

P15

NVIDIA SUFFERS \$279 BILLION LOSS IN MARKET VALUE



P10

RED WARRIORS LOOK FOR STRONG START AGAINST IRAQ



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AN EXCLUSIVE LOOK AT DHOFAR'S ABALONE FARM



Oman supports Egypt’s stance on ‘Philadelphi Corridor’

UN CALLS FOR PERMANENT CEASEFIRE IN GAZA

MUSCAT/CAIRO: The Sultanate of Oman has expressed its full support and solidarity with the Arab Republic of Egypt on its stance rejecting and condemning the statements of the Israeli occupation government about the “Philadelphi Corridor” in the Gaza Strip.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Wednesday, Oman warned against the implications of those provocative statements which, it said, were “aimed at undermining mediation efforts made by Egypt, Qatar and the United States to reach a permanent ceasefire that ends the suffering of the Palestinian people, enables them to obtain all their legitimate rights and establish their independent state.”

Meanwhile, the main UN agency for Palestinians said on Wednesday that good progress is being made in rolling out a polio vaccine to children in Gaza but a permanent ceasefire in the 11-month war is needed to ease



Palestinian teacher Israa Abu Mustafa, who set up a classroom tent on the rubble of her house to educate children, poses for a photo, in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip, on Wednesday. – Reuters



A girl walks past the rubble of a collapsed building in Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip on Wednesday. – AFP

on Wednesday.

“While these polio ‘pauses’ are giving people some respite, what is urgently needed is a permanent ceasefire, the release of all captives + the standard flow of humanitarian supplies including medical and hygiene supplies (into Gaza),” he said.

Palestinians say a big reason for the return of polio is the collapse of Gaza’s health system and the destruction of most of its hospitals during the war.

DIPLOMATIC STANDSTILL

Despite the success of the polio campaign, diplomatic efforts to secure a permanent ceasefire, release of captives and return many Palestinians jailed by Israel, have faltered.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu insisted on Monday that Israeli troops would remain in the Philadelphi Corridor on the southern edge of Gaza bordering Egypt, one of the main sticking points in reaching a deal. **SEE ALSO P6**

humanitarian suffering, .

UNRWA said that three days into the campaign in areas of central Gaza, around 187,000 children had received the vaccine. The campaign will move to other

areas of the Palestinian enclave for the second stage.

The campaign was prompted by the discovery of a case of polio in a baby boy last month, the first in the Gaza Strip for 25 years.

Israel and Hamas agreed to daily pauses of eight hours in the fighting in pre-specified areas to allow the vaccination programme. No violations have been reported.

“Great progress! Everyday in the Middle Areas of #Gaza, more children are getting vaccines against #Polio,” the head of UNRWA, Philippe Lazzarini, said



ARTIST’S IMPRESSION OF THE PROJECT

WORK ON FLAGPOLE PROJECT IN FULL SWING

The largest flagpole in the country, currently under construction near the Ministries District in Al Khuwair, has reached a staggering 50 metres in height, with only 76 more metres to go before its opening on time for the National Day. Standing at a remarkable 126 metres, the flagpole is expected to be the centrepiece of the 18,000-square-metre development in this area. Touted as an architectural icon symbolising Oman’s aspirations for progress and success in line with Oman Vision 2040, the project will include a plaza, huge lawn, walkways, a skate park, cycle path, and cafeteria, along with a variety of entertainment and sports facilities. **DETAILS ON P2**

Burning trash a major source of plastic pollution: study

PARIS: Burning plastic in dumps and open fires is as big a problem for the planet as littering, scientists said on Wednesday in a detailed new assessment of how plastic enters the environment.

A world-first global register of plastic pollution, published in the journal *Nature*, identifies India as the biggest source of such trash and burning garbage as a much bigger problem than previously thought.

The findings come ahead of key negotiations towards a global plastics treaty and researchers hope it better informs policymakers as they consider how best to tackle the growing crisis. Plastic has been found in snow atop the highest mountains and the depths of the remotest oceans, and tiny particles have been detected in blood and breast milk.

Much of the blame is often assigned to plastic litter: bigger pieces like straws that are tossed away and take a long time to break down, blighting ecosystems for generations to come.

But at least the same amount of plastic pollution is caused by burning it informally, mostly in poor regions where no alternatives are available, said



Some 52 million tonnes of plastic waste entered the environment in 2020.

Costas Velis from the University of Leeds.

“This hasn’t been historically our perception of marine litter or plastic pollution,” said Velis, who led the research.

His team created a detailed global inventory of plastic pollution down to the city-level by using AI to assist in modelling waste management in more than 50,000 municipalities.

They estimated some 52 million tonnes of plastic waste entered the environment in 2020 — 43 per cent as unburned litter, and 57 per cent through open fires lit in homes, streets, or dump sites.

Improperly burning garbage and leaving plastic to smoulder in this manner did not make it “disappear” but only spread smaller pieces far and wide around the environment, Velis said.

It also worsened air quality and exposed people living nearby to very harmful additives that are released when plastic is burned, he added.

“A lot of it is happening very close to vulnerable individuals” but the issue did not get anywhere near the attention it should, he said. “It is something that requires our utter, immediate attention.” — AFP

Oman seeks to target European tourism markets

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism’s first discussion panels for tourism companies operating in the European market, seeks to attract 70 tourism companies from European markets and consolidate ties with partners in the local tourism sector.

It also aims to promote tourism products, highlight experiences and highlight hotel facilities in Oman. The discussions saw participation of local companies operating in the tourism sector and representatives of the authorities concerned in the Sultanate of Oman.

This session was held on the sidelines of an event titled “Marhaba Europe” (Welcome, Europe or Hello Europe), which began on August 31 and concludes on Thursday.

Participants in the discussion panels include representatives of tourism companies from France, Germany, Italy, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Switzerland and Spain. The delegations toured some governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

SEE ALSO P13



Higher education minister explores academic cooperation with France

PARIS: Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, paid an official visit to the French Republic, accompanied by a number of officials and university chancellors with the aim of enhancing academic and research

cooperation between the two countries. The minister of higher education, research and innovation visited several educational institutions and innovative business incubators. She was briefed on the innovative educational system at the Ecole



The visit comes within the framework of the Sultanate of Oman's efforts to foster academic and research cooperation with France

42, a teacher-less innovation-based educational institution that applies self-learning approach and collaborative training without the need for teachers or traditional educational setting and is specialised in information technology and artificial intelligence. The Minister also

visited the headquarters of Station F, the world's largest business incubator that houses more than 1,000 emerging companies. The visit was aimed at enhancing cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and France in the field of entrepreneurship and innovation.

Work on Oman's tallest flagpole project in full swing

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The largest flagpole in the country, currently under construction near the Ministries District in Al Khuwair, has reached a staggering 50 metres in height, with only 76 more metres to go before its dedication to the nation in time for the National Day. Standing at a remarkable 126 metres, the flagpole is expected to be the centrepiece of the 18,000-square-metre development in this area. The space will be dedicated to business activities, entertainment, and well-being. This achievement marks a milestone in the construction of the largest flagpole of its kind. Touted as an architectural icon symbolising Oman's aspirations for progress and success in line with Oman Vision 2040, the flagpole project will include a plaza, large lawn, walkways, a skate park, cycle path, and cafeteria, along with a variety of entertainment and sports facilities.



Standing at a remarkable 126 metres, the flagpole is expected to be the centerpiece of the 18,000-square-metre development in this area

This will transform it into a vibrant community hub, according to Pacific Blue, the main contractor overseeing the monumental project. Different brands and businesses will have a presence at the adjacent business bay, while Oman's iconic project, the 18,000-square-metre development built around the flagpole, will offer leisure and complete family entertainment. "We have reached 50

metres in height towards our goal of 126 metres, and the whole Al Khuwair Square project is progressing rapidly. We plan to inaugurate the flagpole during the country's fifty-fourth National Day celebrations in November," said a source associated with the construction. A wide range of recreational amenities will complete the concept of Al Khuwair Square, including vast, lush green spaces, palm trees, walking and cycling paths, an outdoor arts and crafts exhibition, a skate park, and designated sports areas. Various activities and facilities will make it a vibrant hub for leisure and outdoor activities. Public facilities such as restrooms and a parking lot with 107 spaces will ensure convenience for visitors. The huge Omani national flag, measuring 18 metres in length and 31.5 metres in width, will flutter on top of the flagpole. The flagpole, made using 135 tonnes of steel with an outer diameter of 2,800mm at its base and 900mm at the top, will be equipped with a warning light system for aircraft using the airspace.

OMAN PARTICIPATES IN GCC SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT MINISTERS MEETING

DOHA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD), took part in the 10th Ministerial meeting of the Committee of GGC Ministers of Social Affairs and Development, which was held in Doha, Qatar. The Sultanate of Oman's delegation was headed by Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development. – ONA



98 per cent households have Internet connection in Oman

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) recently conducted a survey assessing access to and use of information and communication technology (ICT) among families and individuals in the Sultanate of Oman. The survey provided several key indicators that reflect the extent to which Omani households and individuals engage with ICT and possess essential tools. The survey's findings revealed that 68 per cent of individuals aged 18 and older use a desktop or laptop computer. Additionally, 83 per cent of individuals utilise the Internet for electronic financial transactions, such as paying electricity bills or making other online payments. Notably, 98 per cent of Omani



households have access to the Internet, although there has been an 11 per cent decline in the ownership of desktop or laptop computers among household members. Oman places great emphasis on harnessing ICT for development, recognising its role in building smart societies and advancing to the next generation of infrastructure. The ICT sector is seen as a vital component in creating job opportunities for the younger generation and enhancing overall societal development. The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology plays a central role in

formulating and implementing e-government strategies in Oman. Its mission is to enhance public sector efficiency through modern technology and foster a digitally-driven society. The growing global focus on providing government services that improve citizens' well-being, save time, and reduce administrative burdens aligns with Oman's e-government initiatives. These services are delivered through multiple channels, ensuring that citizens remain the primary focus. Oman's ICT sector has experienced significant growth in recent years, with increased Internet usage for research, work, and accessing information and services among families and individuals. The data from this survey is instrumental in shaping policies aimed at further developing the ICT sector to meet the needs of Omani families and individuals.



TENDER

سلطنة عُمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

DESIGN, DEVELOP AND OPERATE AN OMAN AI STUDIO

Goals:

- Establishing an AI innovation studio.
- Developing programs to enhance skills and creativity for students and innovators in AI.
- Strengthening collaboration with sectors to apply AI solutions aligned with company goals.
- Promoting AI knowledge and offering consultations on generative AI applications.
- Ensuring financial sustainability for the studio.

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
/MTCIT 214/2024	DESIGN, DEVELOP AND OPERATE AN OMAN AI STUDIO	3/9/2024	18/9/2024	15/10/2024	LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD EXCELLENT & FIRST (CLASS)	THREE HUNDRED OMANI RIAL (LOCAL) (INTERNATIONAL) NON-REFUNDABLE

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@mtcitoman

MoE takes measures to ease school bag burden for students

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 4

In line with the Ministry of Education's commitment to ensure holistic development of Omani students across various educational stages, the Ministry has intensified efforts to address the issue of "school bag weight," particularly for students in grades 1 to 4. Research has highlighted the health risks associated with carrying heavy bags, including back deformities, spinal issues, and bone sprains, as well as potential gait disturbances that could lead to falls and injuries. Additionally, the strain of carrying heavy bags may result in mental distraction, aversion to studying, and long-term psychological and academic challenges. To mitigate these risks, the ministry has implemented measures to reduce the load of school bags for young students. A recent directive limits students in the first cycle to only two notebooks of 80 pages each—one for the first field and another for the second field — and prohibits the use of external



A recent directive limits students in the first cycle to only two notebooks of 80 pages each binders or booklets beyond the official textbooks provided by the ministry. Teachers are now coordinating homework assignments, and students, along with their parents, are encouraged to utilise electronic textbooks available on the educational portal. Parents have welcomed these measures. Sheikha al Ghailani stressed the importance of alleviating the burden on young children and urged teachers to prioritise student comfort, especially during the foundational years, due to the potential long-term harm. Ahmed al Balushi, a parent of two foundation-stage students, emphasised his vigilance in ensuring his children's bags do

not exceed the recommended weight. He also opts for wheeled bags to make it easier for his children to transport them. Concerns have been raised about the quality of materials used in school bags, as some available in the local market are heavy and uncomfortable, lacking the necessary health specifications. To address this, authorities have set guidelines for selecting student-friendly bags. They should be lightweight, with the total weight (including contents) not exceeding 10 per cent of the student's body weight. The bags should have wide, padded shoulder straps that are adjustable to fit the student properly, multiple pockets to help distribute weight, and should cover the upper back down to the end of the ribs without extending below the waist. Educating students on the proper handling of their school bags is also crucial. They should be taught to organise the contents according to the school schedule, with heavier items placed towards the back and lighter items at the front, using all pockets to distribute weight evenly.



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The forum featured a variety of activities, including a photo exhibition and key meetings.

PRESS FORUM HIGHLIGHTS MEDIA'S ROLE IN TOURISM

SALALAH: The inaugural edition of the Omani Press Forum commenced on Tuesday at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah. The forum, which runs until September 5, has attracted the participation of approximately 200 journalists and media professionals from Oman and beyond.

The event was officially inaugurated by HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar. The forum features a variety of activities, including a photo exhibition and several key meetings.

Among these are the Executive Office of the Asia-Pacific Journalists Association, a joint session between the Gulf Journalists Association and the Executive Office of the Asia-Pacific Journalists Association to

finalise the announcement of the West Asian Federation, and a collaborative meeting with the African Federation of Journalists.

A highlight of the forum is a dialogue seminar titled 'Tourism and Economic Investment Opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman, and the Role of the Media in Promoting Them.' The seminar will be held under the auspices of Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of Majlis Ash'shura, and will address various topics, including Oman's current economic and tourism landscape.

The Oman Journalists Association organised the forum in partnership with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, with sponsorship from the Ministry of Information, Dhofar Municipality, and several private institutions. – **ONA**



SALALAH CULTURAL CLUB HOSTS POETRY EVENING

SALALAH: A vibrant poetry evening was held at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah, organised by the Cultural Club in collaboration with the Directorate-General of Culture, Sports and Youth in Dhofar Governorate.

The event featured a variety of poems that ranged from personal and humanitarian themes to national pride. The poetry evening is part of the Cultural Club's ongoing efforts during the khareef season to enhance poetic appreciation and

foster cultural and literary engagement. The platform provided an opportunity for poets to share their experiences and interact with an audience passionate about poetry.

The evening was graced by Omani poet Mohammed al Mahri and Saudi poet Jassim al Sahih, who captivated the audience with their poetic texts. The event also included enriching literary discussions, offering attendees a deeper insight into the art of poetry. – **ONA**

Salalah Future City, a promising project in Dhofar Governorate

YUSEF AL HABSI

SALALAH, SEPT 4

The Salalah Future City is an ambitious and promising project in Dhofar Governorate. The city involves a waterfront, public spaces and a nature reserve which make it an integrated city that is easily accessible and possesses an advanced transportation system that makes the daily commute an enjoyable and seamless experience.

Additionally, the upcoming city boasts a healthy atmosphere as well as environmentally friendly systems that contribute to carbon emissions reduction.

The Salalah Future City provides all basic needs and services through smart and advanced systems as well as a highly effective and robust infrastructure. Other features of the city include green public spaces and recreation facilities, to mention a few.

Eng Dalal al Lawati, Project Manager of the Future City of



Eng Dalal al Lawati,
Project Manager

Salalah project, said: "The city has a stunning coastal view as it is located in the heart of the urban centre of Greater Salalah bordered by the Arabian Sea to the south, Razat farm to the north, Khor Sha' to the east and Khor Al Dahariz to the west. Its location adjoining Al Maamoura Palace makes the city a focal point in the midst of Salalah's urban and natural attractions."

The city extends over an area of 7 square kilometres, and is expected to contain about 12,000 housing units with a population

of up to 60,000 people.

The city will have a vital structure that ensures living and working spaces thanks to its 2.5 million square metres of open and green spaces and gardens designed for cultural, natural and recreational purposes. The design of the city takes into account the flexibility factor that enables it to adapt to various climatic conditions. The green spaces also act as a network linking the north of the city with the waterfront, Al Lawati said.

