

Financial system shows resilience

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) released the eleventh issue of the Financial Stability Report (FSR). The FSR 2023 indicates that the “Omani financial system exhibited remarkable resilience to the heightened volatility and liquidity stress that permeated a large part of the global financial system.” In addition, the FSR 2023 reaffirms that in Oman “the short-term risks to financial stability remain muted” and that the “Omani financial system remains strong and well-poised to support the economy.” SEE P5



P7

NORTH KOREA GIVES RUSSIAN DEFENCE MINISTRY DELEGATION ‘WARM WELCOME’



P12

MESSI SCORES TWICE AS MIAMI THRASH ATLANTA 4-0



P13

OMAN LEADS MENA REGION IN PROJECTED TOURIST ARRIVALS FOR H2 2023



Minimum wage issue needs more consultations

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The decision to raise the minimum wage will be decided outside the Labour Law with the approval of the Council of Ministers. It will be based on economic conditions and in consultation with stakeholders like workers (the General Federation of Oman Workers (GFOW) and the businesses (Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry), Ministry of Labour officials said at a press conference on Wednesday.

Sayyid Salim bin Musallam al Busaidy, Under-Secretary for Human Resources Development at the MoL, presided over the media briefing on the new Labour Law.

According to the ministry officials, the new law seeks to achieve several goals including enabling Omanis to assume leadership positions and making the labour market attractive for foreign investment.

The law offers a number of options for workers, including 10 paid hours a week and obliging the employer to implement procedures that make the work environment attractive. The Labour Law specified the mechanism for the transfer of workers to a different project



and mandated the employer to employ Omanis who were working on the old project, by granting them the same wages and benefits agreed upon in the agreement.

The employer may terminate the worker's service for poor performance after giving him/her 6 months of grace period, provided that another Omani is appointed to fill the job. The employer can assign any worker to another institution on a temporary basis, as this includes reducing operating and recruitment costs, and this is often in jobs with high experience.

During the first year after childbirth, a woman is given an hour to take care of her child, and she determines the time

according to her choice, whether it is at the beginning or end of work, or between working hours. The new law allows the worker to take up temporary jobs. Sick leave applications must be approved by the Ministry of Health if the employee takes treatment from a private hospital.

If an employee submits a fake medical certificate, illegal actions will be initiated against him/her.

The new bylaw allows any worker doing night shift to change into a day duty if s/he expresses his/her inability to do so.

It also mandates employers to roll out an evaluation system at their establishments and should avoid piling work on employees that may harm them.

RCA unveils its fleet of electric cars

MUSCAT: With blessings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Royal Court Affairs (RCA) has begun using the first fleet of electric vehicles (EVs).

The step is a part of a national initiative that conforms with the national plan for net-zero emissions.

The move is also within the framework of the Sultanate of Oman's approach to utilise clean energy in the transport sector.

This initiative is considered the start of the transition process to using EVs in various work requirements. The current fleet of cars will be replaced gradually with EVs according to a specific time plan.

Nasr bin Hamoud al Kindi,



RCA Secretary-General, said: “The quest for the shift process to use electric vehicles is a translation of the Royal directives of His Majesty the Sultan who always stresses the need to use clean energy due to its positive results, whether

on the environment or society in general.” He added that this step comes in line with the global developments in the field of transport, which will undoubtedly contribute to reducing carbon emissions and fuel combustion. — ONA

Rubberised roads solve two problems in one shot

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) is looking at sustainable road building technologies like rubberised bitumen as part of its zero-carbon target. Recycling used tyres and plastic waste in road construction solves two problems in one shot. It will take care of piles of scrap which are a threat to the environment and give long life to roads.

It will take care of the nearly 45,000 tonnes of scrap tyres every year and about 2.3 million tonnes of plastic waste produced in Oman. This figure will rise with population growth and urbanisation and recycling is almost zilch, according to experts. These tyres are now sent to neighbouring countries for recycling or retreading.



At a workshop organised by MoTCIT, officials and experts discussed new methods to extend the durability of roads and adopt sustainable environmental solutions in the road sector.

A presentation by India-based Tinna Rubber and Infrastructure Ltd proposed rubber mixed with bitumen has been proved to be better over the virgin bitumen due to its higher softening point which gives the roads much more stability to survive heat and rains. Also, rubber being elastic in nature extends elasticity to the roads which make it

capable of handling heavy axle load. Tinna has pioneered the concept of rubberised bitumen in India and approximately 500,000 kilometres of roads have been laid across India using its modifier made out of used tyres.

Ruqaya bint Juma al Balushiyah, Head of Quality Control and Assurance Department at the Monitoring and Control Department at MoTCIT said, “We are aiming at enhancing institutional cooperation with relevant government agencies and companies operating in the road sector by reviewing and adopting international best practices in terms of sustainability and the use of recycled materials,” she said, adding, “The Department is also looking at high quality and free of pollution by adopting and applying the latest technologies and applications of recycling and sustainability of available resources.”



PATEK PHILIPPE
GENEVE
BEGIN YOUR OWN TRADITION

YOU NEVER ACTUALLY OWN A PATEK PHILIPPE.
YOU MERELY TAKE CARE OF IT FOR THE NEXT GENERATION.



PERPETUAL CALENDAR REF. 5320G

Patek Philippe Boutique
at
القرم
Al-Qurum
MUSCAT - 22009991

CHAIRPERSON’S REPORT H1 2023

Dear Shareholders,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of National Bank of Oman SAOG, I am pleased to present the first half 2023 report for the period ended 30th June 2023.

Oman's Economy & Financial Sector

Seeking to boost its economy, Oman recently announced the establishment of a new economic city and two economic free zones and signed agreements to setup a USD 3 billion railway network linking Oman with the UAE and a USD 320 million project with the Saudi Fund for Development to finance the infrastructure of the special economic zone in the governorate of ad-Dhahirah. Additionally, Oman plans to launch a USD 5 billion public investment fund, the Oman Future Fund, to support plans to overhaul the economy over the next two decades. The fund will allocate a percentage of its capital to bolster investments in small, medium, and emerging businesses. Oman's construction sector is performing well, with several major projects underway, including Sultan Haitham City.

As per a report by the World Bank, Oman is set to become the fastest growing economy among the six GCC nations in 2023 with a projected growth of 4.3 per cent. Meanwhile, Fitch Ratings has revised Oman's credit outlook to Positive (BB) from Stable.

Oman's public revenue at the end of May 2023 registered USD 14.2 billion, up by 3 per cent compared to USD 13.8 billion over the same period in 2022. This is mainly due to an increase in net oil revenue and current revenue, representing 52 per cent and 30 per cent, respectively, of total public revenue, according to the Fiscal Performance Bulletin issued by the Ministry of Finance.

Overall, the economic and financial outlook for Oman in the first half of 2023 is positive. The economy is expected to continue to grow, while the financial sector is sound and stable.

NBO's Financial Performance

Given this backdrop, Net Interest Income for H1 2023 was OMR 57.0 million, showing an increase of 21.8 percent compared with the same period last year.

Fee Income for the same period was OMR 18.4 million compared to OMR 19.2 million, a reduction of 4.1 per cent, due to one-off gain on sale of Government development bonds in H1 2022, as per regulatory guidelines.

Operating Expenses for the six months ended 30 June 2023 was OMR 30.9 million, compared to OMR 29.3 million for the corresponding period in 2022, an increase of 5.3 percent.

Operating Profit, as a result, grew strongly by 21.4 percent year on year.

Net Impairment for the first six months of 2023 was OMR 9.6 million, compared to OMR 10.5 million for the corresponding period last year, a decrease of 8.7 percent.

As a result, Net Profit for H1 2023 was OMR 29.3 million, a growth of 32.8 percent over corresponding period last year.

Gross loans and advances as at 30 June 2023 are at OMR 3.6 billion, showing growth of 5.5 percent over last year. Customer deposits correspondingly are at OMR 3.3 billion, with the bank continuing to maintain a healthy CASA mix.

The bank's Core Equity and Total Capital Adequacy Ratio stands at 11.6 percent and 16.6 percent respectively.

Key Updates and Highlights

This year coincides with NBO's 50th anniversary, which was marked with a series of initiatives and events bringing together clients, team members and other stakeholders. During these celebrations, participants enjoyed a virtual showcase of NBO's 50-year journey highlighting our contributions and the opportunities we have unlocked and future plans, which was produced as the biggest digital show of its kind in Oman.

NBO acted as an Issue Manager and one of the Joint Global Coordinators for Abraj Energy Services' Initial Public Offering. The success of this IPO is a proud moment for NBO and serves as a testament to the bank's leading advisory services backed by a team of passionate people with proven expertise in managing large transactions.

Continuing to unlock opportunities for our customers, we launched a Salary Transfer Campaign to eligible customers who open new accounts with a salary transfer or have existing accounts with no salary transfer for more than 12 months. These customers have the chance to receive a cashback of up to 10% on their new salary credit, with a maximum cashback limit of OMR 500 and additional benefits.

In keeping with our commitment to creating value for our customers, Private Banking held the Market Outlook 2023 event for our high-net-worth clientele at the bank's head office. This unique experience was part of NBO's comprehensive Private Banking proposition, which it created to guide clients towards long-term financial well-being.

Coinciding with Ramadan, we launched a specially designed car loan campaign, allowing both customers and non-customers to benefit from attractive rates and other benefits. To support this campaign, we organised a Car Carnival Weekend at our head office, an event that served as a one-stop shop for people looking to buy a new or pre-owned car.

On the Corporate side, we signed an agreement with Oman Oil Marketing Company to provide a medium-term financing. The credit facility will enable the expansion of the OOMCO's investment portfolio across strategic segments in Oman and support the group's business and investment activities.

NBO and Muzn Islamic Banking concluded the refinancing of Syndicated USD Term Loan for OQ Gas Networks. This transaction helped us strengthen our relationship with OQ Group and make new inroads for our Islamic window in terms of growth of quality assets.

New call account deposits were attracted from Energy Development Oman through our online banking platform, and we also increased liability balances from a private utility company, Phoenix Power, with NBO leveraging its role as agent and collections bank to sanction secondary market loan purchase from a Japanese lender for this customer.

Digital Capabilities

We participated in COMEX 2023, where we demonstrated the advances in financial technology and the bank's capabilities, including our first in the country self-service kiosk, NBO Mobile App, Merchant App and Muzn App. Visitors of the corner were able to open new accounts via the kiosk and avail card services along with other benefits.

Adding accessibility and convenience, we revamped Oman's first Digital Corner in the bank's head office in Al Azaiba and Qurayat branch to serve NBO and non-NBO customers alike at any time of day or night. The new NBO Digital Corner allows customers to make banking suit their life, how and when they want, at a time that best suits them.

Reaffirming our commitment to delivering a seamless and value-added experience for our customers, Global Transaction Banking launched Remote Deposit Cheque solution (RDC). Offered to our corporate customers with a large number of cheques, RDC will help clients to transmit cheque images from their office to NBO for clearance, eliminating the need to visit a branch.

In the corporate digital sphere, total income from digital channels has increased significantly in Q2 2023 by 15 per cent compared to corresponding Q2 2022. Overall number of transactions through our digital platform has increased by 5 per cent in Q2 2023 compared to the same period in 2022.

Partnerships

As part of our efforts to unlock opportunities and support the real estate development sector in Oman, we signed a MoU with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development to provide financing solutions for prospective customers who intend to purchase residential units in Sultan Haitham City.

Another major milestone was the signing of an agreement to join the Buna Payment System. Buna is a cross-border and multi-currency payment system that allows customers to send and receive payments across the Arab region and facilitates remittances, trade, and commerce between countries in the Arab World.

We entered a partnership with the telecom provider Vodafone Oman, to further facilitate the bank's services and digital solutions, while both entities will also cooperate in other initiatives benefiting customers and team members alike. In addition, the bank also signed an agreement with Abraj Energy Services, an integrated energy company in Oman. NBO also partnered with Ottu, a Kuwait-based company offering Computer Integrated Solutions, to further streamline online payment processes for the bank's customers.

Adding convenience to our Private and Sadara Priority Banking customers, we partnered with Mohsin Haidar Darwish LLC to offer them exclusive airport transfer service.

To foster collaboration in financial technology, we signed an agreement with Mamun Company, a provider of advanced financial technology solutions. We also signed an agreement with Nesto Hypermarket on providing global transaction banking services to Nesto in Oman. We have also partnered with Awasr as part of our commitment to creating value for our customers and unlocking opportunities for their banking experience by providing seamless payment services.

Celebrating the GCC Endowment Week, Muzn signed a MoU with the Ministry of Endowment and Religious Affairs to support the Charitable Endowment Fund for Mosques and Quran Schools in Oman.

Muzn

To commemorate its 10th anniversary, Muzn hosted an exclusive event dedicated to celebrating its corporate partners at NBO's Head Office, where it showcased its journey, while reflecting upon its growth and achievements. Founded in 2013, Muzn was the first licensed Islamic banking window in Oman and has been committed to fostering the development of the Sultanate's Islamic Finance sector by providing customers Sharia compliant services that are in line with their beliefs.

With an aim to provide unique investment solutions, Muzn has extended its investment product to endowments, mosques (masajid) and Quran schools. Such institutions can open with a minimum balance of OMR 5,000 and earn tier-based profits based on the daily closing balance in the account.

