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CHELSEA DOMINATE IN THRASHING OF HAMMERS



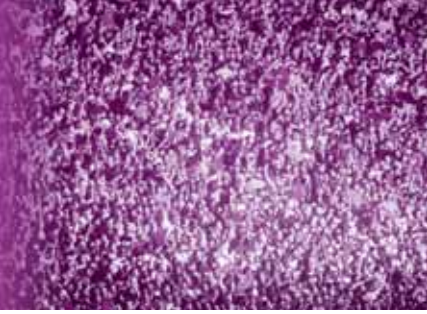
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OMAN DELEGATION REVIEWS SINGAPORE'S EXPERIENCE IN CLEAN ENERGY, ARBITRATION



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MADONNA WOWS RIO WITH 'CELEBRATION TOUR' FINALE



**MUSCAT**

**TALKS ON SERVING JOINT ARAB ACTION**

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, made a phone call on Monday with Ahmed Aboul Gheit, Secretary-General of the Arab League. During the telephonic call, the two sides exchanged views on several topics related to the activities of the Arab League and the integration of joint Arab action. They also touched on bilateral Arab co-operation in various fields in a bid to serve joint interests and unify stances and approaches regarding a number of issues and challenges. The two officials underscored the importance of positively addressing current developments and future aspirations.

**ADDED VALUE AT RO 8.85 BILLION**

The total added value of active private enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman during the fourth quarter of 2023 amounted to RO 8,850.6 million, according to preliminary data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The contribution of the actual operating enterprises to the GDP at current prices during the fourth quarter of 2023 stood at 81.2 per cent, compared to 84 per cent for the fourth quarter of 2022. The added value of large enterprises amounted to RO 6,579.4 million, representing a rate of 60.4 per cent, a decrease of 6.5 per cent compared to the corresponding period of the previous year. **DETAILS ON P13**

**AMAZING CIRCUS**



The Royal Opera House Muscat hosts the first show of (Circopolis), presented by the Canadian troupe (Cirque Eloise), to the public, forming an amazing combination of circus arts and theatre.

**SAYYID THEYAZIN VISITS SME DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY**



HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, on Monday visited the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority to inspect the projects supported by the authority. The visit was aimed at enhancing ways to achieve common goals between the authority and the ministry.

**Survey to measure satisfaction with government services**

**MUSCAT:** The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), on Monday began the second edition of an opinion poll on satisfaction of government services across the governorates of Oman.

The poll will run till May 30 and aims to measure satisfaction with government services provided by governors' offices in general and the municipal services, as well as measuring the extent to which satisfaction with these services has changed in each governorate.

These opinions will be compared with the outputs of the first edition of the same survey, which was implemented by the NCSI at the end of 2023. Through the outputs of the poll, the NCSI formulates six basic indicators for each governorate, including the general satisfaction index, the satisfaction index of hygiene and public health services in the governorate, the satisfaction



index of the governorate's efforts in market management and control, the satisfaction index of the governorate's development efforts, the satisfaction index of the management and maintenance of parks, and the satisfaction index of electronic government services in governors' offices.

It is worth noting that this poll is implemented semi-annually. The data is collected through e-questionnaires that are completed via telephone interviews. — **ONA**

# Hamas accepts ceasefire proposal as Israel rejects

UN SAYS RAFAH EVACUATION ORDER 'INHUMANE'

**RAFAH:** Hamas on Monday agreed to a ceasefire proposal in the seven-month-old war with Israel in Gaza, hours after the Israeli military told residents to evacuate some parts of Rafah, which has been sheltering more than a million displaced people.

Hamas chief Ismail Haniyeh informed Qatari and Egyptian mediators that the group accepted their ceasefire proposal, according to a brief statement from Hamas, which gave no details of the accord.

An Israeli official said a truce Hamas said it agreed to was a "softened" version of an Egyptian proposal that included "far-reaching" conclusions that Israel could not accept.

"This would appear to be a ruse intended to make Israel look like the side refusing a deal," said the Israeli official, who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The agreement, should it take effect, would be the first truce since a week-long pause in the fighting in November, and follows months of failed attempts at pausing the fighting to free captives and allow more aid into Gaza.

There had been concerns that the ceasefire talks being held in Cairo had stalled after Hamas official Izzat al Rashiq warned that any Israeli operation in Rafah would put the truce talks in jeopardy.

The city, on the southern edge of the Gaza Strip, has been the last sanctuary for around half of Gaza's 2.3 million residents, pushed south by Israel's seven-month-old assault.



A displaced Palestinian leaves with their belongings from Rafah following an evacuation order by the Israeli army on Monday. — **AFP**

**UNBEARABLE**

Israel's order for Palestinians to evacuate from eastern Rafah in Gaza is "inhumane", the UN rights chief said on Monday, warning that suffering and destruction would soar beyond already "unbearable" levels. Volker Turk said forcing hundreds of thousands of people to flee to areas with almost no access to aid for survival was "inconceivable".

"Gazans continue to be hit with bombs, disease, and even famine," the United Nations' high commissioner for human rights

said in a statement.

"And today, they have been told that they must relocate yet again as Israeli military operations into Rafah scale up.

"This is inhumane. It runs contrary to the basic principles of international humanitarian and human rights laws, which have the effective protection of civilians as their overriding concern."

Israel's military on Monday called for the evacuation of Palestinians from eastern Rafah, ahead of a long-threatened ground invasion of the city. **SEE ALSO P6**

## Dhofar khareef season to focus on new events

**DUBAI:** Dhofar khareef will last for 90 days from June 20 and to September 20 and this year the focus will be on international events, including the First Dhofar International Theatre Festival. This was revealed at a press conference here on Monday by Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality.

He said one of the most important developments is that the Dhofar Municipality will begin rotating events at its sites rather than repeat events for more than two years, noting that Atteen Square will continue to take centre-stage for tourism events.

The Sultanate of Oman is taking part in the 31st edition of the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2024, the leading global event



This year Dhofar Municipality will rotate events at different sites.

for the travel and tourism sector, which kicked off earlier in the day under the theme "Empowering Innovation — Transforming Travel through Entrepreneurship". The four-day event is organised in Dubai, United

Arab Emirates. Oman's delegation to the travel mart is headed by Azzan bin Qassim al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism, and the country is represented at the event by 36 establishments from the government and private sectors, including small and medium enterprises.

Al Busaidy told reporters that Oman's participation is aimed at exploring the most prominent developments in the field of travel and tourism. The event offers an opportunity to meet representatives of the largest number of international companies and institutions and seek chances of cooperation with them with the aim of increasing the number of tourists to Oman. — **ONA**

**50 per cent rise in people freed as part of Fak Kurba**

**KABEER YOUSUF**  
@kabeeryousef

As many as 7,113 people were acquitted of minor and unintentional financial offences in the past 12 years, thanks to Fak Kurba, an initiative of the Omani Lawyers Association (OLA) which works to free those who are facing legal proceedings or detained for financial offences.

"In 2024 alone, we managed to secure the release of 1,219 people detained for financial offences in various jails of Oman or were facing legal proceedings in different courts of the country," said Dr Mohammed bin Ibrahim al Zadjali, head of Omani Lawyers Association (OLA).

The details of the eleventh edition of the initiative which was began in 2012, and is usually conducted during the holy month of Ramadhan, were announced on Monday under the auspices of Dr Hamad bin Hamdan al Rubaie, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Lawyers Association, and other directors of the organisation. This year's Fak Kurba, conducted under the slogan of 'Remove Distress', saw a jump of 50 per cent from the last year, when as many as 811 people were released. "We are able to secure the release of nearly 1,219 people including citizens and expatriates held for minor financial offences in 2024."



AGREEMENT SIGNED TO BOOST SKILLS OF HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS

**KUWAIT:** Oman College of Health Sciences and the Ministry of Health of the State of Kuwait signed a cooperation agreement to boost the nursing field and develop the skills of healthcare professionals.



The agreement includes the implementation of several specialised programmes to train nursing staff with the aim of enhancing their scientific and practical skills. The project kicked off with the implementation of

training in critical care nursing for adults, followed by paediatric critical care nursing, scheduled to commence in mid-May. This collaboration aims to exchange knowledge and experiences between the two

parties, and develop training and education curricula to meet the needs of the nursing job market, ultimately improving the quality of healthcare provided in hospitals and medical centres.

— ONA

State Council hosts representatives of media establishments to study draft law

**MUSCAT:** The State Council, represented by the Social and Cultural Committee, hosted representatives of media establishments, civil authorities and media professionals to exchange views with them about the freedom of expression and the draft version of the new media law.

the provisions of the draft media law and the extent to which it maintains balance between rights, obligations and penalties. The participants studied how the statute-to-be would serve the media industry in Oman and influence the country's global rating in the future.

— ONA



GAMBIAN PRESIDENT RECEIVES AWQAF MINISTER

**BANJUL:** President Adama Barrow of the Republic of Gambia today received Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. The meeting was held on the sidelines of the 15th Session of the Organization of Islamic Conference (OIC) Summit Conference, held in Banjul, Gambia. The meeting reviewed bilateral relations and underscored the importance of promoting coexistence and peace among nations.

— ONA



The meeting underscored the importance of promoting coexistence and peace among nations. — ONA

Civil defence conference looks at cutting down volume of accidents

**AHMED AL KAABI**  
MUSCAT, MAY 6

The second edition of 'Oman Civil Defence and Ambulance Conference and Exhibition' kicked off on Monday under the auspices of Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs. The two-day event, titled 'Security and Safety of Establishments' discussed the latest studies and research in the field of security and safety of establishments. The conference is organised by the Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance in cooperation with strategic partners, institutions and companies. It included a presentation on innovative equipment, services and technologies used in civil defence and ambulance services. The event is aimed at cutting down the volume of accidents and risks to public safety, to



The two-day event, titled 'Security and Safety of Establishments' discussed the latest studies and research in the field of security and safety of establishments

help save lives and properties. The conference includes three workshops that focus on the following topics: 'First aids taught by life skills teachers at educational institutions', 'security and safety measures to be applied by school bus drivers' and 'safety procedures to be maintained by those

interested in adventure tourism'. The conference was attended by 350 participants from military and security agencies, administrative units of the state, and the private sector, as well as academics and researchers in the field of security and safety. Colonel Abdullah bin Saleh



al Najashi, Director General of Civil Defence at the authority, emphasised the role of the civil defence system in protecting lives, and properties, and achieving public safety, highlighting the importance of the awareness message provided. "Both the conference and exhibition aim to

raise awareness about the safety and security of facilities and discuss the best international practices in this field, as well as occupational health requirements, through presentations by academics, specialists, and experts," he said. Subsequently, Lt Gen Al Shraiqi inaugurated the exhibition, which

includes sections for the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority. During the inauguration, several advanced vehicles in the field of civil defence and ambulance services, search and rescue devices and equipment, as well as safety technologies related to artificial intelligence, were showcased. Colonel Dr Ahmed bin Saif al Jahwari, Senior Consultant and Head of Spinal Surgery at the Armed Forces Hospital, presented the first workshop. Al Jahwari discussed important aspects of strategic leadership in healthcare and its impact on sustainable development, addressing aspects in which strategic leadership systems are formed while Colonel Dr Hamad bin Abdullah al Hammadi, Director General of Ambulance, presented a workshop on emergency medical services and the envisioned reality of sustainable national services.



Invitation to attend the chamber's ordinary general assembly meeting

Pursuant to Article (18) of OCCI Law promulgated by Royal Decree No. (56/2022) on invitation of the assembly to ordinary meeting at least once per year,

OCCI Chairman has pleasure to invite the assembly members who paid the annual fees due for the assembly membership to attend the ordinary general meeting to be held at 5 pm, Wednesday, 29 May 2024, at OCCI's head office in Ruwi, to discuss the following agenda:

1. To discuss the annual report on OCCI's work, and the balance sheet of the last fiscal year as well as the auditor's report on the fiscal year ending 31 December 2023 and approve them.
2. To consider suggestions of the registered members which are presented to the board at least (15) fifteen days before its meeting.
3. To appoint an auditor for the new fiscal year and define his fees.

**Important notes:**

1. In accordance with OCCI's law, registered members shall be represented in the general meeting as owner or authorized partner singly or authorized manager singly, in accordance with the commercial register data. Every member shall have one vote. No authorization or proxy may be granted in attendance of the assembly meeting or voting thereat.
2. Members shall note that the first meeting shall be valid if attended by at least (200) two hundred registered members. In the event this quorum is not satisfied, the second meeting shall be held within (15) days after the date of the first meeting at 5:00 pm, on 13/6/2024 at the Chamber's headquarters in Ruwi and shall be valid, regardless of the number of attendees.
3. The annual report on OCCI's works is available in OCCI's head office and branches.
4. The auditor's report on the last fiscal year shall be provided before the meeting.
5. Please log in for attendance of the meeting via OCCI's website: [www.omanchamber.om](http://www.omanchamber.om)
6. Registration is also available in all OCCI branches in governorates.

OCCI Chairman

[www.omanchamber.om](http://www.omanchamber.om)

 +968 90997733  
 80073737

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Sultanate of Oman, Qatar look at ways of exchanging expertise



The two officials underscored the importance of boosting cooperation and exchanging expertise. — ONA

**MUSCAT:** Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat on Monday received Eng Abdullah Hamad al Attiya, Minister of Municipality of the State of Qatar and his accompanying delegation. The meeting came within the framework of boosting

bilateral cooperation. During the meeting, the two sides discussed several matters of mutual interest. They also highlighted related experiences and projects. The two officials underscored the importance of boosting cooperation and exchanging expertise.

Al Busaidy underlined the importance of administrative decentralisation in governorates, as well as empowering governorates to undertake their roles in the march of development. On his turn, the guest shed light on joint features and components between Oman

and Qatar. It is worth noting that the Qatari delegation's visit to Oman aims to exchange expertise and experiences in various fields, including fisheries, fish farming, food security, scientific cooperation and research.

— ONA



# State-of-the-art centre for disabled children launched

KABEER YOUSUF  
@kabeeryousef

A one of its kind advanced centre for children suffering from disability, was launched under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health.

The centre, part of the Association of Early Intervention for Children with Disabilities (AEICD), is located at the airport heights and has various facilities including 9 daycare classrooms, 7 vocational training classrooms with capacity of 170 children as well as rehabilitation department consisting of physiotherapy, speech therapy, occupation therapy, behavioural therapy and special education.

The centre also features supportive services such as sensory integration rooms, darkroom, observation rooms, specialised sports facilities, aqua therapy services as well as paid activities such as assistive devices shop, gait analysis, 3D insole production services, orthotic and assistive device workshops.

The dream of having a state-of-the-art centre was made possible by the generous support of the government of the Sultanate of Oman, in partnership with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals



The centre also features supportive services such as sensory integration rooms, darkroom, observation rooms, specialised sports facilities and aqua therapy services.

and committee members which include bp Oman, CC Energy Development Oman, Oxy Oman, Daleel Petroleum, OQ and Petroleum Development Oman.

“Our vision is to reach every child with developmental challenges so that they can live to their maximum potential with the highest possible degree of independence and inclusion in Omani society. Its mission is to preserve the right of children with disabilities to live with dignity, equality, and quality of life,” said Sabah al Bahlani, CEO of AEICD.

Dr Ali al Rajhi, Planning Director General in the Ministry of Energy and Minerals commented: “This project reflects our priorities at the Ministry of

Energy and Minerals and Oman Vision 2040 as this centre acts as a strategic direction to have a decent and sustainable life for all, including children and persons with disabilities.”

“The centre offers a comprehensive range of services to support the children and their families in facing their challenges and gives children equal opportunities to thrive, learn and become an integral part of society,” he added. The establishment of the new centre is expected to pave the way for AEICD to become a national centre in providing rehabilitation, social, education and training services to the children with disabilities and their families across Oman.