She added: "With the exquisite khareef season of Dhofar Governorate, Salalah Future City will become an ideal destination and an exceptional experience for tourists seeking relief from the scorching summer heat. The city contains various facilities and services, a stunning sea view, a water canal that cuts through the city centre adding wonderful and distinctive views combining entertainment, relaxation and fun to become the leading future city in the governorate."



Salalah Future City will become an ideal destination and an exceptional experience for tourists



Dhofari farmers are expecting an estimated yield of 20-30 tonnes

30 FARMERS CULTIVATE GINGER IN DHOFAR MOUNTAINS

SALALAH: The Directorate-General of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Dhofar Governorate is advancing the first phase of a pioneering ginger cultivation project in the Wilayats of Rakhyout and Dhalkout, with support from the Agricultural and Fisheries Development Fund.

Since June 2024, 30 participating farmers have begun cultivating ginger across an estimated 3 acres. The initial harvest is projected to yield between 20 to 30 tonnes.

Eng Radwan bin Abdullah al Ibrahim, Director of the Agricultural Development Department at the General Directorate of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources in Dhofar Governorate, and Project Manager, explained that this inaugural ginger season commenced in mid-June and will span 8 to 9 months, culminating in a harvest scheduled for February 2025.

The project provides comprehensive technical support and guidance to farmers, from land preparation and modern irrigation systems to continuous oversight throughout the planting and harvesting phases. The initiative follows the success of the turmeric cultivation project in Dhofar, now in its third year.

The project team will also focus on promoting the ginger crop to the private sector for future marketing, with the directorate distributing subsidised ginger rhizomes to 60 farmers over two years (2024-2025).

This initiative aims to encourage local farmers in Dhofar's mountainous regions to cultivate ginger, recognising its economic potential and health benefits amidst growing local and global demand. Additionally, it seeks to enhance the crop's role as a vital income source for local families, supporting community stability and creating employment opportunities. – **ONA**

Pioneering digital applications elevate visitor experience

SALALAH: As part of the "Tahawul" Government Digital Transformation Programme's mission to harness modern technologies for enhanced efficiency and innovation in government services, the Dhofar Governorate set new benchmarks in enriching the visitor experience during the khareef season.

Through the development of cutting-edge digital applications and services, Dhofar has delivered a truly exceptional experience, meeting the evolving needs of the community and significantly enhancing quality of life.

DHOFAR SEASONS

One of the standout digital innovations introduced by the Governorate is the 'Dhofar Seasons' app. This comprehensive guide has redefined the tourist experience during the khareef season, allowing visitors to

explore a wide array of cultural and entertainment events, tailor activities to their interests, and access detailed information on Dhofar's most breathtaking tourist attractions such as its majestic mountains, pristine beaches and its lush green plains. The app also provides crucial information on accommodations and dining options.

Since its launch, 'Dhofar Seasons' has been downloaded 145,000 times, with users expressing high satisfaction with the app's ability to offer a seamless and enriched experience.

ABSSHER

The 'Absher' app plays a vital role in improving the quality of life within the Dhofar Governorate, offering an array of essential services aimed at environmental cleanliness, road and green space maintenance, and parking reservations. This

'Dhofar Seasons' downloaded

145,000

times, with users expressing high satisfaction with the app's ability to offer a seamless and enriched experience

season alone, 'Absher' has attracted 4,071 users, facilitating 547 transactions, including 230 for road and lighting services, 146 for pest control, 104 for environmental sanitation and 67 for garden and landscaping services. Users have lauded the app for its user-friendly interface, noting significant improvements in mobility and access to environmental services.



Various e-apps have redefined the tourist experience during the khareef season

SEKKA

'Sekka' is designed to simplify the rental process for residential units during the khareef season. The app enables users to search for and list a variety of real estate options for rent, offering detailed information on nearby services. 'Sekka' has been instrumental in enhancing the visitor experience by providing fast and reliable accommodation

solutions. Since its launch, the app has been downloaded 29,088 times, receiving widespread praise for its unique and practical features.

Through these pioneering digital projects, Dhofar Governorate has demonstrated its commitment to implementing innovative solutions that cater to community needs and improve the quality of life. These applications have significantly enhanced the visitor experience by providing comprehensive, accurate information on tourist events, mobility services and accommodation, thereby boosting user experience efficiency and underscoring the governorate's dedication to excellence in digital transformation.

'Tahawul' programme emphasises the urgency of accelerating digital transformation initiatives,

prioritising them as essential to the current phase of development. The programme will continue to offer robust support and guidance to government institutions, ensuring the implementation of best practices and standards in digital project execution.

Moreover, 'Tahawul' programme is committed to bolstering Oman's digital economy by acting as a catalyst for government-led digital initiatives and services aimed at businesses and individuals. It plays a critical role in enhancing digital infrastructure, fostering innovation, expanding digital services and empowering competencies in digital transformation.

The programme is also key to facilitating Oman's transition to a connected, efficient and inclusive digital society that benefits all members of the community.



OVERMEDICATION IS A GROWING CONCERN

DRUG MISUSE INCLUDES USING MEDICATIONS IN A MANNER DIFFERENT FROM THE PRESCRIBED INSTRUCTIONS, OR TAKING MEDICATIONS WITHOUT A PRESCRIPTION. SOME INDIVIDUALS TAKE MEDICATION PRESCRIBED FOR SOMEONE ELSE, CONSUME A LARGER DOSE THAN NECESSARY, OR USE THE MEDICATION IN A WAY OTHER THAN INTENDED, SUCH AS CRUSHING TABLETS TO SNORT OR INJECT THEM



WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, SEPT 4

In our daily lives, it's common to see people immediately reaching for headache tablets at the first sign of discomfort. However, many fail to consider the underlying causes of their headaches, which could stem from dehydration, stress, lack of sleep, poor nutrition, or even a more serious health issue that requires a doctor's consultation.

Some individuals develop a dependency on such tablets due to frequent overuse, often taking two or three tablets at once, which exceeds the recommended dosage. This can occur when the body becomes less responsive to the standard dose. While medications are designed to help us live longer and healthier lives, improper usage or combining certain medications and supplements can be dangerous.

Medications can either be prescribed by a doctor, such as cholesterol-lowering pills, or obtained without a prescription, like pain relievers

THE DRUG SAFETY CENTRE SEEKS TO ALIGN WITH THE GOVERNMENT'S ADVANCEMENTS IN THE MEDICAL FIELD. THIS IS TO SUPPORT PHARMACEUTICAL SECURITY AND ENSURE THE AVAILABILITY, QUALITY, EFFECTIVENESS, SAFETY AND SECURITY OF MEDICINES CIRCULATING IN THE SULTANATE OF OMAN

DR MOHAMMED BIN HAMDAN AL RUBAIE
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF DSC

or lubricating eye drops. The Ministry of Health recently issued Ministerial Resolution (198/2023), outlining non-prescription drugs available in pharmacies and retail shops. However, this accessibility has led some people to misuse these medications.

Overmedication occurs when a patient takes unnecessary or excessive drugs. Drug misuse includes using medications in a manner different from the prescribed instructions, or taking medications without a prescription. Some individuals take medication prescribed for someone else, consume a larger dose than necessary, or use the medication in a way other than intended, such as crushing tablets to snort or inject them.

Another concern is the dangerous practice of combining medications, supplements, herbal remedies, or other treatments without medical advice. For instance, aspirin should not be taken alongside warfarin for heart problems, as this can result in serious health complications.

Stimulants, which boost energy, alertness, heart rate, blood sugar, and blood pressure, are also a concern. These can become addictive, influenced by factors such as peer pressure, culture, age, genetics and mental health.

Children are particularly vulnerable to medication errors, often due to incorrect dosage. A common mistake is confusing units of measurement when administering liquid medications, such as giving 5 teaspoons instead of 5 millilitres, resulting in a fivefold overdose. Additionally, some people use household spoons to measure medication, leading to inconsistent dosages.

Improper storage of medications at home also poses risks, especially if medicines are not kept out of reach of children or bottles are not securely capped after use.

To address these issues, the Ministry of Health established the Drug Safety Centre (DSC), which is responsible for regulating medication safety, ensuring effectiveness and promoting public awareness of proper drug use.

Dr Mohammed bin Hamdan al Rubaie, Director-General of DSC, stated, "The Drug Safety Centre seeks to align with the government's advancements in the medical field. This is to support pharmaceutical security and ensure the availability, quality, effectiveness, safety and security of medicines circulating in the Sultanate of Oman."

On a related note, dietary supplements are often confused with medications, but they are not intended to prevent or treat diseases. Instead, they are designed to improve health by meeting daily nutritional needs, such as calcium and vitamin D supplements that help build strong bones.



Oman Airports seeks to have more direct services: CEO



Oman Airports is making efforts to make seamless travel and arrival for all passengers

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Oman Airports is working on various strategies to connect the Sultanate of Oman to new markets by offering direct services, which will also encourage more tourists to come to the country seamlessly, a top executive said.

Speaking to the Observer, Shaikh Aiman bin Ahmed al Hosni, CEO of Oman Airports, said, “Currently, we have 36 airlines serving more than 80 destinations. We want to expand the list of direct flights from Muscat by assessing some new markets, which can be served by both our national airlines and foreign airlines.”

He added, “We are seeing a big growth in the tourism sector and tourists coming to Oman and hoping to double those numbers, soon. Oman Airports is making efforts to make seamless travel and arrival for all our

passengers, which include having advanced e-gates and additional check-in counters.”

The government has plans to promote Oman in Spain and other countries of Europe, besides the traditional markets of Germany and the UK. Muscat International Airport handled over 7.5 million passengers in the first seven months of this year.

The number of international passengers increased by nine per cent to 6,949,193 from 6,374,797 in 2023. At the same time, the number of domestic passengers increased by 8.3 per cent to 621,955 from 574,405 in 2023. Overall, the number of passengers using the Muscat International Airport went up from 7,571,148 in 2024 to 6,949,202 in 2023. Salalah received 827,486 passengers from 5,975 flights at the end of July 2024, compared to 750,251 passengers in 2023.

New school curricula to align with global standards, Vision 2040

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

In the new academic year, a total of 811,679 male and female students joined various schools in the Sultanate of Oman and they have to go through the newly introduced curricula designed to support the sustainability of the nation's educational vision.

The updated curricula, developed by the Ministry of Education's General Directorate, are part of a broader initiative to enhance the quality of education, keeping pace with global trends and equipping students with the necessary skills, knowledge and values for the modern era.

Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, highlighted that the new academic year will see the phased implementation of an updated study plan for grades 1-4.

This plan includes a restructuring of study materials into core and supplementary subjects, reducing their number to ten, introducing a new subject on identity and citizenship, and renaming individual skills subjects to better align with global trends.

Additionally, the plan increases instructional time for Arabic language and information technology in grades 3-4, and for science in grade three.

Mohammed al Wahaibi, Director of the Curriculum Studies and Development Office, emphasised that the development of these new curricula and study plans is in line with international best practices in education,



This plan includes a restructuring of study materials into core and supplementary subjects

reinforcing the values of identity and citizenship while fostering future skills.

In grades 11-12, the implementation of business administration and information technology specialisations will continue in selected schools in Muscat and Al Batinah North, alongside engineering and industrial specialisations in certain schools within the same governorates.

The recent issuance of the

School Education Law by Royal Decree (31/2023) aims to strengthen the governance of Oman's educational system, aligning with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

This strategic move underscores the importance of comprehensive education, sustainable learning and scientific research in building a knowledge-based society and cultivating competitive national talents.

The creation of these new curricula is carefully tailored to meet the demands of higher education programmes, the labour market and future development needs.

The Ministry of Education is committed to ensuring that the restructuring of curricula meets contemporary demands without imposing undue challenges on students, ultimately graduating a generation well-prepared for the future.

Indian business delegation explores investment opportunities

SUHAR: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) branch in Al Batinah North Governorate on Wednesday organised a meeting with a business delegation from the Republic of India.

The visiting delegation comprises 30 guests. The meeting, held in Suhar, aims to establish business partnerships in various sectors,



OCCI branch in North Al Batinah organised a meeting with a business delegation from India

namely foodstuff, agriculture, construction material, cosmetics, medicine, plastics, textiles, petroleum products and jewellery. Moreover, discussion panels and B2B meetings were held between businesspeople from Oman and India, in a bid to expand trade cooperation, exchange expertise and information and explore joint investment opportunities. — ONA

Programme on treating thyroid cancer held

MUSCAT: Yashoda Hospitals, Hyderabad, in association with Oman Cancer Association and Global Treatment Services, conducted a CME programme at Intercity Hotel Muscat recently.

The topic of discussion in the CME was ‘Recent Advancements in treatment of Thyroid Cancer.’

The CME was graced by Dr Mohammed bin Abdullah al Lamki, a renowned senior consultant endocrinology and member of Oman Cancer Association (OCA). Dr Al Lamki discussed the present scenario on the status and treatment options available for thyroid cancer diagnosed patients in Oman and how OCA has undertaken various activities for the education and awareness among people for the prevention and treatment of cancer in Oman.

Dr Chinna Babu Sunkavalli, Director



Yashoda Hospitals, Hyderabad, along with OCA and Global Treatment Services, held a CME programme recently.

Surgical Oncology and Minimal Access Onco Surgery, and Robotic Surgeon from Yashoda Hospitals, Hyderabad, was the keynote speaker. Dr Chinna

deliberated on defining how surgical oncology techniques and cure patterns have developed over the period of time. He also shared that Yashoda Hospital is using new technologies in the world of radiation which is MR LINAC, the first in India to start this radiation technique.

He also touched upon the very important issues of resource utilisation, cost of care and psycho-social aspects associated with care of cancer patients who undergo the treatment.

The CME was followed by a vibrant discussion on various aspects of addressing cancer and creating awareness among the patients, and the future road-map for dealing with cancer disease in Oman.

Team OCA and GTS extended their gratitude to the Yashoda Hospitals, Hyderabad for facilitating this academic initiative.

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Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date
PRE-24-010 Re-call	Supply of Computers Devices (Re-Tender)	15/09/2024	22/09/2024
PRE-24-103 Re-call	Supply of Materials to Implement the Construction of Public Parking in Al Qurum (Re-Tender)	28/09/2024	15/10/2024
PRE-24-022 Re-call	Satisfaction Reports & Studies for Muscat Municipality (Re-Tender)	15/09/2024	22/09/2024
PRE/24/040 Re-call	Roads Paving at A'seeb (Re-Tender)	28/09/2024	15/10/2024
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PRE/24/195 Re-call	Supply of Evaporative Cooler (Re-Tender)	28/09/2024	15/10/2024
PRE-24-190	Design & Construction of the Upgradation of Existing Al Marid at Al Uthaiba	28/09/2024	15/10/2024
PRE-24-210	Beautification Works at Daghamar Al Hajar In Quryyat (Part One)	28/09/2024	15/10/2024
PRE-23-282	Proposed Public Walkway in Bander Al Khairan	28/09/2024	15/10/2024
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UN welcomes progress in Gaza polio campaign

CAIRO: Good progress is being made in rolling out a polio vaccine to children in Gaza but a permanent ceasefire in the 11-month war is needed to ease humanitarian suffering, the main UN agency for Palestinians said on Wednesday.

UNRWA said that three days into the campaign in areas of central Gaza, around 187,000 children had received the vaccine. The campaign will move to other areas of the Palestinian enclave for the second stage. The campaign was prompted by the discovery of a case of polio in a baby boy last month, the first in the Gaza Strip for 25 years. Israel and Hamas agreed to daily pauses of eight hours in the fighting in pre-specified areas to allow the vaccination programme. No violations have been reported.

“Great progress! Every day in the Middle Areas of #Gaza,



A Palestinian child is vaccinated against polio in Deir Al Balah in the central Gaza Strip.

— Reuters

UNRWA praises progress in polio vaccine campaign as around 187,000 children have received the vaccine

more children are getting vaccines against #Polio,” the head of UNRWA, Philippe Lazzarini, said on X on Wednesday.

“While these polio ‘pauses’ are giving people some respite, what is urgently needed is a permanent ceasefire, the release of all hostages + the standard flow of humanitarian supplies including medical and hygiene supplies (into Gaza),” he said.

