

OMAN
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DAILY

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SUNRISE - 05:28 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR - 04:06 AM

DHUHR - 12:08 PM

ASR - 03:32 PM

MAGHRIB - 06:44 PM

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HUMMELS STUNS MBAPPE, PSG TO TAKE DORTMUND TO CL FINAL

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OMAN MAKES A FASHION STATEMENT AT ISTANBUL MODEST FASHION WEEK

MUSCAT

CRUDE PRICE AT \$82.89 A BARREL

Oman oil price for July on Wednesday reached \$82.89, comprising a drop by \$1.10 from the price of Tuesday which stood at \$84.08. The average price of Oman oil for May delivery has stabilised at \$78.49 per barrel, thus \$3.74 per barrel lower than April delivery. World oil prices fell as industry data showed a rise in US crude and fuel inventories and as the dollar strengthened, signalling that demand for oil is coming under pressure. US crude fell 0.52 per cent to \$77.97 a barrel and Brent slid to \$82.66 per barrel, down 0.6 per cent on the day. Spot gold added 0.04 per cent to \$2,314.81 an ounce, and bitcoin fell 0.95 per cent at \$62,370.75.

LONDON



ASTRAZENECA TO WITHDRAW VACCINE

AstraZeneca said it had initiated the worldwide withdrawal of its Covid-19 vaccine due to a "surplus of available updated vaccines" since the pandemic. The company also said it would proceed to withdraw the vaccine Vaxzevria's marketing authorisations within Europe. "As multiple, variant Covid-19 vaccines have since been developed there is a surplus of available updated vaccines," the company said, adding that this had led to a decline in demand for Vaxzevria, which is no longer being manufactured or supplied. According to media reports, the Anglo-Swedish drugmaker has previously admitted in court documents that the vaccine causes side-effects such as blood clots and low blood platelet counts. The firm's application to withdraw the vaccine was made on March 5 and came into effect on May 7, according to the Telegraph, which first reported the development.

Battles rage around Rafah

RAFAH: Hamas battled Israeli troops on the outskirts of the Gaza Strip's crowded southern city of Rafah on Wednesday and Washington said it had held up a shipment of powerful bombs to Israel to prevent civilian casualties.

The United States, which aims to stave off a full Israeli invasion of Rafah, said it believes a revised Hamas ceasefire proposal may lead to a breakthrough in an impasse in negotiations, with talks resuming in Cairo on Wednesday.

Israeli tanks rolled across the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt on Tuesday, cutting off a vital aid route and the only exit for the evacuation of wounded patients.

A UN official said no fuel or aid had entered the Gaza Strip due to the military operation, a situation "disastrous for the humanitarian response" in Gaza where more than half the population is suffering catastrophic hunger.



Palestinians wait to receive food cooked by a charity kitchen, amid shortages of aid supplies, in the eastern part of Rafah, on Wednesday. — Reuters

Israel has threatened a major assault on Rafah. But the city is a refuge for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who have fled combat further north in the enclave. They have crammed into tented camps and makeshift shelters, suffering from shortages of

food, water and medicine. Rafah's main maternity hospital, where nearly half of Gaza's births take place, has stopped admitting patients, the United Nations Population Fund said. "The streets of the city echo with the cries of innocent lives lost, families

torn apart, and homes reduced to rubble. We stand on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe of unprecedented proportions," Rafah's mayor, Ahmed Al Sofi, said in an appeal to the international community to intervene. — AFP

SEE ALSO P6

Truck driver under probe as 3 killed in Liwa accident

VINOD NAIR
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In a bizarre accident due to the reckless action of a driver, a truck collided with 11 vehicles resulting in three deaths, including two citizens and an expatriate.

According to the Royal Oman Police (ROP), 15 people were injured in the incident that took place in the Wilayat of Liwa as the truck driver drove in the opposite direction of traffic. The injured were admitted to Sohar Hospital.

The video of the truck moving on the highway in the opposite direction had gone viral on social media and the action of the driver was severely condemned.

The circumstances that led the truck driver to get into the opposite carriageway are still not known. Brig Abdullah bin Hamad al Farsi, Al Batinah North Governorate Police Chief, said: "The



The truck coming in the opposite direction of the traffic.

driver is being tested for physical and psychological conditions. The investigation is on to determine the cause of the incident. He has not been under the influence of alcohol, but once the data is verified, a report will be prepared and sent to the competent authorities."

One eyewitness said: "The driver travelled a long distance in the opposite direction of the traffic. What if the accident occurred at peak time on a more busy street? The disaster and consequences could have been greater.

The expatriate who died in the accident was an Indian national and an administration manager in a private company. He was on his way back from Liwa to Suhar with his family to renew his resident card.



10 NEW SPECIES OF PLANTS FOUND

Oman Botanic Garden registered 10 new species of plants that are native to the Sultanate of Oman. The newly registered plants, discovered by local and international researchers in different governorates of Oman, include a rare species of wild barley strain that is indigenous to Sahasah area in the Wilayat of Khasab. Four offspring of the newly discovered species grow in Dhofar Governorate, three of them grow in Musandam Governorate, two in Al Buraimi Governorate and one in Al Dhahirah Governorate. **DETAILS ON P3**

Major role of climate in supercharging rain!

PARIS: Floods have been tearing a path of destruction across the globe, hammering Kenya, submerging Dubai, and forcing hundreds of thousands of people from Russia to China, Brazil and Somalia from their homes.

Though not all directly attributed to global warming, they are occurring in a year of record-breaking temperatures and underscore what scientists have long warned — that climate change drives more extreme weather. Climate change isn't just about rising temperatures but the knock-on effect of all that extra heat being trapped in the atmosphere and seas.

April was the 11th consecutive month to break its own heat record, the EU climate monitor



Aerial view of a flooded area of Canoas, a municipality north of Porto Alegre, Brazil. — AFP

Copernicus said on Wednesday, while ocean temperatures have been off the charts for even longer. "The recent extreme

precipitation events are consistent with what is expected in an increasingly warmer climate," Sonia Seneviratne, an expert

on the UN-mandated IPCC scientific panel, said.

Warmer oceans mean greater evaporation, and warmer air can hold more water vapour.

Scientists even have a calculation for this: for every one degree Celsius in temperature rise, the atmosphere can hold seven per cent more moisture.

"This results in more intense rainfall events," Davide Faranda, an expert on extreme weather at the French National Center for Scientific Research (CNRS), said.

In April, Pakistan recorded double the amount of normal monthly rainfall — one province saw 437 per cent more than average — while the UAE received about two years worth of rain in a single day. — AFP



OMAN VISION 2040 FOCUSES ON SOCIETY AND ECONOMY

MUSCAT: The State Council on Wednesday hosted Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, to review the developments and efforts made by various institutions to realise the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The meeting was held at Al Bustan Hall at the Council of Oman in the presence of Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, and

members of the council.

The Secretary-General of the State Council delivered a speech in which he welcomed the chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, noting that the meeting comes within the context of communication and cooperation between the State Council and the state's departments and units to shed light on the unit's work and the challenges facing the implementation of Oman Vision 2040.



The State Council hosted Dr Khamis bin Saif al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit. – ONA

Dr Munther bin Hilal al Busaidy, Vice-Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, delivered a visual presentation

in which he discussed the national efforts made during the various stages of preparation of the vision's document. He explained the main

components of the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit and its mechanisms for following up on the implementation of Oman Vision 2040 and the challenges facing the implementation of Oman Vision 2040.

Al Busaidy added that the Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit is entrusted with providing support and assistance to the parties concerned, creating and strengthening effective partnerships

and developing cooperation, following up on services and establishing systems and procedures.

During the presentation, he stated that the most prominent foundations on which the unit is based include partnership, responsibility, flexibility and integration. He added that the vision revolves around four axes namely human and society, economy and development, sustainable environment, governance and institutional performance.

Forum enhances competitiveness of services at hotel establishments

MUSCAT: Activities of a forum titled “Enhancing the Competitiveness of National Products and Services in Hotel Establishments” kicked off on Wednesday.

Organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the two-day forum looks into various means of empowering domestic products and services, including policies and laws related to government procurements.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

The forum saw a number of working papers and panel discussions that focused on cooperation about developing local content, exchanging knowledge and benefiting from local and foreign experiences to bolster the tourism industry in Oman. — ONA



The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism. – ONA



SAYYID BADR BIDS FAREWELL TO SPANISH AMBASSADOR

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, on Wednesday received Maria Luisa, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Spain to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid her farewell at the end of her tour of duty. Sayyid Badr expressed his appreciation for the efforts exerted by the ambassador in boosting bilateral relations, wishing her success in her future endeavours. – ONA

Municipality to take more steps to ensure food safety



The event brought together experts and specialists in municipal affairs from Gulf Cooperation Council countries, who presented various research studies and working papers

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Muscat Municipality will take more steps to ensure food safety, according to a key official from the civic body.

Speaking to the Observer after representing the country at the Second Gulf Municipal Week recently held in Qatar, Dr Mohammed bin Said al Balushi, Director of the Food and Laboratories Department at Muscat Municipality, said Muscat Municipality officials are dedicated to addressing challenges in this field to enhance public health.

“We are pleased with the positive results and are reflecting on the outcomes of the First Gulf Municipal Week in Salalah based on which we attended the 2nd Gulf Municipal Week in Doha. We took part in fruitful discussions,” Dr Al Balushi

said.

“Our commitment is to leverage modern technologies for ensuring food safety. We are dedicated to addressing challenges in this field to enhance public health within the community,” said Dr Al Balushi.

He said the municipality has been actively participating in both local and regional events to exchange experiences and knowledge, aiming to enhance the quality of life and services for citizens.

“The municipality focuses on improving infrastructure, local services and public health to achieve its sustainable development goals. Efforts are concentrated on raising awareness and implementing international best practices in food safety and trade to ensure the highest safety standards for consumers.”

The Second Gulf Municipal

Week theme of “A Common Vision for a Sustainable Future” underscored the importance of adopting a sustainable vision based on principles of environmental, economic and social sustainability.

It aimed to identify opportunities and address common challenges facing the region.

The event brought together experts and specialists in municipal affairs from Gulf Cooperation Council countries, who presented various research studies and working papers.

Oman’s delegation, led by the Ministry of Interior, presented four working papers on critical topics, including food safety, sustainable city planning, waste management and the conservation of energy, and building permit procedures and completion certificates.

OMAN CHALLENGE FOR IOT AND AI HELD IN SUHAR

SIHAM AL SAIDI
SUHAR, MAY 8

The University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Shinas hosted the fourth edition of Oman Challenge for IoT and AI, under the auspices of Omar bin Hamdan al Ismaili, CEO of the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority.

The competition aims to foster knowledge of Internet of Things and Artificial Intelligence, empower youths to enhance technical skills and develop new applications for humanity's benefit.

The challenge provides a platform for aspiring entrepreneurs and tech enthusiasts to showcase their

skills. Participants, comprising 52 student projects and 12 start-ups from 11 academic institutions across Oman, will gain technological resources and financial support to complete their smart projects.

The competition's scope covers various sectors, including healthcare, financial technology, education, transportation, smart cities and industrial revolution. By encouraging ideas and innovations in IoT and AI, the challenge is to drive advancements in critical areas, revolutionising how we approach healthcare, education, mobility and urban development.

Ameena al Jabri, head of IT department at Shinas UTAS, emphasised the importance of

empowering the youth with technical skills and providing them with avenues to translate their ideas into clever solutions.

“Initiatives like the Oman Challenge for IoT and AI play a vital role in shaping Oman's digital landscape and fostering a culture of entrepreneurship and technological excellence,” she said.

The challenge witnessed a large turnout. Sohar University secured first place, followed by Al Buraimi University and Shinas University of Technology and Applied Sciences. In the start-up category, Majan College came first followed by Sultan Qaboos University and Modern College of Business and Science.



Sohar University secured first place, Al Buraimi University second and Shinas University of Technology and Applied Sciences third



MoTCIT conference discusses crisis response to air crash

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, MAY 8

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) hosted the “Assistance to Aircraft Accident Victims and their Families” conference in collaboration with the International Civil Aviation Organization on Tuesday in Muscat.

The two-day forum which aims to discuss crisis response protocols, legal frameworks and communication strategies was launched under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health.

Majid al Barhi, Director of the Transport Safety Bureau at MoTCIT, highlighted the significance of supporting aircraft accident victims in his key address, “The International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) recognises that air accidents, when they occur,



The two-day forum which aims to discuss crisis response protocols, legal frameworks, and communication strategies was launched under the auspices of Minister of Health, Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti

result in human and material losses.

ICAO urges its member states to consider the physical and psychological condition of the victims of civil aviation accidents and their families. It is essential to follow up on the affairs of the victims and their families in such accidents, as well as to handle them professionally and responsibly regarding the measures taken by emergency teams, the operating airlines concerned with the incident, and the investigating authorities.”

Aisha al Hameli, acting Assistant Director-General - Air Accident Investigations, UAE, and the Chairperson of the Aircraft Accident and Incident Group (AIIG), underscored the significance of dialogue and knowledge exchange, “Today, we gather to exchange views and develop strategies. We have a shared responsibility to establish an effective system for our region, enabling us to respond efficiently and employ the best practices in the aftermath of such

tragic events. We recognise that the impact of an air accident may extend beyond the physical aspect to affect psychological well-being.” She shed light on previous incidents that solidified the need for timely and adequate support for victims and their families.

“Painful incidents such as Air France Flight 447 in 2009 and Malaysia Airlines Flight 370 in 2014 served as harsh reminders of the challenges faced by the families of the victims in receiving timely and adequate support, assistance and information. In response to these challenges and objectives, the International Civil Aviation Organisation recognised the need to adapt and address this human issue within the framework of international standards, evidence and references.” Over 200 participants from various private and public sectors attended the forum.



Al Dakhiliyah Governorate logo to boost economy and tourism

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, MAY 8

As part of Al Dakhiliyah’s plan to develop a logo, a workshop was held under the auspices of Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri in Nizwa on Tuesday.

Suleiman al Sunaidi, Director-General of Al Dakhiliyah Municipality, walis, municipal council members, and officials from private and public sectors took part in the workshop.

The initiative aimed to foster

community engagement and promote a unique visual identity for Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

At the beginning, a video about the governorate was presented followed by the visual identity and its goals. A discussion and brainstorming session also took place. Al Dakhiliyah Governorate aims to create a visual identity reflecting its vision, mission, goals and core values to promote economic, tourism and social activities across the region.

Oman promotes Khareef Dhofar, Sur at travel mart

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahbalushia

Oman’s 36 entities are taking part in the 31st edition of the Arabian Travel Market held under the theme “Empowering Innovation to Transform Travel through Entrepreneurship” in Dubai. The expo will conclude today (Thursday).

Arabian Travel Market 2024 seeks to leverage innovation to help achieve the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals by building a more sustainable travel and tourism sector.

Among the most prominent goals of the Sultanate of Oman’s participation this year is to tie up promotional partnerships with international tourism companies and institutions. It also aims to promote the Khareef Dhofar season, and to highlight Sur as the Arab Tourism Capital 2024, and introducing the Omani food

and culinary arts tourism programme.

Haitham bin Mohammed al Ghassani, Director-General of Promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, mentioned that the Sultanate of Oman’s participation in the exhibition aims to establish new relationships and exchange knowledge and experiences, noting that the Middle East region has, over the past years, strengthened its position as a global tourist attraction through continued investment in developing tourism infrastructure and driving economic diversification.

The tourism sector in Oman is witnessing steady growth. The contribution of the tourism sector to the gross domestic product reached 2.4 per cent by the end of 2022. The number of tourists in 2023 reached about 4 million, an increase of 36.7 per cent compared to 2022.



Meeting focuses on internal communication

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Information, represented by the Government Communication Centre, on Wednesday organised the 24th meeting of communication and media departments in government institutions.

The meeting reviewed strategic projects, events and topics undertaken by the Government Communication Centre in cooperation with government units over the past few months.

The participants engaged in in-depth study of internal communication, strategies for professional activation of this practice in government units and the importance of applying it within each institution. They



The participants engaged in in-depth study of internal communication, strategies for professional activation of this practice in government units. — ONA

also reviewed standard measures of internal communication and its impact on raising the level of productivity at work.

