

Oman Air gets B787-9 aircraft

Oman Air received delivery of its latest Boeing B787-9 aircraft, the first of three scheduled for this year. Part of an existing order, which includes eight more aircraft by 2027, the newest marks the tenth Dreamliner in the airline's fleet. The aircraft touched down in Muscat Governorate on Friday afternoon, arriving from the Boeing facility in Seattle. **DETAILS ON P13**

SUNRISE - 05:47 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR - 04:29 AM
DHUHR - 12:14 PM
ASR - 03:41 PM
MAGHRIB - 06:36 PM
ISHA - 07:49 PM



P13

GOVERNMENT SECTOR WITNESSES SURGE IN DIGITAL TRANSACTIONS



P12

GORDON'S LATE STRIKE DAMPENS BOURNEMOUTH CELEBRATIONS



P20

THE UNSEEN BURDEN OF RHEUMATISM ON FAMILY CAREGIVERS



SALALAH

DEALS FOR RO 22M SIGNED IN DHOFAR

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning signed 31 usufruct contracts in Dhofar Governorate for investment in a total area of 2.3 billion square metres, to the tune of more than RO 22 million. The contracts provide for the establishment of investment projects in agricultural, industrial, medical and commercial sectors. Twenty-five of the contracts deal with investment in agricultural and food security sectors at a value of more than RO 19.5 million. **DETAILS ON P13**

RAWALPINDI

35 DEAD IN TWO PAKISTAN CRASHES

At least 35 people were killed in two separate bus accidents in Pakistan on Sunday, including 12 pilgrims who had been trying to reach Iran, rescue and police officials said. All 24 people on board a bus were killed when it plunged into a ravine near the town of Azad Pattan on the border between Punjab province and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. "I have lost three members of my family," Tara Zafar, who travelled to the hospital after hearing about the accident, said. Her father, sister and one-year-old nephew were among the dead. "I hoped that at least one of them had survived. It's doomsday for my family," Umar Farooq, a senior government official from Sudhanoti district, where the bus started its journey, said at the crash site "24 were travelling in the bus and all 24 have died". Around 20 villagers helped to retrieve bodies before officials arrived. **DETAILS ON P6**

All set for new academic year as 61,195 teachers report today

MUSCAT: Educational staff and supervisors will be back at schools on Monday to carry out preparation for the (2024-2025) academic year which will begin on Sunday (September 1). The number of teachers in public schools this academic year has

reached 61,195 with an 87.6-per cent Omanisation rate, while the number of public schools across the country stands at 1,269. The number of administrators and technicians in government schools reached 10,652 of whom 4,306 are men and 6,346 are women with a 99.8-per

cent Omanisation rate. The number of teachers in special education schools stands at 220 men and women teachers with 93 per cent Omanisation in addition to 52 administrators. Over the past period, the Ministry of

Education has completed the procedures for appointing 3,233 teachers who cleared written tests and personal interviews for this academic year including 691 men and 2,542 women teachers to meet the need for teaching staff in various specialisations.

MUTTRAH TOURISM HUB A BIG DRAW



The Tourism Hub at Mutturah Waterfront in Muscat Governorate provides information and guides visitors to the most prominent heritage sites and different tourist destinations in the Sultanate of Oman. Mutturah Tourism Hub answers queries of tourists and provides them with necessary information about tourism companies and hotels. The centre showcases activities and events that serve the tourism, heritage and entertainment sectors and encourage visitors to explore them. **DETAILS ON P2**

HEZBOLLAH AND ISRAEL EXCHANGE MISSILES

BEIRUT: Hezbollah launched hundreds of rockets and drones at Israel early on Sunday, as Israel's military said it struck Lebanon with around 100 jets to thwart a bigger attack, in one of the biggest clashes in more than 10 months of border warfare. Missiles were visible curling up through the dawn sky, dark vapour trails behind them, as an air raid siren sounded in Israel and a distant blast lit the horizon, while smoke rose over houses in Khiam in southern Lebanon. Three deaths were confirmed in Lebanon and none in Israel, where damage appeared to be limited. Hezbollah indicated it was not planning further strikes yet. Israel's foreign minister said the country did not seek a full-scale war. Any major escalation in the fighting, which began in parallel with the war in Gaza, risks morphing into a regional conflagration. Sunday's strikes came as negotiators were meeting in Cairo in a last-ditch effort to conclude a halt to the fighting in Gaza. The Lebanese group said it had fired 320 Katyusha rockets towards Israel and hit 11 military targets in what it called the first phase of its retaliation for Israel's assassination of Fuad Shukr, a senior commander, last month. Israel's military said it had foiled a much larger attack with pre-emptive air strikes after assessing that Hezbollah was preparing to launch the barrage, using 100 jets to strike more than 40 Hezbollah launch sites in southern Lebanon. The strikes destroyed thousands of launcher barrels, aimed mostly at northern Israel



This photo taken from a position in northern Israel shows a Hezbollah UAV intercepted by Israeli air forces over north Israel on Sunday. – AFP

but also targeting some central areas, Israel's military said. Hezbollah dismissed Israel's statement that the group's attack had been foiled with pre-emptive strikes, saying it had been able to launch its drones as planned and that the rest of its response to Shukr's killing would take "some time".

FLIGHTS SUSPENDED Expectations of an escalation had risen since a missile strike in the Israeli-occupied Golan Heights last month killed 12 youngsters and the Israeli military assassinated Shukr in Beirut in response. Lebanon's caretaker Prime Minister Najib Mikati met cabinet ministers at a session of the national emergency committee. Hezbollah leader Sayyed Hassan Nasrallah spoke on television later on Sunday, the group said. Flights to and from Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv were suspended for around 90 minutes. Some flights to and from Beirut were halted, stranding passengers. "I just want to get out of here by any means possible," said Rana Saade, a Lebanese woman living in New Jersey. **SEE ALSO P6**

Musandam a feeding station for cormorants



Approximately 45,000 cormorants visited the area last year.

KHASAB: Musandam Governorate serves as one of the most prominent seasonal stations for the Socotra cormorant, locally called (Lawwah), a bird belonging to the threatened cormorants that are endemic to the Arabian Gulf, the south-eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula and Socotra Island in Yemen. Socotra cormorant often migrates to the west, as far as the Red Sea coast, and breeds in the Socotra Islands in the Indian Ocean. Eng Noora bint Abdullah al Shehhiyah, Head of the Environment Conservation Section at Musandam Governorate's Environment Department, said that Socotra

cormorants inhabit the rocky areas and sandy beaches of Musandam from May to September every year. During this period, the birds feed heavily on the abundant quantities of sardines that appear in the area, said Eng Noora, noting that approximately 45,000 cormorants visited the area last year. Eng Noora pointed out that the species of birds (Socotra cormorants) was given that name due to the fact that it was registered for the first time on the island of Socotra in Yemen. "Adult Socotra cormorants have black

feathers, while the feathers of juvenile birds are brown. Socotra cormorants are distinct for their slender neck and white belly. An adult bird grows to a length of 80 centimetres," Eng Noora said. She added that the Environment Authority (EA) is making efforts to follow up on the activities of different types of migratory birds. The EA conducts field surveys and studies and monitors any human infringements on the species, she said, noting that Socotra cormorants face many challenges, including marine pollution, the development of coastal areas and fishing. — ONA

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Dhofar’s Culinary Festival boosts local economy and tourism

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 25

The Dhofar Governorate recently hosted a highly anticipated culinary festival organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

This multi-day event quickly captured the attention of a diverse audience, drawing visitors of all ages and nationalities. The festival’s success translated into a significant economic boost for local markets, with family-run stalls becoming a central highlight.

Beyond its culinary appeal, the festival evolved into a vibrant cultural and social celebration, offering a rich blend of traditional Dhofari and Omani cuisine.

The attendees had the opportunity to explore a wide range of dishes, from classics to innovative modern creations that were new to many.

The event’s success was largely due to the contributions of local families, who played a crucial role in showcasing traditional products such as handmade crafts and locally produced goods. Their participation not only highlighted their integral role within the community but also demonstrated their importance in strengthening the local economy.

The economic impact of the festival extended well beyond the family stalls.

Nearby businesses, including retail outlets, restaurants, and hotels, experienced a noticeable increase in trade, driven by the influx of visitors. Moreover, the festival created temporary



Local families played a crucial role in the culinary festival which showcased traditional products



job opportunities for many young people in the region, underscoring the broader economic benefits of such events.

In addition to its immediate economic advantages, the festival served as an effective tool for promoting tourism in Dhofar. By attracting visitors from across Oman and beyond, the event showcased the governorate’s natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. Attendees praised the festival’s organisation and the warm welcome they received, further enhancing Dhofar’s reputation as a premier tourist destination.

During the festival, Observer spoke with several participants and beneficiaries to capture their experiences:

Um Abdullah, a family stall owner, expressed her enthusiasm: “The festival gave us an excellent platform to present our products to a wide audience. We introduced people to our traditional home-made foods, and our sales exceeded expectations. It was gratifying to see our efforts to preserve Omani culinary traditions appreciated, and we hope for more events like this in the future.”

Um Saeed, another stall owner, reflected on the festival’s economic impact: “I was amazed by the large turnout. Our sales were excellent, benefiting from visitors from various parts of the Sultanate of Oman and even abroad. The festival not only revitalised our stalls but also stimulated broader commercial activity in the area. It provided a significant boost to our business.”

Ahmed bin Salim al Mahri, a festival attendee, shared his positive impressions: “The festival was an immensely enjoyable experience. The variety of dishes was remarkable, and it was wonderful to see local families proudly showcasing their products. Sampling traditional foods that were new to me was a highlight, and I look forward to attending similar events in the future.”

Haitham bin Ali Tabook reflected on the festival’s broader implications: “The festival surpassed all expectations. It went beyond showcasing diverse dishes to support local families and invigorate the local economy. The positive impact on nearby markets is gratifying, and we look forward to organising more events like this.”

“This was my first visit to Dhofar, and the festival made it particularly memorable,” said another attendee. “The organisation was impeccable, and the atmosphere was electric. Events like this are crucial in attracting tourists and introducing them to the cultural richness of the governorate.”



Wadi Dawkah: Preserving ancient frankincense heritage

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 25

Wadi Dawkah, a Unesco World Heritage site nestled within Dhofar Governorate, is a testament to the enduring legacy of the ancient frankincense trade. This verdant oasis, characterised by its low, rounded hills and scattered frankincense trees, offers a glimpse into a bygone era when the resinous sap of *Boswellia sacra* was a prized commodity sought after by civilisations across the ancient world.

The scientific model housed within the Museum of the Frankincense Land in Salalah provides a detailed representation of Wadi Dawkah, showcasing its unique geological formations and the vital role it played in the frankincense trade.

The model vividly depicts the ancient frankincense trees, their gnarled branches reaching skyward, and the shallow basins that provided the ideal conditions for their growth.

Wadi Dawkah’s significance extends beyond its historical importance. It is a living museum, where visitors can witness the ancient frankincense trees still thriving in their natural habitat.

The Omani government has taken significant steps to preserve and protect this precious ecosystem, implementing conservation measures such as planting new frankincense trees and defining clear boundaries for the wadi. These efforts ensure that future generations

can continue to appreciate the beauty and cultural significance of this remarkable site.

The frankincense trade, once a cornerstone of Oman’s economy, left an indelible mark on the region’s history and culture. The resin was used in religious ceremonies, medicinal practices, and as a valuable commodity in trade networks that connected Oman to ancient civilisations such as Egypt, Greece and Rome. The Wadi Dawkah model serves as a reminder of the vital role that Oman played in the global frankincense trade and the enduring legacy of this precious resource.

Wadi Dawkah also offers a serene and captivating natural environment. Visitors can explore the Wadi’s winding paths, marvel at the ancient frankincense trees and immerse themselves in the tranquillity of this unique landscape. The Wadi’s peaceful atmosphere and stunning beauty make it a must-visit destination for anyone seeking a connection to Oman’s rich heritage.

Wadi Dawkah is a living testament to the ancient frankincense trade and a valuable addition to cultural heritage. The scientific model at the Museum provides a valuable tool for understanding the significance of the remarkable site, while the ongoing conservation efforts ensure that its beauty and historical importance will be preserved for generations to come.

Mobile Food Lab ensures safety during Dhofar Khareef season

SALALAH: The Dhofar Municipality’s mobile food laboratory is playing a pivotal role in ensuring food safety during the Dhofar Khareef season 2024.

As part of the municipality’s ongoing efforts to uphold the highest health standards, the laboratory provides comprehensive food inspection and analysis services across various event locations during the season.

Salah bin Salim al Ajili, Director of the Food and Laboratories Department at Dhofar Municipality, emphasised that the introduction of the mobile food laboratory for the Dhofar Khareef season 2024 aims to elevate health oversight, particularly concerning the numerous temporary mobile food carts serving visitors and tourists throughout the season.

Al Ajili said that in August alone, the mobile laboratory’s health inspection teams conducted over 300 tests on food and water samples. He noted that this initiative is crucial in maintaining



Over 300 tests on food, water samples were conducted by the mobile laboratory health inspection teams in August.

the safety and well-being of visitors to the region’s tourist sites during the khareef season.

Dhofar Municipality remains committed to implementing regular monitoring and ensuring adherence to health and professional standards across food outlets at event sites and tourist destinations in the Dhofar Governorate.

Al Ajili pointed out that the mobile laboratory significantly enhances the capabilities of municipal inspectors, enabling them to take swift, immediate

action in accordance with the prevailing laws and regulations, thus addressing the heightened demand for mobile food services during the autumn season.

He further explained that the mobile laboratory project, now in its second year, has two primary components. The first focuses on raising public awareness, featuring an exhibition that introduces visitors to the basics of food safety and quality, along with a virtual reality simulation of laboratory operations. The second component involves the laboratory itself, equipped

The tests are crucial in maintaining the safety and well-being of visitors to the tourist sites during the Khareef season

with essential devices and tools to examine water and food, ensuring their safety.

In addition to its inspection role, the mobile food lab has hosted several awareness activities for children this month.

These activities included photography, drawing and colouring corners, as well as the Promising Health Inspector Competition, which successfully engaged children in learning about food safety.

The lab also launched the ‘Salama’ podcast platform, inviting experts in food and health to discuss topics related to public health and safe nutrition.

— ONA



MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

INTERNATIONAL TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Tender No.	Tender Name	Class & Grade	Last Date For Collection	Submission Date	Purchase Fees (R.O.)
6/2024 (323/2024) at E-Tendering	AI Utilization Project for Ayn Platform	International Excellent First	7/9/2024	22/10/2024	25/-

1. All specialized companies in the field of the tender shown above and are registered with the Tender Board to the degree indicated above, may obtain tender documents, against non-refundable fees, from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

2. Companies and institutions are exempted from providing a temporary insurance of 1% when submitting their bid, provided that they sign a document committing themselves to the submitted bid for a period determined when the bidding strategy is approved in accordance with the document attached to the Isnad platform. As for international companies that do not have a headquarters in the Sultanate of Oman, they are required to provide temporary insurance of 1%.

(For more information, please see the original circular issued by the Tender Board on the Isnad platform.)

Note that the last date for accepting bids as mentioned above is before 10:00 am. Any bid received after the time and date mentioned in the submission date will be rejected automatically.

You are requested to provide 2 hard copies for your offer after the submission in Projects Department at Ministry of Information.

3. The Ministry has the right to:

1) Add or Cancell some works in the tender if necessary.

2) Cancellation of the tender without giving reasons.

For clarifications you may contact via:

Telephone: 24943785, 24943177, Email: (Moi.Tenders@omaninfo.om)



CDA WARNS OF TREKKING RISKS

VINOD NAIR
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OMAN has been a favourite destination for trekkers not just from within the country, but also for some tourists who specifically come to undertake treks. The Royal Oman Police's announcement of four hikers losing lives has sent shock waves among all adventure lovers, especially mountain climbers.

Four people, including a citizen, lost their lives after five of them were swept away in Wadi Tanuf in the Wilayat of Nizwa following heavy rains.

Three of the dead were Arab nationalities while one person was seriously injured. They were part of an international mountain hiking group. They were transported by a police aircraft to Nizwa Referral Hospital.

It may be noted that Saturday's incident was a result of heavy rains in the area, which led to flash floods and wadi flows.

According to Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDA), trekking or hiking can be dangerous if not conducted without following guidelines, especially during rains or turbulent weather conditions where there are chances of flash floods in some places.

Hiking in Oman is done by individuals or in groups amateurs or veterans.

CDA has emphasised the need to be cautious when going to these places and adhere to safety instructions to avoid accidents from

falling from heights, injury, or death.

CDA also urged mountain climbers to use the 'Nidaa' application which will help them to contact emergency services at the earliest.

