

The Ministry of Labour announced that Sunday 28 Rajab 1444 AH corresponding to February 19 will be an official holiday for employees of units of the State's Administrative Apparatus and other legal entities, as well as establishments of the private sector on the occasion of the blessed anniversary of Al Isra'a Wal Miraj. The ministry pointed out that employers may agree on terms to engage employees on the said holiday - if deemed necessary due to the nature of their work-provided they compensate the workers for the holiday. — ONA



P10

TAKUMI SECURES FIRST OVERSEAS TITLE



P13

MANUFACTURING INVESTMENTS TOP RO 7.5 BILLION



P20

OMANI KHANJAR, A SYMBOL OF THE COUNTRY'S RICH HISTORY



MUSCAT

HM THANKED BY KING OF JORDAN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from King Abdullah II of the Kingdom of Jordan, in reply to His Majesty's congratulatory cable on his 61st birthday. In his cable, King Abdullah II expressed his utmost thanks and appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan's fraternal feelings and best wishes. He prayed to the Almighty Allah to protect His Majesty and grant him good health and happiness to achieve further progress and prosperity for the Omani people. — ONA

OMAN, BRITAIN BEGIN JOINT MILITARY DRILL

Activities of the joint Oman-Britain military exercise code-named 'Magic Carpet 2023' began at the drill zone in the Governorate of Dhofar on Sunday. The drill is conducted by the Royal Air Force of Oman (Rafo) and the British Royal Air Force, with support from the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) and the Sultan's Special Force (SSF). The drill includes executing joint training air operations. DETAILS ON P2



INSIDE



CYPRUS VOTES FOR NEW PRESIDENT

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FIRST SHOOT OF THE NEW MISS

P9

Oman reaffirms unwavering support for Palestinian cause

CAIRO: The Sultanate of Oman voiced its strong backing for the "Land-for-Peace Principle" espoused under the "Arab Peace Initiative", considering it as a permanent, fair and final solution to resolve the Palestinian-Israeli and Arab-Israeli conflict. This was conveyed by Oman during its participation at a high-level conference hosted by the Arab League in Cairo to support the City of Al Quds. It has also reiterated its firm position

supporting the Palestinian cause. In a speech delivered on Sunday by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Oman underlined "the significance of maintaining constant support to sustainable development projects in Al Quds." Oman also stressed that the steadfastness of the people of Al Quds and the sacrifices made by the city's residents constitute a legitimate right that is consistent with the rules of international



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister

law, as well as international legitimacy resolutions and the principles of justice, legal rights and fairness. Sayyid Badr said, "I convey a message and a signal to the whole world that we are an Arab nation that continues to extend a hand for peace. We seek to establish and consolidate this approach for peace by advocating the establishment of an independent, fully sovereign Palestinian state, with East Al Quds as its capital ...

TURN TO P2

HERRADA SHINES UPHILL TO CLAIM SECOND STAGE



A ferocious attack in the final metres up the ascent of Qurayat got Jesus Herrada (Cofidis) the prizes he was aiming for: the win in Stage 2 of the Tour of Oman 2023 and the overall lead. The Spanish puncheur made the most of his skills and his knowledge of this specific terrain to pounce at the perfect moment and get the best of Maxim Van Gils (Lotto Dstny) and Diego Ulissi (UAE Team Emirates). DETAILS ON P12

World body lauds Oman's efforts in addressing Covid-19, its mutations

NEW YORK: Ted Chaiban, Global Lead Coordinator for Covid-19 Vaccine Country-Readiness and Delivery, hailed the efforts of the Sultanate of Oman's government in controlling the spread of coronavirus (Covid-19) pandemic. He also lauded the country's ability to recover from the pandemic at various levels and sectors. Chaiban expressed the international community's aspiration to

win Oman cooperation in the war to eliminate the disease and limit its impacts in all countries. Chaiban conveyed the commendation to Dr Mohammed bin Awadh al Hassan, the Sultanate of Oman's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, when Dr Al Hassan received him here on Sunday. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed developments re-

lated to Covid-19. Chaiban pointed out that the world learned a lot from Covid-19 and has become more prepared to address the pandemic and other diseases. He underscored the significance of countries' cooperating with each other and helping less developed, more impacted countries facing serious challenges, like Yemen and other countries in the Middle East. — ONA

RO 41 million Jabal Akhdhar Water Project launched

KABEER YOUSUF @kabeeryousef

A major water project capable of supplying 1.760 million gallons of water per day to the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar was launched by Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, in the presence of senior government officials and dignitaries on Sunday. Initiated and implemented by the Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (OWWSC), the water project is one of its kind in the Middle East as is executed under extreme terrains at the height of 2,980 metres and encompasses the Saiq Plateau at 2,000 metres above sea level. The project consists of six pumping stations aiming to strengthen water pumping. In addition, it includes four main water reservoirs with capacities ranging from 1,800 cubic metres to 5,000 cubic metres. In addition, it contains 23 sites for installing pressure equalisation devices to ensure the stability of the operational pressure of the water distribution networks around the clock. "This project is a standalone one in the region as the plant. The water networks are built under extremely harsh circumstances on a mountain that stands above sea level at a cost of RO 41 million. It will provide 1.760 million gallons of water per day to the wilayat as the new distribution networks have been successfully put into operation," said Ahmed bin Nasser al Abri, Acting General Manager for the

The water networks are built under extremely harsh circumstances on a mountain that stands above sea level. It will provide 1.760 million gallons of water per day to the wilayat as the new distribution networks have been successfully put into operation

AHMED AL ABRI Acting General Manager OWWSC

Plants and Transmissions Project at OWWSC. He further said that the company had completed all works on the readiness of the pumping stations and works related to the completion of the main line of the pipeline supply project. The project is considered one of the most important one the company is implementing as it crosses rugged terrains such as high mountains and steep slopes. The project also has water transmission pipelines with a length of 36 km branching from the main from the desalination plant to Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, in addition to water supply networks with a length of 248 km to serve all villages, communities and modern infrastructure plans. TURN TO P3



Shihab receives Tanzanian defence chief



HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said with General Jacob Mkunda in Muscat on Sunday. – ONA

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received General Jacob Mkunda, Chief of Defence Forces of Tanzania, and the military delegation accompanying him, in Muscat on Sunday. The meeting reviewed the advanced relations between the two countries. They also exchanged views on a spectrum of topics of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Vice Admiral Abdullah bin

Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), and Abdallah Abasi Kilima, Tanzania's Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman. General Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal

Office, received General Jacob Mkunda and his accompanying delegation. Gen Sultan welcomed the guest who expressed his thanks to the Sultanate of Oman for enhancing means of cooperation to achieve the joint interest between Oman and Tanzania. Cordial conversations were exchanged and matters of common interest were discussed during the meeting. Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) received General Jacob Mkunda. The meeting exchanged viewpoints and discussed a range of military topics of common interest. The meeting was attended by Brigadier Abdulaziz bin Abdullah al Manthri, Assistant SAF Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning, Commodore Issa bin Salim al Owaisi, Assistant SAF Chief of Staff for Administration and Supply and Ambassador Kilima.

General Jacob Mkunda and his accompanying delegation visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). During the visit, the guest was accompanied by Vice Admiral Al Raisi and Ambassador Kilima. Upon his arrival at the MSC, the guest was greeted by Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) and Commodore Adil bin Hamoud al Busaidy, Head of the MSC. The guest toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies. He was also briefed on the roles and tasks carried out by the centre within its national duties, as it coordinates with relevant authorities in search and rescue missions for the safety of the maritime environment.

— ONA



General Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani with General Jacob Mkunda in Muscat on Sunday. – ONA

Oman reaffirms unwavering support for Palestinian cause



FROM PAGE 1
... so that the peoples of the entire region can enjoy coexistence in safety, stability and prosperity.”
The conference, which stems from the recommendations of the recent Algiers Summit, aims

to enhance the steadfastness of the people of Al Quds and to highlight the issue of Al Quds on world public opinion. It also underscores the economic and investment dimensions of the issue alongside the legal aspect.

— ONA

Oman takes part in Arab young leaders meeting in Dubai



DUBAI: Represented by the Youth Centre, the Sultanate of Oman today participated in an Arab meeting for young leaders, held in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The meeting coincided with the 4-day World Government Summit. During the event, the Youth Centre presented a visual display highlighting its participation in shaping Oman Vision 2040 and the 10 Five-Year Plan (2021-2025). The presentation also featured the stages of

establishing the centre and the programmes it has launched, since its inception, to empower youth, enhance their skills and hone their talents.
The second edition of the Arab meeting for young leaders, which took the slogan “Reflections on the Story of Arab Youth”, seeks to unify efforts of Arab leaders and build quality partnerships. It also aims to devise a joint action agenda that serves Arab youth and empowers them in all sectors. — ONA

Training in solar powered water treatment

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

As many as 20 young Omanis will receive training for self-employment in the water treatment sector and solar energy, thanks to a MoU by MEDRC and the British Embassy to train SMEs in the water treatment sector.
The agreement that aims at boosting job creation and economic growth, was signed by James Goldman, Charge d' Affaires of the British Embassy and Ciarán Ó Cuinn, Centre Director of MEDRC at a ceremony held under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, at MEDRC office in Al Seeb.
Accordingly, the MEDRC will deliver an intensive 9-week training programme in solar wastewater treatment to 20 Omanis as part of the first project, which will continue after the success of the first edition.
“We are proud to sponsor REROM (Reusing End of life Reverse Osmosis Membranes) SME programme providing vocational training to 20 young



Young Omanis to get trained in self-employment.

Omanis in order to support them gain employment in the green economy, building a more sustainable future,” said Goldman.
“Innovation and entrepreneurship are critical to both UK and Oman which is why we are partnering with the government of Oman on a range of initiatives to support the development of SMEs in Oman alongside REROM in the last 12 months,” he said. The embassy has helped 20 companies and worked with the ASMED on producing

strategies to support their long-term development across a diverse range of fields.
“We wish the participants very success in developing their start-up enterprises. We hope this will contribute to a vibrant ecosystem here in Oman,” Goldman said.
Through the programme, trainees will learn how to design, procure, build and install small solar grey water treatment plants meeting the needs of a variety of consumers.
“Our joint programme

will support Oman's focus on renewables and the green economy while also boosting jobs. The presence of the Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation underlines the strategic importance of these activities,” said O Cuinn.
The technology that will be taught in the programme is a new pioneering method of Reusing End of life Reverse Osmosis Membranes (REROM) for the tertiary treatment of wastewater. This technology was developed by MEDRC in cooperation with the MoHERI under their strategic water research programme.
Sustainable water technology such as this offers real business opportunities for young entrepreneurs in Oman and more individuals and industries look to adopt water and energy conservation approaches.
Present at the event were representatives from the different programme stakeholders including the ministry of agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED).

■ OMAN, BRITAIN BEGIN MAGIC CARPET 2023



Oman-Britain military exercise code-named Magic Carpet 2023 began at the drill zone in the Governorate of Dhofar on Sunday. The drill is run by the Royal Air Force of Oman (Rafo) and the British Royal Air Force, with support from the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) and the Sultan's Special Force (SSF). The drill, which continues till February 23, includes executing joint training air operations within the framework of joint cooperation and sharing military expertise between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom according to the training programme adopted by Rafo Command to exchange experience with sisterly and friendly countries. — ONA



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Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, at the launch of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar water supply project in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar on Sunday. It is capable of distributing 1.760 million gallons of water to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

RO 41 million Jabal Akhdhar Water Project launched

FROM PAGE1

The project also includes an integrated administrative building and advanced systems for water sterilisation and quality control.

“This project of independent water supply project for Al Jabal Al Akhdhar aims to make the area self-reliant in terms of potable water and to support tourism in the area, which is the highest peak in the region. The construction, which took years, was strenuous due to its geographical location,” a spokesperson from the Diam told the Observer.

Although there are many pumping stations in the country, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar's supply was managed by the pumping station located in Barka.

The Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Water supply project, part of

This independent water supply project for Al Jabal Al Akhdhar aims to make the area self-reliant in terms of potable water and to support tourism in the area, which is the highest peak in the region

an investment initiative to provide drinking water to all of Oman's villages and towns, is also expected to spur tourism and economic development in this popular holiday destination in the governorate. When fully operational with a network of pipelines running a total length of 120 km, it will cover all parts of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

Tamkeen Sahim launched in Dhahirah, N Al Batinah

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour implemented the fifth phase of the training programme (Tamkeen Sahim) in the governorates of Al Dhahirah and North Al Batinah with the participation of 231 candidates 75 from Al Dhahirah and 156 from North Al Batinah for a number of public jobs.

Abdulrahman bin Muammar al Kharousi from the Ministry of Labour's Training Support Centre, said that the programme targets to empower the candidates for government jobs by improving basic skills such as the positive behaviour at the workplace,



the fundamentals of leadership beside other skills that enables the candidates to reach the desired career level.

During the five-day training programme the participants will be trained on 10 key themes namely identifying personal goals, career planning, continuous learning strategies, leadership skills, preparation of resume, interview strategies, improving job skills, developing positive behaviour and boosting productivity, interpersonal communication and personality understanding and learning the

Fourth Industrial Revolution skills.

The training programme aims to provide the job candidates with the basic skills and requirements to help them enhance their professional role and realise the desired job level.

By the end of the programme, the participants will obtain a complementary certificate after completing the programme's requirements which will enable them to get a public job after finalising the appointment procedures applied by the Tamkeen Sahim initiative. — ONA

Workshop motivates students to read



AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, FEB 12

A workshop titled 'Reading skill' held in Nizwa focused on inculcating reading habits among students.

The Creativity Center for Culture and Innovation organised the workshop in cooperation with the Omani Society for Writers and Literati.

About 37 students from the fourth to the twelfth grade attended the workshop. Dr Taiba bint Abdullah al Kindiyah from Sultan Qaboos University presented the workshop.

The workshop included a theoretical and practical side in several areas.

One of the course's themes included the



wisdom of relating the reading to the first verse revealed in the Holy Quran.

The definition of reading and the importance of reading in personal, social,

scientific, and practical life were also discussed in the workshop.

It also deals with how the individual prepares for reading before, during, and after reading.

Taiba al Kindiyah also talked about the problems that may hinder reading and how the reader can overcome them.

She showed a film by Ahmed al Shugairi about his beginnings with reading and its impact on his life.

On the applied side, the students narrated some books and stories they had read and admired.

The students selected some books and stories and read them during the workshop, and shared the reading strategies they learned in the workshop.

Jebel Akhdhar Data Center SAOC announced Abdulmonem Mohammed Al Futaisi as new Chief Executive Officer

Jebel Akhdhar Data Center SAOC (Datamount), a leading carrier neutral datacenter and provider of cloud technologies, colocation and data center management services, announced the appointment of Abdulmonem Mohammed Al Futaisi as its Chief Executive Officer, effective January 10, 2023.

Abdulmonem Al Futaisi comes with more than 18 years of experience in the field of telecommunications and information technology, where he has held senior leadership positions. Abdulmonem's main mission would be to drive growth by capitalizing on the exciting opportunities present in the market nationally and internationally.