To streamline payment processes for its corporate clients, Muzn launched its Online Direct Debit processing service. Using cutting-edge technology, the secured service comprises a range of innovative digital solutions, which enable companies to efficiently monitor, control, manage and automate their payments.

Continuing to create Shari'a-compliant value propositions for our customers, Muzn has partnered with Oman Air Holidays to offer flexible financing plans for Umrah packages. Under the scheme, customers can tailor their pilgrimage with a host of great value flight, accommodation, transport, and add-on options and pay for it in monthly installments according to the Service Ijarah concept, making it easier and more convenient to plan their Umrah.

People

Sharing his expertise and experience, our CEO, Mr. Abdullah Zahran Al Hinai, participated in the panel discussion on 'Building a Fintech Ecosystem Beyond Borders' at Dubai Fintech Summit.

NBO is underpinned by its mission to unlock new possibilities, delivering growth opportunities associated with bringing high-class banking experiences to Oman. Within this context, and contributing to our Omanisation efforts, we appointed Dr. Issam Mohsin Al Balushi to our senior management team as Deputy General Manager - Head of Compliance, while we promoted Mr. Mustahil Ahmed Al Mamari to Assistant General Manager - Head Strategy and Transformation and Dr. Ali Salim Al Shekeili to Assistant General Manager – Head of Digital & E-Channels.

As part of our commitment to building a high-performance culture based on our core values, we launched our Values Recognition Program. The program will be recognizing three employees each month who demonstrates one of our four values, celebrating their achievements across the bank and building a stronger culture together.

We also introduced our dynamic customer experience program for all branch employees. 'Dhiyafa' is a three-month course that focuses on communication etiquette, customer expectations, standards for serving customers, face-to-face interactions, and all aspects of the NBO customer experience.

Eleven members of NBO's Direct Sales Agents (DSA) team received a certificate from the bank's Academy of Excellence upon completion of the 2-week Sales Star training program. Additionally, 58 members across the bank received professional certification in different areas, 57 members received Banca Ciftification, 14 members received Future Branch Manager certification, and 18 members received certifications through the College of Banking and Financial Studies.

Furthermore, Muzn has enrolled staff members in the Universal Banker Certificate Program. The training programme provides frontline banking professionals with the instruments and skills they require to deliver a seamless, convenient, and effective customer experience.

As part of our customer engagement efforts, we organized an Online Trade Platform Training Workshop to offer platform familiarization and empowering them to make the most of our trade channels.

Aiming to raise public awareness about financial fraud risks and prevention, we ran a series of financial crime workshops for higher education students and organizations in Oman. During the workshops that were held at Sultan Qaboos University and Muscat Duty Free, a team shared best practices on how individuals and organizations can protect themselves from financial fraud.

Community and Events

Creating value that feeds into the overall progress of Oman, we announced an initiative with the Oman Charitable Organization, in which NBO donated to the non-governmental organization to support national social welfare projects and programs benefitting children, orphans and disabled people.

We launched Shahr il Atta, the bank's annual campaign held during the Holy month of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr. We utilized this community outreach program to distribute food hampers to families in need. We also organized Ramadan Bake Sale at the bank's head office, bringing the team together across the bank to raise funds for charity in collaboration with Nidaa Charity.

To mark this year's Eid Al-Fitr and Eid Al Adha celebrations, we hosted a SMEs Eid Marketplace Exhibition at our head office. The event provided an ideal opportunity for businesses to display their products from handcrafted jewelry, perfumes and fashion to unique homewares and food, while visitors had the chance to purchase their Eid essentials and support local businesses. Also, we were pleased to contribute to Mutrah Charity team Eid initiative, as part of our commitment to CSR.

Marking the occasion of World Civil Defense Day, we partnered with the Civil Defense and Ambulance Authority to raise awareness of the importance of its role and best practices in Defense risk management for the sake of the general well-being of Omani citizens and residents.

Local & Global Recognition

We have been awarded 'Excellence in Sustainability in Banking and Finance' by Alam Al Iktsaad Sustainability Awards, ranked by Forbes among The Region's Top 50 Banks in 2023 and received recognition for our partnership with Etimad Programme by the Royal Academy of Management.

Recognizing its reignited brand Identity, NBO has received 'Best Brand Identity in Oman 2023' by the International Business Magazine and 'Best Brand Identity in Banking Oman 2023' by the World Economic Magazine Awards. This recognition demonstrates the success of NBO's purpose-driven and value-oriented communications strategy, which is designed to fulfil customers' needs and optimize their overall satisfaction.

NBO also won its sixth Straight Through Processing (STP) Excellence award from Citibank. This is owed to the bank's excellence in Treasury and Commercial Payments, of which we managed to successfully achieve an STP rate of over 99.9% and 98.5% respectively. Meanwhile, NBO's Mobile App received 'Best Mobile Banking App Oman 2023' award by Global Business and Finance Magazine.

In recognition of its achievements in digital capacity building, NBO's Academy of Excellence won the 'Best Practices for Internal eLearning' Award. The accolade was presented by MEA HR (Human Resources) & Learning Achievement Awards. This acknowledgment highlights the bank's efforts to offer innovative and rewarding upskilling opportunities for its employees.

Highlighting our efforts in empowering women and the success of our strategy for people's growth, Salima Al Marzouqi, AGM and Chief Islamic Banking Officer, was ranked in the WOMANI 2022 Report for 'Most Influential Women in the Field of Islamic Business and Finance Around the World', issued by the Cambridge Institute of Islamic Finance.

Appreciation

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to thank our customers, shareholders, executive management, and the entire team of NBO for their support and efforts in implementing the bank's strategy and in achieving its goals and objectives.

We would also like to express our appreciation to our regulators, the Central Bank of Oman, the Central Bank of the United Arab Emirates and the Capital Market Authority for their constant support and dedicated efforts to develop Oman's financial industry, especially the banking sector.

We pay tribute to His Majesty, Sultan Haitham bin Tarik Al Said, for his visionary leadership and under whose wise guidance Oman steadfastly continues towards sustainable economic and social development.

Above all, be well and take care.



Amal Suhail Bahwan
Chairperson

INTERIM CONDENSED STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As at 30 June 2023 (unaudited)

	30/06/2023	30/06/2022	Audited 31/12/2022
	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000
ASSETS			
Cash and balances with Central Banks	222,961	284,083	261,589
Due from banks and other money market placements (net)	203,910	101,987	119,260
Loans, advances and Islamic financing assets (net)	3,443,000	3,260,848	3,353,699
Financial investments (net)	448,913	400,740	404,387
Property and equipment	55,659	58,261	57,090
Other assets	112,668	93,413	98,055
TOTAL ASSETS	4,487,111	4,199,332	4,294,080

LIABILITIES AND EQUITY

LIABILITIES

Due to banks and other money market deposits	182,481	262,803	261,743
Customers' deposits and unrestricted investment accounts	3,304,204	3,040,304	3,047,422
Euro medium term notes	191,590	190,190	188,865
Other liabilities	141,940	129,199	139,235
Taxation	14,608	10,884	15,981
TOTAL LIABILITIES	3,834,823	3,633,380	3,653,246

EQUITY

Share capital	162,595	162,595	162,595
Share premium	34,465	34,465	34,465
Legal reserve	54,198	54,198	54,198
Other reserves	7,059	4,317	6,390
Retained earnings	226,838	194,877	216,053

TOTAL EQUITY ATTRIBUTABLE TO THE SHAREHOLDERS OF THE BANK

Tier 1 perpetual bonds	167,133	115,500	167,133
TOTAL EQUITY	652,288	565,952	640,834
TOTAL LIABILITIES AND EQUITY	4,487,111	4,199,332	4,294,080

INTERIM CONDENSED STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

For the period ended 30 June 2023 (unaudited)

	Six months ended 30 June 2023	2022	Three months ended 30 June 2023	2022
	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000	RO'000
Interest income	110,118	84,927	55,657	44,037
Interest expense	(55,909)	(40,766)	(28,799)	(20,009)
NET INTEREST INCOME	54,209	44,161	26,858	24,028

Income from Islamic financing and Investment	6,482	5,111	3,532	2,565
Unrestricted investment account holders' share of profit	(3,707)	(2,483)	(2,151)	(1,242)
NET INCOME FROM ISLAMIC FINANCING AND INVESTMENT ASSETS	2,775	2,628	1,381	1,323
NET INTEREST INCOME AND NET INCOME FROM ISLAMIC FINANCING AND INVESTMENT ASSETS	56,984	46,789	28,239	25,351

Fee and commission income (net)	10,709	10,657	5,408	5,090
Other operating income	7,713	8,554	3,954	2,341
OPERATING INCOME	75,406	66,000	37,601	32,782

Staff costs	(19,321)	(17,738)	(9,594)	(8,916)
Other operating expenses	(8,599)	(8,674)	(4,538)	(4,424)
Depreciation	(2,948)	(2,913)	(1,488)	(1,452)
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	(30,868)	(29,325)	(15,620)	(14,792)

PROFIT FROM OPERATIONS BEFORE IMPAIRMENT LOSSES AND TAX	44,538	36,675	21,981	17,990
TOTAL IMPAIRMENT LOSSES ON FINANCIAL ASSETS (NET)	(9,564)	(10,472)	(4,182)	(3,942)

PROFIT BEFORE TAX	34,974	26,203	17,799	14,048
Taxation	(5,664)	(4,125)	(2,836)	(2,213)
PROFIT FOR THE PERIOD	29,310	22,078	14,963	11,835

OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

Items that will not be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss

Equity investments at FVOCI – net change in fair value	521	(895)	(193)	(3,448)
Tax effect of equity investments at FVOCI – net change in fair value	18	86	(76)	427

Items that are or maybe reclassified subsequently to profit or loss

Debt instruments at FVOCI – net change in fair value	-	(136)	-	-
OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME/ (LOSS) FOR THE PERIOD	539	(945)	(269)	(3,021)
TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD	29,849	21,133	14,694	8,814

Earnings per share:

Basic and diluted, earnings for the period attributable to equity holders	0.014	0.011	0.005	0.004
---	-------	-------	-------	-------

nbo.om





MINISTRY OF LABOUR DISCUSSES NEW LABOUR LAW

New law aims to enhance efficiency of Omani workforce

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JULY 26

The Ministry of Labour highlighted the key elements of the recently issued Labour Law (53/2023) during a press conference in Muscat on Wednesday.

According to officials, the new law aims to address the shortcomings of the previous Labour Law (35/2003) while promoting balanced employment dynamics, enhancing the efficiency of the Omani workforce, and creating a flexible legal framework that can adapt to economic changes, among other goals.

Abdulaziz al Rawahi, a Labour Law Project Team member, said, "The issuance of the law is in line with Oman Vision 2040, considering the aspirations of both employers and workers. It is important to mention that



this law went through several stages where production parties expressed their opinions and observations, which were taken into account to achieve balanced labour dynamics."

Al Rawahi shared that the new provisions aim to facilitate the resolution of workplace disputes "through modern and speedy

dispute resolution mechanisms."

He also highlighted some of the social benefits provided by the new provisions.

"The law also empowers women in the private sector by granting them various possible leaves. For example, they can have maternity leave of up to 98 days with full pay without specifying

the number of times the leave is to be granted. There is also the possibility of granting leave for childcare. The law shows concern for the social aspects of workers in the private sector. As for men, there is paternity leave, which amounts to seven paid days."

He also added that, "The law also emphasises the importance of training and its role in enabling Omanis to work in the private sector - training for empowerment, employment and qualification."

Officials highlighted some key features of the new law, which include standardising working hours to eight hours, excluding breaks, and extending breaks to one hour instead of thirty minutes.

Additionally, employers must grant terminated employees up to 10 paid hours per week during the notice period to search for alternative employment.

OMANI POET HILALAH PASSES AWAY



MUSCAT: Omani poet, Hilalah al Hamadani, who took part in the second edition of the 'Million's Poet' competition in Abu Dhabi passed away early on Wednesday after a stroke.

Hilalah suffered a stroke after she delivered her baby three days ago. Her untimely death shocked

several poetry lovers and others as it was reflected on the social media posts.

Hilalah, who was influenced by her father, is the first Omani poet to participate in the Million's Poet competition and reach its advanced stages. She has been also popular as a radio host in the Sultanate of Oman.

Pomegranate harvest season in Aug

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR: Farmers in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah will begin harvesting pomegranate from August.

Statistics issued by the wilayat's Department of Agriculture and Water Resources indicate that the number of pomegranate trees has reached more than 27,000 whereas the marketing value of the pomegranate crop stood at RO 1,727,000 during the past year.

The percentage of healthy fruits of pomegranate reached more than 90 per cent, after the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources implemented the control programme and released as many as 42.147 million parasites during



2023.

The programme is part of a project of integrated management of pomegranate fruit-sucking moth through the use of alternative means and modern control methods.

Omair bin Mohammed al Fahdi, Head of the Agricultural Development and Water Resources Department (pictured), Wilayat of Al Jabal

Al Akhdhar, said that the average fresh fruits during the last season amounted to 88.7 per cent, and the average fruits per tree stood at estimated 55 fruits.

He added that the present season witnessed an abundant production of the crop, due to rains and the abundance of water. It is expected to witness a great turnout from visitors to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar who will come in a period that coincides with activities of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Festival 2023, he added.

It is worth noting that the pomegranate harvest season in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is one of the unique seasons that adds more diversity in terms of tourism products and highlights elements of recreational tourism, adventure tourism, and natural and heritage tourism.

