

P13

CONSTRUCTION  
BIDS INVITED FOR  
LANDMARK MUTTRAH  
SQUARE PROJECT



P12

SINNER,  
MEDVEDEV SET UP  
QUARTERFINAL  
CLASH



P20

ARCHAEOLOGICAL  
DISCOVERIES IN AL ARID  
SHED LIGHT ON OMAN'S  
EARLY BRONZE AGE



MUSCAT

‘FALLING WALLS LAB’  
WINNERS NAMED

Acting in cooperation with the German organisers of the Falling Walls Foundation, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation on Tuesday marked the conclusion of the 9th national edition of the contest. The ceremony was held at the Innovation Complex in Muscat Governorate under the auspices of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation. First place in the competition went to Tasneem bint Mohammed al Dawoodiyah who shared the trophy with Duha bint Jamal al Barwaniyah. Their project focused on methods to cut down the use of heavy oil through green energy applications. Al Waleed bin Yousef al Maharbi merited second place for his project about the deposition of wax in pipelines. Third place was won by Samia bint Nasser al Riyamiyah for her project on improvising a sustainable water filter. **DETAILS ON P3**

OMAN, INDIA  
TO EXPLORE JVS

OCCI Board Member Eng Redha bin Jumaa al Saleh said that the Oman-India Business Forum constituted a platform for Omani and Indian companies to explore investment opportunities in key sectors like food security, building materials, petroleum and pharmaceutical products, jewellery and textile and plastic industries. The forum, organised by OCCI, was held on Tuesday, which reviewed joint investment opportunities between the two countries in commercial sectors. Al Saleh added that the two countries recently saw remarkable growth in bilateral trade and engaged in developing a comprehensive economic partnership. He said that the value of bilateral commercial exchange stood at RO 1.2 billion (\$3.1 billion) by the end of 2024. **DETAILS ON P13**

KYIV

RUSSIAN MISSILES  
KILL 50 IN UKRAINE



At least 50 people were killed and 271 wounded when Russia hit a military institute in Ukraine’s central town of Poltava with two ballistic missiles on Tuesday, the war’s deadliest single attack this year. Photographs posted on social media showed several bodies of young men on the ground covered in dust and debris, with the badly damaged side of a large building behind them. Reuters could not immediately verify the images. President Volodymyr Zelenskyy ordered a full and prompt investigation, saying the strike damaged a building of the Military Institute of Communications. The emergency service gave the death toll of 50; other officials said 51 were killed. A further 15 people may still be under the rubble, according to Poltava regional governor Filip Pronin. **SEE P7**

A BREATHTAKING NATURAL BEAUTY



Discover the tranquil beauty of Wadi Darbat, a hidden gem nestled in Dhofar’s majestic landscape. Salalah is renowned for its breathtaking natural scenery and peaceful ambiance. Wadi Darbat stands out as a remarkable spot, offering a unique glimpse into the enchanting landscapes that make Dhofar truly special. **PHOTO BY NASSER AL HARRASI**

# Israel kills 33 Palestinians

EARLY POLIO VACCINATION TARGETS SURPASSED IN GAZA

**CAIRO:** Israeli forces killed 33 Palestinians across Gaza in the past 24 hours, Palestinian officials said on Tuesday, but brief pauses in fighting allowed medics to conduct a third day of polio vaccinations for children.

Among those killed were four women in the southern city of Rafah and eight people near a hospital in Gaza City in the north, the Palestinian Civil Emergency Service said. Others were killed in separate air strikes across the territory, it said.

The Israeli military said it killed eight Palestinians, including a senior Hamas commander, at a command centre near Al Ahli Arab Hospital in Gaza City. Nevertheless, the World Health Organization (WHO) said that it was ahead of its targets for polio vaccinations in Gaza on Tuesday, day three of a mass campaign, and had inoculated about a quarter of children under 10.

The campaign, which was hastened by the discovery of the first polio case in a Gazan baby last month, relies on daily eight-hour pauses in fighting in specific areas of the besieged enclave.



A Palestinian civil defence member stands near a building on fire that was hit by Israeli bombardment in the Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood in the north of Gaza City on Tuesday. — **AFP**

Diplomatic efforts to secure a permanent ceasefire and release foreign and Israeli captives and return many Palestinians jailed by Israel have stalled, however.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Monday that Israeli troops would remain in the Philadelphi corridor on the southern edge of Gaza, one of the main

sticking points in reaching a deal to end the fighting and return captives. Hamas, which wants an agreement to end the war and see Israeli forces out of all of the Gaza Strip, says such a condition, among some others, would prevent a deal.

**POLIO CAMPAIGN**  
The United Nations, in collaboration with the local health authorities, embarked on the third day of a complex campaign to vaccinate around 640,000 children in Gaza. Rik Peepkorn, WHO representative for the Occupied Palestinian territories, told reporters in Geneva that it had vaccinated more than 161,000 children under 10 in the central area in the first two days of its campaign, compared with a projection of around 150,000. “Up until now things are going well,” he said. “These humanitarian pauses, up until now they work. We still have 10 days to go.” He said that some children in southern Gaza were thought to be outside the agreed zone for the pauses and that negotiations continued in order to reach them. — **Reuters**

## OMAN INTEGRATES AI INTO SCHOOL EDUCATION

**PARIS:** The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Education, is taking part in the activities of the International Conference “Unesco Digital Learning Week,” which is currently being held from September 2 to 5 at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) in Paris. This year, the conference is held under the slogan “Directing Technology in Education.” Oman’s delegation to the conference is headed by Majid bin Said al Bahri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs. During the sessions held on the sidelines of the conference, Oman’s delegation presented a scientific paper which reviewed the experience of the Ministry of Education in integrating artificial intelligence into school education. Moreover, the head of the delegation met with the Assistant Director-General for Education at Unesco and a number of experts in the organisation in the field of education to discuss means of enhancing joint cooperation between the two sides. Unesco Digital Learning Week is a major event held annually in the field of digital learning and education transformation. It aims to enhance cooperation and the exchange of views among education leaders, those interested in digital education, policy makers, researchers and practitioners from United Nations agencies, governments, NGOs and the private sector. The event comes to promote the digital transformation of education. It also aims to ensure the ethical use of artificial intelligence and how to benefit from it in the learning assessment process; to build educational systems that enhance the relationship between digital transformation and green transformation, empower students and raise their awareness of artificial intelligence technologies, guide and support teachers as users of artificial intelligence in the educational process and support students in acquiring artificial intelligence competencies as part of digital citizenship education. **PHOTO ON P3**

## Study sheds light on mystery of giant galaxies



There are clusters of gigantic stars.

**WASHINGTON:** When the James Webb Space Telescope began sending back its first images of the universe’s infancy two years ago, there were some surprises. Instead of tiny galaxies that had not yet had time to grow, there were clusters of gigantic stars that seemed to challenge the most widely accepted cosmological models.

Earlier this year (2024), the most luminous object in the universe was discovered 12 billion light-years away: a quasar so bright that for decades it had been mistaken for a nearby star. Instead of a sun, it was a disk of gas and dust seven light-years across orbiting a black hole with the mass of 17 billion suns.

The universe’s predilection for forming very massive objects in areas with high galaxy density was then suggested as a possible explanation. In the current universe, after billions of years of cosmic expansion, everything is further away and there is no longer enough mass to generate gigantic objects so quickly. — **Agencies**



# Khareef is a hidden treasure for agricultural research

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The khareef season in Dhofar, known for transforming the region into a lush green paradise, is often celebrated for its appeal to tourists and its boost to local businesses. While thousands of visitors flock to enjoy the mild foggy weather and dew-covered landscapes, there is another, lesser-known aspect of khareef that holds immense value is its potential for agricultural research. Dhofar is a biodiversity hotspot, with around 800 of the 1,200 identified plant species in Oman found here. The khareef season allows agricultural scientists to study these species in their natural habitat, particularly those that bloom exclusively during the monsoon months. The continuous rainfall

hydrates the trees, causing them to flourish naturally without any manual intervention. For scientists, this is an ideal time to observe and document plant behaviours, growth patterns, and ecological interactions unique to this season. Dr Ahmed al Shanfari, Director of the Department of Agricultural and Livestock Research in Dhofar, highlights the advantages of khareef for agriculture: “Dhofar Governorate enjoys many advantages during the autumn season, especially for the agricultural sector. “The climate with low temperatures and moderate humidity, accompanied by rain drizzle, increases water availability and reduces the rate of transpiration and evaporation. This provides a suitable climate for vegetation, allowing crops



Dhofar is a biodiversity hotspot, with around 800 of the 1,200 identified plant species

and all plants to grow rapidly and produce abundant fruits,” he said. According to him, “the farmers take advantage of this season to grow local crops like cucumbers, beans, and corn, and to harvest wild mushrooms from valleys and mountain slopes for sale in local markets. The rain also helps reduce salinity in farms

and groundwater, which benefits agriculture throughout the year.” From July to September, the monsoon winds bring delicate drizzling fog to Dhofar, covering the mountain slopes and coastal areas. This natural phenomenon awakens the land from its dry slumber, blanketing the region in a tender green carpet of grass adorned with vibrant flowers. For three months, dry wadis fill with water, nourishing native plants long after the monsoon ends. This period also provides scientists a unique opportunity to study the region’s rich biodiversity in full bloom. Fog management is another area of research during khareef. The fog that envelops the region is a vital water source in an otherwise arid climate. Dr Nadim Farajalla, an Associate Professor of

Environmental Hydrology at the American University of Beirut, emphasises in his research the importance of fog harvesting as a viable water source in arid regions. Scientists in Dhofar are exploring how fog can be effectively managed to conserve water and support sustainable agriculture. While khareef is often seen as a tourist attraction, its significance for agricultural research is profound. It provides a unique opportunity to study the rich flora of Dhofar, understand the region’s ecological dynamics, and explore innovative water management techniques. Khareef, therefore, is more than just a season of natural beauty; it is a time for scientific discovery and agricultural advancement that benefits both the region and beyond.