The meeting laid emphasis on enhancing the sense of belonging to the institution, exchanging experiences, strengthening ties

between employees and leaders and addressing rumours and misleading news targeting their institution. It also looked into ways of making decisions that accommodate the opinions of all, improving employee satisfaction and augmenting the level of

transparency.

The Government Communication Centre showcased successful models of internal communication applied in a number of government units, including the experience of the Media Communication Centre at the Foreign Ministry that was presented by First Secretary Isma al Balushi. In her presentation, Isma made an analysis of the work environment at the Foreign Ministry. She spoke about the channels used to activate internal communication and the importance of implementing an organised internal communication plan that targets measurable performance indicators. — ONA

Oman, UK review cooperation in military training

MUSCAT: Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies received in his office at Bait Al Falaj on Wednesday Commodore Matt Solly, Deputy Commandant of the United Kingdom’s (UK) Defence Academy and his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed a set of topics in academic and training fields.

The meeting was attended by Commodore Khalid bin Amer al Salti, Director of Studies and Academic Affairs and several



Members of the UK visiting delegation were briefed on various defence training departments. — ONA

senior officers at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

As part of the visit, a memorandum of understanding

(MoU) was signed on cooperation in the academic and scientific fields between the Academy of Strategic and Defense Studies at

the Ministry of Defence and the Defence Academy of the UK.

The MoU was signed by Commodore Khalid bin Amer al Salti, Director General of Studies and Academic Affairs and Commodore Matt Solly, Deputy Commandant of the UK Defence Academy.

Moreover, the Deputy Commandant of the UK Defence Academy and his accompanying delegation visited the Joint Command and Staff College (CSC) at the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

— ONA

TEN NEW SPECIES OF OMANI PLANTS DISCOVERED



MUSCAT: Oman Botanic Garden registered 10 new species of plants that are native to the Sultanate of Oman. The newly registered plants, discovered by local and international researchers in different governorates of Oman, include a rare species of wild barley strain that is indigenous to Sahasah area in the Wilayat of Khasab.

Four offspring of the newly discovered species grow in Dhofar Governorate, three of them grow in Musandam Governorate, two in Al Buraimi Governorate and one in Al Dhahirah Governorate.

These plants are extremely rare. They spread sparsely in limited geographical areas and in very small numbers.

In addition to international researchers, the team that discovered the new species included researchers from Oman Botanic Garden. The discoveries were recently published in a scientific paper in the Edinburgh Journal of Botany (EJB) in the United Kingdom (UK). — ONA





BULLYING IS A SOCIAL PHENOMENON, AS MOST CHILDREN ARE EXPOSED TO BULLYING OR HARASSMENT. THIS MAKES THEM FEEL PSYCHOLOGICALLY STRESSED DUE TO THEIR FEAR OF CONFRONTING THE BULLY, AND THEY REFUSE TO PLAY OUTSIDE THE HOME OR EVEN GO TO SCHOOL



IS BULLYING A GROWING PANDEMIC?

John Crane announces third expansion in Oman with Seven Seas Petroleum LLC

John Crane, a global leader in rotating equipment solutions and energy transition technologies and services, and a business of Smiths Group plc, is pleased to announce the opening of its Oman Service Center under the Patronage of His Excellency, Mohsin bin Hamad Al-Hadrami, the Undersecretary of Energy and Minerals, John Crane's third expansion in Oman with Seven Seas Petroleum LLC, a partner specializing in rotating equipment.

The new service center in Oman, located at the heart of Muscat, solidifies John Crane and Seven Seas Petroleum LLC's commitment to bolstering country value and investment in the region. This partnership aims to not only enhance the local service capabilities but also contribute significantly to Omanization efforts by providing employment opportunities and technical skill upgrades for the citizens of Oman.

Since this partnership's inception in 2004, it has served prestigious customers in Oman including Petroleum Development Oman, OQ Group of companies, Occidental of Oman, Oman LNG, and various other Omani-based companies. This long-standing relationship underscores the trust and reliability established over these years.

One of the key highlights of this expansion is the introduction of state-of-the-art technology to Oman. The facility will feature a 3D scanner, marking the first of its kind to be used in any John Crane repair center in the Middle East. Additionally, the inclusion of a 36-inch lapping machine with a pneumatically operated load application will cater to the maintenance needs of large-diameter wet mechanical seals, further enhancing efficiency and precision.

Moreover, the facility is fully equipped with in-house machining and stocking capabilities, ensuring faster turn-around times for clients. This enhanced infrastructure also positions the service facility to cater to reliability-based, comprehensive mechanical seal maintenance contracts, meeting the evolving needs of the industry.

In line with their commitment to knowledge sharing and capacity building, the new service center will offer vocational and hands-on training programs for Oman customers. The facility



ity includes a dedicated training room, facilitating interactive learning experiences and fostering skill development within the local workforce. Adhering to the highest standards of quality assurance, the service facility conforms to the rigorous John Crane quality assurance protocols, ensuring consistent and reliable service delivery.

The expansion of the John Crane and Seven Seas Petroleum LLC partnership represents a significant milestone in enhancing in country value and investment in Oman. With its focus on Omanization, adoption of cutting-edge technology and commitment to knowledge sharing, the new service center is poised to contribute to the long-term socio-economic development of the region while meeting the diverse needs of its customers.

About John Crane
John Crane is a global leader in mission-critical technologies for the

energy and process industries and an innovator in rotating equipment, encompassing mechanical seals, couplings, filtration systems and cutting-edge asset management and digital diagnostics solutions. Blending a rich legacy of innovation with a commitment to service excellence, we've enabled our customer's reliable and sustainable operations for over a century.

While recognizing the role of traditional energy, we are pioneering solutions that enable cleaner alternatives, crafting a vision for a sustainable energy future. Our extensive global presence underscores our promise to customers, with over 200 service centers in 50 countries.

With £1 billion in revenues in 2023, we are an integral pillar of Smiths Group plc, a FTSE 100 listed company dedicated to improving our world through smarter engineering.

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, MAY 8

Bullying has become rampant in many schools and thousands of kids are insulted, picked upon and demoralised as it makes the victim feel psychologically harmed, afraid, sick, lonely, embarrassed, and sad. The bully may hit the child, push him, call him embarrassing names, verbally hurt him, or intimidate him.

Bullying is a social phenomenon, as most children are exposed to bullying or harassment. This makes them feel psychologically stressed due to their fear of confronting the bully, and they refuse to play outside the home or even go to school.

This phenomenon poses an imminent danger to children, because it has a severe negative impact on the victim, especially children. The child continues to suffer from it for a long time if a parent or specialist does not intervene to put an end to the problem.

The child needs empowerment and continuous attention, and it is necessary to create a safe environment for him so that he can talk about anything without worrying about being blamed, ridiculed, or feeling that no one will understand him.

You must begin to teach your child about bullying at an early age, especially before he enters kindergarten or school, in indirect ways at first, and then move on with him later to directly explain bullying. These methods will help you convey the idea of bullying to your child and make him or her understand that it is necessary to reject it and that it is unacceptable.

Through the movies that you watch with your child that contain any type of bullying, the child can be informed what happened, and how it affects the child who is being bullied, and even the child who is bullying. For those children who bully others, people see him in a very ugly way because he is internally weak and arrogant.

Or through stories that happened to you or that you heard about, such as success stories about people who were bullied and who defeated the bullying and did not stop at it and exploited it to their advantage, such as the story of the ugliest woman in the world who became an international speaker and gave lectures on self-confidence and self-motivation.

Psychologists say that there are several signs that your child appears to be bullied. There is a high possibility that he or she will be exposed to bullying when he or she shows unwillingness to go to school and his constant excuses for absence, the child's loss of self-confidence appears in his tendency not to choose and to let others choose for him, as well as his feeling of failure, tendency to isolate himself and sit alone continuously and loss of appetite and aversion to food, even from the foods he loves and prefers most.

Also, sometimes the child may feel aggressive towards his colleagues and talks about them in a way full of hatred and malice and also if there are traces of bruises or wounds on his body, the source of which is unknown. Also, there is always loss of concentration and an unusual lack of academic achievement.

Psychologists advise parents to educate their children about bullying and to teach them how to deal with bullies through several means including staying away from the bullying child. Children should not respond to the provocations, and make sure to surround the child with a group of friends to reassure him and feel confident. Encourage the child to inform school officials immediately, while making him aware that informing officials is not a sign of cowardice.

It is also advisable to teach and train the child in martial arts, not to remain silent, and to respond firmly to the bully in a defensive manner.





Riyada and OQ sign cooperation programme to empower SMEs

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The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (Riyada) signed a cooperation programme with OQ, the global integrated energy group, to empower SMEs and enhance aspects that contribute to doing business.

It was signed by Halima al Zari, Chairperson, Riyada, and Ashraf al Maamari, Acting CEO of OQ Group. The signing of the programme came within the framework of the strategic partnership with the aim of contributing to the development of this sector, and supporting possible efforts for entrepreneurship and self-employment.

The programme aims to benefit from the experiences and expertise of both parties to contribute to supporting and developing SMEs, and raise the efficiency and competitiveness



The programme was signed by Halima al Zari, Chairperson, Riyada, and Ashraf al Maamari, Acting CEO of OQ Group

of enterprises to obtain business opportunities and exchange experiences and consultations in talent management.

The programme will enhance SMEs to benefit from the tenders offered by OQ, as the agreement aims to raise the level of knowledge among entrepreneurs about the requirements of tenders and how to submit tenders that meet the required conditions through organising workshops.

Given the importance required in developing the capabilities

of entrepreneurs and suppliers, there will be development of programmes for them to join the group's supplier programme, follow up and evaluate their performance while keeping pace with trends regarding empowering emerging companies.

Moreover, it was directed to study and research opportunities to implement a business accelerator programme for emerging companies in the energy sector and related fields, and to study the possibility of

the group supporting it and sponsoring student companies and youth initiatives in the fields of innovation, artificial intelligence and business accelerators.

In this regard, OQ launched an accelerator programme for emerging companies in the energy sector. The programme aims to develop between 10 to 20 startup companies in the oil, petrochemical and alternative energy industries for a period of six months. Given the importance of qualifying employees working in company management and providing them with the necessary skills.

This programme came within the efforts of Riyada and a continuation of the cooperation between the authority and government and private agencies, with the aim of developing a set of capabilities to improve the business environment for entrepreneurs to launch their projects and ensure their sustainability.

PAKISTANI DELEGATION VISITS MARITIME SECURITY CENTRE



MUSCAT: A delegation from the National Defence University in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan on Wednesday visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). The delegation was greeted upon their arrival at the centre by the Head of the MSC. Members of the visiting delegation were briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the centre in the safety of the Omani maritime environment. They also toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies used in carrying out its national duties. – ONA

Forum calls for sustainable growth

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 8

The role of creative industries in nurturing sustainable economic growth and building a vibrant culture of innovation was discussed at the recently concluded Creative Industries Forum at Bait Al Zubair Museum in Muscat.

The forum began under the auspices of Dr Said bin Hamad al Rubaie, Vice-Chancellor of University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS). Dr Abdullah al Shibli, Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs also attended the event.

Dr Fatma bint Mohamed al Aamriyah, Dean of the College of Creative Industries, conceived the event to bring successful graduates, industry leaders, educators and public sector bodies on a single platform to explore the opportunities contributing to the advancement of the creative industries in the country.

Central to the forum's ethos was an exquisite art exhibition showcasing students' outstanding projects and achievements across various disciplines, including design, photography, fashion design and mass communication, serving as a resounding evidence to their creativity and innovative ability.

The two-day forum began on Monday, showcasing UTAS graduates and entrepreneurs in creative industries. The first day highlighted success stories from various fields like graphic design,

architecture, photography and more. It emphasised the uniqueness of their visions and the impact on creativity and self-improvement.

Talented youths including Turki al Balushi and Mezzoon al Riyami, showcased their work and emphasised the need for transformative thinking in Oman.

Turki al Balushi belongs to journalism, while Mezzoon al Riyami has the distinction of working on some of the world's big projects. She has designed many mosques in Oman as well.

Mezzoon called for opportunities for those who think out of the box.

On the second day, industry luminaries discussed the economic impact of creative industries and the importance of educational initiatives.

They debated the need for Omani films and the revitalisation of Oman's visual identity.

The forum stressed the importance of synergies between large corporations and grassroots enterprises and called for more investment in creative economy education.

The forum put emphasis on bridging the gap between theoretical learning and practical experiences to cultivate creative professionals for societal advancement.

The College of Creative Industries aims to realise Oman Vision 2040 by grooming professionals aligned with the cultural strategy focusing on citizenship, identity, heritage and culture.



The forum stressed the importance of synergies between large corporations and grassroots enterprises

TOGETHER WE SHINE Empowering voices at District Toastmasters conference

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 8

Muscat is preparing to host the much-anticipated District Toastmasters Annual Conference (DTAC) on May 10 and 11. This event, after 4 years, is set to bring together members from Oman, Jordan, UAE, and Palestine (District 105) - uniting them under the common goal of developing their speaking skills and leadership abilities.

With a turnout of more than 400 attendees expected from these four countries, the theme of the conference was aptly named "Together we shine".

At a press conference, Girish Kumar, Chairman of the Organising Committee says, "The theme symbolises the unity and collaboration among individuals dedicated to improving themselves and others through effective communication and leadership."

The conference will cater to a diverse audience, including youth, professionals and enthusiasts

Participants will not only gain valuable knowledge and experience but also contribute to the growth and development of their communities

DR SALEH AL KHAMYASI
Vice-Chairman of the Organising Committee

looking to enhance their public speaking prowess. It promises a range of activities such as workshops, contests and an awarding ceremony to recognise outstanding achievements in communication and leadership of each district.

One of the highlights of the event is the presence of the esteemed Guest of Honour, Eng Salim al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals. His support underscores the significance of the conference in promoting personal

development and fostering a culture of effective communication in the region.

Throughout the conference, participants will engage in various activities aimed at honing their speaking skills, building confidence and cultivating leadership qualities. Workshops will also be conducted by seasoned speakers who will provide valuable insights and practical tips, while contests will challenge participants to showcase their speaking prowess in a competitive environment.

YOGATHON AT NBO PREMISES IN ATHAIBA ON FRIDAY

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

As many as 125 people will compete in the Open National Level Yoga Championship at the NBO head office premises in Athaiba on Friday.

Organised by the Champ Sports and Arts in association with Yog Sports Foundation, the half day event is open to all. The last date for registration is Thursday. There will be an entry fee

of RO 5.

Neha Deshmukh, HoD of Yoga and chief organiser at the Champ Sports and Arts, said that anyone who has a passion for yoga can contest and show their mettle.

"As far as we know, this level of yoga championship is happening for the first time in Oman and anyone can join as a participant. We will have judges from India and the chief guest from Vietnam," she said.

Participants will be

judged based on their ease of performing various poses and they will be evaluated as per the asanas chosen by them. A participant can choose any 5 asanas out of 10. There will be an entry fee of RO 5.

Winners will receive medals and certificates of participation and trophies. Those who reach 1st and 2nd places in each category will compete for the Champion of Champions Trophy to be held soon.

Ministry of Health ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tender:-

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of Tender Document	Bid Submission Closing Date on/before 12:00 am Sunday	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
1862/2024/ MOH/ NIZHP-120	Supply, Delivery and Installation of Medical Curtains at Nizwa Hospital	30/05/2024	23/06/2024	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 25,000 Per set

- Tenders should be submitted online on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accept or reject any tender.
- For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200 , Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om.



US
PAUSES SOME
WEAPONS
TO ISRAEL

Palestinians evacuate after Israeli forces launched a ground and air operation in Rafah. – Reuters

CAIRO/WASHINGTON/RAFAH: Hamas said it was battling Israeli troops on the outskirts of the Gaza Strip's crowded southern city of Rafah on Wednesday after a US official said Washington had halted a shipment of powerful bombs that Israel could use in a full-scale assault.

The United States, which is seeking to stave off an Israeli invasion of Rafah, said it believes a revised Hamas ceasefire proposal may lead to a breakthrough in an impasse in negotiations, with talks resuming in Cairo on Wednesday.