# FORUM SEEKS TO STRENGTHEN ANTI-CORRUPTION EFFORTS

CAIRO: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by State Audit Institution (SAI), participated in the Arab Forum ‘Strengthening Anti-Corruption Efforts: Reality and Challenges’, organised by the Arab League in Cairo, Egypt.

The forum saw wide international participation from anti-corruption agencies of the States parties to the Convention, in addition to representatives of Supreme Audit and Accounting Institutions, international organisations, civil society institutions, universities and professional institutions.

Oman’s delegation in the forum was headed by Shaikh Ghuson bin Hilal al Alawi, Chairman of State Audit Institution.

The forum’s programme included three main sessions. The first session reviewed the impact of implementing national

anti-corruption strategies aimed at enhancing dialogue and cooperation between different relevant parties in Arab States to exchange views on the challenges facing the States parties to the Arab Anti-Corruption Convention in evaluating the impact of national strategies to prevent and combat corruption.

Moreover, the session reviewed the possible responses from an international perspective and benefiting from relevant comparative experiences in Arab and foreign States.

The second session of the Forum, titled ‘The Use of Technology in Preventing and Combating Corruption’, addressed the role and importance of technology in reporting corruption, research and investigation of corruption crimes. The session also reviewed

the importance of digitisation in improving services provided to citizens and facilitating State oversight as well as ensuring the integrity of providing service and benefiting from them.

The third and final session of the Arab Forum shed light on the aspects of strengthening the role of the private sector in combating corruption in Arab States, by reviewing the role of the State in engaging the private sector in the fight against corruption and discussing the challenges encountered by governments to stimulate and evaluate companies’ anti-corruption compliance programmes. Furthermore, the session reviewed good practices in providing effective incentives to support the efforts exerted by the private sector in this regard, and its role in establishing sustainable business environments. — ONA



The forum saw wide international participation from anti-corruption agencies. – ONA

## ‘COLLEGE OF CREATIVE INDUSTRIES’ MAGAZINE LAUNCHED

BALQEES AL ORAIMI  
MUSCAT, MAY 6

Creative Industries Forum, which was organised by the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, witnessed the launch of the first issue of the ‘College of Creative Industries’ magazine, an annual magazine that will cover most prominent events, articles and interviews about the college’s various programmes, such as mass communication, design,

photography and fashion design.

Highlighting the university’s efforts to provide programmes in various fields of creative industries, the magazine also addresses various topics, such as the creative economy, creative education and various topics related to the Fourth Industrial Revolution and the requirements of the era, such as artificial intelligence and education.

Hawraa al Maimani, the editor-in-chief, explained that the main goal is to document the importance of promoting creative industries. The

magazine will address the topics of educational curricula and keeping pace with global trends in creative industries.

It will talk about the role of creative industries in sustainable economic development, discussing the role of educational programmes in promoting the creative economy and sustainable development, developing ideas and proposals for entrepreneurship in creative industries for college students as well as developing proposals in creative industries.

# Call for compliance with health, safety regulations

AFRAH AL BALUSHI  
@afrahalbalushia

Coinciding with the World Day for Occupational Safety and Health, the Ministry of Labour (MoL) organised a conference that enhances awareness methods and discusses climate impacts, legislation, risk management and the well-being of the work environment.

The conference, held under the auspices of Eng Yaqoub bin Khalfan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Fisheries, aimed at educating workers and encourage best practices to reduce accidents, injuries and occupational diseases. It also highlighted the impact of climate.

Hussein bin Ali al Lawati, Director General of the General Directorate of Labour Welfare, delivered the ministry’s speech in which he highlighted the efforts implemented by the Ministry of Labour including a series of awareness programmes and campaigns, educational events and activities to ensure that



The conference aimed at educating workers and encourage best practices to reduce accidents

establishments implement the requirements of occupational safety.

“The government’s interest in the health and safety of workers in private sector establishments is in line with the plans and objectives to protect people and society. We must always be fully prepared to face new and changing challenges and provide the necessary resources to achieve them, which contributes greatly to creating a positive and sustainable work environment,” he said.

Dr Mohammed bin Hamad al Abri, Public Health Officer at the World Health Organisation office in the Sultanate of Oman, in the opening speech, stressed the need for good understanding and close cooperation between

the authorities responsible for occupational health and safety and employees and employers so as to achieve good results.

The conference witnessed several dialogue sessions, focusing on the effects of climate change and the efforts required to reduce its effects, occupational safety and health in light of climate change, safety while working in unstable weather conditions, the impact of air pollution on, and developing the work environment through a successful experience in applying intelligence.

Also, it discussed the role of artificial intelligence in improving work safety and preventing accidents in establishments, occupational safety on roads and safe driving.



## TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tender:

| Tender No.          | Description                                                                                                       | Last Date of Buying | Date of Submission | Grade      | Tender Type    | Tender Price (OMR) |
|---------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|--------------------|------------|----------------|--------------------|
| Refloat NES/05/2024 | Unit Rate for Supply and Delivery of IT Equipment and Network Structure Cabling Contract for Nama Supply Company. | 15/05/2024          | 04/06/2024         | Specialist | Public (Local) | 52.500             |

| The table below shows the instructions for participation: - |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |  |  |  |  |  |
|-------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|--|--|--|--|
| Participation                                               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and in I Supplier with Nama Groupe may obtain Tender documents.</li><li>The amount specified above is including 5% VAT.</li><li>Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from Tender fees.</li><li>The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply).</li><li>To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please contact us by email <a href="mailto:Tender@supply.nama.om">Tender@supply.nama.om</a>.</li><li>Tender purchase will be in working ours between 08:00 AM till 01:00 PM.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |  |  |  |  |  |
| Enquiries                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Any inquiry can be sent to <a href="mailto:Tender@supply.nama.om">Tender@supply.nama.om</a>.</li><li>Last day of receiving clarifications on 22/05/2024.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |  |  |  |  |  |
| Tender Submission                                           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Please follow <b>SUBMISSION OF TENDER</b> mentioned in the Prime Document.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |  |  |  |  |  |
| Guarantee                                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman. Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF MINOR TENDER COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C.</li><li>The bid bond should including 5% VAT.</li><li>The bid bond should be submitted as seprate envelope.</li><li>Riyada card holders from Small and Medium Enterprises, SME, are exempted from bid bond requirements.</li><li>Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.</li></ul>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |  |  |  |  |  |
| Terms and Conditions                                        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>To participate in the tender, interested companies must provide a certificate demonstrating a minimum Omanization level of 60%, which includes their subcontractors. Failure to meet this Omanization requirement will result in exclusion from the participation.</li><li>The Tender shall be valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof.</li><li>If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date.</li><li>NESC is not bound to accept the lowest (or highest) Tenderer.</li><li>Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization</li><li>NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies.</li><li>Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.</li></ul> |  |  |  |  |  |



Nama Electricity Supply Company SAOC  
PO Box 1239, PC 131, Sultanate of Oman  
Tel: +968 24250800 | CR 1/71235/7  
[records@supply.nama.om](mailto:records@supply.nama.om) | [www.supply.nama.om](http://www.supply.nama.om)





# DEFAMATORY POST COULD LAND YOU IN COURT

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

@afrahalbalushia

**ATTACKING THE PERSONAL LIVES** of individuals and abusing them using social media and information technology constitutes a crime condemned by law and so is publishing private information over the Internet.

Publishing offensive information about individuals constitutes a crime of defamation because it is public, seen by many people and serves the purpose of offending.

With the development of information technology and the emergence of social networking sites of all kinds, such crimes have increased and have become widespread in the courts, either due to misuse, or because some people deliberately infringe on the sanctity of an individual's private life.

This is done by defaming them on social media sites without putting an end to the sanctity of individuals' private lives.

Since the emergence of information technology means, the Omani legislator was the first to issue the law on combating information technology crimes with Royal Decree No. 12/2011.

This was addressed in Article 16 of the law on combating information technology crimes, which states: "The penalty shall be imprisonment for a period not exceeding less than one year and not more than three years, and a fine of not less than RO 1,000 and not more than RO 5,000 or one of the two penalties. The punishment is applicable to anyone who uses the information network or information technology means, such as mobile phones equipped with cameras, to attack the sanctity of the private or family life of individuals by taking pictures or publishing news or audio or video recordings related to it, even if they are true, or by assaulting others by insulting or defaming them."

In recent years, cases of insult and defamation have increased over the Internet and social media platforms and applications.

Although most people are familiar with the general concept of the crimes of insult, slander and defamation, however, many times, people assume that it only applies to newspapers or other media.

The person who has been defamed only needs to file a complaint with the public prosecution proving that the defendant made a false statement about him, published this statement, and that the publication caused damage to his reputation.

Although it may seem difficult for a plaintiff to prove that a false statement caused harm, in many cases the law presumes that there is harm to an individual's reputation simply because something was published about them without their consent.

Reporting cybercrimes in Oman has now become easy and quick after the government created a unified number to receive these reports, deal with them, and arrest the perpetrator. Technological development has led to a multiplicity of cybercrimes and many people have been exposed to many different crimes.

One can report the occurrence of a cybercrime in the Sultanate of Oman by calling 992, which is the unified number for the entire country, or reporting through the Aman application.

## THE CRIMES

### ELECTRONIC BLACKMAIL:

This is a crime in which the criminal threatens the victim by publishing any pictures, information, or content on communication platforms or a website if he or she does not agree to carry out his requests and desires.

**FRAUD:** It is a crime in which a person is exposed to a scam and the seizure of his or her money from any person who submits a specific offer to him over the Internet, which may be a specific project or a specific deal.

### INTERNET DEFAMATION:

It is one of the most common electronic crimes where one person exposes another by publishing any matter to distort his or her reputation.

### INSULTING AND SLANDER:

It is also one of the crimes that is widely spread among individuals, as each of the quarrels insults each other through communication platforms and distorts the reputation and image of each other.



# Haj pilgrims advised to complete their procedures in time

KABEER YOUSUF  
@kabeeryousef

Pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman who are planning to visit the holy land of Makkah and Madinah have been advised to complete their formalities in time, according to the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs (MoARA).

Further details of the procedures to follow have been made available on its website and the message has been sent to the incumbents on their phones.

In its instruction to the pilgrims and the transport contractors titled ‘Steps for transport contracts for the 1445 AH season’, the Ministry has stipulated that all terms and conditions pertaining to the carriage of Haj pilgrims should be specified and decided upon.

It is important for all pilgrims as well as companies to negotiate and contract with one company that will transport their pilgrims from their arrival until their departure, this is called the accompanying contract, and it is

It is important for all pilgrims as well as companies to negotiate and contract with one company that will transport their pilgrims from their arrival until their departure

the best option.

“The accompanying contract is available to Gulf pilgrims in which it specifies the routes and makes it possible to specify the model and price according to the agreement with the transport company and we recommend this as the best option,” a spokesperson from the ministry said.

The pilgrims’ entry and exit routes shall be clearly mentioned and regarding the usage of Haramain Ttrain, pilgrims and companies from Oman shall agree with the transport company in advance regarding its desire to transport pilgrims back and forth.

The Permanent Committee for Haj Affairs headed by Ahmed bin Saleh bin Sofian al Rashdi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, said SMS text messages were sent to those eligible for the opportunity to perform Haj 1445 AH to complete the contracting procedures and electronic payment of 50 per cent of the Haj cost to the Haj companies they have joined.

This will be available for ten days through the electronic registration system for pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman. The ministry has reiterated that pilgrims need to contract only with licensed companies through the electronic registration system for safer and smoother experience of the pilgrimage.

“We request all Haj pilgrims to contract only with companies licensed through the electronic registration system for pilgrims of the Sultanate of Oman at www.hajj.om, and to complete the procedures and not to fall prey to the false promises of fake companies operating in this sector,” the official said.



## BANGLADESHI DELEGATION VISITS MILITARY UNITS

MUSCAT: A delegation from the National Defence College of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh, headed by Lt Gen Mohammed Saiful Alam, Commandant of the college, on Monday visited the Joint Command and Staff College.

Upon their arrival at the college, the guests were greeted by Brigadier Saif bin Hamad al Yousifi, Commandant of the Joint Command and Staff College.

The visiting delegation

watched a presentation about the college and its training and educational programmes. They also toured the college’s various facilities and departments.

Moreover, the delegation also visited the National Defence College (NDC) at Bait Al Falaj.

Upon their arrival at the NDC, they were received by Rear Admiral Ali bin Abdullah al Shidi, Commandant of the NDC.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed several matters

of mutual interest.

The guests were briefed on the NDC and its facilities.

Further, within the framework of the visiting delegation’s programme in Oman, they were received by Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies in his office at Bait Al Falaj.

During this meeting, the two sides discussed several academic matters of common concern.

— ONA



### TENDER NOTICE

Sultanate of Oman  
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

The Department of Agricultural Wealth and Water Resources in Muscat Governorate announces the invitation to the following tender:

| Tender No.              | Description                                                                 | Tender documents price (R.O) | Class  | Last date for collection of documents | Last date for submission of documents |
|-------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 2024/277/ MWFW/ MWAMG-5 | Removal of mesquite trees in Al-Ramla Area, Wilayat of Quriat (First Phase) | 25/-                         | Fourth | Sunday 02/06/2024                     | Sunday 9/06/2024                      |

- Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- Preference will be given to companies whose bid includes the largest percentage of Omanization and possible purchase of national products.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration (regarding the exemption from submitting a bid bond in tenders).
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402200 or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE  
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

## 6 expats arrested in Musandam

STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, MAY 6

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) seized a boat carrying six expatriates in Musandam Governorate on Monday. In a statement, ROP said, ‘Coast Guard Police in Musandam Governorate seized a boat carrying six people of Asian nationality who were attempting to smuggle large quantities of alcoholic beverages in the Wilayat of Khasab.’ ‘Legal procedures have been taken against them,’ it added.

### Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

| Tender No. | Tender Subject                                                                                                               | Grade                                                                                                                                                              | Last date for obtainment of Tender Document | Last date for Tender Submission | Tender Document Price (non-refundable) |                 |
|------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------|
|            |                                                                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                    |                                             |                                 | Small and Medium Companies             | Local Companies |
| 187/ 2024  | General maintenance work for the building of the General Directorate of Social Development at South Al Sharqiyah Governorate | Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the second or third degree.          | Sunday 26-5-2024 02:00 PM                   | Sunday 16-6-2024 10:00 AM       | 10 R.O                                 | 25 R.O          |
| 188/ 2024  | Annual maintenance contract for the Ministry's General Office building at Airport Heights                                    | Companies specialized in the field of building contracting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board with excellent or first degree.         | Sunday 26-5-2024 02:00 PM                   | Sunday 16-6-2024 10:00 AM       | 10 R.O                                 | 25 R.O          |
| 189/ 2024  | Contracting with consulting offices to provide engineers to work in the General Directorate of Social Development at Dhofar  | Companies specialized in the field of project management consulting and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the second or third degree. | Sunday 26-5-2024 02:00 PM                   | Sunday 16-6-2024 10:00 AM       | 10 R.O                                 | 25 R.O          |

- ❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Tuesday 7/5/2024**.
- ❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website ([reg@tenderboard.gov.om](mailto:reg@tenderboard.gov.om)) tel. (**24402200**).

“ The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry”

[www.mosd.gov.om](http://www.mosd.gov.om)



EVACUATION ZONE HOSTS AROUND 250,000 PEOPLE, MANY ARE ALREADY UPROOTED

# Israel strikes Rafah, ordering evacuation



Smoke billows following bombardment east of Rafah in the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP

**RAFAH:** Israel's military on Monday called for the evacuation of Palestinians from eastern Rafah ahead of a ground invasion of the city, as Gaza aid officials said Israeli jets struck two areas where the warning had been issued.

The evacuation call followed intensified disagreement between the warring parties over the demands to end the seven-month war, during weekend talks in Cairo.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has vowed to send ground troops in against Palestinian fighters in Rafah regardless of any truce, and despite concerns from the United States, other countries and aid groups.

Gazan civil defence and aid officials said on Monday that Israeli jets had struck Al-Shuka and Al-Salam, among other areas, both of which were told to evacuate the day before.