Palestinians say a big reason for the return of polio is the collapse of Gaza’s health system and the destruction of most of its hospitals during the war. Israel accuses Hamas of using

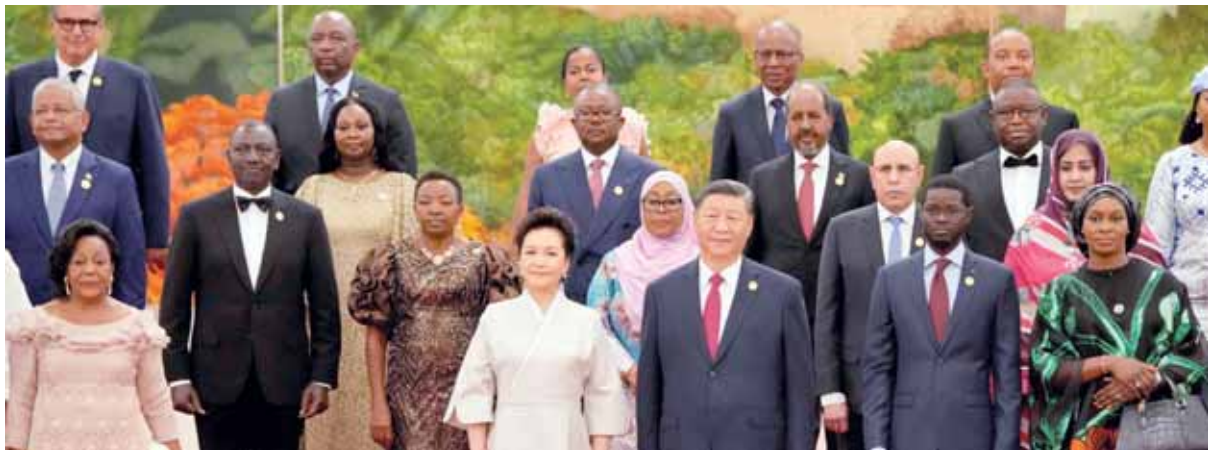
hospitals for military purposes, something the group denies.

On Tuesday, COGAT, an Israeli defence ministry agency tasked with coordinating aid deliveries into Palestinian territories, said since the onset of the war, it has facilitated the entry of 282,126 vials of the polio vaccine, enough for 2,821,260 people.

It also said in a statement that approximately 554,512 vials of vaccines have entered the Gaza Strip, enough for 4,973,736 individual vaccines for various diseases and potential epidemics in the territory. Gaza has around 2.3 million people and is one of the world’s most densely populated places.

Despite the success of the polio campaign, diplomatic efforts to secure a permanent ceasefire, release hostages held in Gaza and return many Palestinians jailed by Israel, have faltered. — Reuters

Xi hosts two dozen African leaders at China’s biggest summit



China’s President Xi Jinping and his wife Peng Liyuan along with leaders from African nations at the Summit of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation held at the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

— Reuters

BEIJING: Chinese President Xi Jinping hosted more than two dozen African leaders at a banquet in Beijing on Wednesday, kicking off the city’s biggest summit in years with promises of cooperation in infrastructure, energy and education.

China, the world’s number two economy, is Africa’s largest trading partner and has sought to tap the continent’s vast troves of natural resources including copper, gold, lithium and rare earth minerals.

It has also furnished African countries with billions in loans that have helped build much-needed infrastructure but also sometimes stoked controversy by saddling governments with huge debts.

Twenty-five African leaders

have arrived in Beijing or confirmed attendance at this week’s China-Africa forum, according to a tally, including some whose countries face a rising risk of debt distress.

Xi and his wife Peng Liyuan welcomed guests as they arrived for a lavish dinner at the Great Hall of the People on Wednesday evening, live footage showed.

There was also a “family” photo of the gathered leaders and Xi will give a speech at an opening ceremony on Thursday morning.

Chinese state media has lauded Xi this week as a “true friend of Africa”, claiming Beijing’s ties were reaching “new heights” under his stewardship.

The Chinese leader had held talks with more than a dozen African counterparts in Beijing

by Wednesday, a tally of state media reporting showed.

Xi called during a meeting on Tuesday with President Bola Tinubu of Nigeria — one of China’s biggest borrowers on the continent — for great cooperation in the “development of infrastructure, energy and mineral resources”, state news agency Xinhua said.

He also promised cooperation in “investment, trade, infrastructure, mineral resources” and other areas during talks on the same day with Zimbabwean President Emmerson Mnangagwa.

Xi backed Zimbabwe in its struggle against “illegal sanctions” imposed by the United States in response to corruption and human rights abuses by the country’s leadership. — AFP

Tunisia presidential candidate remanded

TUNIS: A Tunisian court on Wednesday remanded in custody presidential candidate Ayachi Zammel pending an investigation into suspicions of forging ballot signatures, his lawyers said. Zammel, 43, is one of only two candidates approved by the Tunisian electoral authority, ISIE, to challenge incumbent President Kais Saied in the October 6 poll.

He was heard “in a number of cases related to charges involving presidential endorsements” that were “brought before the public prosecution,” which ordered his remand, his lawyers said.

Zammel was arrested on Monday and is set to appear in court on Thursday.

A little-known businessman and former parliamentarian, he headed Azimoun, a small liberal party, until late August, when he stepped down to run for the top post as an independent candidate.

His arrest came hours before ISIE gave a final list of presidential hopefuls including himself, Saied, and former parliamentarian Zouhair Maghzaoui.

Saied, who is seeking a second term, won power in a 2019 election but orchestrated a sweeping power grab in 2021 and has since ruled by decree. — AFP

Sisi in Turkiye in first visit in 12 years, to sign agreements



Turkiye’s President Tayyip Erdogan welcomes Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el Sisi in Ankara.

— Reuters

ANKARA: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el Sisi arrived in Ankara on Wednesday for talks with Turkish counterpart Tayyip Erdogan, the first such presidential visit in 12 years.

Erdogan had travelled to Cairo in February, his first trip to Egypt since 2012, taking a major step toward rebuilding ties that were severely strained for a decade.

“Turkiye-Egypt relations will be reviewed in all their aspects, and possible joint steps in the coming period to further develop cooperation will be discussed,” the Turkish presidency’s communications office said late on Tuesday.

“There will be an exchange of views on current regional and global issues, especially the Israeli attacks on Gaza and the occupied

Palestinian territories.”

Erdogan met Sisi at Ankara airport before they left together in Erdogan’s motorcade for the presidential palace for a welcome ceremony. They will also chair the first meeting of the Turkiye-Egypt High-Level Strategic Cooperation Council.

In a statement, Sisi said his visit — and that of Erdogan in February — showed Ankara and Cairo’s common will to launch a new phase of friendship and cooperation.

Turkiye and Egypt mutually reappointed ambassadors last year, and Ankara has said it would provide Cairo with armed drones. Erdogan said in Cairo that the countries wanted to boost annual trade by \$5 billion to \$15 billion in the short term. — Reuters

SEOUL

S Korea, N Zealand slam nuclear-armed North

The leaders of South Korea and New Zealand condemned North Korea’s weapons programme and Russia’s war of Ukraine during a summit in Seoul, their first in nine years. South Korea’s President Yoon Suk Yeol and New Zealand Prime Minister Christopher Luxon also agreed to work towards elevating bilateral ties, according to Seoul’s presidential office. “It is more important than ever for countries that share values, including South Korea and New Zealand, to form solidarity at this critical juncture,



where challenges from authoritarian forces continue, with the war in Ukraine and military cooperation between Russia and North Korea,” Yoon said in his opening remarks.

— AFP

JAKARTA

Indonesia to deport to Manila fugitive ex-mayor

Indonesia will deport to the Philippines a fugitive former mayor accused of ties to Chinese criminal syndicates and money-laundering to the tune of over \$1.8 million, Jakarta’s law minister said. Alice Guo, also known as Chinese national Guo Hua Ping, is wanted by the Philippine Senate for refusing to appear before a congressional investigation into the alleged criminal ties. Guo has denied the accusations, calling them “malicious”. The Indonesian minister said Guo would be deported to the



Philippines, but the timing of her return had yet to be fixed. “(The timing) depends on the police investigation results,” the minister, Supratman Andi Agtas, said.

— Reuters

TOKYO

Japanese island eradicates rabbit-killing mongoose

Japan has wiped out all mongooses on a subtropical island, officials said, after the animals ignored the venomous snakes they were brought in to hunt and preyed on endangered local rabbits instead. About 30 of the venom-resistant predators were released on Amami Oshima, a Unesco World Heritage site, in the late 1970s to keep down the population of habu, a pit viper whose bite can be deadly to humans. However, the snakes are mostly active at night when



mongooses prefer to sleep and the toothy mammals turned their ravenous appetites to local Amami rabbits, drastically reducing their numbers.

— AFP



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In brief

■ KANO



81 KILLED IN NIGERIA IN SUSPECTED FIGHTER ATTACK

At least 81 people died and several were missing after an attack by suspected Boko Haram fighters in Nigeria's northeastern Yobe State, local officials said.

"Around 150 suspected Boko Haram fighters armed with rifles and RPGs (rocket-propelled grenades) attacked Mafa ward on more than 50 motorcycles around 16:00 hours on Sunday," said Abdulkarim Dungus, a Yobe state police spokesman.

"They killed many people and burnt many shops and houses. We are yet to ascertain the actual number of those killed in the attack." Dungus said it appeared to be a revenge attack "for the killing of two Boko Haram fighters by vigilantes from the village." — AFP

■ NGARUAWAHIA



NZ TO BURY MAORI KING, CROWN SUCCESSOR

New Zealand will say farewell to a beloved Maori king when a flotilla of carved war canoes will deliver the late monarch to his final resting place on the slopes of a sacred mountain.

King Tuheitia, a 69-year-old truck-driver-turned-royal, died on Friday, just days after heart surgery and celebrations marking the 18th anniversary of his coronation. For the last six days, his body has been laid in state at an ornate ceremonial complex on the country's North Island.

Tens of thousands of Indigenous citizens and "Pakeha" — those of European ancestry — have visited to pay respects, mourn and celebrate New Zealand's rich Maori heritage. — AFP

■ MADRID



BRITISH HIKER FOUND DEAD, ANOTHER MISSING AFTER STORM

A British hiker has been found dead and another is missing on the Spanish island of Mallorca after heavy rains swept over the popular tourist destination, emergency services said. Emergency services have been looking for the two hikers since Monday night in an area of mountains in Mallorca where the Torrent de Pareis canyon descends to the Mediterranean, a police spokeswoman said.

"The body found is that of a woman and the missing person is a man," police said in a statement, adding the search for the man had been suspended because of poor weather but would resume when conditions improved. — AFP

Zelenskiy orders war's biggest reshuffle as deadly strike hits Lviv

KYIV: President Volodymyr Zelenskiy said on Wednesday that Ukraine needed "new energy", as he ordered a major government reshuffle at a crucial juncture in the war against Russia.

A total of six ministers, including Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba, submitted their resignation and parliament accepted the resignations of four.

They included the resignations of a deputy prime minister in charge of European integration, the strategic industries minister overseeing Ukraine's arms production and two other ministers, the lawmakers said.

"We need new energy today, and these steps are related only to the strengthening of our state in different directions," Zelenskiy told media during a joint news conference with a visiting Irish Prime Minister Simon Harris.

Lawmakers said that parliament was expected to consider Kuleba's resignation on Thursday.

After Zelenskiy, 43-year-old Kuleba was the best-known face of Ukraine overseas, meeting leaders around the world and lobbying for military and political support in fluent English.

Analysts said the government reset had been planned for some time but was postponed because Zelenskiy had focused on talks with Kyiv's Western partners through the summer to secure military and financial aid.



A drone view shows residential buildings heavily damaged during a Russian drone and missile strike amid Russia's attack on Ukraine in Lviv, Ukraine. — Reuters

"This is a planned personnel overhaul of the government," said Volodymyr Fesenko, a Kyiv-based political analyst.

"Now half of the government will be renewed. This is Zelenskiy's style. He believes that the new minister brings new energy, new approaches, works more actively. He expects exactly this effect."

Fesenko did not expect a major foreign policy change following Kuleba's expected dismissal. Zelenskiy is expected to nominate his candidate for a new foreign minister on



Two men comfort each other at the site of a missile attack in Lviv. — AFP

Wednesday, with first deputy foreign minister Andriy Sybiha among the frontrunners.

The Kremlin said that government changes in Ukraine would not affect a peace negotiation process in any way, although such talks appear a distant prospect with the two warring parties far apart in their objectives.

The next few months are key for Zelenskiy as he seeks to win more support from the West and seize back the initiative in the war with Russia, after its attack in February 2022. — Reuters

Grenfell inquiry blames deaths on incompetence and greed

LONDON: A public inquiry into the devastating 2017 London Grenfell Tower blaze that killed 72 people blamed the disaster on failings by the government, construction industry and, most of all, the firms involved in fitting the exterior with flammable cladding.

The fire ripped through the 23-storey social housing block in one of London's richest areas during the early hours of June 14, 2017. It was Britain's deadliest blaze in a residential building since World War Two.

"The simple truth is that the deaths that occurred were all avoidable," said inquiry chair Martin Moore-Bick.

In its long-awaited final report, the inquiry laid most responsibility for the disaster on the companies involved in the maintenance and refit of the apartment tower, failings by local and national authorities as well as companies which had dishonestly marketed combustible cladding materials as safe.

There was also widespread criticism and blame levelled at the then-government, the local authority of Kensington and Chelsea, the industry, regulatory groups, specific individuals and an ill-prepared fire brigade for years of inaction over fire safety in high-rise blocks.



A person reacts at a press conference on the day a second report is published as part of the inquiry into the deadly 2017 Grenfell fire in London. — Reuters

"Not all of them bear the same degree of responsibility for the eventual disaster, but as our reports show, all contributed to it in one way or another, in most cases, through incompetence, but in some cases, through dishonesty and greed," Moore-Bick said.

The inquiry report, which ran to almost 1,700 pages, said the inferno was the culmination of "decades of failure", with profits put before people.

"The duty of government should be to safeguard life, whilst protecting us from corporate greed," said Grenfell United, a group representing some

survivors and bereaved families.

"But for too long, they have aided corporations, facilitating them to profit and dictate regulation." While British police have said 58 people and 19 firms and organisations are under investigation, prosecutions - including for corporate manslaughter and fraud - remain years away because of the complexity and need to consider the inquiry's report.

Prime Minister Keir Starmer apologised to the relatives of victims and survivors on behalf of the British state, saying they had been failed for years.

"It should never have

happened. The country failed to discharge its most fundamental duty, to protect you and your loved ones," he said in parliament where some bereaved relatives watched on. "Today is a long-awaited day of truth, but it must now lead to a day of justice."

An earlier report by the inquiry team in 2019, which focused on the events of the night, found an electrical fault in a refrigerator in a fourth floor apartment started the fire.

Flames then spread uncontrollably, mainly because the tower had been covered during a 2016 refurbishment with cladding - exterior panels designed to improve appearance and add insulation — made of flammable aluminium composite material that acted as a source of fuel.

The harrowing accounts, including recordings from those who perished while awaiting rescuers and having followed official guidance to stay put, prompted fury and national soul-searching over building standards and the treatment of low-income communities.

The inquiry, headed by retired judge Martin Moore-Bick, found a litany of failings; lessons had not been learned from past high-rise tower blazes and testing systems were inadequate. — Reuters

Former interior minister out of UK Conservative leadership race

LONDON: Five hopefuls were left in the race to become leader of the Conservatives on Wednesday after former interior minister Priti Patel received the fewest votes from lawmakers in a race set to shape the future direction of Britain's once dominant party.

The contest, to replace former Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, will run until November 2, after Conservative members cast the final ballots for a new leader, charged with turning around the fortunes of a party that suffered the worst result in its history in a July election defeat at the hands of Labour.

Wednesday's first round of voting showed two candidates on the right of the party - Robert Jenrick, who quit as immigration minister as he believed the then-government's plan to send asylum seekers to Rwanda was not tough enough - and former trade minister Kemi Badenoch led the pack with 28 and 22 votes.