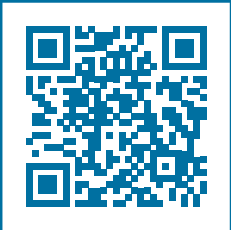
“It was the Boards keenness to select a young Omani with the requisite competencies to lead the growth and expansion of Datamount, especially when the new Data Center in Muscat is reaching its final stages of completion”, said Dr. Tahir Al Kindi, The Chairman of the Board of Directors of Datamount.

Dr. Tahir further stated that the Board looks forward to working with Abdulmonem and is confident that he will accelerate the growth of the Company

“I am delighted to take on the role of CEO and look forward to developing the company further by



supporting the government's digital transformation plans and Oman Vision 2040". Datamount will cater to the increasing needs of the business sector in the Sultanate by continually expanding its portfolio of products and services in addition to providing cloud services and managed services such as managing clients main systems and operating systems, database management, network management, and business continuity services such as disaster recovery backup and high security data protection.”, said Abdulmonem.



OMAN FACES RISKS

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Sultanate of Oman faces risks from natural disasters and extreme weather events, according to the recent Global Risks Report 2023 of the World Economic Forum (WEF).

Over the next decade, climate and environmental risks will be the core focus of global risk perceptions.

The Sultanate of Oman has taken several initiatives to mitigate the effects of climate change, which include discussing ways of cooperation in the field of green finance for supporting projects, programmes, policies, and other activities related to the green economy.

The goal is to generate 20 per cent of its electricity from renewable sources by 2027.

The comprehensive national strategy for a net-zero carbon economy, the Sultanate of Oman focuses on four main sectors, energy sector (electricity, oil, and gas,) manufacturing, transportation, and the cities and buildings sector.

The government is currently working on updating the climate affairs management regulation in line with local and global developments. The regulation aims to follow up on the performance of companies and establishments in the field of climate affairs, whether in mitigation or adaptation.

Work is also under way to draft a climate change law in cooperation with the relevant authorities, which will be an organisational framework

for setting general provisions related to climate affairs issues in the Sultanate of Oman.

The report said that the lack of deep, concerted progress on climate targets had exposed the divergence between what is scientifically necessary to achieve net zero and what is politically feasible.

“Growing demands on public-and private-sector resources from other crises will reduce the speed and scale of mitigation efforts over the next two years, alongside insufficient progress towards the adaptation support required for those communities and countries increasingly affected by the impacts of climate change.” It added that current crises divert resources from risks arising over the medium to longer term. The burdens on natural ecosystems will grow, given their still undervalued role in the global economy and overall planetary health.

Nature loss and climate change are intrinsically inter-linked – a failure in one sphere will cascade into the other.

Without significant policy change or investment, the interplay between climate change impacts, biodiversity loss, food security, and natural resource consumption will accelerate ecosystem collapse, threaten food supplies and livelihoods in climate-vulnerable economies, amplify the impacts of natural disasters, and limit further progress on climate mitigation.



FROM NATURAL DISASTERS



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Knowledge Oman's seminar on social media on Feb 15

MUSCAT: Knowledge Oman is all set to organise its up-coming public seminar on 'The impact of Social Media on the Omani community' at Muscat University in Al Ghubra from 6:30 to 9:00 pm on February 15, 2023. The public free event will be graced by Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad bin Hamoud al Busaidy.



Sayyid Khalid

"We have received lots of positive response from the society on our last seminar that revolved around Women contribution in the society. This time, our public seminar will focus on the impact of social media in the Omani community, and we are proud to host Sayyid Khalid as the guest of honour for this event" said Balqees al Hassani, Knowledge Oman President.

The seminar will include a diverse panel of thought leaders, IT experts, sport professionals and educators, to address topics such as social media trends, the impact of technology on changing business and social networking, the use of social media within sports and how it has changed the face of media. The event aims to equip the public with an understanding of different social media tools and platforms and their impact on society.

UTAS Musannah hosts Rovers Camp

BADRIYA MOHAMMED AL BALUSHI

AL MUSANNAH, FEB 12

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Al Musannah hosted the 22nd Rovers Camp. The five-day camp concluded on Saturday with the participation of 110 rovers and leaders from all its branches.

The camp is part of the joint activities to develop the spirit of voluntary initiatives among the rovers.

The activities ranged from expeditions, challenges, adventures, training camps, field visits to institutions, camp fire, and several cultural, sports and entertainment activities.

The camp began with saluting the flag under the auspices of Dr Said bin Hamed al Rubaie, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences.

The Dean of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Al Musannah delivered a speech on behalf of the organising committee.

A workshop was conducted on



"How to write a press release on social media", followed by another workshop on "The rope: Knots and ties".

On the event's third day, the participants went to Wadi Al Hoqain to compete in the 'Challenge and adventure programme'. They also visited Al Rustaq Town to learn about its famous landmarks.

On the fourth day, they visited Al Rustaq Sports Complex for Open



Sports Day. In the evening, several workshops were held, including an introduction to the Rover Scouting movement and a workshop on planning. The day concluded with many entertainment activities. On the fifth and last day, all participants folded their tents, stored the tools, and attended the closing ceremony where all participating delegations bid farewell to each other.

The UTAS Al Musannah is hosting this event for the first time. Dr Ahmed bin Ali al Shahri, the Dean, said: "The university administration is proceeding with plans to specifically develop and hone students' skills in various crucial activities as represented by the Rovers Camp, currently in its twenty-second edition under the motto, Rover Scouting, Revival and Giving".

Deccani wing of Indian Social Club holds annual event

MUSCAT: The Deccani wing of Indian Social Club organised their annual flagship event Jashn e Deccan at the Oman hall at CBFS college.

Jashn e Deccan celebrates the culture and traditions of the people of Hyderabad and surrounding areas.

This year's event featured renowned Sufi singer Adil Hussaini. Adil regaled the crowd with popular and feet tapping qawwalis and songs. The evening started with the Hamd Allahu Allahu and ended with the popular damadam mast khalander

During the event he also dedicated a section to famous Hyderabad poets Maqdoom Mohiuddin by singing his evergreen song ek chameli ke mandwe tale and to Shaz Tamkanat by entertaining the crowd with his famous poem kab tak mere.maula and



followed it up with mauje sahil se milo. The houseful audience enjoyed these soulful renditions.

Adil is a true entertainer and left a mark of his own amongst music lovers in Muscat with his memorable presentations. Dr SM Wasifuddin, convenor of Deccani wing welcomed the guests. Ismail Baig, co-

convenor spoke about the event and its relevance, he also gave a brief history of the Deccani wing and how Jashn e Deccan has evolved into a much sought for event in the muscat cultural calendar.

The Deccani wing also honoured social workers and community members who had volunteered and contributed to the wellbeing of others.

Irshad Ahmed, counsellor at the Indian Embassy Muscat, gave away the awards and congratulated the wing and its members on the continued good work the wing is doing to keep people together and supporting social as well as hosting cultural events. Ahmed Maseehuddin of Arabian Modern Travels gave away the mementoes to Adil Hussaini and his troupe members.

Form highlights training in teaching values

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, in cooperation with the Teaching Innovations Team for teachers of the Sultanate of Oman and the Scholar Foundation for Educational and Human Sciences, organised a training forum for modern education techniques between innovation and values in Muscat on Sunday.

The event themed "Innovation Skills and Promotion of Values", was held under the auspices of Honourable Dr Hamad bin Sulaiman al Salmi, Member of the State Council.

The training forum targeted 80 participants representing teachers, university professors and students at the College of Education.

It aimed to empower teachers in some aspects of teaching techniques and learning strategies, promote educational values as an important part of modern education, train them in educational games and appropriate classroom atmosphere, and empower educational leadership with its skill and value aspects among officials

— ONA



Sultanate of Oman سلطنة عُمان
وزارة التراث والسياحة
Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Tender No.	6/2023	Tender Name	Providing consultancy services to set the general framework for guidelines and planning in tourist areas with a sandy nature.
Fees of Tender Documents (Non-refundable)		30 O.R	
Tender Document Sales End Date		27/02/2023	
Last Date for Bid Submission		21/03/2023	
Grade		First	
E-Tendering Portal		https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om	

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>, against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Bids are submitted that fulfill the technical conditions and specifications, accompanied by a tender bond from a local bank not less than (1%) of the bid value, valid for (90) days from the date of its submission.
 - Any bid that does not meet the required tender bond will not be considered
 - The Ministry shall not be obligated to accept the lowest or any other bids
- The bid submission period starts after the end of the inquiry period shown in the e-tendering system, until the last date for submitting bids before (10:00 am, Oman time).

Support and inquiries	For more information, related to the tender, kindly communicate through the website of the e-tendering system: https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
	For inquiries related to the technical support for the e-tendering system, kindly communicate through etenderhd@ita.gov.om or 24402200
For further information	Email : sofic@mht.gov.om Phones : 22088348 - 22088085



TENDERS

Nama Holding (NH) invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tenders below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR)
EHC/2023/06	Property All Risks Insurance for Dhofar Integrated Services Company	21-Feb-2023	14-Mar-2023	100/- Plus VAT Amount (5 OMR)
EHC/2023/08	Industrial All Risks Insurance for Tanweer Company	21-Feb-2023	14-Mar-2023	100/- Plus VAT Amount (5 OMR)
EHC/2023/09	Industrial All Risks Insurance for Transmission and Distribution Companies	21-Feb-2023	14-Mar-2023	1500/- Plus VAT Amount (75 OMR)
EHC/2023/07	Property All Risks Insurance for Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company	21-Feb-2023	14-Mar-2023	1500/- Plus VAT Amount (75 OMR)

- Interested party may purchase the tender through the company website (www.nama.om/ar/new-tenders). Supplier user guide is available to be downloaded at the same page.
- Payment of the tender fees to be done online through the link available in the website. The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 12.00 pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through I-supplier portal before 3.00 pm, time of the Sultanate, on Tuesday 14 March 2023.
- Each bid should be accompanied with a temporary insurance, in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers. Tenders that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered. The original hard copy of the bid bond should be dropped in the tender box at Nama Holding reception.
- NH is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person name and the company details.



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QUAKES TOLL NEARS 33,000

UN warns of aid failure for Syria

KAHRAMANMARAS: The UN denounced on Sunday a failure to get desperately needed aid to war-torn regions of Syria, while warning that the death toll of nearly 33,000 from an earthquake that also devastated Türkiye could at least double.

A UN convoy with supplies for northwest Syria arrived via Türkiye, but the agency’s relief chief Martin Griffiths said much more was needed for millions whose homes were destroyed.

“We have so far failed the people in northwest Syria. They rightly feel abandoned. Looking for international help that hasn’t arrived,” Griffiths said on Twitter.

“My duty and our obligation is to correct this failure as fast as we can.”

Aid has been slow to arrive in Syria, where years of conflict have ravaged the healthcare system, and parts of the country remain under the control of fighters battling the government of President Bashar al Assad, which is under Western sanctions.

The UN convoy of ten trucks crossed into northwest Syria via the Bab al Hawa border crossing, according to an AFP correspondent, carrying shelter kits including plastic sheeting, ropes and screws and nails, as well as blankets, mattresses and carpets.

Tens of thousands of rescue workers continued to scour

“We have so far failed the people in northwest Syria. They rightly feel abandoned. Looking for international help that hasn’t arrived. My duty and our obligation is to correct this failure as fast as we can

MARTIN GRIFFITHS
UN relief chief

flattened neighbourhoods in freezing weather that has deepened the misery of millions now in desperate need of aid.

But security concerns prompted the suspension of some operations, and dozens of people have been arrested for looting or trying to defraud victims in the aftermath of the quake in Türkiye, according to state media.

Miraculous tales of survival still emerged, though experts caution that hopes for finding people alive in the devastation dim with each passing day.

A seven-month-old baby named Hamza was rescued in southern Hatay province more than 140 hours after the quake, while Esma Sultan, 13, was also saved in Gaziantep, state media



A Turkish soldier walks among destroyed buildings in Hatay after a 7.8-magnitude earthquake struck the country's south-east. – AFP

reported.

At the Vatican, Pope Francis called for “concrete support” for the quake victims, urging people to “think what we can do to help them.”

The United Nations has warned that at least 870,000 people

urgently need hot meals across Türkiye and Syria. In Syria alone, up to 5.3 million people may have been made homeless.

Almost 26 million people have been affected by the earthquake, the World Health Organization (WHO) said as it appealed on

Saturday for \$42.8 million to cope with immediate health needs after dozens of hospitals were damaged.

Türkiye’s disaster agency said more than 32,000 people from Turkish organisations are working on search-and-rescue efforts, along with 8,294 international rescuers.

But, in many areas, rescue teams said they lacked sensors and other advanced search equipment, meaning they were often reduced to carefully digging through destroyed buildings with shovels or only their hands. — AFP

Syria’s White Helmets volunteers ‘answering all calls’ to save lives

JANDARIS, Syria: As an excavator claws at the shattered remains of yet another home in Syria’s northwest, Abdel Qader Abdelrahman surveys the debris in the hope of spotting people who might — against all the odds — still be alive underneath.

The former school principal joined the White Helmets in 2022 as a medic, drawn to its humanitarian mission through a 12-year war that has carved Syria into cantons held by rival armed groups.

Monday’s deadly earthquake - which has so far killed more than 2,000 people in the rebel-held enclave and more than 3,500 in total across Syria — forced him to take on a more direct search and rescue role.



A White Helmets volunteer holds a rescued cat in the aftermath of an earthquake in Jandar, Syria. – Reuters

“We have been working for five days,” he said, having not returned home or seen his family in that long. “We are answering all the calls for help.”

“When we remove someone alive, we forget all the pain and the fatigue and everything that is happening to us... Our goal is to save people from this destruction.”

Established in 2014, the group - known formally as Syria Civil Defence - won praise in the West for their daring operations to pick people from the rubble of buildings destroyed by Syrian government and Russian bombardment.

Drawn from society, they count bakers, pharmacists and

engineers among their members and work in areas outside government control in areas held by Islamist rebel groups that came under heavy air strikes and shelling.

They say they have lost hundreds of volunteers over the years - including four in the earthquake - but have rescued thousands of people, earning them praise in the West, which also provides a large part of their funding.

Ismail Abdallah, head of the group’s media center in Sarmada, Idlib, said even years of responding to aerial bombardments had not fully prepared them for the massive scale of the earthquake’s damage.

“There is a vast difference between the natural disaster we faced and the bombing in the past. The shelling is catastrophic... but the scale of the tragedy and destruction and the number of impacted locations never exceeded 10 or 20 at any one point,” he said.

But the earthquake simultaneously left more than 100 locations in northwest Syria in need of their immediate attention, he said.

The overwhelming scale of the disaster has been met with a trickle of help from the international community, who have donated money but sent little physical aid and none of the heavy equipment required to save lives in the week since the quake. — Reuters

Two more contractors held over collapsed buildings in Türkiye

ISTANBUL: Two more contractors have been arrested in Türkiye on suspicion of negligence related to collapsed buildings following Monday’s devastating earthquake, media reported on Sunday.