The safety procedures include choosing the right trail for your fitness level, familiarising yourself with the trail, informing relatives of the route and location, wearing the right footwear, checking the weather forecasts, using headlamps and flashlights, having extra clothing, water, matches/lighter/candles, sun protection, navigation systems, and first-aid supplies.

CDA said that mountain hikers must be accompanied by a guide who leads the group and is trained in providing first aid.

Saturday's incident is not the first of its kind.

Earlier, a woman hiker died after she fell off a cliff in Saih Al Ahmar area in the Wilayat of Bidbid.

In a separate incident, a woman was injured after she fell from a mountain-top while hiking in Jabal Shams.

There was a report of a woman falling and sustaining an injury during mountain hiking in Tiwi.

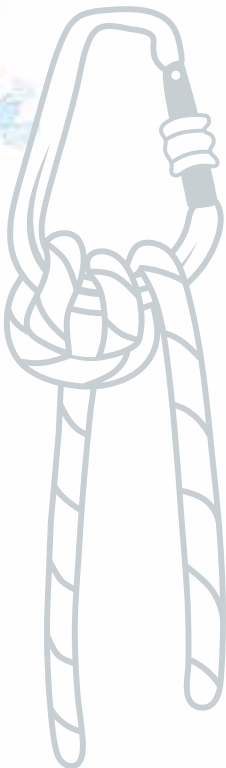
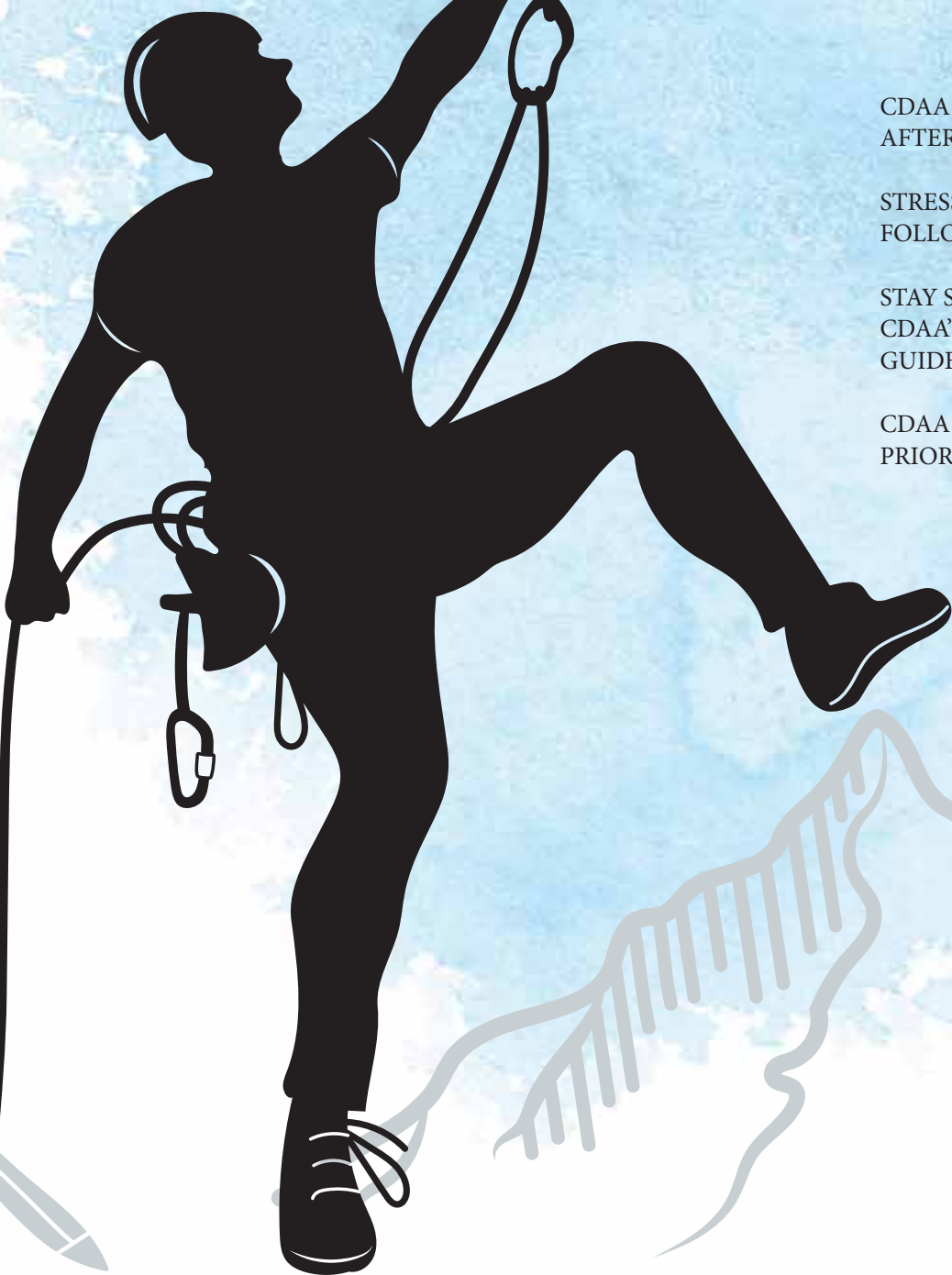
A woman in her 40s fell to her death from a height of 150 metres in Wadi Shab while on a trip along with her friend and she slipped while trying to climb the mountain. In several such cases, police aviation had to be deployed to use helicopters to airlift the injured or stranded trekkers from rugged terrains.

CDA HIGHLIGHTS PRECAUTIONS
AFTER WADI TANUF INCIDENT

STRESSES TREKKING SAFETY
FOLLOWING FLASH FLOODS

STAY SAFE ON OMAN'S TRAILS:
CDA'S VITAL TREKKING
GUIDELINES

CDA URGES HIKERS TO
PRIORITISE SAFETY





MoE announces school transportation upgrades

MUSCAT: As the new academic year 2024-2025 begins, the Ministry of Education (MoE) is prioritising the enhancement of school transportation to ensure a secure and comfortable learning environment for students.

The Ministry's comprehensive plan includes renewing contracts, upgrading safety standards, and implementing extensive training programmes for both drivers and students.

Khamis al Hadidi, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Projects and Services, announced the formation of committees to evaluate current transportation methods. Over

20,000 school bus contracts have been renewed, and 800 additional vehicles have been introduced to accommodate growing demand and new school facilities, with an investment of RO 4,800,000.

To further improve the system, the Ministry has partnered with Karwa Cars Company and the Oman Development Bank to replace outdated vehicles. The initiative will see the replacement of 5,000 school transportation vehicles over the next five years, with 1,000 of these being replaced in the upcoming academic year.

The new vehicles will feature enhanced safety measures,



Over 20,000 school bus contracts have been renewed, and 800 additional vehicles have been introduced

including automatic guidance boards, air conditioning units, first aid kits, and advanced tracking and monitoring systems.

These upgrades adhere to the traffic safety regulations set by the Royal Oman Police. Additionally, drivers will

The ministry will implement the ‘Road Friends’ programme, a global road safety education initiative, in 33 schools, reaching about 1,320 students

undergo preventive driving courses in collaboration with specialised training institutes. The Ministry will also continue its collaboration with the Traffic Safety Institute and the Oman Oil Development Company,

having trained 400 drivers last year on safety practices. This year, the Ministry will implement the ‘Road Friends’ programme, a global road safety education initiative, in 33 schools, reaching approximately 1,320 students. This programme aims to teach safe road behaviours and create effective road safety strategies through interactive sessions and creative messaging.

Overall, these efforts are designed to enhance the quality and safety of school transportation, contributing to a better educational experience for students across the Sultanate of Oman.

MoSD launches rehabilitation staff training programme

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

The Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) organised a professional development programme for rehabilitation on Sunday. The five-day programme will see workers in rehabilitation centres for people with disabilities and relevant authorities taking part.

The programme aims to enhance the capabilities of workers in the field of rehabilitation of people with disabilities, by developing their skills and raising their level of performance, in addition to keeping pace with the latest developments.

The programme also aims to improve the quality of rehabilitation services provided by informing participants of the latest methods and techniques and enhancing their skills and knowledge.

Hala bint Mousa al Wahaibiyah, Director, Department of People with Disabilities, Ministry of



The programme also aims to improve the quality of rehabilitation services

Social Development, in her opening speech spoke about the importance of the programme, which comes within the ministry's strategy to empower workers in the field of disability.

She pointed out that the programme is launched within the framework of Ministerial Resolution No 188/2024, which sets the dates for rehabilitation and evaluation programmes for government and private rehabilitation centres and has adopted the Professional

Development Programme for workers since 2014.

Mariam bint Mohammed al Mahrouqiyah, National Officer for Physiotherapy Services, Ministry of Health, thanked the Ministry of Social Development for inviting her to participate in the programme. She noted that the initiative represents an important step towards enhancing the capabilities of workers in the medical and social rehabilitation sectors.

Al Mahrouqiyah stressed

the importance of cooperation between the two ministries in raising performance standards and exchanging expertise, expressing her aspiration for a sustainable future partnership that serves the public interest.

The programme includes several specialised lectures in cooperation with the Ministry of Health, including lecture on neurodevelopmental therapy ‘Bobath’, which focuses on improving functional skills for cases of cerebral palsy, and on ‘Montessori’ method, which aims to develop rehabilitation programmes that suit various disabilities.

This is in addition to lectures related to training on swallowing difficulties and oral rehabilitation.

The programme also includes specialised sessions on managing group rehabilitation sessions and speech disorders of neurological origin, in addition to applications of the sensory integration theory to treat sensory problems that affect overall performance.

OTC’S ‘TRAIN THE TRAINER’ COURSE ENHANCES TOUR GUIDE SKILLS

MUSCAT: For the first time, Oman Tourism College (OTC) has launched ‘Train the Trainer’ course organised in collaboration with the World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA) in Muscat.

The course is being held from August 25 to September 9, 2024. It brings together 14 participants from diverse backgrounds of the government and private firms and companies in the tourism industry to advance their skills in tour guiding.

This course is designed to equip participants with the knowledge and tools necessary to effectively train new tour guides. The programme will cover best practices in tour guiding, visitor interaction techniques, and tour management, with a focus on developing effective communication and leadership skills.

The course is being held at the Oman Tourism College in Muscat, renowned for its rich history and vibrant culture, making it an ideal location for training the future leaders in the field of tour guiding.

It is important to highlight that the course is pioneering in Oman, being the first of its kind to feature such an international collaboration. This initiative reflects Oman



The course is being held till September 9 bringing together 14 participants from diverse backgrounds

Tourism College's commitment aligning with ‘Oman Vision 2040’, which aims to advance and transform the tourism sector in the country.

The World Federation of Tourist Guide Associations (WFTGA) is a global non-profit organisation dedicated to enhancing and advancing the profession of tour guiding worldwide through training programs and professional workshops.

Training on bird photography held

SUHAR: The Directorate of Environment in Al Batinah North Governorate organised a two-day specialised training programme entitled ‘feathered animals through the lens of environmental pioneers’ in the Wilayat of Suhar.

The programme aims to highlight the beauty of the Omani environment and contribute to environmental conservation and increase awareness of environmental issues among the public. The training programme was divided into two stages

the first one included academic qualification, courses, workshops and e-learning sessions while the second stage included practical application where the participants were trained on the use of professional cameras and phone photography and camera traps.

By conducting such programmes, the Environment Authority seeks to improve individuals’ behaviour towards the environment and build qualified human cadres for environmental work.

GCC University Scout Camp begins in Salalah

SALALAH: The 14th Scout Camp for Scouts from Universities and Higher Education Institutions across the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries commenced on Sunday at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah.

The camp, held under the slogan ‘Inspiration and Empowerment,’ is hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, represented



The scout camp is being held under the slogan ‘Inspiration and Empowerment.

by the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Dhofar Governorate, and will run until August 30.

The camp’s opening ceremony was graced by Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, along

with several other esteemed officials.

In his keynote address, Dr Said bin Hamad al Rubaiee, President of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, emphasised the significance of the camp, stating that it embodies the Gulf Cooperation Council’s commitment to the scouting movement’s pioneering role.

— ONA

Sultanate of Oman to highlight heritage at Adihex 2024

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Zaad Al Rakib Equestrian Club headed by the Governor of Al Sharqiyah North, is preparing to participate in the Abu Dhabi International Hunting and Equestrian Exhibition(Adihex), which will be held from August 31 to September 8. The Sultanate aims to highlight its ancient heritage and present shows that reflect the authentic Omani culture, which will enhance the Sultanate's position as a cultural and tourist centre in the region.

Rashid al Abrawi, head of the Omani mission, said, “Our participation in Adihex is a

valuable opportunity to highlight the authentic Omani heritage and showcase the beauty and diversity of our culture to a wide international audience. We are keen to provide a rich experience that reflects the authenticity of the Sultanate and its ancient history.”

Al Abrawi added: “We have previously participated in many exhibitions outside the Sultanate of Oman, and each time we seek to present something new and distinctive that reflects our unique heritage. In this exhibition, we aim to enhance awareness of Omani traditions and provide an interactive experience for visitors that enables them to learn about part of our culture that extends over centuries.”

He continued: “Through



Oman will be represented by Zaad Al Rakib Equestrian Club headed by Al Sharqiyah North Governor

the performances that will be presented by Omani knights in horse riding and traditional archery skills, in addition to other activities in the Bedouin tent, we want to send a message that Omani heritage is not just a past, but a living present that pulsates in our daily lives.”

Al Abrawi pointed out that “the exhibition is a great platform to communicate with equestrian and heritage enthusiasts from all over the world, and we are proud to represent Oman in this great event. We hope that our participation will be admired by the attendees and leave a positive

mark that enhances the Sultanate of Oman's position on the international stage.”

The Sultanate of Oman's pavilion will include a variety of events and activities that reflect Omani heritage. Omani riders will perform traditional shows daily over nine days, showcasing their unique horse riding skills, such as ‘Ardha Running’, one of the oldest Omani traditions, and ‘Horse Hypnotism’, in addition to a traditional archery show. Visitors will be able to watch these shows in the main arena of the exhibition, providing them with an opportunity to learn about part of the Omani cultural heritage.

In addition to the equestrian shows, the Omani tent will witness a display of traditional

horse accessories, and competitions in fast saddling, in addition to special shows for people of determination with the participation of specialists and assistants, reflecting the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to supporting and empowering this category. A special show will be presented that combines the Saluki dog and the horse, and the Bedouin tent will be a major destination for visitors wishing to experience the Omani Bedouin life. Visitors will be able to watch and make Omani henna and engraving, take souvenir photos in traditional dress, and learn about Omani handicraft techniques that date back to ancient times. Omani craftsmen will showcase a range of heritage products .



Egypt warns visiting US general on Lebanon risk

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi warned America's top general during a meeting on Sunday of the dangers of a major conflict in Lebanon.

US Air Force General C Q Brown, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, arrived in Egypt hours after a significant missile exchange between Israel and Lebanese Hezbollah.

In a statement, Sisi's office said the Egyptian leader told Brown that the international community needed to "exert all efforts and intensify pressures to defuse tension and stop the state of escalation that threatens the security and stability of the entire region." "(Sisi warned) in this regard of the dangers of opening a new front in Lebanon, and stressing the need to preserve Lebanon's stability and sovereignty," the statement read.

Brown did not make public remarks during his visit, on which he also met the defence minister and the country's chief of defence.

In remarks prior to arriving in the region on Saturday, Brown said he aimed to discuss ways to avoid any new escalation in tensions that could spiral into a broader conflict.



An elderly man and a child walk past a building levelled by Israeli bombardment in the Bureij refugee camp, in Gaza. — AFP

Brown's spokesperson said the US general discussed ways "to deter the conflict from broadening" during the meetings. Prior to his Egypt trip, Brown met Jordan's Chairman of the Joint Chiefs Maj Gen Yousef Al Huneiti

in Amman. At least 40,405 Palestinians have been killed and 93,468 others injured in Israel's military offensive on Gaza since Oct. 7, said the Gaza Health Ministry. In the last 24-hours, 71 were

killed and 112 were injured in what the ministry called three "massacres" by Israel in the strip. In a statement, Brown's spokesperson said the two military leaders discussed "regional tensions and efforts to

deescalate them." They also discussed "the urgency of bringing the Gaza ceasefire and captives release deal to closure," the statement said. Negotiators have been

The Egyptian leader told Brown that the international community needed to exert all efforts and intensify pressures to defuse tension and stop the state of escalation

meeting in Cairo trying to clinch a still-elusive Gaza ceasefire-for-captives deal between Israel and Palestinian groups.

US President Joe Biden's administration has been seeking to limit the fallout from the war in Gaza between Hamas and Israel, now in its 11th month.

The conflict has levelled huge swathes of Gaza, triggered border clashes between Israel and Lebanon's Hezbollah movement and sparked attacks by Yemenis on Red Sea shipping.

