepal, meanwhile, were left ruing a trio of dropped catches that might have turned the game had they gone to hand, including skipper Rohit Paudel's missed chance to get rid of O'Dowd in the 18th over.

The Netherlands' modest victory target had been set up by a disciplined bowling display which restricted Nepal to 106 all out.



"Our bowlers were awesome up top," Netherlands captain Scott Edwards said afterwards.

"All five of our bowlers were brilliant. Ideally we would have got the runs a little quicker, but it was great the way Max batted, and Bassie finished it off well."

"We've got to play consistent cricket right way through this tournament."

Logan van Beek took three wickets for just 18 runs while Tim Pringle also claimed a trio of wickets, finishing with figures of

3-20 off four overs.

Paul van Meekeren bagged a brace of wickets for 19 runs while de Leede finished on 2-22.

After losing the toss, Nepal's batsmen struggled to get to grips with moist, overcast conditions after being put into bat following a slight delay of play caused by a wet outfield.

"The conditions while batting were really challenging," Nepal captain Paudel said. "Netherlands bowled really well."

Nepal were in trouble early on to find themselves struggling at 15-2 after 3.1 overs.

Anil Sah was the next to fall for 11 runs after being caught by van Beek off Pringle as Nepal reached 40-3.

There was a slight revival after Rohit Paudel hit a brisk 35 off 37 balls, but the Nepal skipper soon found himself running out of middle order partners.

Kushal Malla, Dipendra Singh Airee and Sompal Kami all fell in quick succession to leave Nepal struggling on 66-6 after 13.2 overs, and when Paudel was dismissed by Pringle the final three wickets all tumbled rapidly.

— AFP

DEFENDING ENGLAND WASHED OUT AFTER SCOTLAND SCARE

BRIDGETOWN: Scotland opens George Munsey and Michael Jones gave England a fright in their T20 World Cup opener in Barbados on Tuesday before rain spared the defending champions a potentially tough chase.

Scotland, in their first T20 against their border rivals, were bidding to match their shock success when they last met England — a six-run one-day international win in Edinburgh back in 2018.

England, meanwhile, were desperate to improve on a woeful defence of their 50-over global title in India last year, where Jos Buttler's men lost six of their nine matches. But after Scotland captain Richie Berrington won the toss on Tuesday, they failed to create one clear and legitimate wicket-taking chance.

Munsey (41 not out off 31 balls) and Jones (45 not out off 30) batted superbly to take Scotland to 90-0 in a rain-interrupted innings of 10 overs at the Kensington Oval.

Because Scotland's innings suffered a lengthy delay on 51-0 off 6.2 overs, it meant England were left with a revised target of 109 in 10 overs under



the Duckworth-Lewis-Stern method. But a fresh downpour led the umpires to abandon the Group B match before England, on a ground where they won the 2010 T20 World Cup final, could begin their reply.

Both England and Scotland received a point each.

"We expected a tough challenge, there are no easy games, but we were confident coming into the game," said England captain Buttler.

"It's disappointment for everyone... We scrapped hard

and we were confident of chasing that score down."

Earlier, left-hander Munsey, on 16, top top-edged a hook off Mark Wood high to wicketkeeper Buttler, only to be reprieved by the fast bowler's no-ball.

"No-ball wickets are always disappointing, but these things happen," said Buttler.

"Hopefully we get a dry day and we can get into the tournament," he added, with England due back at the Kensington Oval on Saturday to face Australia. — AFP



Italy's Jasmine Paolini celebrates winning her quarterfinal match against Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina. – Reuters

PAOLINI SINKS RYBAKINA TO REACH FIRST SEMIS

PARIS: Italy's Jasmine Paolini reached her first Grand Slam semifinal at the French Open on Wednesday after dumping out fourth seed Elena Rybakina 6-2, 4-6, 6-4.

Paolini, seeded 12th, is enjoying the best season of her career at the age of 28 and will play two-time Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka or 17-year-old Mirra Andreieva for a spot in the final.

"It's an unbelievable feeling," said Paolini, who had never previously made it past the second round at any Grand Slam until this year.

She had two points for a 5-3 lead on her serve in the second set but had to regroup after former Wimbledon champion Rybakina rallied to take the match to a



Kazakhstan's Elena Rybakina in action during her quarterfinal match against Italy's Jasmine Paolini. – Reuters

deciding set. "It was a really tough match. I was a bit too emotional in the second set.

"I said to myself 'ok, it is good'. She (Rybakina) is a great champion so it can happen. I tried to hit every ball and it worked, I am here."

She had won a total of four matches in 16 Grand Slam appearances before advancing to the fourth round of the Australian Open in January.

Now she is two wins away in her unlikely quest to emulate compatriot Francesca Schiavone, who won the 2010 French Open.

Paolini's victory also means there are Italian players in the semifinals of both the men's and women's singles of the same Grand Slam for the first time in the Open era. — AFP

Alcaraz sets up crunch match against Sinner

PARIS: Carlos Alcaraz saw off Stefanos Tsitsipas in straight sets on Tuesday to set up a mouthwatering French Open semifinal clash with incoming world number one Jannik Sinner.

The reigning Wimbledon champion proved too strong for former Roland Garros runner-up Tsitsipas, powering to a 6-3, 7-6 (7/3), 6-4 victory on Court Philippe Chatrier.

"I was really calm in the moments I had to (be)," he said. "I'm really happy to play a semifinal here again at Roland Garros."

Alcaraz will be desperate to right the wrongs of last year — when he suffered cramps in a defeat by Novak Djokovic — in his second successive French Open semifinal.

The 21-year-old Spaniard has now won all six of his career matches against ninth-ranked Tsitsipas, including back-to-back quarterfinals in Paris after his three-set victory at the same stage last year.

"I was pretty sure I could face Carlos today and maybe do something different than any other time that I have played (him)," said Tsitsipas.

"The kid is just too good. I can only congratulate him because he's really playing amazing."

Alcaraz is bidding to become the youngest man in history to win Grand Slam tournaments on hard, grass and clay courts after his Wimbledon triumph and 2022 US Open title.

He will face Sinner on Friday for the ninth time, with the pair's head-to-head record level at 4-4.

"It's a really difficult challenge, I'm not going to lie," said Alcaraz of Sinner, who will usurp Djokovic at the top of the rankings next week.

"I think right now he's the best player in the world, the player who's playing the best tennis right now."

There will be a new name on the men's trophy this year after Djokovic pulled out ahead of his

quarterfinal with a knee injury, while it will also be the first final without one of the 'big three' since 2004.

The winner of Alcaraz's match with Australian Open champion Sinner will be favourite for the title in the final against either Alexander Zverev, Casper Ruud or Alex de Minaur.

"Surprise for me that he withdrew from the tournament," said Alcaraz of Djokovic.

"I think not having Djokovic in the tournament, it's I'm going to say distressing for the fans not having one of the best players in the world in the tournament."

LET'S SEE WHO WINS

Alcaraz won his only previous match against Sinner this year in the Indian Wells semis, while they have shared a win each in Grand Slam clashes.

"We've played great matches, high level," said Alcaraz. "I'm grateful to have him on the tour, at this level because he pushes me to be my best level... to wake up in the morning to try to get better to try to beat him."

"It's going to be a really good challenge, I'm ready for that challenge. It's the match that everybody wants to watch."

"I'm sure he'll show his best tennis. I will as well, so let's see who's going to win."