The main aid group in Gaza, UNRWA, said "an Israeli offensive in Rafah would mean more civilian suffering and deaths". It added that it "is not evacuating".

When asked how many people should move, a military spokesman said: "The estimate is around 100,000 people."

However, Ossama al-Kahlut, a Palestine Red

Crescent representative in east Rafah, said the designated evacuation zone hosts around 250,000 people, many of whom are already uprooted from elsewhere in Gaza.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Friday said Israel had yet to present "a credible plan" to protect civilians during the ground invasion that it has threatened for weeks. Without it, Washington "can't support a major military operation going into Rafah", Blinken said.

And on Monday EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell on Monday condemned Israel's order for Palestinians living in eastern Rafah to flee the Gazan city ahead of an expected ground assault.

"Israel's evacuation orders to civilians in Rafah portend the worst: more war and famine. It is unacceptable. Israel must renounce to a ground offensive," Borrell said in a social media post.

The French foreign ministry said it was "strongly opposed" to an offensive on Rafah. Jean-Raphael Poitou, Middle East coordinator for the Action Against Hunger charity, said that the areas now opened for evacuees had previously been "closed because they were considered dangerous". — AFP

## UNICEF WARNS 600,000 CHILDREN FACE 'FURTHER CATASTROPHE'

**UNITED NATIONS:** Some 600,000 children packed into Gaza's Rafah city face "further catastrophe," Unicef warned on Monday, urging against their forced relocation after Israel ordered an evacuation ahead of its long-threatened ground invasion.

"Given the high concentration of children in Rafah... Unicef is warning of a further catastrophe for children, with military operations resulting in very high civilian casualties and the few remaining basic services and infrastructure they need to survive being totally destroyed," the United Nations children's agency said in a statement.

It said Gaza's youth were already "on the edge of survival," with many in Rafah — where the agency said the population has soared to 1.2 million people, half of them children — already displaced multiple times and with nowhere else to go.

"More than 200 days of war have taken an unimaginable toll on the lives of children," said Unicef executive director Catherine Russell.

"Rafah is now a city of children, who have nowhere safe to go in Gaza," she said, warning that a large-scale military operation by Israel would bring "chaos and panic, and



Displaced Palestinian children in Rafah ride with belongings as they flee the Israeli strikes. — AFP

at a time where children's physical and mental states are already weakened." Unicef estimates that Rafah's population has swelled to nearly five times its normal figure of 250,000 residents.

Calling again for a ceasefire and for safe access for humanitarian organisations, the agency highlighted there are some 78,000 infants under age two sheltering in the city, along with 175,000 children under five who are affected by infectious disease.

Vowing to destroy Palestinian groups, Israel has conducted a retaliatory offensive that has killed at least 34,735 people in Gaza, according to the territory's

health ministry. Of that toll, more than 14,000 are children, the ministry has said. The Palestinian presidency called on Monday on Washington to stop Israel from conducting a large-scale invasion of Rafah in southern Gaza to prevent a "massacre".

"We call on the American administration to intervene immediately to prevent this massacre... (and) we warn of its dangerous repercussions," the presidency said in a statement, published by the official Wafa news agency, after the Israeli military ordered the evacuation of tens of thousands of people from eastern Rafah. — AFP

## Biden meets Jordan's King Abdullah over Gaza

**WASHINGTON:** President Joe Biden met Middle East ally, Jordan's King Abdullah II, at the White House on Monday with prospects for a Gaza ceasefire appearing slim and Palestinian group Hamas and Israeli officials blaming each other for the impasse.

A Jordanian diplomat said on Monday's meeting between Biden and King Abdullah is not a formal bilateral meeting but an informal private meeting.

It comes as the Biden administration and Israeli officials remain at odds over Israel's planned military incursion in the southern Gaza city of Rafah where it told Palestinians to start evacuating some parts on Monday.

Biden last met King Abdullah at the White House in February and the two longtime allies discussed a daunting list of challenges, including the looming Israeli ground offensive in southern Gaza and suffering of Palestinian civilians. Jordan and other Arab states have been highly critical of Israel's actions and have been demanding a ceasefire since mid-October as civilian casualties



A displaced Palestinian child sits ahead of a threatened assault on Rafah. — Reuters

**Jordan and other Arab states have been highly critical of Israel's actions and have been demanding a ceasefire as civilian casualties began to skyrocket**

began to skyrocket.

More than 34,600 Palestinians have been killed and more than 77,000 wounded in Israel's assault, according to Gaza's health ministry.

Biden last spoke to Netanyahu

on April 28 and "reiterated his clear position" on a possible invasion of Rafah, the White House said. The US president has been vocal in his demand that Israel not undertake a ground offensive in Rafah without a plan to protect Palestinian civilians.

With pro-Palestinian protests erupting across US college campuses, Biden faces increasing pressure politically to convince Israel to hold off on an invasion. Biden addressed the campus unrest over the war in Gaza last week but said the campus protests had not forced him to reconsider his policies in the Middle East.

— Reuters



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## In brief

■ SAO PAULO



### DEATH TOLL FROM BRAZIL DOWNPOURS CLIMBS TO 83

Heavy rains battering Brazil's southernmost state of Rio Grande do Sul have killed at least 83 people, authorities said on Monday, while more than a hundred were still missing. The storms have affected more than two thirds of the nearly 500 cities in the state, leaving about 122,000 people displaced, according to the state civil defence authority. State Governor Eduardo Leite has emphasised that the death toll should still substantially increase as rescue workers gain access to more regions. Rio Grande do Sul's civil defence said 111 people were still missing, a number that has also been increasing in the last few days. — Reuters

■ NEW YORK



### JUDGE FINES TRUMP IN CRIMINAL TRIAL, WARNS OF JAIL TIME

The judge in Donald Trump's criminal trial fined him \$1,000 and held him in contempt of court for a 10th time for violating a gag order, while warning any further violations could land the former president in jail. Justice Juan Merchan said the nine \$1,000 fines he had imposed so far did not seem to be deterring the wealthy business mogul from violating the order, which bars him from making public comments about jurors. Merchan said he considered jail time "truly the last resort" for many reasons. He said Trump's "continued, willful" violations of the gag order amounted to a "direct attack on the rule of law." — Reuters

■ PANAMA



### EX-MINISTER JOSE RAUL MULINO WINS PANAMA PRESIDENTIAL RACE

Jose Raul Mulino, the protege of a graft-convicted former head of state, was declared Panama's president-elect after elections on Sunday. Mulino won the single-round, first-past-the-post race, securing 34 per cent of votes cast, the Central American country's electoral tribunal said. Mulino said he had received the electoral result with "responsibility and humility," but also pledged to take "fearless" measures to restore economic vitality. The vote, he told joyous supporters, represented "the majority will of the Panamanian people." — AFP

# Putin orders nuclear weapons drills with troops near Ukraine

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin has ordered nuclear weapons drills near Ukraine, Moscow said on Monday, in response to "threats" from Western officials to deploy Nato troops to Ukraine. The announcement came as Russian forces said they captured two villages in the war-battered regions of Donetsk and Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine, where outgunned and outmanned Ukrainian troops have struggled to hold the line. Russian officials in the border region of Belgorod meanwhile announced that Ukrainian attack drones had killed six people and wounded over 30, including several children. Putin has upped his nuclear rhetoric since ordering his army into Ukraine in 2022, warning in February there was a "real" risk of nuclear war. The defence ministry gave no date for the drills, but said they would involve the air force, navy and troops stationed near Ukraine. It said they were aimed at ensuring Russian territorial integrity in the face of Western "threats." The Kremlin specified that the exercises were a response to



Russian S-300 missile systems take part in the Victory Day military parade general rehearsal on the Red Square in Moscow. — Reuters

statements by French President Emmanuel Macron and British officials. Russia has in recent days hit out at Macron for telling *The Economist* magazine he was "not ruling anything out" in the West's response to the conflict in Ukraine. It has also blasted UK Foreign Secretary David Cameron

The announcement came as Russian forces said they captured two villages in the war-battered regions of Donetsk and Kharkiv in eastern Ukraine

for saying Kyiv has the right to strike targets inside Russia. "They are talking about the readiness and even the intention of sending armed contingents to Ukraine — that is, in fact, to put Nato soldiers in front of the Russian military," Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said. "This is a completely new

round of escalating tensions. It is unprecedented and requires special measures," he added. Peskov singled out "dangerous rhetoric" issued by Macron, who said the question of sending troops to Ukraine would "legitimately" arise if Russia broke through Ukrainian front lines and Kyiv made such a request. Ukrainian forces have been dependent on Western military aid to battle Russia but Nato has said it will not send troops into Ukraine. Russia's defence ministry said troops from the Southern Military District, which borders Ukraine and includes the occupied Ukrainian territories will take part in the drills. "During the exercise, a set of measures will be taken to practise the preparation and use of non-strategic nuclear weapons," it said in a statement. Non-strategic nuclear weapons, also known as tactical nuclear weapons, are designed for use on the battlefield and can be delivered via missiles. Moscow has been making steady gains in eastern Ukraine and stepped up aerial attacks and shelling on border regions. — AFP

## Macron, von der Leyen meet China's Xi in Paris

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron and EU Commission chief Ursula von der Leyen urged China to ensure more balanced trade at the start of President Xi Jinping's visit to Paris, during which Macron was also set to press him on Ukraine. Macron said Europe and China needed to resolve structural difficulties, in particular on trade. "The future of our continent will also very clearly depend on our capacity to further develop in a balanced way our relationship with China," he said as the three sat at a round table under the gilded ceilings of the Elysee Palace. In brief public comments ahead of the talks, Xi said he viewed relations with Europe as a priority of China's foreign policy and that both should stay committed to the partnership. "As the world enters a new period of turbulence and change, as two important forces in this world, China and Europe should adhere to the positioning of partners, adhere to dialogue and cooperation..." Xi said. France also hopes to push to open the Chinese market for its agricultural exports. China, may announce an order for around 50 Airbus aircraft during Xi's visit. France is also set to nudge China into pressuring Moscow to halt operations in Ukraine, with little progress apart from Xi's decision to call Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy for the first time shortly after Macron visited Beijing last year. China-EU cooperation, in essence, was complementary and mutually beneficial, Xi told French President Emmanuel Macron and



(From L) France's President Emmanuel Macron, Chinese President Xi Jinping and European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen leave after holding a trilateral meeting, at the Elysee Palace in Paris. — AFP

The future of our continent will also very clearly depend on our capacity to further develop in a balanced way our relationship with China  
EMMANUEL MACRON  
French President

European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen during a trilateral meeting at the Elysee Palace in Paris. Jinping said that china had all along been working

"vigorously" to facilitate talks for peace in Ukraine. China is ready to work with the EU to support a more broad-based, authoritative and effective international peace conference to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The pressing task was to realise a comprehensive ceasefire as quickly as possible, and the key priority was to ensure humanitarian assistance. It is legitimate for France and China to each support their domestic industries, but any such policies have to be done fairly and reciprocally, French Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire said. Le Maire added that Chinese President Xi Jinping's current visit to France was a good opportunity to build a balanced trade partnership. — Reuters

## King Charles III marks first anniversary of coronation

LONDON: Britain's King Charles III on Monday marked the first anniversary of his coronation following a difficult year that has seen a cancer diagnosis. To celebrate the occasion a 41-gun salute rang out from Green Park next to Buckingham Palace at noon, followed an hour later with 62 volleys fired from another central London location. No official events, however, were planned with the milestone coming less than a week after King Charles resumed public duties since his diagnosis. He visited fellow cancer patients at a London hospital on Tuesday after doctors said they were "very encouraged" by his progress. The 75-year-old monarch was also reportedly keen to mark the day with minimal "fuss" given the link between his accession and the death of his mother Queen Elizabeth II. The Archbishop of

Canterbury Justin Welby, who crowned King Charles a year ago at Westminster Abbey, praised his "sense of duty". "The past year has presented the king with some great personal challenges. But I have been struck by his continued sense of duty, having recently returned to royal engagements following treatment," he said. "His openness in sharing his condition has been characteristic of his willingness to help and support others," he added. The anniversary comes as an Ipsos poll for the Daily Mail saw King Charles's personal popularity rating rise to 56 per cent. Catherine, 42, also known as Kate, announced her own shock cancer diagnosis in late March following abdominal surgery which had already forced her to withdraw from public life. — AFP



Members of the Honourable Artillery Company fire a 62 Gun Royal Salute, to mark the first Anniversary of the Coronation of Britain's King Charles III, in central London. — AFP



The writer is Associate  
Professor, Dept of  
English Language  
and Literature Sultan  
Qaboos University

Content creators add to a business, but in many ways, they are a business themselves. Often acting as experts in different fields, they share tips, ideas or facts that draw our attention. Good content can be attractive and bring us back to the site regularly. Content itself can be in the form of blog posts,

The 3 basic Cs of the digital format are creation, curation and conversation, according to experts. This means that creating a format is only the first step. Even writing a digital blog or making a video is the beginning. It needs to be shared with others, starting with friends and family or one's immediate community. Inviting others to contribute to the conversation is a great step forward, ensuring that the topic is

In the Middle East, content in Arabic has grown rapidly in the last few years. They include businesspeople, entertainers and lifestyle influencers. Drawing on Arab culture and history, many content creators in the Arab world are becoming more relevant as they use local idioms, references and ideas to connect with their community. That is why digital content in Arabic is seeing a promising, sharp rise.



The writer is an Omani  
writer and author of *The  
Road to Jerusalem*

A large crowd of people is gathered in a park, many holding Hungarian tricolor flags. Two individuals in black hoods stand atop a statue, holding a large Hungarian flag. Police officers in riot gear are visible in the background.

(The article is translated by Badr al Dhafari and the original version of the article was published in Arabic in Oman newspaper on May 5)

# Ambassadors of peace and hope

Summer is here even though the official date is June 21. We have been used to getting rain showers and sudden plunge in temperatures and now the heat is taking its toll on us. It is brighter, sunnier and we have begun to look for a shade.

We realise once again how blessing each tree is. Meanwhile, Al Hajar Mountains have begun to see local clouds for afternoon summer showers. And Al Hamra enjoyed an afternoon shower on Sunday. It is May after all, we managed to enjoy pleasant weather all this time.

Summer also means signs of impatience, love for cottons and light colours and air conditioning. It also indicates summer holidays and trips to keep the younger ones busy.

The summer escape is indeed popular and everyone looks for places where children could have fun. And that probably means theme parks and game centres. There is a growing demand for destinations that can keep children entertained. Keeping them entertained, however is not enough, adequate measures are to be in place for their safety too.

**EXCEPTIONAL**  
Speaking of children it was amazing to see the opening of the new premises in Ghala for the Association of Early Intervention for Children with Disability. The journey has been exceptional. It was established in 2000. This charitable organisation that depends solely on grants from the government, private companies, organisations and individuals, is one place which provides a range of services for children with disabilities from birth to the age of 9.

It is satisfying to see the growth and transformation of the association as the doors are opened for the new centre. Some of the children have grown up and one of them is Samar who was keen to show the frankincense burner he has made. Samar explained in English how he and his friends make different products. He explained how one can burn bakhoor or frankincense and have a fragrance-filled room.

These children are true ambassadors of hope.

For every parent going through doubts and fears, these children prove that the world is yet to understand about the different abilities.



Lakshmi Kothaneth  
@lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

THERE IS A GROWING DEMAND FOR DESTINATIONS THAT CAN KEEP CHILDREN ENTERTAINED. KEEPING THEM ENTERTAINED, HOWEVER IS NOT ENOUGH, ADEQUATE MEASURES ARE TO BE IN PLACE FOR THEIR SAFETY TOO

What is required is awareness and learning the various methodologies to intervene at the right age. It might be an expensive deal in many places but here the centre is a partner with the families for not just moral support but with knowledge and resources.

The brand new swimming pool is fun but is also a tool for therapy. The therapist who was going through a swimming session with a child explained that being in the water helps in moving hands, mobility, relaxation of muscles, it takes lot of pressure from the joints and water makes us smile.