In recent weeks, the US military has been bolstering its forces in the Middle East to guard against major new attacks by Iran or its allies, sending the Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group into the region to replace the Theodore Roosevelt carrier strike group. — Reuters

Bangladesh floods leaves 300,000 in shelters

FENI: River waters in low-lying Bangladesh are receding after days of deadly floods but 300,000 people are still in emergency shelters requiring aid, disaster officials said on Sunday.

The heavy floods, which killed at least 18 people in Bangladesh, have added to the challenges of a new government that took charge this month after a student-led revolution.

Rescue teams, including joint forces of the army, air force and navy, are helping those forced from their homes and bringing aid to those who have lost everything, disaster management minister Faruk-e-Azam said.

"The flood situation is improving as the flood water started to recede," Azam said. More than 307,000 people are in shelters and more than 5.2 million have been affected by the floods, the ministry said. "Now we are working to restore communication in the affected areas so that we can distribute relief food," Azam said.

"We are also taking steps so that contagious diseases don't spread" Ordinary Bangladeshis have been crowdfunding relief efforts.



People move on vehicles on a flooded Dhaka-Chattogram highway in the Chhagalnaiya area, in Feni, Bangladesh. — Reuters

Highways and rail lines were damaged between the capital Dhaka and the main port city of Chittagong, making access to badly flooded districts difficult and disrupting business activity. Monsoon rains cause widespread destruction yearly but climate change is shifting weather patterns and increasing the number of extreme weather events. The South Asian nation of 170 million people is criss-crossed by hundreds of rivers and has seen frequent floods in recent decades.

Much of the country is made up of deltas where the Himalayan rivers the Ganges and the Brahmaputra wind towards the sea after coursing through India. It is among the countries most vulnerable to disasters and climate change, according to the Global Climate Risk Index. Hard-hit areas include the southeastern regions around Chittagong and Cox's Bazar, home to around a million Rohingya refugees from neighbouring Myanmar.

Floods across the border in upstream India have also left a trail of destruction, with at least 24 people killed in eastern Tripura state since Monday. Meanwhile, Bangladesh's metro railway in the notoriously congested capital Dhaka resumed on Sunday, more than a month after it was closed during the peak of student-led protests that eventually toppled the prime minister. The resumption of metro services is a key sign of a return to normal daily life. — AFP

Officials say 35 dead in Pakistan bus crashes

RAWALPINDI: At least 35 people were killed in two separate bus accidents in Pakistan on Sunday, including 12 pilgrims who had been trying to reach Iran, rescue and hospital officials said. Twenty-three people were killed when the bus they were travelling in plunged into a ravine near the town of Azad Pattan on the border between Punjab province and Pakistan-administered Kashmir. Sameena Khan, the head of Tehsil Headquarter Hospital in the town of Kahuta, said that twenty-three bodies had been recovered from the crash site. "I have lost three members of my family," Tara Zafar said, who travelled to the hospital after hearing about the accident. Her father, sister and one-year-old nephew were among the dead. "I hoped that at least one of them

had survived. It's doomsday for my family." Umar Farooq, a senior government official from Sudhanoti district, where the bus started its journey, confirmed the death toll from the crash site. In a separate incident, 12 men died when their bus crashed into a ravine on the Makran Coastal Highway in Balochistan, after being prevented from crossing into Iran. "An army crane is on its way to help lift the bus from the ravine to check if passengers are pinned underneath the vehicle. Therefore the death toll may rise," police official Aslam Bangulzai said. "This is a particularly treacherous tract of road, with many twists and turns. The driver was speeding and the bus fell into a deep ravine," he added. — AFP



Rescue personnel inspect the site of a bus accident at Soon village near Kahuta, Punjab province. — AFP

BANGKOK

Thai authorities raid illegal bitcoin mine

Thai officials raided an illegal bitcoin mine west of Bangkok after residents complained of frequent blackouts in the area for more than a month, local authorities said on Sunday. "We found bitcoin mining rigs, pointing to people using this house to operate a mine and using power they didn't fully pay for," said Jamnong Chanwong, a chief district security officer. He said that records showed that electricity consumption in the house was



large, but they had paid for very little of it. It was fourth time this year that authorities have raided an illegal bitcoin mine in Ratchaburi province. — AFP

BRAZZAVILLE

Congo-Brazzaville reports 21 mpox cases

Twenty-one cases of mpox have been recorded in Congo-Brazzaville, the country's health minister said. Gilbert Mokoki said that the central African country had "registered 158 suspect cases" since the beginning of the year, "21 of which we have confirmed". The virus has been reported in five of Congo-Brazzaville's 15 regions, with the forested areas of Sangha and Likouala in the north particularly affected. A new variant of mpox has swept



across DR Congo, killing 570 people so far this year. Mokoki said that the epidemic was not alarming in Congo-Brazzaville, but appealed to people to take preventative measures. — AFP

BEIJING

China says rescued 'personnel' after collision

China's coast guard said it rescued Filipino "personnel" who fell overboard on Sunday after a Philippine vessel collided with one of its ships in the South China Sea. It said the collision took place near the disputed Sabina Shoal, 140 kilometres west of the Philippine island of Palawan and about 1,200 kilometres from Hainan island. China Coast Guard spokesman Gan Yu said the collision occurred when a vessel refused to comply with "control meas-



ures" after attempting to deliver supplies to another vessel "illegally stationed" near Xianbin Reef, using the names for the Sabina Shoal and the Spratly Islands. — AFP



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In brief

■ WASHINGTON



HARRIS CAMPAIGN SAYS IT RAISED \$540M IN JUST OVER A MONTH

Kamala Harris's US presidential campaign said on Sunday that it has raised more than half a billion dollars in just over a month, "a record for any campaign in history."

The eye-watering amount of \$540 million, raised since Harris launched her campaign after President Joe Biden dropped out of the White House race on July 21 and endorsed her, comes as she and Republican rival Donald Trump embark on the final 10-week sprint to election day on November 5.

Trump, whose campaign was thrown when Biden stepped aside, reported having \$327 million cash on hand at the start of August. — AFP

■ VATICAN CITY



POPE CONDEMNS UKRAINE BAN ON ORTHODOX CHURCH

Pope Francis on Sunday condemned the Ukraine government's move to ban a Russia-linked branch of the country's Orthodox Church.

"Do not touch churches," the pope said in his weekly prayers, one day after Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky signed the ban. "In thinking of the law recently adopted in Ukraine, I fear for the liberty of those who pray," the pope said.

The Ukrainian Orthodox Church broke away from the Moscow patriarchy in 2022, but Ukrainian officials accuse its clerics of staying loyal to Russia. Pope said he continued to follow "with sorrow" the fighting in Ukraine. — AFP

■ BAMAKO



MALI DRONE STRIKES KILL AT LEAST 15 IN NORTHERN TOWN

At least 15 people, including children, were killed by drone strikes on the town of Tinzaouaten in north Mali, near where the army suffered a heavy blow last month. The town, located near the Algerian border, came under drone attack again on Sunday, a spokesperson for a rebel coalition known as the Permanent Strategic Framework for Peace, Security and Development (CSP) said.

The strikes hit a civilian home, a pharmacy and other parts of town. The fighting near Tinzaouaten in July could be Wagner's heaviest defeat since it stepped to help Mali's junta fight insurgent groups. — Reuters

Russia sends more artillery in Kursk



Ukrainian firefighters work to extinguish a fire in a residential building at the site of a missile strike in Kharkiv. — AFP

MOSCOW: Russia's defence ministry said on Sunday that it sent more artillery to the Kursk region where Russian forces are fighting thousands of Ukrainian troops who pierced the Russian border on August 6.

"Additional missile and artillery weapons have been supplied to the group," the ministry said in a statement on supplies to troops in the Russian border regions.

Russia launched several missiles and drones overnight targeting northern and eastern Ukraine, Kyiv's military said, with air defence systems destroying most of the weapons before they reached their targets.

The attack targeted Ukraine's frontline regions of Chernihiv, Sumy, Kharkiv and Donetsk, Ukraine's air force said on the

Russia launched several missiles and drones overnight targeting northern and eastern Ukraine with air defence systems destroying most of the weapons

Telegram messaging app.

"Most of the missiles did not reach their targets," the air force said, adding that Russia launched an Iskander-M ballistic missile, an Iskander-K cruise missile and six guided air missiles. It did not specify how many missiles were destroyed.

The air force said Russia launched nine attack drones, with Ukraine's air defence systems destroying eight of them

over the Ukraine's Mykolaiv region.

Oleh Sinehubov, governor of the Kharkiv region in the east, posted on Telegram that seven people were injured in the Russian attacks, including a 4-year-old child.

Ihor Terekhov, mayor of Kharkiv city, said a gas pipeline was damaged in the city and at least two houses were destroyed and 10 damaged.

Both sides deny targeting civilians in the war that Russia launched with a full-scale attack on Ukraine in February 2022.

Russia has been pummeling Ukrainian border regions with strikes, and Kyiv said its surprise incursion earlier this month into Russia's Kursk region aimed to hinder Moscow's ability to stage such attacks. — AFP

Telegram chief Pavel Durov to appear in French court

PARIS: Telegram chief executive Pavel Durov is to appear in court after being arrested at a Paris airport for offences related to his popular messaging app, sources said.

Russia has accused France of "refusing to cooperate" following the arrest of the Franco-Russian billionaire, 39, at Le Bourget airport on Saturday night. Durov had arrived from Baku, Azerbaijan, a source close to the case said.

France's OFMIN, an office tasked with preventing violence against minors, had issued an arrest warrant for Durov in a preliminary investigation into alleged offences including fraud, drug trafficking, cyberbullying, organised crime and promotion of terrorism, one source said.

Durov is accused of failing to take action to curb the criminal use of his platform. "Enough of Telegram's impunity," said one investigator who expressed surprise that Durov flew to Paris knowing he was a wanted man.

Russian authorities said they

had demanded access to Durov but had no response from France.

"We immediately asked French authorities to explain the reasons for this detention and demanded that his rights be protected and that consular access be granted. Up to now, the French side is refusing to cooperate on this question," Russia's embassy in Paris said.

Russian foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said Moscow had asked for consular access to 39-year-old Durov, saying that as he also had French citizenship "France considers that it is his main nationality".

Businessman Elon Musk posted the hashtag #FreePavel on the X social media platform he owns and commented in French, "Liberte Liberte! Liberte?"

Former US presidential candidate Robert F Kennedy Jr said, also on X, that "the need to protect free speech has never been more urgent". — AFP



Police officers lead activist Vladislav Mazur away during protesting against the arrest of Pavel Durov, near the French Embassy in Moscow. — AFP

German police say suspect confesses to rampage

SOLINGEN: German police said on Sunday that a Syrian man has given himself up and confessed to killing three people and wounding eight others in a knife rampage at a street festival. The random attack as thousands of people gathered on Friday night in the western city of Solingen has stunned Germany. Two men aged 56 and 67 and a 56-year-old woman were killed, officials said.

Four of the wounded remained in a serious condition. All of the victims were stabbed in the neck, according to police.

Police said in a statement that the suspect was a 26-year-old Syrian who had "given himself up to authorities... and declared himself responsible for the attack".

According to the Bild and Spiegel newspapers, the suspect arrived in Germany in December 2022 and had a protected immigration status often given to those fleeing war-torn Syria.

The IS group has claimed responsibility for the attack, saying "the perpetrator of the attack on a gathering" in Solingen "was a soldier of the IS".

German Vice-Chancellor Robert Habeck said the suspect was not known to the security services as an extremist considered dangerous.



A 26-year-old Syrian man is escorted by police as he leaves the Federal Public Prosecutor in Karlsruhe, Germany. — AFP

Police said in a statement that the suspect was a 26-year-old Syrian who had given himself up to authorities... and declared himself responsible for the attack

The German prosecutor's office on Sunday ordered the pre-trial detention of the suspected perpetrator of a deadly knife attack in Solingen, suspecting him of belonging to a "terrorist group".

The arrest warrant says that the suspect identified as "Syrian national Issa Al H" will be detained over "strong suspicions of belonging to a terrorist group abroad" as well as of murder and

attempted murder. The attack took place as thousands of people gathered for the first night of a "Festival of Diversity", part of a series of events to mark Solingen's 650th anniversary. The whole festival has now been cancelled.

Witness Lars Breitke told the Solinger Tageblatt newspaper he was near the attack, close to the main stage, and "understood from the expression on the singer's face that something was

wrong".

German officers indicated on Sunday that a suspect arrested a day before at a raid at a hostel for asylum-seekers, not far from the scene of the attack, was being considered a "witness".

National and local leaders, including Chancellor Olaf Scholz, said the country had been "deeply shocked" by the deaths in Solingen, a city of 160,000 people. — AFP

Studying abroad offers students unique opportunities



Sandhya Rao Mehta

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

The latest group of Omani school leavers are now ready to go foreign universities to pursue their further studies. Based on their final grades and personal preferences, these students will soon be exposed to a whole different learning atmosphere, developing their soft skills in addition to knowledge in their chosen majors.

There is little doubt that travelling and studying in a different country and context develops a young mind.

In addition to being exposed to new teaching and learning techniques, it also acts as an introduction to different ways of life, facilitating the adaptation of various skills like time management, punctuality and organisation.

Today, studying abroad comes in various forms — from a month long stint at a language immersion programme, a year-long focus on study skills before deciding on a major, or a longer, 4-year or longer programme at the undergraduate or higher level. In all cases, the physical distance from childhood and school education contexts provides more challenging opportunities to learn and prosper.

It does not matter where a student chooses to study — neighbouring and regional countries offer students learning experiences which are culturally similar, ensuring comfort and familiarity. The further away one goes, the more challenging, and rewarding, the experience will be.

There are many advantages to studying abroad, most of which are familiar to many but are worth repeating. Broadening one's horizons, creating networking opportunities and gaining linguistic and intercultural skills are some of the most important outcomes which can be measured.

Studying abroad exposes young minds to different ways of thinking and diverse perspectives to traditional ways of learning and doing. It introduces learners to diverse groups of students who share the same set of challenges, allowing them to grow together, often leading to lifelong friendships.

It also introduces youngsters to different cultural perspectives which challenge preconceptions of people and places. This leads to breaking barriers and opening windows of the mind to new ways of seeing and interpreting. In our globalised world, employers also place importance on people who

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have diverse international exposure and experience. Working part time instils a work ethic and professionalism, training students to set priorities and manage time. In fact, companies and institutions value employees who are adaptable and are able to work with different people and contexts.

Studying and using the opportunities to work abroad also help youngsters in setting up their own businesses or take up careers in digital spaces. The learning opportunities, exploring available options and being able to think outside the box of traditional careers will surely help anyone who wants to return freshly energised and motivated.

There is no doubt that studying abroad is challenging for everybody. While some may cope with the challenges easily, others will struggle a bit more. In fact, not everybody has the personality to undergo these challenges, so orientation and counselling is essential so that students who are taking up this opportunity are sure of the repercussions of their choice. However, once the adventure begins, there is no substitute to travelling and learning, with all the advantages it offers for a promising future.

Fiji islands see highest water temperature in 600 years

CHRISTIAN SCHULTZ

Near the Fijian Islands in the south-western Pacific, the ocean has not been as warm in the past 600 years as it is today, according to a study published in *Science Advances* journal.

The data is “further evidence of the unprecedented warming of the western Pacific,” according to the Johannes Gutenberg University Mainz (JGU) in Germany, which was involved in the research.

The view into the climatic past was made possible by the reef-building honeycomb coral (*Diploastrea heliopora*) which can live for a very long time and grows on average between 3 to 6 millimetres per year.

Climate changes of past centuries are stored in the skeletons of such corals, according to the JGU.

Specifically, the researchers looked at a core about 2 metres long from such a coral, focusing on the ratio of strontium to calcium.

The age of each layer was determined using the Uranium-Thorium dating method, thanks to the Institute of Geosciences at Mainz University.

Basically, scientists examine how much the uranium isotopes contained have decayed radioactively and transformed into thorium, which enables them to draw conclusions about age.

The evaluation of coral data from 1370 to 1997, supplemented by 26 years of water temperature measurements, showed that 2022 was the warmest year in the Pacific region since 1370.

The southwestern Pacific plays a central role in regulating global climate patterns such as the El Niño-Southern Oscillation weather phenomenon, a coupled circulation system of ocean and atmosphere in the tropical Pacific.

Strong and moderate El Niño events contribute to warming and increase the average global surface temperature, potentially affecting high and low-pressure systems, winds and precipitation.

The coral project scientists say current climate simulations suggest that changes over the 21st century are likely to lead to further drought or heavy rainfall. This could cause adverse effects for the inhabitants of endangered Pacific islands and their ecosystems

Fiji consists of an archipelago of more than 330 islands — of which about 110 are permanently inhabited — and more than 500 islets, amounting to a total land area of about 18,300 square kilometres. — dpa

Biodiversity loss: A critical threat to human health and survival



Dr Khalfan bin Hamed Al Harrasi

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The loss of biodiversity isn't just an environmental issue; it's a direct threat to human health with potentially catastrophic consequences. One of biodiversity's most remarkable gifts is its role as nature's pharmacy.