## FOCUS ON SUSTAINABLE AND SAFE SCHOOL TRANSPORTATION

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For many students, the school day begins and ends with a bus ride, making safe school transportation a top priority for parents and stakeholders. As schools reopen, the focus often lies on registration, purchasing books, and preparing supplies, but the critical need to educate students on safety during transportation is sometimes overlooked. A recent study exploring advancements in school transportation safety highlighted three key factors for ensuring secure bus travel: Well-designed and regularly maintained buses, comprehensive driver training, and robust management of safety protocols. These elements are essential for providing a reliable, sustainable, and safe transportation system for students. At the start of this year, a significant agreement was signed between the Ministry of Education, the Development Bank, and Karwa Motors Company, coordinated by the General Secretariat of the Tender Board. This agreement aims to phase out old school buses and replace them with 5,000 new



buses over the next five years. The new fleet will feature the latest safety and monitoring systems to ensure a safe and comfortable journey for students from home to school and back. Additionally, this initiative includes training drivers to obtain a preventive driving license, enhancing their ability to navigate safely. The project not only aims to elevate safety standards but also supports the national economy by promoting local Omani industries and providing opportunities for small and medium enterprises. Issa bin Saleh al Rashdi, Director of the School Transport Department at the Ministry of Education, emphasised that renewing school transport contracts and introducing new buses are part of the ministry’s broader strategy to align with traffic safety standards.

Al Rashdi also noted that the Ministry is committed to renewing over 20,000 school transportation vehicles and has already deployed more than 800 new buses equipped with high-quality features, at a cost of 4.8 million Omani riyals. The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology has further organized efforts to regulate school transport activities, emphasising the need for bus drivers to comply with safety standards and register buses on the ministry’s transportation platform. They also conduct regular inspection campaigns under the slogan “A Safe and Sustainable Integrated School Transportation System” to ensure compliance with the Land Transport Law and safety regulations. Bus drivers play a crucial role in maintaining the trust placed in them by parents, ensuring that students are safely transported to and from school. This responsibility extends to all road users, who must prioritise school buses and exercise caution in areas where students are present. The combined efforts of bus drivers, the ministry, and the broader community are vital in creating a safe transportation environment for all students.

### OVER 7,000 WILD SEEDLINGS DISTRIBUTED FOR ECO INITIATIVE

**IBRI:** An Omani environmental initiative in Al Dhahirah Governorate kicked off through the distribution of more than 7,000 seedlings of wild trees to various public and private establishments and individuals. The aim is to spread greenery in an open area where the growth of wild plants can maintain the ecological balance upright. The initiative is based on volunteers’ collecting seeds and plants from various desert and mountainous environments, valleys and plains and then nurse the stocks in large quantities in a “seed bank”. — ONA



## Omani author’s novel short-listed for literature award

**AMMAN:** A novel authored by Omani writer Ruqayya bint Abdullah al Badiyah has been short-listed for the 18th edition of “The Abdul Hameed Shoman Children’s Literature Award”. The novel, titled ‘The Boy Who Ran with His Heart’, focused on the theme of ‘Adventure Literature’, a genre of discourse dedicated to the age group 12-16 years. Shoman Foundation appointed a jury tasked with assessing the entries to the award.



Ruqayya bint Abdullah al Badiyah

The jury comprised professionals in literature, criticism, and children’s literature. he criteria for evaluating the works were based on language, style, content, ideas, innovation and the authenticity of the works. The jury, acting in the most transparent manner, would look out for entries that meet “the highest standards”, without knowing the names of the participants or the countries to which they belong. — ONA

# Al Jabal Al Akhdhar gearing up for Olive Harvest Festival

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Yet again, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is all set to host the Olive Harvest Festival as the mountain is clad in olivine, which attracts people from across the country and beyond for days long activities and fun and frolic from September 26 to 28. The festival, currently in its third edition, is the celebration of annual olive cultivation and this governorate’s bountiful olive harvest promises an unforgettable experience, featuring storytelling, olive oil pressing, and other fun-filled activities. The unique Mediterranean-style climate, which is a rarity in Oman and the Middle East, for which Al Jabal Al Akhdhar

is known for, allows for the cultivation of a rich variety of fruits and vegetables. This unique environment nurtures the humble olive, giving rise to a thriving local olive oil industry and olives are considered a symbol of peace and prosperity. It is said that local farmers began growing the crop after the former King of Spain brought olives as a gift on a visit to the country. Just as the people on the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar who are in awe, hotels on the mountain too are all set to welcome the annual festival that celebrates this precious crop, with a series of events highlighting the quality and variety of olives that grow in the area and of with a range of delectable Omani foods made with olives.



The festival, currently in its third edition, is the celebration of annual olive cultivation and this governorate’s bountiful olive harvest promises an unforgettable experience. — File photo

“We are excited to be welcoming our guests to the Olive festival on the mountain and we will give the guests an opportunity to engage in olive

harvesting, a rewarding activity that connects participants with the local area of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and its traditions. Additionally, we have a plethora of

kids activities, competitions and culinary demonstrations led by renowned chefs Martin Aristondo and Riccardo Passoni,” said Maren Kuehl, General Manager of Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Resort. Promoting healthy eating styles, Chefs Martin Aristondo and Riccardo Passoni will showcase their expertise using freshly harvested olives where culinary aficionados will be able to look forward to a series of live cooking demonstrations. Chef Aristondo, visiting from NH Collection San Sebastian Aranzazu in his native town, is known for his innovative approach to traditional Basque cuisine. Chef Aristondo will be showcasing an exquisite three-course set menu at Al Qalaa, while

Chef Passoni, Executive Chef at NH Collection Milano President, brings a refined Italian flair at the award-winning Bella Vista Restaurant. Their presentations will highlight the versatility and richness of the olive, transforming this humble ingredient into gourmet masterpieces. Visitors to Al Jabal Al Akhdhar can explore the journey of olive oil production at a local factory, witnessing the meticulous process from pressing to packaging. The Local guide will provide guests with a deeper insight into olive farming in the area through immersive storytelling encounters. These experiences provide an enriching glimpse into the heritage and craftsmanship that define this cherished tradition.



# Sailing through the first week of school with excitement, concerns

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Students are navigating through the first week back in classrooms after summer holidays, with children and parents adjusting to the new academic year.

While some have had a smooth transition, others have faced challenges.

Some parents have taken time off work to help their children settle in.

The Ministry of Education is set to gradually implement the new curriculum, which categorises subjects for first cycle classes into basic and accompanying subjects, focusing on core skills by reducing the number of subjects.

However, many parents are still struggling to secure school placements as most schools are at full capacity.

One mother expressed, “Two of my children have been admitted, but the third



The Ministry of Education is set to gradually implement the new curriculum, focusing on core skills by reducing the number of subjects



is still waiting. It's a real struggle for students in Al Amerat.”

Another parent is working hard to secure a morning session for her child, stating, “For working parents, managing the afternoon shift is difficult.”

Concerns have also been raised about inconsistent pick-up and drop-off timings for students.

The Royal Oman Police has launched a safety campaign for school children, emphasising that educating and guiding students is a collective responsibility.

They have outlined six key points for students to follow: stay seated while the bus is in motion, pay attention when boarding and exiting the bus, avoid approaching a moving bus, report reckless drivers, avoid rushing when the bus arrives, and be cautious when crossing the road.



The guests were greeted by Commodore Adil bin Hamoud al Busaidy, Head of the Maritime Security Centre. — ONA

## Indian defence delegation visits MSC

MUSCAT: A delegation from the National Defence College of the Republic of India visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC).

Upon their arrival at the centre, the guests were greeted by Commodore Adil bin Hamoud al Busaidy, Head of the Maritime Security Centre (MSC).

During the visit, members of the visiting delegation were briefed about the role of the MSC in maintaining the maritime security. They also toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest systems and equipment

which are used in carrying out the MSC's national duties.

Moreover, the delegation also visited the Command of the Sultan's Armed Forces (COSAF).

Upon their arrival at the COSAF, they were received by Air Commodore Nasser bin Said al Saadi, Assistant Chief of Staff for Training and Joint Drills of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF).

During this meeting, the two sides discussed several topics related to training.

Further, the visiting delegation listened to a briefing on the roles and tasks of the COSAF. — ONA

# Onam competition registration begins today

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As expatriates in Oman gear up for the Onam festival, a harvest festival in South Asia, preparations are underway. People are collecting clothes and food ingredients for the ten-day celebration, which culminates on the tenth day with great enthusiasm. Along with the festival, competitions are also being organised.

Registration for the 'Sing and Win' competition is now open to both expatriates and Omanis. The registration period is from today, September 4, to September 6. Additionally, registration for the Payasam Competition (making traditional Indian kheer) will begin on September 6 and close



on September 12, as per the organisers.

“This year's Onam competitions, titled 'Madhuramai Padam Madhuryam Valambam Season 2', are a follow-up to the successful results of last year's competition, which saw a large number of participants from various backgrounds,” said Mohammed Haneefa, Country Manager of KM Trading Group in Oman, the main organiser of the event.

The event will feature two main activities: the Sing and Win Competition, and the Payasam Competition. It will take place on September 19 at KM Hypermarket, Al Khuwair branch, at 6 pm.

Participants aged between 10 and 20, of any nationality, with a

passion for singing can register by sending a WhatsApp message to the provided number. Shortlisted participants will be notified and are expected to attend an audition round on Saturday, September 7, at City Seasons Hotel, Al Khuwair. The top 10 singers from the auditions will be selected to showcase their talents, with the final three winners announced by the judges during the competition on September 19.

The Payasam Competition is expected to have 30 contestants, taking place at the same venue on the same date. Entry is limited to registration, with the first 30 registrants qualifying for the competition. A panel of expert judges will select the top three winners, who will receive attractive gifts.