A contractor who was allegedly responsible for managing the construction of several collapsed buildings in the south-eastern city of Adiyaman was arrested with his wife at Istanbul airport, the DHA news agency reported.

The two were reportedly trying to flee to Georgia with a large amount of cash.



Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu speaks to the media, as he and his Greek counterpart Nikos Dendias visit an operations centre, in Hatay, Türkiye. – Reuters

Türkish prosecutors are now investigating more than 130 people allegedly responsible for the collapse of buildings, according to official reports. Arrest warrants have already been issued for more than 100 people.

Opposition politicians have said that President Recep Tayyip Erdogan shares responsibility for the disaster and accuse him of having failed to prepare the country for such a quake during his 20 years in power.

UN aid chief: We failed people in north-west Syria

CAIRO: The United Nations’ top humanitarian relief official, Martin Griffiths, admitted the UN had failed to provide help to people in Syria’s

opposition-controlled region since Monday’s devastating earthquake.

“We have so far failed the people in north-west Syria. They rightly feel abandoned. Looking for international help that hasn’t arrived,” Griffiths said in a tweet.

“My duty and our obligation is to correct this failure as fast as we can. That’s my focus now,” he added during a visit to the border area.

Families of the victims in the town of Jindires, Idlib province, hoisted the UN flag upside down over buildings destroyed by earthquakes to condemn a lack of help from the organisation, according to opposition activist Osama Abo Zayd.

GREECE, TÜRKİYE URGE BETTER TIES

ANTAKYA: Greece’s foreign minister visited Türkiye on Sunday in a show of support after the country was hit by a devastating earthquake last Monday, despite a longstanding rivalry between the two Nato countries.

Foreign Minister Nikos Dendias was met with a warm embrace by his Turkish counterpart Mevlut Cavusoglu, according to footage on state-run ERT TV, before they boarded helicopters to quake-hit regions.

His arrival marks the first visit by a European minister to Türkiye since the earthquake.

— dpa/AFP



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In brief

■ BRUSSELS



NATO CHIEF PLANS TO LEAVE OFFICE IN OCT

Long-serving Nato leader Jens Stoltenberg has no plans to extend his mandate for a fourth time and expects to be replaced in October, the military alliance said. "The mandate of Secretary General Jens Stoltenberg has been extended three times and he has served for a total of almost nine years," spokeswoman Oana Lungescu said. "The Secretary General's term comes to an end in October of this year and he has no intention to seek another extension of his mandate."

The 63-year-old former Norwegian prime minister took office at Nato's headquarters on October 1, 2014. — **AFP**

■ NEW DELHI



FIRST STAGE OF DELHI-MUMBAI EXPRESSWAY OPENS

India on Sunday inaugurated the first stage of its longest expressway, a route linking New Delhi and Mumbai. The ambitious \$13 billion project will eventually cut the road travel time between the country's two biggest cities in half, to 12 hours.

A sign over one of the new four-lane carriageways proclaimed "Welcome to Delhi-Vadodara-Mumbai Expressway" — a route that spans a total of 1,386 kilometres. Prime Minister Narendra Modi opened the 246-kilometre first stage, linking the capital with the tourist city of Jaipur in Rajasthan. It was a "sign of developing India", he said. — **AFP**

■ SYDNEY



AUCKLAND BRACES FOR EX-CYCLONE GABRIELLE IMPACT

Residents of New Zealand's biggest city were urged on Sunday to prepare for the impact of a storm that buffeted Australia's Norfolk Island.

Gabrielle, downgraded to a sub-tropical low pressure system from a Category 2 cyclone, hit Norfolk Island on Saturday night, with its most destructive winds missing the island, before tracking to New Zealand, 1,460 kilometres south.

New Zealand's North Island and its largest city Auckland braced for the storm's full impact from Sunday night. Last month Auckland was hit by record rainfall that sparked floods and killed four people. — **Reuters**

Cyprus votes for new president in run-off

NICOSIA: Cyprus went to the polls on Sunday for a tight presidential runoff between two career diplomats seeking the top post in the south of the divided Mediterranean island.

Polling stations closed at 6 pm in the race to succeed two-term conservative President Nicos Anastasiades as head of state and government of the small EU member country.

Former foreign minister Nikos Christodoulides, 49, faces 66-year-old fellow diplomat Andreas Mavroyiannis after last Sunday's inconclusive first round.

Christodoulides, who defected from the conservative ruling DISY party to run as an independent, scored 32.04 per cent a week ago, against 29.59 per cent for Mavroyiannis, who is also running as an independent and is backed by the communist AKEL party.

The former top diplomat Christodoulides voiced confidence when he told reporters: "The Cypriot people know and understand what is at stake... I have complete confidence in their judgement."

Mavroyiannis meanwhile revived his campaign slogan, saying: "It is time to turn the page for a new, united, European Cyprus ... We will be winners, and Cyprus



Cypriot presidential candidate Andreas Mavroyiannis casts his vote during runoff in the capital Nicosia. — **AFP**

will be victorious with us."

Top concerns for many voters are the cost of living crisis, irregular immigration and the island's almost half-century of division between the Greek-speaking south and a Turkish-occupied breakaway statelet in the north recognised only by Ankara.

But many disaffected voters

will simply opt for "the least worse candidate -- a characteristic in most elections, but more so in this one," said Andreas Theophanous of think tank the Cyprus Center for European and International Affairs.

The winner needs 50 per cent plus one vote to succeed Anastasiades as the republic's



Presidential candidate Nikos Christodoulides during the second round of the presidential election in Geroskipou near Paphos, Cyprus. — **Reuters**

eighth president, with the official final result expected by 1900 GMT.

Turnout at noon had reached 35.4 per cent of registered voters, slightly up on the rate at that time in the first round.

The outgoing president urged Cypriots to come out "en masse to participate in this electoral process", adding that "this is our

duty. The people decide, the majority decides and the minority respects."

Cyprus has been divided since 1974, when Turkish forces occupied its northern third in response to a Greek-sponsored coup, but voters appeared split over whether the division was a priority in the election. — **AFP**

G-20 under India's presidency lifted up Global South voice

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

[@patkaushal](#)

India's engagement with Health Working Group at the ongoing presidency of G20 meeting drew appreciation from the stakeholders of the global health community. A senior World Health Organization (WHO) official called it an exciting development, which has lifted up the voice of the Global South.

Recently, a WHO official lauded India for leading its G20 presidency at the Health Working Group meeting, describing it as an "exciting moment in history."

Ayoade Alakija, special envoy, ACT-Accelerator at WHO called the Health Working Group deliberations as "exciting moment in history, which has lifted up the voice of the Global South."

"I have been very keenly looking forward to seeing the Global South collaborations, which can match and fit in with the new world order...I hope that this process will certainly help...



The world is not just coming to India to have discussions on various subjects but also seeks to learn from its experiences, as the country has witnessed the massive digital transformation in multiple sectors including health, finance and infrastructure," reports quoted her as saying during the meeting.

Other participants lauded India's efficient handling of the Covid-19 situation and the vaccines it sent abroad under its 'Vaccine Maitri' initiative.

The ongoing sessions, according to Alakija, "will provide a relevant platform for how we can learn from each other, being active participants of Global South — Africa, India, Latin America, and other countries."

In course of his deliberations,

Vaidya Rajesh Kotecha, secretary, Ministry of Ayush, cited statements of Dr Alain Labrique, Director of Digital Health and Innovation, who called "India shining as a beacon to other countries to learn from. The ongoing meeting is a foundation of that process."

"So, I think, that is the foundation of a place where I would like to see India shining as a beacon to other countries to learn from," Dr Alain Labrique was quoted as saying.

The Secretary, Indian Ministry of Ayush, put emphasis on the importance of multilateral collaborations, which are vital for knowledge sharing and establishing a framework for accessible, affordable, and quality healthcare in accordance with the idea of 'One World, One Health'.

"By bridging the world through medical value travel based on integrated health care, the flaws and inequalities of current healthcare systems will be addressed," he said.

Zelenskiy says drive to clean up govt to continue

KYIV: Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskiy issued a decree on Saturday sacking a senior security figure and said separately that his drive to clean up the government would continue.

Ukraine's forces are holding their defences along the front line in the eastern region of Donetsk, including the besieged town of Bakhmut, with the fiercest battles for the cities of Vuhledar and Maryinka, Kyiv's top military commander said on Saturday.

Yevgeny Prigozhin, founder of Russia's Wagner Group, said on Sunday that the mercenary force had taken the village of Krasna Hora, on the northern edge of Bakhmut.

Prigozhin said on Saturday it could take two years for Moscow to control all of the two eastern Ukrainian regions whose capture it has stated as a key goal of the war.

A 53-year-old woman was killed on Sunday morning after Russian forces shelled an apartment building in the southeastern Ukrainian city of Nikopol, the regional governor said.

Galina Danilchenko, the Russia-installed mayor of the Ukrainian city Melitopol in south-eastern Zaporizhzhia region, said on Saturday one civilian died and two people were injured in overnight shelling by Ukrainian forces.

Reuters could not verify the battlefield accounts.

Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg will end his term as planned in October, a spokesperson for the alliance said, after a newspaper reported a further extension was in the works.

Ukraine's capital Kyiv and the surrounding region, as well as the Odesa and Dnipro regions, can avoid power cuts on Sunday, leading producer DTEK said, as authorities worked to repair power grids damaged by a major Russian strike. — **AFP**

Abbas urges world support for Palestinians

CAIRO: Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas on Sunday accused Israel of having "crossed all red lines" in the occupied West Bank and east Jerusalem, and urged world leaders to put an end to its actions.

The international community must "protect" the Palestinian people and "put a stop to Israeli aggression... (and) unilateral actions", the head of the Palestinian Authority told an Arab League meeting in Cairo.

"Israeli intransigence and practices have crossed all red lines", he said at the gathering attended by Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al Sisi and Jordan's King Abdullah II.



Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas during the Arab League's 'Summit for Jerusalem' in Cairo. — **AFP**

Last year was the deadliest year in the West Bank since the United Nations started tracking casualties in the territory in 2005.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict has seen at least 43 Palestinians — including attackers, activists and civilians — killed this year, according to AFP figures.

Nine Israeli civilians including three children, and one Ukrainian have been killed over the same period, according to a tally based on official statements.

In a video address, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres affirmed the international body's "clear position against unilateral actions," citing "illegal

settlements in east Jerusalem" in particular. Sisi — whose country retains its traditional role as a Middle East mediator - vowed to "continue to work with the two sides of the conflict to revive the political process and restore calm in the West Bank and Gaza".

Abdullah, whose country acts as custodian of Muslim and Christian holy sites in Jerusalem, said Arab leaders "must galvanise efforts to support the resilience of our brothers" in the Palestinian territories. US President Joe Biden told Abdullah last week that Washington supports a "two-state solution" in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. — **AFP**

Why child abuse in Oman concerns all?!

Child Abuse is a very critical social issue due to the remarkable increase in number of cases reported by the Ministry of Social Development in the Sultanate of Oman. This needs highlighting the importance of having a national communication campaign to combat child abuse. An urgency should be accorded to change public attitude towards this issue and familiarise society on different social, health, and psychological impacts of abuse on children, family and society in general.

Another convincing reason to recommend such a campaign is lack of public awareness on child-related rights and legislations. This was proved by the statistics and findings of an online public survey that was conducted by me in August 2022. It indicated that around 31.2 per cent (out of over 550 respondents) were unaware of the child abuse issue in Oman, while 64.1 per cent were ignorant of the 24/7 hotline (1100) dedicated to report child abuse cases.

Based on the need for an intensive awareness campaign, it is significant to involve all concerned stakeholders. Therefore, in CIPR Diploma studies, I identified different stakeholders' engagement models, which enticed me to cluster the child-abuse related stakeholders in the country. I worked on stakeholders' engagement matrix and interrelated the relations between them and identified the opportunities that serve in joining their hands to combat the rise in child abuse cases. Another model touched on developing communication messages to be addressed to target audiences, children, public and decision-makers.

Although child abuse is a social issue concerning the whole nation, it marks a responsibility of particular segments of society and a number of government bodies concerned. Conducting researches and studies on this issue requires approaching and liaising with relevant parties and target audiences too. This serves the research purpose, striving to solve the issue or lessen certain concerns by revealing real facts and figures about it, while bringing different recommendations or solutions to combat the rise in child abuse cases in the Sultanate of



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ALTHOUGH CHILD ABUSE IS A SOCIAL ISSUE CONCERNING THE WHOLE NATION, IT MARKS A RESPONSIBILITY OF PARTICULAR SEGMENTS OF SOCIETY

Oman. In view of that, I had to mind map the key aspects of child abuse issue at the local front, and investigate the relevance and significance of conducting a national media and communication campaign. Such campaign shall come from the united hands of all stakeholders related to this issue to make a fruitful social impact and attitude change. An effective media campaign needs to spotlight a list of concerns including, what are the roles and initiatives of stakeholders accorded towards child rights and protection? How child abuse issue could be communicated to public highlighting its impacts and consequences? How parents and children could be enlightened about child rights and proper parenting principles? How families and individuals can contribute in combating the increase in child abuse cases in Oman?

With many other concerns and questions that I had in mind, I listed the relevant stakeholders with their roles and contributions to solve the issue. Thus, proposing a national media campaign will undoubtedly serve this noble cause and save both, the society and children. On the other hand, I reflected on the analysis of my online public survey on child abuse, which I conducted in August 2022 and the viewpoints of individuals, families and public respondents to the survey. Moreover, group discussions and one-on-one conversations and interviews that I conducted with individuals and officials from different public and corporate stakeholders enriched my knowledge, as well as triggered my brainstorming and planning process prior to conducting the research.

Moreover, approaching various resources, most of which are online, thrived my familiarity with the child abuse issue. The different articles, studies, reviews and data enlightened me with many related aspects of the issue from social, health, economic, legal fronts. This made me to explore more areas and seek knowledge and support from specialists, officials and experts representing different stakeholders and parties concerned. (The article is part of a social research conducted by the writer)

FIRST SHOOT OF THE NEW MISS



Newly elected Miss Belgium 2023 Emilie Vansteenkiste poses during the traditional first shoot of the new miss, one day after the Miss Belgium 2023 beauty contest, at the Plopsa Hotel, in Plopsaland amusement park, in De Panne, on Sunday. – AFP

Where did modern science come in fight against fungal infection?

The study of fungi, including their genetic and biochemical properties, taxonomy, and human applications, is known as mycology. The study of fungi (molds and yeasts) that cause infections in humans is known as medical mycology. Infectious diseases are those caused by microorganisms found in and on our bodies, such as bacteria, viruses, fungi, and parasites.

Fungi are a little-studied resource with enormous potential for developing products that improve human well-being significantly. I will highlight some significant discoveries and developments in applied mycology and interdisciplinary life sciences research in this article. The true beneficial potential of fungi, on the other hand, was only realised in the last century as a result of the development of a systematic technology that enabled the production of various industries and products that are extremely beneficial to humanity.