The right-wing Patel won only 14 votes, and two centrist candidates - former work and pensions minister Mel Stride and former security minister Tom Tugendhat, were way behind the three leading candidates with 16 and 17 votes respectively. — Reuters

France pilots school mobile phone ban



Sophie Laubie

The writers are both journalists at AFP

Tens of thousands of students in France are going through a slightly different return to school this autumn, deprived of their mobile phones. At 180 “colleges,” the middle schools French children attend between the ages of 11 and 15, a scheme is being trialled to ban the use of mobile phones during the entire school day.

The trial of the ‘pause numérique’ (‘digital pause’), which encompasses more than 50,000 students, is being implemented ahead of a possible plan to enforce it nationwide from 2025. Right now, students in French middle schools must turn off their phones. The experiment takes things further, requiring children to hand in their phones on arrival. It is part of a move by President Emmanuel Macron for children to spend less time in front of screens which the government fears is arresting their development.

The use of “a mobile phone or any other electronic communications terminal equipment” has been banned in nurseries, elementary schools and middle schools in France since 2018. In high schools, which French children attend between

the ages of 15 and 18, internal regulations may prohibit the use of a mobile phone by students in “all or part of the premises.”

Bruno Bobkiewicz, general secretary of SNPDEN-Unsa, France’s top union of school principals, said the 2018 law had been enforced “pretty well overall.” “The use of mobile phones in middle schools is very low today,” he said, adding that in case of a problem “we have the means to act.”

The experiment comes after Macron said in January he wanted to “regulate the use of screens among young children.” According to a report submitted to Macron, children under 11 should not be allowed to use phones, while access to social networks should be limited for students under 15.

With an increasing amount of research showing the risks of excessive screen time for children, the concern has become a Europe-wide issue. Sweden’s Public Health Agency said this week children under the age of two should be kept away from digital media and television completely, and it should be limited for more

THE EXPERIMENT COMES AFTER PRESIDENT MACRON WANTED TO ‘REGULATE THE USE OF SCREENS AMONG YOUNG CHILDREN’

senior ages. One of Britain’s biggest mobile network operators, EE, has warned parents they should not give smartphones to children under the age of 11.

The French education ministry hopes that the cellphone-free environment will improve the “school climate” and reduce instances of violence including online harassment and dissemination of violent images. The ministry also wants to improve student performance because the use of phones harms “the ability to concentrate” and “the acquisition of knowledge.” The experiment also aims to “raise students’ awareness of the rational use of digital tools.”

Jérôme Fournier, national secretary of the SE-UNSA teachers’ union, said the experiment will seek “to respond to the difficulties of schools for which the current rule is not sufficient,” even if “in the vast majority of schools it works.” According to the education ministry, “it is up to each establishment to determine practical arrangements,” with the possibility of setting up a locker system. — AFP

Pope makes appeal on extremism as he launches Asia tour

CLEMENT MELKI

Pope Francis appealed for religious unity to counter extremism and intolerance as the longest tour of the 87-year-old’s papacy got into full swing in Indonesia. On the first full day of his four-nation trip to the Asia-Pacific, the pontiff zeroed in on the role all faiths can play in flashpoint security issues.

“In order to foster a peaceful and fruitful harmony that ensures peace... the Church desires to strengthen interreligious dialogue,” the pope said after meeting President Joko Widodo. “Extremists, through the distortion of religion, attempt to impose their views by using deception and violence.” Widodo echoed the pope’s remarks.

“Freedom and tolerance are what Indonesia, together with the Vatican, want to spread in the midst of an increasingly turbulent world,” he said.

Catholics represent fewer than three per cent of the population of Indonesia—about eight million people, compared with the 87 per cent, or 242 million, who are Muslim. However, they are one of six officially recognised religions or denominations in the nominally secular nation, alongside Protestantism, Buddhism, Hinduism and Confucianism.

The trip to Indonesia is the third ever by a pope and the first since John Paul II in 1989.

The pope’s fragile health is set to be tested on the trip, which will also take in Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Singapore. He had not travelled abroad since visiting Marseille in France in September last year.

Accompanying him to Indonesia are his personal doctor and two nurses, but Vatican spokesman Matteo Bruni said that was standard procedure.

The pontiff appeared refreshed when he arrived in Jakarta from Rome on Tuesday and again when he met Widodo on Wednesday morning in the first major set piece of his tour.

He arrived in a civilian Toyota car, sitting in the front passenger seat before getting out in a wheelchair to greet spectators. Hundreds of children wearing traditional costumes screamed, shouting “Welcome pope” and waving flags.

He was greeted by Widodo and Defence Minister Prabowo Subianto, the country’s president-elect, who will take office next month. The pontiff got out of his wheelchair using a cane for talks with the Indonesian leader.

The pope was later scheduled to hold a private meeting with members of the Society of Jesus—the Jesuit order to which he belongs—at the Holy See’s mission in Jakarta. —AFP



Mohammed Anwar Al Balushi

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

Strategies for modern business decisions

Taking a business decision requires a blend of wisdom, knowledge, experience and skills. The weight of such decisions cannot be understated, as they can significantly impact the future of an organisation. A single wrong move can lead to unforeseen consequences, affecting not just the bottom line but the very survival of the company.

A recent headline from an electronic newspaper on August 9, 2024, highlighted a major decision by Mukesh Ambani’s Reliance Industries: the company cut its workforce by 42,000 in the last financial year amid a revenue slowdown. This is a stark reminder of the difficult choices business leaders must make in response to changing market conditions. But what are the consequences of such a decision? How was this decision made and on what basis?

To understand the potential outcomes, one must consider the ripple effects of massive layoffs. In the short term, reducing the workforce may help alleviate financial pressures by cutting costs. However, in the long run, it can lead to a loss of valuable talent, decreased morale among remaining employees and a tarnished reputation. Customers and investors might lose confidence in the company’s stability, leading to further declines in revenue and stock value. Therefore, such decisions must be made with careful consideration of both immediate needs and long-term consequences.

Looking back at history, we find numerous examples of wrong business decisions that led to the downfall of once-thriving companies. Kodak is a prime example. Despite being a dominant player in the photography industry and inventing the first digital camera in 1975, Kodak failed to fully embrace digital photography. The company continued to focus on film photography, believing that digital technology would remain a niche market. This decision allowed competitors to take the lead in the digital space, ultimately leading to Kodak’s bankruptcy in 2012. The failure to adapt to changing technology and consumer preferences was a costly mistake.

Another classic example is Blockbuster. In the early 2000s,

Blockbuster was offered the opportunity to purchase Netflix for \$50 million. John Antioco, Blockbuster’s CEO at the time, turned down the offer, believing Netflix’s business model was unprofitable. Blockbuster continued to rely on its traditional brick-and-mortar rental model, while Netflix revolutionised the industry with its online streaming service. By 2010, Blockbuster filed for bankruptcy, while Netflix went on to become a global entertainment giant. What made John Antioco dismiss Netflix’s potential? It’s likely a combination of underestimating the impact of digital disruption and overconfidence in Blockbuster’s established business model.

BUSINESS LEADERS MUST SIFT THROUGH VAST AMOUNTS OF INFORMATION TO IDENTIFY RELEVANT INSIGHTS THAT CAN GUIDE THEIR DECISIONS

Nokia, once the world’s leading mobile phone manufacturer, made a similar mistake. The company decided to stick with its outdated Symbian operating system rather than adopting Android or developing a new platform. This decision led to a rapid decline in market share as competitors like Apple and Google introduced smartphones with more advanced operating systems. By 2014, Nokia was acquired by Microsoft, marking the end of its dominance in the mobile phone industry. It’s hard to imagine that Olli-Pekka Kallasvuo, Nokia’s CEO at the time, did not analyse the market before making such a decision. However, the failure to recognise the importance of software in the smartphone revolution proved disastrous.

Yahoo’s story is another cautionary tale. In 2002, Yahoo had the

opportunity to purchase Google for \$1 billion but turned it down, considering the price too high. Google went on to become one of the most successful companies in history, dominating the search engine market, while Yahoo’s relevance dwindled over the years. Yahoo was eventually acquired by Verizon in 2017. This decision underscores the importance of recognising the potential of emerging technologies and companies, even if they seem expensive or unproven at the time.

These examples highlight the complexities involved in making business decisions, especially in modern organisations. The sheer volume of data available today adds another layer of difficulty. Business leaders must sift through vast amounts of information to identify relevant insights that can guide their decisions. The ability to harness and interpret data has become a critical skill in the business world.

Business intelligence, as described by Chen et al. (2012), involves an array of technologies, systems and practices designed to streamline data collection, integration, analysis and presentation. This enables organisations to make informed decisions based on timely and relevant information. However, the exponential growth of data, particularly from sources like the Internet and social media, has made it increasingly challenging to manage and utilise effectively.

To address this challenge, many companies have established dedicated analytics departments. For instance, IBM reorganised its consulting business to focus on analytics, creating a 4,000-person organisation dedicated to this area. The demand for professionals with analytics expertise has skyrocketed, leading many universities to offer specialised programmes in this field.

Strategic decision-making involves assessing and determining the best way to achieve long-term organisational goals (Eisenhardt & Zbaracki, 1992; Glaveli et al., 2023). It is essential that any decision aligns with the long-term strategy of the organisation. The consequences of poor decision-making can be dire, as demonstrated by the examples of Kodak, Blockbuster, Nokia and Yahoo.

Sole actors and deepfakes implications

It is eye-opening to learn about the threats and implications of individual owners of social media platforms becoming politically involved in different countries' elections, policies, and legislation. The owner of X (formerly Twitter) has increasingly been using his social media platform to express his views on a wide variety of subjects. Elon Musk has pulled himself into disputes over politics, war and peace, and global security.

Aside from Brazil, Musk has engaged in various political scuffles with Australia, Venezuela, Bolivia, Argentina, Germany, and Türkiye, as well as the new Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. We can see that one man, the world's richest person, is attempting to affect political moments across the globe using one of the most influential social media platforms. With 196 million followers, the owner of X is promoting divisiveness, conspiracy theories, and deepfakes.

We live in a digital media-dominated era. While modern communication technologies increase access to information, it has also become challenging for people to verify and trust it. The global expansion of social media platforms has transformed them into a significant force in shaping global communication, culture, and international affairs.

Platforms like Facebook, X, and Instagram allow individuals in many parts of the world to connect in real-time. These platforms, based on algorithms designed to capture attention and amplify divisive content, are fuelling political and social polarisation and intolerance and causing an information crisis. It is becoming harder to distinguish between disinformation, lies, information manipulation, and deepfakes. Social media sites, notably X, are becoming fertile ground for contentious content.

Deepfake is the phenomenon of the creation of realistic digital products with manipulated pictures, videos, and sounds, and we see it spreading like fire. Deepfake videos can cause significant harm to individuals by exploiting and altering their likenesses to convey explicit or damaging information. Some of the possibilities can raise an eyebrow about privacy, ethics, and copyright.



Sonia Ambrosio
@ambrosionelson

The writer is journalist, academic, researcher in media studies

In many ways, this article was inspired by a thorough look at tweets on X, including some posted by Elon Musk that contain a provocative approach. While artificial intelligence is rapidly evolving, there is no turning back, but some of the abuses already committed in the digital space are concerning.

Social platform X had several artificial intelligence-generated pieces of content with fake images of United States President Joe Biden, Vice-President Kamala Harris, and former president Donald Trump. Elon Musk has posted a deepfake video of Kamala Harris with detrimentally manipulated audio. The X built-in chatbot Grok allows users to create photorealistic images with little limitations, allowing for and producing misleading depictions of real people.

The complexities of deepfakes lead us to evaluate the importance of information validity. Studies point out that most attention has focused on how deepfakes could threaten political discourse, while relatively little attention has been given to how deepfakes might impact the financial system. Geotechnopolitics is already a reality with cyberattacks and mass disinformation, besides new attempts to rewrite the financial market narrative.

Experts in artificial intelligence are appealing for comprehensive regulations as it is used to amplify disinformation and manipulate public opinion.

Individuals with greater influence online should be held to higher standards of decency. As a major social media influencer who can steer his more than 196 million followers at an idea just by posting it, it matters. Scoring political points by posting divisive content, and deepfakes and having over 100 million views on his original posts as well as thousands of retweets requires that the platform's owner exercise social responsibility in his online behaviour.

Most importantly, the case highlights the growing influence of sole actors and big tech companies in international affairs. The increasing private involvement in public governance demonstrates individual players interfering at the population level, with ramifications for social and political life.

THE COMPLEXITIES OF DEEPFAKES LEAD US TO EVALUATE THE IMPORTANCE OF INFORMATION VALIDITY

AIR MANOEUVRES!



Chengdu J-10 Vigorous Dragon fighter aircraft of China's Ba Yi Aerobatics Team release smoke while performing manoeuvres during the first Egypt International Airshow at Alamein International Airport in Alamein in northern Egypt on Wednesday. – AFP

Harris plays chess while Trump plays checkers

Regardless of who wins November's US presidential election, Vice President Kamala Harris or former president Donald Trump, there is little doubt that the outcome will have a profound impact on the country's political climate. The economic implications, however, are less clear, owing to Trump's lack of interest in policy and the Harris campaign's efforts to divert attention from the increase in grocery prices under Joe Biden.

So far, financial markets have remained largely indifferent to the election, perhaps because investors assume that neither Harris nor Trump will secure control of both houses of Congress, limiting their ability to enact meaningful legislation. With polls and betting markets predicting an exceptionally close race, it is reasonable to conclude that political deadlock is the most likely outcome. But is it? In my view, the odds of a Democratic sweep are increasing, and investors would be wise to pay attention.

Ever since Biden ended his re-election campaign and Harris began her remarkable ascent, Republicans – or, more accurately, Trump – seem to be playing checkers while Democrats are playing chess. Although the



Kenneth Rogoff

The writer is Professor of Economics and Public Policy at Harvard University and recipient of the 2011 Deutsche Bank Prize in Financial Economics

GOP has no shortage of sharp strategists, the party's leader either ignores their advice or lacks the focus to follow it.

By contrast, the Democrats are running a remarkably disciplined campaign, largely keeping Harris from press interviews and unscripted moments, with the one exception being her on Thursday sit-down with a highly sympathetic CNN correspondent and her running mate, Tim Walz, on hand for support. This strategy has proven highly effective, with Harris radiating charisma and energy in her meticulously crafted speeches and easily holding her own in her first interview. Trump, after a decade of dominating the news cycle, finds himself sidelined and struggling to reclaim public attention.

Should the Democrats win the White House, hold the Senate, and retake the House of Representatives, Harris will be able to enact sweeping economic reforms. Eliminating the Senate's filibuster rule, as Democrats have repeatedly vowed to do, would enable her administration to run roughshod over Republican opposition even with a narrow majority. Although this strategy

would undoubtedly pave the way for Republicans to do the same when they eventually return to power, potentially leading to long-term volatility, the Democratic leadership appears unfazed.

Nevertheless, gaining control of the executive and legislative branches would enable Harris and the Democrats at least partly to address the US deficit — projected to reach \$1.9 trillion in 2024 – and mounting long-term debt by passing much-needed tax increases. Harris has already proposed raising taxes on the rich and corporations in order to generate \$5 trillion in new revenue over the next decade. But she will struggle to implement

her ambitious progressive plans without raising the deficit or breaking her promise not to raise taxes on anyone earning less than \$400,000 per year. While Harris says she wants to “turn the page” on Donald Trump and the past decade of American politics, she has offered little clarity on what the next chapter might look like.

To be sure, Trump has also proposed tax increases, albeit in the form of a universal 10 per cent import tariff and a 60 per cent tariff on Chinese goods. Given that the US imported goods worth more than \$3 trillion in 2023, this approach could indeed generate substantial revenue. Notably, tariffs are common in developing countries

with weak tax-collection systems.

But despite Trump's claims to the contrary, his proposed tariffs – though technically levied on foreign companies – would ultimately lead to higher prices for US consumers, who would bear the brunt of the costs. Moreover, foreign countries will inevitably retaliate, further driving up the cost of imported goods.

Neither Trump nor Harris seems particularly interested in reducing the deficit. Harris's economic plan includes several costly measures, such as restoring the Biden administration's child tax credit and offering subsidies to first-time home buyers. Given Harris's background as a progressive Democrat from California, one suspects her spending agenda will eventually go well beyond these initial proposals.