OMAN PARTICIPATES IN UNESCO DIGITAL LEARNING WEEK IN PARIS

PARIS: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Education, is taking part in the activities of the International Conference “Unesco Digital Learning Week,” which is currently being carried out during the period from September 2 to 5 at the headquarters of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) in Paris. This year, the conference comes under the slogan “Directing Technology in Education”.

# MoHERI fetes ‘Falling Walls Lab’ competition winners

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The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation concluded the ‘Falling Walls Lab Oman’ competition on Tuesday, marking its ninth consecutive edition.

The winners’ announcement ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation.

The competition aimed to showcase the talents of the next generation of researchers in Oman, offering them a platform to present their ideas and innovations. It provides an opportunity for young people to connect with the community, link emerging talents with seasoned creators and foster interdisciplinary dialogue and international collaboration. The goal is to discover and develop outstanding researchers and build strong, sustainable networks.

Ibrahim al Balushi, Head of



The winners’ announcement ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation. — Photo by Shamsah al Harthi

the Competitions and Awards Department of Research and Innovation Capacity Building at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, noted that this year's competition saw 62 submissions across various fields including health, environment, technology, artificial intelligence and humanities. From these, 20 ideas and projects advanced to the final stage.

Tasneem bint Mohammed al Dawoodiyah won first place for her project “Heavy Oil Reduction Using Green Energy”. She expressed her excitement about representing Oman in Berlin and anticipates that her project aligns with Oman Vision 2040, which aims to support innovation and find alternative solutions, especially in renewable

energy and the hydrogen sector.

Second place went to Al Waleed bin Yousef al Maharbi for his project “Wax Deposition in Pipeline Systems”. He expressed happiness at making it to the finals and explained that his project addresses the problem of wax deposits in pipelines using ultrasonic waves, offering an eco-friendly and energy-efficient solution.

Samia bint Nasser al Riyamiyah secured third place with her project “Sustainable Water Filter”, which is an eco-friendly, clay-based filter designed to reduce plastic water bottles and traditional filters. She plans to establish a company that will be the first in Oman to produce water filter membranes.

The top two participants will have the chance to compete in the Falling Walls Lab finals in Berlin on November 8, and attend the Falling Walls Conference on November 9, 2024, where leading scientists will present their latest achievements. The third-place winner will receive a monetary prize.

The ideas and projects were evaluated by a panel of six experts from academia, research institutions and the business community, including Dr Khalid bin Abdul Wahab al Balushi, Dr Talib Muhieuddin Ghulam, Dr Thamara al Ghafri, Najah al Ghafri, Abdullah al Shuhi and Dr Jamila al Hina.

Dr Khalid al Balushi, a jury member, explained that the

evaluation criteria included the uniqueness and applicability of the idea or invention, its economic benefits, and the participants’ ability to present and articulate their projects clearly in English.

These factors are crucial for effectively representing Oman on the Berlin global stage.

Dr Al Haddabi said, “The idea of the competition is to present a research project concept within a time limit of only three minutes per participant and to persuade the judging panel that this idea has value in breaking through a barrier. The name of the competition is derived from the Berlin Wall, symbolising a global challenge that needs to be overcome. The topics of the competition have varied, and we are pleased with this diversity of ideas.” He highlighted that the ideas presented, whether winning or not, have the potential to make significant impacts, including gaining patents or attracting investors, and showcasing Oman's innovation on an international platform.



# KNOW THE RISKS AND SAFE PRACTICES

## HIDDEN DANGERS OF SKIN LIGHTENING CREAMS

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MOST people desire fairer skin, a preference that is particularly common among women. However, this obsession often leads to the use of skin lightening creams, and many fall prey to products laden with chemicals. While these products may initially produce good results, they can gradually harm the skin, potentially causing significant damage over time.

For numerous individuals, using these creams has become a daily habit. However, the risks associated with skin lightening products are often overlooked. Contrary to popular belief, skin lightening creams do not actually lighten the skin. They are pharmaceutical compounds designed to treat pigmentation issues caused by various skin conditions. The unregulated and excessive use of these creams can lead to significant side effects.

It is crucial to exercise caution when using skin lightening creams, as they can cause changes that might have both aesthetic and harmful consequences. Overuse or improper use can increase sensitivity to the sun, leading to redness, burning, or further pigmentation due to the lack of protective melanin. This heightened vulnerability makes the skin more susceptible to sun damage and burns.

Furthermore, the random mixing of medical creams without proper medical supervision can result in severe harm. A common practice involves using a “triple mixture” or “triple formula” to achieve lighter skin. However, doctors strongly advise against this due to the potential for serious side effects from combining chemicals like hydrocortisone, hydroquinone, and retinoids. Misuse of these substances can cause significant damage, emphasising the need for caution and the avoidance of harmful ingredients in skin lightening products.

Dr Lotfi bin Omar al Kathiri, a consultant dermatologist, warns against mixing lightening creams with cortisone. He explains, “Using creams mixed with cortisone on large areas of the body can suppress local immunity, allowing harmful microbes to penetrate the skin and enter the bloodstream, potentially leading to life-threatening infections.” Cortisone-based creams should only be used under strict medical supervision and for a limited duration to minimise risks.

Improper use of these creams can lead to various skin issues, such as exacerbated acne, skin thinning, discolouration, folliculitis (inflammation of hair follicles), and irritation from allergic reactions. Prolonged use may also accelerate skin ageing, as the chemicals alter the skin’s natural composition, causing premature lines and marks to appear.

Long-term use of skin lightening creams poses even more severe risks, including an increased chance of developing skin cancer. Hydroquinone, a common ingredient in these products, can damage DNA if used daily over extended periods, especially when the skin is frequently exposed to sunlight without adequate protection. Doctors recommend discontinuing use immediately if any unusual side effects occur and consulting a dermatologist for safer alternatives.

To prevent the adverse effects of skin lightening products, one should consider consulting a doctor before starting any skin lightening regimen to ensure its safety and follow the product’s instructions carefully. It is important to discuss any medical history, allergies or conditions such as eczema, psoriasis or asthma with the doctor.

One should avoid using these products during pregnancy as they can pose risks to the health of both the mother and the baby, and there is insufficient evidence to support their safety during these stages. It is important to check for harmful ingredients to ensure the product does not contain mercury, as it can cause severe health problems, particularly for pregnant women, infants, and young children. Mercury exposure can impair neurological development and be transferred to a baby through breastfeeding.

Hydroquinone levels are another factor to keep in mind. “Ensure that the hydroquinone concentration in any product does not exceed 2 per cent. If the percentage is unclear or not listed, avoid using the product to prevent potential harm,” says a skin expert.

Sunscreen has its own benefits. After applying any skin lightening products, it is advisable to use sunscreen to protect the skin from harmful UV rays, which can exacerbate damage.



Recall



Recall Date: 04/09/2024

| Brand of Commodity | Year of Production | Number of Affected Commodities |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Audi / A5-A4-Q5    | 2007 / 2013        | 103                            |

Recall consequence

On Audi vehicles with TAKATA driver airbag manufactured within a specific period it is possible that the gas generator housing may be damaged if the driver airbag is deployed. This could cause small metal parts to become dislodged from the housing and potentially injure the driver or a passenger.

Recall Action

Replace Driver Airbag

To check the serial Numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website for Recalls & Warnings: <http://recall.pacp.gov.om>



مجلس حماية المستهلكين  
Consumer Protection Authority  
www.pacp.gov.om



خط المستهلكين  
Consumer Line  
80078009  
80077997

During Official Working Hours  
Contact Number +968 22845100



التميز للسيارات  
Premium Motors



A recent International Medical Conference held in Muscat was attended by approximately 60 practising doctors in Oman

# ‘Organ transplantation is the final option to save life’

STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, SEPT 3

Transplanting organs is the final option to save a life, and not every patient with liver disease requires a liver transplant and the medical team is the best judge for determining the timing of a liver transplant, as discussed at a recent International Medical Conference held in Muscat.

The event, chaired by Dr Yahya al Azri, Head of the Department of HPB (Hepato-Pancreato-Biliary) Unit at the Royal Hospital, included Dr Nooren al Balushi, Consultant of HPB Surgery at the Royal Hospital and Head of the Oman Transplant Society as Guests of Honour.

Dr Vivek Vij, Chairman and Director of HPB Liver Transplant Surgery, the guest speaker, emphasised that the best outcomes are achieved when patients are medically attended to at the right time.

During his presentation titled ‘Liver Transplant is a Successful Therapy and Standard of Care for end-stage liver disease patients’, he highlighted the importance of proper medical care.

Since 1988, the Sultanate of Oman has conducted 347 organ transplant surgeries, including 22 liver transplants and 325 kidney transplants

Organised by Fortis Healthcare India in collaboration with the Muscat Family Physicians Group and Global Treatment Services, the International Medical Conference on ‘Liver Transplant – A Comprehensive Update’ took place at the Crown Plaza Hotel. Medical practitioners from various sectors, both private and government, participated in discussions and exchanged expertise throughout the evening.

Dr Vij enumerated the indications for liver transplants in adults and children, including end-stage chronic liver disease, acute liver failure, cholestatic liver diseases, and paediatric patients with various conditions.

He also shared statistics on the overall success rate of liver transplants, stating that it is one

of the best organ transplants for the human body.

Despite potential complications, Dr Vij mentioned that advancements have been made in minimising post-transplant complications, improving patient quality of life significantly.

After the transplant, patients experience a drastic improvement in their quality of life, allowing them to return to their normal lifestyle within a few months. Regular follow-ups with the transplant team are essential for maintaining good health.

The conference was attended by approximately 60 practising doctors in Oman, including Hepato-Biliary Surgeons, General and GI Surgeons, Paediatric Surgeons, Paediatricians, Internists, and Family Physicians from both government and private health establishments. An interactive session followed the meeting.

Dr Sanjay Dalal, Founder of the Muscat Family Physicians’ group, highlighted the importance of the liver in the human body, emphasising its connection to life.

## Ministry mulls more breakwaters in coastal villages

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources has responded to social media reports on damages to some fishing boats in some coastal villages due to the impact of tropical condition Asna.