Enzyme factories have also been established, and these fungi play an important role in the production of enzymes used in biotechnology. In recent years, fungi have also been increasingly used in biodegradation



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THE MOST DANGEROUS FUNGAL PATHOGENS ARE THE CRITICAL GROUP, WHICH CONSISTS OF ONLY FOUR FUNGAL PATHOGENS

and bioeconomy, for example, to process organic waste and generate energy. Fungi are important sources of food. Many of these achievements have been made possible by the availability of a number of powerful assay systems for high-throughput detection of enzymatic activities and biological effects, which are now available at white biotechnology, agro, and pharma industries. However, new OMICS technologies, as well as advances in molecular genetics and biochemistry, have facilitated the



development of new products and processes across the board. In this article, I summarise 10 significant decadal advances in fungal biology that scientists and mycologists believe will improve human well-being. Recent advances in fungal research over the last decade include: Fingolimod, an immunosuppressive therapy for neurological diseases derived from the mimic synthesis of a fungal metabolite; From enfumafungin to ibrexafungerp, the development of the first

pharmaceutical drug for human use derived from a plant-dwelling fungus; Pleuromutilins, the most recent antibacterial on the market, were created by sustainable biotechnology; The role of fungi in the treatment of immune disorders through their influence on the central nervous system; The importance of fungal infection to human health, as well as an overview of the few available treatment options; Bioeconomy of the fungi trade; Hormoneama Carpetanum identification and description,

as well as the development of an antifungal known as enfumafungin; CARD9, a new immune disorder, as well as a new fungal infection problem; The role of chromatin in the regulation of fungal secondary metabolism, as well as the successful application of CRISPRCas9 in medical mycology; and new treatment and diagnostic methods are being developed. Finally, in a global report, the World Health Organization (WHO) urged the public and researchers to pay closer attention to fungal pathogens. The true burden of fungi-caused disease is unknown, and evidence beyond current healthcare treatment guidelines is limited. The most dangerous fungal pathogens are the critical group, which consists of only four fungal pathogens — Cryptococcus neoformans, Aspergillus fumigatus, Candida albicans, and Candida auris. Fungal infections are spreading, becoming more resistant to treatments, and becoming a global public health concern as a result of a pandemic of bacterial resistance to antimicrobials.

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TAKUMI SECURES FIRST OVERSEAS TITLE

ASIAN TOUR’S INTERNATIONAL SERIES
OMAN CONCLUDES AT AL MOUJ

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, FEB 12

Japan’s Takumi Kanaya claimed his first overseas title when he was crowned champion of the International Series Oman at Al Mouj Golf on Sunday as part of an enhanced series in the Asian Tour.

With the triumph, the young Japanese golfer received \$2 million cash prize and the coveted trophy after a spectacular finale. Takumi overcame a strong challenge from his closest opponent Thailand’s Sadom Kaewkanjana and American Berry Henson to secure a dominant four-shot victory.

Post the award ceremony, the champion of International Series

Oman expressed his joy with this new abroad achievement. “It was great experience to play in the incredible layout of the course at Al Mouj Golf. The golf course was amazing and extremely challenging when the wind picked up. Thanks for the hospitality which was shown throughout the week. I loved my time in Oman, it was a great week,” the Japanese said.

“Special thanks to the people of Oman, Al Mouj Golf and the various partners for their great support this week. It will be a fond memory for me.”

The final ceremony of the event was held under auspices of His Highness Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, Vice-Chairman of Oman

Olympic Committee (OOC) in presence of Cho Minn Thant, Asian Tour CEO, Dr Mohammed al Rumhi, Eng Mundhir al Barwani, Chairman of Oman Golf Association (OGA), Nasser al Shaibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat and top dignitaries. The chief guest delivered the trophy to Kanaya.

Takumi Kanaya, who is one of Japan’s most exciting young prospects, shot a resolute 71 to tame the testing conditions that Oman’s first ever links course has become renowned for across the globe. He started the concluding day on 9-under-par, one shot clear of Ryo Hisatsune.

England’s Steve Lewton (71) finished fourth, one shot further

back, while Spain’s Sergio Garcia and Joaquin Niemann from Chile, both in with 74s, tied for fifth another two strokes behind.

The Asian Tour event took place at the world-class conditioning course in Al Mouj Golf with a participation of impressive 132-player field which included golfers from 32 countries across six continents.

OGA CHIEF THANKS PARTNERS

The OGA chairman appreciated all the efforts taken by all for the success of this world-class event. “Thanks to the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for their continuous support and special thanks for all our

partners and volunteers. The event was a great occasion for Oman golf to host elite players of the game.”

Designed by two-time major winner, Greg Norman, Kanaya was not the only player to marvel at the world-class conditioning of the course, with four-time major champion Brooks Koepka stating ahead of the tournament: “It’s a great golf course. I think it’s phenomenal. The putting surface is very true. Fairways are in great shape. I’ve been very, very impressed with the shape it’s in.”

Recent Presidents Cup participant and ten-time professional winner Mito Pereira echoed the sentiments of Koepka on the quality of the golf course

adding: “This place is great, super impressed by the facilities and the golf course. I honestly didn’t expect the course to be this good, I’m really happy to be here.”

Speaking after the conclusion of the International Series’ debut in the Middle East, Nasser al Shaibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said, “we are extremely proud to have hosted the season opener of the International Series Oman this week, welcoming a number of the world’s best players to showcase Al Mouj Golf’s incredible course, facilities, and hospitality to a global audience as a world top 100 club. From all of us at Al Mouj Muscat, we would like to congratulate Takumi Kanaya on his well-earned victory.”



Japan’s Takumi Kanaya holds the trophy with the chief guest and dignitaries at Al Mouj Golf. – Faisal al Balushi

Real Madrid thump Al Hilal to win fifth Club World Cup

RABAT: Real Madrid lifted the Club World Cup for a record fifth time with a pulsating 5-3 win over Al Hilal on Saturday in Morocco.

Vinicius Junior and Fede Valverde struck twice each, while Karim Benzema also scored on his return from injury in Madrid’s spectacular victory over their Saudi Arabian opponents.

Carlo Ancelotti’s side, who qualified as Champions League winners last season, had far too much attacking quality for their opponents to handle.

Madrid’s emphatic triumph at Rabat’s Prince Moulay Abdellah stadium secured their second piece of silverware of the season, after winning the European Super Cup in August.

It also provided welcome respite from their La Liga campaign, where they sit eight points behind rivals Barcelona, who also beat them in the Spanish Super Cup final in January.

Madrid also won three Intercontinental Cups in 1960, 1998 and 2002 -- a match between European and South American champions, which merged with the Club World Cup in 2005.

“We are very happy, for the eighth time Madrid are champions of the world, it was what we had to do,” Ancelotti told Telecinco.

“We’re happy, it was a good game. I think we were good



Real Madrid players celebrate with the trophy at the end of the Fifa Club World Cup final against Saudi Arabia’s Al Hilal at the Prince Moulay Abdellah Stadium in Rabat. – AFP

up front, with Vinicius, Karim, Valverde, who got two, and up top the team had mobility and quality.”

Ancelotti brought Benzema back into the starting line-up after he had missed the semifinal win over Al Ahly with a thigh injury, with Rodrygo dropping to the

bench.

The 35-year-old striker created the opening goal for Vinicius with a short pass to send the Brazilian winger through on goal.

After a frustrating spell in Spain because of racist abuse from the stands and opponents targeting

him on the pitch, Vinicius was able to enjoy himself in Morocco, netting in both of Madrid’s matches and crowned player of the tournament.

“We are delighted with him because he keeps improving, he’s much more effective,” Ancelotti

told reporters. “He scores in almost all the games and makes the difference in all of them.”

BOOST FOR SEASON

The same went for the team as a whole, glad to take a short break from their domestic battle with

Xavi Hernandez’s Barcelona to earn the title of world champions.

“We are improving,” added Ancelotti. “We have to consider there were mistakes at the back, the team is coming back, like Karim, (Eder) Militao, (Thibaut) Courtois.

“This trophy will give us a boost for the rest of the season.”

Valverde rifled the second goal home through defender Ali Albulayhi’s legs, leaving goalkeeper Abdullah al Mayoof unsighted.

Former Porto striker Moussa Marega pulled one back for the 2021 Asian Champions League winners, sliding a shot past Andriy Lunin, who should have done more to keep it out.

For a short period it seemed the Saudi Arabian side were going to truly test their more illustrious rivals, but Madrid stepped up a gear in the second half and secured an entertaining victory.

Vinicius set up Benzema early in the second half with a stunning cross using the outside of his boot and the French forward made no mistake from close range.

Uruguayan midfielder Valverde netted his second goal after a slick combination with defender Dani Carvajal, finding his form and goals again after a dip in form.

Earlier, Brazilian Copa Libertadores winners Flamengo finished third with a 4-2 win over Egypt’s Al Ahly. — AFP

Australia, England in cruise control with emphatic victories



PAARL, South Africa: Australia and England made emphatic statements with convincing wins in a double-header at Boland Park in Paarl on the second day of the Women's T20 World Cup on Saturday.

Defending champions Australia crushed New Zealand by 97 runs, while England made light of a challenging target as they raced to a seven-wicket win over the West Indies with 5.3 overs to spare.

England's bowling and fielding was some way below perfection in 38-degree heat as West Indies scored 135 for seven.

But their batters attacked the West Indian bowlers with a formidable display of power and aggression.

Opener Sophia Dunkley pounded 34 off 18 balls before Nat Sciver-Brunt (40 not out) and skipper Heather Knight (32 not out) completed the win with an unbeaten fourth-wicket partnership of 67 off 43 balls.

"That's exactly what we want to do," said Knight.

"We want to be fearless and take the game on — and entertain as well. We want to try to go hard up front and today was a big step to do that in a big tournament."

It was measure of England's superiority that West Indies fast bowler Chinelle Henry felt that her team had shown enough improvement on recent performances to feel confident going into their next match

against India in Cape Town on Wednesday. "If we play our game against India the way we did today we definitely can beat them," said Henry.

'GET BETTER'

If England were impressive, Australia were even more so as they shone in all departments.

They overcame tricky batting conditions on a pitch showing signs of wear to make 173 for nine, the highest total of the first two days of the tournament.

Alyssa Healy top-scored with 55 off 38 balls with skipper Meg Lanning making 41 and Elysse Perry hitting 40, an innings which included two sixes.

Then they bowled out New Zealand for 76, with off-spinner Ash Gardner using helpful conditions to take five for 12.

Australia were already well on the way to victory when Gardner came into the attack.

Megan Schutt dismissed Suzie Bates and Sophie Devine, New Zealand's most experienced batters, in the first over, while Darcie Brown looked menacing and bowled at high pace.

Australia also looked by far the most athletic and aggressive fielding outfit of the six teams on display over the first two days.

Lanning said she wanted her team to improve as the tournament progressed.

"I'm really happy," said Lanning. "Hopefully we are going to get better through the tournament." — **AFP**

KUWAITI DRIVER BECOMES FIRST ME DRIFTER TO TAKE TOP SPOT AT OI DC

ALI MAKHSEED MAKES HISTORY

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, FEB 12

Kuwait's Ali Makhseed became the first drifter from the Middle East to take the top spot in an Oman International Drift Championship (OIDC) round during the third round of OIDC 2023 in Muscat on Friday night.

El Salvador's Naser al Harbaly missed out in the final battle to take second while Oman's Ahmed al Amri made waves by claiming third at the Muscat Drift Arena of the Oman Automobile Association.

Ali Makhseed also topped the Mena category with Al Amri second. Jordan's Ahmed Daham continued his consistent performance in the OIDC 2023 by taking third place.

"I feel great. I feel relieved. It's like a huge weight has been lifted-off my shoulders," Ali Makhseed said.

When asked about the struggles he faced, Ali Makhseed said: "OIDC is always a struggle with the competition being really high and the tracks always technical, so it's just not easy to get the top spot here."

"For me to be in this position is a great achievement and we made history today as I'm the first middle-eastern participant to get first place in the international category in the OIDC. That's always been a target and we finally achieved that goal and it puts us in a really good spot in the overall championship fight and hopefully next round we can seal the deal and win the championship."

"The track is the most technical layout ever designed in OIDC, which was really fun for us drivers and the teams as well, to adapt to and get the right driving style. So



the best team, the best driver and the best car won today and I'm thankful for that."

Each Heat displayed a great number of battles with judges deciding on a 'One More Time' play on a couple of occasions when the points were too close.

AL AMRI TARGETS GLORY

In the national category, Ahmed al Amri topped the charts with Refaat al Yahyaie taking

technical track I have ever drifted in. I joined the OIDC last year, which was my first time competing in general and so this is my second time here.

"Being an international championship, you see a lot of people coming from different countries, so there are a lot of different power levels. The main challenge is finding the strategy that would work so you can battle them and be in level with the competition."

The drivers are already geared up for the fourth and final round, pushing themselves for the last opportunity of the season to win the overall championship cup.

"I am disappointed that I couldn't get first place but I'm grateful for being in the top 3 again. I will prepare myself for next weekend and hope to finally bring home the winning cup in the international category," Oman's Ahmed al Amri said.

Credit Oman sponsors 3 OC leagues

MUSCAT: Oman Cricket (OC) has been keen to rope in corporate support for the development of the game in the Sultanate of Oman. The untiring efforts of OC has met with success and the latest partnership agreement between the cricket governing body of Oman and Credit Oman will give further boost to the domestic league.

OC recently unveiled Credit Oman as the sponsors of the C, D and E Division leagues for the 2022-23 season.

Credit Oman is a Muscat-based three-decade old company and over the years has shaped domestic trade and catalysed exports from Oman to regional and international markets as a leading credit insurer, fully owned by the government.

Welcoming on board Credit Oman, Alkesh Joshi, OC's treasurer, said: "We are delighted to have Credit Oman join the Oman Cricket family as our title sponsors for the C, D E divisions. These divisions serve as a refinery to produce the talent pool of cricketers in Oman. I am looking



forward to the talented players to represent the country. We certainly feel overwhelmed when corporates like Credit Oman come on board to develop the game as part of their Corporate Social Responsibilities (CSR) programme."

Duleep Mendis, OC's chief development officer, said: "I would like to extend my thanks to Credit Oman in supporting domestic cricket in the Sultanate of Oman. This backing will enable us to facilitate and enhance the quality of cricket at grassroots level. We

are looking forward to fructify this association in its best way in the coming future."

Mohammed bin Hilal al Jabri, Credit Oman director of sales, said: "We are delighted to be associated with the second most popular sport across the globe through Oman Cricket. The partnership serves as our means to contribute towards sports and youth in Oman. We are basically trying to focus at the grassroots level in the domestic cricket. We are grateful to Oman Cricket for giving us an

opportunity to be part of cricket fraternity in the Sultanate of Oman. The sponsorship will also allow Credit Oman to extend their CSR programme by investing in sports and youth in Oman."