LABOUR LAW ENSURES RIGHTS OF EXPATRIATE WORKFORCE

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

The Labour Law 53/2023 issued through Royal Decree on Tuesday has ensured the safety of expatriate workers in the country through its various articles.

The law states that the employer may not keep the worker's passport or private documents except with the worker's written consent.

As per Article 10, a worker who is dismissed from work may submit his complaint to the competent authority within 30 days from the date of his notification of the decision, and it shall take the procedures

stipulated in Article (9) of this law. The worker is entitled to an annual leave with comprehensive pay of not less than thirty days, which he enjoys according to the requirements of the work, and he may not take the leave before the expiry of at least six months from the date of joining the work with the employer.

The worker's annual leaves may be combined according to the agreement between the two parties, and the non-Omani worker is entitled to a return air ticket to his country.

The worker is entitled to his comprehensive wage during the legally prescribed official holidays.

The employer may grant

the worker, upon his request, a special leave without pay, provided that the worker, in this case, bears all contributions to the Social Protection Fund, including his percentage, the percentage of the employer and the government during the leave period.

The worker must take leave at least once every year and for a period of no less than 30 days.

The employer may pay the worker the basic wage for the days of annual leave that he did not take if the worker agrees in writing to that.

The worker is entitled to the comprehensive wage for his annual leave balance if his service ends before he exhausts it.

CDAA celebrates graduation of emergency medical technicians



MUSCAT: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) celebrated the graduation of a new batch of emergency medical technicians from its Foundation Emergency Medical Programme.

The graduation ceremony, held at the CDAA headquarters, was graced by Brigadier General Dr Abdul Malik bin Suleiman

al Kharousi, Director-General of Medical Services, along with Colonel Mubarak bin Salem al Arami, Director-General of Operations and Training.

Brigadier General Dr Abdul Malik bin Suleiman al Kharousi hailed the lecturers and instructors who played a vital role in shaping the skills of the graduates. As a

gesture of recognition for their exceptional dedication, the lecturers were honoured, and the first graduates were presented with well-deserved awards and certificates. The graduates took the medical oath, reaffirming their commitment to serving humanity and saving lives.

A special segment of the

ceremony showcased the practical exercises that the graduates had diligently practiced in the medical laboratories. This hands-on training equipped them with the necessary skills and confidence to handle real-life emergency situations effectively and efficiently.

The graduates successfully completed the Foundation

Programme at the Sultan Qaboos Academy for Police Sciences, for over six months. The programme comprised English language courses, IELTS test preparation, anatomy, body physiotherapy, and medical terminology related to pre-hospital emergency medical services.

Subsequently, they underwent

the comprehensive Foundation Emergency Medicine Programme, spanning two semesters of 16 weeks each. At the conclusion of each semester, the graduates embarked on practical training at various health institutions, ambulance centres, and the General Administration of Police Aviation. — ONA





■ AGRICULTURE MINISTER HOLDS TALKS WITH FAO CHIEF



ROME: Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources, engaged in a fruitful discussion with Dr Qu Dongyu, the Director-General of the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), during his participation at the United Nations Food Systems Summit +2 in Rome. The meeting highlighted the significant matters of mutual interest and explored opportunities for cooperation between Oman and FAO in the fields of agriculture, animal husbandry, fisheries, and water resources. The officials also deliberated on strategies to enhance bilateral relations and collaborative efforts in these vital sectors while addressing pertinent issues concerning the summit's mission to achieve sustainable development goals. – **ONA**

■ KHAREEF DHOFAR BOOK FAIR OPENS



SALALAH: Khareef Dhofar Book Fair was opened at Sultan Qaboos Youth Compound for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah on Tuesday under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality. The 10-day fair is organised by a number of private sector companies in cooperation with Dhofar Municipality. As many as 30 publishing houses and libraries inside and outside Oman are taking part in the fair. – **ONA**

NDC graduates prepared to safeguard security



MUSCAT: The Academy of Strategic and Defence Studies celebrated the graduation of the tenth session of the National Defence College, where distinguished senior officers from the Sultan's Armed Forces, military and security agencies, government officials, and representatives from civil institutions participated.

The graduation was held under the auspices of Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najar, Minister of Social Development, Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies, and marked the culmination of the extensive training in strategic decision-making and security studies.

Held at the National Defence College headquarters in Bait Al Falaj, the event commenced with recitations from the Holy Quran.

Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the National Defence College, in his speech emphasised their readiness to serve the country and face the challenges of the modern era armed with strategic knowledge and innovative thinking.

The ceremony featured a visual presentation showcasing the comprehensive study programmes, practical applications, and local visits undertaken during the course.

Distinguished military and security leaders, along with eminent experts, academics, and



decision-makers, contributed to the participants' learning experience, fostering intellectual growth and creativity at the strategic level.

Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najar Minister of Social Development praised the participants for their exceptional preparation and the valuable contributions they received from the National Defence College.

She highlighted the significance of national and strategic planning in building and maintaining the country's security and stability.

Brigadier General Staff Pilot Salah bin Ahmed al Mazrouei, Royal Air Force of Oman, expressed gratitude for the programme's success in refining their strategic decision-making skills. He acknowledged the dedicated planning and leadership behind the college, turning it into an intellectual beacon fostering research, development, and strategic thinking.

The graduates shared their experiences and knowledge



gained in security and defence-related strategic studies, emphasising their commitment to contribute positively to Oman's progress.

The tenth session, which began on September 1, 2022 aims aimed to prepare and qualify strategic leaders, both military and civilian.

Through an academic environment promoting intellectual creativity and research, the participants acquired the necessary skills to assume leadership roles, formulate public policies, and make sound strategic decisions in the realms of security and defence.

The ceremony saw the presence of eminent dignitaries, including His Highness Sayyid Dr Fahd bin Al Julanda al Said, Vice-Chancellor of Sultan Qaboos University and Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, among others, reaffirming the significance of the National Defence College's mission in safeguarding Oman's security and stability. — **ONA**

ROP ensures road safety during Khareef season in Al Wusta

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 26

During the Khareef Dhofar season there has been a significant traffic on the roads of Al Wusta Governorate.

Colonel Ahmed bin Rashid al Kasbi, Assistant Police Commander, reaffirms Royal Oman Police commitment to safeguard the safety and well-being of road users.

To ensure the seamless flow of traffic and assist travellers, five strategically located security checkpoints have been set up along the Adam-Thamrait road in the governorate.

"The safety of citizens, residents, and visitors is our top priority," says Col Al Kasbi. "To fulfil this mission, the police leadership has equipped Al Wusta Governorate with a well-trained and highly skilled human force," he says.

"To facilitate immediate response to emergencies, the police aviation helicopters are on standby, equipped with a complete crew of pilots, technicians, and medical personnel. They can provide necessary medical assistance to the injured before they are transported



COLONEL AHMED BIN RASHID AL KASBI

The Operations Centre of Al Wusta Governorate Police Command has provided mobile phone number to receive service requests' coordinates via WhatsApp at 91391703

to the hospital," Col Al Kasbi adds.

He further commended the cooperation of citizens, residents, and tourists in contributing to maintaining security, and order, and reducing traffic accidents on the roads. He highlighted some common violations observed



during the autumn season, such as exceeding the speed limit by more than 200 kilometres per hour, improper overtaking, obscured license plates and rear lights, and attaching cargo trailers to vehicles without proper permission and security measures.

To address these issues, Col Al Kasbi provided essential recommendations for road users, such as ensuring licence plates remain visible and avoiding changes to the vehicle's colour that differ from the original. Drivers were also reminded to seek police assistance promptly if needed by contacting the emergency number (9999) or reaching out to the various security checkpoints available in the governorate.

The security checkpoints in Al Ghafatain (91738459) and Umm Al Zamayim (92084581) areas for any assistance required.

Users of the coastal road can reach the Deepath checkpoint in the Wilayat of Al Jazir at (93250042), the Sarab checkpoint in the Wilayat of Al Duqm at (92469214) and Medairah checkpoint in the Wilayat of Mahout at (93674739).

To ensure a rapid response, the Operations Centre of Al Wusta

Governorate Police Command has provided a mobile phone number to receive service requests' coordinates via WhatsApp at (91391703).

Col Kasbi further advised drivers to be cautious of moving sand and accumulations on certain road sections due to active winds, which can reduce visibility and increase the risk of accidents. The police leadership collaborates with the Roads Department of the governorate to continuously clear these areas for safer driving conditions.

Furthermore, he encouraged travellers to take a break and explore the Summer Al Wusta 2023 events in the Wilayat of Haima , which will continue until August 31. These events promise various tourist activities and attractions for all visitors.

The police leadership encourages road users to be responsible and follow traffic regulations during their journeys, prioritising the safety of themselves, their families, and fellow travellers. By adhering to the rules and being vigilant on the roads, everyone can contribute to ensuring a safe and enjoyable travel experience.



Oman’s financial system shows resilience: CBO report

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) released the eleventh issue of the Financial Stability Report (FSR).

The FSR 2023 indicates that the “Omani financial system exhibited remarkable resilience to the heightened volatility and liquidity stress that permeated a large part of the global financial system.”

In addition, the FSR 2023 reaffirms that in Oman “the short-term risks to financial stability remain muted” and that the “Omani financial system remains strong and well-poised to support the economy”

The FSR mentions that since Oman follows a fixed exchange rate regime, its policy rate is closely aligned with the US target federal

funds range. As a result, Oman’s policy rate increased in tandem with the US Fed’s policy rate.

On the health of the banking sector, the report mentions that banks continued to hold ample capital buffers to “mitigate potential risks and withstand adverse economic conditions,” and “with the upturn in the economy, the profitability indicators for banks also improved.” The report also mentions that the “asset quality of the banking sector remains strong after the implementation of the exit strategy from loan deferment scheme.”

The report also states that the “banking system continued to maintain ample liquidity buffers and systemic liquidity remained



adequate amid monetary policy tightening.”

The FSR also presented the results of the two annual surveys conducted by CBO “Systemic Risk Survey-2023” and the “Credit Conditions Survey-2023.”

The systemic risk survey

affirmed an improvement in confidence in the Omani financial system and the credit conditions survey illustrated that credit conditions in the Sultanate of Oman are expected to improve in 2023.

The report also recognises the

The report states that the ‘banking system continued to maintain ample liquidity buffers and systemic liquidity remained adequate amid monetary policy tightening’

emergence of new challenges for financial stability, specifically in the areas of climate change and cybersecurity.

To address these challenges, CBO is actively working on developing policies and frameworks that promote

sustainable financial practices while ensuring the stability and security of the financial system.

The Composite Financial Stability Indicator (CFSI) of the Sultanate of Oman has revealed positive trends largely driven by favourable factors, particularly higher oil prices, improved debt sustainability and systemic risk indicators.

Moreover, FSRs are an important communication tool by Central Banks across the globe to disseminate information on potential points of distress for financial stability.

In Oman, publications of FSR was made a part of the overall macro-financial surveillance system since 2013. — ONA



Bangladeshi delegation visits MSC, COSAF

MUSCAT: A delegation from the National Defence College of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, headed by Rear Admiral Mohammad Shahjahan, on Wednesday visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). Upon the delegation’s arrival at the centre, they were greeted by Commodore Adil bin Hamoud al Busaidy, Head of the MSC.

During the visit, members of the delegation were briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the centre in the safety of the Omani maritime environment. They also toured the MSC’s facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies used in carrying out its national duties.

A delegation from the National Defence College of the People’s



Republic of Bangladesh, headed by Rear Admiral Mohammad Shahjahan, also visited the Command of the Sultan’s Armed Forces (COSAF) at Muaskar Al Murtafaa.

Upon their arrival at the COSAF, they were greeted by

Brigadier Hamid bin Abdullah al Balushi, Assistant Chief of Staff of the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF) for operations and planning.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views regarding various matters of mutual interest. — ONA

GCC eyes knowledge-based economy

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 26

The Forum on the Reality and Future of Scientific Research and Innovation in the GCC Countries concluded on Tuesday, with participants calling for stronger research cooperation between the GCC countries and for the benefits of international experiences to be shared.

The forum was organised by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, was held over two days in Salalah.

The first day focused on the role of scientific research and innovation in economic development. Speakers from the GCC countries discussed their countries’ respective strategies for promoting research and innovation, as well as the challenges they face in this area.

The second day of the forum focused on the legislative and financial challenges faced by higher education institutions, scientific research and innovation. Speakers



discussed successful experiences in attracting external support and funding for research, as well as in mobilising the outputs of scientific research and transforming them into pioneering companies.

In his closing remarks, Dr Salah bin Soumar al Zadjali, Director General of Programmes and Capacity Building, Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, highlighted some of the key takeaways from the event, including the importance of research cooperation, student exchange, and the exchange of researchers.

Al Zadjali also called for the GCC Council to adopt research priorities and to provide participatory funding

for research. He also stressed the importance of the Gulf University in Bahrain having a role in all GCC countries, and of the transition towards a knowledge-based economy, which will push companies to pay attention to scientific research.

The forum was a valuable opportunity for researchers from the GCC countries to share their experiences and to discuss ways to promote research and innovation in the region.

The participants’ recommendations will be taken into consideration by the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation as it develops its future plans for research and innovation in Oman.

Jusoor launches new social initiative for Batinah North

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, JULY 26

A new social initiative called ‘Making the brighter future’ has been launched for the community by Jusoor in Al Batina North. The initiative comes under social engagement for the future of Al Batinah North. Under the initiative, the citizens’ ideas are being given preference to ensure sustainability.