Alcaraz started quickly in front of an expectant crowd on Tuesday, racing through the first set in just half an hour as Tsitsipas struggled to contain his opponent.

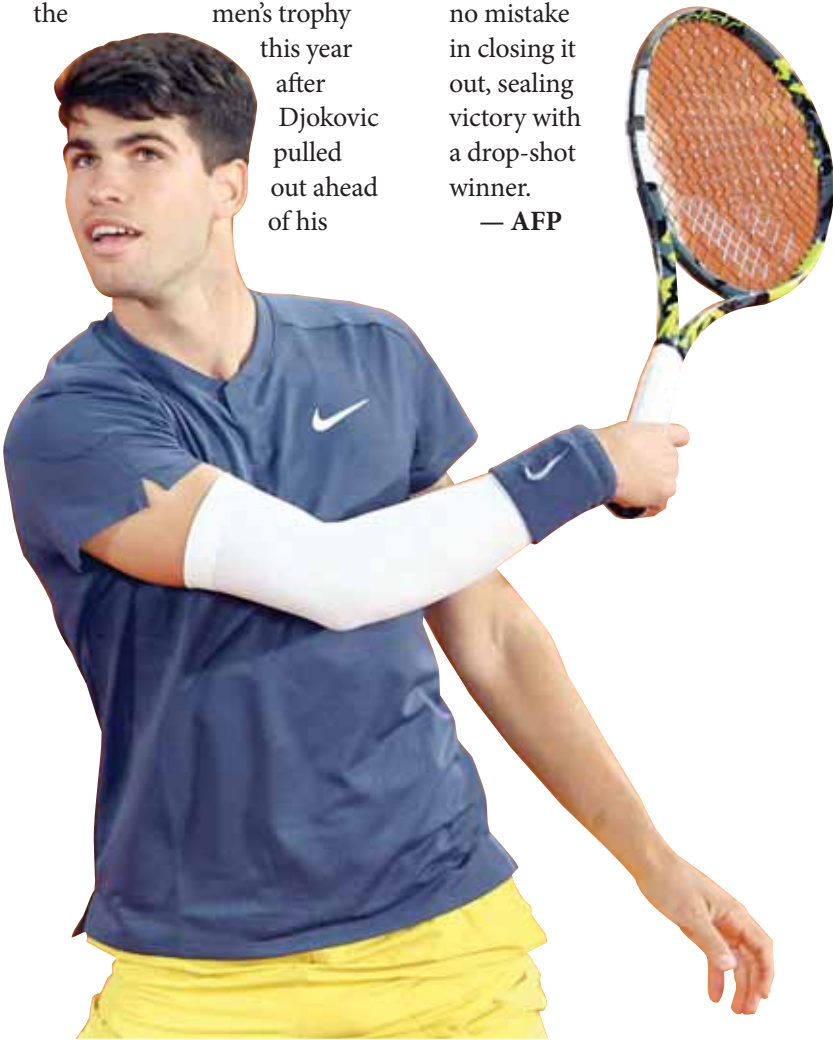
An underwhelming contest looked on the cards when the third seed forged 4-1 ahead in the second, although Tsitsipas fought back to force a tie-break.

The Greek was always on the back foot, though, and Alcaraz upped his level again to take the breaker.

Tsitsipas' hopes dissipated with a double-fault to give up a break of serve in the seventh game of the third set.

Alcaraz made no mistake in closing it out, sealing victory with a drop-shot winner.

— AFP



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz Garfia celebrates after winning against Greece's Stefanos Tsitsipas at the end of their quarterfinal match on Court Philippe-Chatrier on day ten of the French Open tournament at the Roland Garros Complex. — AFP



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MDO progresses slate of major mining projects

The exploration efforts have not been limited to copper. New discoveries of chromite ore amounting to 163 thousand tonnes have been reported.

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

Oman's mineral sector has seen significant advancements in exploration, drilling, project development, and investment opportunities. The country is striving to harness its mineral resources to meet market demands and bolster its industrial capacity, marking considerable progress in several key areas.

Playing a key role in harnessing the potential of this industry is Minerals Development Oman (MDO), the mining sector investment arm of Oman Investment Authority (OIA). An overview of MDO's key achievements of 2023 was featured in the newly published 2023 Annual Report of OIA issued here

earlier this week. One of the standout achievements of MDO is the 80% completion rate of the aerial geophysical survey programme. This initiative is designed to establish a robust base of mineral resources to satisfy market needs. The programme has already yielded substantial discoveries, including 48.7 million tonnes of copper ore. In addition to these findings, the copper project in the Wilayat of Yanqul has been incorporated into the broader project agenda, boasting a total reserve of 8.7 million tonnes of copper ore. The exploration efforts have not been limited to copper. New discoveries of chromite ore amounting to 163 thousand tonnes have been reported. Furthermore, reserves of 99 million tonnes of solid silica and 4.1 million tonnes of industrial clay kaolin have been identified, reflecting a diversified mineral wealth that holds promise for various industrial applications. MDO's commitment to advancing its mineral sector is further evidenced by significant



Detailed studies for the Shuwaymiyah Industrial Minerals Project are nearing completion.

project developments. The final investment decision for the copper project in Yanqul has been made, with the tender for engineering, procurement, construction, and management expected to be signed soon. This decision marks a pivotal step in realising the project's potential and bringing substantial economic benefits to the region.

In parallel, MDO has commenced efforts to redevelop the Al-Aseel and Al-Baidha mines, estimated to contain around 2.8 million tonnes of copper reserves. Additionally, construction has begun on the titanium dioxide plant in the Sohar Free Zone, a project that signifies a move towards diversifying the industrial base and enhancing the value-

added processing of minerals. MDO is actively seeking strategic partnerships to further its mineral sector ambitions. Notably, there are plans to conduct feasibility studies for a manganese production project in the Wilayat of Sur. This project aims to exploit the region's manganese resources and create new economic

opportunities. Moreover, detailed studies for the Shuwaymiyah Industrial Minerals Project are nearing completion. This project envisions the establishment of a new export port and an industrial zone, which will include supporting mines and services. Such infrastructure developments are crucial for facilitating efficient mineral export and stimulating industrial growth. A notable investment opportunity has emerged with the signing of an agreement with a local company to establish an annual production of approximately 1.5 million tonnes of gypsum ore in the Wilayat of Thamrait.

Oman's mineral sector is also making strides in promoting local employment. The Omanisation rate in the sector stands at 74%, reflecting a strong commitment to integrating Omani nationals into the workforce. This policy not only supports local employment but also ensures that the benefits of mineral resource development are widely shared within the community.