The official signing ceremony was held recently at the Oman Cricket Academy with Joshi, representing Oman Cricket and Al Jabri, representing Credit Oman, inking the agreement in the presence of Mendis, Vaishali Jesrani, advisor to OC, and other officials.

ISC OPEN BADMINTON CHAMPIONSHIP CONCLUDES

MUSCAT: ISC Open Badminton Tournament concluded successfully at the ISC courts on February 4.

The organising team comprised of Mathew P Thomas, Sanjit Kanojia, Faigee and Haridas took all initiatives to conduct the event in a systematic and professional manner. The tournament was participated by various nationalities including from Indonesia.

The awarding and closing ceremony were held after the open men's doubles final, making a perfect end of the ISC Badminton Tournament 2023.

Sports Secretary Saji Abraham thanked all the officials, tournament committee, staff, coaches and parents for their support and dedication in

conducting the tournament successfully.

ISC Vice-Chairman Karanjeet Singh and General Secretary Babu Rajendran addressed the gathering and emphasised the importance of sports events which will help to bring young talented players to the limelight. Mathew P Thomas delivered vote of thanks. Maria Luisa Huidobro, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain to the Sultanate of Oman, was the chief guest during the closing ceremony.

Binoy Simon Varghese, Head of Operations of Purshottam Kanji Exchange, distributed the trophies and cash prizes along with Gopakumar from GK Recruiters Pvt Ltd. Shajahan of Al Raka Trading LLC was also present during the ceremony.





Herrada masters Qurayat climb to take red



TOUR OF OMAN STAGE 2 RESULTS

1. Jesus Herrada (ESP)	Cofidis	04:21:07
2. Maxim Van Gils (BEL)	Lotto Dstny	+ 00
3. Diego Ulissi (ITA)	UAE Team Emirates	+ 00
4. Matteo Jorgenson (USA)	Movistar Team	+ 00
5. Mauri Vansevenant (BEL)	Soudal Quick-Step	+ 00
6. Alexey Lutsenko (KAZ)	Astana Qazaqstan Team	+ 03
7. Remy Rochas (FRA)	Cofidis	+ 05
8. Cristian Rodriguez (ESP)	Team Arkea-Samsic	+ 05
9. Stan Dewulf (BEL)	AG2R Citroen Team	+ 05
10. Davide Formolo (ITA)	UAE Team Emirates	+ 05

GENERAL CLASSIFICATION

1. Jesus Herrada (ESP)	Cofidis	07:51:57
2. Maxim Van Gils (BEL)	Lotto Dstny	+ 04
3. Diego Ulissi (ITA)	UAE Team Emirates	+ 06
4. Mauri Vansevenant (BEL)	Soudal Quick-Step	+ 10
5. Matteo Jorgenson (USA)	Movistar Team	+ 10
6. Alexey Lutsenko (KAZ)	Astana Qazaqstan Team	+ 13
7. Davide Formolo (ITA)	UAE Team Emirates	+ 15
8. Lennert Teugels (BEL)	Bingoal WB	+ 15
9. Niklas Eg (DEN)	Uno-X Pro Cycling Team	+ 15
10. Harold Tejada (COL)	Astana Qazaqstan Team	+ 15

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, FEB 12

COFIDIS RIDER Jesus Herrada's stupendous effort in the final metres on the Qurayat uphill powered him to the second stage triumph and the overall leader's red jersey in the Tour of Oman 2023 on Sunday. The Spanish puncheur finished in 04:21:07 after pouncing on the right moment to get the better of Maxim Van Gils (Lotto Dstny) and Diego Ulissi (UAE Team Emirates). "I was familiar about the final climb. I finished second here in 2019 behind Alexey Lutsenko. I knew it was hard. Today I had good legs and it all went very well."

The Cofidis rider is an expert on rising finishes and he waited until the final 300 metres before attacking in the 174 km stage.

Herrada had finished third in the Tour of Oman 2019 with a second place in Qurayat stage.

"I want to keep the red jersey all the way to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar (Green Mountain), the final summit of this 12th edition, on Wednesday," he said.

The peloton left the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex to head into the infamous climb of Al Jabal Street (3.5km at 9.2%).

Ivan Cobo (Equipo Kern Pharma) made good attack uphill but with little space from the peloton. After leading alone, he slipped to the bottom of the downhill.

UAE, ASTANA IMPRESS

Fredrik Dversnes (Uno-X) jumped ahead of the bunch at 15 km. Luca Van Boven (Bingoal WB) joined him soon but Dvernes dominated the intermediate sprint of Al Amerat (20.1 km).

Four more riders joined them after 25km. Ivan Cobo, Angel Fuentes (Burgos-BH), Kosuke Takeyama (JCL Team Ukyo) and Jeroen Meijers (Terengganu Polygon) made the attack.

The gap raised to 4 minutes but UAE Team Emirates and Astana Qazaqstan reacted quickly at the front of the bunch. Mark Cavendish led the chase for the Kazakh team to keep the gap between 2 and 3 minutes until the conclusion of the stage.

Cobo showed his climbing skills again as the attackers face the climb of Qurayat (2.6km at 7%) for the first time, 52km before the uphill finish. Meijers dropped back to the bunch.

The peloton upped the ante after the summit as the gap dropped to one minute. Cobo, Dvernes and Takeyama also dropped back to the bunch. Van Boven and Fuentes remained at the front inside the last 30km.

Soudal Quick-Step move to the front of the bunch and put the hammer down with 15km to go. The two attackers remaining at the front were brought in 7km away from the finish, just ahead of the final ascent.

UAE Team Emirates, Bora-Hansgrohe and Arkea-Samsic set a strong pace for their leaders. Herrada pulled away in the final 200m with Maxim Van Gils and Diego Ulissi coming closest to the Spaniard.

Herrada became the new race leader, courtesy to the time bonuses. He leads Van Gils by four seconds, with Ulissi at six seconds.

Van Gils' efforts saw him pick up the best young rider jersey as Meijers retained the most aggressive rider's golden jersey.

Herrada and Cofidis will defend the leader's red jersey on 151.8 km-long Stage 3 from Al Khobar to Jabal Haat that ends with a 4.6km climb to the line.



Spanish rider Jesus Herrada of Cofidis poses on the podium after winning the second stage of the Tour of Oman 2023, from the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex to Qurayat. – AFP



The pack rides during the second stage of the Tour of Oman 2023, from the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex to Qurayat. – AFP



Omanis watch as the pack rides during the second stage of the Tour of Oman 2023, from the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex to Qurayat. – AFP

business

Manufacturing investments in Oman top RO 7.5 billion

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, FEB 12

The manufacturing sector’s contribution to the Gross Domestic Product of the Sultanate of Oman grew an impressive 65.6 per cent as of end-September 2022 compared to the same period of 2021 where its share at current prices amounted to 11 per cent (9.3 per cent at constant prices), according to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP).

Citing statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information NCSI, the Ministry noted that the volume of locally manufactured commodity exports also recorded a significant increase.

Mineral products, for example, surged by 175 per cent, metals 27 per cent, chemicals 32 per cent and plastics 42 per cent compared to trends a year earlier.

Omanis working in the



industrial sector also grew 4.3 per cent to reach 34,790, it stated.

According to Eng Sami al Sahib, Director General of Industry, Oman’s industrial cities continued to attract heartening volumes of investments despite the back-to-back global economic downturn and the coronavirus pandemic period.

Industrial investments now

top RO 7.5 billion with as many as 2,398 projects currently in operation around the country.

The Ministry, he said, is currently focused on implementing the executive programmes of the Industrial Strategy by including them in the five-year development plans.

He also affirmed that, MoCIIP will develop a governance

MOCIIP WILL DEVELOP A GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORK TO FOLLOW UP ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE OUTPUTS OF THE CONVERTING AND FUTURE INDUSTRIES LABORATORY, AND WILL COOPERATE WITH INVESTORS TO DEVELOP A TIME PLAN FOR THE IMPLEMENTATION OF INDUSTRIAL PROJECTS THAT WERE ANNOUNCED DURING THE LAB.

framework to follow up on the implementation of the outputs of the Converting and Future Industries Laboratory, and we will cooperate with investors to develop a time plan for the implementation of industrial projects that were announced during the Lab.

“We will also work to develop new incentives for industrial investment opportunities that include financing and land allocation,” Al Sahib added.



Oman Observer presents our brand new podcast season - The Business Class. Join us with Khalid al Huraibi where he chats with industry experts on topics ranging from artificial intelligence for business to co-working spaces in Oman. Listen now.



Licensing of National Product Brand identity to be regulated

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion issued Ministerial Decision 62/2023 regulating the licensing of the national product’s identity.

The decision seeks to establish a unified national framework for Omani products. Besides unifying the products’ marketing identity, the decision is aimed at augmenting competitiveness, enhancing in-country added value (ICV) of national products and raising local and foreign consumers’ awareness about Omani products.

Article (2) of the decision states that all establishments and companies must harmonise their status accordingly, within 180 days from the date the decision came into effect.

It requires each to obtain



صنع في عُمان
Made in Oman

a license from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion to use the national product identity.

The ministry recently launched the international numbering system (barcode) for Omani goods and products under code number (607).

The barcode’s launch seeks to streamline Omani exports’ access to global markets and facilitate the electronic sale and marketing of Omani products. — ONA

Fourteen investment opportunities linked to Oman’s space programme

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, FEB 12

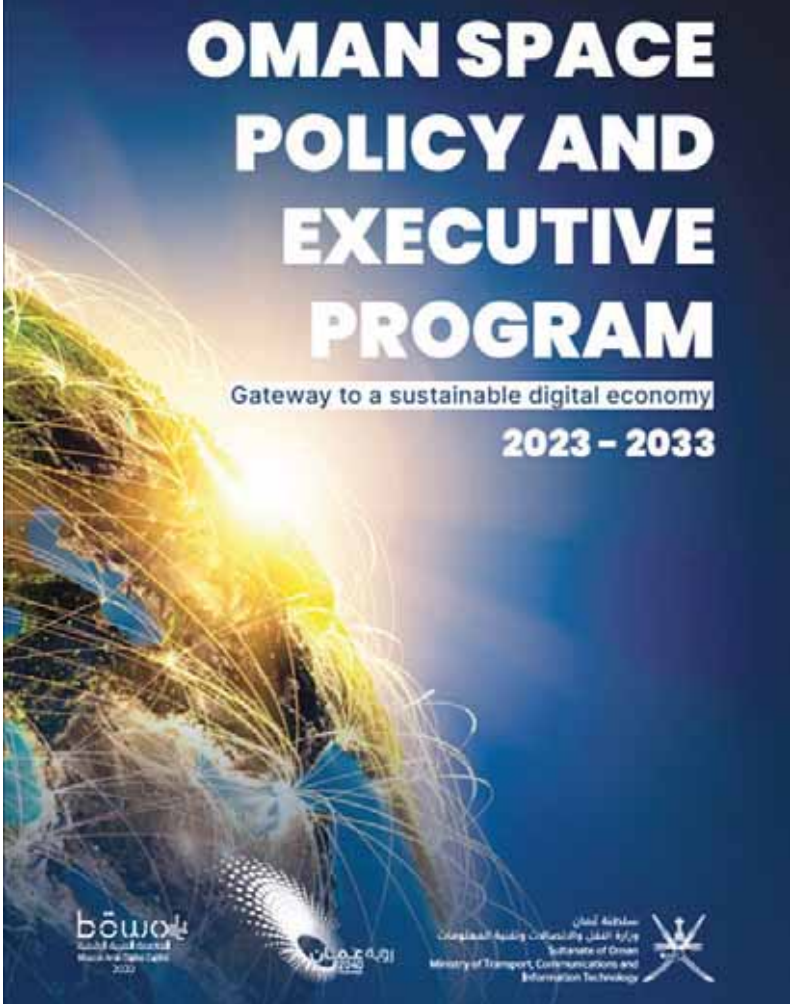
A long-term National Space Policy issued recently by the Omani Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) has identified as many as 14 projects and investment opportunities that will contribute to the development of a domestic downstream space industry.

The initiatives, primarily targeted at international investors and technology partners, centre on establishing or enabling the following in Oman: Space Cloud Partnership, Satellite ground station hub, Direct receiving station, National Space Data Platform, End user applications booster programme (Sandbox), Center of Excellence for space applications, Cubesat project, Space Accelerator, National space observatory, World Space Conference, Satellite R&D programme, National Satcom Initiative, Regional Satnav augmentation system, and Launch site partnership.

Key project opportunities:

Space Cloud Partnership: Through partnerships with world class space and cloud partners, Oman aims to develop a space-based cloud (satellite sourced data) service ecosystem that intersects with leading edge computing and data analytics.

“The ecosystem will contribute to develop downstream space industry- the development of space applications and services in Oman,” says an Executive Programme issued along with the



Space Policy.

Ground Stations Hub: This initiative will leverage Oman’s strategic location with respect to the equator to host ground stations as a service for satellite operators.

Additionally, it will take advantage of the presence of 21 submarine cables installed in Oman’s proximity to feed data downloaded from satellite.

Direct Receiving Station (DRS): Intersecting with the Ground Stations as Services (GSaS) initiative, this project aims to attract foreign satellite

operators to establish their DRS in Oman while allowing Omani users to access data received through the station.

National Space Data Platform: This project aims to provide the Earth Observer sector with a state-of-the-art digital platform to gather, process and share data fostering applications and ecosystem development.

The platform will also help build national capacity in the downstream sector to support digitalisation and economic diversification.

TURN TO PAGE 15



شركة الفجر العالمية ش.م.ع.ع.
AL FAJAR AL ALAMIA CO. SAOG

PO BOX 78, QURUM CITY CENTRE, PC 102, SULTANATE OF OMAN

Group's Unaudited Financial Results for the six months ended 31 December 2022

Chairman's Report

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present to you the company's report on activities and unaudited financial results for the first half ended December 31, 2022.

1. Operating Results

The Group's total revenue for the six-month period ended 31 December 2022 was RO 5.388 million, compared to RO 8.822 the previous year.

The Parent Company's net loss after taxation was RO 0.994 million, compared to a net profit of RO 0.300 million for the same period the previous fiscal year.

For the six months ended 31 December 2022, the Group recorded a consolidated loss after taxation of RO 2.933 million, compared to a net profit of RO 0.076 million in the same period the previous year.

2. Operations

The Group's revenue fell 39% year on year due to the inability to obtain key raw materials. The management is currently working hard on options for restocking raw materials and returning operations to normal levels. Due to limited raw material availability, the company is currently catering to critical projects and customers who pay on time and have accepted the price increase.

Due to the scarcity of explosives, the drilling and blasting industry in Fujeirah (UAE) is also experiencing a revenue decline, which will be resolved once the group company begins supplying explosives.

Geodynamics has successfully completed the requirement for the additional storage facility, and the authorities will soon change the license to a permanent explosives facility. We anticipate that the volume will increase significantly after the completion of the above and the availability of raw materials with an additional storage facility. This will benefit the Group's revenue and profitability while also strengthening its position in the UAE market.