The goal is to create a better society and help young people develop their skills. It encourages young individuals to come up with innovative ideas to improve important areas like education, health, culture, and entrepreneurship in Al Batina.

The initiative is directed at youth institutions, specialised companies, and civil society organisations, whether public or private, and are invited to join. The idea is to ensure that the people leading these projects are genuinely interested in making them successful and long-lasting.

The interested participants

will present their ideas. For this, they should be organised and planned very well with excellent descriptions for the ideas. Then an expert team from Jusoor will look at them deeply and choose the best proposals based on criteria like genuine ideas, sustainability,

jusoor’s initiative is an exciting opportunity for young minds to contribute ideas and create a lasting impact on Al Batinah North’s future

and having a positive impact on the community’s social issues.

One of the aims of such an initiative is to find critical and sustainable smart solutions for some of the community challenges in targeted fields.

The initiative will last till August end and then the selected projects will be announced by early 2024 once they get approval and funding for 2024.

The main aim of this initiative is to promote sustainability and get young people actively involved in making a difference in Al Batina North. By involving the community in these projects, they hope to bring positive changes and make the region even better.

Jusoor organisation is committed to supporting the development of the region by empowering its youth and encouraging their creativity to build a more sustainable and innovative society.

This initiative is an exciting opportunity for young minds to contribute their ideas and create a lasting impact on Al Batinah North’s future. This initiative guarantees that youth innovation and competencies can significantly develop society and show their capabilities.

“We can look forward to a brighter and better tomorrow for our community by supporting their ideas and talents,” said a student while commenting on the prospects of the project.



Tender Announcement

Tender Number	Re-T-06-2023
Tender Name	Supply of Bow Thrusters for MV Shannah and Jawharat Masirah.
Project Summary	MWASALAT invites proposals from qualified Suppliers for the Supply of new 04 Pcs of Bow Thrusters for MWASALAT ferries MV Shannah and MV Masirah as per the details stipulated in the tender documents.
Tender Fee	Free
Grade & Specialty	Qualified & Specialized Companies in the Field
Start date for tender document distribution	Wednesday, 26th July 2023
Last date for tender document distribution	Sunday, 30th July 2023
Last date for submission	Tuesday, 8th August 2023

The Tender documents may be shared by email during official working hours between 9:00A.M - 2:00 P.M.
Tenderers are requested to share commercial registration (CR) & business card through email tenders@mwasalat.om and tender number as the subject of email. Tender Document shall be shared by email.

"Mwasalat"
Head Quarter, Ghala Tel: +968 1551
P.O.Box: 911, Al Khuwair, PC: 133, Sultanate of Oman

"Mwasalat" invites professional firms for the following tenders:

Tender Number	T-28-2023
Tender Name	Oracle Licenses & Technical Support Services for MWASALAT ERP Systems - SCM & Financials
Project Summary	MWASALAT invites proposals from Oracle certified Partners in Oman for the renewal of Licenses, subscriptions and Technical Support for MWASALAT ERP Systems - SCM & Financials, as per the details stipulated in the tender documents.
Tender Fee	Free
Grade & Specialty	Oracle certified Partners in Oman
Start date for tender document distribution	Wednesday, 26th July 2023
Last date for tender document distribution	Sunday, 30th July 2023
Last date for submission	Wednesday, 9th August 2023

For more information please send to:
tenders@mwasalat.om



Erdogan meets Palestinian president, Hamas leader

ISTANBUL: Turkiye’s leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan on Wednesday spoke with the Palestinian president and the head of Hamas in Ankara, ahead of a crucial meeting of Palestinian factions set for the weekend.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu was also due to visit Turkiye this week, but his visit was later postponed, after he had surgery last weekend and as Israel is roiled by protests over contentious judicial reform.

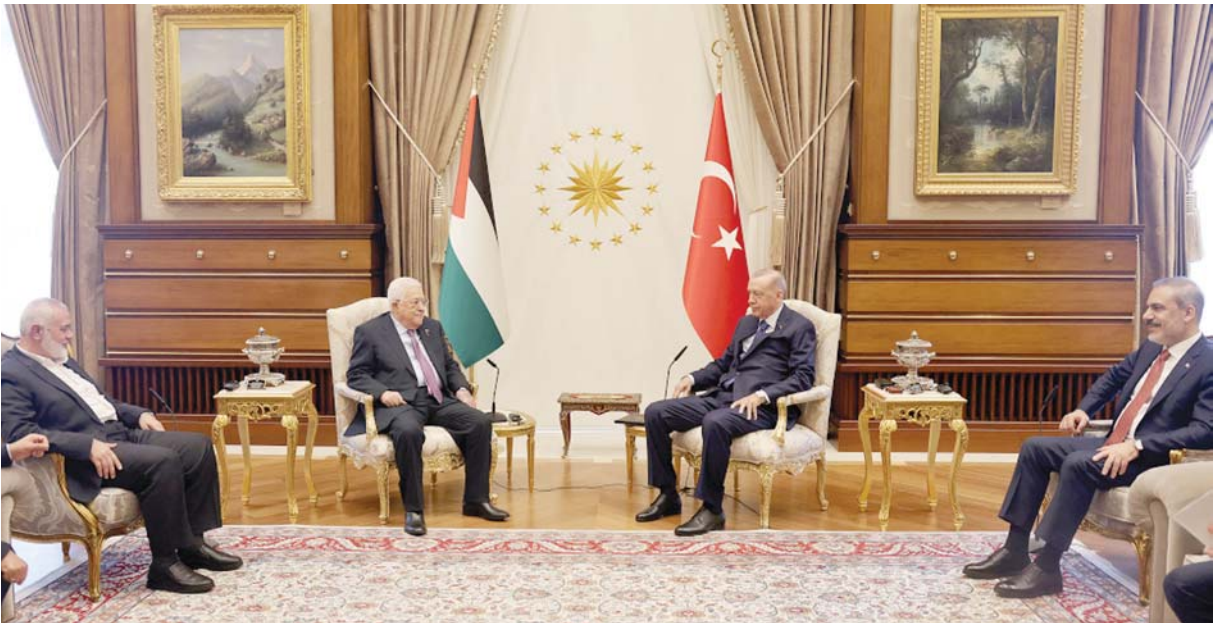
After several years of tensions, relations between Turkiye and Israel have improved over the past year, with several high-level visits, including that of Israel’s President Isaac Herzog.

Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh was also at the meeting with Erdogan, which was held behind closed doors, the Turkish leader’s office said.

Erdogan on Tuesday promised to continue supporting the Palestinian cause and voiced concerns over the flare up of violence in the West Bank in recent months, after meeting with Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas.

“We will continue to support the Palestinian cause in the strongest way possible,” Erdogan said, alongside Abbas.

“We are deeply worried about the increasing loss of live, destruction, the expansion of illegal settlements and settlers violence,” the Turkish leader said.



Turkiye’s President Tayyip Erdogan and Turkish FM Hakan Fidan meet with Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas and Palestinian group Hamas’ top leader Ismail Haniyeh at the Presidential Palace in Ankara, Turkiye. – Reuters

“The only way to a just and lasting peace in the region is to defend the vision of a two-state solution.”

Erdogan also said Turkiye would do its part for unity and reconciliation between the Palestinian factions.

Meanwhile, Israeli troops killed a Palestinian in the occupied West Bank Wednesday, the Palestinian health ministry said, as the army confirmed it was conducting “counter-terrorism activity” in a Nablus refugee camp.

“A young man died of his wounds as the occupation forces stormed the city of Nablus at noon,” the ministry said, referring to the Israeli army.

“The martyr, Mohammed Abd


We will continue to support the Palestinian cause in the strongest way possible

RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN

Turkiye’s President

al Hakim Nada, was shot in the chest.”

An Israeli army spokesman said that troops had conducted a “counter-fighting activity in Al

Ain camp” in Nablus.

In a separate statement, the army said that during the raid “suspects fired and hurled rocks and paint bottles at the soldiers, who responded with live fire.

Eyewitnesses said that Israeli forces had stormed the neighbourhood of Al Muhayim and surrounded a house before arresting one Palestinian.

Troops “apprehended one wanted individual suspected of involvement in terrorist activity,” the army added.

A Palestinian group, the Al Aqsa Martyrs’ Brigades, said its fighters had “ambushed a unit of special forces in the alleys of Al Ain camp... and managed to inflict casualties”. — AFP

African leaders seek grain commitments at Russia summit with Putin

LONDON: African leaders will look to Russian President Vladimir Putin for concrete promises on grain supplies at a summit starting on Thursday, with some also likely to seek clarity and assurances on the future of Wagner mercenaries in the continent.

The gathering in St Petersburg will take place 10 days after Putin quit the Black Sea agreement that had enabled Ukraine — like Russia, a major grain exporter — to ship food out of its southern ports despite the 17-month-old conflict.

Chicago wheat futures, a benchmark of global prices, have risen around 20 per cent since Russia ended the deal on July 17. They are now at their highest levels since February, though well below their peaks of 2022.

Putin wrote in a pre-summit article on the Kremlin website that the arrangement had been “shamelessly” exploited by US

and European trading firms and less than 3 per cent of the grain shipped had reached the poorest countries - ignoring the wider effect of the deal in pushing down prices worldwide.

Mvemba Dizolele, director of the Africa Programme at the Washington-based Centre for Strategic and International Studies, said food insecurity would be the top issue for the Africans.

“Prices just went through the roof in a lot of these countries. So if you are any African leader out there, that’s the last thing you want... It’s absolutely an important national security issue for a lot of these African countries,” he said.

Putin says Russia is expecting a record harvest this year and is ready to fill the gap for African countries by supplying grain both commercially and for free.

— Reuters



Flags informing of the upcoming Russia-Africa summit fly in front of Saint Isaac’s Cathedral in central Saint Petersburg, Russia. – Reuters

Lebanese politicians scramble to avoid central bank vacuum

BEIRUT: Lebanese officials were in a last-minute scramble on Wednesday to avoid leaving the crisis-hit country’s central bank without a leader when governor Riad Salameh’s 30-year tenure ends next week.

The prospect of a vacuum at the top of the central bank has added to concerns about the further fragmentation of the state as it barrels towards a fifth year of financial turmoil.

Even as the clock winds down, politicians remain split over whether to appoint a successor or allow the bank’s first vice-governor to take over as laid out in law, reflecting wider divisions that have also left the presidency vacant and the country without a fully empowered cabinet for over a year.

Powerful group Hezbollah and

its Christian ally the Free Patriotic Movement are against appointing a new governor, while Speaker of Parliament Nabih Berri and caretaker premier Najib Mikati are spearheading efforts to name one.

Mikati, his deputy Saade Chami and finance minister Youssef Khalil met on Wednesday with the bank’s four vice-governors, according to the state’s National News Agency.

The four had earlier this month threatened to resign if no successor to Salameh was named, risking a total vacuum in the top rungs of the central bank as the economy sinks further.

The central bank leadership is selected via the sectarian power-sharing system that governs other top posts in Lebanon.

First vice-governor Wassim Mansouri was nominated by Berri,



Lebanon’s caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati meets with vice-governors of Lebanon’s central bank and other officials, at the government palace in Beirut, Lebanon. – Reuters

who leads Amal Movement.

“Berri already backs the finance minister and a financial prosecutor. So he wants to avoid having Mansouri in the hot seat as he does not want to be seen as responsible for any further economic deterioration,” a source close to Mansouri said.

Mikati has called for the cabinet to meet on Thursday to discuss nominating a new governor.

Hezbollah chief Hassan Nasrallah has said the caretaker cabinet did not have the right to appoint one. The FPM agrees and says it wants to appoint a Christian legal overseer to administer the central bank.

Ali Hamdan, a senior adviser to the speaker, denied that Berri’s position was based on worries about a backlash. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

ISLAMABAD

Court rejects Imran’s plea to halt trial

Pakistan’s Supreme Court on Wednesday rejected former prime minister Imran Khan’s plea that his trial on charges of unlawfully selling state gifts be halted on concerns over the merits of the trial and that the judge hearing it was biased.

The Supreme Court asked Khan to go back to the Islamabad High Court to seek a ruling over his objections, according to an order seen by reporters who attended the top court’s proceedings.

The Supreme Court cannot in-



terfere in the trial court proceedings, said one judge on the two-member panel of the top court, which disposed of Khan’s petition, directing the high court to hear all his petitions related to the trial.

MANILA

Two dead as typhoon Doksuri batters

A powerful storm pounded the northern Philippines on Wednesday, killing at least two people, toppling trees and knocking out power as thousands sheltered with neighbours or in emergency evacuation centres.

Typhoon Doksuri was “slowly moving away from Dalupiri Island”, off the northern tip of the main island of Luzon, and into open waters.

The weather agency warned of “violent, life-threatening conditions” as severe maximum sus-



tained winds of 175 kilometres an hour and heavy rain.

A woman died when she was hit by a falling coconut tree in the northern province of Isabela on Wednesday.

DHAKA

Bangladesh records high dengue death toll

Dengue is spreading rapidly through densely populated Bangladesh this rainy season, raising fears that the mosquito-borne disease could result in a record number of deaths and infections for the second consecutive year.

At least 201 people have died and more than 37,000 have become infected with the virus so far this year, according to official figures.