Asyad-affiliated free zones attract FDIs of over RO 1 billion in 2023

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

Omani free zones that fall within the ambit of Asyad Group — the integrated logistics provider of the Sultanate of Oman — garnered over RO 1 billion in foreign direct investments in 2023, underscoring the country's strong investment appeal amid a sustained government-led drive to diversify the economy. Of this total, the lion's share of RO 727.5 million flowed into Salalah Free Zone, the oldest of Oman's port-adjacent free zones. The amount is distributed across seven projects for which usufruct agreements were inked with foreign investors last year, according to Oman Investment Authority (OIA), the parent organisation of Asyad Group. Sohar Freezone was the next big beneficiary of FDI, having signing a total of 10 project agreements with a combined investment value of RO 135.8 million. Khazaen Economic City, an integrated economic zone in Al Batinah South Governorate, pulled in a total of RO 56.6 million through 15 project agreements signed with overseas investors during the year. A further RO 115.4 million in foreign investments were ploughed into other assets



Asyad Drydock turned a profit for the third consecutive year, fuelled by an uptick in ship calls for dry-docking and repair services.

of Asyad Group during the year, OIA stated in its 2023 Annual Report. Significantly, Asyad Group — spanning around 16 entities operating in the shipping, ports, transportation, logistics, ship repairs, free zones and other sectors — posted revenues totalling RO 465 million in 2023, representing a 5% increase over the corresponding figure for 2022. Profits were up 4% to RO 47 million over the same period. Noteworthy achievements of Asyad Group subsidiaries and joint ventures were also highlighted in the Annual Report. Asyad Drydock (formerly Oman Drydock Company) achieved net profits for the third consecutive year, having also recorded a 4% growth in

the number of vessels calling at the Duqm yard for repairs and maintenance. Asyad Shipping, which owns and operates a diverse fleet of ocean-going cargo ships, signed an agreement with Oman LNG to rent two state-of-the-art LNG carriers for more than eight years. "It is expected that this contract will generate direct and indirect added value surpassing RO 200 million and enhance collaboration between OIA Companies," said the Authority in its report. Under a separate contract, Saudi national shipping firm Bahri Shipping has committed to transporting around 600,000 metric tonnes of urea over a one-year timeframe at a cost of RO 4.6 million. Additionally, a direct partial shipment service was

launched to link Khazaen Dry Port (part of Khazaen Economic City) with Nhava Sheva Port on India's west coast via Sohar Port. In another significant highlight, Asyad Shipping's Singapore office generated revenues of RO 32 million in the first year of its operations, vindicating the Group's decision to set up operations in this vital South Asian maritime hub. In other notable developments during of the year, Asyad Ports received a total of 138 cruise ships carrying over 430,000 tourists, representing a 92% increase over the previous year. Also in the same year, Asyad Ports was appointed as the operator of a newly launched Container Terminal at the Port of Duqm. National bus and ferry operator Mwasalat posted a 21% uptick in revenues on the back of a significant rise in travellers, as well as the successful signing of commercial contracts, according to the Annual Report. Adding to its expanding portfolio, Asyad Group received the mandate to operate, develop, and manage the Free Zone at Muscat International Airport. The announcement was made by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ).

WADI ADAI DAM PROJECT TO STRENGTHEN MUSCAT'S RESILIENCE AGAINST FLOODS



Construction under way on Wadi Adai dam.

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has announced progress in the construction of the Wadi Adai Dam in the Wilayat of Muttrah — a major infrastructure initiative that tackles two critical challenges: flood risks and dwindling groundwater reserves. Spanning a length of 220 metres and height of 39 metres, the dam will boast a sizable storage capacity of 23 million cubic metres. Constructed with a core of compacted rock and soil, an innovative asphalt wall running along its centre will prevent water seepage. Furthermore, a 120-metre concrete side spillway ensures controlled discharge of floodwaters during heavy rain events. Integrated gates will allow for meticulous water release and reservoir drainage, maximising efficiency. The dam serves as a guardian against the destructive potential of floods. By intercepting rainwater and floodwaters originating from

the southern wadis before they reach the Al Qurum area, the project significantly reduces the risk of these devastating events. This translates to safeguarding lives, property, and fostering a sense of security residents downstream. Beyond flood protection, the dam offers a sustainable solution for the wilayat's groundwater woes. By capturing and storing precious water resources, the dam will contribute to replenishing surrounding wells. This improved groundwater availability will be a lifeline for the region, ensuring a reliable source for domestic and agricultural needs. The ministry has prioritised responsible development throughout the project. The dam's design incorporates earthquake safety measures, prioritising the safety of the community. Additionally, the surrounding area will be aesthetically enhanced through tree plantation initiatives, creating a harmonious blend of functionality and environmental consciousness.

Sohar Aluminium is now fully ASI-certified



SUHAR: Sohar Aluminium (SA) has proudly received the Full Certification for Performance Standard V2 from the Aluminium Stewardship Initiative (ASI). This prestigious certification underscores SA's commitment to sustainable practices in its smelting and Casthouse facility located in Suhar. The ASI Performance Standard Certification defines Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles and criteria, with the aim to address sustainability issues in the aluminium industry.

The Performance Standard supports responsible supply chains within the Aluminium industry and reinforces and promotes consumer and stakeholder confidence in the aluminium sector and its products.

It provides a common standard for the aluminium value chain on environmental, social and governance performance. Areas covered within the Environment include greenhouse gas emissions, effluents and waste, water stewardship and biodiversity.

For Social, it focuses on human rights, labour rights, occupational health, and safety. Governance includes business integrity, policy and management, transparency and material stewardship.

"Inspired by our ESG Strategy, Sohar Aluminium adopted and adhered to sustainable business operations and practices that played a significant role towards being awarded the ASI's Full Certification for Performance Standard V2," Eng Said al Masoudi, CEO of Sohar Aluminium said.

"Receiving ASI Certification marks an achievement that reflects our pursuit to be a world-class and pioneering industrial company while being mindful of our obligations to the local environment and our stakeholders.

This certification testifies Sohar Aluminium's commitment towards delivering Aluminium responsibly," al Masoudi added.

All-new Mitsubishi L200 launches in Oman

MUSCAT: General Automotive Company (GAC), the authorised distributor of Mitsubishi Motors in Oman, proudly launches the all-new Mitsubishi L200.

This milestone showcases Mitsubishi Motors' unwavering commitment to innovation, excellence, and its focused approach to meet the evolving needs of the Oman market.

The all-new Mitsubishi L200 represents a paradigm shift in the pickup truck segment, featuring a host of groundbreaking enhancements designed to elevate the driving experience and set new benchmarks in performance and durability.

Junya Takami, President of Mitsubishi Motors Middle East and Africa, commented on this significant launch, "The launch of the all-new Mitsubishi L200 signifies a new era of automotive excellence, where we redefine the boundaries of capability, safety, and eco-friendliness.

Our dedication to the Middle East, Africa, and Oman market is unwavering, and we are excited to introduce a vehicle that not only exceeds expectations but also aligns with our vision for sustainability and social progress."

Speaking on the occasion,



Manoj Ranade, General Manager, General Automotive Company said, "At General Automotive Company, we are committed to providing world-class products with cutting-edge technology and delivering the highest levels of customer satisfaction through our extensive sales and service network across the length and breadth of Oman and our trained and experienced staff.

Today, GAC stands as the number one After Sales Distributor for Mitsubishi Motors in the whole of Middle East and Africa, a position that we are

confident of retaining for a very long time."

Pointing out that the launch of the L200 marks not just a new chapter, but another key milestone in this remarkable journey, he added, "This new model is not just a pickup; it is a culmination of years of research, customer feedback, and engineering excellence.

The new L200 is designed to meet the diverse needs of our customers, offering enhanced performance, superior comfort, and advanced safety features."

The grand launch event, held

at Al Rozna Hall in Muscat on June 5 2024, is part of a series of launches across Oman, marking a significant milestone in the company's history.

Delivering a welcome address at the media briefing, Niels Bormans, Group CEO, Zubair Corporation said, "A journey that began way back in 1974, has paved the way for a long and fruitful partnership between Mitsubishi Motors and General Automotive Co.