3. Health, Safety and the Environment

Your company is run in a safe and efficient manner in strict accordance with the highest safety standards and the current Royal Oman Police Explosives Rules and Regulations.

No accidents or environmental incidents were reported during the period ended 31 December 2022.

During the six months ending December 31, 2022, your company complied with the Code of Corporate Governance and other applicable rules and regulations.

4. Future Outlook

We are pleased to inform our valued shareholders that Phase 2 of the proposed explosives facility in the UAE for the additional two permanent magazines has been completed. The authority's visit for the same was also completed. We anticipate that the temporary license will be changed to a permanent explosives facility license shortly. This will pave the way for the resumption of commercial operations once Oman's raw material situation improves.

We anticipated that the ANFO production plant and raw material stores would be completed by July 2023. Once completed, these will help to increase volume in the future. We believe that this will boost the Group's overall profitability.

Going forward, we anticipate higher revenue growth in the drilling and blasting divisions in both the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates, based on projects recently awarded in the UAE and projects scheduled to begin soon. Furthermore, we are in a strong position to meet the increased demand from the mining industry, given the increased demand from export markets impacted by COVID-19 over the last two years.

The operation at the Gypsum Quarry has already begun, albeit slowly. We anticipate better results from Awam Minerals as demand rises, resulting in an increase in the Gypsum rate.

5. Acknowledgements

The Members of the Board wish to record their gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haithem bin Tariq bin Taimur and the Government of Oman for the successful efforts made to improve development and prosperity within the Country.

The Directors also wish to thank the Royal Oman Police, other Government bodies, our valued customers and Banker for their cooperation and support.

Haythem Mahmood Abd Al-Nabi Macki
Chairman

Consolidated Statement of Comprehensive Income

	GROUP		PARENT	
	31.12.2022 RO.	31.12.2021 RO.	31.12.2022 RO.	31.12.2021 RO.
Revenue	5,387,753	8,822,490	1,526,307	2,983,751
Cost of Sales	(6,539,990)	(7,286,083)	(1,815,997)	(2,258,097)
Gross Profit	(1,152,237)	1,536,406	(289,690)	725,654
Other Income	64,329	87,909	56,372	398,439
Administration & General expenses	(844,710)	(878,896)	(263,179)	(278,332)
Sales & Distribution expenses	(232,885)	(387,468)	(114,367)	(234,881)
Operating Profit	(2,165,503)	357,951	(610,864)	610,880
Finance charges	(995,829)	(280,013)	(558,464)	(258,474)
Profit before taxation	(3,161,332)	77,938	(1,169,328)	352,406
Taxation	228,122	(1,963)	175,302	(52,588)
Profit and total comprehensive income	(2,933,210)	75,975	(994,026)	299,818

Consolidated Statement of Financial Position

	GROUP		PARENT	
	As at 31.12.2022 RO.	As at 31.12.2021 RO.	As at 31.12.2022 RO.	As at 31.12.2021 RO.
Fixed Assets	11,059,122	10,949,120	596,285	721,305
Intangible Assets	3,888,315	4,329,915	114	458
Goodwill	22,228,249	22,228,249	579,717	579,717
Investment in Subsidiary	-	-	36,996,677	37,015,980
Investment in associates	829,047	857,627	829,047	857,627
Right of Use of Assets	780,450	177,256	91,969	111,134
Deferred Tax	1,164,362	511,659	252,107	62,553
Current Assets	12,585,915	20,084,106	12,216,360	7,688,093
Total Assets	52,535,460	59,137,932	51,562,276	47,036,867
Non-current Liabilities	23,952,107	11,181,778	22,443,437	8,336,966
Current Liabilities	11,517,503	21,973,202	4,051,844	12,170,326
Total Liabilities	35,469,610	33,154,980	26,495,281	20,507,292
Net Assets	17,065,850	25,982,952	25,066,995	26,529,575
Shareholders' Fund				
Share Capital	4,933,025	4,933,025	4,933,025	4,933,025
Legal Reserve	1,436,224	1,466,206	1,340,068	1,370,050
Special Reserve	579,717	579,717	579,717	579,717
Share premium account	13,550,576	13,550,576	13,550,576	13,550,576
Retained earnings	(3,433,692)	5,453,428	4,663,609	6,096,207
Total Shareholders' equity	17,065,850	25,982,952	25,066,995	26,529,575

MG Motor sales end 2022 with 40% growth

MUSCAT: MG Motor continues to rise up the rankings in the GCC's top ten car manufacturers as the brand secured 6th position with an unprecedented sales performance in 2022. The year concluded with MG recording a remarkable 4.7 per cent market share.

With total sales of 57,506 units, the company's achievements are particularly impressive considering the competition it faces from rising Chinese brands in the GCC market.

This remarkable milestone could not have been achieved without the exceptional support from MG's dealer network and

the aggressive expansion plans the brand has implemented. As a result, the brand now has a total of 49 showrooms in the region, currently open, with 6 new showrooms penciled for opening in H1 2023.

The brand has always focused on ensuring the highest standard of customer service, with 4 new facilities opening in H1 of 2023, being added to the 64 state-of-the-art facilities already used by our customers.

MG continues with its double-digit growth ever since it kicked off its operations in the Middle East region, as such increasing the brand's sales by 40%.



Now, the brand is one of the top 6 Automotive brands in the region and MG continues to lead with large increases in market shares

across the GCC. With MG5 and MGZS being the best-performing models across the year. Customers have shown their appreciation of

the British-born brand's products.

Tom Lee, Managing Director of MG Motor's Middle East operations, commented: "MG has recorded another year of extraordinary growth in the region despite the ambitious goals we have set for ourselves and the slew of new competitors.

The growing awareness, popularity and desire for the MG brand has been really evident as we have maximised accessibility to the brand for customers across our nine markets, and as we look to introduce two new markets in Q1 of this year."

Mohsin Hani al Bahrani, CEO, MHD ACERE, said "It has been

a tremendous performance by MG in the region and my hearty congratulations to the team. We are equally proud that Oman has been a significant contributor to this growth story. With the highest market share growth of 8.2%, MG today stands as the 2nd largest car brand in Oman. We are confident this momentum will continue in to 2023".

Furthermore, MG will continue to enhance its services as it tends to its customer's needs, while its 10 years / unlimited km warranty on all models, combined with exceptional offers available to new and current customers, will ensure complete peace of mind.

CBFS holds graduation of MBA students

MUSCAT: The graduation for the 16th & 17th batches of MBA programme of the University of Strathclyde was held on Wednesday February 8, 2023 at the College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS) campus.

A total of 46 graduates were conferred MBA degree in the annual graduation ceremony under the auspices of Tahir bin Salim al Amri, Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman, in the presence of Dr Khalfan bin Mohammed al Barwani, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the CBFS, Dr Zahran bin Salim al Salti, Dean of the College, Prof David Hillier, Vice Principal & Executive Dean, Strathclyde Business School and Members of the CBFS Board.

The ceremony began with the entrance of the academic graduates consisting of the College of Banking and Financial Studies and the University of Strathclyde.

Dr Khalfan bin Mohammed al Barwani, Chairman of the College Board in his welcome speech said, "This is a momentous occasion that marks a significant milestone



in CBFS annual calendar. Hence, it my pleasure — on behalf of the College — to sincerely congratulate all of our MBA graduates for their outstanding achievement. Their success is not a surprise! It is a well-deserved one.

I would also truly commend our graduates for surviving the rigor of CBFS academic discipline, and for satisfying all the academic requirements of the Strathclyde MBA. I recall here the CBFS' robust and long-term alliance with the University of Strathclyde Business School that began in 2001, which has significantly contributed to the breadth and depth of our MBA programme.

Strathclyde Business School is a triple accredited business school. This gives us all an assurance that CBFS is the place to be if a student is looking for a transformative, holistic and empowering postgraduate studies.

It is a source of pride that the MBA programme has resulted in the successful graduation of more than 600 students until today. We are further proud that today many of our business leaders in Oman, are in fact graduates of CBFS MBA programme". This was followed by the sponsor of the ceremony, Tahir bin Salim al Amri, Executive President of the Central Bank of Oman, distributing certificates to graduates.

OAB to hold partners' gala dinner

MUSCAT: Seeking to strengthen its strategic partnerships with public and private sector companies, Oman Arab Bank (OAB) is organising an OAB Partners' Gala Dinner on Monday, February 13, 2023 at the W Muscat hotel, with over 200 partners, officials and the bank's senior leadership team expected to attend.

The event seeks to strengthen the bank's existing relationships with its partners from the public and private sectors. These partnerships play a pivotal role in the bank's efforts to facilitate digital transformation and create value across the customer journey.

Commenting on these partnerships, CEO of OAB, Sulaiman al Harthy said: "We are immensely proud of the network we have grown and the partnerships we have forged over many years. We attach great importance to our strategic partnerships with both the public and private sector organisations, and are committed to offering them tailor-made services and solutions that support their organisations' growth."



Mohammed al Abri, Head of E-Payments and Merchant Support at OAB added: "We have a strong track record of supporting businesses operating within Oman with integrated services and solutions to enable them to accept and process their payments seamlessly.

This includes our host-to-host payment solutions, e-payment gateway, state-of-the-art POS terminals and our latest launch 'OAB Mobile Pay'; a Payment Solution for small business owners and SMEs that enables them to transform their NFC-enabled Android smartphones into a payment terminal to accept contactless payments

from their customers, by simply downloading the OAB Mobile Pay App. We look forward to showcasing these solutions at the upcoming event."

OAB has a rich and proud history as one of the first financial institutions to be established in the Sultanate of Oman. Today, OAB operates a nationwide network of 48 conventional branches and 142 conventional ATMs across the Sultanate of Oman. OAB provides a complete range of financial products and services through its OAB Online App. Customers can now digitally benefit from several other services directly from the convenience of their mobile phones.

Exclusive Toyota Muscat Nights benefits ending soon

MUSCAT: Own any of your favourite Toyota now and don't miss the chance to make the most of Muscat Nights benefits. The benefits include service from 2 years/20,000 kms up to 4 years / 40,000 kms (whichever is earlier) and insurance 1 year or cash gift in lieu of insurance RO 125 to RO 300.

The campaign is valid until February 16, 2023. (Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Terms & Conditions apply. Customers can visit any Toyota showroom for details.) Fans of Toyota can choose their favourite vehicle from the exciting range that includes sedans, SUVs, Pick-ups, MPVs and more.

The popular and legendary Land Cruiser is the perfect companion on any terrain. Boasting inspiring strength, durability and reliability the Land Cruiser delivers high-end performance and advanced off-roading capabilities and safety features. It is equipped with a choice of two powertrain options.

The V6 twin-turbo 3.5-litre petrol engine achieves class-leading performance that



surpasses that of a conventional V8, producing 409 hp and up to 650 nm.

This is paired to a 10-speed automatic transmission. Also available is a naturally aspirated 4.0-litre V6 petrol engine that produces 271 hp and up to 385 nm paired to a 6-speed automatic transmission. The sleek and capable Toyota

Fortuner offers some of the most exciting drives with a choice of petrol engines that include a 2.7 Litre Four Cylinder Engine producing 164 HP & 25.0 Kg-m of Torque.

For even more exciting experiences, the 4.0 Litre V6 Engine churns-out 235 HP along with 38.3 Kg-m of Torque. The 6-speed Automatic Transmission,

available as a standard option, provides thrilling acceleration.

The Toyota RAV4 is steadily making a fine impression with its combination of style, power and capability. One of the two major additions to the RAV4 is the hybrid electric model, which combines two power sources consisting of a petrol engine and an electric motor. The second addition

to the RAV4 is the Adventure model, which was established as a symbolic model to appeal to active users through enhanced Waku Doki — the equivalent of "heart-pumping excitement" in Japanese — and a more powerful image.

The RAV4's 2.5-litre four-cylinder engine produces 204 hp and 24.8 kg.m. of torque and is mated to a eight-speed automatic transmission (8AT), resulting in a quicker and smoother acceleration.

On the other hand, a hybrid system combines two power sources consisting of a petrol engine and electric motor producing a combined power of 219 hp. It is also paired to a Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT) that provides the lowest fuel consumption value of 22.2km/L (Fuel economy may vary due to driving conditions.) while delivering a new level of driving pleasure.

The Toyota Raize is compact yet powerful. A perfect companion to navigate the busy city streets, the Raize is available with a 1-litre turbocharged engine providing smooth and responsive acceleration and producing 96.5 hp and 14.28 Kg.m. of torque.

Paired with Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT), which simulates a seven-speed sequential shift transmission to deliver powerful, smooth acceleration from start-off and at low speeds, and quiet and efficient transmission at higher speeds.

A newly developed lightweight, highly rigid body and suspension contribute to outstanding handling, stability, and ride comfort.

Specifications of vehicle imported from Toyota Motor Corporation are as per the GSO Conformity Certificate applicable to the model/grade. Parameters such as vehicle weight, dimensions & fuel economy could vary from the GSO Conformity Certificate due to fitment of dealer installed accessories. Pictures and colours shown may differ from actual specifications.

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Sustainable Manufacturing: The time is now

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, FEB 12

Maymuna al Adawi of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and organiser of the Oman Business Forum Tejarah Talks discusses sustainable manufacturing, the topic for the first session of the popular series in 2023.

Q: Tejarah Talks got off to a flying start in 2022. What's in store for 2023?

A: Appropriately, as this is the month in which Oman celebrates Industry Day, the first Tejarah Talks of the 2023 season, which takes place on Wednesday February 15, will be on sustainable manufacturing.

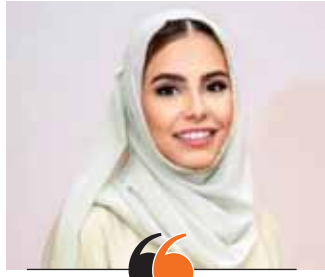
We take pride in always putting together impressive speaker line-ups and this one is no exception with Harsha Shetty, CEO, Jindal Shaded; Mazin al Rubaiai, Marketing Manager, Oman Aluminium Rolling Company; Haider al Zaabi, Co-founder, Mays EV; and Eng Abdullah al Saidi, CEO & Founder, Nafath Renewable Energy. These are industrial pioneers - folk driving Oman's sustainability efforts. His Highness Sayyid Dr Adham al Said, Founder, The Firm, will moderate the February 15 panel discussion.

Generously supported by the Ministry of Culture, Sports & Youth, Jindal Shaded, Omantel and OmanFM, over a thousand people attended Tejarah Talks last year. We are looking to build on the success we enjoyed in 2022 and take Tejarah Talks up a notch or two - providing attendees with even more memorable insights and food for thought.

Hopefully, people will leave our sessions feeling inspired, empowered and ready to do things differently. We want to continue making a positive impact.

Q: What is sustainable manufacturing?

A: The actual definition of sustainable manufacturing changes depending on who



Sustainable manufacturing is all about minimising the diverse business risks inherent in any manufacturing operation while maximising the new opportunities that arise from improving processes and products.

MAYMUNA AL ADAWI

you are talking to. However, according to the UN's Brundtland Commission Report, sustainable manufacturing is a form of manufacturing development that meets "the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."