Biodiversity is also essential for ensuring a steady supply of clean water, especially in the world's driest regions. Wetlands, forests and natural landscapes act as nature's water filters, purifying and regulating the water we depend on. Yet, these systems are under siege from pollution, deforestation and climate change, eroding their ability to provide this service.

The result? Dwindling water quality and availability, leaves many communities vulnerable to waterborne diseases. Protecting these natural filters isn't just an environmental issue; it's a public health imperative.

Disrupting natural habitats doesn't just displace wildlife; it opens the door to new health threats.

The balance within ecosystems helps regulate populations of disease carriers like mosquitoes, but when we alter these environments, that balance is lost. Deforestation, for example, has been linked to a surge in malaria cases, as it creates ideal breeding grounds for mosquitoes.

The Covid-19 pandemic highlighted how the destruction of wildlife habitats can lead to zoonotic diseases; those that jump from animals to humans.

As human activity encroaches on natural areas, the risk of new infectious diseases grows, posing a serious threat to global public health.

Beyond physical health, the richness of life around us is crucial for mental well-being. Environments rich in plant and animal life have been shown to reduce stress, anxiety and depression.

In bustling cities, green spaces like parks and gardens offer a peaceful escape, fostering mental health. Preserving these natural havens is essential not only for their ecological importance, but also for the psychological well-being of communities.

Access to these serene environments allows individuals to experience the calming benefits that nature provides, underscoring why conservation efforts are vital for both our environment and our mental health.

Biodiversity is also the backbone of our food security. The genetic diversity within crops and livestock enables them to adapt to changing climates, fend off pests and resist diseases.

However, as this genetic variation erodes, our food systems become increasingly fragile. Over 75 per cent of the world's food supply relies on just 12 plant species and five animal species, creating a dangerously narrow genetic base. If we lose this diversity, our food supply could be easily disrupted, leading to shortages and crises.

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Maintaining agricultural biodiversity is crucial for a sustainable future and for the survival of those whose livelihoods depend on farming.

The preservation of endangered species is not just about saving individual animals; it's about maintaining the delicate balance of nature that underpins our health and well-being. Every species plays a vital role in its ecosystem.

When even one species goes extinct, it can trigger a domino effect, disrupting the entire environment. For example, the decline of predators like the leopard can lead to an overpopulation of prey, resulting in overgrazing, vegetation loss and soil erosion.

These cascading effects degrade the ecosystems that support all life, including our own.

The loss of biodiversity doesn't just harm the environment; it has far-reaching socio-economic consequences

that ripple through communities and economies worldwide. For those who depend on natural resources, like fishing and agriculture, the stakes are especially high.

As biodiversity declines, these communities face increasing poverty and food insecurity, as their livelihoods are directly tied to the health of the environment. But the impact goes beyond local economies.

The global economy relies on the services that biological diversity provides, from pollination of crops to water purification and climate regulation. If we lose these services, the economic fallout could be severe, affecting industries and livelihoods worldwide.

Tackling the global biodiversity crisis demands more than just local efforts; it requires strong conservation policies and international cooperation.

Initiatives like the Convention on Biological Diversity are pivotal in safeguarding species and habitats while promoting sustainable development.

Traditional ecological knowledge, especially from indigenous communities, has long been a cornerstone of sustainable land management. By integrating this wisdom into modern conservation practices, we can enhance their effectiveness and cultural relevance, ensuring that progress does not come at the expense of the natural world.

The diversity of life on Earth is not just a wonder to behold; it's a critical foundation for human health and survival. The loss of biodiversity is far more than an environmental concern. It is a direct threat to our well-being that demands immediate attention.

Every species and ecosystem contributes to the resources we depend on, from the medicines that heal us to the food and water that sustain us.

Protecting this natural variety is essential for the health of our planet, the stability of our economies and the future of generations to come.

Recognising the immense value of biodiversity and taking decisive action to preserve it is not just an option; it's a necessity for a sustainable and healthy future.

Your language goes to head or heart?

The different means of communication that we have today bridged the gap between people and nations. They have brought the whole world even closer than it was thousands of years ago. Day-to-day interaction between people around the globe is becoming easier as communication links are smarter and faster, making this world feel like a virtual village. For that reason, people are encouraged to learn other languages, which are essential to have effective communication. Mastering another approach of communication, such as learning a new language, helps people easily interact with individuals from different nations, backgrounds, and cultures. Understanding another language is considered the doorway to wisdom! Speaking, or at least understanding the basics of other languages, can be an attractive quality for speakers of that particular language. Learning a few greeting phrases in a different language can serve as an effective way and an icebreaker to start a friendly conversation.

It is great to have interest to learn a new language; however, this process involves a number of challenges. Once the learning journey begins, one must keep in mind that the path to multilingualism feels like a never-ending road trip with countless dead ends. To acquire the spoken form of a new language, learners should master the sounds or phonemes that constitute the language and understand how to arrange words (syntax) to create meaningful utterances. They must also learn new vocabulary from that language and practice using it in dialogues within different contexts.

One of the most significant languages that is less commonly learned or spoken among people is the Sign Language. It is an essential tool for communicating with deaf individuals, and the world has designated a special day to celebrate its importance and recognise the human rights of deaf people. This day



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IT IS GREAT TO HAVE INTEREST TO LEARN A NEW LANGUAGE... HOWEVER, THIS PROCESS INVOLVES A NUMBER OF CHALLENGES

highlights the linguistic identity and cultural diversity of all sign language users worldwide. Countries observe this day to recognise the importance of sign languages in achieving global goals and fulfilling the core promise of leaving no one behind. Nelson Mandela, the South African revolutionary and political leader, said, “If you talk to a man in a language he understands, that goes to his head. If you talk to him in his own language, that goes to his heart.” According to the World Federation of the Deaf, there are over 70 million deaf people around the world. Collectively, they use more than 300 different sign languages, and over 80 per cent of these individuals live in developing countries. Not all words are expressed through voice; sometimes thoughts and feelings are conveyed through body language, as in sign language. Sign Language is based on the idea that sight is the most useful tool for a deaf person to communicate and receive information. Unlike spoken languages, where the different sounds created by words and tones of voice are the main devices for communication, sign language relies on hand shapes, positions, movements, body movements, gestures, facial expressions, and other visual signs to construct its words. Like any other language, fluency in sign language comes only after a long period of study and practice. Learning Sign Language as a second language or acquiring it as a first language is likely not the same experience. Some studies emphasise age as a critical factor for individuals who learn sign language. For a person to become fully competent in any language, exposure should begin as early as possible, preferably before school age. Researchers suggest that the first six months are the most crucial for a child’s development of language skills. The early identification of a child’s hearing loss or deafness provides parents with an opportunity to explore communication options.

MONSOON VIBES!



▪ A peacock displays its feathers after monsoon rains on the outskirts of Ajmer, India, on Sunday. – AFP

Why mpox vaccines are only just arriving...

THE first 10,000 mpox vaccines are finally due to arrive next week in Africa, where a dangerous new strain of the virus - which has afflicted people there for decades - has caused global alarm. The slow arrival of the shots - which have already been made available in more than 70 countries outside Africa - showed that lessons learned from the Covid-19 pandemic about global healthcare inequities have been slow to bring change, half a dozen public health officials and scientists said. Among the hurdles: It took the World Health Organization (WHO) until this month to start officially the process needed to give poor countries easy access to large quantities of vaccine via international agencies. That could have begun years ago, several of the officials and scientists said. Mpox is a potentially deadly infection that causes flu-like symptoms and pus-filled lesions and spreads through close physical contact. It was declared a global health emergency by the WHO on August 14 after the new strain, known as clade 1b, began to proliferate from Democratic Republic of Congo to neighbouring African countries. In response to questions about the delays in vaccine deployment, the UN health agency said on Friday it would relax some of its procedures on



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IT TOOK THE WHO UNTIL THIS MONTH TO START OFFICIALLY THE PROCESS NEEDED TO GIVE POOR COUNTRIES EASY ACCESS TO LARGE QUANTITIES OF VACCINE VIA INTERNATIONAL AGENCIES

this occasion in an effort to now accelerate poor countries’ access to the mpox shots. Buying the expensive vaccines directly is out of reach for many low-income countries. There are two key mpox shots, made by Denmark’s Bavarian Nordic and Japan’s KM Biologics. Bavarian Nordic’s costs \$100 a dose; the price of KM Biologics’ is unknown. The long wait for WHO approval for international agencies to buy and distribute the vaccine has forced individual African governments and the continent’s public health agency - the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - to instead request donations of shots from rich countries. That cumbersome process can collapse, as it has before, if donors feel they should keep the vaccine to protect their own people. The first 10,000 vaccines on their way to Africa - made by Bavarian Nordic - were donated by the United States, not provided by the UN system. Helen Rees, a member of the Africa CDC’s mpox emergency committee, and executive director of the Wits RHI Research Institute in Johannesburg, South Africa, said it was “really outrageous” that, after Africa struggled to access vaccines during the Covid

pandemic, the region had once again been left behind. In 2022, after a different mpox strain spread outside Africa, smallpox shots were repurposed by governments within weeks, approved by regulators and used in roughly 70 high and middle income countries to protect those most at risk. Those vaccines have now reached 1.2 million people in the United States alone, according to the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). But no shots have been available in Africa outside clinical trials. A key reason: Vaccines needed to be greenlit by the WHO before they could be bought by public healthcare groups including Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance. Gavi helps poorer countries buy shots, supplying childhood vaccines in this way routinely. It administered a global scheme for all vaccines during Covid-19 and has up to \$500 million to spend on mpox vaccines and logistics. The Africa CDC has said 10 million doses may be needed across the continent. But the WHO only this month asked vaccine manufacturers to submit the information needed for the mpox shots to receive an emergency licence - the WHO’s accelerated approval for medical products. It urged countries to donate shots until the process was finalised, in September.

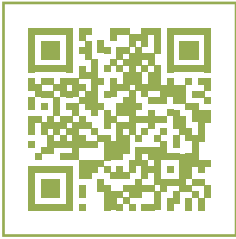


A nurse adjusts his gloves in a mpox ward at the Kavumu hospital, 30 km north of Bukavu in eastern Democratic Republic of Congo. – AFP

The WHO said it is working with the authorities in Congo to put together a vaccination plan, and on Friday said Gavi could start talks while it finalised its emergency approval. Sania Nishtar, chief executive of Gavi, said the WHO’s aim to now act quickly on approvals and improvements in funding showed “the somewhat brighter side of where we are compared to Covid.” Asked to comment on the approval delays, she said, “hopefully this is another learning moment for us.” The WHO’s role in approving medical products has revolutionised supply in low-income countries, which often lack the facilities to check new products themselves, but it has also faced criticism for its slow speed and complexity. The Geneva-based UN health agency said on Friday it did not have sufficient data during the last mpox emergency in 2022 to start an approval process for the vaccine, and it has been working with manufacturers since then to see if the available data warranted an approval. Mpox, which includes several different strains, has caused 99,000 confirmed cases and 208 deaths worldwide since 2022, according to the WHO. The tally is likely an underestimate as many cases go unreported.

Sport

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Oman national team preps for 2026 World Cup Qualifiers

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

The Oman national football team will report back to the training sessions on Wednesday ahead of the opening match against Iraq at the 2026 Fifa World Cup qualifiers.

The short domestic camp will take place at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex while the team's delegation will travel to Basra, Iraq on September 3 and the match will take place on September 5. The official opening game at the deciding qualifiers will kick off at 8 pm (Oman time) at Basra International Stadium.

"We had a visit to Basra city from August 6 to 8 ahead of the team's arrival. The purpose of the visit was to ensure the readiness of the accommodation and training facilities beside ensuring the fans' presence in the venue to support the national team. The delegation which visited Basra comprised Ali al Khanbashi

as Assistant head coach, Hussain al Zadjali as Team Manager and Nasser al Busaidy as representative of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth," Hussain al Zadjali said.

"My main part during the visit was linked to the accommodation and some logistic arrangements for the teams and all these were confirmed. I will also go ahead with the team's delegation arrival in Basra which will arrive on September 1 while the delegation will arrive two days later. The team will stay at Grand millennium Basra hotel and the training sessions at Al Fayhaa Sport Club which can accommodate around 10,000 fans. There were no scheduled friendly matches ahead of Iraq match. The current focus is to raise the number of training sessions and keep the players in right shape," he added.

"It is scheduled that the team will return back to Muscat on the following day of the match and they will begin an internal camp in Muscat on September



Hussain al Zadjali, Team Manager

6. The following game will take place in Muscat against South Korea on September 10 and the match will start at 6 pm (Oman time). We are looking for the fans' support in the both first two games against Iraq and South Korea. The initial matches are very essential to the teams' path in their qualifiers campaign," he added.

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth (MoCSY) had launched recently in direct collaboration with Oman Football Association (OFA) the national football team's supporting campaign in their main assignment at the deciding round of the Asian qualifiers to advance and reach 2026 Fifa World Cup. The campaign is titled under the slogan of 'We Are All With You'.

The logo symbolises sports, speed and boldness and is designed in a single colour for versatile use across various platforms such as TV, print advertisements and social media.

The Red Warriors have high hopes to

reach the Fifa World Cup as they were drawn in a balanced group that comprises South Korea, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and Kuwait in Group B. Oman will begin their campaign in the Asian qualifiers with an away match against Iraq in Basra city on September 5, before hosting South Korea in a key game on September 10.

Later, the Red Warriors will meet Kuwait on October 10 in Muscat and it will be followed by Jordan clash on October 15 in Amman city. The concluding first leg matches will be against Palestine on November 14.

The second leg matches will begin as Oman will host Iraq in Muscat on November 19 before travelling to Seoul to face South Korea on March 20, 2025, and then Kuwait on March 25, 2025. The final group matches will be against Jordan in Muscat on June 5, 2025, and the concluding game against Palestine in an away match on June 10, 2025.

Sultanate of Oman MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH					
TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT					
MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH, Muscat, hereby give notice of tenders for the following projects:-					
Tender No.	Project Category	Location	Grade in Tender Board Registration	Last Day to Purchase Tender Documents	Last Date of Tender Submission
16/2024	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE & OPERATION OF ELECTRO-MECHANICAL SERVICES, CIVIL, CLEANING AND PEST CONTROL SERVICES TO SULTAN QABOOS SPORTS COMPLEX AT BAUSHER FOR THE PERIOD 2025-2026	Excellent Grade	07/09/2024	07/10/2024
17/2024	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO SEEB SPORTS STADIUM (INCLUDING SPORTS HALL AT SEEB SPORTS CLUB) FOR THE PERIOD 2025-2026	Excellent Grade	07/09/2024	07/10/2024
18/2024	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO AL AMAL SPORTS CLUB FOR THE PERIOD 2025-2026	Excellent Grade	07/09/2024	07/10/2024
19/2024	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO IBRA SPORTS COMPLEX FOR THE PERIOD 2025-2026	Excellent Grade	07/09/2024	07/10/2024
20/2024	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO IBRI SPORTS COMPLEX FOR THE PERIOD 2025-2026	Excellent Grade	07/09/2024	07/10/2024
21/2024	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO KHASAB SPORTS COMPLEX (INCLUDING SPORTS CENTRE AT LIMA) FOR THE PERIOD 2025-2026	Excellent Grade	07/09/2024	07/10/2024
22/2024	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE AND OPERATING SERVICES TO SALALAH SPORTS COMPLEX FOR THE FOR THE PERIOD 2025-2026	Excellent Grade	07/09/2024	07/10/2024
23/2024	Services	CLEANING SERVICES TO ENTIRE CAMPUS AND FACILITIES TO MINISTRY'S VARIOUS BUILDINGS AT MUSCAT GOVERNARATE FOR THE PERIOD 2025	Excellent Grade	07/09/2024	07/10/2024
24/2024	Services	MAINTENANCE OF LANDSCAPING WORKS TO MINISTRY'S CAMPUSES IN MUSCAT GOVERNORATE FOR THE PERIOD 2025	First Grade	07/09/2024	07/10/2024
25/2024	Electromechanical and Telecommunications Contracting and Maintenance	MAINTENANCE & OPERATION OF ELECTRO-MECHANICAL AND AIR-CONDITIONING UNITS TO MINISTRY'S VARIOUS BUILDINGS IN MUSCAT GOVERNORATE FOR THE PERIOD 2025	First Grade	07/09/2024	07/10/2024
26/2024	Construction and Maintenance	RESTRUCTURE & SETUP OF NEW MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH OFFICE AT AL-KHUWAIR	Excellent Grade	31/08/2024	09/09/2024
27/2024	Construction and Maintenance	CONSTRUCTION, COMPLETION AND MAINTENANCE OF GUARD RESIDENCE AT AL KHUWAIR	Third Grade	31/08/2024	09/09/2024
Companies, which are registered with the Tender Board and engaged in same category with experience in and same Grade as noted above, can obtain the Tender Documents at the Tender Board E-tendering digital portal link (http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om)					
The last date of tender submission on above E-tendering site					
INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE OF MINISTRY OF CULTURE, SPORTS and YOUTH					
Any participants have doubt in adopting e-tendering can contact over the phone 24402200 or through email etenderhd@ita.gov.om					

Salalah Club reaches semi-finals despite Al Qurain defeat

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

Salalah Club qualified for the semi-finals of the Fatima bint Mubarak Gulf Women's Basketball Cup held in Abu Dhabi. Salalah will face Al Gharafa Club, which qualified as the second in the group after achieving two wins and suffering a loss.