Hospitals, especially in Dhaka, are struggling to find space for



the high caseload of patients suffering high fever, joint pain and vomiting, health officials said. The government has launched initiatives to limit the spread of mosquito-borne diseases.



In brief

■ AMELAND



TRANSPORT SHIP FIRE COULD 'BURN FOR DAYS'

The blaze raging aboard a ship carrying 3,000 cars off the Netherlands could burn for days, officials said on Wednesday.

The cargo aboard the vessel includes electric vehicles and a coastguard official told Dutch media that authorities were looking into whether the fire had started with one of them.

Rescue personnel received a call reporting a fire on the Fremantle Highway.

All 23 crew members were evacuated from the ship, but one person died and several were injured, the coastguard said.

■ PHNOM PENH



PM TO STEP DOWN AFTER FOUR DECADES

Cambodian Prime Minister Hun Sen, one of the world's longest-serving leaders, said on Wednesday he will resign and hand power to his eldest son after almost four decades of hardline rule.

His Cambodian People's Party (CPP) won a landslide victory in an election on Sunday with no meaningful opposition.

"I would like to ask for understanding from the people as I announce that I will not continue as prime minister," the 70-year-old said on state television. Hun Sen said Hun Manet, a 45-year-old four-star general, would take over as prime minister at the head of a new government on August 22.

■ KYIV



POLICE SEARCH HOME OF MP AFTER MALDIVES TRIP

Ukraine's SBU security service said on Wednesday it searched the home of a member of parliament who allegedly went on holiday abroad despite war-time restrictions on officials travelling for personal reasons.

Yuriy Aristov travelled to Lithuania for a work trip, but then faked sick leave and went to a luxurious hotel in the Maldives with his family, according to investigators. A news report had revealed the case, triggering a vehement reaction from Ukrainian President.

"Any internal betrayal, any 'beach' or any personal enrichment instead of Ukraine's interests triggers fury," Zelensky said.

North Korea gives Russian defence ministry delegation 'warm welcome'

SEOUL: North Korea rolled out the red carpet for the Russian defence minister, state media said on Wednesday, with delegations from Moscow and Beijing set to attend Korean War anniversary events, the country's first-known foreign visitors since its pandemic border closure.

Pyongyang is on Thursday marking the 70th anniversary of the signing of the July 27, 1953 Korean War armistice, which ended open hostilities and is celebrated as Victory Day in the North.

The Russian national anthem blared throughout Pyongyang International Airport, which was "wrapped up in a warm welcome atmosphere" to greet Moscow's Sergei Shoigu and his delegation on Tuesday evening, the state-run Korean Central News Agency said.

Shoigu was greeted by North Korean Defence Minister Kang Sun Nam, and photos carried by the official Rodong Sinmun newspaper showed hundreds of uniformed soldiers of the Korean People's Army lining the airport holding signs welcoming the Russians.

Shoigu laid flowers in front of giant bronze statues of former leaders Kim Il Sung and Kim Jong Il, video shared by the Russian defence ministry showed.

"For Russia, the Democratic People's Republic of Korea is an important partner, with which we share a common border and a rich history of cooperation," Shoigu said according to a ministry statement, which added that the meeting would



Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, who is leading a visiting delegation, is welcomed at an airport in Pyongyang, North Korea. — Reuters

"contribute to strengthening cooperation between our ministries of defence".

Russia, a historic ally of North Korea, is one of a handful of nations with which Pyongyang maintains friendly relations.

North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has been steadfast in his support for Moscow's attack on Ukraine, including, Washington says, supplying rockets and missiles.

The fact that Russia's defence

Russia, a historic ally of North Korea, is one of a handful of nations with which Pyongyang maintains friendly relations

minister flew to Pyongyang while his country is at war was "very significant", said Park Won-gon, director of Ewha University's Institute of Unification Studies.

"Even though the emergency quarantine system remains in place, Kim Jong Un may have felt the need to show something to his people at the Victory Day celebrations," he said.

Satellite imagery indicates North Korea has been preparing for the kind of large-scale

military parade with which it typically fetes such anniversaries.

South Korea's Yonhap news agency reported that there were "clear signs" of preparations for a midnight parade at Kim Il Sung Square in Pyongyang in recent days, citing multiple unnamed government sources.

The inclusion of foreign guests at this year's celebrations is a post-pandemic first and hints at new flexibility towards enforcing border controls. — AFP

NatWest CEO resigns after 'serious error' in Farage fiasco

LONDON: NatWest CEO Alison Rose stepped down with immediate effect on Wednesday after she admitted to a "serious error of judgment" in discussing former Brexit party leader Nigel Farage's relationship with the bank with a BBC journalist.

Paul Thwaite, the head of the bank's commercial and institutional business, will helm NatWest for an initial period of 12 months, the company said in a statement.

NatWest has faced intense political and media scrutiny over a decision by its private bank Coutts to close Farage's accounts. An internal review obtained by the politician-turned-TV show host showed Coutts' wealth reputational risk committee had said his values did not align with the bank's own.

Some major NatWest investors are also applying pressure on the bank's chair Howard Davies to step down for mishandling the fallout, including saying Rose had the board's "full confidence" hours before she stepped down, the Financial Times reported.

In a post on the X social media platform on Wednesday, Farage called for further heads to roll in the wake of Rose's resignation.

"Others must follow," he said. I



NatWest Chief Executive Officer Alison Rose delivers a speech at NatWest's headquarters in the City of London. — Reuters file photo

Nigel Farage's experience shows why data protection rights remain so important

JOHN EDWARDS
Information Commissioner

hope that this serves as a warning to the banking industry," he said, pledging to speak up for other people who had their accounts shut down.

"I hope the whole financial sector learns from this incident. Its role is to serve customers well

and fairly - not to tell them how or what to think," said financial services minister Andrew Griffith.

Keir Starmer, leader of the opposition Labour party, said that Rose was right to resign and said no-one should be refused banking services over their political views.

Data regulator the Information Commissioner's Office also said on Wednesday it had written to banks to remind them of their responsibilities to the public.

"Nigel Farage's experience shows why data protection rights remain so important," said Information Commissioner John Edwards, who added the watchdog would give NatWest a chance to respond to Farage's complaint before getting involved.

Britain's Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) has urged NatWest's board to review the matter.

"It is vital that the review is well resourced and those conducting it have access to all the necessary information and people in order to investigate what happened swiftly and fully," said Sheldon Mills, the FCA's executive director of consumers and competition. — Reuters

EU watchdog probes Frontex's action in Greece boat tragedy

BRUSSELS: The EU watchdog on Wednesday announced a probe into the bloc's border patrol agency Frontex over its actions after a boat packed with migrants off Greece sank last month, killing hundreds.

The investigation is "aimed at clarifying Frontex's role in search and rescue operations in the Mediterranean sea following the drowning of hundreds of people off the coast of Greece on 14 June", ombudsman Emily O'Reilly said in a statement. The independent probe by the European Union watchdog was launched on O'Reilly's own initiative.

It adds to two investigations Greece says it has started: a criminal one into alleged smugglers it blames for the tragedy, and another into the actions of its coastguard.

The boat that sank, an overcrowded fishing trawler, was carrying up to 750 people picked up in Libya who sought to cross the Mediterranean to irregularly enter Europe.

Around 100 of them were saved, but it is thought that some 600 drowned, according to Greek figures relayed by EU commissioner Ylva Johansson



Brothers reunite after deadly shipwreck at open sea off Greece after their boat capsized, at the port of Kalamata, Greece. — Reuters file photo

to the European Parliament in early July. O'Reilly spoke of "the deaths of at least 500 people".

EU lawmakers in that hearing expressed scepticism that the Greek probes into the sinking would be adequately carried out. They called for an independent and transparent investigation.

Athens has already rejected survivors' accounts that the Greek coastguard tied a rope to the drifting vessel and then powered off, causing it to capsize.

O'Reilly said her office's investigation would be carried out in coordination with the Greek ombudsman's office.

— AFP

Wrong words can hurt

“Sticks and stones may break my bones, but words can never hurt me”. Never thought that this quote was ever true. Since words can have such an effect on you and many times it cut deep like a sharp knife.

Also true, words can be inspirational and motivational to the point it can change your life for the better. Words can have such an impactful meaning to a person either negative or positive. As Rudyard Kipling said: “Words are, of course, the most powerful drug used by mankind.” So it has to be said responsibly. As what is about to be uttered might overwhelm the person and change their view of you. What was said might have an impact and can alter a situation in just a second.

This makes you think that at times we aren’t aware of what we have said. As words are so easily spoken and we can say anything at the moment, to only realise the damage is done. And many times we are just being honest, expressing an opinion with no harm meant. Some family disagreements are often due to the wrong words being said. It is so easy to say wrong words when you’re angry or trying to defend yourself.

I remember an argument among a couple on the beach a few weeks ago. As I was seated on the bench near the couple, I was able to overhear the wife shouting at the man.



Saif al Shaibany
SaifalShaibany@hotmail.com

The writer is a banker by day and a storyteller by night

WHEN SOMEONE SAYS WHAT YOU SAID HURTS, YOU SHOULD TAKE NOTICE. YES, WORDS SAID CAN BE A DOUBLE-EDGED SWORD

I couldn’t make out what started the argument, but I could hear her words to him. When I thought she had the last word, the husband started to pour in his words.

What happened next was a whole new situation; the wife started to cry. I felt bad and so do the people around them.

In my opinion, the husband should have controlled the situation and taken the conversation to a private location. But instead, the whole thing exploded and wrong words were used and the wife started crying creating an uncomfortable situation for both.

I am a firm believer that we should say what is in our minds; honesty is the word. But I also believe that the right words should be used to express honesty.

No matter how powerful words can be, we can’t suppress our opinion or mind. Say what is in your mind. ‘Just choose your words wisely’.

Like the couple, there are many examples of using the wrong words that can create rifts between family members and friends. You can lose your job, find yourself in trouble with the law... the list goes on. If one uses the right words, one can establish great relationships and connections.

When someone says what you said hurts, you should take notice. Yes, words said can be a double-edged sword. But nonetheless don’t be quiet, just be mindful of your words.

ONE YEAR TO OLYMPICS



People walk past the countdown clock showing 366 days, one year to go until the Paris 2024 Olympic Games opening ceremony, near the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France, on Wednesday. – Reuters

McCarthy sounds the alarms for Biden

The American political landscape has suddenly been inundated with a lot of talk about “investigations” on both sides of the divide.

While Donald Trump awaits a looming third indictment, in a TV appearance on Fox News interview, House Speaker Kevin McCarthy has also sounded alarm bells for the possibility of President Biden’s impeachment over conjectural allegations of financial impropriety. Such a tempest of legal entanglements portends stormy days ahead.

Although McCarthy has yet to overtly endorse Donald Trump’s bid for the 2024 Republican presidential nomination, observers detect a strategic manoeuvrer in his recent actions. Amidst mounting GOP pressure to display allegiance to the former president, McCarthy has deftly broached the subject, ostensibly gauging the political winds and seeking to assuage the party faithful.

The upcoming 2024 presidential contest remains awash with intrigue and calculations as contenders vie for the mantle of Republican leadership. “But this is rising to the level of impeachment inquiry,” said McCarthy in his TV appearance. McCarthy’s concise remarks bore an intentional tone, distinct from mere casual banter.

In a striking turn, McCarthy invoked the accounts of two IRS whistleblowers, who, he claimed, revealed a sluggish pace in probing Hunter Biden’s alleged tax infractions. McCarthy also drew attention to House GOP investigations, which purportedly unveiled a trail of foreign funds coursing through shell companies to benefit Biden family members and associates to the tune of millions. With these charges resurfacing in the political arena, the specter of controversy surrounding the Biden family gains fresh momentum.



Dr Imran Khalid

The writer is freelance columnist on international affairs

Although he conceded that their investigations have yet to yield evidence of any misconduct, McCarthy underscored that an impeachment inquiry could provide Congress with the means to ascertain the truth. Furthermore, he refrained from specifying any timetable for initiating an impeachment inquiry into Biden and asserted that he had not engaged in discussions with Trump on the matter. Additionally, when pressed, he opted not to disclose any potential presidential endorsement.

With a measured reticence, McCarthy is trying to keep his cards close. As expected, the White House has retorted aggressively to

McCarthy’s comments. The White House spokesman for oversight and investigations, Ian Sams, tweeted in response to McCarthy’s comments: “Instead of focusing on the real issues Americans want us to address like continuing to lower inflation or create jobs, this is what the House GOP wants to prioritise. Their eagerness to go after POTUS regardless of the truth is seemingly bottomless.” Apparently, the White House is trying the same tactics of “smoking” the debate on this issue.

Focusing intently on the Biden family’s financial dealings, House Republicans are particularly scrutinising the payments that flowed to the younger Biden from Burisma, the Ukrainian energy

firm ensnared in Trump’s initial impeachment proceedings.

In a recent development, Hunter Biden has struck an agreement with prosecutors, signalling his willingness to plead guilty to misdemeanour charges related to his failure to pay income taxes over several years. The persistence of this narrative, even in the face of official dismissal, indicates that Republicans are very seriously trying to muffle the impact of Trump’s incessant involvement in a series of investigations.