The ministry said that it is aware of the fishermen’s demands and that a company specialised in implementing consulting work



has been selected to design the establishment of breakwaters or ports in several areas, including Al Dafah, Al Suwaih and Ruwais.

The ministry affirmed its constant concern for the safety of sea-goers, fishermen, and their property in tropical conditions by following up on the latest weather bulletins issued by the Civil Aviation Authority.

## SU kicks off staff development week

SUHAR: Sohar University (SU) commenced its Annual Staff Development Programme for the academic year 2024/2025 on September 2. The programme will run until September 8, aiming to professionally develop all university staff, including administrative, academic, and new joiners.

This event serves as a valuable opportunity to bring together staff from all levels and is a key initiative in enhancing the skills and competencies of SU’s employees.

The Staff Development Week began with a speech by Dr Hamdan al Fazari, the University Vice-Chancellor. The event included the recognition of recipients of the VC Outstanding Achievement Award and the VC Outstanding Teaching Award for the academic year 2023/24, as well as long-serving staff members who have completed 10 and 20



years of service at the University. Special recognition was also given to the SU Journal team for their successful publication of the 2nd edition, and to the QS working Team for their dedicated efforts in supporting SU’s QS file.

The programme continued with a presentation by Mohammed al Braiki, Head of HSE, on HSE matters, followed by a speech from Dr Ali al Hassnawi, Director of QA, Planning & Accreditation Department, discussing the university’s readiness for institutional re-

accreditation.

Throughout the Staff Development Week, various training activities, workshops, and lectures will be offered to all employees, both in academic and administrative roles. A comprehensive induction programme will also be provided for new staff joining the university.

Notably, the 7th Teaching and Learning Conference is scheduled to be held on September 5, 2024, as part of this year’s Staff Development Week.

Maryam al Amri, Director of Human Resources, emphasised the importance of the annual staff development week in enhancing staff skills at all levels. She highlighted the opportunities for staff to engage in activities, network with colleagues, and emphasised that investing in staff development is crucial for the university’s success.

Recall

TOYOTA & LEXUS

RECALL DATE: 04/09/2024

| Brand of Commodity | Year of Production*                 | #Number of Affected Commodities |
|--------------------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Toyota Crown, BZ4X | Ocober 29,2021through April 2, 2024 | 116                             |
| Lexus NX350        | March 31,2021through April 6,2023   | 101                             |

\*Not all vehicles in this production period, are affected.  
#Subject to revision, based on the information received from the manufacturer, from time to time.

Recall consequence

The subject vehicles are equipped with a Toyota Safety Sense (TSS) 3.0 system or Lexus Safety System Plus (LSS+) 3.0, containing a forward recognition camera to detect objects for certain driver assistance features, including the Pre-Collision System (PCS). Due to the programming of the front view camera software, the memory inside the front view camera fails during processing when the ignition is turned off. If this occurs, The pre-collision system will not be activated on the next ignition start, causing warning lights to illuminate, audible chimes to sound, and messages to display on the instrument panel.

Recall Action

To reprogram the Forward Recognition Camera

To check the serial Numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website for Recalls & Warnings: <http://recall.pacp.gov.om>

TOYOTA LEXUS

Contact details: Toll free - 80073000  
Working days: Sunday - Thursday  
Working Time: 8:00 - 17:00 hrs.

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خط المستهلك  
Consumer line  
80079009  
80077997

جامعة الشرقية  
A' SHARQIYAH UNIVERSITY

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Tender Committee at A'Sharqiyah University is pleased to invite companies with experience in providing laboratory equipment to participate in this tender.

**Tender details:**

| Tender No.   | Description                                                                                  | Document Collection Deadline | Bids Submission Deadline | Document Fees |
|--------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------------|---------------|
| ASU/01/24/25 | Providing Lab Equipment for College of Applied and Health Sciences at A'Sharqiyah University | 09/09/2024                   | 30/09/2024               | 100 OMR       |

- Specialized companies interested in this assignment can obtain the tender document from the Procurement and Contracts Department at A'Sharqiyah University in Ibra during working days from 9:00 AM to 3:00 PM.
- Bids must be submitted in closed, sealed envelopes with red wax, addressed to the Tender Committee at A'Sharqiyah University, Ibra. The envelopes should clearly indicate the tender subject and reference number but must not display the bidders' names.
- The main submission envelope should contain the following:
  - A separate sealed envelope with the technical proposal (1 original copy, 1 copy, and 1 soft copy on a USB flash drive).
  - A separate sealed envelope with the commercial proposal (1 original copy, 1 copy, and 1 soft copy on a USB flash drive).
  - A separate sealed envelope containing the tender bond.
- ASU general terms and conditions of tenders shall apply on all submitted bids.  
[http://www.asu.edu.om/downloads/purchase\\_terms\\_conditions.pdf](http://www.asu.edu.om/downloads/purchase_terms_conditions.pdf)
- A'Sharqiyah University is not obligated to accept the lowest bid.
- For further details, feel free to contact us via phone at 25401115, 25401116, or by email at [ajza.rashid@asu.edu.om](mailto:ajza.rashid@asu.edu.om)

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

إعلان مناقصة  
Tender Notice

The Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology invites for the Following Tender:

| TENDER NUMBER    | TENDER NAME                                   | DATE OF PUBLISHING | LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT | SUBMISSION DATE | COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER                                                                                     | DOCUMENT PRICE                                                                |
|------------------|-----------------------------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| MTCIT/58432/2024 | DESIGN, DEVELOP AND OPERATE AN OMAN AI STUDIO | 1-9-2024           | 15-9-2024                             | 13-10-2024      | LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (EXCELLENT & FIRST CLASS) | (300/-) THREE HUNDRED OMANI RIAL (LOCAL, INTERNATIONAL)<br><br>NON-REFUNDABLE |

Interested Companies registered with the Secretariat General of Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted online on given website.

**CORRESPONDANCE:**

- Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:  
**Tel: +968 24402200, e-mail: [etenderhd@gstb.gov.om](mailto:etenderhd@gstb.gov.om)**

**INTERNAL TENDERS COMMITTEE**

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



## GAZANS AMID PAIN AND FAMINE

Palestinians receive cooked food rations as part of a volunteer initiative in a makeshift displacement camp in Mawasi Khan Yunis in the besieged Gaza Strip. With Gaza lying in ruins and the majority of the 2.4 million residents forced to flee their homes due to Israel’s military assault, disease has spread. Israel’s military assault on Gaza has so far killed at least 40,819 people. — AFP

## Pope arrives in Indonesia to start tour

**JAKARTA:** Pope Francis arrived in Indonesia on Tuesday to kick off a four-nation tour of the Asia-Pacific that will be the longest and farthest of the 87-year-old’s papacy.

The head of the world’s 1.3 billion Catholics touched down in capital Jakarta for a three-day visit devoted to inter-religious ties, and will then travel to Papua New Guinea, East Timor and Singapore.

The 12-day tour will test the pontiff’s increasingly fragile health, but he is often energised by being among his flock and he emerged from the 13-hour flight smiling and waving.

“I thank you for coming on this journey. I think it is the longest one (flight) I have done,” he told reporters aboard his chartered plane after landing.

He disembarked in Jakarta in a wheelchair to an honour guard, greetings by Indonesian officials, including the religious affairs minister, and a traditional bouquet from two children.

The pontiff was then picked up from the red carpet by a civilian Toyota car, choosing a modest vehicle over one of luxury



Pope Francis (C, in wheelchair) is welcomed during his arrival at Soekarno Hatta International Airport in Jakarta. — AFP

typically used by world leaders.

He had no official engagements scheduled on Tuesday following the long flight from Rome, but the Vatican said he hosted a meeting with a group of orphans, migrants and homeless people at its Jakarta mission shortly after he arrived.

The pope is scheduled to meet President Joko Widodo in the

first major set piece of his visit to the world’s most populous Muslim-majority country.

“This is a very historic visit,” Widodo, popularly known as Jokowi, told reporters on Tuesday. “Indonesia and the Vatican have a similar commitment to peace and brotherhood.”

On Thursday, Francis will

“This is a very historic visit. Indonesia and the Vatican have a similar commitment to peace and brotherhood

**JOKO WIDODO**  
*Indonesia’s President*

meet representatives of all six at Istiqlal Mosque, the largest in Southeast Asia and a symbol of religious coexistence.

It is linked via a “tunnel of friendship” to the cathedral across the road, where Christians in recent days have been taking selfies with a life-sized pope cutout. He will then host a mass and deliver a sermon at Indonesia’s 80,000-seat national football stadium. His trip to Indonesia is the third ever by a pope and the first since John Paul II in 1989. Originally planned for 2020 but postponed due to the Covid pandemic, the visit takes place just three months before his 88th birthday. — AFP

## DR Congo jail break attempt leaves 129 dead

**KINSHASA:** An attempted jail break at the Democratic Republic of Congo’s largest and chronically overcrowded prison this week has left at least 129 people dead, the interior minister said on Tuesday.

The circumstances around the bid to bust out of Makala prison in the capital Kinshasa in the early hours of Monday remain unclear.

But Interior Minister Jacquemain Shabani in a statement released by video to the media on Tuesday announced a provisional death toll of 129 people. They included “24 who were shot after warnings”, he said. At least 59 others had been wounded and were receiving care, he added. Witnesses said that they had heard gunfire at around 2:00 am on Monday and that it lasted

for several hours in the area of the prison, a popular and residential neighbourhood.

On Monday, police had cordoned off the streets leading to the prison, journalists at the scene saw. The interior minister said many people had been crushed or suffocated and that a number of women had been raped. He gave no details on their identities.

The authorities have given no indication as to how many inmates escaped or attempted to do so.

On Monday morning, government spokesman Patrick Muyaya said only that the security services were at the scene and he called on residents to “not panic”.