Israel has threatened a major assault on Rafah to defeat thousands of Hamas fighters

it says are holed up there, but Western nations and the United Nations have warned a full-scale attack on the city would be a humanitarian catastrophe.

Hamas said its fighters were battling Israeli forces in the east of Rafah, where hundreds of thousands of Palestinians have sought refuge from combat further north in the enclave. The group said its fighters attacked Israeli soldiers and military vehicles with heavy artillery near the airport east of Rafah.

"The streets of the city echo with the cries of innocent lives lost, families torn apart, and homes reduced to rubble. We stand on the brink of a humanitarian catastrophe of

unprecedented proportions," Rafah's mayor, Ahmed al Sofi, said in an appeal to the international community to intervene.

Around 10,000 Palestinians have left Rafah since Monday, said Juliette Touma, spokesperson for UNRWA, the UN agency for Palestinian refugees. The Hamas-run Gaza government media office put the number at tens of thousands. A senior US official said President Joe Biden's administration paused a shipment of weapons to Israel last week in an apparent response to the expected Rafah offensive. The White House and Pentagon declined to comment. The official said Washington had carefully

34,844
GAZANS DIED
SINCE THE
START OF THE
WAR

reviewed the delivery of weapons that might be used in Rafah, and as a result paused a shipment consisting of 1,800 2,000-lb bombs and 1,700 500-lb bombs.

This would be the first such delay since the Biden administration offered its "ironclad" support to Israel after Hamas' October 7 attack. Washington is Israel's closest ally and main weapons supplier.

A senior Israeli official declined to confirm the report, "If we have to fight with our fingernails, then we'll do what we have to do," the source said. A military spokesperson said any disagreements were resolved in private. Israeli tanks rolled across the Rafah border crossing

between Gaza and Egypt on Tuesday, cutting off a vital aid route and the only exit for the evacuation of wounded patients.

The complex was closed for a second day on Wednesday, according to the Gaza health ministry, but Israel said it was reopening the other crossing in southern Gaza, Kerem Shalom, through which most aid to Gaza has been delivered recently.

The Israeli military said it had uncovered Hamas infrastructure in several locations in eastern Rafah and its troops were conducting targeted raids on the Gaza side of the Rafah crossing and air strikes across the Gaza Strip.

— Reuters

Israel says reopens Kerem Shalom border for aid

JERUSALEM: Israel said it reopened the Kerem Shalom border crossing to humanitarian aid for Gaza on Wednesday, four days after closing it in response to a rocket attack that killed four soldiers.

"Trucks from Egypt carrying humanitarian aid, including food, water, shelter equipment, medicine and medical equipment donated by the international community are already arriving at the crossing," the army said in a joint statement with COGAT, the defence ministry body that oversees Palestinian civil affairs.

The supplies will be transferred to the Gaza side of the crossing after undergoing inspection, the statement said.

The UN agency for Palestinian refugees however said the Kerem Shalom crossing remained closed. "The crossing



The UN agency for Palestinian refugees, however, said the Kerem Shalom crossing remained closed.

is still not open," UNRWA spokeswoman Juliette Touma said. The military said the Erez border crossing between Israel and northern Gaza was also open for aid deliveries into the Palestinian territory.

The Kerem Shalom crossing was closed after a Hamas rocket

attack killed four soldiers and wounded more than a dozen on Sunday.

On Tuesday, Israeli troops seized control of the Palestinian side of the Rafah crossing between Gaza and Egypt after launching an incursion into the eastern sector of the city.

The UNRWA spokeswoman said the Rafah crossing too remained closed.

"We are calling for their reopening. We normally get fuel through Rafah not Kerem (Shalom)," Touma said.

"There's not been humanitarian supplies for the past three days. We have started rationing fuel," she said, adding Gaza needed 300,000 litres (79,250 gallons) of fuel a day for humanitarian purposes.

On Tuesday, UNRWA chief Philippe Lazzarini said the two crossings were a "lifeline" for delivering aid to Gaza.

"Through them we bring critical supplies and fuel for humanitarian use. They need to be reopened without any delay," he said on X.

Israel's ally the United States too called for the reopening of the two crossings. — AFP

SOUTH GAZA HOSPITALS HAVE ONLY THREE DAYS' FUEL LEFT, WARNS WHO

GENEVA: Hospitals in the southern Gaza Strip have only three days of fuel left, the head of the World Health Organization said on Wednesday, due to closed border crossings.

Despite international objections, Israel sent tanks into the overcrowded southern city of Rafah on Tuesday and seized the nearby crossing into Egypt that is the main conduit for aid into the besieged Palestinian territory.

"The closure of the border crossing continues to prevent the UN from bringing fuel. Without fuel all humanitarian operations will stop. Border closures are also impeding delivery of humanitarian aid into Gaza," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on X, formerly Twitter.

"Hospitals in the south of Gaza only have three days of fuel left, which means services may soon come to a halt."

Tedros said Al Najjar, one of the three hospitals in Rafah, was no longer functioning due to the ongoing hostilities in the vicinity and the military operation in



A woman cries while holding the body of a child killed in an Israeli strike at Abu Yousef al Najjar hospital in Rafah on Monday. – Reuters

Rafah. "At a time when fragile humanitarian operations urgently require expansion, the Rafah military operation is further limiting our ability to reach thousands of people who have been living in dire conditions without adequate food, sanitation, health services and security," he said. "This must stop now."

Israel bombarded Rafah on Wednesday as talks resumed in Cairo aimed at agreeing the terms of a truce in the seven-month war.

— AFP



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In brief

■ KIGALI



KAGAME CRITIC RWIGARA UNVEILS ELECTION BID

Diane Rwigara, a vehement critic of Rwanda's iron-fisted President Paul Kagame, announced on Wednesday she planned to run against him in this year's elections.

"A new chapter for Rwanda begins now. Together we will make history! Join me as I run for President," Rwigara posted on X, formerly Twitter.

Rwanda, which has been de facto ruled by Kagame since the end of the 1994 genocide, is due to hold both presidential and parliamentary polls on July 15.

The 42-year-old Rwigara, who is leader of the People Salvation Movement, had planned to stand in the 2017 election against Kagame but was disqualified.

■ LONDON



SECOND UK LAWMAKER DEFECTS TO LABOUR

Britain's ruling Conservatives on Wednesday suffered their second defection to the main opposition Labour party in as many weeks, piling pressure on Prime Minister Rishi Sunak.

Natalie Elphicke crossed the floor in the House of Commons just moments before Sunak's weekly grilling by lawmakers, adding to his woes after heavy losses for the Tories in English local elections last week.

Elphicke is MP for Dover, on the south coast of England, which is heavily affected by the small boat crossings from northern Europe which Sunak has vowed to stop.

■ ISLAMABAD



WIFE OF FORMER PAKISTAN PM MOVED TO JAIL

The wife of former Pakistan Prime Minister Imran Khan was moved on Wednesday from house arrest to the same jail as her husband, lawyers said, where the pair will serve matching prison terms for illegal marriage.

Khan's party has been targeted with a sweeping crackdown since nationwide protests erupted over his arrest on May 9 last year, which saw unprecedented anger directed at the military.

Bushra Bibi, 49, and Khan, 71, were both convicted of corruption and breaking Islamic marriage laws in the lead up to February's general election, which saw military-backed parties come to power.

Climate change: World sweltered as April smashed heat record

PARIS: April marked another "remarkable" month of record-breaking global air and sea surface temperature averages, according to a new report by the EU's climate monitor published on Wednesday.

The abnormally warm conditions came despite the continued weakening of the El Nino weather phenomenon that contributes to increased heat, said the EU's Copernicus Climate Change Service, pointing to human-caused climate change for exacerbating the extremes.

Since June last year, every month has been the warmest such period on record, according to Copernicus.

April 2024 was no exception, clocking in at 1.58 degrees Celsius above the 1850-1900 pre-industrial average.

"While unusual, a similar streak of monthly global temperature records happened previously in 2015/16," Copernicus said.

The average temperature over the last 12 months was also recorded at 1.6C above pre-industrial levels, surpassing the 1.5C target set by the 2015 Paris Agreement to limit global warming. The anomaly does not mean the Paris target has been missed, which is calculated over a period of decades.



A man controls his horse as they take a dip in sea on a hot summer day in Mumbai on Wednesday. — AFP

But it does signal "how remarkable the global temperature conditions we are currently experience are," Copernicus climatologist Julien Nicolas said.

Last month was the second warmest April ever recorded in Europe, as was March and the entire winter period.

Swathes of Asia from India to Vietnam have been struck by scorching heat waves in recent weeks, while southern Brazil has suffered deadly flooding.

"Each additional degree of global warming is accompanied by extreme weather events, which are both more intense and more likely," Nicolas said.

Diverging extremes in the form of floods and droughts peppered the planet in April.

Much of Europe saw a wetter April than usual, although southern Spain, Italy and the western Balkans were drier than average, Copernicus reported.

Heavy rain resulted in flooding over parts of North

America, Central Asia and the Persian Gulf.

While eastern Australia was hit with heavy rains, the bulk of the country experienced drier than normal conditions, as did northern Mexico and around the Caspian Sea.

The natural El Nino pattern, which warms the Pacific Ocean and leads to a rise in global temperatures, peaked earlier this year and was headed towards "neutral condition" in April, Copernicus said. — AFP

Malaysia plans to introduce orangutan diplomacy



Orangutans are pictured at the National Zoo in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. — Reuters file photo

KUALA LUMPUR: Malaysia intends to gift orangutans to palm oil-purchasing countries as part of an initiative similar to China's panda diplomacy, the commodities minister said on Wednesday.

Johari Abdul Ghani said the "orangutan diplomacy"

strategy would gift the endangered great apes to palm oil trading nations, especially major importing territories like the EU and India.

Orangutans are critically endangered, according to the WWF, with habitat loss "due to logging, agricultural

expansion, particularly palm oil plantations, and infrastructure development" posing the greatest threat.

"By introducing 'orangutan diplomacy', it will show to the world, that Malaysia is always committed to biodiversity conservation," he said in a

post on social media platform X.

He urged palm oil companies to collaborate with NGOs to help preserve and provide technical expertise on wildlife in Malaysia.

Palm oil is blamed by environmentalists for fuelling the destruction of rainforests in Malaysia and Indonesia, which together produce the majority of global output.

The edible oil is used in foods such as cakes, chocolate and margarine, as well as cosmetics, soap and shampoo.

Beijing has long used panda diplomacy as a form of soft power.

It only loans pandas to foreign zoos, which must usually return any offspring within a few years of their birth to join the country's breeding programme. — AFP

France fashions Paris 2024 torch from raw steel

VIRE: It takes only four cars from the scrapyard — or the steel from about 50 washing machines — to make the 2,000 torches needed for the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games, but the process requires a specific savoir faire.

Six tonnes of steel were melted by manufacturing corporation ArcelorMittal, a Paris 2024 official partner, before being shaped into 0.7-millimetre plates that were shipped to the Normandy factory of French silverware and cutlery company Guy Degrenne.

There, it is laser-cut, welded and assembled by a couple of dozen workers who delivered the torches at the end of January,

marking the end of a nine-month process.

"It's a bit like my baby, our baby," Delphine Moulin, Paris 2024 director of celebration, said amid the sounds of metal being cut, bent, polished and sprayed with micro-particles of steel.

The result is a slender-looking torch, with a wavy touch which represents the Mediterranean Sea and oceans that carried the Olympic flame from Greece and will take it to the French overseas territories.

"We wanted it to be unique. You can see that it's different from the usually flared shape of the Olympic torch," Moulin added.

The torch, which is 70



The Olympic flame on the French 19th-century three-masted barque Belem as the boat sails near the coast of Marseille, in the Mediterranean Sea, on Wednesday. — AFP

centimetres high and weighs 1.5 kilos, is water and windproof as it is designed so the flame can withstand a sustained wind of 20kph and gusts at 60kph.

"It also went through a crash test, resisting a three-metre fall," said ArcelorMittal's Franck Wasilewski, the project manager.

"It requires so much attention to details, first to make the perfect steel. You don't use the same kind of steel to make rails and to make this torch," ArcelorMittal France president Eric Niedziela said.

"It is also our pride to have this French product made with our partners (Guy Degrenne), their savoir faire is unique."

Some 1,500 torches will be

used for the Olympic relay, with the other 500 going to the Paralympics' relay.

There will be 11,000 torch bearers to bring the flame to its final destination in Paris, meaning the same torch will be carried by almost 10 different people.

"This is a sustainable option," Moulin said.

Paris 2024 officials and ArcelorMittal have been tight-lipped on the budget of the torches' fabrication, declining to give an estimate of the overall cost.

The Games will be held from July 26 to August 11 and the Paralympics run from August 28 to September 8. — Reuters

OpenAI unveils tool to detect DALL-E images

SAN FRANCISCO: OpenAI, the Microsoft-backed artificial intelligence company behind the popular image generator DALL-E, on Tuesday announced the launch of a new tool aimed at detecting whether digital images have been created by AI.

Authentication has become a major concern in the fast development of AI, with authorities worried about the proliferation of deep fakes that could disrupt society.

According to the company, OpenAI's image detection classifier, which is currently under test, can assess the likelihood that a given image originated from one of the company's generative AI models like DALL-E 3.

OpenAI said that during internal testing on an earlier version, the tool accurately detected around 98 per cent of DALL-E 3 images while incorrectly flagging less than 0.5 per cent of non-AI images.

However, the company warned that modified DALL-E 3 images were harder to identify, and that the tool currently flags only about five to 10 per cent of images generated by other AI models.

OpenAI also said that it would now add watermarks to AI image metadata as more companies sign up to meet the standards from the Coalition for Content Provenance and Authenticity (C2PA).

The C2PA is a tech industry initiative that sets a technical standard to determine the provenance and authenticity of digital content, in a process known as watermarking.

Facebook giant Meta last month said it would begin labelling AI-generated media beginning in May using the C2PA standard.

Google, another AI giant, has also joined the initiative. — AFP

A Palestinian girl defeats Biden



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Just as the hands that rock the cradle rule the world, the President that sits in the White House rules the world. This is because for the past thirty years the United States of America has become the world's only superpower that matters.

For this reason the results of the upcoming November 2024 US Presidential elections, between the current President Joseph Robinette Biden Jr. and former President Donald John Trump, will impact each one of us and every corner of the earth strategically, militarily and financially. But, Biden, the most powerful and experienced leader in the world will not be beaten because of Trump, but because of a little girl the President probably never cared to hear about named Hind.

While we will delve deep around the world assessing the strengths and weaknesses of the Presidential candidates, we will learn a new lesson that a human interest story and a song is more than enough to cause a paradigm shift in the global order and can bring down the world superpower's commander-in-chief.

WHO IS HIND

On January 29, 2024 a 6-year-old girl, named Hind Rajab in Tel El Hawa neighbourhood of Gaza in the Occupied territories, made a distress call to the Palestinian Red Crescent Society. She asked them for help as she was stuck in a car with six of her dead relatives surrounded by Israeli Occupation Force army tanks firing in Hind's direction. Eye witnesses found Hind dead, along with the two rescue team members, as a result of tank artillery fire. During the US students' protests a hall at Columbia University was occupied and renamed Hind's hall in her memory. In addition and more culturally significant a song titled Hind's Hall was streamed and went viral in May 2024, by one of the most popular rap artists nicknamed Macklemore. The fact that Hind's story is trending shows that natural algorithms carrying the theme of social justice can beat disconnected elitists anytime and all the time.

BIDEN STRENGTHS

Economically, his set of policies, dubbed as Bidenomics, created millions of jobs, helped US energy, manufacturing and technology industries

thrive and kept organisations such as OPEC and BRICS at bay by a combination of threats and intimidation.

WEAKNESSES

On the other hand, Biden failed in not one but two important fronts, foreign policy and culture. While the incumbent President succeeded in law and order domestically by prosecuting violent insurrectionists who attacked Capitol Hill on January 6, 2020. However, his foreign policy leaned towards regimes indulging war crimes.