The second match in the semi-final will bring together Fatima Club and Al Qurain Team.

In their last group stage match, Salalah lost to Al Qurain in the third game of the group stage. In the first quarter, Kuwaiti Al Qurain Team started the match strongly, achieving a big lead with a score of 21-6.

Mashaal al Marzouqi excelled in the attack, as she scored many points, and she was joined in the performance by Hanin al Sulayli, who added many decisive points, in addition to Maryam Ali, who also contributed effectively to scoring points. On the other hand, Salalah Club players, Shams al Duha and Ghadeer Ismail tried to confront the Kuwaiti attack and score some points for their team, but the superiority was in favour of Al Qurain.

In the second quarter, the Kuwaiti Al Qurain team continued to dominate the match, as this quarter ended with the team leading 35-15. Salalah players tried to perform better during this quarter, but the strong defences of Al Qurain team prevented them from reducing the difference significantly.

At the beginning of the third quarter, Salalah Club players tried to reduce the difference through several attacks, but Al Qurain team's defence was strong. Shaikha al Dallamah scored two additional points after stealing a rebound, followed by Ayat al Tawhid with two more points, which increased Al Qurain's lead to 39-19. After



exchanging opportunities, despite Shams al Ghanji and Zeina Batash's attempts to reduce the difference, the quarter ended with Al Qurain's clear lead with a score of 47-22.

In the final quarter, Zeina Batash opened the scoring for Salalah, but Al Qurain's player, Mashaal al Marzouqi, quickly responded by scoring four consecutive points, bringing the score to 51-23.

Despite Salalah's efforts to come back into the game, including a three-pointer by Shams al Duha and additional points from Fatima al Numani, Al Qurain managed to maintain their lead and added 12 more points.

On the other hand, Salalah's players struggled to break through the opponent's defences, resulting in a well-deserved victory for Al Qurain with a final score of 64-31.

OHA SET TO HOST 2024 ASIAN YOUTH CUP IN AL AMERAT

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman Hockey Association (OHA), is preparing to host the 2024 Asian Youth Cup for men and women, which will be held from November 26 to December 15 at the new hockey stadium in Al Amerat. This is the second major sporting event of its kind hosted by the Sultanate, following the successful 2023 edition held in Dhofar Governorate last June.

This edition is expected to witness the participation of 10 teams in both the men's and women's categories.

The men's competition schedule will include the teams of Oman, Bangladesh, China, Chinese Taipei, India, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Thailand. The matches will be held from November 26 to December 4. While the women's teams from Bangladesh, China, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, China, India, Japan, South Korea, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand will compete from December 7 to 15.

The 2024 AFC Youth Championship will serve as the qualifiers for the 2025 FIFA Youth World Cup for men and women. The top six men's teams will qualify for the World Championship to be held in India, while the top five women's teams will qualify for the World Cup, the venue of which has yet to be determined.

Shaker Munir, technical expert at the Oman Hockey Association, commented on the importance of hosting the event, saying: "Hosting this tournament reflects Oman's continued commitment to strengthening its position as a global sporting destination, especially after its success in hosting the 2024 Hockey Fives World Cup." He pointed out that Oman has made remarkable



Oman Hockey Association team



New hockey stadium in the Wilayat of Al Amerat

progress in hockey, making it a key destination on the continental and international sports map.

He added that the Oman Hockey Association, under the leadership of Dr Marwan bin

Jumaa Al Jumaa, has developed a strategic vision for hosting major tournaments, and that over the past three years it has succeeded in organizing a number of sporting events at the continental

and international levels. He also noted that the national hockey fives team ranked second in the world, which reflects the efforts made to improve the level of players.

Munir added that preparations for hosting the Asian Youth Cup began immediately after the Asian Federation approved Oman's hosting of the tournament, as a technical committee was formed to follow up on the arrangements and organizations, and ensure the stadium's readiness according to the required standards.

This tournament will be a golden opportunity for the national team and Omani youth hockey to prove their skills and qualify for the world stage, in addition to being a window to discover new talents in the game at the Asian level.

Roglic wins Vuelta stage eight, O'Connor keeps red jersey



Primož Roglič celebrates crossing the finish. — AFP

THREE-TIMES former champion Primož Roglič attacked on the climb to the finish to win stage eight of the Vuelta a España on Saturday, taking valuable time off Ben O'Connor's overall lead.

Roglič (Red Bull-Bora-Hansgrohe) had to work hard to shake off the Australian in the red jersey but the Slovenian's pace finally paid off and he took his second stage win of the race. Spain's Enric Mas (Movistar) was beaten to the line by Roglič and had to settle for second place, with his compatriot Mikel Landa (Soudal Quick-Step) coming in third.

O'Connor (Decathlon-AG2R La Mondiale) crossed the line in 17th place, 46 seconds after Roglič who also earned a 10-second bonus. The gap to the leader is now three minutes 49 seconds.

It was expected that Roglič would attempt to make up time on O'Connor on the 159-km ride from Ubeda to Cazorla, a medium mountain stage but with a sharp uphill finish, and the Slovenian showed his strength when it mattered.

"The opportunity was there, and I went for it. It was hard, hot. I was lucky, I had the legs to take it today," Roglič said.

A trio of riders were up ahead in the closing kilometres, and behind them Roglič pushed the pace at the front of the peloton, where several riders went down in a crash.

Roglič made a few attempts to get away but O'Connor dug deep to stick with his rival's wheel at first, but in the final two kilometres Roglič went ahead, with Mas the only one to go with him.

They overtook the riders up ahead and Mas grabbed the lead with 400 metres to go but Roglič had the stronger kick and got the win, and the all-important bonus.

Mas moved from fourth to third overall as Joao Almeida slipped down the general classification after trailing in almost five minutes behind the winner.

Sunday's stage nine takes the riders 178.5 km from Motril to Granada, and with tougher climbs along the way, O'Connor could find his lead cut even further if Roglič attacks again before Monday's rest day.

"I'm going every day full racing, just see how I will respond to all of this input to my body after a hard period with my injury. I still feel it, so we'll see," Roglič said. (Reporting by Trevor Stynes; editing by Clare Fallon and Ed Osmond)

Najmul dedicates Bangladesh's historic cricket win to protest victims

RAWALPINDI, PAKISTAN: Bangladesh captain Najmul Hossain Shanto said his team's first win in Test cricket against Pakistan on Sunday was a tribute to people killed during protests that toppled former premier Sheikh Hasina.

The South Asian nation endured weeks of student-led protests that ultimately forced Hasina to resign and flee to India this month after 15 years of autocratic rule.

"We are paying tribute to the individuals who recently passed away in our nation during the protest and we are praying for their souls," Najmul said after his side's 10-wicket victory in the first Test in Rawalpindi.

Bangladesh's tour to Pakistan was hit by a lack of preparation, with foreign coaches unable to attend training sessions because of travel warnings.

However, the new interim government, led by Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus, allowed the two-Test tour to Pakistan to go ahead.

Bangladesh led by 117 runs on the first innings after a record score against

Pakistan of 565, the hosts having declared their innings at 448-6 on a batting-friendly pitch.

They then dismissed Pakistan for a paltry 146 on day five, with spinners Mehidy Hasan Miraz (4-21) and Shakib Al Hasan (3-44) doing the damage.

Bangladesh scored the 30 runs required without losing a wicket, sparking celebrations in the visitors' dressing room.

Najmul, who also celebrated his 26th birthday on Sunday, said it was a special feeling.

"It is nice to win on a birthday, special feeling," he said. "But more special is the team's win. It's a historic day for us, it is massive.

"I think before we started this series, we believed we can win this time. And then... everyone really believed that we can do something special this time."

Najmul also praised his bowlers for keeping Pakistan in check.

"Everyone showed his character, I am really happy with them. We have worked hard to achieve this win. Our bowlers did so well," he said.



Shadman Islam (2R) celebrates with Najmul Hossain Shanto (R) and wicketkeeper Litton Das (L). — AFP

He also praised veteran batter Mushfiqur Rahim, whose 191 in the first innings set the foundation for Bangladesh's highest total against

Pakistan.

"He has been playing cricket for 15-17 years and he never looks tired, doing things repeatedly over and over again,"

Najmul said.

"The way he batted in these hot conditions was impressive and I am really happy for him, that's why we probably win the match."

Pakistan skipper Shan Masood apologised to home fans for the poor result.

"We all are disappointed, the whole of Pakistan is disappointed," said Masood, who has lost all four matches since being appointed Test captain last year.

"As a team, as a leader of the team, obviously I would apologise to our fans that we were unable to give the desired result that Pakistan deserved."

Masood denied his team took Bangladesh lightly.

"I thought they were very disciplined, with the ball and in the field, they played the game to their strengths," he said.

Masood hoped his players would be able to lift themselves for the second Test, which begins in Rawalpindi on Friday.

"We have to raise our hands that we have committed mistakes, so we have to lift ourselves and train hard to come back strongly," he said. — AFP



Newcastle United's Anthony Gordon celebrates scoring their first goal. — Reuters

Gordon's late strike dampens Bournemouth celebrations

BOURNEMOUTH, ENGLAND: Newcastle United's Anthony Gordon equalised 14 minutes from time to secure a 1-1 draw at Bournemouth in the Premier League on Sunday and spoil their hosts' 125th anniversary celebrations.

Marcus Tavernier put Bournemouth ahead in the first half but Gordon stole in at the back post to steer home a 76th-minute cross from substitute Harvey Barnes to ensure a deserved share of the spoils.

Newcastle advanced to four points from their opening two games of the season. Bournemouth drew their first match at Nottingham Forest.

Bournemouth, hoping for a win to mark their anniversary festivities, had the ball in the net in stoppage time for what looked initially to be a dramatic late winner but Dango Ouattara's effort was ruled out for handball after a VAR check.

Ouattara rose powerfully but a check showed the ball hit him on the top of his arm as he went up for the header and it was disallowed to the frustration of the home fans.

It was Newcastle who looked to more likely to snatch a winner, however, with Bournemouth goalkeeper Neto making several key stops to deny Alexander Isak, Joelinton and a header from centre back Dan Burn in the closing stages.

Bournemouth's lead came after Antoine Semenyo had stolen possession from Joelinton and worked the ball past three defenders before setting up a tap-in for Tavernier.

Joelinton was caught midway in his own half by the Bournemouth winger, who looked to have taken on too much as he stormed in at goal but managed to get a square pass to Tavernier when surrounded by three defenders.

Semenyo, who struck the crossbar in the first half, was close to another assist in the 64th minute but his pass from the wing was miscued by a sliding Evanilson at the back post.

Bournemouth's record signing was making his debut in one of five changes from last week's line-up but Evanilson's two other efforts on goal were easily dealt with by home goalkeeper Nick Pope and he was taken off after 72 minutes.

Bournemouth were founded in 1899 but have had their best times in the last decade after winning their initial Premier League promotion in 2015. — Reuters

Madueke nets treble as rampant Chelsea hit Wolves for six



Chelsea's Noni Madueke celebrates scoring their third goal with Malo Gusto. — REUTERS

LONDON: Noni Madueke hit a hat-trick as Chelsea crushed Wolves 6-2 to give Enzo Maresca his first Premier League win as Blues boss, while Newcastle rescued a controversial 1-1 draw at Bournemouth on Sunday.

Maresca suffered a 2-0 loss against Manchester City last weekend in his first game since arriving from Leicester to replace Mauricio Pochettino in the close-season.

Chelsea got off the mark under Maresca with a UEFA Conference League play-off victory against Servette on Thursday, but that low-key success was only the prelude to their goal spree at Molineux.

Maresca's side made the perfect start after just 98 seconds when Matheus Cunha could only flick his attempted clearance from a corner towards Nicolas Jackson, who was left unmarked to head in from six yards.

Jackson's goal infuriated Wolves fans already angry with Chelsea after Madueke posted and then deleted a critical review of Wolverhampton just hours before kick-off.

Madueke shared his location, which was Wolverhampton, in the post, which read "this place is s**t". — Reuters



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The new aircraft will serve across the airline's network of destinations.

Oman Air receives new Boeing 787-9 aircraft

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

Oman Air received delivery of its latest Boeing B787-9 aircraft, the first of three scheduled for this year. Part of an existing order, which includes eight more aircraft by 2027, the newest marks the tenth Dreamliner in the airline's fleet. As one of the world's most modern and advanced passenger aircraft, the B787-9 is known for its innovative design and exceptional fuel efficiency, while its wide cabins and large windows offer unparalleled on-board comfort for guests. The aircraft touched down in Muscat on Friday afternoon, arriving from the Boeing facility in Seattle.

"We're excited to welcome our new Boeing B787-9 to our aircraft line-up, which aligns with our strategy to fly a modern and common Oman Air fleet. It allows us to maintain efficiency in operations, optimise

maintenance costs and ensure a seamless and consistent experience for our guests," said Con Korfiatis, Chief Executive Officer. "Our latest addition to the fleet is also consistent with our focus on transforming our airline towards financial sustainability while upholding our reputation as a world-class carrier and supporting Oman's ambitions to increase tourism and connectivity in the years to come." The newest aircraft features a two-class configuration with 30 Business Class seats and 258 Economy Class seats and will serve across the airline's network of destinations.

Oman Air's spacious, elegant cabin design and exceptional service and hospitality, have garnered it a string of international awards, including most recently Best Seat Comfort in the Middle East at the APEX 2024 Awards and Best Airline Staff Middle East at the Skytrax 2024 Awards.

31 LAND-USE PACTS SIGNED IN DHOFAR GOVERNORATE

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 25

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has taken a decisive step to invigorate the local economy and stimulate investment in Dhofar Governorate by signing 31 land-use agreements with a combined value exceeding RO 22 million. These pacts span an expansive area and are earmarked for a diverse range of projects across the agricultural, industrial, medical, commercial, and residential-commercial sectors.

A significant portion of these agreements—25 agreements—are allocated to the agricultural sector, with investments surpassing RO 19.5 million. These projects will cover approximately 11.6 acres and include the establishment of the Omani Agricultural Association in the Wilayat of Thamrait. This facility, spanning 42,000 square meters, will serve as the association's headquarters, a logistics centre and a service hub. These agricultural ventures are poised to play a pivotal role in enhancing food security and driving growth within the sector.

In addition to the agricultural initiatives, the Ministry has finalised four land-use agreements for projects within the industrial, medical, and residential-commercial sectors. Collectively valued at more than RO 3 million, these projects will



Officials representing a number of stakeholders participating in the land-use agreements' signing ceremony on Sunday.

occupy a total area of 22,500 square meters.

The agreements were formalised by Eng Hamad bin Ali al Nazwani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for Housing, at an event attended by key stakeholders, including representatives from the Oman Investment Authority, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and the Najd Agricultural Area Development Office.

Ahmed bin Said bin Ali al Maashani, Director of the Lands Department in Dhofar Governorate, underscored the importance of these agreements, stating: "By the grace of the Almighty, we have successfully

signed a series of land-use contracts between the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning and various investors for sustainable projects, particularly those aimed at bolstering food security. This accomplishment is the result of strong collaboration with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and the Oman Investment Authority. The 31 contracts, valued collectively at over RO 22 million, cover more than 49 million square meters, equivalent to 11,809 acres, and are distributed across three contracts in the Wilayat of Salalah and 28 in the Najd Agricultural Area." Al Maashani further noted that these agreements are part of a broader governmental strategy

to advance food security and sustainable development within the Sultanate of Oman. The Najd Agricultural Area, in particular, has been identified as a key region for the development of modern agricultural projects, which have significantly enhanced the productivity of the sector.

These new agreements align with the government's ongoing efforts to optimise land use and improve efficiency, all in pursuit of the objectives outlined in Oman Vision 2040. The initiatives are expected to generate employment, drive economic growth and elevate living standards while also fostering sustainable development across Oman.

Government sector witnesses surge in digital transactions

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

The government sector in the Sultanate of Oman has witnessed notable growth in electronic transactions and digital payments throughout 2023.