This partnership has been instrumental in bringing some of the finest vehicles to the Omani

market, enduring the challenging terrain and climatic conditions, and becoming the most trusted partners for businesses and individuals alike."

Following the unveiling, guests were treated to a comprehensive presentation delving into the L200's features, innovations, and technological advancements.

Key specifications, safety features, and design elements were brought to life, showcasing the L200's commitment to performance, safety, and style.

With its state-of-the-art engineering and rugged capabilities, the L200 is poised to revolutionize the pickup segment and elevate the driving experience for customers in Oman.

Built from the ground up to tackle the most demanding terrains and daily challenges, the all-new Mitsubishi L200 boasts a fully reengineered chassis, Super Select 4WD-II system, and many more performance related features that deliver exceptional multi-usage prowess.

With enhanced ground clearance and advanced 7 Drive Mode tailored for sand, gravel, rocky terrain and more, the L200 ensures a smooth and confident ride in any environment.

City Centre Malls in Oman launch 'Summer of Fun' with exciting games, giveaways, gatherings and more

MUSCAT: Majid al Futtaim, a leading pioneer in shopping malls, communities, retail, and leisure across the Middle East, proudly announces the return of the 'Summer of Fun' at City Centre malls in Oman.

With a wide range of specially curated activities, these malls are set to become vibrant hubs of excitement and unforgettable memories during the summer months.

City Centre Muscat, City Centre Qurum, and My City Centre Sur are elevating the shopping experience by offering guests the chance to win big with every purchase.

From now until July 21st, customers who spend a minimum amount specified at each location will be entered into a bi-weekly draw, ensuring every receipt could be a winning ticket. This initiative reflects the malls' commitment to providing exceptional value to their guests. City Centre Qurum invites families to enrol their children in an exciting



Summer Bootcamp, running from June 22nd to August 29th.

This program combines entertainment and skill development in a dynamic environment for children aged 6 to 16 years.

The camp concludes with a two-day souq,

where participants can showcase and sell the products they created, emphasising the practical application of the bootcamp's business and marketing education.

From July 7th to July 20th, City Centre Muscat will delight children with a series of Smurf-themed games and activities. Kids can interact with The Smurfs, the beloved blue characters, adding a touch of magic to their summer holidays.

City Centre Suhar will host a thrilling gaming event from June 16th to July 31st. Families and gaming enthusiasts can immerse themselves in a gaming zone that seamlessly blends virtual entertainment with traditional board and card games, catering to visitors of all ages.

As City Centre malls continue to cultivate wonderlands of family fun and learning, they are becoming more than just shopping destinations.

Alfa Romeo Oman delivers nine Stelvios to MHD Leasing in the region

MUSCAT: Alfa Romeo Oman proudly announces the delivery of nine Alfa Romeo Stelvio SUVs to MHD Leasing, marking a significant milestone for the brand in the region.

The Alfa Romeo Stelvio, celebrated for its Italian heritage, stunning design, and dynamic performance, is set to enhance MHD Leasing's premium fleet.

This acquisition underscores the growing demand for luxury vehicles that blend performance, innovation, and sophisticated design.

Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD Automobiles, commented, "We are delighted to see the Stelvio becoming an integral part of MHD Leasing's fleet.

This transaction highlights the trust and recognition Alfa Romeo has earned in the market. The Stelvio's combination of luxury,



performance, and advanced features will undoubtedly impress MHD Leasing's clientele."

The addition of the Stelvio to MHD Leasing's portfolio demonstrates a shared vision of offering premium, high-performance vehicles to discerning

customers. As Alfa Romeo Oman continues to expand, this delivery exemplifies the brand's commitment to excellence and customer satisfaction.

The Alfa Romeo Stelvio is available in two variants in Oman. The Veloce variant offers a superior

driving experience with its 2.0L Turbo Engine delivering 280hp, paired with an 8-speed automatic transmission and All-Wheel Drive (AWD).

Enhanced by Level 2 Advanced Driver Assist Systems, it ensures safety and convenience while reflecting Alfa Romeo's rich heritage through its Italian design.

The perfect weight distribution and Alfa Link suspension system contribute to uncompromising driving dynamics and maximum comfort.

For those seeking higher performance, the Stelvio Quadrifoglio variant is available. It boasts a 2.9L Twin-Turbocharged V6 Engine with 505hp, Q4 All-Wheel Drive (AWD), and an 8-speed Automatic Transmission. Capable of accelerating from 0 to 100 KM/H in just 3.8 seconds, the Stelvio Quadrifoglio offers an exhilarating driving experience



NBO promotes financial literacy with Children's Account for a secure future

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) is encouraging financial literacy among children with the launch of its Children's Account, designed to help young ones develop essential money management skills. This initiative provides a valuable savings solution for children under 13, allowing them to save their Eidiya—the money received from relatives during Eid Al Fitr.

Maha al Raisi, Assistant General Manager and Head of Retail Products at NBO, stated, "At National Bank of Oman, we believe in empowering the next generation with essential financial skills.

Our Children's Account provides a platform for children aged 1 to 12 to start their journey towards financial independence. We urge families to open a Children's Account to help children save and manage the money they receive during the festivities.

Parents can now open a Children's Account instantly and digitally via the NBO app, accessing the service anywhere, anytime. We invite you to join us in building a financially secure future for our children."

NBO's Children's Account is open to both Omani and expatriate parents or guardians aged 18 and above, offering numerous benefits to ensure financial growth and security for young savers.

OQ8 powers up sustainability with 47,048 m2 of solar panels

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 5

OQ8 has announced in its 2023 Sustainability Report that its refinery in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm draws renewable power from 47,048 square metres of solar panelling installed across its facilities.

David Bird, CEO of OQ8, stated in the report, “In addressing our environmental obligations comprehensively, we have implemented various initiatives focusing on water usage, biodiversity, air quality, and waste management. Despite being one of the most modern refineries globally, we remain committed to further enhancing energy efficiency through operational excellence and technological investments.” Operational since January 2023, OQ8’s extensive solar panel system has generated a substantial energy output of 3.541 gigawatt-hours (GWh). The panels, installed on all accessible rooftop areas along with 295 standalone solar-powered streetlights, represent a proactive approach to energy efficiency. This investment in renewable



Image for representation purposes only. – Reuters

energy underscores OQ8’s dedication to sustainability and reducing reliance on traditional energy sources.

The company’s transition from the commissioning phase in 2022 to full operations in 2023 saw its energy consumption double—a typical increase during such transitions. However, OQ8’s strategic addition of solar energy as a third source of power highlights its forward-thinking approach. By integrating solar energy into the refinery design, OQ8 aims to meet its energy

requirements while minimising its carbon footprint.

OQ8’s environmental initiatives extend beyond solar energy. The company monitors and evaluates its greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions to understand its environmental impact, set targets, and guide future actions. The transition to full operational capacity in 2023 resulted in a doubling of GHG emissions, an anticipated outcome in line with projected design emissions. By establishing a baseline through detailed tracking and assessment,

OQ8 aims to effectively manage and mitigate its environmental impact.

In addition to its solar energy initiatives, OQ8 has implemented a Flare Minimisation Plan (FMP) developed according to international standards. This plan ensures that flaring events occur only during upset conditions and emergencies, with operational adjustments made to process units to prevent flaring. The refinery design also includes a flare gas recovery system, which consists of a specialised compression package to recover and repurpose gases typically burned during flaring, further contributing to environmental sustainability efforts.