Culturally, one of the most viral songs of 2024 popularised among millions of youth in the US and around the world a phrase that says "No, I will not vote for Biden in the Fall".

In the most famous strategy book The Art of War, Sun Tzu advises "If a battle cannot be won don't fight it" but having a nuclear arsenal and weapons of mass destruction worth trillions of dollars made us think we can conquer free souls and ideas that God created for free. The innocent soul of Hind represents the idea of resistance, and we have not invented a weapon that can kill an idea which time has come.

THE INNOCENT SOUL OF HIND REPRESENTS THE IDEA OF RESISTANCE, AND WE HAVE NOT INVENTED A WEAPON THAT CAN KILL AN IDEA WHICH TIME HAS COME.

Rains refill Iraq's drought-hit reservoirs

HWAN MOHAMMED

The reservoir behind the massive Darbandikhan dam, tucked between the rolling mountains of northeastern Iraq, is almost full again after four successive years of drought and severe water shortages.

Iraqi officials say recent rainfall has refilled some of the water-scarce country's main reservoirs, taking levels to a record since 2019.

"The dam's storage capacity is three million cubic metres. Today, with the available reserves, the dam is only missing 25 centimetres of water to be considered full," Saman Ismail, director of the Darbandikhan facility, said.

Built on the River Sirwan, the dam is located south of the city of Sulaimaniyah in Iraq's autonomous Kurdistan region.

"In the coming days, we will be able to say that it's full," said Ismail, with the water just a few metres below the road running along the edge of the basin. The last time Darbandikhan was full was in 2019, and since then "we've only had years of drought and shortages," said Ismail.

He cited "climate change in the region" as a reason, "but also dam construction beyond Kurdistan's borders".

The central government in Baghdad says upstream dams built in neighbouring Iran and Türkiye have heavily reduced water flow in Iraq's rivers, on top of rising temperatures and irregular rainfall. This winter, however, bountiful rains have helped to ease shortages in Iraq, considered by the United Nations to be one of the five countries most vulnerable to some impacts of climate change. In Iraq, rich in oil but where infrastructure is often run-down, torrential rains have also flooded the streets of Kurdistan's regional capital Erbil.

Ali Radi Thamer, director of the dam authority at Iraq's water resources ministry, said that most of the country's six biggest dams have experienced a rise in water levels. At the Mosul dam, the largest reservoir with a capacity of about 11 billion cubic metres, "the storage level is very good, we have benefitted from the rains and the floods," said Thamer.

Last summer, he added, Iraq's "water reserves... reached a historic low".

"The reserves available today will have positive effects for all sectors", Thamer said, including agriculture and treatment plants that produce potable water, as well as watering southern Iraq's fabled marshes that have dried up in recent years.

— AFP

With schools in ruins, education in Gaza will be hobbled for years

LIAM STACK AND BILAL SHBAIR

Amjad Abu Daqqa was among the top students at his school in Khan Younis, excelling in math and English, and he was applying for a scholarship to study in the United States when war erupted in the Gaza Strip in October.

Teachers used to reward his good grades with trips to local historical sites or to the pier, where they would watch boats and take pictures of the sunset. He dreamed of going into medicine like his big sister, Nagham, who studied dentistry in Gaza City.

But his old life and old dreams now feel far away. His school was bombed, many of his friends and teachers are dead, and his family fled their home to seek safety in Rafah, along with more than 1 million others.

"Everything in my town is gone forever," said Amjad, 16. "I feel like I am a body without a soul, and I want to feel hopeful again." No end to the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza is in sight. Even if there were, it would do little to change the bleak educational prospects of more than 625,000 students who the United Nations estimates are in the territory. Seven months of war have devastated every level of education there. More than 80 per cent of Gaza's schools have been severely damaged or destroyed by fighting, according to the United Nations, including all of its 12 universities.

That has led critics, including the Palestinian ministry of education and more than two dozen UN officials, to accuse Israel of a deliberate pattern of targeting educational facilities, much as it has been accused of targeting hospitals.

"It may be reasonable to ask if there is an intentional effort to comprehensively destroy the Palestinian education system, an action known as 'scholasticide,'" a group of 25 UN experts said in a statement last month. "These attacks are not isolated incidents," it added. "They present a systematic pattern of violence aimed at dismantling the very foundation of



Palestinian children attend a class in Shejaiya, an eastern neighbourhood of Gaza City. — NYT file photo

Palestinian society." In response, the Israeli military said in a statement on Wednesday that it has no "doctrine that aims at causing maximal damage to civilian infrastructure."

The war has "really hugely affected the education system," said Hamdan al Agha, 40, a science teacher displaced from Khan Younis, a city in southern

MORE THAN 85 PER CENT OF THOSE SCHOOLS WERE DAMAGED OR DESTROYED. IT SAID MORE THAN TWO-THIRDS OF GAZA'S SCHOOLS WOULD EITHER NEED TO BE REBUILT FROM THE GROUND UP OR BE EXTENSIVELY REPAIRED

Gaza. "And it will for generations." Before the war, Gaza had 813 schools that employed about 22,000 teachers, according to the Global Education Cluster, a research group that works with the United Nations. Many schools were run by UNRWA, a UN agency for Palestinian refugees.

But by last week, more than 85 per cent of those schools were damaged or destroyed, according to a study

conducted by the Global Education Cluster, based on satellite imagery. It said more than two-thirds of Gaza's schools would either need to be rebuilt from the ground up or be extensively repaired before their buildings could be safely used again.

Universities have been especially hard hit. Al Azhar University in Gaza City, where Amjad's sister, Nagham, studied dentistry, is in ruins. The Israeli army used the campus as an outpost and said Hamas had operated there, leaving behind weapons. Nagham now spends her days cooking, cleaning the family tent and looking after her brother.

More than 320 school buildings have been used as shelters for displaced Gaza residents, and more than half of those have taken direct hits or were seriously damaged by blasts nearby, the Global Education Cluster study found.

Displaced people in Rafah sometimes offer their tents for use as makeshift schoolhouses, where volunteers provide lessons for children in the camps, said Mohammed Shbair, a school principal from Khan Younis.

"Most of them spend their whole day looking for firewood for their family," he said. "How can these students think of any type of learning while basic things are not available for them?" — The New York Times

Jewels of a flourishing history

Visiting the past helps us understand the road ahead, its obstacles and appreciate previous accomplishments.

Infrastructure has always been the primary goal of moving Oman into the 20th century. Since the early days of the Renaissance, the country's leadership has taken infrastructure development in Salalah and Muscat as part of its heart and mind strategy.

I discovered excerpts from a book shared with me about Oman's early development. It is a treasure trove of knowledge and narratives offered by construction company employees operating in Oman in the early 1970s.

Oman was never a British colony, but the close relationship has been well grounded in treaties of peace and friendship dating back to 1891. Other treaties have been signed subsequently, but for the time being, this article is about uplifting stories of challenges.

Expatriate manpower from Britain and other parts of Europe was coming in hundreds to construct buildings, roads, harbour, and other engineering projects. That was the time when the foundation for the construction of the Royal palace in Seeb was laid, and development projects throughout northern Oman were running fast. That was also when a music school building was planned, first in Muscat and then in Salalah. That was the start of the formation of military bands in the country.

According to excerpts, until the 1970s, music, singing and dancing were prohibited, as were Western dress styles, cigarettes, newspapers, flashlights, umbrellas and sunglasses!

Those wishing to ride bicycles had to obtain a permit, and those travelling abroad needed special permission. The city gates were ordered to close at sundown. What a long way we have come!

To think that not many decades ago, only one flight per week would come to Muscat, and that was from Bahrain when a Fokker F27 would land on an airstrip in Ruwi between two mountains and be considered one



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THE BOOK IS A TREASURE TROVE OF KNOWLEDGE AND NARRATIVES OFFERED BY CONSTRUCTION COMPANY EMPLOYEES OPERATING IN OMAN IN THE EARLY 1970S

of the most interesting places to land.

The contractors' staff quarters were at the far end of the Ruwi airfield; they were not allowed to reside in Muscat. Companies would have offices and lodgings for their supervisors, while other employees would be housed in tents. It was a granted privilege for general managers to be allowed to live in Muscat.

Each foreign company operating in Oman was permitted to have only one of its expatriate employees accompanied by the wife. At that time, one dozen European spouses were residing in the contractors' camp in Ruwi. Years later, some companies were permitted to have their staff in a block of flats in Muttrah, overlooking the old Portuguese forts.

Companies were allowed one car and only Land Rovers. Travelling between Muscat, Muttrah and Ruwi required special clearance. That was also the time when donkey stations in Muscat were filled with piles of alfalfa for the donkeys, as they were the usual way of transport.

And yes, Spinneys has been in Oman for a long time. The Muttrah Cold Store was the only place selling European food. Muttrah already had a thriving souk of barasti-covered stalls selling fruits, vegetables, fishing, clothing and gold. In those days, the US dollar was based on the gold standard at a rate of \$35 per ounce of gold.

Communication was one of the most difficult aspects of doing business in Oman. Morse code was the means of contact between Muscat and Salalah. The technology was eventually upgraded to a telex machine that could not communicate with the outside world. The best time and, with a bit of luck, brief connections for messages to be transmitted were in the evening, depending on atmospheric conditions.

My treasure box is overflowing with notes, photographs and old maps. Oman is full of amazing stories. It is a delight to review people's narratives and share their interesting memories with you.

CARRYING OLYMPIC TORCH



The 'Belem', a three-masted sailing ship that carries the Olympic Flame sails to the Old Port ahead of the Paris Olympics 2024 on Wednesday. – Reuters

US-China cooperation remains possible

When US Secretary of State Antony Blinken recently visited Beijing in an effort to

stabilise relations with China, many of the issues that he discussed with Chinese President Xi Jinping were highly contentious. For example, Blinken warned China against providing materials and technology to aid Russia in its war against Ukraine. Other disputes concerned US trade and export controls on the flow of technology to China.

I was visiting Beijing around the same time as the chair of a Sino-American "track two dialogue," where citizens who are in communication with their respective governments can meet and speak for themselves. Because such talks are unofficial and disavowable, they can sometimes be more candid. That was certainly the case this time, when a delegation from the Aspen Strategy Group met with a group assembled by the influential Central Party School in Beijing — the sixth such meeting between the two institutions over the past decade.

As one would expect, the Americans reinforced Blinken's message on the contentious issues, and the Chinese repeated their own government's positions.

Things became more interesting, however, when the group turned to explore possible areas of cooperation. The change in US policy from engagement with China to a strategy



Joseph S Nye, Jr

The writer is an emeritus professor at Harvard Kennedy School and a former US assistant secretary of defence

ALTHOUGH THE US HAS ABANDONED ITS POLICY OF ENGAGEMENT WITH CHINA, THE STRATEGY OF GREAT-POWER COMPETITION THAT HAS REPLACED IT DOES NOT PRECLUDE COOPERATION IN SOME AREAS

of great-power competition does not preclude cooperation in some areas. In framing the discussion, we used the analogy of a soccer game: two teams battle fiercely, but they kick the ball, rather than the other players, and everyone is expected to stay within the white lines.

Switching metaphors, some Chinese did worry that the American emphasis on establishing "guard rails" was like putting seat belts in a car that encouraged speeding; but most agreed that avoiding a crash was the primary objective. To that end, we identified seven areas of potential cooperation.

The first and most obvious was climate change, which threatens both countries. Although China is continuing to build coal-fired power plants, it is rapidly adding renewable sources of energy, and it claims it will reach peak carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and carbon neutrality by 2060. We urged a more rapid timetable and scientific exchanges to that end.

The second issue was global public health. Scientists say the next pandemic is not a question of if, but when. Both governments handled Covid-19 badly, and millions died as a result. But rather than argue over whom to blame, we suggested studying how our scientific cooperation helped slow Sars in 2003 and

Ebola in 2014, and how we could apply those lessons in the future.

On nuclear weapons, the Chinese defended their rapid buildup on the grounds that intercontinental ballistic missiles are more accurate, and that the vulnerability of submarines may someday jeopardise their capability to strike back if they are struck first. They repeated their familiar objection to adopting arms-control limitations before their arsenal matches those of the US and Russia. But they expressed a willingness to discuss nuclear doctrine, concepts and strategic stability, as well as non-proliferation and difficult case like North Korea — the area where America and China have cooperated in the past.

The fourth issue was artificial

intelligence. In San Francisco last fall, Xi and US President Joe Biden agreed to begin talks about AI safety — though their governments have not yet made much progress. Our group agreed that the issue also calls for private talks behind closed doors, particularly about the technology's military applications. As one retired Chinese general put it, arms control is unlikely, but there is a big opportunity to work towards a mutual understanding of concepts and doctrine, and what it means to maintain human control.

On economics, both sides agreed that bilateral trade is mutually beneficial, but the Chinese complained about US export controls on advanced semiconductors. While the US

justifies its policy on security grounds, the Chinese see it as a measure designed to constrain their country's economic growth. Since US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan has described the US approach as building "a high fence around a small yard," we pointed out that it affects only a small portion of our total trade in chips.

The topic of Chinese overcapacity in industrial production, which is fuelled by subsidies, was more difficult. China's economic growth has slowed, and rather than taking steps to bolster its domestic consumption, it is trying to export its way out of its current problems (as it has done in the past). We pointed out that the world has changed since the "China shock" at the beginning of the century.

But rather than countenance a decoupling that would be bad for both sides, we agreed to divide economic issues into three buckets. At one end were security issues, where we would agree to disagree.

At the other end was the normal trade in goods and services, where we would follow international trade rules. And in the middle, where questions of subsidies and overcapacity arise, we would negotiate issues case by case. @Project Syndicate, 2024



The Americans reinforced Blinken's message on the contentious issues.



Dhofar, Al Nahda set for crunch clash



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 8

Dhofar and Al Nahda will both be eyeing to create history when they face off in the 2023-2024 HM Cup final on Friday at Khasab Sports Complex. The match will be played at Khasab in Musandam Governorate for the first time in history as one of the steps from the government to enhance hosting of the major sporting events in different governorates across the Sultanate of Oman.

As the season 2023-2024 approaches its end, the 10-time winners are targeting to snatch the 11th title in their history while the Al Buraimi based team are seeking to lift the trophy for a second successive time after emerging champions in the last

edition against Seeb Club. Dhofar are targeting to end their season with their favourite competition HM Cup after they had won the cup ten times in 1977, 1980, 1981, 1990, 1999, 2005, 2007, 2012, 2020 and 2021. Salalah giants attended in many HM Cup finals as they had ended as runners up six times in 1972, 1982, 1984, 2002, 2009 and 2017.

Dhofar's campaign to the final of the coveted cup was not easy as they faced off many tough teams. They managed to beat Saham in the last 16 round before defeating Oman Club in the quarterfinal. In the semifinal, Dhofar ended Bahl's dreams to progress into the final as they secured slot in the final.

On the other side, Al Nahda will chase to defend their title specially after missing the top-



Khalid al Hajri

tier league title as Seeb Club were crowned champions of this season on Tuesday. Coach Hamed al Azani's men will work hard to complete their



season on a bright note by clinching the coveted cup after a perfect season domestically and continentally in Asian AFC Cup. Al Nahda reached the final

after they blanked Sur in the last 16 round before edging last edition runners-up Seeb in the quarterfinal. In the semifinal, the Al Buraimi representative club booked spot in the final after beating Al Nasr.

Al Azani's side will not be lacking confidence after overcoming numerous challenges in the top flight league, OFA Cup and at AFC Cup. On the other hand, Dhofar will not accept any result except the triumph to ensure their determination in this event as they are holding the record for winning the title for most number of times.

Oman Football Association (OFA) announced on Wednesday the details of the press conference and the technical meeting which will take place on Thursday. The technical meeting will be held at

Khasab Sports Complex at 11:00 am while the press conference in Atana Musandam Hotel at 4:00 pm. The match will kick off on Friday at 7:30 pm under the auspices of Sayyid Ibrahim bin Said al Busaidy, Governor of Musandam, in presence of top dignitaries and officials from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth besides attendance of Salim bin Said al Wahaibi, Chairman of the Oman Football Association.

The Governor of Musandam office in coordination with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and OFA will organise series of activities and events as sideline of the final match of the HM Cup including festivals and courts for food and entertainment in different locations in Khasab.