Trump has promised tax cuts for everyone, vowing to make Social Security benefits tax-exempt not just for low-income retirees but also for the wealthy, who pay higher tax rates and thus stand to benefit the most. Needless to say, this approach is reckless. ©Project Syndicate, 2024



So far, financial markets have remained largely indifferent to the election.



RED WARRIORS LOOK FOR STRONG START AGAINST IRAQ

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 4

Oman will begin their bid to qualify for the 2026 Fifa World Cup for the first time when they kick off their third round of AFC Asian Qualifiers — Road to 26 Group B campaign against Iraq on Thursday. The match will kick off at 8 pm (Oman time) at Basra International Stadium. The Red Warriors' hopes are very high for a perfect start in this crucial opener of the qualifying assignment.

A victory or at least a draw will encourage and push the team's squad for a top show in the forthcoming games especially as Oman will host South Korea on Tuesday in Muscat. The fans of Red Warriors are looking positively to qualify for the global showpiece on merit and set a historic moment for Oman's football as Oman is aiming for their first-ever Fifa World Cup appearance.

Coach Jaroslav Silhavy, head coach of Oman national team, sounded confident in the press conference ahead of the game as he said that the team is in its best shape to play against Iraq in the opening game of the qualifiers. "Ahead of the match, I would like to thank the Iraq Football Association for their warm welcome. We felt that we were in our home country. We have managed to deliver top matches in the previous games and will continue in this path. I am very confident on the players to deliver top game as they are experienced enough and trained to play under different circumstances," he added.

Coach Silhavy took charge of the national team following team's participation in the last edition of the AFC Asian Cup in Qatar. He will eye to set a positive target in the opener game in order to have a resounding start ahead



of the forthcoming crucial game against South Korea on Tuesday in Muscat.

"I have observed the opponent in many games. The strength and weakness points of the rival is clear and the players will play accordingly. Special thanks for the national team's fans for their continuous support and appreciation to everyone who is behind the team," he added.

COMMITMENT

Silhavy will be relying on the same level of commitment that saw them through to the third round. It is expected that the Czech coach will begin the match with a starting line up featuring Ibrahim al Mukhaini as goalkeeper, defending line may comprise Abdulaziz al Shmoosi, Mohammed al Musallami, Ali al Busaidy and Ahmed al Khamisi. Harib al Saadi will monitor the midfield accompanied by Arshad al Alawi, Jameel al Yahmadi, Esam al Subhi and Zaher al Aghbari.

"The opening games are normally quite tough than other games. However, we will do our level best to end the match on a positive note. We have learned a lot of lessons in this qualifiers and will act on better ways. There is no easy games in this qualifiers stage and we will deal with each match separately," defender Mohammed al Musallami said.

On the other side, Iraq will look to register a strong push for a ticket to the Fifa World Cup under supervision of coach Jesus Casas-led Iraq, who are aiming to replicate the success of the 1986 squad that qualified for the nation's maiden Fifa World Cup in Mexico. Coach Casas is confident his side can claim one of the eight spots available for the Fifa World Cup 2026 to be hosted by Canada, Mexico and the United States.

Paralympic legends Masters, Storey light up Games



Oksana Masters of the United States in action during Paris 2024 Paralympics - Road Cycling - Women's H4-5 Individual Time Trial at Clichy-sous-Bois, France. — Reuters



Women's C5 Individual Time Trial gold medalist Sarah Storey of Britain (C) celebrates with her medal on the podium along with silver medalist Heidi Gaugain of France (L) and bronze medalist Alana Forster of Australia. — Reuters

PARIS: US cyclist Oksana Masters and British Paralympic great Sarah Storey added to their title hauls in early action on Wednesday as star Italian fencer Bebe Vio began her medal campaign with an easy victory.

Masters, who was born in Ukraine with birth defects believed to be linked to the Chernobyl nuclear disaster, including missing thumbs and weight-bearing bones in her legs, claimed the seventh Paralympic gold of her career by winning the H4-5 category.

The 35-year-old, who was adopted by an American family, has previously won medals in rowing and in a range of winter sports including cross-country skiing.

Storey, who is competing in her ninth Paralympics at the age of 46, slammed the Paris organisers after winning the 18th gold medal of a career that began in swimming by taking the C5 time trial in the Paris suburbs ahead of French hope Heidi Gaugain.

Born without a functioning left hand, Storey has now won 29 Paralympics medals of all colours since she made her debut at the 1992 Barcelona Games.

But Storey said the course that measured 14.1 kilometres was "appalling" and said she had



Dmitriy Horlin of Uzbekistan in action during the men's 100m freestyle swimming heats competition at Paris La Defense Arena, Nanterre, France. — Reuters

never raced on a Games course shorter than 22 km.

"This is the shortest Paralympic time trial we have

ever had, and I think it's a real shame because we don't get to showcase para-sport in the way we want to," Storey told British

media. "You'll have to ask organisers. There's plenty of time in the day for us to do two laps like the men.

Having fought so hard for parity in women's cycling, to not have it is a real disappointment," the British paracyclist added.

'BEBE' STARTS HER BID Another of the global stars of Paralympism, Beatrice 'Bebe' Vio, began her title defence with an easy win in the women's foil category B quarterfinal against Ukrainian Nadiia Doloh.

Vio, who uses prosthetic arms after having all four limbs amputated when she contracted meningitis at the age of 11, won 15-2 to progress to the semifinal stage in the ornate surroundings of the Grand Palais.

The 27-year-old, known for her exuberant celebrations when she wins, took gold medal in the individual foil at Rio 2016 and Tokyo 2020.

Vio raced into a 7-0 lead before Doloh managed to score a point against her.

The women's foil category B semifinals and final are set to take place later on Wednesday.

Meanwhile, host nation France surpassed the number of gold medals they won three years ago in Tokyo thanks to Alexandre Leaute's victory in the C2 time trial.

That gave France 12 gold, putting them fifth in the medals table.

China were top with 55 gold halfway through Wednesday's action, with Great Britain second on 31 gold and the USA third with 24. — AFP

McCullum can work magic with England white-ball teams: Pope

LONDON: Stand-in Test captain Ollie Pope said Brendon McCullum can transform the fortunes of England's limited-overs teams in the same way he has reinvigorated the red-ball side.

England cricket chiefs on Tuesday announced the New Zealander would take charge of all formats from January and that he has extended his contract until the end of 2027.

"We've seen the impact he's had on us as a Test team and as individuals, which I think he can then transfer into the white-ball stuff as well," said Pope, speaking ahead of the third Test against Sri Lanka, starting on Friday.

"He brings the best out of each other. He's a real optimist and I think that's really good in the cricket world. So, very exciting for English cricket overall."

McCullum, 42, inherits white-ball teams that have surrendered titles in the 50-over and 20-over



England's Ollie Pope before losing his wicket, caught by Sri Lanka's Prabath Jayasuriya off the bowling of Asitha Fernando in the second Test. — Reuters

world cups in the past 12 months.

When the former New Zealand captain took charge of England's Test side in May 2022 they were at a low ebb, with just one win in 17 games.

But under his leadership they

have won 19 of their 28 Tests, playing an exciting attacking game that has been labelled 'Bazball'.

Pope, who has struggled with the bat in recent matches, said McCullum had given him confidence and freedom in his



England's Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum are pictured in the pavilion before the match against Sri Lanka. — Reuters

personal game.

"He's got a great outlook on the game in general and just being able to kind of draw a line under your best and your worst weeks as well," said the batter, who is deputising as skipper for the

injured Ben Stokes.

"I think that's probably one of his biggest skills as a player, but now he's sort of got that into his coaching as well. He's a massive optimist."

England, 2-0 up in the three-

match series against Sri Lanka, have brought in left-arm seamer Josh Hull for the final Test at The Oval.

The two-metre tall 20-year-old, who only made his first-class debut last year, replaces Matthew Potts.

England are just one win away from completing a clean sweep of home Test triumphs for the first time since 2004, having moved on emphatically from a disappointing 4-1 defeat by India in the winter.

Before the Sri Lanka series they beat West Indies 3-0.

"It'd be special to win 6-0 this summer," said Pope. "And I think winning's a habit, isn't it? So I think going forward it'll put us in good stead. And obviously we've got a lot more cricket to come."

Pope was asked whether taking on the captaincy was affecting his batting — he has mustered just 30 runs in four innings against Sri Lanka so far. — AFP

WHO SAID
WHAT ON
DAY 9 OF
US OPEN

“It’s madness, it’s crazy. What’s going on?”
— **FRANCES TIAFOE** on making the semifinals

“I did nothing to deserve to win. It’s as simple as that. Terrible. Just absolutely terrible by me.”
— **ALEXANDER ZVEREV** on his quarterfinal defeat to Taylor Fritz

“I think the mental coping I was doing was, well, every time I was in the quarters I played Djokovic. That was my way to protect my ego. But then I got a look at Wimbledon where I didn’t play Novak in a quarter. I played Musetti and he outplayed me and I lost. I think that’s when I was, like, okay, maybe that excuse doesn’t quite work out anymore.”
— **TAYLOR FRITZ** on how he coped with never previously getting past the quarterfinal stage at the majors

“Naturally he’s kind of a quiet, shy guy unless you start talking about tennis or gaming or fashion.”
— Fritz’s coach **MICHAEL RUSSELL**

“He grew up as a kid doing odd jobs trying to make a penny and he worked really hard to get where he’s at. He instilled a lot of the lessons that he’s learned along the way into my siblings and I.”
— **EMMA NAVARRO** on the influence of her father Ben Navarro, the founder of Sherman Financial Group, whose fortune is estimated by Forbes to be \$1.5 billion

“When you feel so bad with such negative thoughts, you want to leave because in the end you become an ant.”
— **PAULA BADOSA** after losing her semifinal to Navarro in straight sets having led 5-1 in the second set

“I was a complete disaster.”
— **BADOSA** on her 6-2, 7-5 defeat



Swiss former professional tennis player Roger Federer (L) attends the women’s quarterfinal match between Belarus’s Aryna Sabalenka and China’s Zheng Qinwen on day nine of the US Open tournament at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York City. – AFP

“She plays with a competitive grace that I think is somewhat lost in not just our sport but just in sports in general. I think she’s so incredibly respectful of the game. She’s so incredibly respectful of the person on the other side of the net.”
— **PETER AYERS**, the coach of Emma Navarro

“I’m sure they will put me on the prime time all the time. They will not put me late like here, I’m sure, and I will always get the court when I want, how long I want. This is the best thing because here is not easy to get the court. I have to fight a lot, even I’m seeded. I’m sure there will be my pictures in Wuhan.”
— **ZHENG QINWEN** looking ahead to playing at home in China in October after her US Open exit

“I saw him there on the big screen. I was like, okay, I have to play my best tennis so he enjoys it. I have to show my skills, you know, slice skills, come to the net and all that stuff.”
— **ARYNA SABALENKA** on realising that Roger Federer was amongst the spectators

TIAFOE, FRITZ AND NAVARRO
BOOST HOME HOPES

NEW YORK: Frances Tiafoe and Taylor Fritz set up an all-American US Open semifinal on Tuesday as compatriot Emma Navarro reached the women’s last four to boost home hopes of a title sweep.

The 20th seed Tiafoe progressed when ninth-ranked Grigor Dimitrov suffered an injury in the third set of their quarterfinal and quit in the fourth with the score at 6-3, 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 4-1.

Tiafoe also made the last four in 2022 while Fritz reached his first Grand Slam semifinal by defeating fourth-seeded Alexander Zverev 7-6 (7/2), 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/3).

Navarro, playing in front of her home New York crowd, broke through to a maiden Slam semifinal by defeating Paula Badosa of Spain 6-2, 7-5 after coming back from 5-1 down in the second set.

She will tackle world number two and reigning Australian Open champion Aryna Sabalenka, who brushed aside Olympic gold medallist Zheng Qinwen 6-1, 6-2.

With Tiafoe and Fritz clashing on Friday, the US is guaranteed a home men’s

Navarro, playing in front of her home New York crowd, broke through to a maiden Slam semifinal by defeating Paula Badosa of Spain 6-2, 7-5 after coming back from 5-1 down in the second set

finalist for the first time since 2006 when Andy Roddick was defeated by Roger Federer.

Roddick remains the last American man to capture a Grand Slam when he claimed the 2003 US Open.

“It’s not the way I wanted to win even if I’m happy to get through to the semifinals,” said Tiafoe of Dimitrov’s injury.

“It was a very high-level match. You’re going to see me against another American, it’s going to be great.

“It will be the biggest match of our careers.”

‘JOB’S NOT DONE’
Dimitrov, 33, sought treatment off court after the third set but was reduced to walking pace in the fourth as his hopes slipped away.

The Bulgarian was reluctant to discuss the specifics of his injury after a thigh problem forced him to also quit his last-16 match at Wimbledon in July.

“I think it’s a combination from everything. I think there’s really no point to talk about that. It’s just the game, and I need to keep my head up,” he said.
Zverev’s defeat to Fritz



USA’s Frances Tiafoe (L) and Bulgaria’s Grigor Dimitrov (R) meet at the net after Dimitrov retired due to injury during their men’s quarterfinal match on day nine of the US Open tournament at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York City. – AFP



USA’s Taylor Fritz celebrates after defeating Germany’s Alexander Zverev in their men’s quarterfinal match on day nine of the US Open tournament at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York City. – AFP



USA’s Emma Navarro waves to the crowd after defeating Spain’s Paula Badosa during their women’s quarterfinal match on day nine of the US Open tournament at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York City. – AFP



Belarus’s Aryna Sabalenka reacts after winning her women’s quarterfinal match against China’s Zheng Qinwen on day nine of the US Open tournament at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York City. – AFP

means world number one Jannik Sinner is the only top-four player left in the men’s draw following the shock early exits of Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz.

“I have had a few looks at Grand Slam quarterfinals over the years so I felt it was my turn to take a step further,” said the 26-year-old Fritz, who cracked 12 aces amongst his 45 winners in his victory.

“It’s cool I’m in the semis. But I very much have the mindset of the job’s not done.”

Germany’s Zverev had been attempting to reach his ninth semifinal at the Slams and third in New York.

“Terrible. Just absolutely terrible by me,” he said of his performance. “I did nothing to deserve the win, simple as that.”

‘COMPLETE DISASTER’
Navarro insisted she always believed she could claw her way back from a 5-1 second-set deficit against New York-born Badosa.

“When I got to 5-2 I had an inkling that I’d win in two sets,” said Navarro, who had lost in the first round on her only other two appearances at the tournament.

“I was a complete disaster today,” said Badosa after committing 35 unforced errors.

Zheng was bidding to become the third Chinese woman to reach the US Open semifinals after Li Na in 2013 and Peng Shuai in 2014.

However, she was completely outplayed by Sabalenka in a 73-minute loss in which she hit just nine winners.

Zheng said the record late finish to her last-16 clash which finished at 2:15 am on Monday had impacted her performance. She said she only went to bed at 5:00 am.

“I couldn’t sleep after I finished the match 2:30 in the morning. I’m not able to practice yesterday because I was feeling terrible,” said Zheng.

The 26-year-old Sabalenka, runner-up to Coco Gauff in New York last year, will be playing in her fourth successive US Open semifinal and ninth at the Slams.

The Belarusian also defeated Zheng at the same stage of the US Open in 2023 before going on to beat the 21-year-old again in the Australian Open final in January.

“It was important that I got the early break, that was an advantage because it’s tough to face her,” said Sabalenka.

— AFP

US OPEN DAY 9 RESULTS
Men (quarterfinals)
Taylor Fritz (USA x12) bt Alexander Zverev (GER x4) 7-6 (7/2), 3-6, 6-4, 7-6 (7/3); Frances Tiafoe (USA x20) bt Grigor Dimitrov (BUL x9) 6-3, 6-7 (5/7), 6-3, 4-1 - retired
Women (quarterfinals)
Emma Navarro (USA x13) bt Paula Badosa (ESP x26) 6-2, 7-5; Aryna Sabalenka (BLR x2) bt Zheng Qinwen (CHN x7) 6-1, 6-2





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Al Rusayl Industrial City boosts investment portfolio to RO 766m



Eng Mohsen bin Zahran al Hinai, CEO of Al Rusayl Industrial City

Al Rusayl Industrial City successfully attracted eight new projects during the first half of 2024.