The company has installed a Wastewater Treatment Plant (WWTP) to recycle water consumption. This system is designed to collect and manage aqueous emissions from the refinery, ensuring compliance with environmental regulations and standards. The treated wastewater, discharged into the sea, adheres to specified limits, reinforcing OQ8’s dedication to minimising water contamination and conserving resources.



E-scooters unveiled as part of the mobility project launched at KOM.

Madayn launches smart mobility project at KOM

MUSCAT: Knowledge Oasis Muscat (KOM), the tech arm of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), launched on Wednesday a ‘Smart Mobility’ project in collaboration with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), and Salik Mobility.

The project features electric scooter service for the employees working in various companies within KOM, facilitating easy movement between buildings.

This initiative aligns with Madayn’s ongoing efforts to enhance facilities at the Knowledge Oasis Muscat and create a conducive business environment through adopting environmentally friendly projects that reduce consumption, implement smart building management, provide smart security and safety solutions, and integrate various smart technologies to transform Knowledge Oasis Muscat into a smart city.

Among these technology solutions are security management system, parking management, smart systems for building management, smart irrigation, waste management, and lighting management, as well as smart facilities management and smart audiovisual display management systems.

China to establish carbon footprint management system by 2027

BEIJING/SINGAPORE: China aims to establish an initial carbon footprint management system by 2027, it said on Wednesday, a move that would create a more comprehensive and unified system of standards to measure carbon emissions.

The system is meant to push toward China’s carbon-neutral goal, according to a plan issued by the Ministry of Ecology and Environment and other relevant government bodies.

It aims to release carbon footprint calculation standards for about 100 major products by 2027, and increase that number to 200 by 2030.

It will prioritise the calculation standard releases for products including coal, steel, natural gas, aluminium, lithium batteries and new energy vehicles. The world’s top carbon emitter plans to expand carbon trading to sectors such as steel and cement, and head off the impact of Europe’s carbon border adjustment mechanism (CBAM), which will impose tariffs on high-carbon imports.

Key enterprises, including

those involved in foreign trade, should take the lead.

Chinese officials have expressed concern that CBAM unfairly penalises China’s exporters and doesn’t fully take into account the efforts China has made to reduce emissions.

The plan announced on Wednesday said China would pay close attention to carbon-related trade policies around the world, build mutual trust and promote the international alignment of carbon footprint standards.

It also said it would use the new standards to encourage low-carbon consumption, with local governments urged to develop pilot programmes and new policies that could encourage enterprises and individuals to buy cleaner products China last week released a separate plan to reduce the carbon dioxide emissions of key industries by an amount equivalent to about 1 per cent of the 2023 national total through efficiency gains in everything from steel production to transportation.

— Reuters



People cross a street in the Central Business District (CBD) on a polluted day in Beijing, China. – Reuters

European shares rebound on soft US jobs data



People walk past the entrance of the London Stock Exchange in London, Britain. – Reuters

INDIA: European shares gained on Wednesday, mirroring global sentiment as a soft US labour market data firmed bets of a rate cut from the Federal Reserve, ahead of the European Central Bank’s key rate verdict later this week.

The pan-European STOXX 600 was up 0.5 per cent as of 08:40 GMT, rebounding from the previous session’s losses.

Wall Street ended higher on Tuesday and Asian equities broadly rose on Wednesday after data showed US job openings fell in April, signalling an easing labour market and firming bets of a Fed rate cut in September.

“If you’re kind of sanguine about the labour market and you see that earnings revisions are broadly positive in the US, that gives you a positive backdrop for equities,” said Richard Flax, chief investment officer at Moneyfarm.

Most sectoral indexes traded higher, with retail advancing 1.4 per cent to hit an over two-year high as Zara-owner Inditex jumped 4.7 per cent on better-

than-expected current trading numbers in its first-quarter results.

Spain’s benchmark IBEX index was up 0.6 per cent.

Adding to the sector’s gains, WH Smith advanced 3.7 per cent after the British retailer said it was well positioned for the peak summer, betting on strong travel

Wall Street ended higher on Tuesday and Asian equities broadly rose on Wednesday after data showed US job openings fell in April

demand.

Investors are now focused on the ECB’s key interest rate decision on Thursday, where it is expected to ease borrowing costs by 25 basis points from the present record levels of 4 per cent.

“Even if the ECB does cut

rates tomorrow, one of the questions that will come up, particularly given the recent inflation data is to what extent the ECB can cut further from here and on what time frame,” Moneyfarm’s Flax added.

In the foreword to the Slovak central bank’s financial stability report published on Wednesday, policymaker Peter Kazimir said the ECB is nearing its first interest rate cut with inflation on a good path.

Meanwhile, a survey showed euro zone business activity expanded at its quickest rate in a year in May, as growth in the bloc’s dominant services industry outpaced contraction in manufacturing.

Among other stocks, ASML rose 3.3 per cent after Jefferies said the Dutch semiconductor equipment maker’s CFO provided positive feedback on talks with TSMC during a small group call.

The technology sector climbed 1.6 per cent, while European lenders were market laggards, down 0.2 per cent. — Reuters

Airlines and energy firms clash over green fuel supplies



IATA Director General Willie Walsh looks on during an interview with Reuters in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. – Reuters

DUBAI: Airlines and energy firms clashed over scarce availability of alternative fuels on Tuesday as carriers ended a three-day summit struggling to square near-record demand with supply chain problems and pressure to meet environmental goals.

The aviation industry has committed to reducing net emissions to zero by 2050 largely through plant-based Sustainable Aviation Fuels (SAF).

But with current supplies of SAF covering just 0.5 per cent of the airlines’ fuel needs, disagreements surfaced during an annual meeting of the International Air Transport Association, attended by energy companies including France’s TotalEnergies.

“Total’s net earnings last year were \$23.2 billion. The whole airline industry’s net earnings in 2023 were \$27 billion,” IATA Director General Willie Walsh said during a closing debate. — Reuters

Exploring pros and cons on the dual facets of commercial society



MOHAMMED ANWAR AL BALUSHI

The author is an academic lecturer and advisor at Oman College of Management and Technology

Have you noticed how everything seems commercial these days? Are we not living in a commercial society? If not, then what kind of society are we in? Visit any financial institution, the so-called “Engine of Money,” for a service and observe what you find. Even in non-financial institutions, the result is the same.

Upon entering, you are greeted by a receptionist with a smile. Is that smile genuine or is it a commercial facade? How much are we paying for that commercial smile, and is it worth it? Do we exist in a world where authenticity is overshadowed by commercial interests? I’m not entirely against commercial society, but I’m not fully in favour of it either.

In a commercial society, everyone depends on others and is compelled to perform and please others for commercial gain.

What often happens in such a society is a constant tug-of-war

where individuals either drag others down or are dragged themselves. It is undeniable that we rely on each other to fill commercial gaps. Historically, scholars have revisited the debate between Rousseau and Adam Smith, discovering that their views on commercial society were not as diametrically opposed as once thought.

The commercial society offers undeniable advantages: economic growth and innovation, employment opportunities, consumer choice and quality, wealth creation and improved living standards and economic flexibility and resilience.

However, these benefits come with significant drawbacks: consumerism and environmental impact, income inequality, social and cultural impacts, and exploitation and ethical concerns.