Khasab all decked-up to host historic HM Cup

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 8

Musandam Governorate is set to host a historic sporting event for the first time in its history, as the final match of His Majesty the Sultan's Cup football competition, also known as 'The Precious Cup', will be held on Friday at the Khasab Sports Complex Stadium between Dhofar Club and defending champions Al Nahda Club.

His Majesty the Sultan's Cup football competition is one of the most important sporting events in the Sultanate of Oman and is held annually with the participation of all first and second-division clubs. The competition has attracted great interest from the Omani public, especially in recent years.

Hosting the final HM Cup football competition in Musandam Governorate is a significant sporting event and

reflects the Sultanate's interest in developing sports throughout the country. It will also contribute to promoting tourism in Musandam Governorate, which enjoys a distinguished geographical location and breathtaking natural beauty.

Buthaina bint Abdullah al Kindiyah, Head of the Sports Exchange and Broadcasting Rights Department at Oman Sports Channel, explained that the channel is keen to put viewers in every detail of this important sporting carnival, as it has been coordinated with many Gulf and Arab sports channels to broadcast the final match on their screens.

Al Kindiyah said that so far, the desire of sports channels (Egyptian Channel One, Iraqi Sports Channel, Jordanian Sports Channel, Nile Sports Channel, Algerian Channel, Dubai Sports Channel, League and Cup Channel, Abu Dhabi



Sports Channel, Kuwait Sports Channel 3, Bahrain Sports Channel and Saudi Sports Channel, in addition to Oman Sports Channel and Oman Direct Channels, has been confirmed, and some channels will have a direct link from the stadium to conduct some live interviews with the technical and administrative staff and players.

Cultural and Artistic Events

The final match is expected to witness a large public presence from all over the Sultanate of Oman. Many cultural and artistic events will be held alongside the final. The most prominent of these is the activation of the Musandam Walkway with the presence of the cup of the tournament in it, and these events will include musical performances, traditional dances,

and art exhibitions.

Yousef al Kamzari, Vice-Chairman of Khasab Club, said that the governorate and the sports community have been waiting for this event for a long time, adding that hosting this event is a sports wedding for all residents of the governorate. He pointed out that a meeting was held and many plans were put in place to attract fans to the sports complex, stressing that all the club's capabilities have been employed to organise this final. He also expressed the club's readiness and readiness, in addition to all available facilities, to attract fans and make this final an unforgettable experience for everyone.

The sports complex in Khasab was established in 1985 to be a sports edifice serving the youth of Musandam and is considered one of the youth tributaries that enhances the creativity of young people in the governorate. The

complex includes a football stadium and a sports stadium with a capacity of more than 11,000 spectators and includes a project for a turf stadium equipped with lighting according to international specifications, in addition to a platform for dignitaries and rooms, halls and other facilities.

Other facilities in the complex include a swimming pool, an administrative building, a theatre, a lecture hall, a gymnasium, an art studio and accommodation for sports teams.

The second phase of the project was implemented in 1995 and 1996, and included a closed gymnasium and other service facilities.

In 2015, the work on the sports stadium, which began in 2013, was completed, with a capacity of about 12,000 spectators with a platform for dignitaries. The total cost of the project is RO 3.8 million.

HUMMELS STUNS MBAPPE, PSG TO TAKE DORTMUND TO CL FINAL



Paris Saint-Germain's French forward #07 Kylian Mbappe (R) fights for the ball with Dortmund's German defender #15 Mats Hummels (L) during the Uefa Champions League semifinal second leg match at the Parc des Princes stadium in Paris. — AFP



Borussia Dortmund's Mats Hummels, Emre Can and Nico Schlotterbeck celebrate after the match. — Reuters



Dortmund's Mats Hummels scores their first goal past Paris St Germain's Gianluigi Donnarumma. — Reuters



PARIS: Mats Hummels headed in the only goal as Borussia Dortmund stunned Kylian Mbappe and Paris Saint-Germain in their Champions League semifinal second leg on Tuesday, winning 1-0 on the night and advancing 2-0 on aggregate to next month's final at Wembley.

Hummels struck five minutes into the second half at the Parc des Princes and PSG were unable

to muster a response, the home side all out of luck as they hit the woodwork four times in total.

Dortmund, who sit fifth in the German Bundesliga, were never expected to go so far and will be underdogs in the June 1 showpiece regardless of whether they face their old rivals Bayern Munich or Real Madrid, who meet on Wednesday.

It will be their first final since 2013 when, remarkably,

the match was also played at Wembley and Jurgen Klopp's Dortmund lost to Bayern.

Hummels played in that final and here, 11 years later, he was the hero as Dortmund built on the advantage given to them by Niclas Fullkrug's goal in the first leg. "It'll take us a bit of time to realise that, but we're looking forward to it extremely," Dortmund coach Edin Terzic told broadcaster Amazon Prime

of getting to the final. "We did it somehow, making it to London."

The story of this semifinal, however, is as much about PSG's failure in another crunch knockout tie in the competition.

They have still never won the trophy despite all the money invested by their Qatari owners since the 2011 takeover, and there will be no dream send-off for Mbappe. He will leave when his contract expires after this season and had been hoping to play his last game for the club in the June 1 final.

Instead PSG will be left to reflect on how they failed to get their hands on the biggest trophy of all during Mbappe's seven years at his hometown team.

"We were not clinical enough. They scored two goals, one from a corner and one from a long ball. We created lots more chances, many more than them, but we didn't take them," PSG captain Marquinhos told Canal Plus. "We got so close and we wanted to get to the final. But we had to win tonight and be more clinical, and we were not."

PSG's last two semifinal appearances both came during the pandemic, meaning this was the first time they had hosted a match at this stage of a European competition with fans in 29 years, since losing to AC Milan in 1995.

WOODWORK TO RESCUE

Luis Enrique's team had won 2-0 at home against Dortmund in the group stage and were safe in the knowledge that a repeat of that performance would be enough.

The PSG coach made one major selection decision, dropping Bradley Barcola and bringing in Portuguese striker Goncalo Ramos. That meant moving Mbappe from the middle onto the left wing.

Dortmund would have been bracing themselves for an onslaught from kick-off, but that did not transpire.

Mbappe took only seven minutes to produce his first attempt, yet his volley was easily saved by Dortmund goalkeeper Gregor Kobel.

The hosts had most of the possession but struggled to get Mbappe into the game, the France captain often looking isolated on the wing.

In fact it was Dortmund who had the best chance of the first half, when Karim Adeyemi led a counterattack before seeing his shot saved by Gianluigi Donnarumma. — AFP

Delhi down Rajasthan to stay in IPL play-off race

NEW DELHI: Skipper Sanju Samson's 86 went in vain as Delhi Capitals beat Rajasthan Royals by 20 runs on Tuesday to stay in the hunt for an IPL play-off berth.

Delhi posted 221-8 courtesy of Jake Fraser-McGurk's 20-ball 50 and an attacking 65 by Abhishek Porel at their home Feroz Shah Kotla ground.

Rajasthan looked good in their chase after Samson's fifth half-century of this season but his dismissal, a catch in the deep which was ruled clean by the third umpire, turned the match in Delhi's favour.

Rajasthan, who are yet to confirm their play-off spot, lost three more wickets in the next two overs and Delhi restricted the opposition to 201-8 for their sixth win in 12 matches.

"We had it in our hands, it



was 10-11 runs per over which was achievable but these things happen in the IPL," Samson said after the loss.

Inaugural champions Rajasthan, placed second behind toppers Kolkata Knight Riders, have eight wins in 11 matches

and still favourites to make the top two in the play-offs.

Top four teams will make the play-offs but number one and two will have the advantage of getting an extra match to enter the final on May 26 in Chennai.

Spinner Kuldeep Yadav



returned impressive figures of 2-25. Fast bowlers Khaleel Ahmed and Mukesh Kumar also took two wickets. But the batters set up victory after Fraser-McGurk, who raised his 50 in 19 balls, and Porel attacked in an opening stand of 60.

Rajasthan lost wickets after the openers departed but Tristan Stubbs hammered 41 off 20 balls in a late charge to take the total to 221-8.

Stubbs was helped by Gulbadin Naib, who hit 19, and Rasikh Salam, who hit two sixes

in his nine runs, as Delhi got 53 runs from the last three overs.

The in-form Samson, a wicketkeeper-batsman who has amassed 459 runs, attempted to set up the chase only to depart in the 16th over when Shai Hope caught the batsman off Kumar.

Hope's foot was parallel to the boundary rope but the third umpire ruled it out and a disappointed Samson walked back after a chat with the on-field officials.

Veteran spinner Ravichandran Ashwin led the Rajasthan bowling with figures of 3-24.

Yuzvendra Chahal took his 350th T20 wicket — first Indian to achieve the feat — when he got skipper Rishabh Pant, a left-hand batsman, caught out in fine leg for 15. — AFP

SEEB EMERGE OL CHAMPIONS



AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 8

Seeb emerged champions of the Omantel League late on Tuesday after defeating Bahla 1-0 in a match held at the Nizwa Sports Complex as part of the 20th round of the competition.

In the first half, Seeb exerted strong control as they appeared more organised in both attack and defence. The players led the successive attacks with precise passes and harmonious movements, and in the end, Abdulrahman al Mashari managed to open the scoring for his team in the sixth minute of the half. The attacks were exchanged between the two sides to end the first half with Seeb leading 1-0.

As for the second half, both teams raised the intensity. Bahla tried their best to score the equaliser, but Seeb's defence remained solid and organised to achieve the victory.

With this result, Seeb raised their score to 51 points, who achieved the top of the league table without the possibility of being caught by second-placed Al Nahda with 40 points, as only two rounds remain in the competition.

On the other hand, Bahla's tally froze at 14 points, leaving them in 11th place (before last), and they need a miracle to stay in the league next season. Bahla are six points behind Dhofar,



who occupy 10th place with 20 points, which means that their only chance of staying is to win the next two rounds with Dhofar losing each of them.

AI WAHDA RELEGATED
After losing in a strong confrontation against Al Nasr 1-0, Al Wahda were relegated to the first division league for



the next season. The match was held at Al Saada Sports Complex.

In the first half, the match was equal between the two

teams, as it ended in a draw. Despite some timid attacks from both sides, the real scoring opportunities were few. The goalkeeper for both teams

With this result, Seeb raised their points to 51, and are unassailable leaders in the 2023-24 Omantel League. Second-placed Al Nahda are 11 points behind on 40 points with only two rounds remaining.

was able to save the shots that reached the goal.

The start of the second half witnessed momentum from Al Nasr, when Walid al Muslimi managed to score the only goal in the match in the 47th minute, after a powerful shot from inside the penalty area. After the goal, Al Nasr increased the pace of their attacks in an attempt to score an additional goal, and Mehdi al Hamidan almost added the second goal in the 76th minute.

Al Wahda tried to respond to the pressure and created some threatening opportunities for Al Nasr's goal, but the strong defensive tactics of Al Nasr and the brilliance of their goalkeeper Hassan al Buraiki prevented any goals from being scored.

With this victory, Al Nasr's score rose to 28 points, snatching fifth place from Al Rustaq, while Al Wahda's relegation was officially confirmed.

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Oman aims to become a global energy source: OIA

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 8

Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, President of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), emphasised Oman's pioneering role in clean energy development, stressing in particular the country's ambitions to evolve into a global source of green energy.

Speaking to the media on Tuesday, shortly after the signing of key power and water agreements at W Muscat Hotel, Al Murshidi noted that renewable energy projects currently in progress and on the anvil will surpass Oman's energy requirements.

He further stated that the objective is for Oman to transform into a global energy provider, exporting renewable hydrogen in many forms, notably green ammonia, green methanol and other transportable derivatives.

Earlier, Nama Power and Water Procurement Co – part of Nama Group – signed power and water purchase agreements with a number of existing utilities in Oman to secure the country's electricity and potable water requirements over the next nine years.

The agreements cover supply commitments of over 1,500 MW of electricity and 200,000 cubic meters per day of desalinated water.

Al Murshidi underlined Oman's commitment to harnessing renewable power



OIA President Abdulsalam al Murshidi at the signing ceremony on Tuesday.

for electricity generation and water desalination in line with its Net-Zero pledges.

This goal is being pursued in close alignment with the imperative of securing Oman's power and water needs, he said. Tuesday's agreements were aimed at extending the operational lifespan of existing power plants with the objective of ensuring a continuous supply of energy at reasonable prices for consumers, he further noted.

Renewable energy projects, OIA's President said, are integral to Oman Vision 2040's strategy to diversify the economy and achieve sustainable development. To this end, the Omani government – represented by various stakeholder agencies – has signed a number of investment agreements during the recent Oman Sustainability Week (OSW).

Renewable energy projects will also play a crucial role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions and bolstering climate change mitigation efforts, he added.

Oman offers diverse tourism projects and integrated residential plans

MUSCAT: The real estate development sector in the Sultanate of Oman is a promising and enabling sector for implementing investment opportunities, and it is one of the most important fields that receive great attention supported by the readiness of the basic infrastructure system of roads, electricity, water, sewage, and a well-thought-out regulation and planning for the future of this vital sector.

Eng Khalid bin Nasser al Mahrouqi, Director General of Real Estate Development at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, affirmed that the ministry has worked on preparing a national plan for the development of the real estate development sector by studying and analysing the current situation of the sector and turning challenges into initiatives that contribute to stimulating it and enhancing investment opportunities to make the sector a major contributor to the Omani GDP.

He said in a statement to the Omani News Agency that one of the most prominent real estate development projects in the Sultanate of Oman is the Sultan Haitham City project, which is



The real estate development sector aims to attract about 70 of foreign direct investment to Oman.



Eng Khalid bin Nasser al Mahrouqi
Director General of Real Estate Development at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning.

the first smart and sustainable project like an integrated city with an area of 14.8 million square meters, including around 20,000 residential units distributed over 19 integrated neighbourhoods with various facilities and services that meet the needs of residents such as healthcare, schools, colleges, universities, mosques, roads for internal transportation, pedestrian and cycling paths, as well as water and sewage services.

He explained that there are many projects such as the Al Khuwair Downtown project, estimated at RO 800 million, and the development project of Green Mountain Front as an integrated tourist complex, which is currently under study, pointing out that these projects will add various tourism destinations in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman in modern and diverse styles.

TURN TO PAGE 15

Strategy to transform Greater Muscat into globally competitive metropolis

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, MAY 8

The Greater Muscat Structure Plan (GMSP) is a visionary initiative that aims to provide a more focused spatial development strategy for the sprawling 1360 km² metropolitan region of Muscat, a key project official has told the *Observer*.

Yaqoub al Harthy, Project Manager, said the Greater Muscat Structure Plan Project envisions a future where Greater Muscat evolves into a globally competitive metropolis. It confers upon Greater Muscat a crucial role in diversifying and upgrading Oman's export profile, by leveraging its functions in business, finance, logistics, and innovation.

"Muscat's evolution into a globally competitive metropolis is crucial for Oman's economic diversification efforts," said Al Harthy.

Rooted in the over-arching vision of the Oman National Spatial Strategy, the GMSP seeks to strengthen and promote



Greater Muscat's existing 15 clusters and economic districts are proposed to re-categorised into four primary categories.

sustainable design in the urban environment.

According to the official, the GMSP set outs a roadmap for economic diversification, poised to foster job creation, talent attraction, and investments across knowledge-based services and innovation-oriented industries.

Central to its mission is the strategic categorisation of Greater Muscat's existing 15 clusters and economic districts into four primary categories, each tailored to harness the region's inherent strengths and opportunities.

At its core, the GMSP aligns with the broader objectives of the Oman National Spatial Strategy, anchoring its vision in sustainable urban development and spatial planning.

By providing a comprehensive framework for focused spatial development, the project not only aims to propel Greater Muscat into a globally competitive metropolis but also to serve as a catalyst for broader socioeconomic advancement across Oman.

The GMSP anticipates significant economic expansion

within Greater Muscat, driven by the generation of numerous new and improved employment opportunities.

This expansion is expected to be achieved through heightened participation in the workforce, increased productivity, and a shift towards higher-value industries.