The likelihood looms large that McCarthy and Trump loyalists will set the wheels in motion for Biden’s impeachment in the coming days. Staunch Trump loyalists within

MCCARTHY INVOKED THE ACCOUNTS OF TWO IRS WHISTLEBLOWERS, WHO, HE CLAIMED, REVEALED A SLUGGISH PACE IN PROBING HUNTER BIDEN’S ALLEGED TAX INFRACTIONS

Congress are exerting considerable pressure on Speaker McCarthy, driven by two clear motives. Firstly, an aggressive pursuit of President Biden’s impeachment aims to divert attention from ongoing investigations and potential indictments of Trump. Secondly, such a move could significantly undermine Biden and the Democrats, who still grapple with the question of a viable replacement in the event of his disqualification from the 2023 presidential elections.

The political stakes are high, as uncertainty abounds and strategic calculations come to the fore in this ever-evolving scenario. Biden’s impeachment poses significant challenges for McCarthy, given the lack of widespread support among moderate Republicans.

Even if the House were to impeach Biden, conviction in the 100-member Senate remains improbable, necessitating a two-thirds majority vote. With Democrats currently holding a 51-49 advantage in the Senate, the odds of a successful impeachment are almost near to impossible, further complicating the political landscape and potential outcomes. Trump, McCarthy and the Republican core team are well aware of this situation.



US House Speaker Kevin McCarthy

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



AL FAYROUZ PRESIDES OVER RUSSIAN TENT PEGGING COMPETITION

INDIA SNATCH CHAMPIONSHIP TITLE IN MOSCOW



WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, JULY 26

Mohammed bin Issa al Fayrouz, head of The International Tent Pegging Federation (ITPF), presided over the conclusion of international tent pegging championship in Moscow on Sunday.

Nine countries took part at tournament hosted by the Russian Equestrian Federation including Syria, Pakistan, Kuwait, Qatar, India, Iran, Kazakhstan and Belarus.

The Indian team won the championship title on the first day of the competition in the team category, while Belarus claimed the second place. Kuwait came third.

The Russian, Afimov Vader snatched the individual title, while second and third places were won by India's Dinesh Kangram and Garsha Gorshin.

In the second day competitions, the Qatari team topped the team category followed by Kazakhstan and India. In the individual category, the first place was won by Setsk Ahar from Belarus, the second place was taken by Dolesh from Kazakhstan, and the third place went to Mohit Kumar from India.

The Omani referees Mansour bin Ali al Mahrouqi, Saif bin Salim al Khatri, Khalid bin Naseeb al Quraini, Ahmed bin Obaid al Jassasi and Abdullah bin Sulaiman al Balushi took part in the competition

At the end of the championship, Mohammed bin Issa al Fayrouz, President of the International Tent Pegging Federation, honoured the winners.

In the second day's competitions, at the national



OMANI REFEREE
MANSOUR AL MAHROUQI



level, Qatar won the first place, Kazakhstan came second, and India third. On the individual level, Setsk Ahar from Belarus won the first place, Dolesh from Kazakhstan came second, and Mohit Kumar from India finished third.

India topped the list with maximum points. The second place went to Belarus and Qatar finished third. At the individual level, India's Mohit Kumar won the first place and the second place was won by Dinesh Kangram of India. Third place went to Sistak Ahar from Belarus.

Al Fayrouz honoured the winners at the end of the championship. On the sidelines of the tournament, two training courses were held, one for referees and the second for coaches and referees from different countries of the world.

Oman Equestrian Federation will launch Dhofar Khareef activities at 4:00 pm on Friday, including flat, race endurance and tent pegging competitions.

Oman lost all matches at the concluded ACC Emerging Teams Asia Cup

MUSCAT: After reaching the high of a top-six place in the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier in Zimbabwe earlier this month, much was expected from the Oman side at the ACC Emerging Teams Asia Cup in Sri Lanka.

However, the Oman A squad that competed in the tournament failed to make an impression as they lost all the three matches in the group stage to make a tame exit.

National chief coach Duleep Mendis, who was delighted with his team's display at the ICC World Cup Qualifier in Zimbabwe, admitted that the boys failed to perform in Sri Lanka but added that it is a learning curve for the national team.

In his remarks at the conclusion of the ACC Emerging Teams Asia Cup, which was won by Pakistan on Sunday, Mendis said: "I expected a much better performance from my boys. We rested few of our senior players for the Emerging Teams Asia Cup with an aim to provide exposure to newcomers. The team was a mix of senior and few newcomers but they disappointed."

"We had an exceptional tournament in Zimbabwe where we belied the expectations of many by qualifying for the Super Six stage. The players performed brilliantly and I am proud of what they achieved in the ICC World Cup Qualifier."

"I expected the senior players to continue their good form in Sri Lanka and hoped that would rub on the newcomers. It didn't happen. I am not offering excuses but the long tour of Zimbabwe led to senior players being exhausted. They failed to do justice to their talent."

The Sri Lankan great, who has been with Oman for more than a decade, and led the Team Red to two T20 World Cups and guided the team to ICC ODI World Cup Qualifier, added: "We did pick few newcomers and gave them a chance to play against some good sides in the Emerging Teams



DULEEP MENDIS - HEAD COACH

Naseem Khushi and experienced all-rounder Mohammed Nadeem. All five were part of the team that returned from Zimbabwe.

Mendis said: "In Sri Lanka, our senior players, who are semi-professionals looked to be exhausted. They are expected to adjust to different conditions but the team as a whole misfired. The good thing is that during the past few months, we have understood our strengths and weaknesses. We will try to work on it."

He added: "We have had exceptional last few years leading to the ICC ODI World Cup Qualifier, having finished second in the ICC World Cricket League 2. We put on a solid performance in the ICC World Cricket League 2, finishing second among seven teams with 21 wins in 36 matches across four years."

The former Sri Lankan Test captain, added: "We now have to gear up for the next FTP (Future Tours Programme) that will be the Division 2 again, starting from May 2024 for another three years with seven other strong nations - Canada, Namibia, Nepal, Netherlands, Scotland, UAE, USA. We have to get a good bench strength and the focus has to be on newcomers who could serve Oman with passion and pride. It is going to be another long and tough cycle and at Oman Cricket we will be committed to provide more opportunities for talented newcomers."

Asia Cup. We may have not got the desired results but this is the only way forward - to provide platform for newcomers at international stage."

In Sri Lanka, Oman was placed in Group A with hosts Sri Lanka A, Bangladesh A and Afghanistan A.

Oman began their campaign on July 13 against Afghanistan and went down by 72 runs. Chasing a target of 268 to win after Afghanistan scored 267/8, Oman were dismissed for 195 in 40.3 overs with Ayaan Khan top-scoring with 47.

In the next game, Bangladesh A cruised to an eight-wicket win. Oman were all out for 126 in 46 overs with Ayaan again the top run-getter with 26. Bangladesh raced to win in 17 overs scoring 130/2.

And in the concluding group match, Oman had a game to forget as they were bundled out for a paltry 42 in 17.1 overs

against hosts Sri Lanka A, who had batted first and hammered 259/8 in 50 overs. It was second ever lowest List A score of Oman.

Ayaan emerged as team's top scorer with 74 runs from three matches followed by Shoaib Khan (70). Both the batters also had an excellent tour to Zimbabwe. In bowling, captain Aqib Ilyas picked a total of eight wickets with best figures of 4/58 against Sri Lanka A.

The Sri Lanka tour gave national team List A debuts for wicketkeeper Abdul Rauf, Shubo Pal and Muhammad Bilal Shah, who were called up for their maiden Oman tour.

Among the seniors rested for the tour were regular skipper Zeeshan Maqsood, who is recovering from a hamstring injury that kept him out of the last two matches at the Qualifier in Zimbabwe. Also missing were pacer Bilal Khan, all-rounder Sandeep Goud, wicketkeeper

Oman Sail heads to South Korea for the ASAF Keelboat Cup



MUSCAT: Four sailors from Oman Sail's national team have travelled to Boryeong in South Korea to compete at the 2023 ASAF Keelboat Cup. Taking place at the Boryeong Sailing Centre at Daechun Beach, the event brings together 12 international teams and three qualifying teams from within Korea to race over four days of racing - as well as the Awesome Islands Race which kicks off the event.

The mid-distance offshore race features teams from hosts Korea, France, Denmark, Türkiye, Australia, New Zealand, China, Thailand, and Malaysia, as well as Oman. Representing Oman will be Nasser al Mashari, skipper of the team, Yaser al Rahbi, Ali al Bulushi and Hussain al Jabri.

Mohsin al Busaidy, Oman Sail's Head of Performance, said, "This is a great chance to test ourselves against crews from around the world and some of the best in South Korea. The J/70 is a popular keelboat used at high profile events in Kiel and Hyères, as well as at the World Championships later this year, and the 2023 ASAF Keelboat Cup will give us invaluable experience ahead of a busy season. We are looking forward to gauging our progress and working on the technical aspects of the boat in a highly competitive environment off the coast of the Yellow Sea in South Korea."

Nasser al Mashari, Skipper of the team, said, "Racing in South Korea is a great chance for us to put into practice the tactics and training we have been working on and gain much-



MOHSIN AL BUSAIDI



NASSER AL MASHARI

needed experience ahead of a busy winter season. Building a connection as a team is vital in order to perform at our very best, both now and in the future, and the 11 races will help to identify areas to improve on and learn more about the boat."

The 2023 ASAF Keelboat Cup is the first Asian Yachting Federation (ASAF) accredited yachting competition to be held in Korea and features 240 sailors and officials across three events. There will be 13 countries competing in 11 races in the J/70 class and youth squads from 10 countries represented in the Optimist competition. After the Awesome Islands Race on 25 July, racing begins on 27 July 2023, with the prize giving ceremony and closing ceremony on 30 July 2023.

SIX CHAMPIONSHIPS AT NEW SEASON OF OMAN VOLLEYBALL



The Board of Directors of the Oman Volleyball Association approved 6 championships for the new season 2023-24. The championship league on the general league competitions will start on October 13. The second competitions will be on November 3. The Ministry Shield competition will be on December 1. In addition to the new halls championships next August.

MESSI SCORES TWICE AS MIAMI THRASH ATLANTA 4-0

MIAMI: Lionel Messi scored two first half goals and assisted on another in the second to lead Inter Miami to a 4-0 dismantling of Atlanta United and advance to the knockout stage of the Leagues Cup on Tuesday.

After coming off the bench to score a dramatic game winner in his debut on Friday night, the World Cup champion from Argentina wasted no time in his first start with the MLS side.

The team captain received a lovely lofting pass from former Barcelona team-mate Sergio Busquets and, after initially hitting the post, fired home his own rebound to put Miami up in the eighth minute to roars of approval from the home crowd.

Messi slotted home a second in the 22nd minute on a diving cross from team-mate Robert Taylor, who notched a brace of his own on a hot night in Miami.

After scoring, Messi stopped and pointed from the field at the team co-owner David Beckham, who was watching the game. The gesture was met with a

wide smile from the former Manchester United great who helped lure Messi to the MLS despite a massive counter offer from Saudi Arabia.

Atlanta's best chance at getting on the scoreboard came with a late penalty kick from Thiago Almada but Miami keeper Drake Callender read it perfectly to preserve the clean sheet.

Messi and fellow Argentinian Almada hugged when Messi was subbed out in the 78th minute and the pair exchanged jerseys after the match.

Messi came on as a substitute in Friday match against Cruz Azul and his game winner on a set piece in the dying second of the contest made for a dream start in MLS for the 36-year-old, a seven-times Ballon d'Or winner who led Argentina to World Cup glory last year.

With the win Miami have now won their group in the Leagues Cup tournament, which is a World Cup-style tournament featuring all teams from MLS and Mexico's Liga MX. — Reuters



Lionel Messi passes during the second half against Atlanta United at DRV PNK Stadium.
— USA TODAY Sports

Stokes puts his faith in Anderson for Ashes finale

LONDON: England captain Ben Stokes has no doubts over James Anderson keeping his place in an unchanged side for this week's Ashes finale, hailing the veteran seamer as "the greatest fast bowler to play the game".

The hosts are bidding to end the series all square at 2-2 in a fifth Test at The Oval starting on Thursday, with Australia having already retained the Ashes at 2-1 up following last week's rain-marred draw at Old Trafford.

Anderson on Sunday has taken just four wickets in three matches this series at a costly average of 76.75 apiece.

But Anderson, whose 689 Test wickets are the most taken by any fast bowler, insisted in a recent newspaper column he has no intention of retiring any time soon and plans to continue

an England career that already spans 20 years.

Stokes, with England having overlooked the claims of Ollie Robinson and rising star Josh Tongue, was more than happy to have Anderson in his side.

"James Anderson is the greatest fast bowler to play the game and he's still looking as good as he was two years ago," said Stokes at The Oval on Wednesday.

"Although he's not had the impact or the wickets he would have liked to in this series, he's a quality bowler and quality performer. To have nearly 700 Test wickets is phenomenal, and to be able to do it all around the world as well."

- 'Amazing' Broad -
Stokes also paid tribute to Stuart Broad, Anderson's



England's Ben Stokes during training. — Reuters

longstanding new-ball colleague. The Nottinghamshire seamer is the leading bowler in the Ashes with 18 wickets and is about to appear in his sixth Test in a row this season, having featured in

the off-match against Ireland at Lord's.

"At 37 years old it's testament to the work and effort he puts in," said Stokes. "It's amazing. It was always going to be hard for one

bowler to play every game this series but he's been incredible for us. He's been very good at coming on with the ball and changing the game."