No discussion of commercial society would be complete without mentioning Jean-Jacques Rousseau, a Genevan philosopher, writer, and composer. His political philosophy influenced the Age

of Enlightenment across Europe, the French Revolution, and modern political, economic and educational thought.

Rousseau consistently argued that commercial society impedes true freedom by making us dependent on others and on endless desires beyond our control. He believed that

commercial society deprives individuals of their freedom, time, desires and dreams.

Interestingly, Rousseau and his work “Emile” suggest that an elite class can still find freedom within a commercial society. If commercial society is truly beneficial, shouldn’t freedom be attainable for all, not just the elite? Commercial society revolves around labour, markets, products, and prices. The term commercial society also refers to the complex web of relationships and behaviours that emerged during the rapid evolution of labour and goods markets, rising living standards, and shifting class relations in 17th and 18th century Europe.

Adam Smith, the father of economics, argued in “The Wealth of Nations” (1776) that commercial society arises when the division of labour is fully established, compelling highly specialised workers to sell and barter their surplus labour in an increasingly complex marketplace: “every man thus lives by exchanging, or becomes

in some measure a merchant.” Despite its benefits, commercial society is rejected by some, including Rousseau, who believed it strips individuals of their freedom.

Emile notes that commercial society does not immediately present itself as disenchanted, but beneath the surface, it fosters economic growth, innovation, and improved living standards while presenting significant challenges such as income inequality, environmental degradation, and ethical concerns.

Balancing these aspects is crucial for sustainable and equitable development. While commercial society drives progress and innovation, it also necessitates careful consideration of its broader impacts to ensure that its benefits do not come at the expense of individual freedom and ethical integrity.

The ongoing dialogue between proponents and critics of commercial society highlights the need for a nuanced approach to its development and governance.

COMMERCIAL SOCIETY OFFERS UNDENIABLE ADVANTAGES: ECONOMIC GROWTH AND INNOVATION, EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES, CONSUMER CHOICE AND QUALITY, WEALTH CREATION. HOWEVER, THESE BENEFITS COME WITH SIGNIFICANT DRAWBACKS.

Growing pharma sector key to building resilience in Oman’s health services



HAIDER AL LAWATI haiderdawood@hotmail.com

The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for CBO and OCCI

Pharmaceutical industries represent one of the most important sectors in the global economy. They enhance the quality of life and provide protection against diseases that people face periodically.

Despite the interest of Omani and Gulf individuals and institutions in establishing more pharmaceutical projects and health supply facilities in the region, obtaining production licenses from Western companies is challenging.

This difficulty is due to the numerous approvals required, resulting from the monopoly of developed countries on the patents and technologies essential for this crucial industry.

The Omani government is continuously working to localise and encourage national investments in the medical industries to achieve pharmaceutical security, which is as vital as secure food and water systems.

The number of pharmaceutical factories in Oman and the wider region is significantly below par compared to the financial capabilities and population of this area. In Oman, the pharmaceutical sector accounts for only 10 per cent of the total requirements, with 90 per cent being procured from abroad.

To bolster these national efforts, the Menagen Pharmaceutical Industries factory was recently opened in the Rusayl Industrial Area. This factory, built to international standards and complying with the European Medicines Agency requirements, is the first in the Middle East to manufacture specialised medicines for rare



The Menagen Pharmaceutical Industries Plant

diseases. In January 2023, the Phelix factory was opened in the Salalah Free Zone.

This project, established with Qatari-Omani investment, is one of the latest in the pharmaceutical industry within the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Several more factories are planned to produce intravenous solutions, pharmaceutical preparations, gloves, medical masks, and other medical equipment and products that are currently imported annually.

These industries will undoubtedly support the national trends and goals of the Oman Vision 2040 in the fields of industry and health security.

Achieving these goals requires establishing more Omani joint-stock companies in this sector, with contributions from national funds, Omani banking institutions, and other entities.

Additionally, attracting foreign regional and global investments will position Oman as a leading industrial and production centre in this field.

The goal of establishing such factories is to increase the percentage of locally produced medicines and medical supplies from the current 7 per cent to 20 per cent by 2025.

This initiative includes strengthening development contracts for pharmaceutical research with similar institutions

in Arab and foreign countries that have more experience in this field. The number of patients in the country and the region is increasing due to the spread of diabetes, heart disease, high cholesterol, and other chronic conditions, which require significant financial resources for medication.

Additionally, there is a constant need for various types of medicines, vaccines, capsules, pain relievers, and treatments for cancer, tumours, and other diseases. Therefore, it is crucial to support Omani and Gulf nationals in establishing these factories financially and morally to ensure the success of their endeavours.

THE OMANI GOVERNMENT IS CONTINUOUSLY WORKING TO LOCALISE AND ENCOURAGE NATIONAL INVESTMENTS IN THE MEDICAL INDUSTRIES TO ACHIEVE PHARMACEUTICAL SECURITY, WHICH IS AS VITAL AS SECURE FOOD AND WATER SYSTEMS

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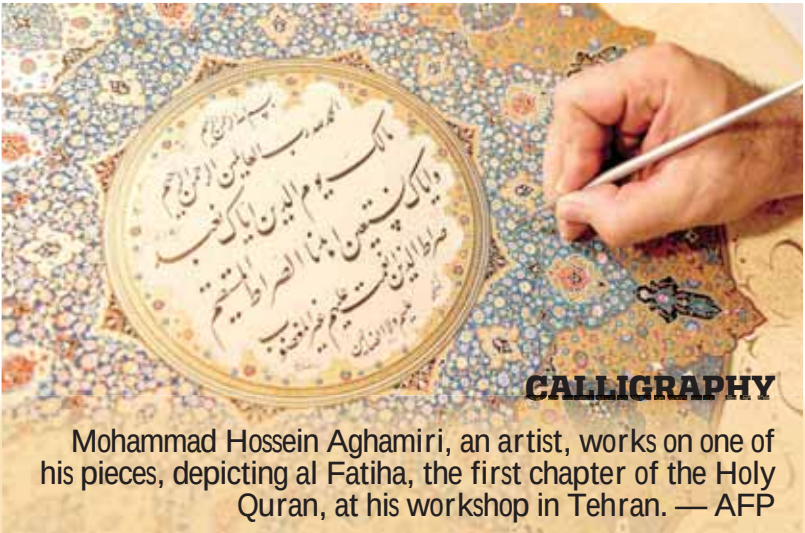
MUSIC

Argentine musician and producer Gustavo Santaolalla, who won two Oscars for the soundtracks of “Brokeback Mountain” and “Babel”, poses for pictures. — AFP



TRAVEL

A general view shows the business district during the evening rush hour in Jakarta. — AFP



CALLIGRAPHY

Mohammad Hossein Aghamiri, an artist, works on one of his pieces, depicting al Fatiha, the first chapter of the Holy Quran, at his workshop in Tehran. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