The latest annual report released by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) highlights a surge in both the volume and scope of digital activities, reflecting an increasing reliance on electronic systems and platforms.

In the first half of 2023 alone, electronic certification systems processed 903,897 transactions utilising electronic signatures. This represents a 12-per cent increase compared to the 806,500 transactions recorded in the second half of 2022. Additionally, the adoption of digital IDs has gained momentum, with 12,924,684 digital transactions completed using digital identification methods during the

same period, marking a 25-per cent rise from the 10,331,000 transactions in the latter half of 2022.

Since the inception of electronic certification systems in 2013, a total of 115,828,495 digital transactions have been completed. Of these, 13,828,581 transactions occurred between January and June 2023, showing a 15-per cent increase from the 12,031,000 transactions completed in the first half of 2022.

The National Integration Platform, a cornerstone of digital government infrastructure, has expanded significantly. In 2022, the platform featured 30 data providers and served 59 beneficiaries. This year, the numbers have grown to 33 data providers and 71 beneficiaries, reflecting an increase of 10 per cent in data providers and a 20-per cent rise in beneficiaries.

The Oman Net Payment Gateway Portal has seen substantial activity from January to October 2023. The total number of digital



The integration of digital payment solutions and contactless options has facilitated a notable shift toward a cashless society.

In the first half of 2023 alone, electronic certification systems processed 903,897 transactions utilising electronic signatures

transactions conducted through the portal reached 41,617,405, representing a 22-per cent increase from the 34,182,000 transactions recorded in the same period in 2022. Total digital payments amounted to 1,096,333,451, which is a 30-per cent increase compared to 844,683,000 in the previous year.

Significantly, the integration of digital payment solutions and contactless options has facilitated a notable shift toward a cashless society. This transformation is complemented by the implementation of customer relationship management (CRM) systems and data analytics tools,

which have enabled banks to offer personalised services and make data-driven decisions. Additionally, the emphasis on robust cybersecurity measures has ensured the secure implementation of digital banking services, safeguarding against potential threats and enhancing overall trust in digital transactions.

The data from 2023 underscores a transformative period for the government sector's digital landscape. The impressive statistics across electronic certification, the National Integration Platform, and the Oman Net Payment Gateway Portal illustrate a robust shift towards digital processes and payments. With substantial percentage increases in transactions and payments, these advancements promise to enhance efficiency, security, and accessibility within the public sector, setting a strong foundation for future growth and innovation.

Navigate the city with 25 MY Kia Seltos SUV

Living the city life comes around with its own set of challenges. The narrow roads, heavy traffic and tricky highways make navigation a tedious task. For those meeting busy schedules and getting life through a hectic routine, it is important to have a dedicated car that meets your expectations.

Indulge in an enhanced driving experience with the Kia Seltos, a compact SUV that is perfect for young drivers and executives looking for a modern ride. It is easy to navigate in winding city spaces or crowded mall parking spots when one is driving at an elevated position of an SUV.

Treat it as an investment or a lifestyle upgrade, Kia Seltos checks all the boxes. The Seltos features a 1.5L engine producing 113 hp at 6,300 rpm paired to a VVT transmission that delivers exceptional performance and an impressive fuel efficiency of 17 KMC/litre, lessening the burden on your pocket.

At first look, the impressive 2,610mm wheelbase and 17-inch alloy wheels create a firm road grip whereas the interior is spacious, comfortable and aesthetically pleasing that spells luxury. Crafted using a bold



Kia Seltos, a compact SUV that is perfect for young drivers and executives looking for a modern ride.

design philosophy with sharp muscular creases, in the Seltos, Kia introduced its new design, a diamond pattern radiator grille garnish complemented by the eye-catching daytime running headlights.

A look inside – the five-seater offers the luxurious comfort of roomy legroom, wider headspace, ventilated front-row seats and a panoramic sunroof that brightens the mood. Discover a range of seamless controls for easy

cruising with the 3.5-inch mono OLED LCD, smooth controls paired to the steering wheel, 8” display audio with integrated Apple Car Play and Android Auto and a wireless charging tray for compatible smartphones.

Customise the interiors with ambient lighting options while you fill-up the 433-litre boot to load your travel essentials. Create your perfect drive with Seltos’ amazing range of features as you cruise highways and lanes.

Kia’s attentiveness to life-saving technologies is reflected in its dynamic product lineup. Not missing out on a beat, the Seltos features advanced safety that makes the overall ride a joyful experience. It is equipped with manual speed limit assist (MSLA), electronic parking brake, Parking Distance Warning (PDW), rear-view monitor, front and back sensors.

Moreover, Kia offers state-of-the-art service and spare parts facilitation centres to avoid inconvenience in times of mishaps. Visit your nearest Kia showroom to get a first-hand experience with the Seltos and join the Kia family. The Kia team eagerly anticipates your arrival to support and enhance your Kia ownership experience.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), Kia’s distributor in Oman, ensures a rewarding ownership experience with excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities. Recognised globally, RIA has received prestigious accolades, including the ‘Good Partnership’ award, the ‘Family Like Care’ Service award, and the ‘Kia Distributor of Distinction’ award.

NBO hosts annual Kids Carnival to celebrate families and nurture young talent



The NBO Kids Carnival 2024.

MUSCAT: The National Bank of Oman (NBO) hosted its annual Kids Carnival on August 24, 2024 at its head office in Muscat. A cherished tradition since 2017, the event targeted NBO’s employees and their families, underscoring the bank’s ongoing commitment to building a sense of community and togetherness within its workforce.

Timed with the start of the new school year, the carnival offered children an opportunity to engage in numerous activities that prepared them for academic success.

The event featured different interactive workshops, cultural activities and engaging sessions that inspired a love for learning while promoting essential life skills.

The robotics workshops were a primary event, aiming to provide children with a captivating introduction to technology and innovation and financial literacy sessions to nurture responsible financial habits from an early age.

The annual NBO Kids Carnival is more than just a day of fun — it is an initiative formed to support the development of young minds

and encourage them to explore their creativity. This aligns with NBO’s mission to nurture the next generation of leaders and innovators by equipping them with the skills and confidence needed for future success.

NBO’s annual Kids Carnival continues to play a vital role in the bank’s commitment to actively engage with its employees, their families and the wider community.

Through this event, NBO reaffirms its dedication to creating a supportive environment where its employees and their children can grow, learn and thrive.

Five compelling reasons to discover khareef this summer

SALALAH: Whilst the majority of the GCC brace the soaring summer heat, there are still a few weeks left to escape the sun and savour the cooler climates in Salalah, Governorate of Dhofar.

Less than two hours away from neighbouring Gulf countries, this is the perfect Middle East escape for rainy skies and a breath of fresh air.

Whilst exploring the rolling landscapes, expect to admire the most interesting historical locations of the governorate, and rediscover the beauty of nature through the senses, where desert springs, waterfalls and blankets of green flora come to life.

MAJESTIC WATERFALLS & MESMERISING VISTAS

The breathtaking waterfalls of Dhofar cascade with breathtaking splendour, creating a symphony of nature’s raw power and serene beauty amidst the lush, green landscapes. With a host of Alila curated adventures such as ‘The Journey to Springs and Waterfalls’, the route from Alila Hinu Bay goes west to Wadi Darbat, the main wadi in the governorate, up to the spectacular piedmont of Jabal Samhan, some 1,800 metres above sea level and descends towards the coast by Wadi Hinna and an unusual ‘antigravity spot’. Get ready to marvel at both natural wonders and an endless succession of valleys and green hills.

ADVENTURES IN WADI DARBAT

Discover Oman’s natural beauty at Wadi Darbat, located at the ancient capital of Dhofar and the most beautiful wadi. Trek through a hiking trail and connect with nature, as you swim in one of the beautiful waterfalls.



Discover Oman’s natural beauty at Wadi Darbat, located at the ancient capital of Dhofar and the most beautiful wadi.

SIGNATURE FRANKINCENSE EXPERIENCE

Drift into a timeless and authentic spa experience at Alila Hinu Bay. The journey begins with a naturally fragranced sea salt foot ritual, followed by a frankincense-infused body polish and invigorating shower. Guests can then unwind in a warm jacuzzi, savouring local delicacies at their leisure. The signature frankincense massage features heated stones and locally sourced frankincense oil from Salalah, renowned as the perfume capital of Arabia. Warm frankincense oil is gently poured onto the scalp during a soothing head and pressure point massage. To complete the experience, guests enjoy local refreshments and a hot frankincense tea, along with cherished take-home memories and a special gift.

OMAN-INSPIRED LUXURY VILLAS WITH PRIVATE POOLS

A seamless blend of expansive indoor and outdoor living, complemented by breathtaking views of the Arabian Sea. These coastal desert sanctuaries are perfect for family getaways or vacations with friends. Guests

can take a refreshing dip in their private heated outdoor pool while relaxing under the shade of an outdoor Majlis (pergola). As evening arrives, you can indulge in the unique pleasure of an outdoor tub, surrounded by cool sea breezes and a clear desert night sky, with direct access to the natural, undisturbed beachfront.

KAYAK THROUGH LAGOONS

Embark on a peaceful kayaking, or fishing excursion, in the bountiful waters that surround Alila Hinu Bay. Serenely cast your line and put your angling prowess to the test in the tranquil depths. Spot the flamingos, gaze upon passing camels and enjoy gliding across the lagoon’s waters.

Nearby, guests may visit the coastal town of Mirbat and see fishermen set sail on traditional boats or discover incredible ancient Bedouin rock art, dating back to the 3rd millennium BC. With a host of unusual and once-in-a-lifetime experiences, guests can share an evening with traditional desert nomads, tread the trail of an age-old frankincense route and embrace the dewy excitement of a mystifying khareef.



Oman Electricity Market records steady growth in 2023: Nama PWP

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

The Oman Electricity Market (OEM), a pioneering initiative that paves the ground for the future liberalisation of the country's electricity sector, delivered a second year of operational success in 2023, according to Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP).

Introduced for the first time in 2022 – a first in the Middle East – the Oman Electricity Market enables generators with expiring Power Purchase Agreements (PPAs) to compete for the opportunity to offer some or all of their uncontracted capacity through a short-term market run each day.

“The Market has performed well with steady growth in the local economy, with the market peak demand closing 3.3 per cent higher than 2022. Also, there is a significant increase in total Pool Demand in the market compared to 2022,” said Ahmed Salim al Abri, CEO – Nama PWP.

“In the operating year 2023 all the market participants have built better capabilities and experience to fulfill the operational requirements of the market,” Al Abri stated in a foreword to the Market's 2023 Annual Report.

Nama PWP, as Sole Power Procurer is also the Market Operator of the Oman Electricity Market. Other participants are generators whose PPAs are coming to the end of their



With the exception of Ibri II, all the generators participating in the Oman Electricity during 2023 were conventional gas-powered plants.

contracts. Oman Electricity Transmission Company (which operates the Load Dispatch Center) has a key role as well.

Under the specific rules of the Oman Electricity Market, the PWP purchases electricity from the registered generators through a short-term market run each day, with prices for each half hour set each day based on what generators have offered to sell. Generators holding P(W) PAs and connected to Main Interconnected System (MIS) are also required to submit offers to the Market.

In all, seven generators registered their capacity on the Oman Electricity Market during 2023. They are: Barka II, Barka III, Sohar II, Sohar III, Ibri I, Ibri II and Sur 1, which together

registered a total of 7,882.83 MW of capacity. Energy generated through the Market totalled 36.37 terawatt-hours (TWh) of electricity, of which 4.3 per cent was solar PV-based renewable energy.

Al Abri also underlined the Oman Electricity Market's contributions to, among other things, the enhancement of availability signals, dispatch efficiency, transparency, and the provision of more efficient operation incentives.

“The market continued to provide trust and confidence and to provide a base to support liberalisation journey of Oman's electricity sector,” he noted. “Furthermore, the market can play a role into the efficient integration of renewables and

demand side resources in future. The market also provides the generator with greater transparency in the treatment of expiring P(W)PAs.” Nama PWP, a member of Nama Group, also anticipates a number of beneficial impacts for the wider power sector.

Besides supporting the future liberalisation of Oman's electricity sector, Market Rules oblige generators to achieve the optimal reduction of consumption of fossil fuel for power generation in a bid to improve dispatch efficiency.

Further, by capitalising on improved availability signals, forced outage rates will be reduced overall, particularly during critical peak periods, PWP added.

STADA to expand in Oman after acquiring FITO from LEO Pharma

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

STADA, the German healthcare company that focuses on generics and specialty pharma, has acquired LEO Pharma and the existing FITO trademark in the GCC, North Africa, the Middle East and selected Asian Countries and will be expanding its base in Oman as well as in other countries.

The medical device is based on the wheat extract Rigenase (Damor Farmaceutici, Italy) and is indicated for the dermatological treatment of first- and second-degree burns, ulcers, wounds and abrasions.

The herbal origin has a high safety profile and forms a protective barrier against the external environment.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Stephane Jacqmin, STADA EVP of Emerging Markets said that the acquisition includes the takeover of the existing

business in the markets of, besides Oman, UAE, Kuwait, Egypt and Saudi Arabia while it has strong presence in countries like Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Kenya, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritius, Morocco, Pakistan, Palestine, Qatar, Tunisia and Yemen.

“We look forward to leveraging our local marketing and sales platform to develop the full potential of this strong brand in the many markets of the MENA region. This will strengthen STADA's role as the partner of choice in consumer healthcare and support our growth in this region,” adds Stephane Jacqmin.

He further said that in addition to this acquisition, STADA MENA has also entered into a supply and distribution agreement with Farmaceutici DAMOR S.p.A, Italy which will positively reflect on the healthcare medication being provided in Oman.



The headquarters of STADA.

FLAG Logistics to boost Oman presence

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

MUSCAT: FLAG Logistics, a subsidiary of Gulf Warehousing Company (GWC) — one of the fastest-growing logistics businesses in the MENA region — has unveiled a strategy to strength its presence in the Sultanate of Oman.

Qatar-based FLAG Logistics is currently launching operations at Khazaen Economic City. Strategically located near to transport links, borders, and within only two hours' drive of 80% of Oman's population, FLAG operates from a modern 50,000m² infrastructure in Khazaen Economic City, which is segmented into specialist areas, each tailored to address distinct logistical needs including dry, ambient, chilled and frozen warehousing, bulk storage, records management and marshalling areas. The warehouse and distribution centre measure 27,500m².

FLAG leverages GWC's 20 years of knowledge and expertise to create new benchmark in

the logistics industry, aiming to provide reliable and efficient logistics solutions to customers, including storage, freight forwarding, supply chain management, customs clearance, project logistics, sports logistics, event logistics, fine art logistics, and other advanced logistics solutions, along with a full range of records management solutions including collection, storage, retrieval and more.

Recently, FLAG Logistics was awarded ISO 28000:2022 for Security Management System (SMS), along with three ISO Certifications for its Integrated Management System (IMS), which includes ISO 9001:2015 for Quality Management System (QMS), ISO 14001:2015 for environmental management systems (EMS), and ISO 45001:2018 for occupational health and safety management systems.

These certifications were granted following a rigorous external audit, during which the company demonstrated full compliance with all requirements.



FLAG operates from a 50,000m² infrastructure in Khazaen Economic City.

Tech Certificate Reimbursement initiative launched under ‘Makeen’



The Professional Certification Support Initiative allows individuals to apply for reimbursement of the costs of specialised certifications in technology.

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 25

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) has unveiled a programme that enables individuals who have acquired specialised technology certificates to be suitably compensated.

The programme is part of ‘Makeen’ — the Ministry's national initiative for the rehabilitation of digital cadres with the aim of boosting national tech competencies.

A post on the Ministry's website explained, “The Professional Certification Support Initiative, launched by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology,

is based on the principle of reimbursing beneficiaries for the costs of examinations after obtaining the professional certification.” “This is done to encourage and motivate national cadres, entrepreneurs, and job-seekers to acquire accredited certifications in the field of communications and information technology only, in order to develop their skills and expertise in specialised and in-demand areas in the labour market,” it added.

Under the programme, specialised certifications from over 16 entities including Amazon, Cisco, Microsoft and Oracle, will be supported. However, applicants are only entitled to one reimbursement request per year, not exceeding a value of RO 400. Furthermore, certifications obtained prior

to January 1, 2024 will not be eligible for the reimbursement programme. Eligible applicants can register and apply through the Professional Certification Support Programme's page on Makeen's website, where they can submit copies of the certification and receipts of the costs. Approved applicants will receive payments within 40 days from the submission date.

First launched in 2021, the National Initiative for the Rehabilitation of Digital Cadres ‘Makeen’ emerged to achieve the goals of the National Programme for the Digital Economy which aims to raise the sector's contribution to the local GDP from 2 per cent currently, to 5 per cent by 2030 and 10 per cent by 2040. Since its launch, the Makeen initiative has trained over 5,000 individuals through

its various tracks, and aims to employ 10,000 Omanis by the end of 2025.