"By 2040, we anticipate total employment within Greater Muscat to reach 1.83 million, representing an annual growth rate of 4.1 per cent from its current level of 890 thousand in 2022," Al Harthy stated.

TURN TO P15

Samayil Industrial City localises 3 new projects worth RO 8 million

MUSCAT: Samayil Industrial City, affiliated with the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), signed 3 new contracts to localise projects specialised in water desalination, building materials and plastics, with a total volume of investments exceeding RO 8 million, to be built on 50,00 square metres area.

These projects will provide local and foreign markets with high-quality products manufactured using modern technologies, in addition to providing a range of career opportunities for Omani cadres.

The first contract that Samayil Industrial City signed with Tasnee Metals Company was to establish a project specialised in manufacturing desalination and water treatment equipment with an investment size estimated at RO 4.85 million and an area of 10,045 square metres.

The industrial signed the second contract with



The projects will provide local and foreign markets with high-quality products manufactured using modern technologies.

Al Manshur International Company to establish a project specialising in the manufacture of plaster, cement and adhesives, with an investment size estimated at RO 1.8 million and to be established on an area of 19,865 square metres.

The third contract was signed with the Future Industries Company to establish a project specialising in manufacturing plastic, rubber and plastic products with an investment amounting to RO 1.4 million on an area of 20,000 square metres. — ONA

Sohar Islamic introduces new Shariah-compliant credit cards

MUSCAT: Expanding its card portfolio to offer convenient payment solutions, Sohar Islamic, Sohar International's Islamic Window, has unveiled three new credit cards in the Signature, Platinum, and Gold categories. These Sharia-compliant cards combine exceptional benefits in travel, wellness and lifestyle, catering to the growing desire for exclusive services, elevated experiences and unique products.

With the newly launched propositions, customers can now enjoy flexible spending management and secure payments through the convenient contactless tap and go feature.

Furthermore, customers have the option to link their new Sohar Islamic credit cards to Samsung Wallet, enabling seamless digital transactions through Samsung Pay across a range of Samsung smart devices.

Commenting on the launch of the new credit cards, Abdulwahid al Murshidi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer at Sohar International said, "As a customer-centric bank, Sohar Islamic is deeply inclined toward introducing innovative propositions that add value to the lives of its customers.

Our specially curated new Sharia-compliant credit cards will go beyond empowering our customers with more financial flexibility and freedom – cardholders will also benefit from a seamless user experience, enhanced security, and abundant rewards."

With these credit cards, cardholders can take advantage of multiple payment options based on their financial preferences. They can either pay in full or opt for partial or minimum payments.

Meanwhile, the generous



rewards programme ensures that the bank's credit cardholders also enjoy attractive benefits such as loyalty points and exclusive discounts at partner merchants. With this, the bank places increased emphasis on parameters that are most valued.

Abdulwahid al Murshidi added, "At Sohar Islamic, we constantly strive to offer customers tailor-made solutions and custom-built experiences when it comes to their banking services.

The three credit cards represent a full range of options for our customers giving them the liberty to choose one that best fits their lifestyle needs."

Sohar Islamic has seamlessly integrated the new credit cards with the Sohar Islamic user-friendly mobile banking app. This integration allows customers to conveniently manage their card activities, make payments, and track their rewards from wherever they are.

Furthermore, Sohar Islamic has also equipped the cards with advanced security features as customer data protection and upholding the highest standards of security in transactions remain a top priority for the bank.

Facial injury turns into radiant smiles at Burjeel Hospital

MUSCAT: Marwa bint Salim bin Hamood al Khaifiyah, a 30-year-old international hockey player representing Team Oman, suffered a significant facial trauma during a game, resulting in fractures of her facial bones. Faced with the uncertainty of her future and the possibility of being unable to continue her international career, Marwa was understandably distraught.

However, hope was restored when she was promptly taken to the emergency room at Burjeel Hospital, Al Khuwair.

Through minimally invasive surgical procedures, the fractures were successfully treated, ensuring that the debilitating injury would not hinder her ability to play. In an astonishingly short period, Marwa made a remarkable recovery and was able to return to her beloved sport.

Expressing her gratitude, Marwa, the esteemed world hockey champion, extended her heartfelt appreciation to the exceptional interdisciplinary medical team at Burjeel Hospital – Al Khuwair.

She reserved special thanks for Dr Khader V Shaik, whose extraordinary care and support from the moment she arrived until her discharge made all the difference.

Marwa underwent jaw surgery



after being struck by a high-speed hockey ball while training for the Asian World Championship in Thailand.

Upon her arrival at Burjeel Hospital, Al Khuwair, a thorough examination revealed cheekbone fractures that required surgical intervention.

Thanks to the exceptional coordination, professionalism, and attentive care provided by the hospital's team, the surgery was a resounding success.

The follow-up care was equally commendable, ensuring Marwa's complete recovery. Now, she is back to training and eagerly anticipating rejoining her team for the Asian World Championship.

Marwa extends her heartfelt appreciation to Dr Khader V Shaik, and the entire team at Burjeel Hospital, Al Khuwair, for their invaluable assistance during her challenging time.

Their unwavering support and positive outlook played a pivotal

role in her journey to recovery. At Burjeel Hospital, we take pride in our specialised team dedicated to managing maxillofacial trauma cases with utmost expertise. Equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, we ensure that patients receive the highest level of care and attention they deserve.

Our commitment to providing personalised care to those in need is at the core of our mission. For more information, please contact 24399777.

Toyota honours Saud Bahwan Automotive as best distributor in the Middle East and Central Asia

MUSCAT: Recently, Toyota Motor Corporation bestowed upon Saud Bahwan Automotive the esteemed 'Gold Award' for their exceptional performance as the 'Distributor in the Middle East and Central Asia'.

This recognition underscores Saud Bahwan Automotive's commitment to excellence across various domains such as Sales and After-Sales, Customer Centric Initiatives, Carbon Neutrality and Best-in-Town Activities, among others.

The Award was presented by Masaru Shimada, General Manager, Middle East and Central Asia Division, Toyota Motor Corporation.

Accepting this prestigious accolade, Abdullah bin Mohamed Bahwan, Managing Director – Corporate, Saud Bahwan Group, expressed profound gratitude, stating, "We are delighted to receive the Gold Award for being the Best Distributor in the Middle East.

It is an honour for which we are grateful to our valuable customers who have always patronised us. Without them, an achievement like this wouldn't be possible. We will continue to do our best in all our endeavours and offer distinctive experiences that customers will cherish for long."

Extending his appreciation to Toyota Motor Corporation for this esteemed recognition, he added, "We would like to thank Toyota Motor Corporation for



Abdullah bin Mohamed Bahwan receiving the prestigious award



Toyota's prestigious 'Gold Award'

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Bank Muscat recognised for its contributions to sustainability and ESG

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, is pleased to announce that it has recently received the Sustainability Award in the ESG category at the Oman Sustainability Week Award ceremony held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center (OCEC).

The event was hosted under the auspices of Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, who handed over the award to Hamza bin Abbas al Ajmi, Deputy General Manager, Credit, Bank Muscat, with the presence of a number of senior officials and executives from various public and private sectors.

The event was organised to recognise the institutions that play a pioneering role in implementing sustainability and ESG practices.

The Oman Sustainability Week represents a national platform aiming to highlight Bank Muscat's role in the field of sustainability and the Sultanate of Oman's commitment to implementing innovative strategies and sustainable practices conducive to the development of the nation, as strategised in Oman Vision 2040 and in alignment with the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The Oman Sustainability Week came in existence to raise public awareness on sustainability. It also



Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, hands over the award to Hamza bin Abbas al Ajmi, Deputy General Manager, Credit, Bank Muscat.

represents a medium to enhance corporate responsibility for implementing strategic plans and embarking on sustainable and ESG practices which contribute to national development and sustainable economic growth.

Speaking on this achievement, Hamza bin Abbas al Ajmi, Deputy General Manager, Credit, Bank Muscat, said, "We are delighted to receive the Sustainability Award at the glittering OSW Awards ceremony, which reaffirms Bank Muscat's strategy of promoting sustainability through its endeavours of utilising and investing in renewable energy to expand sustainable projects as an integral pillar for creating national sustainable economy.

The Bank has undertaken many initiatives to promote

sustainability, including the development of its eco-friendly green finance product.

The launch of this product came with the aim to allow customers to install solar panels on their rooftops and use solar energy for a large part of their household energy requirements.

Bank Muscat is committed to implementing recent technologies to reduce water and electricity consumption rates, reduce gas emissions that lead to global warming, and decrease paper waste.

Furthermore, the Bank takes pride in having successfully installed solar panels in Al Koudh Meethaq branch to be the first branch in the Sultanate of Oman utilising and relying on renewable energy."



Oman's central greenmarket hub signs key pacts

CONRAD PRAHU

MUSCAT, MAY 8

Ahead of its much-anticipated launch in around six weeks, Silal — the Fruit and Vegetable Central Market currently nearing completion at Khazaen Economic City in Barka — has begun signing agreements with an array of prominent service providers who will play a pivotal role in the seamless and efficient operation of Oman's exclusive one-stop greenmarket.

On Tuesday, Silal signed an agreement with Masaco Trading Est for the establishment of a Central Sorting Unit on a 3,500 m2 area within the central market.

Muscat-based Masaco is a leading wholesale distributor of premium fruits, vegetables and eggs based in Oman. Established in 1974, the company specialises in the identification, elimination, reduction, substitution or control of significant quality and other operational risks.

Also on Monday, Silal announced the signing of an agreement with leading hypermarket chain LuLu Hypermarket for the establishment of a central refrigerated warehouse covering an area of 6,000 m2.

LuLu Hypermarket, the retail division of multinational LuLu Group International, operates more than 260 stores across the



Silal, Oman's integrated fruit and vegetable hub at Khazaen Economic City, is gearing for launch by mid-year.

Gulf region.

Just earlier, Silal inked an agreement with the Estate

Centre for Business, a start-up specialising in providing support services to Omani SMEs seeking

to operate the central market. Under the agreement, the Estate Centre for Business will operate and manage the Business Centre offering as many as 40 different types of services to businesses.

Separately, local Omani firm Modern Silver Hands Company has secured a contract to operate and manage ground handling operations in the new hub. In March, Silal signed an agreement with Yardi, a leading provider of software systems for investment and property management, to utilise its technology at the central market.

Utilising Yardi's unified cloud platform, Silal aims to efficiently manage its property

operations, including leasing, lease administration and facility management processes.

Covering an area of over 500,000 m2, Silal will host the modern, state-of-the-art version of the existing Al Mawaleh Central Market in the capital city, which is due to make way for tourism, commercial and retail investments.

Serving as a central logistics hub for wholesale transactions in fresh fruits and vegetables, Silal will help consolidate importers, exporters, wholesalers, retailers, consumers and customs and lab facilities in one destination. The facility is set to formally open by around the middle of this year.

Strategy to transform Greater Muscat into globally competitive metropolis

FROM PAGE 13

The GMSP actively supports key economic sectors through tailored district and cluster development initiatives. By granting these districts special economic privileges and providing them with necessary resources, the plan aims to bolster their global competitiveness.

"Beyond mere concentration, fostering dynamic ecosystems and value chains is expected to bolster productivity and innovation across economic sectors," Al Harthy noted.

Currently, Greater Muscat's economy employs approximately 890,000 workers, predominantly in construction, retail and manufacturing sectors. However,

there is an emphasised need to transition towards more digitally integrated and environmentally sustainable models.

"Greater Muscat aims to redefine its urban economy in alignment with Oman Vision 2040 and global trends. The future economy will cater to rising global demand for green products and services, mitigating the risk of reliance on products with diminishing future demand and high emissions," he explained.

To drive sustained economic growth in Greater Muscat, the city's integration with the global economy needs to be enhanced, the official said. In this regard, he outlines three primary pillars: emphasis on connectivity infrastructure, focus

on attracting Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) into strategic sectors, and implementation of internationalisation initiatives.

"Customised support programmes tailored for Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) will be essential. These initiatives may include activities such as brand development, participation in international trade fairs, assistance with market feasibility reports and provision of export credits," Al Harthy stressed.

"To thrive, Greater Muscat must develop an economy that produces goods and services valuable both domestically and internationally, attracting individuals to participate in its growth," he added in conclusion.

Oman offers diverse tourism projects and integrated residential plans

FROM PAGE 13

He pointed out that the real estate development sector aims to attract about 70 per cent of foreign direct investment to the Sultanate of Oman in the coming years, indicating that the sector will have positive ramifications by activating the role of small and medium companies as suppliers, contractors, construction sectors, building materials, and other businesses related to these projects.

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has recently launched 6 housing projects in various governorates of Oman within the Integrated Housing Plans and Neighbourhoods project.

These include Luban District in the Wilayat of Nakhal in Al Batinah South Governorate, Majd District in Suhar in Al Batinah North Governorate, Fort Al Zain in Bidbid in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, Al Ahed Neighbourhood in Al Amerat in Muscat Governorate, the Palm Hills project in Khasab in Musandam Governorate, and the Al Shorouk Neighbourhood in Salalah in Dhofar Governorate.

The total area of these projects reaches 3.3 million square metres, with an investment value of RO 333 million, including more than 5,000 diverse residential units.

The ministry also awarded several integrated residential plans covering a total area of 1.3 million square metres, with an investment value of RO 5.7 million, represented in Al Rustaq plan in Al Batinah South Governorate, the Nizwa plan in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, and Al Mudhaibi plan in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate.

On his part, Younis bin Khasib al Harrasi, Chairman of the Board of the Omani Real Estate Association, said that the real estate development projects announced by the Sultanate of Oman in the past few years are large projects that will undoubtedly have positive economic effects and represent a promising opportunity for investors.

This is in light of the government incentives and facilities provided, such as not needing local partners in addition to the multiple areas in which foreign investors can work and the possibility of obtaining financial facilities and other advantages, such as getting residence ranging from 5 to 10 years within the



The Sultan Haitham City project will provide numerous opportunities for investors and real estate developers.



Younis bin Khasib al Harrasi, Chairman of the Board of the Omani Real Estate Association

investor residency programme.

The real estate sector in Oman is witnessing significant growth.

The trading volume in 2023 grows by 6 per cent compared to 2022, expecting this growth to maintain its rates during the coming period due to the large projects announced and the actual start of the Sultan Haitham City project, which provides numerous opportunities for investors and real estate developers, he added.

He added: "What the Sultanate of Oman is witnessing at this stage of offering many opportunities for investors in the real estate development and tourism projects is unprecedented and in line with the government's directions."

The Omran Group — the Omani government's arm for tourism development and investment — is working on establishing and operating tourist destinations and providing various investment opportunities, attracting the best developers and operators of hospitality brands regionally and globally.

In recent years, Omran has signed strategic partnerships with several prominent developers on the regional and global levels, representing various tourism projects, with the most prominent being the Aida project in partnership with the Dar Global Group.

It aims to invest around

\$1.6 billion to establish a multi-purpose tourist project on an area of about 3.5 million square metres between the Yiti and Yanket areas in Muscat, with approximately 3,500 residential units and two hotels totalling 450 hotel rooms.

Omran is partnering with Diamond Developers to implement the Sustainable Yiti City project with an investment value of about \$1 billion, including the construction of 1,657 residential units featuring 300 eco-friendly villas with high-efficiency designs and various villa spaces, as the city relies entirely on renewable energy sources to operate all its facilities.

The group, in collaboration with Diyar Holding from Qatar, is executing the construction works in the Diyar Ras Al Hadd project in Sur in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate on an area of 1.9 million square metres, comprising around 200 hotel rooms and 50 villas distributed among five-star hotels, in addition to 1,029 residential units.

Omran has recently signed an agreement to develop the first Club Med resorts in the Middle East, in Khasab in Musandam Governorate, with an investment value exceeding \$100 million, adding around 300 hotel rooms upon its completion in 2028.

In collaboration with the Majid Al Futtaim Group, Omran aims to establish the Al Irfan Hills project in Muscat with a total development area of 4.5 million square metres to provide approximately 11,000 residential units, retail stores and other facilities.