In a nutshell, sustainable manufacturing is all about minimising the diverse business risks inherent in any manufacturing operation while maximising the new opportunities that arise from improving processes and products.

Q: Are people taking sustainability seriously?

A: Today, manufacturing is changing at a rate of knots and at the heart of this change is sustainability. What began as a compliance and reporting exercise has become a strategic business imperative.

Forward thinking Omani manufacturers are resetting their sustainability targets to reduce waste, increase efficiency, gain visibility across the supply chain



as well as enhance their brand reputation.

I think it is fair to say that since the Covid-19 pandemic began sustainability has moved to the top of the agenda for governments, investors and consumers. In terms of examples of this, here in Oman the government has introduced a 2050 net-zero emissions target while the EU has put climate change response at the heart of its post-pandemic economic-recovery plans.

And as for business, just look at BlackRock, the world's largest asset manager - it has told companies in its portfolio that it will vote against the re-election of directors that fail to protect natural resources and cut carbon emissions.

Consumers too have also become a lot more vocal about sustainability and are more likely to act on their views.

Interestingly, one recent survey of apparel companies found that almost 50% feared they would lose customers if they did not live up to sustainability commitments.

So, I think you can see this creates a very interesting backdrop for our Tejarah Talks sustainable

manufacturing discussions.

Q: And how are manufacturers responding to all this?

A: In their droves, I would say. Over the past few years, an extraordinary number of manufacturers worldwide have made public commitments to ongoing reductions in carbon emissions and resource consumption.

Across industries, geographies and company sizes, businesses have been allocating more resources toward improving their environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) performance. In fact, more than 90% of S&P 500 companies now publish ESG reports in some form, as do approximately 70% of Russell 1000 companies.

And it is estimated that 21% of the world's 2,000 largest public companies, representing sales of nearly \$14 trillion, now have net-zero commitments.

Increasingly, these targets encompass not just the operations of these companies - reflected in the Greenhouse Gas (GHG) Protocol's Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions - but also the entire value chain, as envisioned in

Scope 3.

This in turn has placed extra pressure on thousands of suppliers to reduce their own environmental footprints.

I should say that in addition to helping the planet, many manufacturers feel that reducing their environmental impact can offer them long-term financial gain. A McKinsey survey of over 2,000 company leaders found that 40% of respondents expected their sustainability programmes to generate profit in the next five years by attracting more environmentally conscious consumers.

Going forward, any Omani manufacturer looking to secure growth needs to embed sustainability into all their products, services and processes.

Q: Are consumers playing any part in shaping the sustainability agenda?

A: I think they are. In PWC's 2019 Global Consumer Insights Survey, just 35% of respondents said they chose sustainable products to help protect the environment, 37% said they looked for products with environmentally friendly packaging and 41% said

they avoided the use of plastic when they could.

But in their 2021 survey, results show percentages ten to 20 points higher in response to similarly worded questions. In a recent McKinsey study, 75% of millennial respondents, said they consider sustainability when making a purchase.

The message is loud and clear, consumers around the world want to live more sustainably. And many expect businesses to play a key role in society and feel that when it comes to driving positive change, brands bear as much responsibility as governments.

Indeed, as the climate crisis worsens, it is incumbent on manufacturers to protect future generations and improve their production processes.

By learning more about sustainability and adopting its main principles, Omani manufacturers can ensure the transition to the circular economy is as smooth and successful as possible.

Q: So sustainable manufacturing is the first Tejarah Talks of the 2023 session. What else can we expect during the year?

A: We will be covering topics ranging from Web 3.0, Oman's journey to net-zero, M-commerce and how cities and businesses can work together for growth. All chosen with their relevance to Oman Vision 2040. For those who cannot attend in person, there is always the possibility to tune in online.

And do not forget we also issue a Tejarah Talks report after each session as well as a podcast. Anyone who is interested in finding out more about our discussions from last year can catch the webcasts on Oman Business Forum's YouTube channel: <https://bit.ly/40Avv7w> Tejarah Talks is open to all and free-of-charge to attend. The next session will take place on February 15, starting at 7.30pm sharp. To reserve your seat register at: <https://bit.ly/3RADwKa>



MANDARIN ORIENTAL TO BE DEVELOPED IN MUSCAT

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism signed an agreement with Eagle Hills Real Estate Company to develop the Mandarin Oriental project at Qurum Beach (Shati Al Qurum), Muscat Governorate. The project, which constitutes an architectural model for integrated tourism complexes, comprises a 150-room 5-star hotel and 156 residential units, in addition to recreational facilities and gardens. It is expected to be opened in the third quarter of 2024. The agreement was signed by Salim bin Mohammed a Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, Sayyid Mohammed bin Abdulhameed al Baisaidi and Shaikh Mubarak Ali al Khalifa, members of the Board of Directors of Eagle Hills Real Estate Company. — ONA

TRA unveils results of telecom services quality assessment for 2022

MUSCAT: The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has unveiled the results of telecom services quality assessment for 2022. TRA said that the Wilayat of Muttrah posted the highest 4G service coverage rate in 2022, while the Wilayat of Saham boasted the highest data download speed for mobile broadband services.

The assessment was the outcome of a field survey conducted by the TRA to measure the quality of telecommunication services in Oman's wilayats in 2022.

The survey covered 11 wilayats, which include Dibba, Saham, Barka, Muttrah, Al Mudhaibi, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Bahla, Yanqul,



Mahdha, Duqm and Taqah.

TRA affirmed that such surveys are carried out using specialised measurement tools and approved methodologies that simulate a user's experience. They seek to raise beneficiaries'

level of awareness and enhancing competition in the sector, it said.

Key indicators covered the level of coverage, the speed of downloading data and the percentage of successful calls, it added. — ONA

Fourteen investment opportunities linked to Oman's space programme

FROM PAGE 13

End-user Applications Booster Program (Sandboxing): This initiative aims to encourage key economic sectors, such as Oil & Gas, agriculture, maritime, urban

planning, and so on, to adopt space-based solutions to support the development of national service providers.

Launch Site Partnership: Through partnerships with

international investors, this initiative envisions the establishment of potentially the first regional spaceport in Oman.

The Executive Programme of Oman's Space Policy, first unveiled

last week, targets a 10-year timeframe for the establishment of the broad underpinnings of a new industry centring initially around downstream space applications and thereafter into the development of

systems and hardware.

"The executive programme aims to support the Sultanate of Oman's vision in the field of the space sector with its various sciences, technologies, applications and

services. The positive results of the sector for the country within 10 years will be determined through partnership in implementing various projects and initiatives," the Ministry added.



The Omani Khanjar: A symbol of the country's rich history and traditions

The Omani Khanjar is a fascinating and important part of the history and culture of Oman. It is a symbol of pride, power and honour, as well as a weapon and tool... **P20**

BRIT awards: Harry Styles triumphs with most wins

HARRY STYLES WAS THE big winner at the BRIT awards, Britain's pop music honours, on Saturday, winning all four categories he had been nominated in, a week after his triumph at the Grammys. Styles took home the coveted album of the year for "Harry's House", song of the year for his synth pop hit "As It Was", best pop/R&B act and artist of the year, one of two gender-neutral categories introduced last year after BRIT awards

organisers got rid of female and male distinctions. The contenders for that prize were all men, which had irked many in the industry and on social media. "I'm really, really grateful for this and I'm very aware of my privilege up here tonight," Styles said in his acceptance speech, dedicating the artist of the year award to a list of female singers. Styles, who rose to fame on talent



show "The X Factor" as a member of boy band One Direction, last week won two Grammy awards, including album of the year. "This night has been really special to me ... Thank you so much for the welcome home," Styles said on Saturday after his

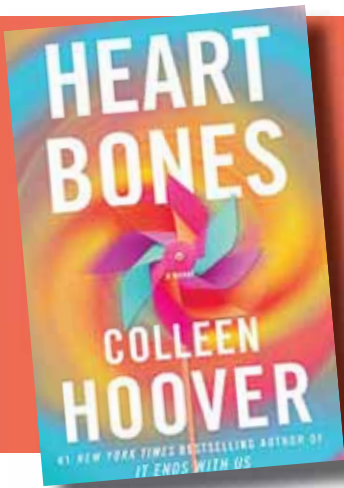
final win, for best album. "I'm so, so proud to be a British artist out there in the world. I'm so proud to be here tonight celebrating British artists and British music." A statement on the BRIT Awards' website said the gender-neutral

categories had been introduced so artists were judged "solely on the quality and popularity of their work, rather than on who they are, or how they choose to identify." But it added that organisers "acknowledge and share in the disappointment" of no women making the list. "A key factor is that, unfortunately, there were relatively few commercially successful releases by women in 2022 compared to those by men." "Of the 71 eligible artists on the long list, only 12 (17 per cent) are women. We recognise this points to wider issues around the representation of women in music that must also be addressed." Singer Rina Sawayama welcomed the change to gender-neutral categories but said the list of nominees should be longer. "If you have more nominees then you're going to see a cross section of what has happened throughout the year and who has made an impact," she said on the red carpet. Indie rockers Wet Leg won group of the year and best new artist. Music star Beyonce was named international artist of the year and her hit "Break My Soul" won international song of the year. —Reuters

READ

HEART BONES BY COLLEEN HOOVER

After an unexpected death prevents her from going to Penn State and forces her to move in with her absent father, Beyah Grim has a summer fling with the rich guy next door.



ENTERTAINMENT

South African rap sensation Kiernan Forbes, popularly known as AKA, has been shot dead outside a restaurant on a popular nightlife street in the southeastern Durban city, his family said on February 11, 2023. He was aged 35. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

A farmer checks mustard plants at his field in a village on the outskirts of Jalandhar — an ancient city in the north Indian state of Punjab. — AFP





Fears for remains of lost Mughrabi quarter

AT JERUSALEM'S WESTERN Wall plaza, a recent excavation has alarmed some heritage specialists who fear the traces of a centuries-old Arab neighbourhood razed by Israel may disappear.

There are no signs on the expansive plaza to recall the history of the Mughrabi neighbourhood, or Moroccan quarter, which was demolished by Israeli forces after they captured east Jerusalem in the 1967 Six-Day War.

The area now bustles with tourists and worshippers who cross the stone square to the Western Wall, which marks the holiest site where Jews can pray.

The only indication of its North African heritage is a Moroccan flag, flying discreetly in a nearby private garden.

Last month, excavations which the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA) said aimed "to strengthen, stabilise and improve infrastructure" at the site "revealed parts" of the Mughrabi quarter and uncovered the remains of homes.

French historian Vincent Lemire said the discoveries included walls nearly a metre high, traces of paint, a cobbled courtyard and a system to drain rainwater.

"No one expected to discover so many remains of the Mughrabi quarter, so well preserved," said Lemire, who has authored a book about the neighbourhood's destruction.

For a brief time, "we could literally walk in the middle of the ancient Mughrabi quarter — in its streets, in its courtyards, in its houses," said Lemire, who also heads Jerusalem's French Research Centre.

Within days, AFP journalists saw that some stone remains appeared to have been removed and the area was covered up once more.

DEEPLY CONCERNED

The district was initially founded in the 12th century by Saladin, who defeated the Crusader kingdom in Jerusalem.

It was established for Muslim

pilgrims from North Africa as it stood below the Al-Aqsa mosque, the third-holiest site in Islam.

The mosque compound is above the Western Wall and is also holy to Jews, who refer to the site as the Temple Mount.

After Israeli forces seized east Jerusalem and its Old City in June 1967, Mughrabi residents were forcibly evicted and the neighbourhood was demolished overnight.

"From previous archaeological activities in the Old City and its sur-

roundings, we are deeply concerned" about the recent findings, said Alon Arad, director of Israeli organisation Emek Shaveh, which fights against the politicisation of archaeology.



He said the IAA's priority was to create a vast archaeological site which celebrates only the Jewish heritage of Jerusalem.

The IAA has been involved in numerous controversial digs in east Jerusalem, which Israel annexed years after the 1967 war.

Among them are excavations in a Jewish settlement area in the Palestinian neighbourhood of Silwan, just beyond the Old City walls, and tunnels beneath the Western Wall plaza.

The tunnels are now a vast museum displaying ruins dating to the time of the Second Temple, which the Romans destroyed in 70 AD, leaving only the Western Wall standing.

The 1996 public opening of the tunnels sparked violent clashes

as baseless, telling AFP that it works on "all the antiquities of Jerusalem, from all the cultures and religions that lived in the holy city".

The remains discovered last month are too recent to be considered antiquities, the IAA said, but the findings were documented and details would be published in a scientific journal.

The body did not respond to an AFP question about a potential public display.

Morocco, which revived relations with Israel in 2020, "seeks to promote 'intangible Judeo-Moroccan heritage'," said Ali Bouabid from the North African country's Abderrahim Bouabid foundation think tank.

"It's a strange contrast: when one celebrates diversity loudly, while in silence the other organises its disappearance," Bouabid said.

Visitors to the plaza are invited to pray at the Western Wall or explore the tunnels, where they can "touch the true stones which recount the history of the Jewish nation".

There is no mention of the residents who lived for centuries in the site's shadow.

But the recent dig also unearthed everyday objects such as toys, tools and cooking utensils.

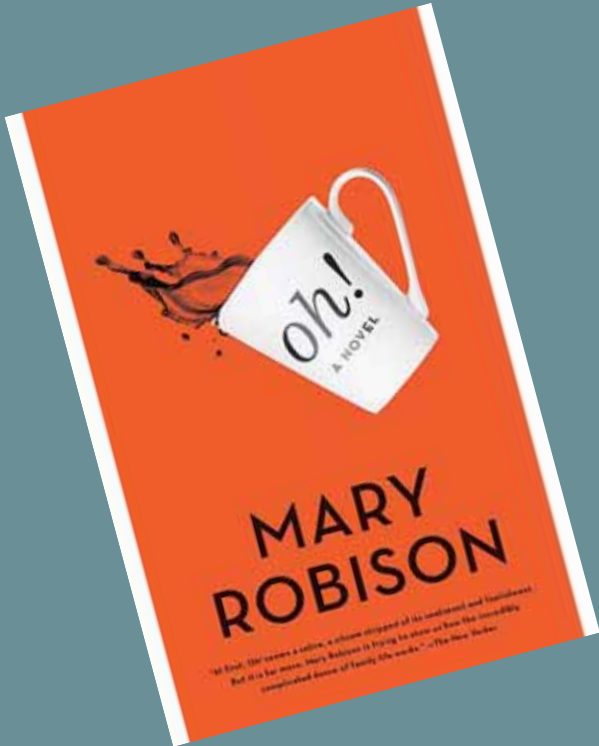
Exhibiting such items could serve as a testament to the "ordinary history of this extraordinary neighbourhood", said Lemire, suggesting some building remains could be "preserved, displayed and highlighted in a tourist route".