Speaking to the *Observer* earlier this year, the Assistant Director Department of Future Skills Development at MoTCIT, Ahmed bin Nasser al Naabi, explained that the initiative's programmes are tailored based on the needs of demands of global tech companies in an effort to boost local cadres, and thus localising technologies and attracting investment companies.

The initiative currently includes 5 main tracks including: a technical boot camps track, an advanced nano-degree track, a professional specialised qualification track, the technical competitions track, and the technical certificates support track.

Elon Musk’s X leaving SF, officials say ‘good riddance’

HEATHER KNIGHT
AND KATE CONGER

San Francisco’s long-relationship with X is nearly over — and city officials are far from heartbroken.

Elon Musk is shuttering his social media company’s headquarters in a gritty downtown neighbourhood in the coming weeks and will move its last employees based there south to offices in Palo Alto and San Jose, California. New headquarters will be set up in Texas.

But city officials are not lamenting the exit. X bears little resemblance to the company that San Francisco wooed with a tax break more than a decade ago, when it was Twitter, to help anchor a budding tech hub in a downtrodden neighbourhood near City Hall known as Mid-Market. The pandemic, and Musk’s 2022 acquisition of the company and subsequent gutting of its workforce, reduced the headquarters to a ghost town.

“I share the perspective that most San Franciscans have, which is good riddance,” said

MUSK, WHO CLASHED WITH STATE REGULATORS OVER PANDEMIC STAY-AT-HOME ORDERS AND HAS INCREASINGLY ENMESHED HIMSELF IN RIGHT-WING POLITICS, RECENTLY INDICATED THAT HE WAS SOURING ON SAN FRANCISCO

City Attorney David Chiu, who as a member of the city’s Board of Supervisors backed the tax break that lured Twitter to Mid-Market in 2012.

Twitter once symbolised San Francisco’s status as a startup capital. But the city’s nonchalant response to the move — amid public posts from Musk about San Francisco’s inflexible tax policies and liberal politics — shows officials are now less willing to cater to companies considering a move.

Musk and X did not respond to requests for comment.

Twitter was founded in San Francisco in 2006. In 2011, it threatened to forsake its hometown for tiny Brisbane, just over the city’s southern border, which wouldn’t levy payroll taxes.

San Francisco’s mayor then, Ed Lee, coping with the lingering effects of a recession and a nearly 10 per cent unemployment rate, proposed a so-called Twitter tax break. The deal would erase the 1.5 per cent payroll tax on new hires for certain companies in Mid-Market. Those companies would, in turn, create jobs and enliven a neighbourhood that

struggled with crime, vacancies and homelessness.

After Twitter moved into the new headquarters at 1355 Market St, its payroll swelled from a few hundred to a few thousand people. The cavernous ground floor became home to upscale bars and restaurants — where people could eat antelope, elk and pig ears.

By 2017, 59 new companies had set up shop nearby, including Uber, Square and Zendesk. Several luxury apartment buildings went up. The boom helped expand the city budget but also contributed to spiking housing costs.

Many of the tech companies also provided free food, so workers didn’t spend as much at local businesses as city leaders had hoped. The Twitter tax break ended in 2019, with politicians considering its success mixed.

Then came the pandemic. Offices emptied, and foot traffic dried up. Jack Dorsey, a Twitter co-founder and its CEO at the time, announced that employees could work from home forever.

In October 2022, Musk bought Twitter for \$44 billion and soon slashed jobs. Last year, he renamed the company and erected

on the roof a giant “X” sign that flashed at night, upsetting neighbours and landing him in trouble with the city.

“It’s like a zombie version of the old Twitter, and I think what a lot of people are feeling is: Just put this bird out of its misery,” said Yao Yue, a software engineer who worked at Twitter for 12 years and was let go after Musk’s takeover.

Musk, who clashed with state regulators over pandemic stay-at-home orders and has increasingly enmeshed himself in right-wing politics, recently indicated that he was souring on San Francisco. In July, he posted online that he had been trapped in the company’s garage “because a gang was doing drugs in the street and wouldn’t move!” Musk said last month that he would move X’s headquarters to Austin, Texas, after California passed a law that bans school districts from requiring teachers to notify parents if their children change their gender identification. He also blamed San Francisco’s gross receipts tax, which taxes local businesses for transactions that take place outside city limits.

He said the tax unfairly penalises businesses that process

payments — something he hopes X will do. “X could not remain in SF and launch payments, as it would immediately fail,” he posted in July.

Mayor London Breed said she met with Musk once several months ago and had texted with him. She said she had not offered X anything to stay but wanted to maintain good relationships with all CEOs in her city.

“I’m not going to beg anybody,” Breed said. “But I made it very clear that my goal is to ensure that companies succeed.” She said she thought Musk’s political agenda had driven him out of San Francisco but did not elaborate.

Mid-Market is looking better than it did in the depths of the pandemic, but its office vacancy rate is 46 per cent, 10 points higher than the city as a whole. Uber and Square moved out, and Zendesk retains a small footprint but has bigger offices downtown.

The city’s chief economist, Ted Egan, said X had shrunk so much already, its departure would matter little to the city’s coffers.

“In many respects, they were already gone,” he said.

— The New York Times

Finance goes to Hollywood



JEFFREY FRANKEL

The author is a professor of Capital Formation and Growth at Harvard University.



Government agencies must insure depositors (at least up to some threshold) and should intervene in the event of a bank’s failure.

Over the years, Hollywood films have had much to say about financial markets and institutions – often reflecting a distinctly populist perspective. At a time when both populism and financial volatility are much in evidence, what lessons might these films hold about regulation? Start with the 1939 classic *The Wizard of Oz*, in which Dorothy and her cohort – the Cowardly Lion, the Scarecrow, and the Tin Man – travel along the “yellow brick road,” in order to reach the magnificent Emerald City, where they hope to find the wizard who can make their dreams come true. But the city’s splendour — and the wizard’s power — turn out to be illusory.

Most of the film’s devotees don’t realise that it is a populist allegory about money. The yellow brick road represents gold, and the Emerald City is a metaphor for Wall Street. The Cowardly Lion represents William Jennings Bryan, a populist presidential candidate in 1900, when the book on which the film was based was written. Bryan railed against big-city bankers and the monetary austerity of the gold standard, and pledged to advance the interests of farmers in the American West (the Scarecrow) and factory workers in the east (the Tin Man).

Fast-forward 15 years, and we arrive at the 1955 film *East of Eden*, in which Cal Trask (played by the legendary James Dean) “goes long” on beans, in anticipation of an increase in demand if the United States enters World War I. Sure enough, the price of beans skyrockets. But when Cal offers the profits to his father, he is rebuffed. Cal’s father is morally offended by his son’s actions, which he views as tantamount to profiting off of others’ misfortunes.

The film’s message is clear: speculation is sinful. But, in reality, Cal has been the agent of Adam Smith’s “invisible hand.”

POLITICIANS OFTEN ATTEMPT TO WIN ELECTIONS BY APPEALING TO POPULAR ANGER AGAINST BANKERS AND SPECULATORS, A SENTIMENT REFLECTED IN COUNTLESS HOLLYWOOD FILMS, FROM THE WIZARD OF OZ TO DUMB MONEY. BUT WHILE SOME DO TRY TO IMPROVE REGULATION ONCE IN OFFICE, MANY DO PRECISELY THE OPPOSITE

By betting on his hunch about the future, Cal has contributed to upward pressure on the price of beans in the present, thereby increasing supply precisely when it is most needed (by the British Army).

This would seem to support corporate raider Gordon Gekko’s famous pronouncement in the 1987 film *Wall Street*: “Greed, for lack of a better word, is good.” But Gekko’s greed involves insider trading — a crime in which the commodity traders in the 1983 comedy *Trading Places* also partake. In the 2013 movie *The Wolf of Wall Street*, stockbroker Jordan Belfort adds government corruption to the mix. Although these rogues are expected to elicit a guilty admiration from the audience, their moral failings — and the need for regulation to protect the public from them — are obvious.

But not all speculation is created equal. Bank runs, for example, cannot necessarily be blamed on “evil” bankers or greedy stock-brokers. In the 1946 classic *It’s a Wonderful Life*, it is ordinary depositors

who converge on the small-town Bailey Brothers Building and Loan demanding their money, fearing that others will do the same. As the institution’s reserves are drained, protagonist George Bailey must sacrifice his honeymoon to avert failure.

Likewise, in the 1964 film *Mary Poppins*, a bank run erupts when Michael Banks – the young son of a bank clerk and one of the children in Mary Poppins’ care — cries out for the bank chairman to return his tuppence, sparking a panic among depositors. The drama was inspired by real events: an anonymous letter triggered a run on deposits at Birkbeck Bank in 1910, the year in which the movie was set.

We have known for some time how to deal with bank runs effectively. Government agencies must insure depositors (at least up to some threshold) and should intervene in the event of a bank’s failure. To guard against moral hazard (excessive risk-taking by banks on the expectation that they will be bailed out of trouble), reserve

and capital requirements are needed. Since these requirements intentionally constrain banks’ profits, they amount to a sort of ex-ante insurance premium.

In the 2023 morality tale, *Bank of Dave*, a good-hearted businessman tries to open a community bank in a small English town, only to face underhanded resistance from the big London banks. Ultimately, they rely on onerous capital requirements, imposed by a captured regulatory body, to bring Dave down — and nearly succeed. (The real-life Dave, on whose story the film is based, never managed to come up with the capital.) Typically, however, big banks lobby for lower, not higher, capital requirements.

The 2008 global financial crisis proved particularly inspiring for Hollywood, exemplified by films like *Margin Call* and *Wall Street: Money Never Sleeps*. In *The Big Short*, a few investors realise in 2006-07 that US home mortgages have been excessively packaged, sliced, and derivatised, so they “short” the market. Needless to say, their bet pays off.

The *Big Short* is unusual in presenting short-sellers in a somewhat positive light. Far more common is the approach taken by 2023’s *Dumb Money* – also based on a true story – in which the meme-stock traders who bought GameStop shares in early 2021 are positioned as the “good guys” standing up to short-selling hedge funds. And yet, short-selling serves an important purpose – for example, as a check on excessive market exuberance.

Many politicians appeal to popular anger against bankers and speculators during election campaigns.

Some follow through on their promises to strengthen regulation once in office. Recent efforts to improve capital requirements — the “endgame” of the Basel III initiative, launched after the 2008 crisis — are a case in point.

In the US, leaders build on the 2010 Dodd-Frank legislation, which led to important progress, including regular bank stress tests and strengthened regulation of derivatives.

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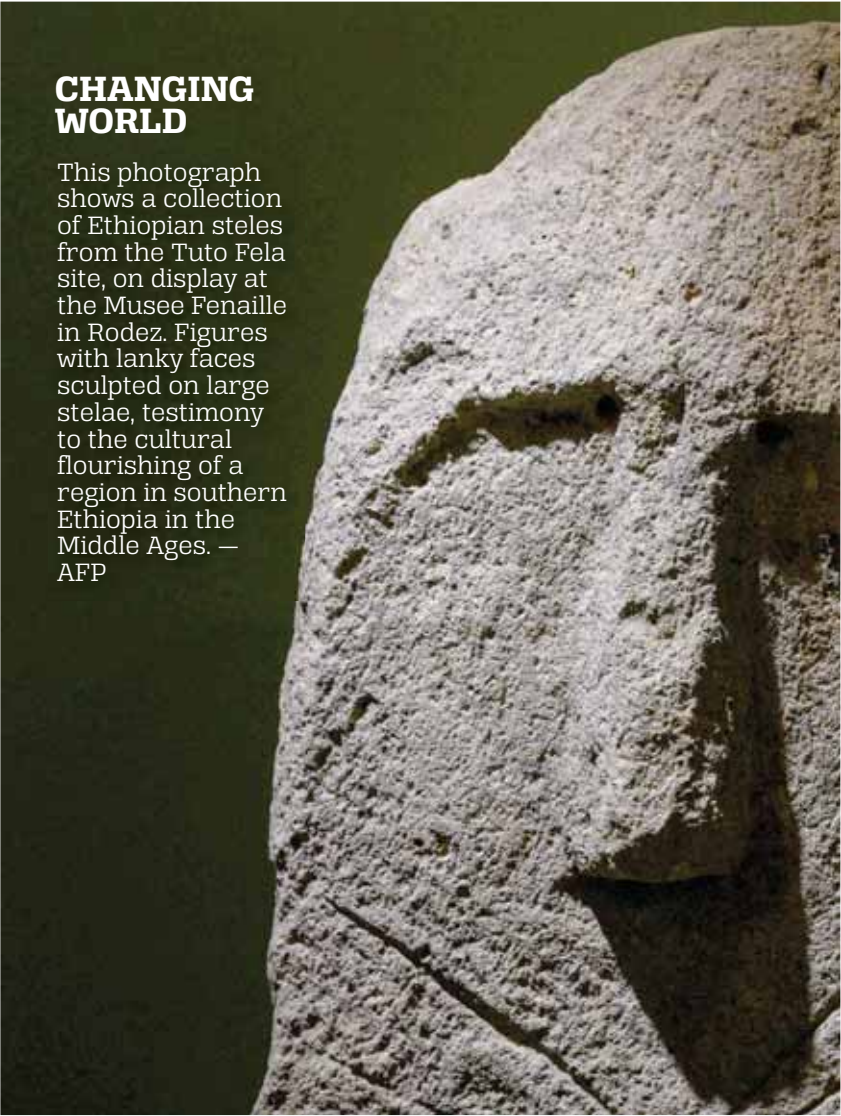
GASTRONOMY

A Robotic technology server waits to deliver a meal at the Robot Cafe, the food hub featuring robots that serves customers in Nairobi, Kenya. — AFP



MUSIC

French artist Luc Bruyere aka Lucky Love performs on stage during the 20th edition of the Rock en Seine music festival, in Saint-Cloud, outside Paris. — AFP



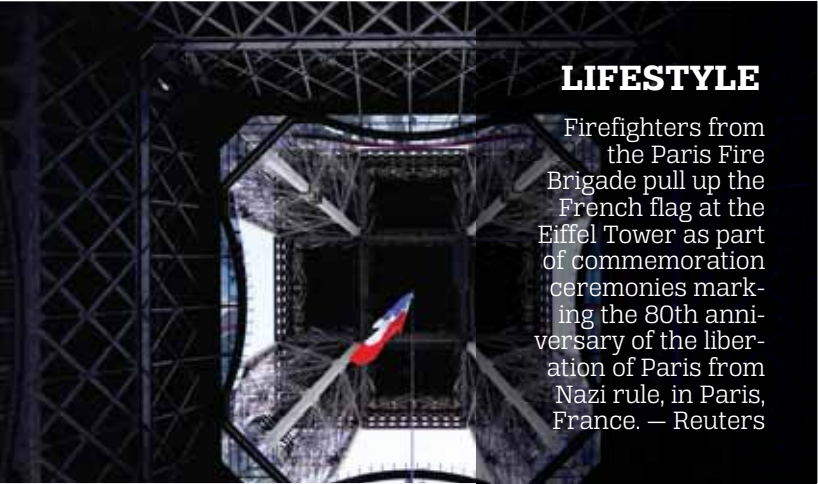
CHANGING WORLD

This photograph shows a collection of Ethiopian steles from the Tuto Fela site, on display at the Musée Fenaille in Rodez. Figures with lanky faces sculpted on large stelae, testimony to the cultural flourishing of a region in southern Ethiopia in the Middle Ages. — AFP



FASHION

French fashion historian Olivier Saillard (L) and British actress Tilda Swinton pose for photographs after a rehearsal of drama 'Pier Paolo Pasolini' at the Taipei Performing Arts Center in Taipei. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

Firefighters from the Paris Fire Brigade pull up the French flag at the Eiffel Tower as part of commemoration ceremonies marking the 80th anniversary of the liberation of Paris from Nazi rule, in Paris, France. — Reuters

art & life

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THE UNSEEN BURDEN OF RHEUMATISM ON FAMILY CAREGIVERS

A family member with rheumatoid arthritis can be both emotionally and physically challenging not just to the person with the condition but even the caregivers. In this feature, we look at the importance of early diagnosis, proper treatment, and lifestyle adjustments to manage the disease and improve quality of life... **P20**

ART

Guggenheim Curator Will Stage Exhibition of Caribbean Diaspora

THE NATIONAL GALLERY of Jamaica announced on Friday that curator Ashley James would organise this year's Kingston Biennial, a showcase of artists from the Caribbean and African diasporas that aims to link the regional art scene with international audiences.

"I have always seen myself as Jamaican American," said James, 36, whose parents immigrated to New York from the country in the 1970s. "But it has never been in the context of my work — until now."