A few hours later, he told national television the situation was “under control”. — AFP



Military reinforcements walk the entrance of Makala prison in Kinshasa. — AFP

### SHORT TAKES

#### KABUL

### IS claims deadly Afghanistan attack

The IS group claimed on Tuesday a suicide attack in the Afghan capital that killed six people a day earlier, saying it had targeted the Taliban government’s prosecution service.

The explosion in Kabul’s southern outskirts on Monday afternoon killed at least six people and wounded 13 more, according to the city’s police.

The IS group said that “the suicide bomber waited until the time when the prosecutor’s employees were leaving their shifts”



before detonating in the middle of a crowd.

The previous suicide attack in Afghanistan claimed by IS was in the city of Kandahar in March. — AFP

#### SEOUL

### Japan’s PM Kishida to visit South Korea

Japan’s outgoing Prime Minister Fumio Kishida will head to Seoul on Friday for a two-day visit to meet South Korea’s leader. “Japan and South Korea are important neighbours to each other that should work as partners to tackle a wide range of international issues,” Japan’s top government spokesman Yoshimasa Hayashi said on Tuesday, confirming the trip.

“Prime Minister Kishida eagerly sought to visit South Korea to discuss the future direction of



development between the two countries,” the presidential office in Seoul said. It said Kishida “expects to continue to give constructive advice on the foreign policy of the successor”. — AFP

#### WINDHOEK

### Namibia’s cull of 700 wildlife under way

A Namibian government cull of more than 700 wildlife to cope with its worst drought in decades is under way, with 160 animals already killed, the environment ministry said.

The cull was announced last week to relieve pressure on grazing and water supplies, and to provide meat for programmes to support the thousands of people going hungry because of the drought.

Carried out by professional hunters, it targets 30 hippos,



60 buffalos, 50 impalas, 83 elephants, 100 blue wildebeest, 100 elands and 300 zebras. At least 157 of the 723 animals designated for culling have been killed so far. — AFP



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## In brief

■ MADRID



### SPAIN LOGS HOTTEST AUGUST ON RECORD IN 2024

Spain registered in 2024 its hottest August since records began, with an average temperature at 25 degrees Celsius, the national weather agency said. “August 2024 was the warmest in history in mainland Spain,” the AEMET meteorological agency said in a post on X, formerly Twitter, on Monday evening.

The average temperature was two-tenths higher, which was previously the warmest August in the country. In August, the EU climate monitor, the Copernicus Climate Change Service, said that it was “increasingly likely” that 2024 would end up being the hottest year on record. — **AFP**

■ BRUSSELS



### EU SLAMS WARRANT FOR VENEZUELA OPPN CANDIDATE

EU foreign affairs chief Josep Borrell dismissed an arrest warrant issued by a Venezuelan court for opposition presidential candidate Edmundo Gonzalez Urrutia, who claims to have rightfully won July elections. “I categorically reject the arrest warrant,” Borrell wrote on X.

“Enough of the repression and harassment of the opposition and civil society. The will of the Venezuelan people must be respected.”

Venezuela’s National Electoral Council, most of whose members are friendly to incumbent Nicolas Maduro, declared him reelected to a third six-year term after vote. — **AFP**

■ MANILA



### AT LEAST 12 MIGRANTS DEAD AFTER VESSEL CAPSIZES IN CHANNEL

At least 12 migrants died on Tuesday after their boat capsized on its way across the channel to Britain, French Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said, adding that rescue operations were underway to find two people still missing. French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer pledged to work closer together to dismantle migrant smuggling routes.

The channel is one of the world’s busiest shipping lanes and currents are strong. In August, two people were found dead after a boat carrying migrants to cross the channel ran into difficulties. — **Reuters**

# Russian strike on Poltava kills 41, injures 180

**KYIV:** Dozens of Ukrainians were killed on Tuesday in a Russian missile attack on the central Ukrainian city of Poltava, one of the deadliest strikes of the two-and-a-half-year war.

President Volodymyr Zelensky vowed to hold “Russian scum” accountable for the attack on a military education facility and nearby hospital, which killed at least 41 and wounded another 180.

The strike triggered anger on Ukrainian social media after unconfirmed reports said it had targeted an outdoor military ceremony, with many blaming reckless behaviour from officials who allowed the event to take place despite the threat of Russian attacks.

Zelensky said he had ordered a “full and prompt investigation into all the circumstances of what happened”.

“More than 180 people were injured. Unfortunately, there are many dead. As of now, 41 people have been reported dead,” Zelensky said in a post on social media.

Two Russian ballistic missiles hit the hospital and an educational institution, partially destroying one of the buildings, Zelensky said.

“The time interval between the alarm and the arrival of the deadly missiles was so short that



A journalist walks near residential buildings heavily damaged during a Russian military attack, in the frontline town of Chasiv Yar, in Donetsk. — **Reuters**

it caught people in the middle of evacuating to the bomb shelter,” the defence ministry said.

The strike took place in the morning in Poltava, a city with a pre-war population of around 300,000 people, located 300

kilometres (189 miles) east of Kyiv.

The Poltava military communications institute, founded in the 1960s when Ukraine was part of the USSR, specialises in training telecommunications specialists.

“One of the institute’s buildings was partially destroyed and many people were trapped under the rubble,” the defence ministry said.

A journalist on the scene saw several ambulances heading

The strike triggered anger on Ukrainian social media after unconfirmed reports said it had targeted an outdoor military ceremony

towards the affected site shortly after the attack on the military institute. Rescuers were still at work after having managed to save 25 people, including 11 trapped under the rubble, the defence ministry said.

Poltava Governor Philip Pronin said his administration could not provide more details of the circumstances of the strike “for security reasons”. “The enemy is using any means to bring Ukraine more pain and disorientate Ukrainians. Please trust only reliable sources,” he said.

The attack follows another recent scandal for Ukraine’s army command after a US-made F-16 fighter jet crashed in combat last week, killing the pilot.

The crash of the F-16 was a high-profile setback for Kyiv, which had lobbied the West to send the advanced fighter jet for months and triggered the dismissal of the country’s air force chief Mykola Oleshchuk. — **AFP**

## France’s Macron mulls right wing ex-minister as PM



President Emmanuel Macron, next to CESE’s president Thierry Beaudet (L), delivers a speech, in Paris. — **AFP file photo**

**PARIS:** France’s President Emmanuel Macron was on Tuesday considering a former right-wing minister to lead a new government after almost two months of deadlock, sources with knowledge of the discussions said. The search has been on for a new premier after the left in early July became the largest bloc in a hung parliament after snap polls, followed by Macron’s centrists and the far right.

Prime Minister Gabriel Attal has resigned but stayed on as a caretaker during the Paris Olympics and Paralympics. But the pressure is mounting to name a new premier by October 1, when a fresh government must file a draft budget law for 2025, a task that Attal’s cabinet cannot accomplish.

The president on Monday met ex-minister Xavier Bertrand, from the right, as well as former premier Bernard Cazeneuve, from the centre left, as two potential candidates.

Leaders of the right-wing

The search has been on for a new premier after the left in early July became the largest bloc in a hung parliament after snap polls

Republicans (LR) party in a meeting with Macron on Tuesday morning said they supported a nomination of Bertrand as long as he had sufficient backing from lawmakers, LR sources said. But in a blow to his chances, the far-right National Rally (RN), the largest single faction in the new National Assembly with 126 seats, said it would back a no-confidence motion against Bertrand if he was appointed.

The RN would only support a “technocratic” government which would implement a system of proportional representation for the next legislative elections rather than the current first-past-the-post set-up, said an RN

official, asking not to be named.

Bertrand, 59, is the right-wing head of the northern Hauts-de-France region and previously served as labour and health minister between 2005 and 2012 under presidents Jacques Chirac and Nicolas Sarkozy.

He would be a more palatable choice for the right than Cazeneuve, 61, who was interior minister during the 2015 Paris attacks and briefly led government for several months from late 2016.

French media on Monday reported 62-year-old Thierry Beaudet, the relatively unknown head of an advisory body called the Economic, Social and Environmental Council (CESE), was also in the race.

The left-wing alliance that won the July 7 vote this summer suggested from its ranks economist Lucie Castets, 37, but Macron has quashed the idea, arguing she would not survive a confidence vote in the hung parliament. — **AFP**

## Mongolia rolls out red carpet for Putin

**ULAAABAATAR:** Russian President Vladimir Putin was welcomed by honour guards and red carpets in the Mongolian capital on Tuesday on his first visit to an International Criminal Court (ICC) member since it issued a warrant for his arrest last year.

Putin landed in Ulaanbaatar on Monday night at the start of a high-profile trip seen as a show of defiance against the court, Kyiv, the West and rights groups that have all called for him to be detained.

He met Mongolian President Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh on Tuesday at Ulaanbaatar’s imposing Genghis Khan Square, also known as Sukhbaatar Square, where a band played martial tunes and both national anthems.

The Russian leader praised Mongolia’s “respectful attitude” and told Khurelsukh the two nations had “close positions” on “many current international issues”.

Putin is wanted by the Hague-based ICC for the alleged illegal deportation of Ukrainian children since his troops attacked the country in 2022.

Ukraine has reacted furiously to the trip, accusing Mongolia of “sharing responsibility” for Putin’s “war crimes” after authorities did not detain him at the airport.

“Today, Putin humiliated Mongolia by cynically using it as a bargaining chip in his geopolitical game,” Ukrainian Prosecutor General Andriy Kostin said on social media platform X. “By refusing to arrest Putin, Mongolia has deliberately jeopardised its international standing,” he said.

The ICC said last week all its members had an “obligation” to detain those sought by the court. In practice, there is little that can be done if Ulaanbaatar does not comply.

A vibrant democracy situated between authoritarian giants Russia and China, Mongolia enjoys close cultural links to Moscow as well as a critical trading relationship with Beijing.