BUSINESS REPORTER MUSCAT, SEPT 4

Al Rusayl Industrial City, under the management of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), has successfully attracted eight new projects during the first half of 2024, with a combined investment value of approximately RO 8 million.

This brings the total number of investment contracts in the city to 488, further solidifying its role as a key player in Oman's industrial landscape.

The total investments in Al Rusayl Industrial City now exceed RO 766 million, employing 19,854 workers with an Omanisation rate surpassing 33 per cent.

Eng Mohsen bin Zahran al Hinai, CEO of Al Rusayl Industrial City, emphasised the city's historical significance, noting that it has been a cornerstone of Oman's industrial development since its establishment in 1983.

Over the years, the city has expanded from an initial area of 3.5 million square metres to a vast 10.5 million square metres, with 6.8 million square metres already developed and nearly 95 per cent occupied.

Al Hinai highlighted that recent infrastructure enhancements, totalling around RO 37.8 million, have been pivotal in advancing the city's capabilities. These developments include the expansion of the logistics area by 500,000 square metres and the second phase of

OVER THE YEARS, THE CITY HAS EXPANDED FROM AN INITIAL AREA OF 3.5 MILLION SQUARE METRES TO A VAST 10.5 MILLION SQUARE METRES, WITH 6.8 MILLION SQUARE METRES ALREADY DEVELOPED AND NEARLY 95 PER CENT OCCUPIED.

industrial development spanning 2.4 million square metres. These efforts are set to bolster the city's logistics and industrial sectors, driving economic growth.

Further improvements include the modernisation of road networks, significantly reducing traffic accidents and easing congestion, thus creating a safer environment for both workers and visitors.

The city has also upgraded

its communication networks, introducing a state-of-the-art fibre optic system, which enhances connectivity and supports the city's growing technological infrastructure.

Madayn is also exploring sustainable initiatives, including the purification and reuse of treated water for industrial purposes and the integration of advanced monitoring technologies to enhance operational efficiency and environmental safety.

Additionally, beautification projects at the city's main entrance are underway, reflecting Madayn's commitment to sustainable development and service excellence, positioning Al Rusayl Industrial City as a leading industrial hub in the region.

Oman's telecom sector sees over RO 221 million investment

MUSCAT: Oman's telecommunications sector witnessed robust investment activity in 2023, with total investments reaching approximately RO 221.9 million. These investments were allocated across various segments, with 37 per cent directed towards fixed telecommunications services, 53.7 per cent towards mobile services, and 9.3 per cent towards other ancillary services.

According to the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) annual report, the Authority issued 12 public consultation documents in 2023, aiming to engage stakeholders and ensure a regulatory environment that adapts to rapid technological advancements.

Significant strides were made in expanding broadband access across Oman, with the number of fifth-generation (5G) stations increasing to 5,238.

Additionally, fibre optic networks now cover 773,589 residential units, marking substantial progress in digital connectivity.

The report also detailed that by the end of 2023, 377 valid communications permits were issued, covering a broad range of services.



By the end of 2023, 377 valid communications permits were issued.

These included 41 licences for tracking and geolocation services, six for Internet of Things (IoT) services, and 267 for implementing communications-related services.

Furthermore, 48 licences were granted for establishing or operating private networks, five for utilising inactive infrastructure, three in the regulatory sandbox for new communications services, and two for voice or video communications via Internet Protocol (IP).

The postal services sector also saw significant growth, with 15 new companies licenced in 2023, bringing the total to 63 licensed companies. This expansion has led to the creation of 1,624 new jobs, with Omani nationals filling 1,223 of these positions, reflecting the sector's role in driving local employment opportunities. — ONA

Marhaba Europe spotlights Oman's sports tourism potential

NASRULAH AL AJMI MUSCAT, SEPT 4

The "Marhaba Europe" event, organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, commenced at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Wednesday, September 4, 2024, with a high-profile discussion panel featuring key industry figures.

The session included presentations from Basmah al Mayman, Regional Director for the Middle East at the United Nations World Tourism Organization; Shaikh Aimen bin Ahmed al Hosni, CEO of Oman Airports; Shabib bin Mohammed al Mamari, Managing Director of Visit Oman; and Haitham bin Mohammed al Ghassani, Director-General of Tourism Promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. The panel was moderated by Dr Hamed al Muhrzi, Dean of Oman Tourism College. The discussions covered a range of topics, including

identifying the main needs and interests of international markets and engaging in interactive discussions on the development of tourism packages.

Basmah al Mayman, speaking at the event, emphasised the key trends shaping the future of tourism in the Middle East. "Last year, the Regional Commission for the Middle East announced that wellness and health tourism would be among our top priorities on the programme of work for the region," she stated, noting that Jordan has been designated as a regional hub for the segment due to its longstanding commitment to health and wellness tourism.

Al Mayman, attending the event in Oman for the second time this year, reflected on the evolving landscape of global tourism, highlighting the significant shift in tourist behaviour and preferences post-Covid-19.

"There is now a high focus on relaxation, and the fastest-growing segment in tourism



A high-profile panel discussion was the highlight of Marhaba Europe's inaugural session at OCEC.

today is health and wellness," she remarked. The sector is projected to reach a value of \$1.3 trillion by 2025, with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region expected to play a leading role in meeting this growing demand.

While the region has traditionally been known for its spas and wellness retreats, Al Mayman pointed out that post-pandemic ambitions have become more diverse. She also highlighted the rise of sports

tourism, noting, "We are now in the post-Fifa World Cup era after Qatar hosted it, and the region is hosting numerous sports events." She emphasised the region's natural infrastructure and capacity to support a wide range of sports activities, from Formula 1 to adventure tourism in Oman's unique landscapes, including its caves and mountains. "People like to come and attend sports events while also enjoying the gastronomy of the region," she

added.

Shaikh Aimen bin Ahmed al Hosni, CEO of Oman Airports, focused on the role of technological advancements in enhancing the passenger experience. "We have implemented many e-technology solutions. Our eGates allow for seamless, queue-free passage, and the x-ray check-in process is designed to be quick and efficient. The check-in counters are also streamlined for a smooth and fast

experience," he stated.

Al Hosni further emphasised the importance of providing a variety of options for passengers once they pass through immigration and security. "We ensure they have a wide variety of options for shopping, including duty-free, as well as food and beverages. We are always striving to improve, listening closely to our passengers' feedback," he said.

He highlighted the significant progress Oman Airports has made in customer service rankings, moving from number 97 in 2015 to number six today in Skytrax customer service rankings. Both Al Mayman and Al Hosni highlighted the importance of health, wellness and sports tourism in the region's growth strategy. The discussions at the "Marhaba Europe" event underscored the commitment of the Middle East to capitalise on these emerging trends, positioning the region as a leading destination in the global tourism market.

Oxy Oman celebrates phase 6 of Tasharuk SME programme

MUSCAT: Oxy Oman celebrates Phase 6 of the Tasharuk Small & Medium Enterprises (SME) Programme by welcoming Recycling Services LLC into the programme. The company will provide recycling services for Oxy Oman's field operations. This programme highlights Oxy Oman's commitment to enhancing recycling and waste recovery efforts within its operations.

Phase 6 of the programme, focusing on "Recycling Waste," aims to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfills and incinerators. This aligns with Oxy Oman's dedication to innovative solutions fostering a low-carbon future, supporting the Oman Vision 2040 plan for economic diversification.

Oxy Oman established the Tasharuk Program for Omani SMEs in 2013. The programme supports the capacity building of Omani SMEs that demonstrate high potential for maximising In-Country Value (ICV) and Omani job creation. Over six phases, it has focused on developing and advancing the capabilities of participating SMEs.

The signing ceremony for this new contract with Recycling Services L.L.C was held at Oxy Oman's headquarters in Muscat, under the auspices of Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-



Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals. Steven Lauver, President and General Manager of Oxy Oman, and other senior executives were present at the ceremony.

During the event, Oxy Oman also unveiled its new In-Country Value (ICV) logo and identity, "Oxy ICV," with the tagline "Local Excellence. Global Reach." Additionally, "ICV Champions" which is pivotal in promoting and executing In-Country Value contracts that prioritise Omani-made goods and services, were recognised for their contributions.

"The Tasharuk Programme is a cornerstone of Oxy Oman's In-Country Value strategy, dedicated to fostering the growth and development of Omani SMEs," said Steven Lauver, President and General Manager of Oxy Oman. "By supporting local SMEs, we are enhancing our operational efficiency and contributing to the broader economic diversification goals of Oman."

Tasharuk reflects our unwavering commitment to building a competitive and sustainable Omani supply chain, creating jobs, and driving innovation within the local

market." The Tasharuk program engages local SMEs and seeks to bridge gaps in Oman's SME sector, fostering business growth, competitiveness, job creation, and sustainable development.

Oxy Oman's ICV strategy demonstrates efforts by Oxy Oman to increase and improve the sustainable employment of Omani nationals while simultaneously encouraging the development of Omani goods and services with a focus on human resources, technology, business development, and contracting and procurement.

Al Jenaibi International Automobiles launches BMW M Club Oman

MUSCAT: Al Jenaibi International Automobiles, the official importer of BMW Group vehicles in Oman, is thrilled to announce the launch of the BMW M Club Oman. This new initiative brings together passionate BMW M owners, offering them exclusive benefits and creating a close-knit community of automotive enthusiasts who share a love for performance, innovation, and the legacy of the BMW M brand.

Creating a community for M enthusiasts

The BMW M Club Oman goes beyond driving premium performance vehicles: it is about building a community of like-minded individuals who appreciate the excellence of BMW M. These vehicles represent the pinnacle of the brand's engineering excellence, delivering exceptional performance, precision and power.

The club will serve as a platform where members can connect, share their experiences and participate in exclusive events that celebrate the BMW M ethos. United by a common passion for high-performance driving, members will find a sense of camaraderie and shared enthusiasm for pushing the limits of what a car can do. From thrilling track days to scenic drives through Oman's breathtaking landscapes, the BMW M Club Oman will curate a series of events that embody the

spirit of BMW M. Rachid Zamani, Managing Director of Al Jenaibi International Automobiles, expressed his excitement about the launch: "The BMW M Club Oman is not just about cars; it's about the people who drive them and the shared passion that unites them. Our members are driven by a love for performance and the pursuit of perfection, qualities that define the BMW M brand."

We are proud to create a space where BMW M owners can come together, enjoy unique experiences, and be part of a community that celebrates the very best in automotive excellence. We look forward to welcoming members and making this club a central part of the BMW M experience in Oman."

Exclusive benefits for BMW M Club Oman members

Members of the BMW M Club Oman will enjoy a host of exclusive benefits, including discounts on BMW M parts, accessories, and lifestyle products. Additionally, the club will organise special events designed to enhance the ownership experience, offering members a more in-depth view of BMW M and its world of high-performance driving.

The club's first president, Mulhim al Rawahi, is a lifelong motorsports fan whose journey has taken him from go-karting to GT racing.



BankDhofar opens new branch in Thumrait



MUSCAT: BankDhofar, the leading financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, is proud to announce the opening of its new branch in the Wilayat of Thumrait in Dhofar Governorate to meet the daily needs of customers and strengthen its relationship with them.

Through the expansion of its branch network, BankDhofar also seeks to support government initiatives to achieve the goals of Oman Vision 2040, which aims to care for citizens who possess high capabilities and competencies and provide them with job opportunities in private sector establishments, in addition to supporting small and medium enterprises by providing them with financial support and economic consultations that help them grow their enterprises.

By opening this branch, BankDhofar provides its services to all segments of society, including children, youth, ladies and minors, holders of Al-Rifaa and Al Riadah cards, tourists and visitors due to its possession of heritage components and the frankincense tree, which makes it a tourist destination throughout the year. This branch also serves visitors coming to Dhofar Governorate, especially in the fall season, due to its

location on the main roads that connect the coastal states to various other governorates.

The opening ceremony of the Thumrait branch was under the auspices of Shaikh Ahmed bin Hamad al Maawali, Wali of Thumrait.

With the opening of this branch, the number of branches of BankDhofar and Dhofar Islamic Bank reaches 127 branches distributed across the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. BankDhofar is the second largest bank in the Sultanate of Oman in terms of the number of branches. In addition to more than 360 ATMs and CDMs that operate 24/7.

BankDhofar is committed to keeping pace with various digital developments through massive investment in technology, adopting innovative strategies to improve customer experience, simplifying operations, and providing a comprehensive range of digital services. The bank offers a wide range of features through its mobile application that allow customers to manage their accounts and stay informed of their financial activities easily at any time and place, such as paying bills and instant money transfers, whether inside or outside the Sultanate of Oman.

Lexus' powerful LX SUV: Engineered for a perfect driving experience

MUSCAT: Lexus' powerful LX SUV is the epitome of prowess and finesse. Embark on an exhilarating journey with fine Japanese craftsmanship complementing the taste of true luxury enthusiasts; the LX enables deeper and more intuitive control. Create your perfect experiences while off-roading or cruising through highways.

Discover endless possibilities with LX's two powertrain options. The first LX600 variant boasts a 3.5-litre petrol engine producing 409 hp and up to 66.28 kg of torque. Whereas, the V6 twin-turbo engine 3.5-litre diesel variant is capable of 302 hp and up to 71.38 kg of torque paired with a standard 10-speed automatic transmission. With its incredible power and remarkable style the LX is built to tackle tricky terrains.

Experience the pinnacle in luxury with Lexus' stunning cabin, which is enhanced by innovative technology features. Based on the Japanese concept of Tazuna, the cockpit design emphasises keeping the driver's attention on the road while drawing important information on the screen.

Indulge in an elevated driving performance with high-tech features of the 4WD that include a 12.3-inch multimedia touchscreen display compatible with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto and a lower 7-inch display for navigation, audio, climate controls and other driver support



functions.

Gear up for the drive with its head-up display, an 8-inch colour Multi-information Display (MID), and a wireless smartphone charging tray for seamless connectivity.

Set the mood by adjusting the inside temperature to your liking with the 4-zone automatic climate control system with rear control switches for the back passengers. Lexus LX creates the perfect balance between elegance and power.

Explore new horizons and venture out in class with the built-in Lexus Safety System+ that enables peace of mind. Some of LX's noteworthy safety features comprise an upgraded Pre-Collision System and advanced speed control systems such as

the Full-Speed Dynamic Radar Cruise Control with Curve Speed Reduction that maintains speed and vehicle balance during tricky curves.

Additionally, the drivers also benefit from Lane Tracing Alert, Lane Departure Alert, and Adaptive High-Beam System.

Moving up a notch, the LX Grandeur model boasts exclusive interior features, including two large heated rear seats with ventilation, massage and recline option, a Rear Seat Entertainment (RSE) system with an 11.6-inch anti-reflective screen, and built-in ottoman leg support. Command attention on the road with LX Sport Edition, specially curated for sports luxury enthusiasts.

Accelerate your journey with

exhilarating performance and an impressive exterior, designed for a bespoke experience. Based on your needs, choose between 4, 5 and 7-seater options at your nearest Lexus Oman showroom.

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In brief

WASHINGTON

US MANUFACTURING
ACTIVITY CONTINUES
TO SHRINK

Economic data showed that the manufacturing sector activity in the United States of America continued to shrink for the fifth consecutive month in August due to the rapid decline in orders and production.

The US Institute for Supply Management reported that the US manufacturing purchasing managers' index rose last month to 47.2 points, with a reading of less than 50 indicating a contraction in the sector's economic activity, while a reading of more than 50 points indicates growth in activity.

At the same time, the manufacturing sector production sub-index declined for the fifth consecutive month.

NEW YORK

GOLD STABILISES
AMID ANTICIPATION
OF US JOBS DATA

Gold prices stabilised yesterday as investors await a monthly report on jobs in the United States of America, which may affect the extent and speed of the Federal Reserve interest rate cuts this year.

Gold stabilised in spot transactions at \$2,493.34 per ounce after falling to its lowest level in more than a week on Tuesday, and there was little change in US gold futures contracts, recording \$2,524.80.