The opening ceremony brought together interesting group of people - among the distinguished guests were also distinct individuals who were pioneers in volunteering in Oman. They gleamed with pride as they went on a tour of the centre with the chief guest, the Minister of Health.

They fondly remembered the time when they gathered to collect 22 to 23 signatures to apply for this centre. Then there were the fund raising events. And the excitement when the land was granted by His Majesty the Sultan.

They were all building blocks and the centre today is self-sufficient in facilities and services.

May 6, 2024 will always be a special day for the team.

Science continue to pave new ways to overcome challenges and we can for sure find new ways with the use of Artificial Intelligence. AI powered speech recognition has already enhanced quality of life for many individuals with disabilities whether visually or hearing impaired, but also in the case of accessibility.

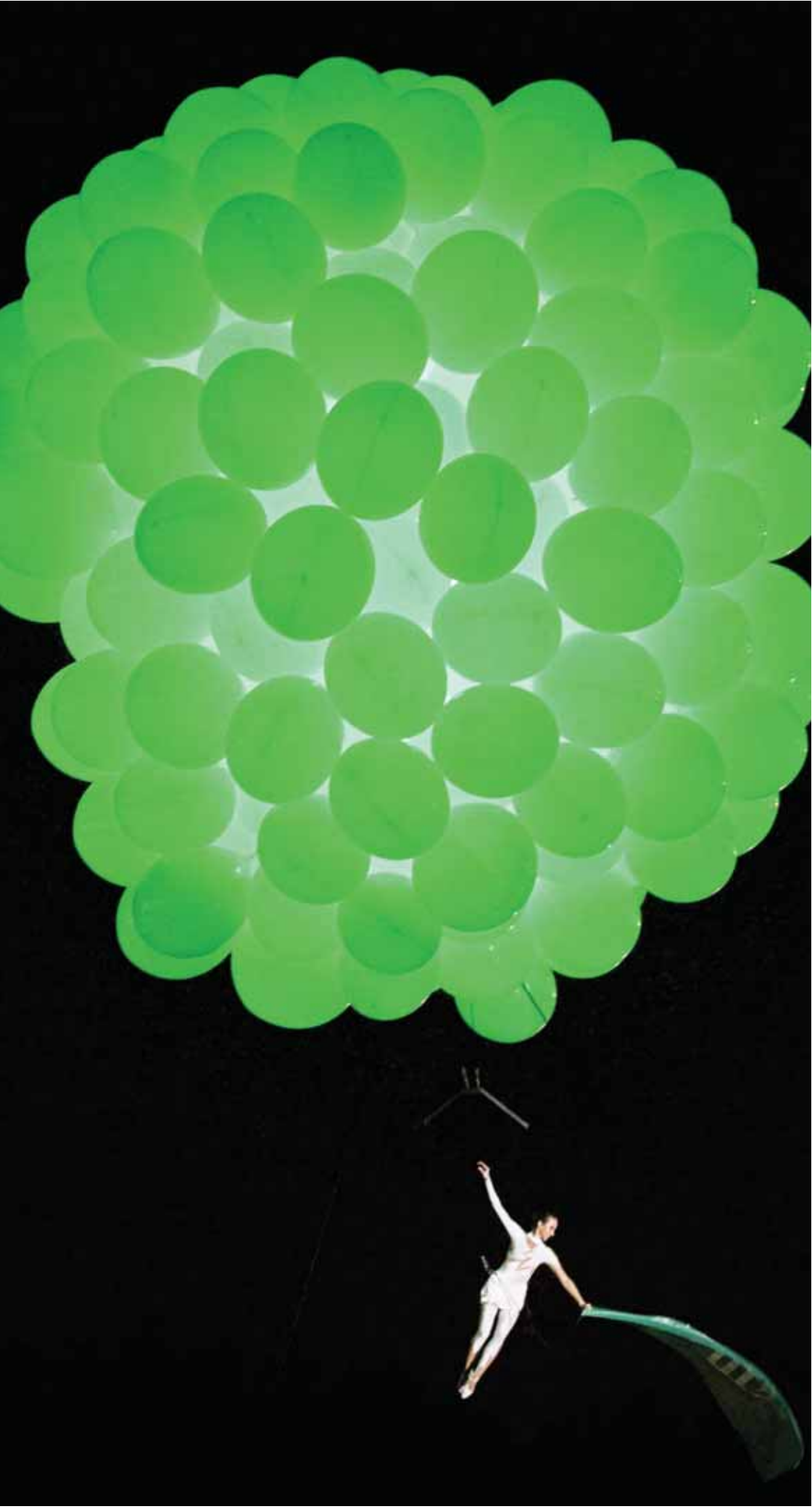
All the associations will surely be in need of volunteers with compassion and innovative thoughts and ideas. Not to forget the exceptional teachers and therapists as well as the medical experts and support staff.

But not to forget are the parents and family members who also need training and moral support.

The society also has to do much more for inclusivity and creating opportunities. It is not about giving the chance to prove themselves but coming up with new ways so that the individuals with different abilities and disabilities have means to express themselves and be earning members of the society.

And let their voice be heard.

## A FLOATING PERFORMER!



A performer floats above supporters attached to a helium balloons with a Sporting flag at Marques do Pombal square in Lisbon on Monday, to celebrate the title of Champions of the Portuguese football League. – AFP

# Is climate action China’s Trump card?

If former US President Donald Trump returns to the White House in 2025, China needs to step up to assume the mantle of global climate leadership – an outcome that many have considered impossible. After all, China has been the world’s biggest emitter of greenhouse gases for nearly two decades, currently accounting for 35 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions. But geopolitical dynamics can shift quickly in the face of conflict, economic strife, and crucial elections, meaning that China could soon be seen in a new light.

In 2023, China’s long-time (and recently retired) climate envoy, Xie Zhenhua, kept his cards close to his chest – the country was clearly not in the mood to make any major commitments. Ahead of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP28) in Dubai, the United States and China reached a headline-grabbing agreement to cooperate on climate change, but it included no binding targets. And while China agreed to launch a “transition away from fossil fuels” as part of the final COP28 deal, it is still hesitant to reduce its coal consumption.

But this may be the year that Chinese leadership plays its hand. By early 2025, countries must submit their next round of Nationally Determined Contributions (NDC) under the Paris climate



Li Shuo

The writer is Director of the China Climate Hub at the Asia Society Policy Institute



Lauri Myllyvirta

The writer is a non-resident senior fellow at the China Climate Hub at the Asia Society Policy Institute

agreement, including emissions-reduction targets for 2035. Recent Chinese statements and policies suggest that internal debates about the new targets are under way. China faces notable challenges in setting ambitious climate goals, but doing so is in the country’s economic and political interests.

This would not be the first time that Chinese President Xi Jinping injected significant momentum into global climate action. In 2014, Xi and then-US President Barack Obama jointly announced their initial carbon-reduction commitments ahead of the historic 2015 Paris climate conference. And in 2020, Xi pledged that China would reach peak emissions by 2030 and achieve Net-Zero emissions by 2060.

The increasingly volatile global environment and China’s current economic weakness pose significant challenges. After an upswing in emissions during and after the Covid-19 pandemic, the country has fallen short of its carbon-intensity target – a measure of emissions per unit of GDP – for 2025, and will have to cut emissions in absolute terms to meet it. Until recently, policymakers had assumed that emissions would increase until

MANY CANNOT IMAGINE CHINA TAKING THE LEAD IN SETTING CLIMATE GOALS. BUT IF FORMER US PRESIDENT DONALD TRUMP RETURNS TO THE WHITE HOUSE, THERE IS A CHANCE THAT CHINA COULD FILL THE GAP IN GLOBAL CLIMATE LEADERSHIP

around 2028. Further complicating the NDC development process is China’s continued reliance on coal: in recent years, the government has approved a host of new coal-fired power plants to increase energy



China currently accounts for 35 per cent of global carbon dioxide emissions.

security.

Geopolitical considerations will surely shape China’s decision, too. Chinese policymakers will patiently weigh their options until the US election in November. A Trump victory might mean less climate pressure on Beijing from the US. But China should act more proactively in filling the global leadership gap left by the US.

There are good reasons for Beijing to step up the climate game. China’s massive investment in clean-energy manufacturing has started to drive growth. By establishing itself as the world’s main supplier of solar panels, batteries, electric vehicles, and other green technologies, China has aligned its decarbonisation

agenda with its economic interests, presenting a strategic opportunity for the country to position itself at the forefront of sustainable modernisation.

This clean-energy blitz could facilitate China’s CO2 emissions reduction in 2024, raising the possibility of emissions peaking long before 2030. And if China can hit this target before 2025, it could achieve substantial emissions reductions by 2035, the same year that it aims to become a moderately developed country. In fact, as China is already well on its way to this status, it should specify an absolute emissions-reduction target for 2035 — a goal that only a few developing countries have set so far.

Chinese policymakers face difficult choices in setting climate goals. Some appear technical but have significant implications for environmental outcomes. One example is the selection of a base year for emissions measurements. Setting a percentage target for reducing emissions from a still-undefined peak to 2035 might seem rational, but it could create a perverse incentive for industries close to meeting their targets to delay peak emissions.

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# sport

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## Al Nahda, Dhofar aim to cap brilliant run in HM Cup

AHMED AL KAABI  
MUSCAT, MAY 6

Ten-time champions Dhofar will face defending champions Al Nahda in an exciting final of the 52nd edition of His Majesty the Sultan's Cup football championship final to be held on Friday at the Khasab Sports Complex in Musandam Governorate.

Dhofar enter the match hoping to salvage their season after falling out of contention for the Omantel League title. Dhofar will rely on their history and experience in the tournament as the team with the most wins, as well as the ambition of their players to claim the title.

Al Nahda, on the other hand,

are looking to retain their title and continue their success under the leadership of their national coach Hamad al Azani. Al Nahda will rely on their stars, as well as their strong team spirit, to win the match.

On their way to the HM Cup final, Al Nahda scored 5 goals and conceded 2. Dhofar scored 7 goals and conceded 3. Al Nahda qualified for the Round 8 of the competition by defeating Sur 1-0, while Dhofar managed to overcome this hurdle by defeating Saham 2-1.

In the quarterfinals, Al Nahda faced Seeb in an early final over two matches. After a strong show from both sides, Al Nahda managed to secure their place in the semifinals by winning 2- 1 in the first leg,



while the two teams drew 0-0 in the second leg. Dhofar reached the last four by defeating Oman Club by an aggregate score of 4-2 over the two matches, beating Oman Club 2-0 in the first leg and drawing 2-2 in the second leg.

In the semifinals, there was a fierce battle between Al Nahda and Al Nasr, with the former securing their place in the final by drawing 1-1 in the first leg at the Al Buraimi Sports Complex and then winning 1-0 in the second leg at the Al Saada Stadium.

Dhofar reached the final of the prestigious competition at the expense of Bahla, as the first leg ended in a goalless draw, before Dhofar, cheered by the home

crowd, won 1-0, securing their place in the final to face Al Nahda.

It is also worth noting that VAR technology will be used for the first time in Oman in the HM's Cup final at the Khasab Sports Complex in Musandam Governorate.

In addition, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has appointed Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam, to patronise the final of the long-standing tournament.

The match is expected to be a close and exciting affair, with both teams evenly matched.

Dhofar's experience and history in the competition could give them an edge, but Al Nahda will be highly motivated to retain their title.



## Oman Club move to third after thumping Dhofar

AHMED AL KAABI  
MUSCAT, MAY 6

Oman Club secured a well-deserved 3-1 victory over Dhofar in the 20th round of the Omantel League in an exciting match at the Seeb Sports Stadium on Sunday.

The first half started cautiously with both teams approaching the game with a degree of caution. However, Dhofar players quickly took control of the midfield, showcasing organised attacks and a strong desire to score. Their efforts paid off in the 15th minute when Qasim Saeed found the back of the net with a well-placed shot.

As Dhofar took the lead, Oman Club struggled to find their rhythm in the first half. However, the substitutions made by the Oman coach injected new dynamism into the team and improved their performance towards the end of the half.

The second half witnessed a strong comeback from Oman Club as they launched a series of attacks on Dhofar goal for an equaliser. Their persistence was rewarded in the 62nd minute when Mohammed al Ghafri capitalised on an organised opportunity to level the score.

Following the equaliser, Oman continued to dominate the game and managed to add another goal in the 66th minute through Yazeed al Ruwahi, who slotted the ball into the net after a well-placed pass inside Dhofar penalty area.

In the stoppage time, the substitutions made by both coaches added further intrigue to the match, with both teams continuing to press forward in search of a winning goal. Oman Club's determination paid off in the dying moments of the game when a mistake from a Dhofar defender resulted in an own goal,



Dhofar and Oman Club players fight for the ball during the Round 20 match of Omantel League.

sealing Oman's victory. With this win, Oman raised their points tally to 33, snatching third place from Sohar. Dhofar remain in 10th place with 20 points, just above the relegation zone.

**AI RUSTAQ HOLD AL NAHDA**

In another exciting match, Al Nahda and Al Rustaq played to a thrilling 1-1 draw at the Al Buraimi Sports Complex Stadium.

The match started with an early flurry of attacks from Al Nahda, who displayed organised play but lacked the necessary composure to convert their chances into goals. Al Rustaq, on the other hand, adopted a solid defensive approach and relied on swift counter-attacks. As a result, the first half ended in a scoreless draw.

The second half saw Al Nahda intensify their pressure, searching for an early goal to take the lead. Despite creating numerous opportunities, Al Nahda players struggled to find the back of the net until the 61st minute when Terrence Sawbwa headed home a cross from the right flank to put his team ahead.

Al Nahda's lead, however, was short-lived as the referee disallowed a goal for offside in the 79th minute, much to the dismay of the team and their fans.

In the 84th minute, Al Rustaq capitalised on a free-kick opportunity to score the equaliser, restoring hope for a positive result.

As the final whistle blew, neither team could find a winning goal, resulting in a 1-1 draw.

With this result, Al Nahda remain in second place with 40 points, while Al Rustaq move up to fifth place with 26 points.

The draw paves the way for Seeb to clinch the league title with a win or even a draw against Bahla in their upcoming match.

## ‘Splendid’ Narine powers clinical Kolkata to top of IPL



**LUCKNOW, INDIA:** Red-hot Sunil Narine smashed 81 off 39 balls to help Kolkata Knight Riders thrash Lucknow Super Giants by 98 runs and take top spot in IPL table on Sunday.

Narine’s blitz, laced with six fours and seven sixes, guided Kolkata to 235-6 after they were invited to bat first in Lucknow’s final home game.

Two-time champions Kolkata bowled out Lucknow for 137 in 16.1 overs for their eighth win in 11 matches and almost guaranteed a play-off berth. Second-placed Rajasthan Royals have played one match fewer.

In the first game of the day, all-rounder Ravindra Jadeja starred with bat and ball to help holders Chennai Super Kings climb to third with a 28-run win over Punjab Kings.

The top four teams will make the play-offs with the final on May 26 in Chennai.

Narine, who has impressed after being promoted to open by Kolkata this season, led their batting charge in a 61-run first-wicket stand with Phil Salt.

“He was splendid,” Kolkata skipper Shreyas Iyer said of his team’s player of the match Narine, who has amassed 461 runs at a strike-rate of 183.66.

“The start from openers has been great. Pure bliss. We just want to keep continuing the momentum so that we get to the great total and be optimistic.”

Lucknow’s Naveen-ul-Haq took three wickets to hurt KKR but Iyer, who made 23, and Ramandeep Singh, who hit a six-ball 25 not out, helped the team finish on a high.

Ramandeep returned to make an impact in the field as he took a stunning catch to dismiss Arshin Kulkarni when he ran back 21 metres to dive and pouch the ball off the bowling of Mitchell Starc.

Marcus Stoinis hit 36 but the rest of the batting fell flat as spinner Varun Chakravarthy and fast bowler Harshit Rana took three wickets each.