On the streets of Ulaanbaatar, Altanbayar Altankhuyag, a 26-year-old economist, said that it would have been “immoral and improper” to arrest Putin. — **AFP**



Russia’s President Vladimir Putin and Mongolia’s President Ukhnaagiin Khurelsukh attend a wreath laying ceremony at a monument to Soviet Marshal Georgy Zhukov in Ulaanbaatar. — **AFP**

# Sir Brian and the importance of good statistical analysis



Karim Easterbrook  
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The writer is former  
School Principal  
Cambridge UK

Professor Sir Brian Jarman is someone I feel honoured and privileged to call my good friend and mentor. Born in 1933 he began his medical journey during a period of significant change in the UK medical profession. He studied at Cambridge University and later at St Mary’s Hospital, London. He graduated from St Catharine’s College, Cambridge with a degree in Natural Sciences in 1954 and subsequently completed a PhD in geophysics at Imperial College in 1960.

After working for Shell for three years, he transitioned to medicine, earning a medical degree from Imperial College in 1969. His early medical career focused on general practice, a field in which he was a strong advocate.

However it was his application of statistical methods to medicine that distinguished him from his peers. Perhaps his most significant contributions came through his work in medical statistics, particularly with the development of the Hospital Standardised Mortality Ratio (HSMR). This statistical tool which he pioneered in the 1980s and 1990s, measured hospital performance by comparing the observed number of deaths to the expected number based on factors such

as patient demographics and clinical conditions. The HSMR became crucial for identifying underperforming hospitals, leading to improvements in patient care and safety.

Sir Brian has always remained committed to transparency and accountability, believing these principles to be essential for improving healthcare outcomes. His work laid the foundation for modern data use in healthcare management, influencing health policies both in the UK and internationally. Among his many achievements was the introduction of The Jarman Index, which quantified deprived areas where “deprivation payments” were necessary to assist elderly individuals living alone, single parents in overcrowded households, the unemployed, ethnic minorities, and others struggling to meet their basic needs.

In 2003, Sir Brian Jarman was elected President of the British Medical Association (BMA), where he further solidified his legacy as a leader in the medical community. During his presidency he was a vocal advocate for the National Health Service (NHS), emphasising the need for adequate funding while improving working conditions for doctors and maintaining public trust in the healthcare system. He

SIR BRIAN HAS ALWAYS REMAINED COMMITTED TO TRANSPARENCY AND ACCOUNTABILITY, BELIEVING THESE PRINCIPLES TO BE ESSENTIAL FOR IMPROVING HEALTHCARE OUTCOMES

also advocated for greater transparency in hospital performance and healthcare outcomes. He gave the Harveian Oration at the Royal College of Physicians in 1999, on “The Quality of Care in Hospitals.”

Sir Brian’s selfless service in helping to improve healthcare for patients and conditions for doctors was recognised when he received the OBE in 1988 and was knighted in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List in 1998.

His awareness that statistical analysis is essential for making informed and successful decisions in healthcare equally applies to education. When developing any future education system statistical analysis can help us to understand the factors contributing to student success and to allocate resources to those schools most in need.

Professor Sir Brian Jarman’s career exemplifies how dedication to both science and service can lead to profound contributions to society. His advancements in medical statistics and his commitment to transparency, accountability, and patient-centred care have left an indelible mark on modern medicine. He has devoted his life to uplifting those around him and putting others’ needs before his own. He has made a profound impact through acts of kindness, generosity, and leadership.

## India launches flood warning systems at glacial lakes

PARVAIZ BUKHARI

India is setting up high-tech warning systems at nearly 200 Himalayan glacial lakes at risk of bursting their banks, a deadly threat exacerbated by climate change, disaster officials said on Tuesday.

India’s Himalayas contain at least 7,500 glacial lakes, many of which pose risks of dangerous flash floods. Teams from India’s National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA) are targeting 190 high-altitude lakes deemed to be the most dangerous in a mission slated to take three years.

“We have already made significant strides in mitigating risks”, Safi Ahsan Rizvi, a senior NDMA official directing the mission, said.

A glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) is the sudden release of water that has collected in former glacier beds. These lakes are formed by the retreat of glaciers, a naturally occurring phenomenon turbocharged by the warmer temperatures of human-caused climate change.

One expedition is currently working to install early warning systems around six high-risk lakes in the northeastern state of Sikkim, where at least 77 people died in such a flood in October 2023.

“We have done 20 lakes so far, and will complete 40 this summer,” Rizvi said.

The project will also include “lowering lake levels” of accumulated water and ice slush in lakes.

Teams include experts from the army and multiple government agencies, including the Indian Space Research Organisation, geologists, hydrologists, computing engineers and weather specialists. India’s air force is also expected to join the mission later, flying heavy equipment into remote sites.

The mission will cover the Himalayan regions in India, from Kashmir and Ladakh in the north to Arunachal Pradesh in the northeast.

Climate change is driving the disappearance of glaciers, with half the Earth’s 215,000 glaciers projected to melt by the end of the century, even if warming can be capped at 1.5 degrees Celsius above pre-industrial levels.

The volume of glacial lakes has jumped by 50 per cent in 30 years, according to a 2020 study based on satellite data.

A study, published in Nature Communications, found that 15 million people live within 50 km of a glacial lake and within one km of potential flooding from a breach.

The risk was greatest in the “High Mountains Asia” region across 12 countries, including India, Pakistan, China and Nepal. That is partly because more people live closer to glacial lakes in the region than in other parts of the world, making warning times even shorter. — AFP

## Food poisoning... the underestimated enemy hidden in our foods



Moza Abdullah Al Busaidi

The writer is Food Safety Consultant and Board Member of Oman Consumer Protection Association

FOOD POISONING POSES A SERIOUS THREAT NOT ONLY TO PUBLIC HEALTH BUT ALSO HAS SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL IMPACTS

Food poisoning, also known as foodborne illness or disease, is a critical public health issue resulting from the consumption of contaminated food or water. This contamination can be due to microorganisms such as bacteria, viruses, parasites, protozoa, or fungi, their toxins, as well as chemical contaminants or allergens. The World Health Organization (WHO) identifies over 200 different diseases associated with contaminated food.

Microbial contaminations that are commonly associated with food poisoning are due to certain types of bacteria, including Salmonella, Escherichia coli (E.coli), Campylobacter, Listeria monocytogenes, Clostridium perfringens and Staphylococcus aureus, among others. According to WHO, bacterial foodborne diseases account for over 226 million cases globally. Viruses also contribute to foodborne illnesses; for instance, Norovirus and Hepatitis A are highly infectious and can spread rapidly in environments like restaurants, cruise ships, and communal living areas, with virus-related infections estimated to exceed 138 million annually. Additionally, contamination by parasites like Protozoa (eg, Giardia, Cryptosporidium), helminths (eg, Trichinella, Taenia), in food and water sources cause around 11 million infections each year, as reported by WHO. These microorganisms can be present in food at any stage from harvesting, processing, distribution, storage, or cooking.

Chemical contaminants on the other hand, are substances that are unintentionally present in food or feed. These may come from various stages of production, processing, or transport, or from the surrounding environment. Common examples include detergents and sanitisers used during cleaning, as well as fertilisers, herbicides, and pesticides if not properly managed. Food additives can also be a source of chemical contamination if misused or overused, leading to adverse reactions or toxicity in humans and animals.

Allergenic contamination occurs also when a food containing allergens comes into contact with another food, leading

to unintended exposure for sensitive individuals. This can happen through cross-contact during preparation, handling, or storage. Common allergens include tree nuts, peanuts, milk, eggs, soy, wheat, fish, and shellfish.

Foodborne illness can manifest in a range of symptoms and vary depending on the type of pathogen, chemical, or allergen involved. The common symptoms are nausea, vomiting, diarrhoea, abdominal pain, muscle aches, fatigue and fever, and most of which affect the digestive system. In severe cases, symptoms may include dehydration, or neurological symptoms such as blurred vision or difficulty swallowing, kidney and liver failure, brain disorders, arthritis, miscarriage, cancer, and, in some extreme cases, death. The severity and duration of symptoms vary depending on the type of contaminant and the health of the infected individual. Certain groups, including children, the elderly, and those with weakened immune systems, are at higher risk for severe complications.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one in ten people globally falls ill after consuming contaminated food, leading to 600 million cases and over 420,000 deaths annually. Children are particularly vulnerable, with an estimated 30 per cent of foodborne deaths occurring among those under five years old.

Despite the implication of food poisoning, its true impact and severity is often underestimated. While symptoms of food poisoning, such as diarrhoea or vomiting, may seem minor as they often resolve within a few days, they have become so common that the underlying causes may not be thoroughly investigated. This can result in inadequate examination of whether the issue stems from poor food preparation or an allergy to specific foods. Previously, it was believed that recovery from food poisoning meant a complete return to health. However, it is now understood that some foodborne illnesses can lead to long-term health problems and serious complications even after the initial infection has subsided.

Emerging threats that increase the incidence of foodborne illnesses are

continually escalating due to factors such as environmental changes, climate change, the emergence of new and evolving bacteria and toxins, and antibiotic resistance. Additionally, changes in food production, distribution, and consumption patterns, coupled with the globalisation of food trade, heightens the risk. Rising global temperatures contribute to increased food poisoning cases, and the Sultanate of Oman is no exception. Warm and humid conditions, combined with inadequate cooling, promote the rapid growth of microorganisms. According to 2022 statistics from the Ministry of Health, Oman reported 64 food poisoning cases, a notable decrease from previous years. Most cases were among individuals aged 10-14 and 20-24, with no cases reported in those over 45 years of age. Food poisoning cases typically peak during summer seasons spanning from July to November. These figures may under-represent the true number of cases, as many individuals may not seek medical attention or report their symptoms, since they appear shortly after ingestion and can persist for up to six days, with severity depending on the intensity of symptoms.

Food poisoning poses a serious threat not only to public health but also has significant economic and social impacts. It results in substantial costs, including medical expenses, strain on healthcare systems, loss of productivity, and expenses related to prevention and investigation. It can also negatively affect tourism, trade, and employment, while damaging the reputation and trust of affected food establishments and industries, which in turn affects their sales and customer relationships.