Gold has achieved gains of 21 per cent since the beginning of the year and reached its highest level at \$2,531.60 on August 20, supported by expectations of a reduction in US interest rates.

LONDON

OPEC+ DISCUSSING
DELAY TO PLANNED
OIL OUTPUT HIKE

Opec+ is discussing a delay in a planned output increase next month as oil prices hit their lowest in 9 months, three sources from the producer group said on Wednesday.

Oil prices have been falling together with other asset classes on concerns about a weak global economy and particularly soft data from China, the world's biggest oil importer.

Last week, the group looked set to proceed with a 180,000 barrel per day hike in October, but market volatility from oil facility shutdowns in Libya and a weak demand outlook have raised concern within the group, one of the sources said.

There were suggestions to delay the increase, one of the sources said. — Reuters

MDO WRAPS UP MAJOR AIRBORNE
SURVEY OF OMAN'S MINERAL WEALTH

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT, SEPT 4

Minerals Development Oman (MDO), the country's leading mining sector player, has announced the successful completion of its landmark Airborne Geophysical Survey project – a two-year initiative to unlock metallic minerals hidden away below ground across its sprawling mineral concessions.

Launched in August 2022, the airborne survey has been described as the first large-scale exercise of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman aimed at identifying metallic minerals for eventual development and commercialisation in support of the country's economic diversification. "The airborne geophysical survey project by MDO_Oman is the largest of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman's history for mineral exploration. Our exploration journey will forge ahead with geochemical surveys and exploratory drilling to support our robust database of mineral resources," state-backed MDO – part of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) – remarked in a post on Wednesday.

Undertaken in phases, the Airborne Geophysical Survey covered a total area of around 21,500 square kilometres, broadly representing the massive



MDO announced the conclusion of its two-year-old airborne survey of its mineral concessions – the biggest mapping exercise of its kind to date in Oman.

swathes of contiguous and non-contiguous mineral concessions that form part of MDO's extensive portfolio.

Canadian firm Sander Geophysics Ltd, specialists in conducting airborne geophysical surveys for petroleum and mineral exploration, were tapped by MDO for the mapping exercise.

Deploying a specially equipped low-flying aircraft, the company was tasked with obtaining geophysical data including magnetic, radiometric, electromagnetic, and gravity data – which is key to unearthing prospective mineral anomalies for further testing and potential development as well.

Significantly, an agreement to launch the survey came on the heels, in March 2022, of a landmark decision by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MoEM) to grant as many as 12 concession areas to MDO for exploration and development.

Spanning around 21,480 sq kilometres, the concessions

include a number of potential minerals, mainly strategic minerals (metallic) such as Copper, Gold and Chromium.

The agreements covered eight sites mostly located in the governorates of Al Batinah North and South, Al Dhahirah, Al Buraimi, Al Dakhiliyah and Al Sharqiyah North and South.

Nvidia suffers \$279 billion
loss in market value

NEW YORK: Shares of AI heavyweight Nvidia tumbled 9.5% on Tuesday in the deepest ever single-day decline in market value for a US company, as investors softened their optimism about artificial intelligence in a broad market selloff following tepid economic data.

Nvidia lost \$279 billion in market capitalisation, a major indication that investors are becoming more cautious about emerging AI technology that has fuelled much of this year's stock market gains.

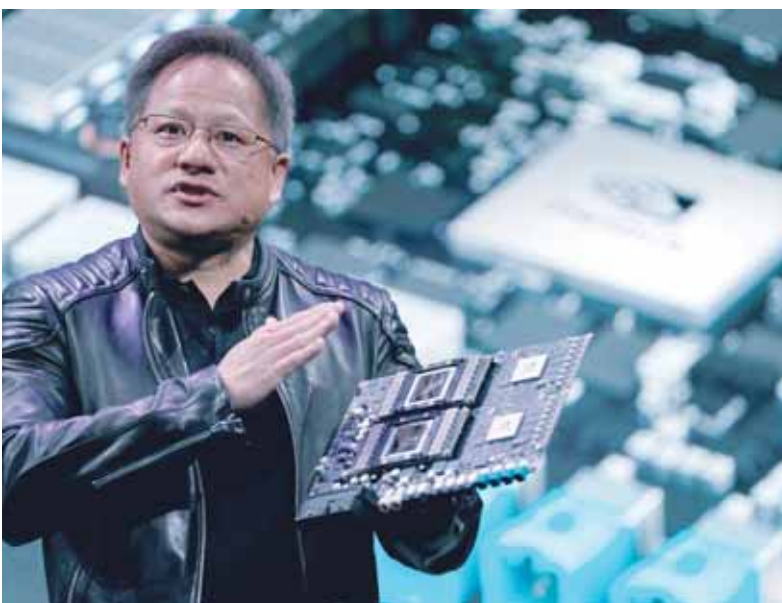
The PHLX chip index plummeted 7.75%, its biggest one-day drop since 2020.

The latest jitters about AI come after Nvidia last Wednesday gave a quarterly forecast that failed to meet the lofty expectations of investors who have driven a dizzying rally in its stock.

"Such a massive amount of money has gone to tech and semiconductors in the last 12 months that the trade is completely skewed," said Todd Sohn, an ETF strategist at Strategas Securities.

Intel dropped nearly 9% after media reported CEO Pat Gelsinger and key executives are expected to present a plan to the company's board of directors to slice off unnecessary businesses and revamp capital spending at the struggling chipmaker.

Worries about slow payoffs from hefty AI investments have dogged Wall Street's



Jensen Huang, CEO of Nvidia, speaks at his keynote address at CES in Las Vegas, in this file photo. — Reuters

most valuable companies in recent weeks, with shares of Microsoft and Alphabet trading lower following their quarterly reports in July.

"Some recent research has questioned if the revenues from AI alone will eventually justify this wave of capital spending on it.

When assessing AI capex by individual companies, investors must consider if they are making the best use of their balance sheets and capital," BlackRock strategists wrote in a client note on Tuesday.

At its July record high close, Nvidia had almost tripled in 2024. Its recent losses leave it up 118% year to date.

Tuesday's weakness in chip stocks accompanied wide declines on Wall Street, with the Nasdaq dropping 3.3% and

the S&P 500 down 2.1%.

Investors mostly expect the Federal Reserve to cut interest rates by 25 basis points in its Sept. 18 policy announcement, according to CME's FedWatch Tool.

However, minority expectations of a 50 basis point cut rose to 37% from 30% after data on Tuesday signalled activity in the manufacturing sector remains soft.

Investors will get a host of data on the labour market this week, culminating in Friday's key government payrolls report.

"There's concern about what the job numbers are going to show, about seasonality," warned Steve Sosnick, a market strategist at Interactive Brokers.

The chip index is now up 14% in 2024, just under the S&P 500's 16% gain. — Reuters

Oman-UK virtual meeting focuses
on trade and investment cooperation

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 4

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, held a virtual meeting on Wednesday, September 4, 2024, with Douglas Alexander, Minister of State for Trade Policy and Economic Security in the United Kingdom. The discussions focused on enhancing trade and investment cooperation between Oman and the UK.

During the meeting, Al Yousef extended his congratulations to the UK minister on his recent appointment, expressing his best wishes for success in his new role. He also emphasised the strong ties of friendship and cooperation that unite Oman and the United Kingdom and his hope for continued progress in these relations.

The meeting provided an opportunity to review the growth of bilateral trade and to discuss strategies

for further increasing trade and investment between the two nations. Both sides reiterated their commitment to advancing the ongoing negotiations on a Free Trade Agreement between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and the United Kingdom. Additionally, they explored several areas of mutual interest that could benefit from closer collaboration.

Al Yousef underscored the United Kingdom's status as a strategic partner for Oman, noting the significant growth in economic ties between the two countries.

He highlighted the importance of this partnership in realising shared ambitions and enhancing bilateral cooperation across various sectors.

The discussions also touched on ways to bolster joint investment efforts, with both sides agreeing on the need to encourage direct investment in sectors and activities of mutual interest, in accordance with the laws and regulations of both nations.

The pivotal role of economic media professionals in driving sustainable growth



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

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

Commercial, industrial, financial and banking institutions worldwide employ specialised economic and media professionals to promote and market their operations, particularly those engaged with the public. These experts also provide valuable financial, banking and economic analyses of the events impacting these institutions and their competitors.

In the Arab world, the demand for national talent in economic media sectors is growing rapidly as more professionals become involved in institutions that produce essential products. In our region, key associations are engaged in producing oil, gas, renewable

energy, natural resources and other commodities—many of which are managed by foreign entities. These external players often control the production, manufacturing, marketing, pricing and distribution of these products in global markets.

Today, the economic media sector is one of the most influential industries due to its power to shape public opinion, government policies and institutional strategies. Countries are increasingly utilising advanced technologies to manage this sector, which remains relatively new in the Arab world. Its goal is to engage in media activities related to economic sectors, given their importance in generating financial returns and creating job opportunities for graduates in these fields. The influence of

economic media is evident across business, production, trade and industrial activities globally, reshaping professional dynamics among institutional leaders and highlighting the growing role of economics within the media industry.

The importance of media institutions continues to grow as they respond to society's needs for goods, products and services. This connection influences financial markets and drives the organisation of international trade fairs, which strengthen relationships among institutions, consumers and advertisers. The economic dimension now plays a pivotal role in guiding consumer behaviour and decision-making through advertising, fostering

competition among markets. Multinational companies increasingly dominate these media and advertising channels, impacting product pricing, quantities, preparation methods and export strategies. These companies also generate numerous job opportunities in media, particularly in social communication, alongside related fields such as journalism, radio, television, cinema, the internet, satellite and telecommunications.

Given these trends, academic institutions should incorporate "Economic Media" into their curricula to equip students with the skills needed to navigate both media and economic fields. Graduates would be better prepared to work in institutions

immediately, capable of handling economic and financial analysis while understanding broader economic developments. In today's digital landscape, where every company has its own platform and social media presence, media professionals must be knowledgeable about economic contexts both locally and globally.

The economic media sector has become an essential tool for raising public awareness, mobilising communities and disseminating economic knowledge. It informs society about institutional policies, laws, regulations and procedures while promoting a culture of saving, investment and other economic behaviours related to production, promotion and marketing.

Empowering the future: The essential role of savings for youth

Imagine a society where children and young adults are nurtured to develop a strong savings habit from an early age is essential. Over time, these savings can grow into a substantial nest egg, offering exciting opportunities for the individual—whether for investments, further education, purchasing a car or even providing seed money for a dream home or a business startup. The true success here isn't just the accumulated wealth but the valuable lessons and experiences gained along the way, embedding a lifelong culture of financial responsibility.

Aligned with the fiscal strategies outlined in the Oman Vision 2040 and bolstered by recent initiatives from the Omani government to foster a savings culture among its citizens, Oman's banking sector has been a key player in this national effort. This was evident in the sector's enthusiastic support for the pioneering Social Protection Fund (SPF) initiative introduced by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik last year, which includes, among other things, the Child Benefit Programme. Through this programme, the government has pledged to provide monthly financial support to Omani children from birth until the age of 18.

Every Omani child is entitled to have a savings account opened at birth, as it does not only provide financial security but also encourages children, along with their parents, family members and other well-wishers, to contribute to these savings. Cash gifts from birthdays, Eidiya payments and other monetary gestures can be deposited directly into the



ASHRAF KHALID
AL BATTASHI

The author is Head of Products and Segmentations at Bank Dhofar

child's account, offering a far more enduring benefit than toys or devices that quickly lose their appeal. Indeed, there is no greater gift than a financial contribution that will earn interest and grow into a sum that could have a transformative impact on the child's future.

Experts agree that by the time children are seven or eight and beginning to understand basic maths, they are ready to learn about money—its value, how to save it and how to plan for the future. Encouraging them to save from an early age lays the foundation for a lifetime of financial security, particularly in today's era of economic uncertainty and rising debt. As they grow older and grasp the function of a savings account, they will learn essential money management skills, such as budgeting and setting financial goals. They will begin to take ownership of their finances, watching their savings grow over time. These accounts not only provide a practical platform for children to learn about finance but also empower them to make informed decisions about their financial future.

As children transition into adulthood, their financial needs and responsibilities evolve. A dedicated savings account can help them prepare for more

significant financial goals, such as buying their first car or home, or even starting a small business. Today, there are numerous examples of young Omanis who have successfully established their own SMEs. While many have benefited from low-interest loans and other financial support from banks and public institutions, most emphasise the importance of personal savings in providing a crucial initial boost before seeking additional funding.

Thus, while the Omani government deserves praise for encouraging the opening of savings accounts for children at birth, it is up to us as a society to build on this initiative and turn it into a national movement. The dual objectives are clear: to help our young people develop a savings habit early on and to empower future generations to manage their finances wisely and make informed financial choices.

Bank Dhofar offers a diverse range of savings products designed to cater to various financial goals. The 'Life Cycle Banking' approach offers various products to meet customer needs at each life stage. For individuals looking for flexibility, the Savings Account offers a basic platform for managing finances. Additionally, Bank Dhofar provides guaranteed return deposits like Fixed Deposits, Recurring Deposits, and Education and Retirement Savings Plans, ensuring a secure and predictable income stream. These products, coupled with Bank Dhofar's exceptional customer service and convenient banking channels, make it a popular choice for individuals and families in Oman.

Trade War II will be easy to lose for China



HUDSON LOCKETT

The author is the Asia Columnist for Reuters Breakingviews in Hong Kong.

“Trade wars are good and easy to win,” Donald Trump tweeted in March 2018 when he was US president, just months before kicking off in earnest one of the largest trade conflicts in modern history. The ensuing campaign of tit-for-tat tariffs between Washington and Beijing hardly proved him right: in June, China notched up a record monthly trade surplus with the United States of \$99 billion.

But the Republican nominee for November's presidential election has threatened to raise tariffs on Chinese exports from an effective 10% to 60% across the board if he wins. With Trump polling neck and neck with his Democratic rival Kamala Harris in key battleground states, Beijing faces the very real possibility of Trade War II. If the first trade war is any guide, Chinese leaders probably can't stop Trump from imposing tariffs. He remains unhappy with his country's \$280 billion trade deficit with China in 2023. Officials can, though, deploy some tactics they've learnt in the past six years to blunt the impact of any fresh assault on annual exports worth some \$500 billion and slow the economic decoupling that took root during Trump's first term.

Costly Lessons

In the first trade war, outreach and negotiations helped to delay the implementation of some of the steepest tariffs threatened by the White House. Beijing allowed the renminbi to weaken against



Workers stand at the port of Qingdao, Shandong, China. — Reuters

the dollar cushioning the blow for Chinese exporters early on; rerouting shipments of electronics and textiles to the United States via other countries such as Vietnam and Mexico helped some to skirt new tariffs of up to 25%. Yet it took a dozen odd rounds of talks over the course of about a year and a half—during which Washington branded China a currency manipulator, then walked back that label—before the two sides agreed on the so-called "Phase One" deal in January 2020 that ended reciprocal tariff hikes. Perhaps the biggest lesson from the first Sino-American trade war is that once tariffs are applied, they are not removed. The truce paused further hikes but it provided no clear path towards the removal of the tariffs imposed by the United States despite President Xi Jinping's commitment to buy an extra \$200 billion in American goods and services, including agricultural products and energy, over the next two years. Since 2021, President Joe Biden has piled on additional tariffs and export curbs. It is unclear if Vice President Kamala Harris will follow the same path if she wins the race to the White House. Equally, Trump may be making empty threats—though much the same was said of his original tariff threats last time he won the White House.

Messy Aftermath

Ultimately, the direct impact of the trade war thus far has not been too severe. Although China's share of total imports by the United States has fallen 8 percentage points since 2018 to roughly 13%, according

to the US Census Bureau, China's share of global exports has risen by 1.5 percentage points over the same period, data from the International Monetary Fund shows. What's more, an analysis by the Peterson Institute for International Economics found China bought essentially none of the additional American goods and services it promised. One of the only real victories for Trump came courtesy of the US share of China's agricultural imports, which per customs data rose from 10% in 2019 to 19% in 2021 as hog herds recovering from African swine fever in China bolstered demand for grain. But that share slid to 15% last year as Beijing—concerned over food security in the wake of Russia's attack of Ukraine—diversified away from American farms in favour of soybeans and corn from Brazil. Meanwhile, China's manufacturing edge remains central to some of America's most valuable companies, including \$655 billion Tesla and \$3 trillion Apple. Last year the iPhone maker flagged plans to move almost a fifth of global smartphone production to India but in March, boss Tim Cook acknowledged during a visit to Beijing that "there's no supply chain in the world that's more critical to us than China."