Andre Russell took two wickets and Narine returned figures of 1-22.

### PATHIRANA BLOW FOR CHENNAI

Lucknow are fifth on the table and stay in the hunt for a play-off spot. “Once we go back to dressing room, we move on from this game and see where we went wrong,” said skipper KL Rahul. “Last home game, we are on the road for the next few games, we need to be little bit more fearless.”

In the earlier match, Jadeja top-scored with 43 off 26 balls to guide Chennai to 167-9 batting first in Punjab’s adopted home ground of Dharamsala.

Jadeja then returned figures of 3-20 from his four overs of left-arm spin to help restrict Punjab to 139-9 for Chennai’s sixth win in 11 matches. — AFP

## RUBLEV BATTLES ILLNESS TO CLAIM MADRID OPEN TITLE

**MADRID:** Andrey Rublev won the Madrid Open with a hard-fought 4-6, 7-5, 7-5 victory over Felix Auger-Aliassime on Sunday to secure his second title of the year, despite battling with illness.

The Russian world number eight said he was “almost dead everyday” and could barely sleep this week after securing a career second Masters 1,000 victory.

Rublev had lost four consecutive matches before arriving in the Spanish capital but came from a set down to beat his Canadian opponent.

The 26-year-old triumphed at the Hong Kong Open in January but struggled since before turning around his form in Madrid, dropping just one set on the way to what proved a tense final.

“I think it was an incredible match, Felix deserved (in) the same way as me to win today and we showed a great battle together, I think the most important thing was that the people enjoyed it,” said Rublev on court.

“Our sport is like this, we cannot have both winners.”

Rublev, who takes the Madrid crown from double champion Carlos Alcaraz whom he beat in the quarterfinals, said he had played despite feeling ill at times this week and hailed his doctors for helping him through.

“If you knew what I had been through in the past nine days you would not imagine that I would be able to win a title,” he added.

“I was almost dead everyday, I was not sleeping at night — the last three, four days I didn’t sleep.” Auger-Aliassime reached the final after his opponent Jiri Lehecka retired hurt in the semifinals and quarterfinal opponent Jannik Sinner withdrew with a hip injury, with the ATP draw at the clay-court tournament struck by misfortune.

However the 23-year-old Canadian, ranked 35th in the world, gave everything he had in his first Masters 1,000 final appearance.

### TENSE BATTLE

Auger-Aliassime started superbly by breaking to love in the first game and then again in the fifth game for a 4-1 lead.

Rublev recovered a break when Auger-Aliassime went long, and consolidated for a 4-3 deficit.



Russia’s Andrey Rublev raises his trophy after winning the 2024 ATP Tour Madrid Open final at Caja Magica in Madrid. — AFP

The Russian saved a set point to hold for 5-4 down but Auger-Aliassime clinched it at the second opportunity with a forehand down the line. In the second set the Canadian held for 3-3 with a brilliant drop shot after Rublev spurned a break point.

They stayed on serve until the 12th game when Rublev brought up two set points, converting the

second to take it to a deciding third set. Rublev raced through his service games and put heavy pressure on his opponent’s serve, forcing a break point in the second game and two more in the fourth, none of which he could take.

Auger-Aliassime produced huge serves to fight his way out of tough spots, racking up 14 aces

in the match to Rublev’s seven.

However Rublev dropped just three points on his serve in the third set, while Auger-Aliassime trailed in all of his service games but always battled back, until the decisive 12th game.

Auger-Aliassime double-faulted to hand Rublev the title, with the Russian falling to the floor in delight. — AFP

## Oman Sail’s 49er teams head for European championships

**MUSCAT:** Oman Sail’s 49er teams return to action this week in La Grande Motte, France, as the 2024 49er, 49erFX and Nacra 17 European Championships get underway. The pairings of Musab al Hadi and Waleed al Kindi and Abdulrahman al Maashari and Ahmed al Hasani, will join 71 teams from 25 nations in the 49er competition as a total of 148 crews, including Olympic sailors vying of national selection, look to take home the gold.

The two Omani teams will be battling it out against 11 Olympic qualifiers, in what is the last big meet before the Paris 2024 Sailing Competition. Having narrowly missed out on qualification, all four Omani sailors will be looking to show their skill on the water and continue to improve ahead of a busy second half of the year.

Hashim al Rashdi, Oman Sail’s Head of Performance and 49er coach, said, “the European Championships are a great opportunity to continue

our journey in the 49er competition and compete against some of the very best crews in the world. It is also the start of a new campaign and we’re hopeful of a strong performance in France this week. The conditions and the fleet are very similar to the Olympic competition and the level of competition is expected to be very high. This is our chance to grow as sailors while learning from more experienced competitors in the 49er event.”

Racing officially begins on May 7 after a full day of practice, and will continue until May 12 with three races per day. The first three days have been designated for Qualifying Series races with the top 10 boats in each event moving on to the final series and medal races from May 10-12 where the winners will be decided.

The 2024 49er, 49erFX and Nacra 17 European Championships are organised by the Yacht Club de La Grande Motte in conjunction with the International 49er and Nacra 17 Class Associations.



Oman 49er team participates in one of the international regatta in this file picture.



C H E L S E A  
**DOMINATE**  
IN THRASHING OF HAMMERS

ANDY JALIL  
LONDON, MAY 6

**HAVING SUFFERED** early-season defeat to West Ham, Chelsea hit back strongly in the return fixture with a 5-0 win at home. It was Chelsea's second successive London derby victory in three days after beating Tottenham.

Their delighted manager, Mauricio Pochettino, said: "We need to keep this momentum and belief going. It's step by step but most important is the mentality. Last season was tough and to keep the feelings and performance this season is difficult. We need time for everyone to trust in the process and we have recovered good feelings."

He added: "The assist from Noni (Madueke) to (Nicolas) Jackson showed we learned, we are smart."

Referring to the spat between the two players recently on taking a penalty kick. The manager said: "The situation with the penalty against Everton we received a lot of criticism but a young team needs to make mistakes and to improve."

"Today was a great action of Noni to see how the group is starting to live and feel between them. It is a process that takes time, you never know if it will take one month, six months or a year. But they are starting to feel and live like a group of players with links. I am so pleased for that, helping them grow and be mature."

Chelsea took control of the match early dominating the first half's play. Their first three goals came as a result of bad defensive errors and unable to deal with the pace of Chelsea's attackers and their quick crosses.

They shot into lead within 15 minutes from a cross from Madueke which went to Kurt Zouma, off Jackson's legs, and then fell into Cole Palmer's path. The Chelsea forward, celebrating his 22nd birthday, promptly sent a firm left-footed shot inside the far post.

West Ham's Jarrod Bowen was unlucky to have a shot hit the bar almost immediately but on the half-hour Chelsea doubled the lead.

Zouma had blocked a shot from Madueke but the ball went to Conor Gallagher who hammered in a right-footed shot.

Chelsea were in total control and their third goal in the 36th minute from a corner. The ball was headed down across the 6-yard box by Thiago Silva and from the bounce an unmarked Madueke swiftly

headed in. Chelsea's last two goals were scored by Jackson. His first came just three minutes after the break when Trevoh Chalobah put a long ball up-field which Madueke picked up and unselfishly slid to Jackson on his left to tap in.

To add to the Hammers' embarrassment, with ten minutes remaining and just after West Ham had hit the bar for the third time, Jackson, from a ball from Moises Caicedo and on a one-on-one with the goalkeeper, put a low shot into the net.

West Ham's manager, David Moyes, said: "Not good, we were lacking toughness, leadership and mental toughness. We've had two away games where we've conceded five. The manager will always take the responsibility because that's what you do in this job, you have to prepare them and get them right."

He added: "Somewhere along the line the players have to take responsibility for doing their jobs, being hard to play against, being aggressive and competitive. I question if we were all that in the first half."

Chelsea's Conor Gallagher celebrates scoring their second goal. — Reuters



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# Added value of private enterprises in Oman reaches RO 8.85 billion



The contribution of enterprises to the GDP reached 81.2% in Q4 2023.

MUSCAT: The total value added of private sector enterprises actively operating in the Sultanate of Oman for Q4 2023 amounted to RO 8.85 billion, according to preliminary statistics released by the National Center for Statistics and Information.

The statistics indicated that the contribution of actively operating enterprises to the gross domestic product at current prices reached 81.2% in Q4 2023 compared to 84% in Q4 2022.

The value added of large enterprises reached RO 6.58 billion, accounting for 60.4%, a decrease of 6.5% compared to the same quarter of 2022.

The value added of medium enterprises was RO 681.9 million, accounting for 6.3%, a decrease of 3.2%. The value added of small enterprises was RO 718.6 million, accounting for 6.6%, a decrease of 2%.

The total value added of micro establishments was RO 870.7

million, accounting for 8%, an increase of 0.7%.

The number of employees in actively operating private sector enterprises in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 6.4%, reaching 1.82 million workers during the Q4 2023, compared to 1.71 million workers during the Q4 2022.

The number of establishments was 240,765, showing an increase of 8.7% compared to the same period in 2022. — ONA

# MSX forum highlights importance of Shariah Index

HIBBA AL KINDI  
MUSCAT, MAY 6

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) hosted the 'Shariah Index - Economic Prospects' forum here on Monday, May 6, 2024, under the auspices of Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy. The event — held in collaboration with Alizz Islamic Bank — aimed to highlight the significance of the Shariah Index and its role in promoting Shariah-compliant investment.

In remarks to journalists, Haitham bin Salem al Salmi, Chief Executive Officer of Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), underscored the significance of the Shariah Index: "The Shariah Index was launched in 2013, with its main objective being to classify companies according to their compliance with Islamic Shariah requirements, as well as to sort them according to the standards of Islamic financial and accounting standards used in all Islamic countries, and thus apply these standards. Companies are classified so that they are known as Shariah-compliant and Shariah-compatible."

The CEO added, "In the recent period, there has been a significant and radical change in Islamic financial transactions in the Sultanate of Oman, the most prominent of which is the presence of Islamic banks and Islamic



Forum on Shariah Index hosted by the MSX.

windows, as well as their growth during the past periods.

Therefore, there must be special initiatives in Islamic investment so that these banks can also expand their customer base to invest in these instruments. We trust that the forum serves as an ideal platform to highlight the importance of various aspects of the Shariah Index."

Ali bin Saeed al Maani, CEO - Alizz Islamic Bank, highlighted the potential of the Islamic banking sector in driving the economy. "The Islamic banking sector has significant opportunities to contribute to driving the economy forward and uplifting partners, whether individuals or institutions.

We hope to emerge from this forum with important recommendations that address the processes of refinement,

improvement, and raising awareness of the economic roles of the monthly index of the Muscat Stock Exchange, and to enrich the ideas that will be discussed with international experiences that enhance performance efficiency."

The forum included various papers, and panel discussions that discussed various topics including investment funds, regulatory frameworks, and charitable investments.

First launched in 2013, the MSX Shariah Index (MSXSI) measures the performance of companies that comply with the requirements of Islamic Shariah, based on standards issued by the Accounting and Auditing Organization for Islamic Financial Institutions (AAOIFI). The index has 15 constituents, which are reviewed on a quarterly basis.

## NCSI WINS AWARD IN DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

KUWAIT: The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) won the 'His Highness Shaikh Salem al Ali al Sabah Informatics Award' in its 23rd session in the Digital Transformation in Sustainable Development category for the 2020 Electronic Census of Population, Housing and Establishments project.

The award was received by Dr Khalifa bin Abdullah al Barwani, CEO of NCSI, during a ceremony held yesterday at Bayan Al-Amer Palace in the Kuwaiti capital, under the auspices of HH Shaikh Meshaal al Ahmad al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait.

Dr Al Barwani stressed that this award comes in appreciation of the efforts made by the Centre in digital transformation in statistical and information work, digitising data and using it to enhance knowledge and support decision-making in order to enhance the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The 2020 electronic census contributed to creating a renewed information system linking various government agencies, which enabled it to implement a census of population, housing and establishments in the years 2021, 2022 and 2023 with minimal human effort and without financial cost and in a time period not exceeding 7 working days. — ONA



The award was received by Dr Khalifa bin Abdullah al Barwani, CEO of National Centre for Statistics and Information.

# ABRAJ

## ENERGY SERVICES SAOG

### CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

**Dear Shareholders,**  
On behalf of the Board of Directors of Abraj Energy Services SAOG, I am pleased to present the condensed interim financial statements for the first quarter of 2024 and for the three-month period ended 30th March 2024.

The Company is focused on providing services around Oil and Gas Wells, during and post wells construction. From building a wider service portfolio, Abraj now focuses on strategic top-tier services coupled with strong operational efficiency to realize maximum financial returns and sustainable growth. Abraj continues to benefit from the strength of long-term contracts in generating sufficient cash flow for growth.

#### HSE:

Abraj HSE performance in Q1 2024 was excellent as there was no Loss Time Incident (LTI), or recordable incident or any other major incident in Q1 2024. All Units have achieved unit KPI target score in Q1 2024 as per defined criteria. ISO 14001 re-certification audit completed successfully in Q1 2024.

#### Company Financial Performance

##### Key Financials of your company: -

- Revenue has increased during the three months period ended 31st March 2024, compared to the same period of 2023 by 17.70% from OMR 33.339 M to OMR 39.239 M.
- Total expense during three-month period ended 31st March 2024 has increased compared to the same period in 2023 by 8.4 % from OMR 30.8079 M to OMR 33.4 M. This is mainly due to the increase in Rig Move cost as additional revenue stream and as well the increase in manpower cost.
- Profit after tax for the period ended 31st March 2024 Increased by 128.28% to OMR 5.9 M from OMR 2.6 M for the same period in 2023.

#### Segment Performances – Q1 -2024:

##### Drilling and Workover

Abraj is seeking to increase its regional operations post penetrating the Kuwaiti drilling market with the award of 3 drilling rigs with KGOC which started its operations during the first quarter in 2024. Abraj fleet remained at 25 Drilling rigs with 100% utilization for our drilling rigs and 100% utilization for workover rigs. Our national market share remains at 29% for drilling rigs and becoming the leader and national champion of Oman in the drilling rig market.

##### Well Services and Others

The company maintains its operations in Well services having 20% market share for the core services and progressively expanding this market share by outperforming service quality and New Technology differentiation being a trusted technical provider for all our customers.

#### Acknowledgements:

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I take this opportunity to express their sincere and deep gratitude to the vision and wise leadership of the country's leader His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for maintaining the sustainable growth and prosperity of the Omani Economy. Abraj Board also appreciates the valuable support and guidance from the various stakeholders such as Government agencies, Shareholders, Clients, Management, Employees, Bankers, and Suppliers.

**Ayad Al Balushi**  
Chairman of the Board

**Note:** The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder in Arabic or English as requested, within 7 days of receipt of the request.

### CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

|                                              | 31 March 2024<br>(Unaudited)<br>RO'000 | 31 Dec 2023<br>(Audited)<br>RO'000 |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>ASSETS</b>                                |                                        |                                    |
| <b>Non-current assets</b>                    |                                        |                                    |
| Property and equipment                       | 191,255                                | 191,405                            |
| Right-of-use assets                          | 4,785                                  | 5,502                              |
| Intangible assets                            | 210                                    | 231                                |
| Deferred tax assets                          | 429                                    | 426                                |
| Deferred expenses – non-current              | 87                                     | 94                                 |
| Capex advances                               | 9,303                                  | 4,546                              |
| <b>Total non-current assets</b>              | <b>206,069</b>                         | <b>202,204</b>                     |
| <b>Current assets</b>                        |                                        |                                    |
| Trade receivables                            | 41,898                                 | 39,448                             |
| Advances, prepayments, and other receivables | 2,440                                  | 2,937                              |
| Deferred expenses – current                  | 74                                     | 25                                 |
| Inventories                                  | 26,096                                 | 23,786                             |
| Cash and cash equivalents                    | 5,601                                  | 8,071                              |
| <b>Total current assets</b>                  | <b>76,109</b>                          | <b>74,267</b>                      |
| <b>Total assets</b>                          | <b>282,178</b>                         | <b>276,471</b>                     |
| <b>EQUITY AND LIABILITIES</b>                |                                        |                                    |
| <b>Capital and reserves</b>                  |                                        |                                    |
| Share capital                                | 77,020                                 | 77,020                             |
| Legal reserve                                | 11,313                                 | 10,718                             |
| Retained earnings                            | 47,066                                 | 58,040                             |
| <b>Total equity</b>                          | <b>135,399</b>                         | <b>145,778</b>                     |
| <b>Non-current liabilities</b>               |                                        |                                    |
| Term loans – non-current portion             | 68,752                                 | 72,060                             |
| Deferred income - non-current portion        | 944                                    | 1,094                              |
| Deferred tax liabilities                     | 4,275                                  | 4,407                              |
| Employees' end of services benefits          | 2,370                                  | 2,218                              |
| Lease liabilities - non-current portion      | 2,506                                  | 3,565                              |
| <b>Total non-current liabilities</b>         | <b>78,847</b>                          | <b>83,344</b>                      |
| <b>Current liabilities</b>                   |                                        |                                    |
| Term loans - current portion                 | 13,232                                 | 13,232                             |
| Lease liabilities – current                  | 2,557                                  | 2,212                              |
| Trade payables                               | 33,606                                 | 16,401                             |
| Other payables                               | 13,764                                 | 12,068                             |
| Deferred income - current portion            | 909                                    | 762                                |
| Income tax payable                           | 3,864                                  | 2,674                              |
| <b>Total current liabilities</b>             | <b>67,932</b>                          | <b>47,349</b>                      |
| <b>Total liabilities</b>                     | <b>146,779</b>                         | <b>130,693</b>                     |
| <b>Total equity and liabilities</b>          | <b>282,178</b>                         | <b>276,471</b>                     |

### CONDENSED INTERIM STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE THREE MONTHS PERIOD ENDED 31 MARCH (UNAUDITED)

|                                                    | 31 March 2024<br>(Unaudited)<br>RO'000 | 31 March 2023<br>(Unaudited)<br>RO'000 |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| Revenue from contracts with customers              | 39,239                                 | 33,339                                 |
| Cost of sales                                      | (29,054)                               | (27,130)                               |
| <b>Gross profit</b>                                | <b>10,185</b>                          | <b>6,209</b>                           |
| General and administrative expenses                | (1,817)                                | (1,419)                                |
| Other expenses                                     | (27)                                   | (98)                                   |
| Other income                                       | -                                      | 14                                     |
| Expected credit loss reversal on trade receivables | -                                      | 204                                    |
| <b>Operating profit</b>                            | <b>8,341</b>                           | <b>4,910</b>                           |
| Finance costs                                      | (1,410)                                | (1,864)                                |
| Finance income                                     | 73                                     | 44                                     |
| <b>Net Finance costs</b>                           | <b>(1,337)</b>                         | <b>(1,820)</b>                         |
| <b>Profit before tax</b>                           | <b>7,004</b>                           | <b>3,090</b>                           |
| Taxation                                           | (1,055)                                | (484)                                  |
| <b>Profit for the period</b>                       | <b>5,949</b>                           | <b>2,606</b>                           |
| <b>Other comprehensive income for the period</b>   |                                        |                                        |
| <b>Total comprehensive income for the period</b>   | <b>5,949</b>                           | <b>2,606</b>                           |
| <b>Earnings per share</b>                          |                                        |                                        |
| Basic and diluted earnings per share-Balza         | 7.7                                    | 3.4                                    |

# BankDhofar high yield saving account offers competitive interest rates of up to 4.25%

MUSCAT: As part of BankDhofar’s constant endeavour to help customers achieve their financial goals that suit their future aspirations, the bank continues to offer a high-yield account to obtain an interest rate of up to 4.25%, which is calculated on a daily balance at the end of each day, to be added to the customer’s account at the beginning of the subsequent month.

The high-yield savings account includes a number of features that allow customers to achieve their financial goals at an accelerated pace, as the account provides a world of convenience and possibilities, whether as an account for daily transactions, optimal returns on funds, or access to various services such as debit and credit cards, and term deposits and insurance options.

Additionally, customers can access the account around the clock via the mobile application and online banking services, and



the ease of conducting banking transactions through ATMs, cash deposits, direct debit cards, and the cardless withdrawal feature.

An existing customer of BankDhofar can open a high-yield saving account, via the mobile application. New customers can

open a High Yield Saving Account via our Intilaqa App or can visit one of the bank’s 118 branches conveniently located throughout the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.

BankDhofar is one of the leading banks in the region,

providing integrated banking services to the corporate and the individual customers, as well as commercial financing services. It also works to meet customers needs by implementing the best international practices in the world of banking and finance.

The bank continuously seeks to enrich the banking services provided to customers by developing products based on their needs.

The Bank is aligned to the government’s Vision 2040 and build the proposition with a commitment to drive economic growth and development in Oman.

BankDhofar is also committed to keeping pace with digital developments that appear from time to time in the world through a huge investment in technology, in addition to adopting innovative strategies to improve customer experience, simplifying operations, and provide a comprehensive set of digital services.

The bank recently launched “Dhofar-Pay”, a service the bank provides to customers that allows them to pay via smart phones easily and safely without the need to use a debit card.

## Applications open for Asyad Accelerator Programme



MUSCAT: Asyad Group, Oman’s global integrated logistics provider, in partnership with Omantel Innovation Labs, has opened applications for its highly anticipated Asyad Accelerator Programme.

This initiative marks a significant milestone in enhancing Oman’s technology and logistics sectors by supporting the nation’s most innovative technology startups.

Focused on supply chain optimisation, sustainable logistics and cold chain logistics, the six-month accelerator programme is designed to empower early-stage Omani startups that are developing cutting-edge solutions to address key challenges and seize opportunities within the logistics industry. This effort aligns with Asyad’s commitment to bolster SMEs and foster entrepreneurship throughout Oman.

Participants in the Asyad Accelerator Programme will benefit from expert mentorship in financial viability, market desirability, technical feasibility, and fundraising strategies. The programme also offers a comprehensive perks package that grants access to global resources such as legal, accounting, bookkeeping, and cloud computing services.

Moreover, startups enrolled in the programme will have a unique opportunity to secure potential investment from Omantel Innovation Labs and connect with a global network of mentors, corporate partners, and investors.

Khalfan al khusaibi, Group In- Country Value Lead at Asyad Group emphasised the programme’s role in the regional logistics landscape: “Our mission at Asyad Group is to propel the development of Oman as a global logistics hub through our integrated logistics ecosystem. We strongly believe in the vital role of the private sector, especially SMEs, in achieving this mission.

This programme is Asyad’s call to innovative, visionary entrepreneurs to join us in redefining the future of logistics in Oman and beyond. Through this targeted accelerator, we look forward to enabling Oman’s most promising startups to grow and thrive.”

To be considered for this opportunity, eligible startups should demonstrate that they are developing proprietary solutions with potential to enhance Asyad Group’s operations. Applicants should have a minimum viable product and be ready to scale. Earlier stage companies and technology startups outside of the programme’s focus areas will be considered based on relevance and viability.

Startups can apply online before June 25, by visiting this link <https://www.f6s.com/asyad-omantel-accelerator-program/apply>.

## Ooredoo named Oman’s top brand in telecoms



MUSCAT: Ooredoo was chosen as the “Top Omani Brand” in the telecoms category based on a survey conducted by *Alam Al-Iktisaad Wal Aamal* (AIWA).

Always putting the consumer front and centre, Ooredoo has won the accolade for its commitment to consistently delivering on its brand promise. The telco aims to upgrade the world of its diverse customer base by providing seamless, omnichannel, and digital-first experiences.

Bassam bin Yousef al Ibrahim, the Chief Executive Officer of Ooredoo received the award during the “Top Omani Brand Awards” ceremony, held under the auspices of Shaikh Salim bin Mustahail al Maashani.

Ooredoo is committed to meeting its customers’ ever-changing and specific needs by offering innovative products, services, and tailored solutions.

To learn more about Ooredoo’s award-winning products and services, please visit [www.ooredoo.om](http://www.ooredoo.om) or head the multi-award-winning app.

## Royal Oman Police and Bank Muscat continue partnership for anti-fraud campaign

MUSCAT: With the increased popularity of digital channels due to the ease with which they bring services closer and enable transaction processes, criminal activities from all over the world have been on the rise to scam the public through a variety of deceptive methods via these channels.

Against this background, the Royal Oman Police and Bank Muscat have announced that they continue to partner closely in implementing a joint anti-fraud campaign for the fifth consecutive year. The campaign focuses on raising public’s awareness about this phenomenon among different institutions and individuals in

the community.

The awareness campaign will be carried out as part of social responsibility efforts of both institutions using various media channels including Oman TV, radio, print, online media, and social media.

This year, the campaign will include a number of new programmes and topics reflecting the more recent deceptive activities used by criminals.

The public can easily contact the Royal Oman Police hotline at 80077444 to report fraud or for any fraud-related queries.

The campaign launched this year will be supported by a number of new awareness

messages in various media channels, websites and electronic newspapers to reduce the consequences of falling for fraud.

Criminals use multiple methods such as sending phishing e-mails or links to employees and members of the community in general. People can also fall for fraud when playing online games or making online purchases without verifying the persons or entities being dealt with.

With cases of electronic fraud increasing globally and often causing tremendous financial and psychological harm to both individuals and businesses, Bank Muscat has further strengthened its efforts to combat this crime

by partnering regularly with a number of institutions and authorities including the Royal Oman Police, Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and other institutions.

The campaign sought to help the public recognise fraud and avoid falling prey to it.

Royal Oman Police and Bank Muscat will continue during the coming period to spread new messages reflecting the importance of never sharing personal details with anyone, including those claiming to be a bank employee or an official as this is an essential first step to defend oneself against criminal activities.

## Khedmah Pay E-Wallet lauded at Top Omani Brands 2024

MUSCAT: Recognised for its pioneering role in shaping the Sultanate of Oman’s digital payments landscape, ‘Khedmah Pay’, the E-wallet service for digital payments by Oman Investment and Finance Company OIFC (Khedmah), was titled the ‘Top Omani Brand in Digital Payments’ at the Top Omani Brands Awards 2024 held on April 29.

The prestigious award ceremony was hosted by Alam Al-Iktisaad, the leading Arabic business publication in the Sultanate of Oman, to honour the accomplishments of leading Omani brands. Chief Guest, HH Sayyid Mohammed bin Thuwaini al Said presented the award to Said bin Ahmed Safrar, Chief Executive Officer, Oman Investment and Finance Company OIFC (Khedmah), during the ceremony.

This distinguished accolade is a testament to the depth of advancements that Khedmah Pay has introduced to Oman’s digital payment landscape, reflecting its unique commitment to delivering a seamless and secure digital payment experience.

Khedmah Pay allows customers to open an

Category – Digital Payments

Khedmah Pay



E-wallet account through simplified processes. Subsequently, they can add funds to the wallet, enabling them to make payments through the Khedmah Pay mobile app.

This includes paying bills, recharging mobile and electricity balances, subscribing to entertainment channels, settling traffic fines, and insuring their vehicles, among other available services in the app.

Khedmah Pay users enjoy the convenience

of recharging their e-wallets, embedded in the popular Khedmah mobile app, and making payments by simply scanning QR codes at various shops, stores, and hypermarkets, or by transferring to the phone number associated with the bank account.

Recharging the E-wallet is flexible, allowing users to link it to their existing bank accounts or conveniently replenish it with cash at any of Khedmah’s branches throughout the Sultanate, thereby catering to individuals without a bank account.

Said bin Ahmed Safrar remarked, “We are delighted by this prestigious accolade, which underscores the leading position that Khedmah has achieved in Oman’s digital payment landscape through its provision of exceptional and unique digital solutions.

The award shines a spotlight on the significant role played by Khedmah Pay E-wallet in advancing Oman’s digital transformation efforts towards broader horizons of growth and development. It serves as impetus to continue enhancing our digital payments solutions to meet the evolving needs of our customers.”



## RO 16 million beverage plant to come up in Samayil Industrial City



**BUSINESS REPORTER**  
MUSCAT, MAY 6

Samayil Industrial City – part of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), has signed an agreement with Al Khayal Business and Investment Company to establish a beverages and fruit juices plant with an investment of RO 16 million over two phases.

Separately, Madayn has also invited investors to set up and operate the Medical Fitness Examination Centre in Samayil Industrial City.

The facility will provide top-tier healthcare services to the workforce of the industrial city and the surrounding population. Located just off the Expressway, the centre features 1,100 sq metres of built-up area for hosting laboratories, clinics, X-ray facilities, offices, among other facilities.

# Oman delegation reviews Singapore's experience in clean energy, arbitration

MUSCAT: During its recent visit to the Republic of Singapore, a delegation from the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) engaged in fruitful discussions with officials at the Singapore Centre for International Arbitration.

The 25-member delegation, consisting of the Chamber's Board of Directors, sectoral committee heads, and representatives from various industries such as small and medium enterprises, healthcare, construction, education and innovation, as well as companies involved in real estate, transportation, logistics, digital economy, artificial intelligence, finance and insurance, convened at the centre.

Minister Plenipotentiary Anwar bin Ahmed al Muqabil, Chargé d'Affaires of the Sultanate of Oman in Singapore, also graced the meeting with his presence.

Mustafa bin Ahmed Salman, a Board member of OCCI and Chairman of the Finance and



The delegation toured the Urban Redevelopment Authority building, gaining insights into Singapore's urban development and infrastructure planning achievements.

Insurance Committee, lauded the centre as a globally significant institution. He emphasised the chamber's intention to

leverage the centre's expertise in commercial arbitration, fostering an environment of heightened awareness about the pivotal role

such centres play in resolving commercial disputes.

Apart from their visit to the Singapore Centre for International

Arbitration, the delegation also toured the Urban Redevelopment Authority building, gaining insights into Singapore's urban development and infrastructure planning achievements.

They delved into the rich history of Singapore's development journey and were briefed on the city-state's urban planning standards. Additionally, a technical presentation outlining Singapore's past, present and future development endeavours left a lasting impression on the delegation.

As part of their itinerary, the delegation visited one of Singapore's leading clean energy contracting companies to explore the company's milestones in the realm of solar energy.

Of particular interest was the company's undertaking to install solar panels in the Wilayat of Manah in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, which will generate a substantial 300 megawatts of energy.

## Oman oil price reaches \$83.93 per barrel



**MUSCAT:** Oman oil price (July delivery 2024) yesterday reached \$83.93 per barrel, comprising a drop by 9 cents from the price of last (Friday) which stood at \$84.02. The average price of Oman oil (May delivery 2024) has stabilised at \$78.49 per barrel, thus \$3.74 per barrel lower than April delivery 2024.

Meanwhile, oil futures climbed on Monday after Saudi Arabia hiked June crude prices for most regions and as the prospect of a Gaza ceasefire deal appeared slim, renewing fears the Israel-Hamas conflict could still widen in the key oil-producing region.

Brent crude futures were up 43 cents, or 0.5%, to \$82.83 a barrel at 1300 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude futures were at \$77.99 a barrel, up 51 cents, or 0.7%.

Last week, both futures contracts posted their steepest weekly loss in three months, with Brent falling more than 7% and WTI down 6.8%, as investors weighed weak US jobs data and the possible timing of a Federal Reserve interest rate cut.

— **ONA/Reuters**

## MSX to deliver ESG 30 metrics masterclass

**BUSINESS REPORTER**  
MUSCAT, MAY 6

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), in partnership with Crowe Oman, will conduct a collaborative two-day workshop on MSX – ESG 30 Metrics. The programme will be held on May 7 - 8 at the Novotel Hotel.

This timely workshop has been designed to equip participants with the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate the evolving landscape of Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) reporting.