The exhibition will be named "Green X Gold" — inspired by the colours of the Jamaican flag — and include more than two dozen artists looking at environmental concerns and how the tourism industry promotes an idealised version of the Caribbean to the outside world. Some artists featured in the show, which is scheduled to open on December 15, will be Oneika Russell, Joi Minaya and Rodell Warner.

"Five years ago, James became the first Black full-time curator at the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum in Manhattan. Last year, she opened an exhibition called "Going Dark: The Contemporary Figure at the Edge of Visibility," which filled the museum rotunda with artworks by people of colour that examined the relationship among technology, surveillance and race.

An opportunity to plan the Kingston Biennial came as she was putting the finishing touches on the Guggenheim exhibition.

"We were looking for someone to marry intellectual rigor with a presentation that would be accessible," said O'Neil Lawrence,



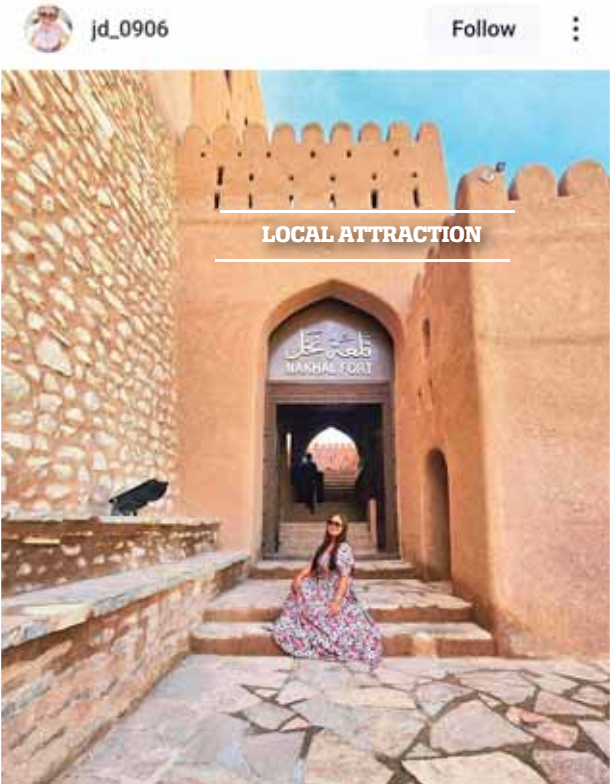
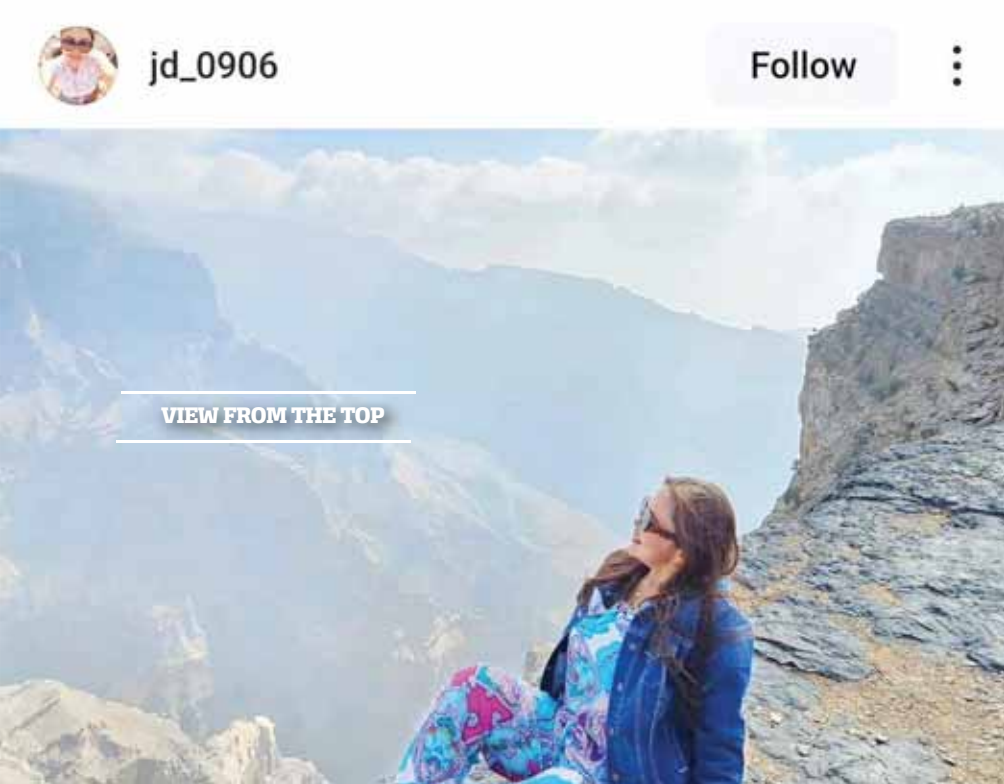
chief curator at the National Gallery of Jamaica, which says it is the largest and oldest public art museum in the English-speaking Caribbean.

The Kingston Biennial started under a different name in 1977 as a celebration of local artists. But the programme has expanded over the past decade to welcome a more international crowd as some alumni from the exhibition — including Ebony G. Patterson, Renee Cox and Leasho Johnson — have found success in the broader art world. This is only the second time a curator from outside the National Gallery of Jamaica will organise the show, which Lawrence said was part of an effort to bring the biennial into a global context.

James will have a budget of about \$160,000 to organise the exhibition, which is supported by the Jamaican government. The biennial was originally supposed to open in the summer but was delayed because of a packed schedule for the gallery's 50th anniversary and a lengthy government approval process over the show's budget.

"I see myself as engaging in a conversation and building out from that," James said about the biennial. "This is a region of the world that is ripe for the art world to take seriously." — **NYT**

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CHANGING WORLD



Whaling: why the practice will not go away

THE DETENTION IN Greenland of anti-whaling campaigner Paul Watson pending possible extradition to Japan has turned the spotlight on the widely condemned practice of hunting whales.

A 1986 moratorium on commercial whaling allowed numbers to recover following centuries of hunting that decimated the population to near-extinction.

Today three countries still permit the practice — Japan, Norway and Iceland. Beyond the moral case against whaling, as made in campaigns such as Watson's, what is the science driving the arguments both for and against the practice?

sei whales, and wants to expand its list to include fin whales as well.

The government says the species are "abundant" and that catching them around Japan in limited numbers is sustainable.

The Bryde's and common minke are listed as being of "least concern" on the International Union for the Conservation of Nature's Red List, but globally the sei is "endangered", and fin whales are listed as "vulnerable".

Whales also face other threats besides hunting, including ship collisions, entanglements with fishing nets and rising ocean temperatures.

WHALES AND ECOSYSTEMS

"Conserving biodiversity is not just a case of saving 'charismatic macrofauna' but maintaining balanced ecosystems for the continued health of nature and humans," Rodhouse said.

Abundant whales in an ecosystem "contribute to enriching the surface layers with mineral salts and mineral elements such as iron," said Ridoux. Those elements are a key source of nutrients for some organisms. Because whales breathe at the surface, they release much of what they consume there, providing a food source for surface-dwelling marine organisms.

DISTURBING' DEVELOPMENT

In May, Japan launched a new "mothership" for its whaling fleet to replace its previous lead vessel, retired in 2023.

Weighing in at nearly 9,300 tonnes, the "Kangei Maru" is a substantial upgrade and has raised alarm in the scientific community.

"It is very disturbing because it is a ship of large dimensions, it can go very far and therefore has probably very high operating costs," said Ridoux.

"If you want to use a boat like this in a commercial logic, you need big quotas to balance the operating costs and there has to be a market for that."

Tokyo argues that eating whale is part of Japanese culture and an issue of "food security" in the resource-poor country, which imports large amounts of animal meat.

But whether or not there is a big appetite in Japan for the meat is an open question.

Consumption has declined significantly in recent decades to around 1,000 or 2,000 tonnes per year compared to around 200 times that in the 1960s. — AFP

SCIENTIFIC' WHALING?

In 2019 Japan quit the International Whaling Commission moratorium and resumed commercial whaling inside its territorial waters and exclusive economic zone.

Before this, Japan had been pursuing "scientific research" whaling since 1987, arguing some data could only be collected from dead carcasses. But the evidence to support the claim was thin, Paul Rodhouse, fellow of the Marine Biological Association in Britain, said.

"There seems to be very little justification for scientific whaling and few worthwhile scientific studies," he said.

A study published in Marine Policy in 2016 found that whaling and non-whaling countries had produced similar numbers of scientific papers on whales between 1986 and 2013. If we consider all the whales captured "and compare them to the very, very small number of scientific publications produced, we say to ourselves it really wasn't worth it and the scientific objectives were certainly not the priority of this activity", Vincent Ridoux, a marine megafauna researcher at La Rochelle university in France, said.

There is also plenty of non-invasive research being carried out on living whales using increasingly sophisticated technology.

Those tools include satellite transmitters attached to the mammals, passive acoustic devices in submarine vessels, satellite imagery and artificial intelligence.

ARE WHALES STILL ENDANGERED?

Overall, the moratorium has been successful in enabling the whale population to recover.

But there remain sharp variations between regions and species.

Japan hunts Bryde's, minke and



WITH TIM BURTON'S "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice" to premiere at the Venice US Festival this week, the US director's dark, oddball yet always tender cinematic approach looks poised for its latest success.

From "Edward Scissorhands" (1990) to "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory" (2005), Burton's films are instant classics, ageless works seen and re-seen from generation to generation without losing any of their eerie magic.

Slated to kick off the prestigious festival on Wednesday in an out-of-competition screening, Burton's "Beetlejuice" sequel is "the happy confirmation of the extraordinary visionary talent" of its director, in the words of festival head Alberto Barbera.

It's a taste for monsters and the dark that non-conformist Burton has cultivated since his childhood spent in the Los Angeles suburb of Burbank, over the hill from Hollywood and home to the major film studios including Disney.

A loner as a child, but saved by a love of drawing, Burton — who turned 66 on

Sunday — says he always felt apart from others, one of those "weirdos" others consider strange.

"I liked everything that was a little different, strange. I didn't fit into the classic categories," he has said.

But the fantasy films and horror flicks that Burton turned to became a refuge, fuelling his nascent interest in the creepy, kooky and fantastical. Decades later, Burton remains rather taciturn, preferring to create rather than explain his world populated by skeletons, ghosts and headless horsemen.

He has cited "the element of mystery", saying he prefers his work to speak for itself.

PEE-WEE, BATMAN AND SCISSORHANDS

A fan of "stop motion", a rudimentary frame-by-frame animation technique, Burton joined Disney on a scholarship, working on the studio's 1981 cartoon, "The Fox and the Hound".

But the eccentric Burton left, finding himself a poor fit with Disney's sunny, family-friendly fare — gravitating instead to a cinematic vision

that plays up the imperfect, the handmade, the cobbled-together.

That quirky charm was on display in his 1985 directorial debut, "Pee-wee's Big Adventure", but perhaps felt most acutely in "Beetlejuice" three years later, a gothic tale where dying seems like a big joke, and where the peaceful coexistence between ghosts and humans seems almost possible.

In 1989, Burton again tapped "Beetlejuice" star Michael Keaton for "Batman", ushering in a new era for flawed superheroes in the film the director has described as "a complete duel of the freaks".

Burton's other favourite actors have included Helena Bonham Carter — the mother of his two sons — and Johnny Depp, the star of "Edward Scissorhands", an anti-fairy tale in which a creature with scissors instead of hands, Edward, destroys what he touches.

Burton and Depp went on to collaborate on another seven films, including "Charlie and the Chocolate Factory", "Sleepy Hollow" and "Ed Wood", a black-and-white ode to the cult filmmaker.

Burton also delved into science fiction comedy with "Mars Attacks!" in 1996, a delirious homage to alien invasion films with an all-star cast including Jack Nicholson and Pierce Brosnan.

Back with Disney for some non-conventional family entertainment, Burton produced stop-motion cult classic "The Nightmare Before Christmas" in 1993, while he directed the live-action adaptations of "Alice in Wonderland" in 2010 and "Dumbo" in 2019.

Burton's universe shows no signs of ageing — his latest Netflix series "Wednesday", inspired by The Addams Family's pigtailed daughter, was a success with viewers while garnering a Golden Globe nomination last year for its young star, Jenna Ortega. Ortega, 21, is expected in Venice on Wednesday for the premiere of "Beetlejuice Beetlejuice".

The film reunites original stars Keaton, Winona Ryder and Catherine O'Hara in a sequel that Venice's Barbera has said features "a surprising swing of creative imagination and driving hallucinatory rhythm." — AFP



THE UNSEEN BURDEN OF RHEUMATISM ON FAMILY CAREGIVERS

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Caring for a family member with rheumatism or rheumatoid arthritis presents significant challenges that extend beyond the financial strain of ongoing medical care.

Emotionally, the toll can be profound as family members witness their loved one's physical decline and struggle with chronic pain. The unpredictability of flare-ups and the gradual loss of mobility can lead to feelings of helplessness and frustration, not only for the patient but also for those who care for them. The constant need for assistance with daily activities can strain relationships, as the caregiver often must balance these demands with other responsibilities, leading to fatigue and emotional burnout. Moreover, the emotional weight of seeing a loved one endure such hardship can lead to anxiety and depression within the family unit, making the experience deeply challenging on multiple levels.

While some families in Oman, especially those with ageing parents, are familiar with this particular disease, its impact and causes are still not widely understood.

The experience of living with rheumatoid arthritis is marked by intense exhaustion and significant physical pain, often leading to sleep deprivation and a decline in both physical and mental health.

To clarify the difference between rheumatism and rheumatoid arthritis, the Observer consulted Dr Samson Premkumar, an orthopaedic specialist at Al Amal Medical Centre in Muscat.

Dr Premkumar explained that rheumatism is a broad term encompassing various diseases that affect the joints and muscles, including rheumatoid arthritis, which is often colloquially referred to as rheumatism. However, this term commonly refers to a subset of conditions, with rheumatoid arthritis being the most prevalent.

"Rheumatoid arthritis is a chronic inflammatory disorder that primarily affects the joints,

but it can also impact other organs such as the lungs, heart, skin, nerves, muscles, blood vessels and kidneys," Dr Premkumar stated. "The condition causes pain and swelling in the joints, which is particularly evident in the fingers, toes and spinal joints, leading to restricted movement."

Regarding symptoms, Dr Premkumar noted, "The common symptoms of rheumatoid arthritis include morning stiffness, pain, swelling and tenderness in the joints."

He further explained that the disease affects the synovium, the lining of the joints, leading to inflammation and periarticular arthritis. This inflammation can result in significant pain and impaired joint mobility. When small joints in the hands are affected, it can interfere with daily activities such as eating, mixing food and holding utensils, potentially leading to malnourishment.

Diagnosing rheumatoid arthritis involves a combination of clinical examinations and various tests, including the Rheumatoid Factor (RF), CCP antibody test, C-reactive protein (CRP),



DR PREMKUMAR EMPHASISED THAT DELAYING TREATMENT FOR RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS COULD LEAD TO SEVERE COMPLICATIONS, POTENTIALLY NECESSITATING SURGICAL INTERVENTION. THIS IS BECAUSE THE JOINTS, PARTICULARLY IN THE FINGERS, MAY DEVIATE FROM THEIR NORMAL ANATOMICAL POSITION.

Erythrocyte Sedimentation Rate (ESR), Anti-Nuclear Antibody (ANA), Complete Blood Count (CBC), and X-rays. Factors such as age, family history, smoking, obesity, stress and genetic susceptibility (which accounts for about 60 per cent) also play a role in the disease's development.

Dr Premkumar emphasised that delaying treatment for rheumatoid arthritis could lead to severe complications, potentially necessitating surgical intervention. This is because the joints, particularly in the fingers, may deviate from their normal anatomical position. The disease can be effectively managed with allopathic medications, including NSAIDs and DMARDs. In addition to drugs, patients are advised to make lifestyle modifications, such as engaging in gentle exercises to strengthen the muscles around the joints, incorporating good stretching practices, and swimming regularly. These measures



DR SAMSON PREMKUMAR
Orthopaedic Specialist

can help maintain joint mobility, along with following a nutritious diet, adhering to prescribed medications, and maintaining regular follow-ups with the treating physician.

Adhering to medical advice is critical, as many patients are influenced by conflicting information from social media and the Internet, often driven by misinformation and the desire for quick recovery.

This can negatively impact their condition and delay the treatment process. Early intervention, combined with appropriate medications and lifestyle practices, can help manage the disease and reduce complications, allowing patients to experience relief and peace of mind.

Dr Premkumar concluded by noting, "Rheumatoid arthritis is believed to be an autoimmune disease, where the immune system mistakenly attacks the body's tissues. The main types are seronegative rheumatoid arthritis and seropositive rheumatoid arthritis."