Children play along a street during rainfall in Chennai. — AFP



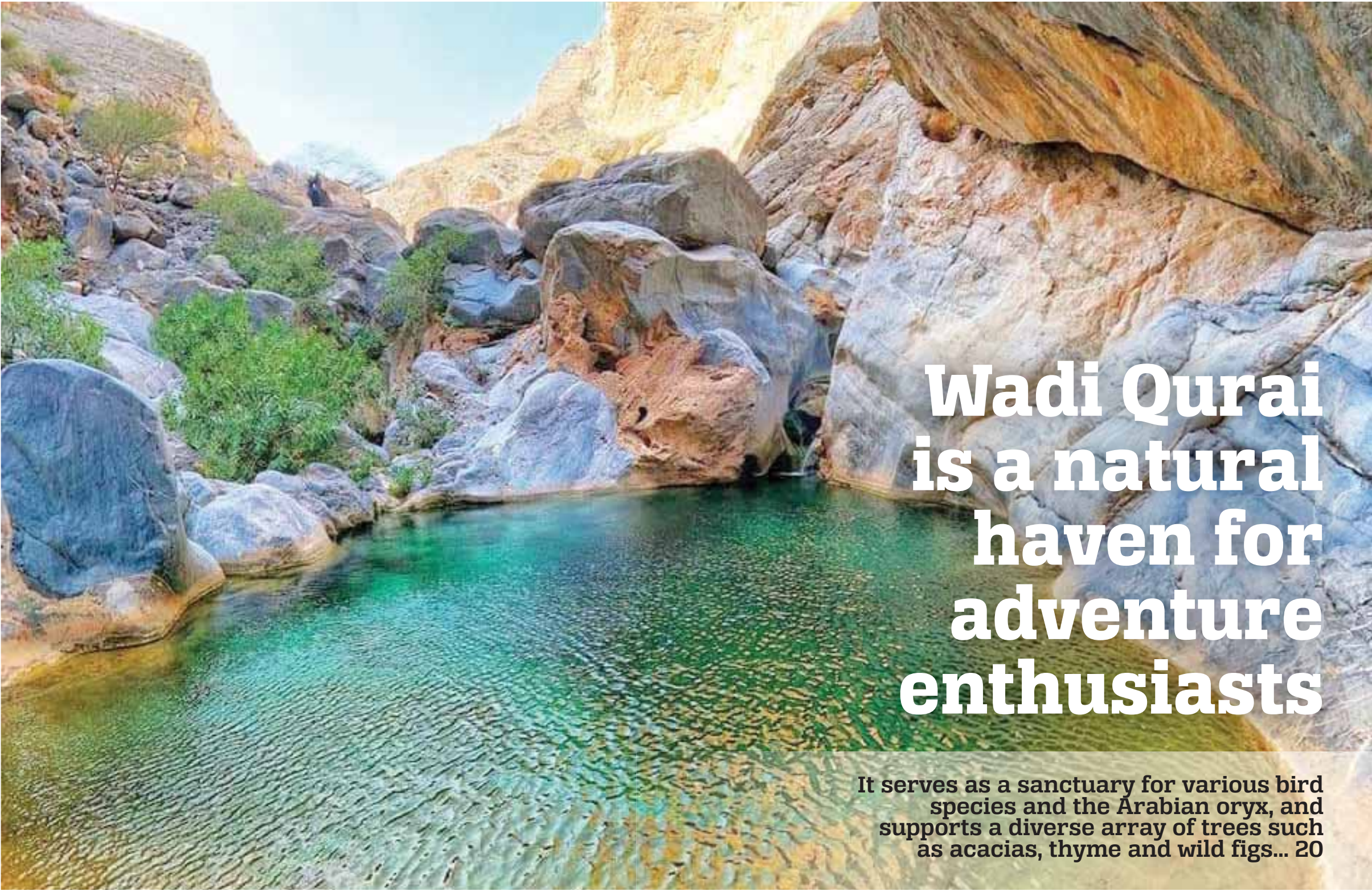
LIFESTYLE

Dallas Lowriders spokesperson Mark Mata leads a procession of lowriders as they cruise in Dallas, Texas. — AFP

art & life

THURSDAY | JUNE 6, 2024 | DHUL QA'ADA 29, 1445 AH

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Wadi Qurai is a natural haven for adventure enthusiasts

It serves as a sanctuary for various bird species and the Arabian oryx, and supports a diverse array of trees such as acacias, thyme and wild figs... 20

‘WHOLE FAMILY CRIED’: NEW GENE THERAPY OFFERS HOPE FOR DEAF KIDS

ZHU YANGYANG babbles away like a typical happy three-year-old, calling out for “mama” and “papa” and accurately naming colours — a remarkable achievement considering he was completely deaf just months ago.

He is one of five children whose hearing was restored through a revolutionary new gene therapy in a clinical trial led by Chinese and American researchers, offering new hope for those born with a rare genetic

mutation.

Yangyang's mother Chang Yiyi says she was moved to tears when she realised, around three weeks after the treatment last September, that Yangyang could hear her knocking on the door.

“I hid in a closet and called for him, and he still responded!” she said in an interview from Shanghai.

The results of the study, published on Wednesday in the prestigious journal Nature Medicine, mark the first time the procedure was performed on both ears. This led to significant improvements in speech perception and the ability to locate the source of sounds compared to treatment in just one ear.

“This is absolutely a turning point,” Zheng-Yi Chen, the study's senior author at the Eaton-Peabody Laboratories at Mass Eye and Ear, said, adding companies are now conducting clinical trials, including two in Boston, with the goal of moving towards regulatory approval.

“If the results hold, without any complications, I think in three to five years, it may be a medically approved product,” he added.

- RARE MUTATION -



There are around 26 million people globally with genetic forms of deafness, with this particular therapy focusing on people born with a mutation of the OTOF gene — roughly two to eight per cent of inherited deafness cases.

This defect means they are unable to produce the protein otoferlin, which is needed for hair cells in the inner ear to convert sound vibrations into electrical signals that can be sent to the brain.

The treatment involves injecting a modified virus into the inner ear that smuggles in a working version of the OTOF gene, restoring hearing.

When they realised that Yangyang could hear for the first time, “the whole family cried” including Yangyang's mother and grandmother, said lead study author Yilai Shu of the Eye & ENT Hospital of Fudan University in Shanghai.

Chang, a 26-year-old homemaker, said that taking care of her son has become much easier since he began developing language skills, and the family soon hopes to move him from a speech rehabilitation school to traditional kindergarten.

MORE GENETIC TARGETS

Shu led the research team that delivered the very first OTOF gene therapy in 2022, pioneering a treatment that has since been administered to more children around the world, including in the United States and the United Kingdom.

Treating both ears presented new challenges, he said. Doubling the surgical procedures increased the risk of side effects.

However, careful dosing minimised the immune response, and only mild to moderate side effects — like fever, vomiting and slightly elevated white cell counts —were observed.

All five children, who ranged in age from one to 11, saw major improvements.

Two of them gained an ability to appreciate music — a more complex acoustic signal — and danced happily in videos recorded for the study.

Surprisingly, even the 11-year-old has gained some capacity to understand speech and talk, even though it was expected it would be too late for the brain to acquire this ability if it had never before perceived sound.

“That really shows our brain has a plasticity that maybe lasts much longer than we originally thought,” said Chen. The clinical trial is ongoing, and the participants will be monitored for long-term follow up.

Meanwhile, Shu and Chen said they are working on further animal testing to develop treatments for other causes of genetic deafness, including those related to the GJB2 gene — the most common cause of deafness present at birth.