Launched in September 2023, the MSX guidelines mandate Sustainability Reporting for SAOG companies, with voluntary disclosure encouraged in 2024 and mandatory compliance by March 2025.

The workshop caters to participants seeking to bridge the gap between their existing ESG knowledge and the practical application of reporting on their company's sustainability performance.

The workshop agenda delves into overcoming challenges associated with ESG reporting, including greenhouse gas (GHG) emission identification and calculation.



Carefully designed to align with the latest International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) Sustainability Standards (S1 and S2) and the Global Reporting Initiative (GRI) standards, the workshop provides participants with a comprehensive understanding of ESG reporting best practices.

Delivery will be from seasoned ESG professionals from Crowe Oman and Crowe Spain (one of the leading ESG services providers in Europe, with close ties to the EU Standards setting bodies) with proven experience in the field.

Participants will benefit from first hand insights and practical guidance on implementing effective ESG reporting strategies.

The workshop will also feature introductory remarks from the CEO of the MSX, underscoring the importance of ESG reporting within the Omani market, in alignment with the Net-Zero emissions ambition of Oman Vision 2040.

Participants will leave equipped with a range of valuable skills, including understanding the IFRS and GRI standards for sustainability reporting; navigating the ESG disclosure requirements of the MSX; measuring and reporting on environmental, social and governance performance indicators; and communicating their company's sustainability journey and alignment with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

## Omani-Brazilian Investment Forum to launch on Tuesday

**NASRULAH AL AMI**  
MUSCAT, MAY 6

The highly anticipated Omani-Brazilian Investment Forum is scheduled to kick off at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Tuesday, May 7, under the auspices of Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

This forum holds particular significance as it coincides with celebrations commemorating the 50th anniversary of diplomatic ties between the Sultanate of Oman and Brazil.

Organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the event promises to be a pivotal moment in bilateral relations.

With a forward-looking agenda, the forum is strategically designed to align with Oman Vision 2040, focusing on economic diversification and positioning Oman as a pivotal hub for re-exporting to key markets across Asia, North and



Vale's steel complex at Sohar Port represents one of Brazil's biggest investments in Oman.

East Africa. Delving into various sectors, including investment, clean energy, re-exporting, heavy industries, food security and information technology, the forum aims to spotlight lucrative investment opportunities in both Oman and the Federal Republic of Brazil.

Moreover, the forum will serve as a platform for fostering partnerships and collaborations between the two nations, facilitating the exchange of knowledge, experiences and expertise across a spectrum of fields. From research and innovation to agriculture, space and mining, the forum seeks to nurture robust bilateral relations and cooperation, particularly within the private sector.

# CBO allocates RO 85.5m in government treasury bills

**MUSCAT:** The Central Bank of Oman has announced that government treasury bills totalling RO 85.5 million have been allocated for the week. These treasury bills are short-term financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance to offer investment opportunities for licensed commercial banks, with the Central Bank of Oman overseeing the issuance.

For bills maturing in 28 days, an amount of RO 6.5 million was allocated at an average acceptable price of RO 99.647 per RO 100.

The lowest acceptable price was RO 99.645, with an average discount rate of 4.59760% and an average return of 4.61387%.

Bills maturing in 91 days were allocated RO 17 million, with an average acceptable price of RO 98.745 per 100.

The lowest acceptable price was RO 98.740, with an average discount rate of 5.03497% and an average return of 5.09898%. For bills maturing in 182 days, an amount of RO 42 million was allocated at an average acceptable



price of RO 97.450 per 100.

The lowest acceptable price

was RO 97.445, with an average discount rate of 5.11449% and

an average return of 5.24833%. Furthermore, notes maturing in 364 days were allocated RO 20 million, with an average acceptable price of 95.160 Omani riyals per RO 100.

The lowest acceptable price was RO 95.160, with an average discount rate of 4.85330% and an average return of 5.10014%.

The statement also mentioned that the interest rate on repurchase operations (repo) with the Central Bank of Oman for these bills is 6.00%, while the discount rate with the Central Bank on treasury

bill facilities is 6.50%.

These treasury bills provide a rapid liquidation feature by discounting them with the Central Bank of Oman and through repo transactions with the Central Bank. Licensed commercial banks can also conduct repo operations among themselves on these bills in the interbank market.

This financial tool helps set short-term interest rates in the local financial market and provides flexibility for the government to fund certain expenditures smoothly. — **ONA**

# Artificial Intelligence in simple English



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The author is Knowledge Oman Founder knowledgeoman.com

Almost every place you go, see, speak with or even experience, has an Artificial Intelligence mention, tag, element, component or even inclusion around it in one way or another.

The two recent conferences I attended, one in Spain (for the Mobile World Congress) and the other in Dubai (for the Global Information Security Conference), both themes revolved around Artificial Intelligence.

The words Artificial Intelligence (also known as AI) may sound gibberish to some yet

may many pretend to understand it all, but only to limit it to a new technological advancement that is only seen in the movies.

Believe it or not, Artificial Intelligence is real, and you may be, in one way or another, interacting with it (most probably) in almost every area of your life, in every couple of minutes, even when are asleep (no thanks to wearable technologies).

My article this week (as I promised last week) is to simplify the definition so as illustrate to you some practical and personal use cases of the same.

So what is Artificial Intelligence anyways? Quite simply, a smart device/computer that is given (fed into with) right data as a form of information to act, make decisions, and solve real-world problems without humans intervention.

These computers learn from the vast information (a.k.a. Big data, something I will also write about in the near future) that it gets from the various systems that generates these data on a periodic basis, for instance, the smart devices and wearables (watch,

glass, phone, TV, refrigerators, metering system etc).

In brief, think of AI as machines that behave (act) more like humans.

Artificially intelligent machines can remember behaviour patterns and adapt their responses to conform to those behaviours.

Scary eh? Yes I know and I will write in the near future a complete article on how these systems will penetrate not just business but every facet of our personal lives (yes, it has both positive and negative implications too).

Now that you have a basic understanding of the AI, lets look at some of the real-world and practical applications and usage of AI.

Gone were the days where you would depend on a printed map or direction in order to commute from one place, state or a country to another.

Using digital maps (e.g. Google maps) on your phone, you can easily find where to go, which route to take and the best way to arrive/reach your destination (again thanks to AI powering the

same, behind the scenes).

The search you do (be it for movies, books, music, etc) online and the suggestions along with personalisation you get as an outcome/result is again powered by AI.

The chatbot you use to communicate with some companies customer service departments are powered by AI.

The ChatGPT that everyone seems to be talking about lately is also powered by AI. Other leading technology solutions providers around the world have too jumped the bandwagon to introduce their own AI solutions (that are competitive too). Everything you talk to and interact with, will be powered by AI.

The content you see and the kind of information you receive via your social media and network accounts and feeds are powered by AI.

The digital assistant (like Apple's Siri, Microsoft Cortona or Amazon Echo) that you may be using on your phone or even in the car are powered by AI. All interactions you have with them are fully managed by AI

(yes not from a human, but via a smart computer).

When you enter into some of the offices, some CCTV cameras and access control systems actually identify who you are (facial recognition and bio-metric technology) powered by AI.

Obviously, there are many use-cases but I hope you have a basic idea of what an Artificial Intelligence is, how it works and how it also impacts you and everything around you, personally.

What is Oman doing in as far as AI is concerned? AI action plan, which was unveiled in Oman on August 2022, seeks secure a place for the country among the world's top 40 AI-ready countries within 2 years.

Target for 2024 is to improve Oman's ranking in the Global AI readiness index.

We are today ranked 53rd out of 180 countries. Goal is to be in the top 40 by 2025. The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) has attracted investments worth RO 30 million in the field of AI in 2023, as a result of growing number of AI

startups in the country.

The government is actively working with academic institutions to launch AI industry programmes and increase AI-related research papers.

This year itself, the Ministry of Economy approved and allocated the budget of RO 15 million for AI projects.

Oman's KPI for AI include increasing AI investment in the country, increase startups and stimulate research and innovation in AI.

To conclude, I would like to emphasise that AI powers almost everything today and will do so tomorrow, be it voice assistants on your mobile phone, smartwatch, TV etc to personalised recommendations you get via streaming media services (e.g Netflix, Hulu, Amazon prime, Shahid TV, etc), to books you browse (via Amazon), to music you download via Apple & Spotify and the likes.

In the near future, self-driving (autonomous) cars will too be powered by AI.

The sky is surely not the limit. Until we catch up again next week, stay positive and be safe.

## Big Oil finds more to love in deepwater exploration fields

As Big Oil returns this week to the industry's annual showcase for offshore energy projects and equipment in Houston, deepwater discoveries off Guyana, Namibia and the US Gulf Coast will take the spotlight.

Offshore exploration had dimmed after the US shale boom ushered in new and cheaper-to-tap supplies of oil, and as past offshore cost overruns pushed deepwater projects onto the industry's back burner.

Newer deepwater projects have the attributes oil and gas companies are looking for: longer-term production, lower breakeven costs, big resource potentials and lower carbon emissions, said Pablo Medina, head of new ventures at energy consultants Wellelligence. "Deepwater is back in vogue," Medina said.

Capital spending on all-new deepwater drilling is poised to hit a 12-year high next year, predicts consultancy Rystad Energy. Investment in all-new and existing deepwater fields could hit \$130.7 billion in 2027, a 30% jump over 2023, it said.

"The return of offshore and deepwater operations is going to be a big topic at OTC, and Namibia is going to be talk of the show," said James West, senior managing director at financial firm Evercore, referring to the series of oil finds off the west African coast.

With crude oil prices above \$70 a barrels, energy producers can expect a return on their multi-billion-dollar deepwater projects in six years, a relatively short period considering the wells' longer lives compared with shale, explained Matt Hale, vice president of supply chain research at Rystad, at the Rystad Energy Forum in Houston.

Deepwater resources also offer lower carbon emissions intensity than shale and other tight oils, averaging 2 kg of carbon dioxide per barrel less than shale, Hale said. That appeals to investors seeking safer bets as environmental regulations tighten.

Enthusiasm for offshore has climbed with discoveries and technology breakthroughs. Namibia's Mopane is forecast to hold as much as 10 billion barrels of oil, Portuguese oil company Galp Energia said

Chevron and TotalEnergies have made a breakthrough in ultra-high pressure environments with their Anchor project in the Gulf of Mexico, the world's first to operate at once-unfathomable 20,000 pounds per square inch (psi) pressures.

The Anchor platform is preparing to start production off the Louisiana coast, and at its peak will produce up to 75,000 barrels per day (bpd) of crude and operate for 30 years.

The Stabroek block off the coast of Guyana has demonstrated the potential for low cost production that rivals the best deepwater fields elsewhere.

Over the next six years, more than half of its recoverable resources are expected pump at a breakeven price of less than \$30 per barrel, according to Rystad. That is comparable to the breakeven on about 80% of deepwater recoverable resources off Norway, Rystad estimates.— Reuters

## China buys gold like there's no tomorrow



DAISUKE WAKABAYASHI

The author is an Asia business correspondent for *The Times* based in Seoul, covering economic, corporate and geopolitical stories from the region.

As gold surged this year to its highest price ever, Xena Lin joined the frenzy by making monthly purchases of gold "beans," pebble-like morsels of the precious metal.

For Lin, a 25-year-old administrative worker in southern China, the \$80 beans — small enough to rest on a fingertip and weighing about one-thirtieth of an ounce — were an affordable way to buy into the gold excitement without splurging for jewellery, gold bars or coins. She had dabbled with investing in stocks in the past, but she said buying gold, especially in this fun way, inspired her to continue investing.

"I'm still working hard to save more," Lin said.

Often considered a safe investment during times of geopolitical and economic turmoil, gold has soared in price in response to Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the war in the Gaza Strip. But gold's climb to highs above \$2,400 per ounce has proved more resilient, and lasted longer, because of China.

Chinese consumers have flocked to gold as their confidence in traditional investments like real estate or stocks has faltered.

At the same time, the country's central bank has steadily added to its gold reserves, while whittling away at its holdings of US debt. And throwing fuel on the fire are Chinese speculators betting that there is still room for appreciation.



A man arranges gold displays at a gold shop in Beijing. — Reuters

China already held considerable sway in gold markets. But the country's influence has become more pronounced during this latest bull run — a nearly 50% increase in the global price since late 2022. It continued to scale new heights despite factors that traditionally make gold a comparatively less appealing investment: higher interest rates and a strong US dollar. Last month, gold prices vaulted higher even after the Federal Reserve signalled that it would keep higher interest rates for longer. And it has continued to appreciate even as the dollar has risen against almost every major currency in the world this year.

Prices have pulled back to around \$2,300 per ounce, but there is a growing sentiment that the gold market is governed no longer by economic factors but by the whims of Chinese buyers and investors.

"China is unquestionably driving the price of gold," said Ross Norman, CEO of MetalsDaily.com, a precious-metals information platform based in London. "The flow of gold to China has gone from solid to an absolute torrent."

Gold consumption in the country rose 6% in the first quarter from a year earlier, according to the China

Gold Association. It came on the heels of a 9% increase last year. Gold investing became more alluring as traditional investments turned lackluster. China's real estate sector, the destination for most families' savings, remains in crisis.

Investor confidence in the country's stock markets has not fully returned. A string of big investment funds aimed at the wealthy toppled after failed bets on real estate.

With few better alternatives, money flowed into Chinese funds that traded in gold, and many young people took to collecting beans in tiny quantities.

Online merchants are aggressively hawking gold beans. On Alibaba's Taobao, one of China's biggest e-commerce platforms, a merchant sold gold beans on a live stream — a blend of the Home Shopping Network and Amazon. She said buying beans was "like shopping, but an investment"

The tiny beans came in five shapes, including one that resembled a peanut and another like a persimmon. Paying \$87 per bean, a person could buy into the gold boom for the price of a hot pot meal, she said.

Another major buyer of gold in China is the country's central

bank. In March, the People's Bank of China added to its gold reserves for a 17th straight month.

Last year, the bank bought more gold than any other central bank in the world, adding more to its reserves than it had in nearly 50 years.

Beijing is buying up gold to diversify its reserve funds and reduce its dependence on the US dollar, long considered the most important currency to hold in reserve. China has been reducing its US Treasury holdings for more than a decade. As of March, China had about \$775 billion worth of US debt, down from about \$1.1 trillion in 2021.

When China increased its gold holdings in the past, it bought domestically using yuan, said Guan Tao, global chief economist at BOC International in Beijing.

But this time, he said, the bank is using foreign currencies to buy gold — effectively reducing its exposure to the US dollar and other currencies.

Many central banks, including China, started acquiring gold after the US Treasury Department took the rare step of freezing Russia's dollar holdings under sanctions imposed on Moscow.

— The New York Times

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29 YEARS old Indian female, MBA holder with 2 years experience. Seeking a suitable position. Currently in Muscat on visit visa. Contact: 78641071, shazashakeel@gmail.com

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.