Additionally, Omran has implemented various different tourism projects in the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, including the Jabal Sifa, Al Mouj Muscat, Muscat Bay, and Hawana Salalah projects, as well as owning hotel assets in several international hotels. — **ONA**

CB&I wins major contract for Marsa LNG tank storage

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT, MAY 8

CB&I, a leading global contractor for tank and terminal storage solutions, has secured a major contract for the construction of a LNG tank at the new LNG bunker hub set to be built by Marsa LNG at Sohar Port and Freezone in the Sultanate of Oman.

Houston-headquartered CB&I, a subsidiary of energy sector engineering and construction giant McDermott, termed the value of the contract as "significant", referring to values ranging from \$100-\$250 million.

As part of the contract, CB&I will undertake the engineering, procurement and construction (EPC) of a 165,000 m3 full containment concrete LNG storage tank with associated piping.

Last month, Marsa LNG — a partnership of French energy group TotalEnergies (80 per cent) and Oman's integrated energy group OQ (20 per cent) — announced a Final Investment Decision for the establishment of the 1 million tonnes per annum (mtpa) capacity LNG bunkering project, the output from which will be earmarked exclusively for maritime bunkering.

Total investment in the project



View of an LNG storage tank. For illustration only.

is estimated at \$1.6 billion.

The LNG bunkering hub will be powered entirely by renewable electricity supplied by a 300 MWp capacity solar PV plant planned to be set up at Shinas, about 30 km north of Suhar.

When operational by Q1 2028, the plant is set to be one of the lowest GHG emissions intensity LNG plants ever built worldwide, with a GHG intensity below 3 kg CO2e/boe (as opposed to the average emission intensity of LNG plants of around 35 kg CO2e/boe).

Leading engineering and technology contractor Technip Energies has been selected by Marsa LNG to build the LNG bunkering hub at Sohar Port against an EPC contract.

For CB&I, the latest contract award builds on the company's

longstanding presence in Oman's refining and petrochemicals industry.

Operating in Oman since 1968, CB&I has been involved in the construction of storage tanks related to, among other projects, the refinery complex of OQ Group in Suhar.

A consortium of CB&I and Saipem was also awarded an EPC contract for Package 3 of the Duqm Refinery project, which included the construction of a crude tank farm at Ras Markaz.

"Through this project, CB&I will contribute to the construction of one of the lowest GHG emissions intensity LNG plants ever built and the energy transition market in Oman," commented Cesar Canals, President and CEO of CB&I.

Oman-UAE rail project to deliver healthy economic returns



HAIDER AL LAWATI
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The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for CBO and OCCL.

The Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates (UAE), have begun to take the necessary measures to realise the railway project linking the two neighbours.

The ambitious project will finally join the railway network of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, which was halted due to political and financial circumstances that occurred in the region during the past two decades.

Oman's statement, delivered by Engineer Abdulrahman bin Salem al Hatmi, Group CEO of Asyad Group, said that preparations for this vital project have begun with the launch of construction work that will soon

connect the two countries.

The project will include the construction of two tunnels with a length of 2.5 kilometres, in addition to the construction of 36 bridges due to the terrain that characterises the Hafeet area, including mountains, highlands, and sandy areas.

The railway project will connect several areas between the two countries, including the city of Sohar, Al Ain and Al Buraimi, next to the city of Abu Dhabi, and will reduce the travel time between those cities much more than is done today via land roads for cars, providing all the comfort and luxury that the Gulf individual aspires to.

This will help achieve more economic and social returns and benefits, in addition to enhancing

tourism and trade among all GCC countries.

Key information shared by Asyad indicates that the project will contribute to achieving economic returns by enhancing public transportation operations for goods and products, so that one freight train trip can transport more than 25,000 tonnes of general goods or ship more than 270 standard containers.

Additionally, it will reduce carbon emissions by a rate of 10 times compared to other means of transportation, fulfilling the desires of international organisations that call for reducing these emissions by the year 2030.

This project will enable citizens and expatriates to obtain a new means of transportation,

especially since the project has become integral to its expansion between all the GCC countries.

It will later connect with Iraq and Türkiye and go directly to the European continent on the one hand, and from Iraq to Iran and then to Asia on the other hand.

The railway between Oman and the United Arab Emirates will undoubtedly achieve significant financial savings in transporting goods and products via land and sea, at a rate of 35 per cent to 40 per cent via land and 50 per cent via sea compared to the cost of other means of transportation, in addition to saving a lot of time.

The importance of trains between cities is great, as they are one of the important and basic means of transportation that

work to connect many passengers and travellers very quickly and in a short period of time, facilitating the movement of trade.

The railway between Oman and the UAE will also be distinguished in the operational aspect by several advantages, including speed, safety, regularity, psychological comfort, preservation of the environment, economy and savings in administrative and customs procedures.

This means is also considered one of the safest means of transportation compared to some of the disasters that occur today on automobile highways because of traffic accidents, considering that traffic accidents on railways are much less than accidents on road transport.

Ship IPO puts wind back in Korea Inc's sails



ROBYN MAK

The author is a columnist at Thomson Reuters.

AKKR - back end marine services firm may help South Korea catch up. Thanks to the artificial intelligence craze and geopolitics, equities across Asia are having their moment.

The KOSPI, though, has risen just 4% since the start of the year, underperforming benchmark indices in Japan, Taiwan and even Hong Kong. Wednesday's successful debut of HD Hyundai Marine Solution, which surged more than 40% in early trading, should buoy sentiment.

Despite boasting global champions in semiconductors, autos and more, South Korea's \$1.8 trillion stock market suffers from an anaemic valuation.

Blame powerful family-controlled conglomerates and weak corporate oversight. Taking a page out of Japan's big push to improve shareholder returns — which has helped lift the Nikkei 225 16% this year — South Korea's stock market watchdog in February unveiled its "Corporate Value-up Program".

Since then, overseas investors have bought a net \$7 billion-worth of stocks, data from Korea

Exchange show, helping boost foreign ownership of the KOSPI to roughly 35% as of early April - a three-year high.

That's not bad, but with the Nikkei ascending this year to record levels, South Korea is lagging behind.

That's partly self-inflicted. Last year, financial authorities banned short-selling. At the time, critics accused the government of meddling to please a huge constituency of retail investors ahead of parliamentary elections.

The ban is set to expire next month but has probably dampened sentiment, particularly for institutional investors suddenly unable to hedge their positions.

Against this backdrop, a lot was riding on HD Hyundai Marine Solution's initial public offering - the country's largest float in more than two years.

On paper, there's plenty to like about the company, which specialises in marine services spanning repair, maintenance and reconstruction.

Earnings surged 44% last year to 151.1 billion won (\$111 million), thanks to booming demand from ships going green. These eco-friendly vessels require more servicing and parts than conventional ones.

Better yet, the company is part of the HD Hyundai shipbuilding-to-oil refinery conglomerate and counts private equity heavyweight KKR as a major shareholder. Institutional investors bid for 200 times the amount of shares on offer, IFR reported, with allocations "heavily skewed" towards long-only funds. — Reuters



Workers of Hyundai Heavy Industries, the world's top shipbuilder, ride motorcycles beside a ship under construction at its dockyard in Ulsan. — Reuters

If it bleeds it leads, inflation edition



PAUL KRUGMAN

The writer is a New York Times Opinion columnist

By normal standards, the US economy continues to look very good. Unemployment has now been below 4% for 27 months, and inflation remains fairly low, albeit somewhat higher than the Federal Reserve's target of 2%. But if you say that, you get a lot of pushback; some get angry.

Much of that pushback is partisan. Donald Trump described Friday's jobs report, in which the unemployment rate rose — wait for it! — to 3.87% from 3.83%, as "horrible," and I'm sure that many Americans believed him.

But it's not all partisan. Some of the pushback comes from readers who are, if anything, to the left, and say something like this: "Well, maybe the economy is strong, but all the gains have gone to people at the top." Or "official inflation may be low, but prices of essentials like food and energy have hugely outpaced wage gains."

So I thought it might be worth putting together some data to show that these assertions aren't actually true — and describing some new research that may help explain why many people think they're true.

Let's start with the claim that recent growth has benefited only the affluent. Not many people seem to know this, but the truth has been nearly the opposite.

Since the pandemic, wages for lower-paid workers have risen substantially faster than wages for the highly paid, a phenomenon David Autor, Arindrajit Dube and Annie McGrew call "The Unexpected Compression."

But, you may say, maybe wages are rising faster at the bottom, but inflation also hits low-wage workers harder. That's a



The US economy's performance is evident with unemployment maintaining below 4% for 27 consecutive months. — NYT

reasonable objection.

But how big an issue is it? It turns out that the Bureau of Labour Statistics has experimental measures of inflation at different income levels.

Fully mapping these measures onto wage data would be a project for economists more experienced in such things than I am, but I've done a quick-and-dirty version.

The BLS regularly publishes estimates of typical weekly earnings at the 10th, 50th and 90th percentiles of the wage distribution, and it also publishes estimates of consumer prices for the bottom, middle and top quintiles of the income distribution, which roughly correspond.

Yes, inflation has run somewhat higher for lower-income Americans, probably because they spend a higher proportion of their income on food and energy. But the difference in inflation has been swamped by the difference in wage growth.

So the claim that lower-income Americans have been hurt worse by inflation isn't supported by the facts. Yes, America has a huge problem with inequality, and I'm a big supporter of efforts to make our society less unequal.

But while the problem isn't fixing itself, it also hasn't gotten worse in recent years.

Still, haven't the prices of essentials like food and energy risen much faster than wages?

While it's true, as I just said, that these types of goods might have a relatively high influence on how inflation affects lower earners, the full answer may surprise you.

First, let's look at how the prices of food at home compare with the usual weekly earnings of the median worker. Food prices were low relative to wages during the worst of the pandemic, then shot up as the economy recovered and, especially, after Russia attacked Ukraine.

At this point, however, the typical worker's purchasing power in terms of food is about what it was in early 2019, when, as I seem to recall, a guy named Trump was boasting about how great the economy was.

What about energy? The price of a gallon of gasoline as a percentage of usual weekly earnings fluctuates a lot but at this point it's more or less in the same range it was in for much of the late 2010s.

So tales of Americans struggling to cope with sky-high prices, both of goods in general and of essentials, don't seem to match the data.

Of course, some people may believe that the data are all being faked by the deep state; if you do, it's hard to have a discussion, although I might note that private measures like that provided by Trufflation look a lot like the government data.

Why, then, do so many people believe otherwise?

One answer may lie in a new report by Ryan Cummings, Giacomo Fraccaroli and Neale Mahoney, writing for Briefing Book, a website I've been finding incredibly valuable.

Their report, titled "Bad news bias in gasoline price coverage," shows that there are far more TV news reports about gas prices when they're high than when they are low.

As I said, gas prices fluctuate a lot. If people hear about them only when they're high, we shouldn't be surprised if the public perceives gas prices as unusually high compared with wages, even if they aren't.

The authors don't do the same exercise for food prices, but I have no doubt that the same phenomenon is true there as well.

Everybody heard about soaring egg prices in 2022; I know for a fact that many people weren't aware that prices plunged even more rapidly in 2023.

This bad-news bias needn't reflect partisanship. Much of it probably reflects the old adage "If it bleeds, it leads."

But why should this bias be worse now than in the past? I haven't tried to quantify this, but it seems clear that we've had a lot more wild price swings than usual in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic. And given bad-news bias, this could lead to a perception that inflation is worse than it is.

— The New York Times

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CULTURE

Visitors walk inside the ancient Orthodox church now converted as the Kariye Mosque in Istanbul. — AFP



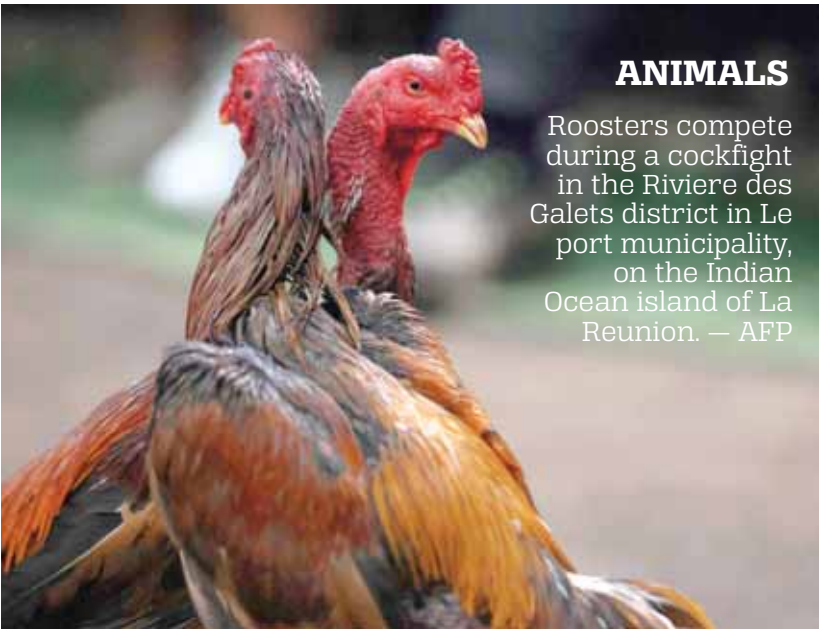
FASHION

A model presents a creation by Colombian designer Monica Fonnegra as part of the Createx fair in Bogota. — AFP



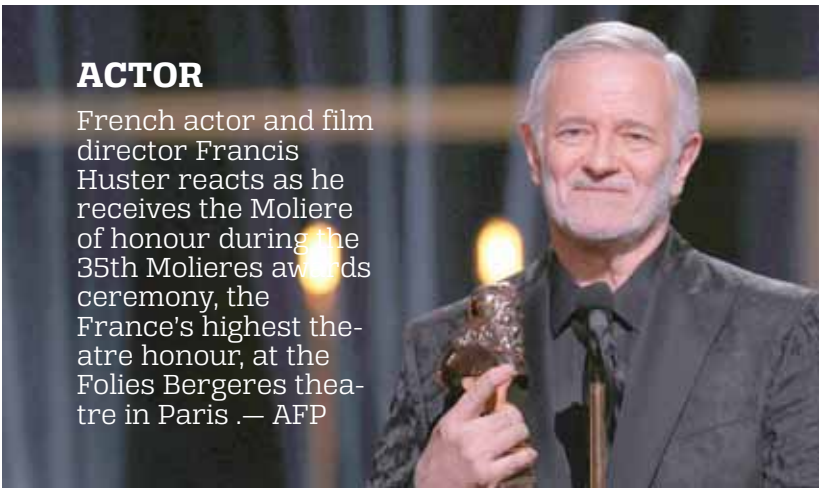
ENTERTAINMENT

US actress Zendaya arrives for the 2024 Met Gala at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York. The Gala raises money for the Metropolitan Museum of Art's Costume Institute. — AFP



ANIMALS

Roosters compete during a cockfight in the Riviere des Galets district in Le port municipality, on the Indian Ocean island of La Reunion. — AFP



ACTOR

French actor and film director Francis Huster reacts as he receives the Moliere of honour during the 35th Moliere awards ceremony, the France's highest theatre honour, at the Folies Bergeres theatre in Paris. — AFP

art & life

THURSDAY | MAY 9, 2024 | DHUL QA'ADA 1, 1445 AH

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OMAN MAKES A FASHION STATEMENT AT ISTANBUL MODEST FASHION WEEK

Oman shines at Istanbul Modest Fashion Week, with its unique blend of tradition and elegance. Halima Aden's presence elevates the event, highlighting the importance of modest fashion and sustainability. Priyah Prakash Pawani, as Oman's ambassador, promotes inclusivity and cultural exchange, bridging gaps between nations through fashion... **P20**

MUSIC

Remastered Beatles movie 'Let It Be' gets long-awaited re-release



"LET IT BE", THE DOCUMENTARY film about The Beatles released just after the band's break up in 1970, hit screens again on Wednesday — the first time it has been legally available in over 50 years. Shot in January 1969, director Michael Lindsay-Hogg's movie contained glimpses of the tensions and acrimony between John Lennon, Paul McCartney, George Harrison and Ringo Starr that eventually

led to them disbanding. "George wasn't getting many songs recorded because John and Paul were so prolifically brilliant," Jonathan Clyde of the Beatles' Apple Corps said. "John had met Yoko (Ono) and was making his own journey, Paul was doing what he wanted to do and Ringo had started shooting films," he said.