Stokes admitted to feeling deflated following the Old Trafford washout, after England dominated the game, but insisted morale would not be an issue at The Oval. Leaving Manchester... I've never left a field, a game pretty emotionless. It was a bizarre feeling, the game petered out the way it did because of the weather. "It was a pretty flat feeling but we've got rid of those emotions and we're ready for this week."

Much has been made this series of England's aggressive 'Bazball' approach to Test cricket. But Stokes insisted other teams didn't have to follow England's

lead. "It's not fair of me to say that's how every team should be playing or thinking about it," he said. "Every team has their own way of operation, teams find a way that best suits the individuals they have in their team."

He added: "The cricket we play best suits the individuals we have in this team."

As for the broader future of Test cricket, amid the growth of Twenty20 franchise leagues, Stokes said: "Test cricket just needs to stay... I think there is a world where T20 and Test cricket can live side by side."

"T20 cricket has obviously helped Test cricket in terms of some of the play you see in the modern era, because without T20 you wouldn't see some of the shots and the players coming through." — AFP



New labour law strongly supports working women

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JULY 26

The recently issued Labour Law has been hailed for, among other things, the various benefits it extends to women in the workforce.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Supreme Court licensed lawyer and Member of the Oman Human Rights Commission, Maimuna bint Said al Sulaimaniyah, shed light on how the new law will positively impact women's working conditions.

"A key feature in the law is to grant women paid maternity leave of not less than 98 days, which is so important," she said.

Previously, a woman was entitled



to maternity leave of just fifty days, which has been significantly extended under the new law

Effectively, this makes Oman one of the countries offering the longest paid maternity leaves in the region, she pointed out.

Additionally, maternal leaves were limited to no more than three times during their employment at a specific workplace, but the new law removes this cap, offering women greater flexibility.

"There is no limit to the number of children a woman can have while working for a specific employer, which marks an improvement compared to the previous law," shared Al Sulaimani.

Additionally, according to

Article (76), new mothers will be entitled to an hour per day during their workday for childcare, which will count towards their working hours. Furthermore, Article (60) stipulates that establishments with more than 25 female employees must provide a resting place for women.

However, most notably, Article (12) specifically bars the termination of employment of women on the grounds of pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding, classifying such acts as arbitrary dismissal.

The new Labour Law was promulgated by Royal Decree 53/2023 issued by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday.

Subsidy extension to boost animal feed production

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 26

The Omani government has approved an extension of subsidies on key raw materials used in animal feed production. The move, which was announced by Dhofar Foods & Investment, on July 25, 2023, is expected to have a significant positive impact on the company's feed production section.

The subsidy extension will run for an additional six months, starting from January 1, 2023. This will help to mitigate losses and bolster the company's operations, which are essential to the stability and growth of the animal farming



THIS WILL HELP TO MITIGATE LOSSES AND BOLSTER THE COMPANY'S OPERATIONS, WHICH ARE ESSENTIAL TO THE STABILITY AND GROWTH OF THE ANIMAL FARMING INDUSTRY IN OMAN

The extension of subsidies serves as a testament to the fruitful collaboration between the government and Dhofar Foods & Investment.

The subsidy extension allows them to continue delivering quality feed to the market, supporting the well-being of livestock and poultry farmers across the country.

industry in Oman.

Dhofar Foods & Investment is a prominent player in the market, and it recognises the importance of government support in ensuring the availability of affordable and

quality animal feed.

With subsidised raw materials, the company can maintain competitive prices, which will ultimately benefit consumers and promote food security.



Hutchison Ports Sohar welcomes mega containership

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 26

Hutchison Ports Sohar welcomed the imposing M/V Berlin Express by Hapag-Lloyd, the largest container vessel to ever grace the shores of the Sultanate of Oman, on Tuesday, July 25, 2023.

Receiving the mega vessel on its arrival in Sohar Port were Mohammed bin Abdullah al Busaidy, the Wali of Sohar and Acting Governor of North Al Batinah, along with distinguished officials and guests from ROP-Customs, Oman Chamber of Commerce, and Industry, SOHAR Port & Freezone, and Hapag-Lloyd.

This event celebrated the vessel's historic arrival, marking a significant milestone for the Sultanate of Oman's maritime industry in aligning with the Oman Logistics Strategy (SOLS) 2040.

The M/V Berlin Express stands tall as the inaugural vessel among the twelve remarkable additions boasting cutting-edge LNG dual-fuel propulsion. With an impressive length overall (LOA) of 399.90 metres and a staggering maximum capacity of 23,664 TEUs.

The vessel's maiden voyage is part of the esteemed Asia Gulf Service, which connects major ports in Asia with the Middle East. The M/V Berlin Express is en-route to its highly anticipated official launch ceremony in Hamburg, Germany.

This mega vessel call demonstrates expanded reach and fortified network of Hutchison Ports Sohar.

Commenting on the call, Anacin Kum, the CEO of Hutchison Ports Sohar said, "This is a significant milestone

for our terminal as well as across Oman's maritime and logistics industry.

The arrival of the LNG dual-fuel Berlin Express at Sohar Port not only distinguishes it as the largest container vessel to grace our shores but also showcases its exemplary eco-friendliness.

This moment resonates with Hutchison Ports' Net-Zero target by 2050, underscoring our dedication to sustainable practices and a greener future for the industry."

Omar bin Mahmood al Mahrizi, Chief Executive Officer of SOHAR Freezone, DCEO SOHAR Port, said, "As we continue to increase our capacity to handle large container vessels, the call of M/V Berlin Express by Hapag-Lloyd at SOHAR Port reinforces our credentials as a key logistics hub in Oman and the wider region.

Boasting containers, liquids, and bulk terminals while sitting at the centre of global trade routes and providing excellent services and incentives, SOHAR is well-positioned for efficient and sustainable regional distribution and trade worldwide."

Dr Maximilian Rothkopf, Chief Operating Officer at Hapag-Lloyd expressed: "We at Hapag-Lloyd are very happy, that our new state-of-the-art flagship, Berlin Express, made her first successful port call at the Port of Sohar, Oman during her maiden voyage. With 23,600 TEU capacity and 400 meters in length, this vessel is the biggest ship sailing under German flag ever. At the same time, she is paving the way into a more sustainable future for Hapag-Lloyd, being the first of 12 ordered dual-fuel ships running on LNG (Liquified Natural Gas)."

Oman leads MENA region in projected tourist arrivals for H2 2023

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JULY 26

In exciting news for the tourism industry, the Sultanate of Oman is set to become the leading destination for tourist arrivals in the Middle East during the second half of 2023. According to the latest data from ForwardKeys, a leading travel analytics company, Oman is projected to achieve a remarkable 31 per cent growth in tourist arrivals, outpacing its regional counterparts.

Juan Gomez, ForwardKeys Head of Market Intelligence, said: "In 2023, the Middle East's impressive tourism performance continues, with a projected increase in international arrivals compared to the previous year in the remaining six months.

Most destinations are on track to match or exceed their 2022 numbers, a testament to the relentless efforts of local authorities in transforming the region into a global tourism powerhouse."

The United Arab Emirates (+29 per cent), Saudi Arabia, Lebanon and Jordan are also projected to have double-digit growth in international arrivals for the second half of 2023.

"While destinations like Qatar may not reach the exceptional volumes of 2022 due to the



Fifa World Cup's influence, neighbouring countries continue to bask in the afterglow of last year's sporting spectacle.

Countries such as Jordan and Egypt show forward booking levels lower than the previous year, but this situation remains dynamic, and an upward trend could materialise as the year progresses," Gomez added.

Oman has been actively promoting its unique blend of natural beauty, ancient heritage, and warm hospitality to attract visitors from around the world.

The nation's efforts have clearly paid off, as ForwardKeys predicts a substantial surge in tourist arrivals

during the latter half of this year.

ForwardKeys' analysis indicates that Oman's popularity is on the rise, with an increasing number of international travellers expressing interest in exploring the country's diverse attractions.

Factors contributing to this growth include improved connectivity, enhanced marketing campaigns, and the successful implementation of initiatives aimed at easing visa regulations.

Muscat is expected to witness a significant influx of tourists, as the city boasts a rich cultural heritage and stunning architectural landmarks.

Visitors will also be drawn to

Oman's breathtaking landscapes, including the picturesque coastal areas of Salalah, especially during the khareef season, the dramatic mountains of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and the vast deserts of Rimal Al Sharqiya.

Furthermore, Oman's commitment to sustainable tourism and eco-friendly practices has resonated with travellers seeking responsible and immersive experiences.

The country's dedication to preserving its natural environment while offering authentic cultural encounters has positioned it as an attractive destination for conscious tourists.

OAB recognised as domestic retail bank of the year – Oman



MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has been recognised as Domestic Retail Bank of the Year – Oman and the SME Payment Solutions of the Year – Oman, earning two wins at the prestigious Asian Banking & Finance (ABF) Retail Banking Awards 2023.

A distinguished panel of judges from the banking and financial industry bestowed the bank with top honours in these two categories.

The SME Payment Solutions of the Year – Oman award reflected the successful introduction of OAB's state-of-the-art Mobile Pay Soft POS solution for SME customers, which represented the first of its kind in Oman and gained an extremely high initial customer penetration rate.

Among its innovative elements, the solution provides an enhanced option allowing customers to enter their PIN through their mobile device, increasing customer convenience and confidence on security, as well as allowing the merchant to carry out real-time stock management, tax calculations and liquidity management.

The bank acquired a total of 116 new merchants in the first three months from launch.

Continuing to uphold its customer-first vision, OAB has launched numerous other new products and services in recent months, including an instant debit card issuance machine; increased limits to its Digital Instant Loan; and several seasonal offers for customers.

The process of epitomising its branches has also continued, including the installation of state-of-the-art digital banking technology to enhance the customer experience and allow customers to bank more efficiently.

OAB's brace of awards were the latest recognition for the bank, which also recently won Best Online Platform in Oman at the 2022 MEA Business Awards and received the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI-DSS) certification, which confirmed OAB's security measures meet the highest standards of protecting customers' payment card data, as set by the PCI Security Standards Council and most recently being accredited by the ACCA.

PDO funds new social investment initiatives

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 26

Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) announced on Wednesday that it is funding four new social investment initiatives with a total of more than \$1.8 million aimed at strengthening health care, education, transportation safety in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Memorandums of Co-operation (MoC) governing these projects were signed at a ceremony held under the auspices of Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals.

To support providing the best health services, PDO signed an agreement with the Ministry of Health to fund the construction of a new maternity and neonatal ward in Bahla Hospital.



The new addition will help improve the quality of care for mothers and newborns in response to the surge in demand for maternity services in the Governorate.

In line with the Company's commitment to backing the education sector within its concession area, PDO signed two agreements with the Ministry of

Education. The first is to fund the construction of additional classes for Al Habbi school in the Wilayat of Bahla, while the second will cover funding a defensive driving training programme in co-operation with the Royal Oman Police for school bus drivers across the concession area, with a view to extending the initiative to cover other governorates.



The programme will help reduce school bus accidents, ensuring safer journeys for children to and from school. PDO Managing Director Steve Phimister, said: "We are delighted to sign these new agreements, which will help benefit many citizens across Oman."

"The initiatives are aligned with our company's commitment

to sustainable development and our goal of maximising value for the Sultanate of Oman". Another agreement signed at the event was with Al Dhahira Municipality to partially fund the construction of a central slaughterhouse in the Wilayat of Ibri, which will elevate the governorate's food safety and hygiene standards.

CHINESE DELEGATION REVIEWS ASYAD'S INTEGRATED LOGISTICS SOLUTIONS



MUSCAT: Asyad Group received a business delegation from China to view its pioneering experience in providing integrated logistics solutions and its efforts in the sustainability and innovation fields.

The visit also aimed to boost business movement and economic activities between Oman and China.

During the visit, Asyad highlighted investment opportunities in the free zones, as well as its various services which include ports, maritime transport, the dry port, transport of containers, reshipping services and e-commerce, among others.

Vodafone launches 'Come for Khareef, Stay for Dhofar' campaign

MUSCAT: Vodafone Oman is extending the socio-economic impact of Khareef, beyond the season, reaffirming its commitment to the nation and its most southerly Governorate with its 'Come for Khareef, Stay for Dhofar' campaign.

The digital operator will capitalise on its strong presence in Dhofar and its main sponsorship of this year's Khareef Festival to support, promote and enable the growth of local businesses.

Sayyid Fahad bin Abdul Aziz bin Saud al Busaidy, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer, Vodafone Oman, said: "People come to Dhofar every summer to marvel at the region's lush green wonders during Khareef, and while Vodafone will enjoy prominence during this time, it is also determined to stand side by side with Dhofaris and demonstrate that we are not only here for the season."

We are a partner and our aim is to continue contributing to the growth and sustainability of the local economy and community, fostering long-lasting positive impact in Dhofar beyond the Khareef season.

He went on to explain that Vodafone has consolidated an



extensive list of local SMEs, representing the richness of Dhofar, whom will reap the benefits of Vodafone's carefully designed campaign which includes nation-wide marketing, social media collaborations and on-ground activations at touristic sites.

Vodafone will also consolidate and distribute a dedicated SME guide encouraging visitors to explore and engage with businesses including Mozart, Dinero Café, Try Said App, Al Bahu Design, NF productions, and Meski, showcasing the vibrant and diverse offerings that Dhofar has to offer, not only until

the end of August but beyond. As well as supporting SMEs by providing ongoing opportunities for collaboration and growth, Vodafone's campaign also includes numerous other initiatives that will be running until the end of August.