Is food safety important? Absolutely and it is crucial and indispensable. The experiences of those who have suffered from severe food poisoning serve as a painful reminder of this ongoing threat.

From simple street vendors to fancy banquets, no food is entirely free from contamination risks. It is crucial to address this hidden issue of food poisoning and to raise awareness on the importance of food safety practices within our communities to protect them from this ongoing threat.

The power of charity

Tomorrow, September 5, we will be celebrating the International Day of Charity to acknowledge and honour the power of kindness that has on our society.

Charity is a word that we hear every day, and we know it's a humane gesture to people who are in need. We also know it is an act that is done without expecting anything in return.

Historically, charity has long been part of our culture. It has been a virtue recognised and fostered by religion throughout human history. All religions ask their members to help those in need.

According to the UN, "Charity can alleviate the worst effects of humanitarian crises and supplement public services in healthcare, education, housing and child protection. It help in the advancement of culture, science, sports, and the protection of cultural and natural heritage."

While charity helps promote the rights of the marginalised and underprivileged it also spreads the message of humanity in conflict situations as well, it says.

Though charity has been apparent across millennia, the word comes from the old French word charité with its origin from the Latin word caritas. Dictionary defines it as almsgiving — a private or public relief of unfortunate or needy people.

However, by looking at charities past, we find that our previous generations responded to the challenges they faced whether in famines, epidemics, wars or movements like civil rights and anti-apartheid, environment protection, and more.

This is why charity matters as it reflects ourselves at our best. In other words, charity is an instinct to give what we can and to do to improve and enrich the lives of others.

Charity fosters a sense of community and solidarity reminding us that we are all connected in our shared humanity.

While the International Day of



Samuel Kutty @samkuttyvp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

THOUGH I WAS NOT GROWN ENOUGH THAT TIME TO FULLY UNDERSTAND WHAT SHE SPOKE, I STILL REMEMBER HER WORDS ON THE EXTENT OF SUFFERING IN THE WORLD AND OF THE GREAT HARDSHIP THAT THE POOR HAVE TO ENDURE

Charity was established with the objective of mobilising people, NGOs and stakeholders all around the world to help others through volunteer activities, September 5 was chosen in order to commemorate the death anniversary of Mother Teresa of Kolkata, India.

The renowned Albanian-born missionary, at a very young age, travelled to India, where she devoted herself to helping the destitute. In 1948, she became an Indian citizen and founded the order of Missionaries of Charity.

Mother Teresa, through her selfless dedication to helping others, ministered to the poor, sick, orphaned and dying while guiding the Missionaries of Charity's expansion, first in India and then in other countries, including hospices and homes for the poorest and homeless.

She inspired people from all walks of life to get involved in charitable endeavours themselves. Her message was clear: "We can all make a difference by extending a helping hand towards those less fortunate than us."

I was fortunate enough to have met Mother Teresa at a monastery in a South Indian city of Kerala where she had come for a discourse. Though I was not grown enough that time to fully understand what she spoke, I still remember her words on the extent of suffering in the world and of the great hardship that the poor have to endure.

Today, as our civil society continues to evolve, we still need the same selfless generosity, warmth of spirit and absolute determination to make a difference. As we move forward, let us carry the spirit of this day with us throughout the year. Let us continue to seek out opportunities to give, to support and to uplift others. Together, we can make a change.

Let us also recognise the incredible work of charitable organisations and the dedicated individuals who drive these efforts forward. Their commitment and passion are the backbone of many positive changes we witness in our communities and beyond.

PERCHED ON THE TOP!



A silhouette of a bird on a lamp post as the sun rises in Summerstrand in Gqeberha, South Africa, on Tuesday. — Reuters

Beware of big tech steering AI regulation

Last October, the European Commission adopted a new roadmap to fight drug trafficking and organised crime, one of the most serious security threats facing the bloc.

For obvious reasons, European Union policymakers did not invite cartel members to help design and develop this strategy; asking for input from criminal networks would have only made it easier for them to continue operating with impunity.

But when it comes to regulating the digital transformation and artificial intelligence, both of which pose myriad risks, policymakers are doing the opposite. They are collaborating with Big Tech companies such as Meta (Facebook), Alphabet (Google), Amazon, Apple and Microsoft, even though their executives have demonstrated a brazen willingness to create dangerous tools and harm users in the name of maximising profits.

For example, national, regional and international "working groups," "expert groups," and "advisory boards" that include representatives from Big Tech companies are preparing proposals to regulate the digital transformation and AI. Beyond that, some initiatives and conferences on this topic are funded by the very companies those endeavours aim to regulate.

The threats posed by digital systems are complex and far-reaching. New technologies are dramatically widening global inequality, and tech giants have emerged as massive energy users, with



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IT IS OBVIOUS THAT ALLOWING BIG TECH FIRMS TO DOMINATE THE PROCESS OF WRITING GLOBAL RULES FOR AI AND THE DIGITAL REALM IS A BIG MISTAKE

serious implications for climate change and the environment. Perhaps most worrying are the near-constant violations of the right to privacy, owing to the lack of data security or protections against surveillance. It is standard industry practice for vast amounts of data to be collected and sold to the highest bidder. As a result, digital platforms seem to know us better than we know ourselves, and life online is awash in economic and political manipulation.

Moreover, algorithmic manipulation and disinformation have already been shown to threaten the proper functioning of democracy. Ahead of the 2016 presidential election in the United States, for example, the political consulting firm Cambridge Analytica harvested information from as many as 87 million Facebook users in an attempt to sway voters. The company and its affiliates had already likewise misused data to try to influence the United Kingdom's Brexit vote.

More recently, the rapid development of large language models such as OpenAI's ChatGPT has opened up new avenues for fraud, including through audio and visual deepfakes that can destroy reputations. LLMs have also facilitated the spread of fake news, a scourge that is most acutely felt in democracies, where a flood of AI-generated content threatens

to drown out quality journalism and to destabilise entire countries within a few hours (as happened with the recent far-right riots in the UK). Moreover, the same strategies can be used to hoodwink consumers.

But that is not all: use of social media has been associated with significant mental-health harms for young people. And many in the field have expressed concern about the disruptive impact that AI-enabled cyberattacks and autonomous weapons could have on international peace and security,

not to mention the existential risks such weapons pose.

Big Tech firms have consistently shown little concern about harming people and violating their rights. That is especially true for social-media companies, which generally earn more in advertising revenue the longer that users stay on their platforms.

In 2021, a whistleblower provided documents showing that Facebook knew that its algorithms and platforms promoted damaging content but failed to deploy meaningful countermeasures. That

should come as no surprise: studies have found that users spend more time online when expressing hate and anger.

Despite its unwillingness to police itself, Big Tech wants to help devise regulations for the digital sphere and AI. Giving these companies a seat at the table is both ironic and tragic. Governments and the international community are allowing these behemoths to dominate the process of establishing a new global regulatory framework and oversight mechanisms. But entrusting those who profit from the sector's fundamental problems is a dangerous mistake.

The good news is that there are plenty of independent experts and academics who can provide valuable input about how best to regulate the development and use of AI and other digital technologies. Of course, the private sector must be involved in such policymaking processes, but not more than other stakeholders, including civil-society organisations.

Technological innovation should no longer serve only the interests of a few multinational corporations. To ensure a sustainable future in which everyone can lead dignified and prosperous lives, policymakers must not allow tech giants to steer the regulation of digital platforms and emerging AI applications.

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The threats posed by digital systems are complex and far-reaching.



# RED WARRIORS GET READY FOR IRAQ OPENER

ADIL AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, SEPT 3

The Red Warriors are all set to commence their historic AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 26 campaign as they take on Iraq in a key opening game of Group B at Basra International Stadium on Thursday. The Omani delegation arrived in Basra on Tuesday afternoon to begin their final warm-up ahead of the crucial clash, which starts at 20:00 (Oman time) on Thursday.

Upon arrival in Iraq, the Oman team players began their final technical preparations on Tuesday night at Al Faiha Stadium under the watchful eyes of head coach Jaroslav Silhavy. All the players are in good shape and fully prepared to play their opening match.

Oman had a comprehensive training programme ahead of the qualifiers, including a three-week



external camp in Spain. During the overseas camp in Spain, the national team played two vital matches. The first preparatory match ended with a 5-0 win for Oman against Racing Murcia City.

The only goal in the second warm-up match was scored by Salah al Yahyaie in the 45th minute, resulting in a 1-1 draw against Real Oviedo FC.

Later, the team held a short

domestic camp in Muscat Governorate after three rounds of the Omantel League.

The coaching staff are well informed on each player's technical status and performance, allowing them to announce the starting line-up for the upcoming matches during the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 26.

Oman will be looking for a bright start in their third appearance in the third round of



the AFC Asian Qualifiers – Road to 26 for the second successive edition.

The Red Warriors are very optimistic this time as the draw placed them in Group B, which comprises South Korea, Iraq, Jordan, Palestine and Kuwait.

The team will commence their campaign in the qualifiers against Iraq in Basra on September 5.

The second match is against South Korea in Muscat on

September 10, which is expected to be a crucial game.

Later, the Red Warriors will face Kuwait on October 10 in Muscat, followed by a match against Jordan on October 15 in Amman.

The first leg matches will conclude with a match against Palestine on November 14.

The second leg matches will begin as Oman hosts Iraq in Muscat on November 19 before

travelling to Seoul to face South Korea on March 20, 2025, and then Kuwait on March 25, 2025. Oman will then return to play a home game against Jordan in Muscat on June 5, 2025, and the concluding game against Palestine is scheduled for June 10, 2025, in an away match.