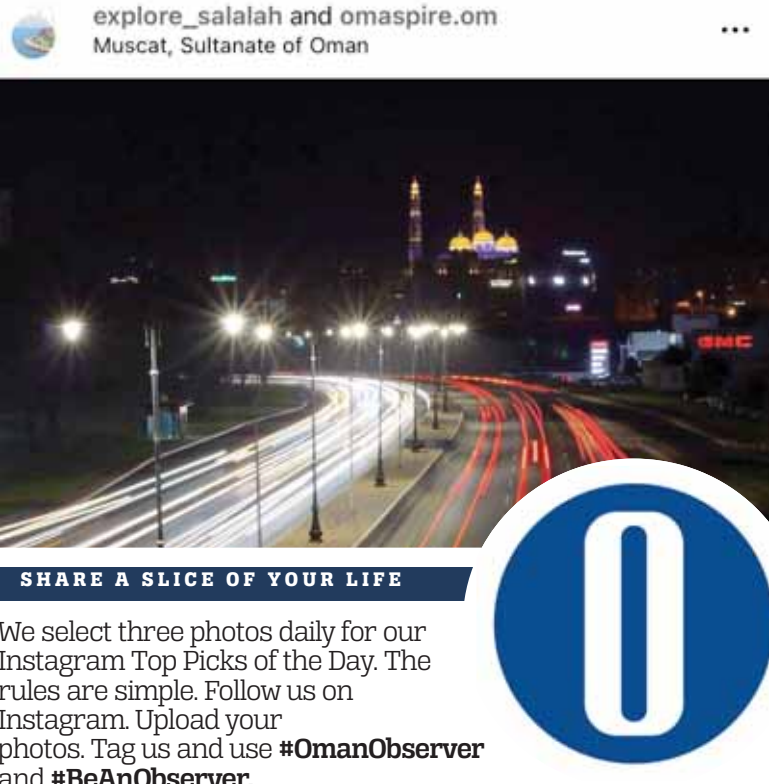


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SINGAPORE'S ONLY HEAVY METAL BAR ROCKS 'SOMETHING DIFFERENT'

TUCKED AWAY IN the basement of an old mall lies gleaming Singapore's only heavy metal bar, where music fans brush shoulder-to-shoulder with international rockers who helped pioneer the genre. Few venues cater to the country's tiny but vibrant metal scene, while the government has focused on luring more mainstream headliners — most recently Taylor Swift.



Around the corner from the looming parliament and Supreme Court buildings, "The Flying V" is a metal music oasis in the otherwise manicured environment. "I've gone to a few places like it, and this is one of the best," said Glover, whose band is behind one of the most recog-

nised bangers of all time, "Smoke on the Water". Two days later, a meet-and-greet session was held for fans of legendary metal muso Marty Friedman, ex-shredder for bands Megadeth and Cacophony. Metal music forges a close community, Friedman told AFP, while "fans of other genres have found good things about metal". "So, it's not just an underground community anymore," he said, after posing for photos and signing autographs. "But places like this are very cool because it's the hardcore real metal fans." Besides metalheads in black band T-shirts, the pub also attracts customers in their office attire as well as tourists. "What shocks me is you get all of these guys who kind of look like you, or they look like me, or they look like regular office guys, especially like Japanese guys and German guys," said George Kirton, who co-founded the bar. "They still have to wear their shirts and their suits for work. But deep down inside, they've still got

that heavy metal streak from when they were teenagers," said the Briton. Customers take turns to cue up their favourite tracks via the pub's communal iPad. Songs blare out, ranging from classic 1980s glam metal to thrash, grindcore or math metal. "When we come here (to the pub), we don't feel like we're in Singapore. We feel like we're in Europe," said Singaporean barber Saifullah Sabri, 36. "When you are in such a bar, you immediately feel at home," Daniel Hokke, 48, said.

The bar is situated in the historic civic district where annual National Day parades are often held in front of the former City Hall building. But in the 1990s, during the global punk revival, the area was also popular among local counterculture groups, including skin-

heads, punks and metalheads, and was home to a handful of shops selling music merchandise and skateboards. Ross Knudson, who co-owns the Flying V with Kirton, also runs LAMC Productions, which brings in rock and metal acts to the city-state. Rock and metal are under-represented in Singapore and a place was needed for fans

to hang out, Knudson told AFP. "Singapore has a very fancy kind of mentality," the American said. "We just wanted to do something that's different." — AFP



TECHNOLOGY

YouTube testing AI generated backgrounds

YOUTUBE ANNOUNCED that it will be testing a new tool called 'Dream Screen', with a small group of content creators. This experimental feature uses artificial intelligence (AI) to generate photos and videos in the background, and can be used in YouTube Shorts. YouTube explained how to generate custom backgrounds using Dream Screen, an experimental feature that produces unique photos and videos based on text commands. Content creators can use the tool to get personalised backgrounds by writing their ideas into the tool in the YouTube app,

for example, a unique AI-generated background can be obtained in the form of a floral orchard or a luxury hotel pool on a tropical island, etc. It is enough to write ideas into the tool to generate them directly, and a close-to-fiction background can be obtained by adding more details to users' text claims. Dream Screen currently supports English text claims only. The company did not specify any date for the official launch of this feature, but stated that Dream Screen will become available to more content creators later this year (2024). — ONA



Wadi Qurai is a natural haven for adventure enthusiasts

Arwa al Hashimi

Photos by: Mohammed Al Dghaishi

TOWERING PEAKS meet crystal-clear waters and verdant palms sway in harmony with breathtaking gardens at Wadi Qurai in Samayil. It is a sanctuary of natural splendour for those seeking an unadulterated, soul-soothing getaway. This idyllic wadi weaves a tapestry of beauty across Oman's landscapes, inviting visitors into a realm of unparalleled serenity.

Upon arrival at Wadi Qurai, a short and easy hike reveals a mesmerising panorama of flowing waters encircled by towering mountains and colourful rocks. This picturesque scene immediately transports you from the mundane to a place of extraordinary beauty and tranquillity.

Wadi Qurai stands as one of Samayil's most picturesque tourist destinations, distinguished by its crystalline springs, flowing waters and lush oases amidst imposing mountains. It serves as a sanctuary for various bird species and the Arabian oryx, and supports a diverse array of trees such as acacias, thyme and wild figs.

The wadi unfolds a narrative of Omani ingenuity and environmental stewardship. Centuries ago, Oman's ancestors embarked on a remarkable endeavour to harness water in this arid region. Through intricate architectural techniques, they carved a network of channels and aqueducts, using locally sourced materials like palm tree trunks to create conduits for water transportation. These structures, known as 'aflaj', facilitated the distribution of water for agricultural and domestic purposes, fostering a symbiotic relationship between Omanis and their natural environment. Today, the legacy of their craftsmanship endures, as the modern aflaj system continues to sustain communities and ecosystems, preserving the rich heritage of the wadi for generations to come.

Wadi Qurai is home to Falaj Qurai, which draws its waters from five natural springs, the foremost being the famed Ain al Najmiyah. These crystalline waters cascade into the falaj, meandering gracefully towards the farms. Despite its narrow width of only 20 centimetres, the falaj efficiently irrigates vast stretches of farmland extending up to 3 kilometres, showcasing its remarkable ability to distribute water resources and sustain livelihoods.

Moreover, Wadi Qurai is a thrilling destination for adventure enthusiasts, offering exciting activities such as swimming, cliff jumping and hiking. The wadi's natural beauty and opportunities for adventure make it a must-visit location for those seeking both relaxation and excitement in the heart of Oman.