In short, Beijing might be relatively unscathed so far. But the growth model policymakers are investing in will make a second commercial conflagration with Washington both more dangerous and difficult to extinguish. For China, another trade war would be bad and easy to lose.

— Reuters

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Indian male 6 years experience in accounts/ automobile/admin. Seeking for suitable opening in any field, currently in Oman. Contact: 78988055/ 92850930, email: ullasmon8@gmail.com

SENIOR accountant - Indian male above 12 years experience (8 years in Oman). Seeking for suitable opening. Currently in Oman. Contact: 98957235, email: unnikrishnanalways@gmail.com

28 YEARS Experience in Oman in sales, marketing and management, Indian with DL and release. Looking for a good job change. Contact: 78501743.

INDIAN male 6 years of experience in accounts / automobile / admin. Seeking for suitable opening in any field, currently in Oman. Contact: 78988055 / 92850930, email: ullasmon8@gmail.com

INDIAN MALE, 10 years experience in Oman as Coordinator have diploma, valid D/L with NOC ready to join. Contact: 95645241.

A SUDANESE resident in Salalah, Bsc of administrative sciences with 21 years of experience in the fields of (sales/ management/ logistics and fleet). Contact: +968 98510880.

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THURSDAY

SEPTEMBER 5, 2024 | RABEE AL AWWAL 1, 1446 AH

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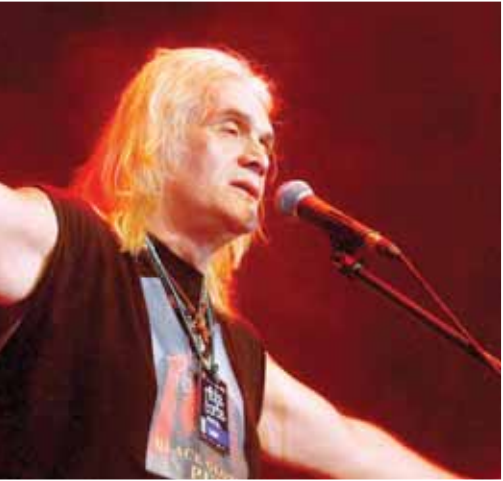
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LIFESTYLE

File photo of legendary Yugoslav rock musician Bora Djordjevic performing on stage during a concert at the Belgrade Arena. He has died aged 72 in hospital in Ljubljana after battling severe pneumonia, his band announced on September 4, 2024. — AFP



FASHION

A model displays a creation by fashion brand Seivson from Taiwanese designer Tzu Chin Shen during Tokyo Fashion Week in Tokyo. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

Actress Arielle Dombasle will chair the jury at the 35th Dinard British and Irish Film Festival from October 2 to 6, the first time the festival has included Ireland in its line-up, organisers announced. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

Dancers of the Chinese Hunan performing arts troupe perform on stage during a show at the American University of the Middle East (AUM) campus in Kuwait City. — AFP



TRAVEL

A woman farmer reaps leaves at a tea estate in Hatton. Several of the leading hill country plantations that produce some of the finest 100 per cent Sri Lankan tea are situated in Hatton. —AFP



art & life

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AN EXCLUSIVE
LOOK AT DHOFAR'S
ABALONE FARM

If you're visiting Dhofar Governorate, the new experience not to miss is the innovative abalone farm in the Wilayat of Mirbat managed by Oman Aquaculture Company (OAC). From learning the science behind the successful abalone farming to why a few pieces of abalone are so expensive, here's a quick run-down of what can be found on the farm... **P20**

CHANGING WORLD



SHADDAD AL MUSALMY

Shaddad al Musalmy is a seasoned Omani journalist who worked for top newspapers in the country. He's currently one of Oman Observer's senior editors and contributes across different beats. His commentaries about life in general paints a vivid picture of the changing landscape in Oman.

FOR FEEDBACK, EMAIL THE AUTHOR AT shadadm75@gmail.com

The burden of imitation: Material aspirations in marriages

IN CONTEMPORARY SOCIETY, the pressures of social comparison can lead individuals to pursue lifestyles that may not align with their personal or financial realities. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced among married couples, where one partner, often the wife, may feel compelled to emulate the lifestyles of other wives who appear to have more luxurious possessions and services. Today, I want to explore how such aspirations can become a burden for husbands, impacting both financial stability

and emotional well-being. After a small chat with the daughter of my sister's brother-in-law about imitation, I came to realise that the heart of this issue lies in the social comparison theory, which makes individuals determine their own social and personal worth based on how they see others. I learnt that in many cases, wives may observe their peers enjoying luxuries such as housemaids, multiple cars, or even extravagant vacations and feel an innate desire to replicate these experiences. This desire can stem from various factors, including societal expectations, peer pressure, or even a longing for validation within their social circles. When a wife seeks to imitate these lifestyles without considering her family's financial situation or priorities, it can create significant strain on the marriage. This is the case with one of my many cousins, who said that as a husband, he finds himself pressured to meet these demands, leading to stress and potential resentment. Indeed, the pursuit of material goods often overshadows more meaningful aspects of life such as emotional connection and shared values.

Another negative aspect is the financial implications of imitating a lifestyle characterised by excess, which can be profound. Indeed, many families operate on tight budgets where every expenditure must be carefully considered. "When one partner desires luxury items or services that exceed what is necessary for comfortable living, it can lead to financial strain," my cousin, who himself has fallen into such a situation in the past, told me. For instance, hiring housemaids or purchasing luxury vehicles often requires substantial ongoing expenses that may not be sustainable in the long term. To achieve such goals, husbands may feel compelled to work longer hours or take on additional jobs to fulfil these desires, which can lead to burnout and decreased quality time spent with family. Furthermore, accumulating debt in pursuit of an extravagant lifestyle can jeopardise future financial security and stability. So, before indulging in such an extravagant lifestyle to please your partner, first, check how deep your pocket is and also avoid imitation.

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PATRICIO CAMPILLO MAKES NEW YORK FASHION WEEK DEBUT, CHAMPIONING MEXICAN TRADITION

NEW YORK FASHION Week kicks off on Friday, with designers showcasing their spring/summer collections - both legacy brands like Tommy Hilfiger, and new kids on the block, such as Mexican designer Patricio Campillo.

Campillo will be making his NYFW

Mexican designer who had previously broken through, he said, adding that he hoped his success could help those coming up.

"Mexico is a place full of talent, full of people willing to work and I believe that nobody grows alone," said Campillo.

on a cover, landing you a feature which can really just be dynamic and really life-changing for these designers. So, it's a big moment."

This season there are roughly 60 designers on the official calendar,



debut on Saturday at the Public Hotel with a men's line that he says was inspired by Mexican volcanoes and how they can "modify a space."

"The brand's patterns are based on a suit that my grandfather gave my dad when my dad turned 18, and this suit was given to me a few years ago," said Campillo in an interview.

Negotiating his career as a self-taught designer had been difficult without the benefit of another

Campillo has already attracted plaudits and celebrity customers, and fashion and beauty writer Asia Milia Ware at New York Magazine's The Cut predicted he will walk away with even more attention following his NYFW appearance.

"The right eyes can land you into a retailer, which is a big goal for a lot of these designers," she said. "Or the right eyes from an editor can land you press, whether that's landing you



plus many more off-calendar.

Ware said the most anticipated shows were Alaia and Off-White. "They normally show in Paris, but this year they're showing in New York, and they're like the two hottest tickets to get in the city this season," she said.

Bold reds and power shoulders would be central themes of collections, she predicted. —Reuters



Waste not: Tai New York Fashion Week kicks off on

PLASTIC BOTTLE CAPS, food packaging, single-use utensils and scrapped toys are just some of the throw-away items that have been given a new life at a zero-waste workshop in Taipei.

Customers get hands-on experi-

fashion magazine Harper's Bazaar Taiwan, said the sunglasses project is a good initiative to promote sustainable fashion.

"I think environmental protection and fashion still have a long way to go. As for consumers, it is



ence in the recycling process, taking plastic waste brought from home, and melting and moulding it into a pair of sunglasses within two hours.

"What we are trying to show in the Trash Kitchen is to let you see, feel, touch within minutes how this

important for them to get first-hand experience, so a workshop like this is very helpful," she said.

Participants said the workshop inspired them to think twice about producing trash and pay more attention to reusable items.

"I have two children. I need to



process can actually work without secondary pollution, and you can actually turn it into something of value directly in front of you," Arthur Huang, founder of Miniwiz, the company that runs the workshop, said.

The Taiwan company also produces tiles, bricks, hangers and other daily necessities from plastic and organic waste, using a "mini-Trashpresso", a machine it developed in 2017, Huang said.

Kora Hsieh, editor-in-chief for

think about their future," said business owner Debbie Wu, 40.

"If you throw away trash without thinking, you kick the problem down the road. So if everyone can do their best, recycle and use less plastic, that will make a big difference," Wu said.

Taiwan produced a record 11.58 million metric tons of waste in 2023, including 6.27 million tons of recyclable trash, according to data from the Ministry of Environment. —Reuters



AN EXCLUSIVE LOOK AT DHOFAR'S ABALONE FARM



BY YERU EBUEN

Beautiful Dhofar Governorate is attracting visitors by the thousands, and the number doubles, especially during the khareef season. Despite the governorate's top attractions, there's one khat people must see and experience—the unique abalone production unit in Dhofar managed and operated by Oman Aquaculture Company (OAC).

Abalone, a type of marine mollusc prized for its delicate and flavourful meat, is considered a luxury delicacy in many parts of the world. Known for its ear-shaped shell with an iridescent interior, abalone offers a unique culinary experience with its firm yet tender texture and subtle sweetness. However, the characteristics of abalone can vary significantly depending on its origin.

Abalone from different regions differs in size, growth rate, and flavour



profile. For instance, Japanese abalone, particularly the Kuro Awabi, is renowned for its large size and pronounced umami flavour, a result of its seaweed-rich diet. In contrast, abalone from Australia, often characterised by a milder taste and firmer texture, reflects the distinct environmental conditions of its habitat. South African abalone, known for its concentrated flavour, benefits from the cold waters off the coast, while Oman's abalone, primarily found along the Dhofar coast, offers a unique taste shaped by the region's warm waters and specific marine environment.

The method of harvesting also plays a crucial role in the differences between abalone from various countries. Countries like Australia and New Zealand have developed sustainable abalone farming industries, ensuring a steady supply through controlled practices. On the other hand, Oman's abalone is largely harvested from the wild, with strict regulations governing the fishing season to prevent overexploitation. This reliance on wild harvesting in Oman affects both the availability and price of the product.

Abalone's high price is driven by several factors, including its scarcity, labour-intensive harvesting methods, slow growth rate, and high demand. With many abalone species now endangered due to overfishing, habitat loss, and illegal poaching, the limited supply has led to a surge in prices. The harvesting process, particularly for wild abalone, is labour-intensive, often requiring skilled divers to collect the molluscs from the ocean floor. Furthermore, abalone's slow growth rate, taking several years to reach marketable size, further limits supply. The high demand for abalone, especially in East Asian markets where it is considered a status symbol and a key ingredient in traditional dishes, exacerbates its scarcity and contributes to its premium pricing.

Cutting-edge facility

Oman Aquaculture Company (OAC) is leading the charge in the sustainable cultivation of abalone, specifically the *Haliotis mariae* species, locally known as As'sufailah. Situated along the subtropical Arabian Sea coast in the Wilayat of Mirbat, Dhofar Governorate, OAC has established an innovative and pioneering abalone farm, harnessing the natural abundance and ideal conditions of the area. The facility represents a significant step forward in Oman's aquaculture industry, combining cutting-edge technology with a deep commitment to environmental stewardship and community development.

The OAC farm is a state-of-the-art aquaculture facility that uses land-based systems to create a controlled environment for abalone cultivation. These systems are meticulously designed to replicate the natural habitat of *Haliotis mariae*, ensuring optimal growth and development of this unique and endemic species. By focusing on 100 per cent organic farming methods, OAC is not only committed to producing high-quality abalone but also to preserving the environment in which these molluscs thrive.

OAC's mission goes beyond just farming; the company is deeply invested in research, training, skills development, and knowledge transfer. By empowering the local team, OAC aims to foster a skilled workforce capable of sustaining the industry's growth and long-term sustainability. The farm employs up to 55 individuals from the local community in Mirbat, contributing to the region's economic development while promoting a

The result is a product that is not only healthy but also exceptional in taste and texture. As you observe the farm's operations, you'll notice the meticulous care in managing the abalone's environment. OAC maintains strict control over water quality, temperature, and feeding regimes, ensuring that each abalone grows under ideal conditions. This attention to detail guarantees that the abalone meets the highest standards in size, flavour, and overall quality.

The facility is equipped with advanced monitoring systems, allowing the team to maintain precise control over the environmental factors essential for abalone growth. In this section, you will see how the team manages water quality parameters such as temperature, salinity, and oxygen levels, all of which are crucial for the abalone's development. The integration of technology into the processes not only enhances product quality but also underscores their commitment to environmental sustainability.



One of OAC's most impactful initiatives is its participation in the Reseeding Programme, through which the company produces spats and juvenile abalone. These are then provided to the state hatchery, contributing to the replenishment of Oman's abalone population and ensuring its long-term viability. This initiative underscores OAC's dedication to preserving the country's depleting abalone wealth and supporting the sustainability of this valuable marine resource.

Why is it so expensive?

Abalone's high cost reflects its rarity, the intensive effort required to harvest it, its slow growth, and the significant demand it commands globally. The differences between abalone from Oman and other producing countries highlight the impact of environmental conditions, harvesting practices, and regional culinary traditions on this prized delicacy.

Six to eight pieces of farm-produced abalone can fetch between RO 30 and RO 50 or more, depending on the bounty of production. Those that are found in the wild and whose harvest is very limited are even pricier.

The OAC team shared that they look forward to providing farm-grown abalone across the country and even in the GCC.

Alila Hinu Bay, a luxury resort, has partnered with OAC to offer an unparalleled abalone dining experience. Just 10 minutes from the abalone farm, Alila Hinu Bay's award-winning restaurant, Seasalt, is the first to showcase the exceptional freshness of Omani abalone. Head Chef Prakash Sundaram has curated a menu that not only highlights the unique flavours of this local treasure but also pays homage to Oman's rich coastal heritage.

At Seasalt, diners can indulge in a range of signature dishes crafted with finesse and creativity. The menu includes Abalone Sashimi, where the purity of the abalone's flavour is delicately showcased, and Steamed Abalone, infused with aromatic herbs that enhance its natural taste. For those seeking a fusion of flavours, the Abalone Gratin with brown butter, garlic and herbs presents a symphony of savoury notes, while the Abalone Green Curry, delicately prepared with Moringa Leaves, Mushroom, and Coconut, offers a tantalising journey through Omani spices and aromas. Each dish is a testament to the culinary excellence and sustainability that define the Omani abalone experience.

sense of belonging within the company.

Touring the abalone farm complex

A private tour of the abalone farm complex in Mirbat is eye-opening. The development of its current technology did not happen overnight. The research was ongoing for nearly half a decade before the facility was created. There's also a lot of science involved, and one wrong move from the staff can have devastating results.

The tour of the abalone complex starts from the state-of-the-art hatchery, a facility dedicated to the careful breeding and nurturing of abalone from larvae to juvenile stages. Here, the team of experienced scientists and aquaculture experts meticulously monitors every aspect of the abalone's development, ensuring that each stage of growth is supported by optimal conditions. As you walk through the hatchery, you'll see how advanced techniques are employed to promote the survival and biodiversity of these remarkable marine creatures, reinforcing the commitment to preserving abalone populations and their natural habitats.

Continuing the tour, you will be ushered into the Grow-Out Farm, where juvenile abalone mature into market-ready specimens. This stage of development is critical, and the team prioritises using organic feed to nourish the abalone with the highest quality ingredients.