"If these final remnants are destroyed in the end, the material traces of this history will be lost forever," he said. — AFP

BOOK REVIEW

Oh Mary, A Cry of Justice

By Azeez Jasim Mohammed



OH MARY IS A novel of life and death that depicts living in harmony as Iraqi people choose to endure during the traumatic events of 2003 and beyond. It is a story of sacrifice for avoiding home-sick at home, a story of suffering from rootlessness, and searching for identity in the native place. This is not the only novel in which Sinan Anton, the Iraqi Diaspora, refers to unity of religions, unity of communities and conjoint way of worship. Amongst many other novels that Anton writes like: I'jaam, Lonely Pomegranate Tree and Contents, Oh Mary is said to be the story of intimacy, harmony and granting rights of belonging for minority in a place that needs support during hard times.

Yousuf and Maha are the narrators, and hero-heroine respectively who narrate each other's motives, desires and aspiration for better living and approval of roots in their native place. The story is a mixture of happiness and sadness, past and present, and friendly treatment by natives and savage ill-treatment by extremists who do not belong to; any sect or a specific place at all. The novel is a biography of every citizen lives in that place during that time. It shows how the 'humanity is above all' as it represents the existence of human beings who are distinguished from all other living beings. Yousuf stands for Sinan Anton though the latter is abroad during the events of the story. This is because the protagonist's final death in the Church refers to Anton's loss of native place for ever and nostalgic reflections. Maha stands for secularity and love for peaceful environment in which all citizens live together regardless of all names that they may be called with. Maha expresses herself after the massacre in the church that she witnesses during the bomb blast and she proves in the television interview that she is able to plug her roots out of the place where she is born just keep silence and peace.

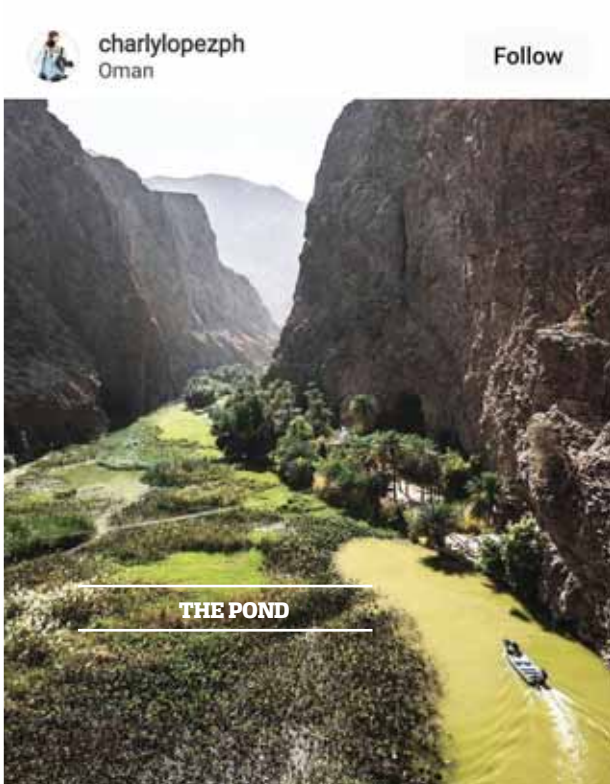
Yousuf, an old Christian citizen of Iraq is very happy with his Muslim close native friend, Sadoon. They attend all worship places, practice different rituals regardless of their religion, and visit each other at home regularly, sharing food and drinks. Their attachment to each other is a symbol of humanity which we all belong to. Despite the difficulties that Iraqi people faced at that time, still intimacy, love, and harmonious living, were all the symbol of their life. Through such hopeful ends covered in his thesis, the writer passes on the idea that hatred and violence do not only affect the opponent but reflect severe harm on oneself too. Oh Mary is the cry of Justice, of redressing for the oppressed minorities from the power of fundamental thinking. It has a divine message states that there are different ways to one God through different religions, but all are one and we believe in.

Azeez Jasim Mohammed is the Head of the Department of English Language and Literature at Al Zahra College for Women.



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AROUND THE WORLD

DISCOVERY

At Mexico's Chichen Itza site, researchers discover ancient 'elite' residences



ARCHAEOLOGISTS HAVE revealed a group of structures discovered at the famed Mayan Chichen Itza archaeological site in Mexico's Yucatan peninsula, believed to have been part of a housing complex inhabited by the elite of the sacred city founded in the 5th Century AD.

Archaeologist Francisco Perez Ruiz said there were no known residential groups in Chichen Itza, meaning the housing complex would represent "the first residential group where a ruler lived with his entire family."



The area, known as Chichen Viejo, is expected to be integrated in the near future into the visitor area of the Chichen Itza archaeological site, a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The newly discovered complex includes the entrance arch, the House of the Snails, the House of the Moon, and the so-called Palace of the Phalluses.

Researchers from the National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) hope that this area and those yet to be uncovered can provide information on what life was like for the people who inhabited the city.



"There must be more residential groups that have not been explored yet. The study of these peripheral groups, around the central part, could tell us about other families, other groups that made up this great city," said archaeologist Jose Osorio Leon.

The area has been under exploration since 1998. Around 2 million people visit Chichen Itza site in southeast Mexico each year, according to official data.

It was founded as a Mayan pilgrimage centre by the Itza, or "water sorcerers." — Reuters

FASHION

Young brands in vogue at New York Fashion Week



NEW YORK FASHION WEEK got under way on Friday with several big names absent from the runway but a calendar packed full of young designers and emerging labels — increasingly the event's trademark.

Rodarte opened the Fall-Winter 2023 parade, one of the few major brands to return this year.

Rodarte, the upscale brand of California sisters Kate and Laura Mulleavy, offered a Gothic and mystical show with models parading in black dresses with flared sleeves and occasionally plunging necklines.

The Collina Strada show was an ode to animals in a menagerie atmosphere. One bewhiskered model "meowed" in front of the delighted audience, followed by a model with a rhinoceros horn and another with a pig snout.

The street-wear touch of the brand is still there, but the colours are less psychedelic, more sober and elegant.

Those who like theatrical shows will also enjoy the return to New York — with a show on Tuesday — of Thom Browne, who succeeds Tom Ford at the head of the American fashion union (CFDA).

Among the other headliners are regulars Proenza Schouler, Altuzarra, Coach, Sergio Hudson, Carolina Herrera, Gabriela Hearst and Michael Kors. But the programme, which ends on Wednesday in the middle of the Big Apple's cold month of February, again has a notable absence of high-profilers such as Tommy Hilfiger, Ralph Lauren and previous CFDA lead Tom Ford.

Pop icon Rihanna, who has exhibited her lingerie collection Fenty at New York in the past, will instead be performing at the much-watched Super Bowl half-time show on Sunday.

"Very few names are brands that are prominent in the US market," said Jacqueline Quinn

of the Fashion Institute of Technology (FIT), confiding that her students are focusing on Paris and Milan instead.

Instead, the collection of ready-to-wear designs serves up a large helping of young talents and new brands, such as Elena Velez.

The 28-year-old was named "emerging designer of the year"

myself to embolden ourselves with our passions," she told AFP.

And Velez is determined to enjoy it while it lasts.

"If we're being honest, the shelf-life of a startup fashion brand isn't exactly lengthy," she added.

Denmark's Christian Juul Nielsen, the creative director at Herve Leger, already has sever-



al years of experience behind him having worked at Dior, Nina Ricci and Oscar de la Renta.

In 2019, he launched his own brand, Aknvas, whose designs "focus on drape, flattering silhouettes, innovative knits and an elevated palette," according to its website.

"I try to translate the drama I got from John Galliano and the modernity I got from Raf Simmons," he told AFP.

For Nielsen, and others like him, New York presents an opportunity.

"A lot of small brands in Paris, they just don't get on the calendar. In America, there is this excitement of newness (and) I want to be part of making the New York fashion scene exciting," Nielsen added. — AFP

ENTERTAINMENT

Oh bother! Viral 'Winnie-the-Pooh' horror film triggers fans



YOU KNOW HIM as a cute, cuddly bear, but Winnie the Pooh is about to receive a terrifying makeover as the knife-wielding villain of a blood-drenched new slasher film — no joke.

Pooh's shocking reinvention — which hits US theatres next Wednesday and has already provoked death threats from enraged fans — could break box office records and test the limits of intellectual property law.

"Look, this is mental," said Rhys Frake-Waterfield, the 31-year-old director of "Winnie-the-Pooh: Blood and Honey."

"I've had petitions to stop it. I've had death threats. I've had people saying they called the police," he told AFP.

While Pooh, Piglet and Eeyore's family-friendly big-screen adventures have been licensed to Disney for decades, the copyright on the first A.A. Milne books recently expired — and Frake-Waterfield's tiny British indie studio pounced on the opportunity.

The first images of "Blood and Honey," in which a sinister, human-sized Pooh and Piglet hovered menacingly behind a young woman relaxing in a hot tub, quickly went viral last year.

Now the live-action film — made on a shoestring budget of less than \$250,000 — is set for a major global theatrical release.

It is already out in Mexico, where it has made nearly \$1 million in two weeks, and some industry analysts are tipping it to become one of the most profitable films of all time. Frake-Waterfield originally hoped his film "might do a mini theatrical run in certain areas."

He now believes it could achieve the highest "budget-to-box office ratio" since "Paranormal Activity," the \$15,000 film that launched a near \$1 billion franchise over a decade ago.

"I really believed in the idea. Other people didn't... and now it's doing all right," he joked.

- 'UN-FAMILY FRIENDLY' -

Under US law, copyrights expire 95 years after a work is first published. The first "Winnie-the-Pooh" book came out in 1926.

However, there are caveats, especially when a character evolves over time.

Distinctive traits that were added to Pooh in later books or Disney films, such as his red shirt or fondness for playing the game Poohsticks, have not yet entered the public domain.

Similarly, Pooh's friend Tigger did not appear until later books, and so could not appear in "Blood and Honey."

And then there is the issue of trademark.

Copyrights prevent the unlicensed copying of the creative work itself, for example books, films and characters. They expire after a set time.

Trademarks guard the source of a work, preventing anyone else from making a product that could mislead consumers into thinking it came from the original author. They can be renewed indefinitely.

"You can't suggest that somehow it's sponsored by or affiliated or associated with Disney in any way, because Disney still does have robust trademark protection," said copyright lawyer Aaron J. Moss.

In this instance, the absurdity of making a Pooh horror movie helps the film's producers.

"Simply because it is so un-family friendly, and isn't anything that (viewers) would expect Disney to have anything to do with, that would make any potential trademark claim much more difficult to assert," he said.

Frake-Waterfield said there was never any desire to skirt as close to Disney's Pooh as legally possible.

"It's literally the opposite. I want to go as far away from them as possible," he said.

"I want Winnie the Pooh to be big and menacing and scary and intimidating and horrifying. I don't want him to be small and cuddly and cute." — AFP

art & life

Local Scene

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MONDAY | FEBRUARY 13 | 2023

The Omani Khanjar: A symbol of the country's rich history and traditions

BY ZUWAINA AL SULIMANI

The Omani Khanjar, also known as the Omani dagger, is a traditional weapon and symbol of the Omani people. It is a curved, single-edged blade mounted on a handle, typically made of silver and decorated with intricate designs. The Khanjar is not only a weapon but also a symbol of pride, power, and honour in Omani culture.

The importance of the khanjar can be seen prominently in different aspects of Omani life. Not only is it depicted in the Omani flag, but it is also printed on banknotes and is a big part of textbooks — its history is noted down to ensure that the knowledge is passed on from generation to generation.

The Khanjar consists of several parts, each of which has a distinct purpose and significance. The blade is typically single-edged and curved, giving it a distinctive look that is instantly recognisable as an Omani Khanjar. The blade is the most prominent part of the Khanjar and is made from high-quality steel. Royals usually infused their daggers with silver and gold to differentiate them from the rest of the citizens.

The handle of the Khanjar is also an important part of the weapon and is typically made from silver or another precious metal. Over time, khanjar handles can also be made out of ivory, rhinoceros horn, or elephant tusk. Other materials like wood or plastic are also used to reduce their price. The handle is often decorated with intricate designs and patterns, which reflect

the craftsmanship and artistry of the maker. The third and last part of the Omani khanjar is the sheath.

The shape of the Omani khanjar is distinguishable among Arabian daggers. Even though it is unknown when the khanjar was created, engravings of Omani daggers were found on top of mountains of northern Oman.

In 1672, Robert Padbrugge of the Dutch Republic made a journey to Muscat, mentioning the khanjar in his book. In old Oman, men used to wear khanjar as a form of protection in a belt around their waists.

The importance of the Omani Khanjar in the history and culture of Oman cannot be overstated. The Khanjar has been a part of Omani society for centuries and has played a significant role in the country's history. In the past, the Khanjar was used as a weapon

of self-defence and a symbol of power. It was also used as a tool for negotiating and settling disputes, as well as a symbol of hospitality and generosity. Today, the Khanjar remains an important part of Omani culture and is often presented as a gift to guests and visitors. It also became a staple of the Omani men's national dress often worn in public during official occasions like Eid, funerals, and weddings.

The Omani Khanjar is classified into five different types based on style and design. Al Saidi Khanjar, Al Dahra Khanjar, Dhofari Khanjar, Sharqiyah Khanjar, and Batinah Khanjar are among them. Al Saidi Khanjar is a rare Khanjar that dates back to the 19th century and is mostly worn by the Al Busaidy tribe in Oman. It is distinguished by geometrical designs with floral patterns. Al Dahra Khanjar is an 18th-century sword



with a horn hilt and intricate silver wire-work. Its sheath is also made of leather and silver ribbons. The Dhofar Khanjar is found only in the Dhofar Governorate of southern Oman, and it is influenced by the Yemeni dagger known as Janbiyah.

In addition to its functional aspects, the Khanjar is also rich in symbolism. The curved blade of the Khanjar represents the crescent moon, which is a symbol of Islam. The crescent moon is also a symbol of good luck, prosperity, and fertility in Omani culture, and it is believed that the Khanjar brings these blessings to its owner. The

handle of the Khanjar is also symbolic and is often decorated with patterns that represent the owner's family, tribe, or community. These patterns are meant to show the owner's connection to their heritage and traditions and are a source of pride and honour.

Mohammed al Shueili, an Omani photographer, has used his Canon 6Dii camera to take photos of the different types of Omani daggers. He said that documenting these different designs took about four months of research as well as continuous movement between regions of Oman to photograph

daggers.

"I focused on the authenticity of the dagger, and there was always discussion about the age of the dagger, its main source, and the process of its creation," Mohammed shared.

He added, "The experience of photographing Omani daggers was certainly enjoyable by which I got new information about Omani daggers and I got to know many of the owner's anecdotes."

Mohammed said that his own journey of being a photographer has opened his eyes to the richness of Oman's history as well as

the beauty of its customs and traditions.

"Oman is rich and diverse when it comes to the environment and culture and its customs, traditions, and crafts make it stand out from a lot of countries. With this diversity, Oman is truly an epic place for photographers as a destination," he said.

Mohammed said that for all budding photographers, his message is that they should pursue their passion with always that core value of raising the name of Oman and helping document the important customs and traditions which bridge the past and the present.