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 B.Com, 35 years experience in Office Management, Accounts, Executive assistant, Admin & HR with D/L (Oman) seeking suitable job. Contact: 92558734

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FASHION

People take part in The Fourth Grand Flaneur Walk organised by The Chap magazine in London, Britain. The walkers meet once a year at the statue of Beau Brummell, who transformed men's fashion in London in the late 1700s. — AFP



MUSIC

US actor and musician Chord Overstreet attends Apple TV+ and the Imagen Foundation's Latinx Celebration at the Hollywood Athletic Club in Los Angeles. — AFP



CULTURE

A street performer named Maradona, dressed up as the Grim Leaper, poses in Bandung, West Java. — AFP



ART

Elisabeth Schweeger, Artistic Director European Capital of Culture Bad Ischl Salzkammergut 2024 is pictured during an interview in front of the installation of floating red ropes and empty dresses at Japanese artist Chiharu Shiota's exhibition. — AFP



TRAVEL

Devotees and participants gather around a church as they attend a religious procession before the start of the ancient game of Lelo Burti, (Field Ball), in the village of Shukhuti in the Guria region of Georgia. — AFP

# art & life

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## THE MODERN CHALLENGES TO KHANJAR PRODUCTION AND HOW ARTISANS ARE ADAPTING TO THE CHANGES

Omani khanjar production is an intricate craft that is facing modern challenges. From labour-intensive processes to material scarcity and counterfeit threats, artisans navigate a delicate balance between tradition and innovation while striving to preserve their heritage amid evolving consumer preferences... **P20**

THE OPERA

Cirkopolis blends theatre and circus in a stunning show

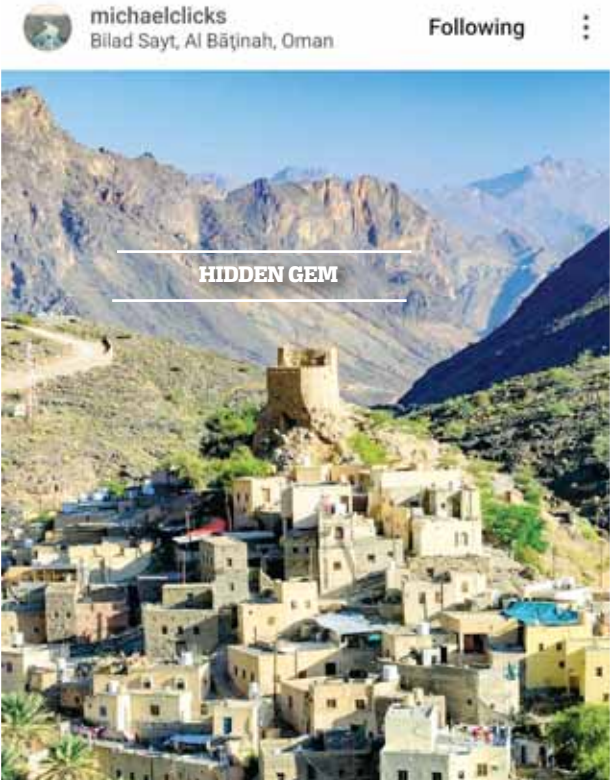
**THE ROYAL OPERA HOUSE** Muscat hosted Oman's premiere of Cirkopolis, the critically acclaimed show by Montreal-based troupe Cirque Éloize for three nights only May 3, 4, 5. With Cirkopolis, Cirque Éloize presents their breathtaking blend of circus arts, theatre, and dance in a highly-stylized

metropolis setting. In front of a captivated audience, twelve acrobats and multidisciplinary artists rebelled against monotony, reinventing themselves and challenging the limits of the factory-city. Since the show began touring in September 2012, it has received rave reviews from the public and critics alike. The New York Times wrote "There aren't more beautiful [shows] than Cirkopolis", while the New York Post wrote "Extraordinary! There's the circus, and then there's Cirque Éloize. These guys are on a whole other level." As a world-class venue, ROHM has welcomed internationally acclaimed shows this season, focusing on a diverse programme of performances especially popular with young and family audiences. "Cirkopolis was imagined as a cross-roads—between imagination and reality, between individuality and community, between limits and possibilities. The show is driven by the poetic impulse of life, the physical prowess of the circus and its humour, at once serious and light-hearted. Entering Cirkopolis is all about letting go and allowing yourself to be borne aloft by hope", explains Cirque Éloize's Cirkopolis Artistic Director and



Co-Director Jeannot Painchaud. "I am proud to present this iconic show at the prestigious Royal Opera House Muscat. We aim to provide the audience in Oman with a poetic and unforgettable experience while nurturing cultural connections and sparking dreams that transcend our imagination," Painchaud emphasised. A driving force in the circus art reinvention movement, Cirque Éloize has been creating award-winning entertainment content for nearly 25 years and ranks among the world's leading contemporary circuses. Cirque Éloize has taken part in numerous prestigious international festivals and has enchanted both New York's Broadway and London's West End. The Royal Opera House Muscat will be hosting its final shows of the 2023/24 season in May including an Homage to Maria Callas featuring mega opera stars Sonya Yoncheva and Leo Nucci on May 15th, their co-production of La Bohème with Opéra di Monte Carlo on May 16th and 18th and Scheherazade by Cairo Opera on 23rd and 24th May. For more information and reservations, visit the ROHM website, app or contact the opera house's box office.

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**DEEP UNDERGROUND** in a disused iron mine and under the bluish glow of a flashlight, a small crowd emerges from a sauna, steam rising off their bodies as they plunge into a crystal clear turquoise lake.

In Sweden and Finland, some unusual saunas have been built in recent years, offering truly singular experiences.

Nestled in the snowy forests of Bergslagen in central Sweden, hidden 90 metres (almost 300 feet) below ground in this region known for its mines, lies this very special sauna.

The old iron mine in the town of Borlänge closed in 1968 before reopening in 2022, redesigned to welcome visitors looking for a unique —

and sweaty — experience, Daniel Karlsson, the head of Adventure Mine, told AFP.

"If you look at saunas today, it's more like a luxury experience," he said.

But "down here it's not just a sauna. It's also the experience that you get with nature," he said, clad in a thick red parka to protect from the cold and a helmet with a headlamp.

The space offers visitors a moment of respite from the busy, connected world above.

"Because the sauna is down in the mine, there is nothing that disturbs you from enjoying the sauna."

"You don't have mobile phones, you don't have the sun, you don't have the

wind," he said.

**- HEAT ON A HIGH -**

Saunas are enjoyed around the world as a method of relaxation, claimed by some to provide health benefits.

They originated in Finland and Estonia, typically built as small wooden cabins where dry heat up to 100 degrees Celsius (212 F) with very low humidity is produced from a stove or hot rocks.

Having a sauna has been a social and hygiene tradition for more than 2,000 years.

Now, sauna enthusiasts who want to expand their horizons can reach new heights in Helsinki.

In the Finnish capital, a giant ferris wheel overlooking the city offers a sauna in one of its specially-built pods.

The sweat session could easily burn a hole in your wallet though, costing between 240 and 350 euros (\$255 to \$375).

"You can get a pretty good steam and heat here if you really want to," said shift manager Viivi Makelainen.

"Although it's pretty small, you can fit quite a few people in here, four or five. Also the views are more fun when you're in the sauna."

Saunas are an integral part of daily life for most Finns.

The country of 5.5 million inhabitants is home to 3.3 million saunas.

Traditionally considered a sacred space in Finland, 'a church of nature', the Finnish sauna culture was named a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in 2020.

**- 'INTIMACY WITH THE SURROUNDINGS' -**

Saunas in the Nordic countries are typically small wooden cabins located near the shore (for a quick dip), deep in the forest (for a quick roll in the snow) or in a home (with a quick shower to refresh).

But one special sauna in the Stockholm archipelago is making waves — sailing on the waters of the capital city.

The "Big Branzino", a luxury floating sauna measuring 30 square metres (322 square feet), was designed and built in 2022 at the request of a private person.

The structure resembles a square wooden cabin, featuring floor-to-ceiling glass windows and an open-air wheelhouse on the deck.

Inside, a custom-made wood stove with hot rocks is surrounded by wooden benches and chairs, while outside, a rooftop terrace features a large table and seating area to take in the view. "A client came to the firm and he wanted a truly extraordinary sauna that he hadn't seen before," architect Johan Strandlund told AFP.

"So we came up with this shape in order to really maximise the intimacy with its surroundings, and we also wanted a truly breathtaking presence on the horizon," he said.

Strandlund said the floating sauna appealed to nature- and sauna-loving Swedes.

"I think it's the way that we really like to enjoy the beautiful nature that we have around here in Stockholm."

And "even when you're not using the sauna, the fire is a great source of heat, for example for cold summer nights." — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

Madonna wows Rio with 'Celebration Tour' finale

**POP IDOL MADONNA** gave it all in Rio de Janeiro as she looked back on her four-decade career in a historic show before throngs of joyful fans jammed onto Brazil's famed Copacabana beach on Saturday night.

The 65-year-old singer walked down an elevated bridge from the Copacabana Palace hotel shortly after 10:30 pm (0130 GMT Sunday) to a massive stage for one of the most important shows of her career.

Dressed all in black, Madonna broke into her hit "Nothing Really Matters" at the start of a burst of brute energy.

"Rio, here we are in the most beautiful place in the world," she said at the start of a performance that brought the giddy Brazilian audience to its feet.

The show marked the final stop on her "Celebration Tour," noting her 40 years atop pop charts, in a free event that drew an estimated 1.6 million people from across Brazil, according to the city tourism office.

Billed as a "historic" show, it blended music and dance with cabaret.

Madonna showcased her versatility with dozens of set and costume changes, spectacular lights and many giant screens along the beach.

She went from being dressed as a schoolgirl in a miniskirt to an irreverent Christian in a black cape while luminous crosses circled around her during "Like a Prayer," a song that cost her excommunication from the Catholic Church.



**- 'LIVE TO TELL' -**

Madonna was joined on stage during the performance of her hit "Vogue" by Brazilian singer Anitta, who is known for taking Carioca funk — the soundtrack of Rio's favelas — to the rest of the world.

With "Live To Tell," she paid tribute to AIDS victims, including Freddie Mercury and the legendary Brazilian musician Cazuza.

US electronic dance music master DJ Diplo opened the show as thousands jostled to get a view of the stage. Boats bobbed in the water offshore, letting those onboard enjoy the show.

"I'm a mess, I haven't slept well, I've been listening to Madonna all week," 29-year-old sociologist Ina Odara told AFP. Tattooed on her shoulder was Madonna's phrase: "All that you ever learned, try to forget."

"Madonna helped me leave the Catholic Church, think about many things and change my relationship with my family," said Odara, a transgender woman, standing near

the huge stage that was twice the size of any other used on the tour.

Police patrolled almost every corner to minimise the usual mass robberies.

After 80 performances across Europe and North America, the Rio concert provided a crowning touch to a tour that took on sudden urgency when the singer suffered a life-threatening bacterial infection in June last year.

Madonna has released an album every two or three years since the 1984 release of "Like a Virgin."

Her shows, with their spectacular productions, set a high bar. But the ever-provocative Madonna has also provided unforgettable moments, such as when she kissed Britney Spears at 2003's MTV Music Video Awards.

Her irreverence led to a tumultuous relationship with the Catholic Church, with Pope John Paul II urging fans to boycott her over her provocative 1989 video "Like a Prayer," which was seen as blasphemous." — AFP



# modern challenges to khanjar production and how artisans are adapting to the changes

BY MOHAMMED AL DIGHAISHI

The production of Omani khanjar may sound easy. For the uninitiated, production may only come as getting silver materials and shaping them into khanjars, but talking with numerous khanjar producers in Oman demonstrated that the process is very complex and that not a lot of people truly understand.

The khanjar holds profound significance as a representation of belonging, masculinity and chivalry believed to be an essential component of a man's identity. Within the Sultanate of Oman, various types of daggers bear names tied to their places of origin. Among these are the coastal, the Suri, the northern, and the Saidi, designated as the exclusive dagger for members of the ruling family.

The aesthetic design and engravings cast in silver and precious metals are creatively evident in the smooth curvature of the Omani dagger and the elegance of this folkloric craft, which dates back a few thousand years.

Added to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) List of World Heritage and Intangible Cultural Arts, Abdullah al Sayegh, one of those working in the manufacture of Omani daggers in the Wilayat of Sur, explained that the dagger is made up of several components, starting with the obliterating rings, which are the basis for connecting the dagger between the cutter and chest areas, and the collar, which is the part on which the dagger blade is mounted. The blade also contains a horn, which is usually taken from an animal.

Hamyar bin Hamad al Amri, one of the owners of dagger shops in Muscat Governorate, explained that

the Omani dagger is a traditional folk inheritance that the Omanis are always proud of, and it is the emblem of the state.

Al Amri added that creating a khanjar also means working with different materials such as wood, silver, leather, and many types of horns, such as rhinoceros, giraffes, elephants and cow horns, which add a layer of complexity to the production.

**MODERN CHALLENGES TO KHANJAR PRODUCTION**

Beneath the surface of its ornate design lies a complex web of challenges that confront Omani khanjar manufacturers.

Both Al Sayegh and Al Amri shared that having been in the industry for quite some time made them aware of the numerous issues that they and their peers face.

Khanjar production is a labour-intensive process, with artisans dedicating anywhere from 20 to 40 days to create a single dagger. This meticulous attention to detail ensures the quality and authenticity of each piece but poses challenges in meeting market demand and maintaining a consistent supply.

The khanjar's exquisite design incorporates a variety of materials, including rare woods, precious metals like silver, and animal horns sourced from rhinoceros, giraffes, and elephants. The escalating prices of these materials present a financial hurdle for manufacturers, impacting the affordability and accessibility of these cultural artefacts.

While some advocate for preserving the khanjar's traditional craftsmanship and design, others propose modern adaptations to appeal to contemporary tastes. Striking a balance between tradition and innovation is essential to



honour the khanjar's cultural significance while adapting to evolving consumer preferences.

As the demand for khanjars grows, so too does the risk of counterfeit products flooding the market. Establishing trust and authenticity through transparent manufacturing processes and stringent quality control measures is imperative to safeguarding the integrity of Omani craftsmanship.

Al Amri also pointed out that many younger Omanis no longer know how to preserve the khanjar which usually are expensive, especially the best quality ones saying that ensuring the longevity of the khanjar requires careful preservation techniques, including storing the dagger in specialised wooden boxes away from moisture and sunlight. However, educating consumers about proper preservation methods and encouraging adherence to these practices remains a challenge, risking the degradation of these cherished heirlooms.

**PRESERVING THE TRADITION**

Abdullah al Sayegh stressed that the Omani dagger is worn on special occasions, as it rests tied at the waist of the man with a belt made of leather and decorated with silver, just as it is located on the flag of the Sultanate of Oman as an emblem of the state.

Al Amri pointed out that the dagger is worn in the middle of the abdomen, and it is better when

wearing the dagger for the dishdasha to be white, and for the fabric to be somewhat heavy. He added the dishdasha must also be folded inward so that it is suitable for placing the dagger.

Al Amri shared as well that depending on the location, Omanis have their preferences explaining that there are different types of daggers.

"There are up to six types, and each type branches into other shapes, the largest of which is Al Nazwaniyah, followed by Al Batiniyah Al Sahel, then Al Saidiyah, followed by Al Suriyyah, which is considered the smallest in size, and Al Sadhiyah, which is specific to Dhofar Governorate, and is similar to the Yemeni jambiya. For a person to avoid fraud, he must purchase it from trusted stores, whose owners are Omanis themselves."

Yousef bin Said al Rawahi, an avid fan and user of Omani khanjar, pointed out that the dagger is a national identity and a symbol of pride and honour in a great historical legacy.

He said, "I prefer wearing the classic traditional dagger, without additions. I like daggers in their traditional shape but as of late, many dagger producers are departing from these traditional shapes and have been using different colours with some modernising them and incorporating a lot of other colours."

Al Rawahi said while there are modernisation happening, the old

styles are the best way to preserve tradition. He also advises purchasing daggers from reliable manufacturers found in areas like Sur, Nizwa, or Al Khabourah.

"Each state has a historical legacy, and the expertise of the makers is showcased in this artisanal production," he said.

Al Amri shared that best-made khanjars do come with hefty prices because of the details as well as the time that it takes to produce one item, but shared that they are worthwhile investments.

For Al Sayegh, "There are many Omanis who buy daggers, and they often buy them during holidays. As for people who have occasions and do not have daggers, they go to some shops to rent them, because they are unable to buy them because they are expensive."

Al Sayegh added that, from his manufacture, "the most famous daggers are the Saidi daggers, the same ones worn by the ruling family."

He also noted that there are also lots of tourists buying khanjar, especially the Gulf tourists while he does notice a few foreign tourists buying as souvenirs.

"Repeat buyers are usually people who have positions in government because they frequently use it in meetings and events, as well as people from the wealthy class, and elderly shaikhs whose sitting rooms are always full of visitors."