The film shows the "Fab Four" in rehearsals and recording sessions for the album "Let It Be". The last part features their unannounced 40-minute concert on the roof of their record company building on London's Savile Row. It was restored from the original 16mm negative with the sound remastered using

the latest de-mixing technology, and has been re-released on Disney+.

MORE OBJECTIVE

Clyde said the film covered a period when they had tried to rekindle the same spirit they had when they started out performing at Liverpool's Cavern Club and in Hamburg. But it became tainted by the break-up in April 1970, a month before the film was released, unfairly making it a "sort of odd postscript to the end of their career", he added. "They never felt a great love for 'Let It Be' because I think it was associated with all the trouble," he told an audience after a screening of the remastered film in London on Tuesday. More than half a century later it could now be seen in a more objective light as an invaluable record of the Beatles' creative process. "We all know they were genius, they created this incredible music year after year after year but actually they also worked incredibly hard at it," he said. "You can see that two steps forward one step back, days when really nothing happened and then suddenly a burst of energy that took it forward."

Iconic Some 60 hours of previously unseen footage shot for the film was used by "Lord of the Rings" director Peter Jackson for his 2021 series on the making of "Let It Be". Jackson's "The Beatles: Get Back", a documentary about a documentary, offered a more positive take on the Beatles' final months together using the outtakes to show the bandmates joking around together as they created classics for their 12th and last studio album. The climax of Lindsay-Hogg's documentary is the rooftop gig, their last public performance together. Music journalist and critic John Harris said it was a snapshot of London in 1969 with office workers and passers-by dressed in bowler hats or mini skirts stopping in the street or clambering onto the tops of neighbouring buildings to get a good view. "It evokes London in that period which is amazing to see — blokes who fought in the First World War wearing hats, all those people who stream out onto the roofs. "It's iconic, John in his fur coat and Ringo in his red plastic mac and Paul... in that beautiful black suit and George in his green trousers and his baseball boots. It's all perfect," he said. — AFP

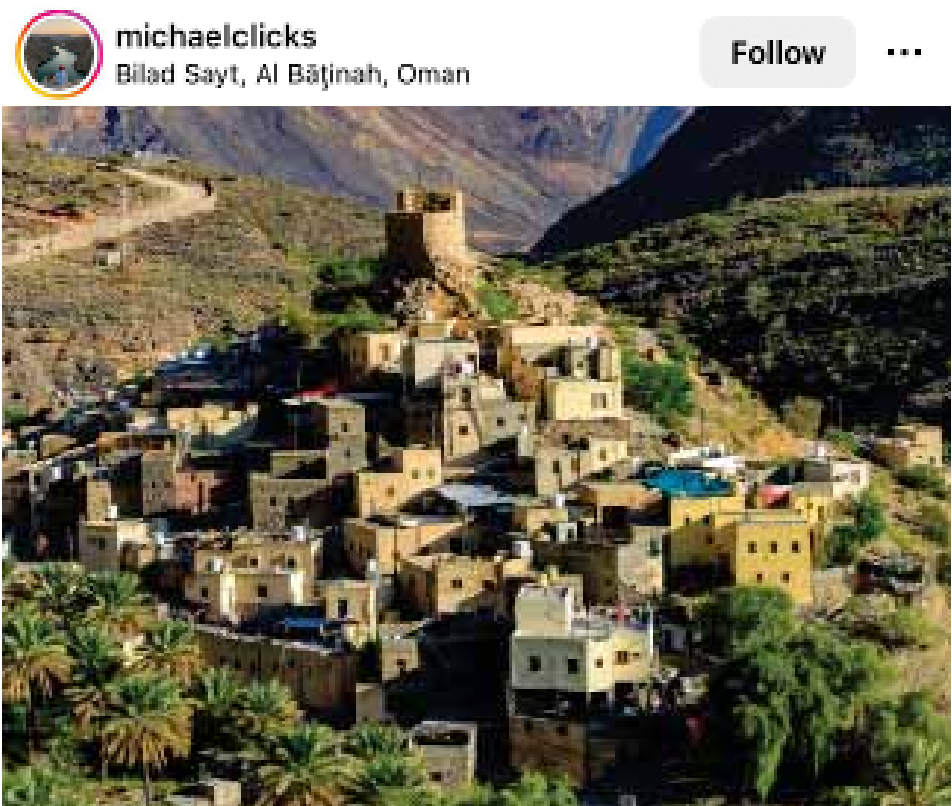


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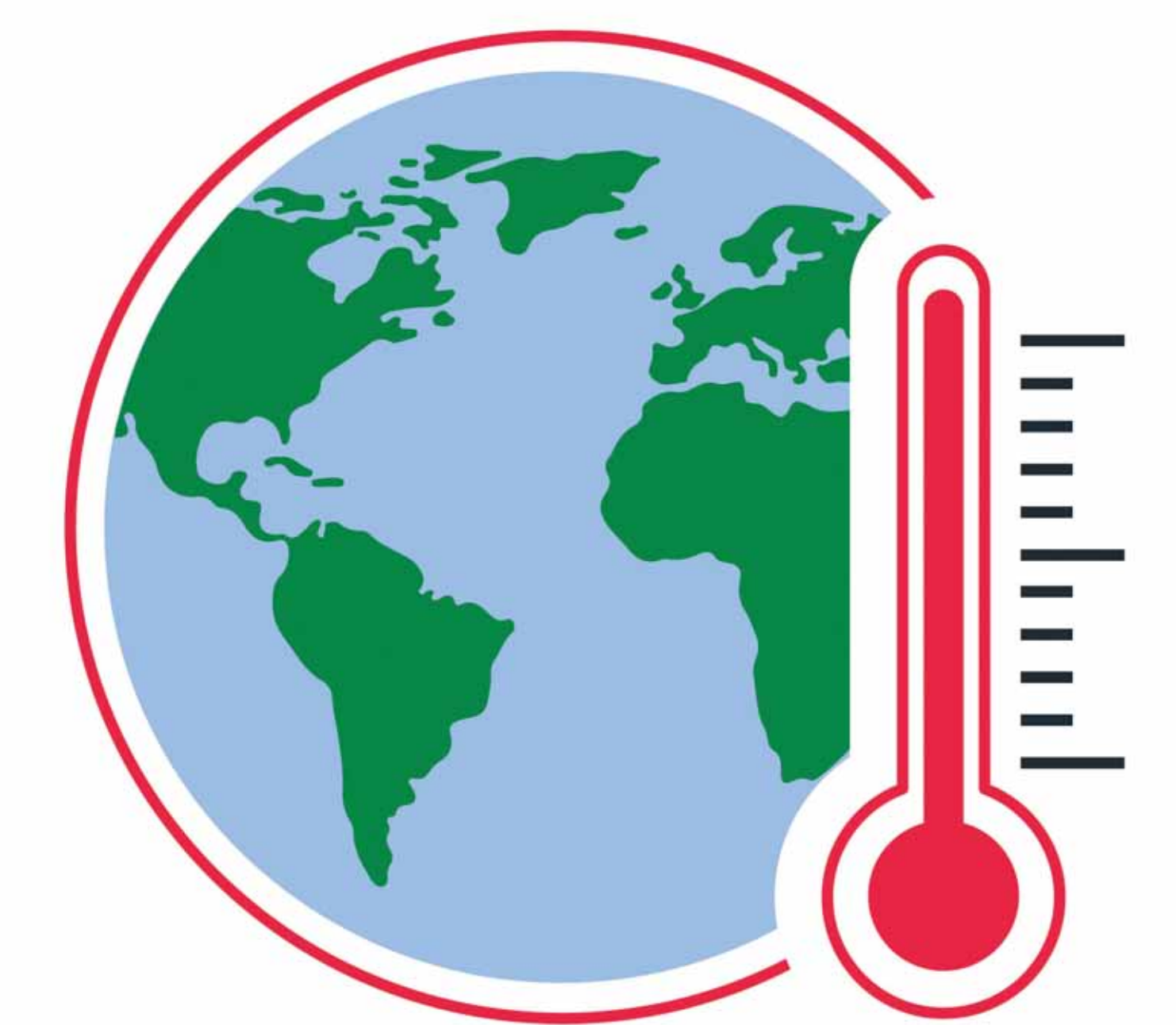
INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



World's oceans
suffer from
record-breaking
year of heat

Fuelled by climate change, the world's oceans have broken temperature records daily over the past year (2023). Nearly 50 days have smashed existing highs for the time of year by the largest margin in the satellite era. Planet-warming gases are mostly to blame, but the natural weather event El Niño has also helped warm the seas. The super-heated oceans have hit marine life hard and driven a new wave of coral bleaching. This analysis is based on data from the EU's Copernicus Climate Service, BBC news reported. Copernicus also confirmed that last month was the warmest April 2024 on record in terms of global air temperatures, extending that sequence of month-specific records to 11 in a row. For many decades, the world's oceans have been the Earth's 'get-out-of-jail card' when it comes to climate change. Not only do they absorb around a quarter of the carbon dioxide that humans produce, they also soak up around 90 per cent of the excess heat. But over the past year (2023), the oceans have displayed the most concerning evidence yet that they are struggling to cope, with the sea surface particularly feeling the heat. From March 2023, the average surface temperature of the global oceans started to shoot further and further above the

long-term norm, hitting a new record high in August. Recent months have brought no respite, with the sea surface reaching a new global average daily high of 21.09C in February and March this year (2024), according to Copernicus data. Not only has every single day since 4 May 2023 broken the daily record for the time of year, but on some days the margin has been huge. Around 47 days smashed the record for that day of the year by at least 0.3C, according to BBC analysis of Copernicus data. Never before in the satellite era had the margin of record been this big. The biggest record-breaking days were 23 August 2023, 3 January 2024 and 5 January 2024, when the previous high was beaten by around 0.34C. This human-driven ocean warming is having considerable impacts on global sea life and may even be shifting the seasonal cycle of sea temperatures, according to a recent study. Perhaps the most significant consequence of the recent warmth has been the mass bleaching of coral globally. These key ocean nurseries turn white and die because the waters they live in grow too hot. They are a critical element in the ocean ecosystem, home to around a quarter of all marine species. Unusually warm seas may also have taken a direct toll on



one of the most beloved ocean-going creatures in the coldest continent, the emperor penguin. One important factor that's made the last year more impactful in seas all over the world has been the El Niño weather phenomenon, adding to human-driven emissions of warming gases. El Niño sees warmer waters come to the surface of the Pacific. As a result, it tends to push up the global average. El Niño kicked into gear in

June 2023 - after a prolonged period of cooler La Niña conditions - and reached a peak in December, although it has since been fading away. But other ocean basins that aren't usually affected by El Niño have also experienced record marine heatwaves - leaving scientists trying to work out exactly what is going on. This heat is still persisting in many ocean basins, including the tropical Atlantic.

Warmer seas give tropical storms extra energy, and this could help to fuel a potentially damaging hurricane/cyclone/typhoon season. As well as these short-term impacts, researchers warn there will be long-term consequences that society will have to adapt to. For example, ice-sheet melting and deep-ocean warming are likely to continue to fuel sea-level rise in the centuries to come.— **ONA**

TECHNOLOGY

Samsung to launch new
update for its mid-range
smartphones

SAMSUNG TO LAUNCH New Update for its Mid-Range Smartphones Seoul, Samsung intends to launch the One UI 6.1 update for its mid-range smartphones, as the expected update will be released for the Galaxy A53 and S21 FE phones during the second half of this month (May 2024). The

update will reach more mid-range and economic Samsung phones, with priority given to the newest versions. The company previously stated that the One UI 6.1 update, which includes many artificial intelligence (AI) features, will reach more than 100 million devices in 2024, the company said in a



statement. Samsung recently launched this update to its Galaxy S21, S22, and S23 phones, in addition to the 3rd, 4th, and 5th generation of its foldable phones, and the Galaxy Tab S9 versions of its tablets. Although Samsung will make the One UI 6.1 update available to mid-range phones, it is unlikely that these phones will get advanced AI features. Rather, Samsung may only provide limited features, such as the "Circle to Search" feature, as these features require high specifications in order to work efficiently. The One UI 6.1 update is

not limited to AI features only, but also offers other improvements and additions, such as custom stickers and improvements to the Gallery application and Video Player. The update also includes the new Quick Share feature, the Samsung Find application, and Auracast Bluetooth technology. The update also improves Samsung's cloud, health, and wallet services, and adds new features, such as quick access to video call effects and voice input without leaving the keyboard, improvements to weather and battery options, and more.— **ONA**

OMAN MAKES A FASHION STATEMENT AT ISTANBUL MODEST FASHION WEEK



BY KABEER YOUSUF

The Sultanate of Oman left its mark on the ninth edition of Global Modest Fashion Week, hosted in Istanbul from April 25 to 27. The event buzzed with excitement, responsibility and a fresh perspective, further enhanced by the presence of American fashion model Halima Aden.

Modest fashion refers to clothing that covers the body in a way that is deemed modest according to cultural or religious beliefs. It often involves garments with longer hemlines, higher necklines, and looser fits, prioritising modesty over revealing or form-fitting designs. Modest fashion can vary greatly depending on cultural norms and individual interpre-

tion statement holds significance, symbolising its role as a catalyst for change in the industry. More than just a show of vogue, the event marked the global unity of humanity for a noble cause.

Priyah Prakash Pawani, a renowned fashion model, was represented at the event as the Modest Fashion Brand Ambassador of Oman and a guest speaker, thanks to the backing of Muhammet Hekimoğlu, Ambassador of Türkiye to Oman and Turkish Airlines, Türkiye's flag carrier.

She eloquently underscored the importance of inclusivity, diversity and the democratisation of modest clothing and fashion. Turkish Airlines, Türkiye's flag carrier, played a pivotal role in facilitating and encouraging Priyah Prakash



Pawani's journey to Istanbul, for which she expressed deep gratitude.

In her role as an ambassador, Priyah Prakash Pawani's primary objective this year was to foster connections between artists and their designs, fostering cultural and social ties between Oman and Türkiye. Her attire, exquisitely crafted by acclaimed Omani fashion designer, Faiza al Balushi from Chiffon Style, proudly showcased Oman and India in its traditional elegance. As an Indian who represented Oman at the TMFW, she also adorned a Saree, a timeless classic in its Modest form.

With more beauty queens and pageant winners embracing Modest Fashion, this year's IMFW stood out as one of the best people have seen so far.

TURKIYE AS A FASHION HUB

Türkiye is fast emerging as a global capital for modest fashion, owing to a convergence of cultural, economic and social factors. With its rich cultural heritage and a significant Muslim population, Türkiye embodies values of modesty and decency, making it a natural fit for the modest fashion movement.

Istanbul, in particular, has become a bustling hub for the fashion industry, attracting designers, influencers and retailers from around the world. This growth has provided a platform for modest fashion designers to showcase their talents and creations, contributing to Türkiye's status as a fashion hotspot.

Moreover, the influence of social media, particularly platforms like Instagram, has played a crucial role in popularising modest fashion trends, with Turkish influencers and bloggers amplifying these styles to a global audience.

For Middle Eastern women, Türkiye offers a diverse range of stylish yet modest clothing options that resonate with their cultural and religious values, making it an attractive destination for fashion enthusiasts seeking both tradition and trend.

tations, but it generally emphasises elegance, simplicity and dignity without sacrificing style or personal expression.

Halima is noted for being the first woman to wear a hijab in the Miss Minnesota USA 2016 pageant, where she was a semifinalist. Following her participation in the pageant, Halima received national attention and was signed to IMG Models. Her attendance added much-needed attention and recognition for modest fashion and sustainability.

Themed this year 'A Unique Fashion Call for Solidarity,' Istanbul Modest Fashion Week 2024 promises to be an exclusive addition to the global MFW journey and bring together designers, artists and personalities from diverse backgrounds, cultures and industries, uniting them for a common cause.

Every aspect of the IMFW 2024 fash-