These include multiple youth empowerment activations through its partnership with the Youth Center; as well as the Dhofar Marathon scheduled to take place on August 5, promoting health, fitness and community participation. Vodafone is also investing in entertainment across various locations in Dhofar for Khareef.

Bank Muscat continue to provide training opportunities for students for this year



MUSCAT: To enhance its leading role in the development of human resources and contribute to provide training opportunities for students of various educational institutions, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has provided more than 250 training opportunities for students from various universities and colleges since the beginning of this year 2023.

During the internship period, the students worked closely with the bank employees in different departments and branches of the bank.

The training was designed in sync with the academic programmes pursued by students aiming to provide relevant work experience that will help them in their respective careers in the future.

This annual initiative reaffirms Bank Muscat's keenness to contribute and cooperate with various educational institutions to provide the best opportunities and training programmes for students in order to refine their practical skills in various fields and job specialities, especially those related to the banking and finance sector.

The bank's training department distributes students to the bank's various departments and branches spread across the Sultanate of Oman and a report is made on the student's daily performance during the training period.

The students were accordingly able to familiarise themselves with various topics

including banking, finance, audit, IT and branch operations as well as gain broad experience and a deeper understanding of Bank Muscat's operations and the financial services sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

Said bin Salim al Aufi, General Manager, Human Resources & Administration, Bank Muscat, said: "Bank Muscat is keen to provide such training opportunities to students from various educational institutions annually through coordination with universities and colleges in various disciplines."

This comes out of the bank's belief in the importance of collaborating with government and private institutions in order to provide students with the necessary knowledge and skills for the job market, and enrich them with the banking knowledge they need in order to nurture their careers in the banking sector.

The bank will continue to invest time and material to foster young talents, sharpening skills and expertise of the Omani youth".

Bank Muscat ensures to participate annually in the job fair and training organised by different educational organisations including the Career Guidance Center at Sultan Qaboos University and College of Banking and Financial Studies among others, as this is an opportunity to meet with students and introduce them to the quality of existing jobs and the bank's policy in the field of employment and training.

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

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

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

أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds



To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER,

WhatsApp
 <your name> to
96473232

THURSDAY

JULY 27, 2023 | MUHARRAM 9, 1445 AH

OMAN OBSERVER
Observer Classified Section

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

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

Saada al Rashdi
 95919344

94501166
 24649593
 24649595

النماني للشحن AL NAMANI CARGO DOOR TO DOOR CARGO WORLD WIDE

INDIA BANGLADESH NEPAL PHILIPPINES UAE INDONESIA EUROPE UK CANADA USA

WHATSAPP **96353654** TOLL FREE NUMBER **80066766**
 Follow us : f i n t www.alnamanicargo.com

Driving School

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

Contact No: 99074072

AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION

Contact: 97239696 95355638

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

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

25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE FAST DELIVERY EXCELLENT SERVICES

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

ROYAL CARGO DOOR TO DOOR CARGO

ALL OVER INDIA INDONESIA NEPAL AIR EXPORT (Port to Port) SEA EXPORT (Container Booking)

SERVICES BY AIR & SEA

FOR MORE INFORMATION JUST DIAL CUSTOMER CARE **93213207**

PICK UP FREE ANYWHERE IN MUSCAT **93213206**

SKT سماء الخضراء للتجارة **SAMA AL KHADRA TRADING**

SERVICES:

PIPING SYSTEMS VALVES
 DRAINS INTERCEPTORS

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

For rent or investment,
 a commercial building of excellent location in Wilayat Bahla, approximately 1700 sqm and suitable for establishing a business:

HYPERMARKET
 POLYCLINIC AND OUTDOOR CLINICS
 SHOPPING MALL AND TEXTILE SHOP
 AUTO SHOWROOM
 PUBLIC SHOPS AND RESTAURANTS
 SUITABLE FOR INTEGRATED BAKERY BUISNESS, FURNITURE, FURNISHINGS AND HOUSEHOLD DECORES AND ACCESSORIES SHOWROOM

PARTS OF THE BUILDING

GROUND FLOOR:
 VERY LARGE AND OPEN AREA.

FIRST FLOOR:
 OFFICE ALONG WITH KITCHEN, TOILET AND SEPARATED OUTDOOR FLAT

THE BUILDING PREVIOUSLY HAD HYPERMARKET
 THE LESSEE CAN PARTION THE FRONT END TO BE 3 SHOPS AND AN ENTRANCE.

For contact
92887944
95253344
95253366

THE BUILDING IS OPPOSITE TO BANK MUSCAT AL MAAMOR BRANCH IN BAHLA NEAR POTRY FACTORY

SERVICE

GALAXY
 manpower office, Supplying house helper Philippines and Myanmar, Contact: 79023541.

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN female homeopathic doctor, currently on a family visa in Oman, seeking excellent opportunities in the insurance or medical-related sector. Contact: 97541038, email: bindyabaalan@gmail.com

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

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

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

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
 Direct Line: 24786077
 GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om
 P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: **99639264**

FOR SALE

DISCONTINUOUS
 PU sandwich panel machine, running condition, for sale.
 Contact: 99205104, email: mktho@omantel.net.om

FOR RENT

FLATS and offices for rent in Muscat.
 96379095, 98403020

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

SIT. WANTED

CHARTERED accountant with 17 years experience in Oman looking for suitable opportunity.
 Contact: 95782629

To advertise on our social media platforms and website

Please Contact our Team **95210257**

OMAN OBSERVER www.omanobserver.com

Now get news on the go



To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER,

WhatsApp
 <your name> to
96473232

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
 m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
 wadialmeeh@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
 bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
 nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suhar Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
 sohardaily@outlook.com



@omanobserver
 www.omanobserver.om

Up to 4% interest With High-Yield Savings Account

To apply, simply visit one of our expanding network of branches, or call us on 2479 1111.

2479 1111 | www.bankdhofar.com | /bankdhofar | @bankdhofar | @bankdhofar



Corruption in Arab countries still pervasive



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

It is widely believe that institutional corruption in any country stems from poor management and planning, and not from a lack of natural resources and other key ingredients that countries abound with.

Corruption results from abuse by individuals in government and private institutions for their personal interests, and the misuse of their administrative authority to achieve their ends, particularly if supervisory controls are absent or weak.

Today, many government departments in the Arab world suffer from poor planning and corruption, according to the data of Transparency International in Berlin.

Most Arab countries did not record any improvement in their perceptions of corruption. Many countries fell in the 2022 rankings, while there are several Arab countries at the bottom of the ranking.

Some experts believe that as a result of attracting cadres who are not well-qualified in their responsibilities and work, they work in any way to maintain their status, which helps the spread of nepotism in administrative and financial issues. Thus those departments flounder in the process of planning and decision-making.

Everyone is aware that corruption is a multifaceted criminal phenomenon with

negative effects on moral values, political life, and economic and social aspects. Transparency International believes that corruption is the abuse of power for private benefit, while other organisations describe corruption as the misuse of a position for private gain.

Corruption is considered one of the most dangerous negative phenomena in any institution if adequate measures are not taken to deter it. It has implications for people's daily lives and interests, and has a strong impact on official centres and institutions in vital areas such as education, health, construction, production, and others.

This calls for civil society organisations, regulatory departments, and institutions tasked with protecting public funds to highlight these issues in order to mitigate corruption and strengthen oversight. Suitable laws should be enacted to hold accountable anyone who has misused public money.

It is also imperative that financial and administrative audit and regulatory departments in the Arab world should ensure that only individuals of integrity and probity should be in the leadership and senior administrative positions of such public institutions.

Over the past years, the phenomenon of corruption has attracted the attention of many researchers and workers in civil society institutions and the media.

Many opinions have been put forward to limit this phenomenon and punish the corrupt. Workers in the fields of economics, security, law, political science and sociology were also keen to follow up the issues resulting from the phenomenon of corruption and how to reduce it due to its bad effects on human societies.

Hydrom kicks off common-use infra stream for hydrogen projects

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JULY 26

Having snagged firm commitments to the tune of \$30 billion in green hydrogen schemes, Oman's authorities have formally commenced the task of putting in place the massive common-use infrastructure that will undergird these multibillion dollar ventures.

Spearheading this task is Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom), the orchestrator and master planner of Oman's green hydrogen industry. The independent entity, a subsidiary of Energy Development Oman (EDO), which has pledged to work with developers, as well as specialised local and international utility service providers, to ensure the provision of utility corridors vital for the successful and cost-competitive operation of the mega projects.

These common utilities will include, among other components, pipelines for the transportation of ultrapure desalinated water for electricity, potable water and wastewater, and potential hydrogen gas, in addition to electrical networks, specialised storage capacity for hydrogen, ammonia and methanol, and so on.



According to Abdulaziz al Shithani (pictured), Managing Director of Hydrom, planning for the common-use infrastructure is now underway.

Speaking to The Energy Year, a well-known UK-based energy industry news portal, Al Shithani said: "Hydrom has recently kick-started a common-use infrastructure stream and is working hand in hand with the national champions, namely OQ Gas Network, Nama Group for electricity and water, and other Oman Investment Authority utility service companies – and definitely under the steerge of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals – to fast-track the development of the common infrastructure needed for the five projects Hydrom has already signed in Al Wusta, as well as another five to

six projects targeted for signing in the second round in Dhofar for both the public auction and the remaining legacy initiatives."

Development of the common-use infrastructure is expected to span 6 – 7 years through to 2030, when the majority of the green hydrogen projects are expected to be commercially operational.

"Speed and cost are key objectives set for the first pieces of common infrastructure to be developed.

I strongly believe that we are well positioned in Oman to deliver on our promises by leveraging our national champions' technical, financial and project execution capabilities, as well as the international partnerships we are exploring on this front," Hydrom's Managing Director noted.

To help ensure that the

common-use infrastructure is robust and suited to the requirements of the project developers, Hydrom hosted a strategic workshop with key stakeholders "to explore the best model to provide optimal configuration for the common use infrastructure that maximises in-country value and attracts foreign direct investment", according to the official.

To this end, Hydrom has been working closely with various national champions, notably OQ Gas Networks, Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) and Nama Water – all of which have ambitions to venture into the green hydrogen space as part of their growth strategies, he noted.

Besides developing the required utilities within the hydrogen clusters envisioned deep in the hinterlands of Oman, the national champions will also establish connectivity with the industrial hubs and export terminals on the coast.

At the same time, Hydrom is also coordinating with the country's three main ports at Salalah, Duqm and Suhar to ensure they are fully in alignment with the country's overall strategy for the green hydrogen economy, he added.

Meeting held to study the effects of green tide phenomenon on water supply in Oman

BALQEES ALORAIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 26

The Basic Services Sector Committee held a meeting chaired by Shaikh Dr Mansoor bin Talib bin Ali al Hinai, Chairman of Oman's Authority for Public Services Regulation, and in the presence of representatives of the concerned companies and sectors.

During the meeting, the latest developments in the green tide phenomenon that appeared on some coasts of the Sultanate of Oman during the past few days were discussed, which affected water desalination plants.



Efforts made by Namaa Water Services and Namaa for Energy and Water Purchasing to reduce the impact of the green tide on the water system and subscribers were reviewed. The committee briefed on the

companies' plans to deal with this situation by activating emergency plans according to the procedures manual, operating alternative sources and reserve wells, and activating the interconnection between desalination plants in Suhar, Barka, and Al Ghubra, in anticipation of any water shortage.

The work plan and the precautionary measures to be taken until the seawater quality situation improves during the coming period were also discussed, and the need to unite national efforts in various agencies to ensure the integration of the measures taken by the competent authorities.

Pact signed for offtake of output from Oman copper-gold project

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 26

Al Hadeetha Resources LLC (AHRL), an Omani-Australian joint venture, has signed an exclusive offtake deal with Trafigura Pte Ltd, a market leader in the global commodities industry, covering the production of copper concentrate from the Wash-hi Majaza Copper-Gold Project in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi in Oman.

Under the agreement, Trafigura will purchase the full output of copper concentrate from

the project for eight years from commencement of production. Pricing is based on the official London Metal Exchange cash settlement quotation for Grade A copper at the time of delivery.

The project comprises three exploration licences: (Wash-hi Majaza, Mullaq and Al Ajal); one mining licence (Wash-hi Majaza); and a copper concentrator plant (under construction) with the capacity to process one million tonnes of copper ore per annum when completed.

The project is expected to be a game-changer in the new era of



copper mines being developed in the Sultanate of Oman in response to the rapidly growing

world demand for sustainable energy.

Following the signing

of the offtake agreement, Atmavishwar Sthapak, Managing Director of Alara and AHRL said: "We are very excited that Trafigura and Al Hadeetha Resources are partnering to transform the mining landscape in the Sultanate of Oman. We are highly indebted to the Ministry of Energy and Minerals in Oman and our other stakeholders for their support in helping us achieve this major milestone."

Ross Ridgway, Head of Copper for Trafigura, said: "There is very strong demand for copper due to its role in the energy transition.

Since the fourth millennium BC, copper has been produced in this region. We are supporting the Wash-hi Majaza project as Oman re-enters the world stage as a supplier of this critical metal."

In conjunction with the offtake agreement, Australian joint venture partner Alara Resources also obtained a \$3.45 million finance facility from Trafigura.

The principal purpose of the facility is to enable Alara to further capitalise AHRL, which will in turn use the funds for completion of project infrastructure construction.