**OMAN SQUAD:** Ibrahim al Mukhaini, Fayeze al Rushedi, Ibrahim al Rajhi, Ahmed al Khamisi, Mohammed al Musallami, Khalid al Buraiki, Ghanim al Habshi, Ali al Busaidy, Ahmed al Kaabi, Amjad al Harthy, Abdulaziz al Shmoosi, Arshad al Alawi, Harib al Saadi, Abdullah Fawaz, Zaher al Aghbari, Jameel al Yahmadi, Omar al Malki, Sultan al Marzooq, Nasser al Rawahi, Issam al Subhi, Abdulrahman al Mushefri, Mohsin al Ghassani, Mohammed bin Mubarak al Ghafri and Mohammed bin Humaid al Ghafri.

# Oman U17s suffer loss to Yemen in West Asian opener

ADIL AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, SEPT 3

The Oman U-17 football team suffered a 3-1 loss to defending champions Yemen in the 11th edition of the West Asian Championship, which got underway in Amman late on Monday. Oman, coached by national coach Anwar al Habsi, will play against Saudi Arabia on Wednesday in a very crucial game to keep their hopes alive.

In the opening match of the junior Red Warriors against Yemen, Kareem Hamdi put Yemen ahead in the 10th minute. Ali Delio doubled Yemen's lead as he scored the second goal minutes before the end of the first half.

In the second half, coach Anwar al Habsi's boys worked hard to reduce the scoring gap, and Ahmed al Omrani managed to register the first goal for Oman in the 55th minute, making it 2-1. The goal motivated the Omani players to push for an equaliser but Yemen's striker Kareem Hamdi managed to score another goal for his team, securing their 3-1 victory and earning the first points. The triumph means Yemen are leading Group B with three points. Saudi Arabia will play their opening game against Oman on Wednesday in what promises to be a tight encounter.

In Group A, hosts Jordan defeated Lebanon 1-0 to clinch the first points. Group A comprises Jordan, Iraq and Lebanon, while Group C features Bahrain, Syria and Palestine.

The top team from each group, along with the best second-placed team among the three groups, will advance to the semifinals. This tournament is particularly significant for the national junior team as they gear up for a major challenge at the 2025 AFC U-17 Asian Cup Qualifiers in late October. Oman will compete in Group J against Tajikistan, Guam and hosts Singapore in their quest for qualification.



# Bangladesh clean sweep Pakistan for series win

**RAWALPINDI:** Bangladesh celebrated a historic first-ever Test series win over Pakistan and a 2-0 clean sweep with a tense six-wicket victory in Rawalpindi on Tuesday.

Shakib Al Hasan hit the winning boundary 25 minutes before the tea break on the fifth and final day to spark jubilation in the away dressing room.

A handful of Bangladesh supporters waving the nation's flag were also there to see their country win only a third away series in 33 attempts.

Shakib remained unbeaten on 21 and Mushfiquir Rahim was on 22 as the visitors painstakingly overhauled the tricky 185-run target.

Openers Zakir Hasan (40) and Shadman Islam (24), plus skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto (38) and Mominul Haque (34), all put runs on the board to help Bangladesh inch their way to a famous win.

Pakistan scored 274 and 172 in the second Test while Bangladesh recovered from 26-6 to make 262



Bangladesh's players pose with the trophy as they celebrate after winning the second and last Test against Pakistan, at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium. – AFP



Bangladesh's Mushfiquir Rahim (2R) and Shakib Al Hasan (3R) celebrate after their team's win in the second and last Test against Pakistan on Tuesday. – AFP

match home series starting next month. "In both the Tests we let them back in the game and in this one from 26-6, so it is something we need to address before our next series." — AFP

## BRIEF SCORES

**Pakistan 274** (Saim Ayub 58, Shan Masood 57, Salman Agha 54; Mehidy Hasan Miraz 5-61, Taskin Ahmed 3-57) and **172** (Salman Agha 47 not out, Mohammad Rizwan 43; Hasan Mahmud 5-43, Nahid Rana 4-44)

**Bangladesh 262** (Litton Das 138, Mehidy Hasan Miraz 78; Khurram Shahzad 6-90, Salman Agha 2-13, Mir Hamza 2-50) and **185-4** (Zakir Hasan 40, Najmul Hossain Shanto 38)

**Result:** Bangladesh won by six wickets, take series 2-0

**First Test:** Bangladesh won by 10 wickets

in their first innings.

Litton Das's 138 rescued Bangladesh with the bat before fast bowlers Hasan Mahmud (5-43) and Nahid Rana (4-44) wrecked Pakistan on Monday with career-best figures.

Bangladesh won the first Test by 10 wickets — also in Rawalpindi — for their first victory over Pakistan in 14 matches.

Najmul described the series win as momentous and a heroes' welcome awaits when they get home to a country which recently saw protests and the overthrow of former premier Sheikh Hasina.

"It means a lot to Bangladesh cricket and to all the players," said the captain. "I cannot express the feelings but I can say that we all are very happy and overjoyed."

"When we came here everybody was determined to do something special and we wanted to win. I am happy that everyone did his job to the best and we have won a historic series."

Bangladesh outplayed the home team in both Tests and were the better bowling side despite having an inexperienced pace attack.

Before this, Bangladesh's only away Test series wins came in the West Indies in 2009 and Zimbabwe three years ago.

In contrast, Pakistan have now lost six of their last 10 home Tests, drawing the other four.

"It is extremely disappointing to lose when you start a busy season," said skipper Shan Masood, whose team faces England in a three-



# Oman junior beach handball team gears up for Asian tourney

WALEED AL JAHWARI  
MUSCAT, SEPT 3

The Oman national junior beach handball team began their daily training at the sand courts of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher as part of the preparation programme to take part in the third Asian Juniors Beach Handball Championship for men and women.

Bangkok, Thailand capital, will host the Asian championship from October 16 to 25 with the participation of 7 teams including: Sultanate of Oman, Iran, Jordan, Qatar, China, Indonesia and hosts Thailand. The top three will qualify for the third Juniors Beach Handball World Cup finals, which will take place in Tunisia from June 17 to 22.

Jaber al Balushi, national team coach, currently selected 20 players to be reduced to 13 players to enter first camp which will be held from September 26 to 28, and 10 players will enter the second camp from October 3 to 6, then will head to Thailand for external camp from October 6 to 14, during which they will play 5 friendly matches.

Oman junior team will start the Asian Championship by meeting title holders Iran on October 16. The second match will be against Indonesia on October 17. Next match is against Thailand on October 19. The fourth match is against Jordan on October 20. Oman take on Qatar on October 23 and conclude with a match



Jaber al Balushi, Oman national beach handball team coach.

against China on October 25. All teams will play in a single-round league, the top three teams will advance to the World Cup finals in Tunisia 2025.

Dr Saeed bin Ahmed al Shehri, Chairman of the Board of Directors of Oman Handball Association, met the players before training session, which was limited to the Muscat players due to the commitment of others to the new school year, to join the training on the weekend.

Al Shehri spoke to players about the importance of the first participating in the Asian Championship, and the

opportunity to gain experience and interact with the participating teams.

Dr Saeed stressed "The association's Board of Directors is doing its utmost to provide all the facilities available with the aim of providing a good preparation base that will contribute to its appearance at an honourable level that reflects the extent of the development of beach handball in the Sultanate of Oman."

"The senior Oman beach handball team is the second best team in the Asian continent, and has achieved many achievements and qualified for the Beach World

Cup nine times. This is a moral incentive for the juniors to achieve honourable results in their first official appearance in the Asian Championship."

**OMAN SQUAD:** Mohammed al Hasani, Ali al Hasani, Abdulkarim al Hadidi, Al Khattab al Hasani, Harb al Hasani, Walid al Balushi, Wael al Balushi, Moataz al Mahrami, Hussain al Maawali, Munthir al Saadi, Loay al Sulaimani, Al Muwali al Busaidy, Rashid al Dughhaishi, Saeed Ambusaidi, Elyas al Sulaimani, Majid al Ghailani, Mohammed al Shibli, Yazan al Buraiki, Al Baraa al Araimi, Salah al Ghailani.

# Hawana Salalah hosts Socca Gulf Cup for first time



**SALALAH:** Hawana Salalah, by Orascom Development and Omran, in partnership with Sports Makers Oman, is hosting the first-ever Socca Gulf Cup in the Middle East and Asia, marking a significant milestone in the regional sports calendar. This prestigious event being held from September 1 to 4, includes eight teams from across the Gulf region.

Hawana Salalah, Oman's largest integrated tourism complex and year-round vibrant community, features white sandy beaches, lush green wadis and turquoise waters, which makes it an ideal setting for the Socca games. The destination offers a choice of hotels, vibrant restaurants and cafes, the Hawana Aqua Park, and a range of water and land activities and is located on the south-eastern coast of the Arabian Peninsula, only 20 minutes from the international airport.

It is also recognised as Oman's premier destination for recreation, leisure, and entertainment, featuring luxurious residential offerings, which makes it the preferred choice for major sports, cultural, and entertainment events throughout the year.

Engineer Wael al Lawati, CEO of Muriya, the developer of the award-winning communities, Jebel Sifah and Hawana Salalah, expressed his enthusiasm for hosting this historic tournament stating, "We are proud to welcome the Socca Gulf Cup to Hawana Salalah, marking a significant first for Oman. This event emphasises Hawana

Salalah's growing reputation as a leading destination for regional and international events. It also contributes to Oman's national economy and further cements the country's position as a top global tourist destination."

The Socca Gulf Cup marks a significant milestone in the development of six-a-side football in the Gulf region, and the broader Middle East. This tournament offers Gulf teams the chance to qualify for the 2024 Socca World Cup, where they will compete alongside elite teams from around the world. The recent draw for the tournament, held on August 20 at the Sultan Qaboos Cultural and Entertainment Complex, witnessed the participation of guests from Oman and other countries, setting the stage for an exciting competition.

Under the leadership of the Middle East Socca Association and its President and Founder of Sport Makers, Waleed al Obaidani, there is an ambitious vision to advance five-a-side, six-a-side, and seven-a-side football across the region. Highlighting the significance of this event, Al Lawati added, "Hosting the inaugural Socca Gulf Cup at Hawana Salalah is just the beginning of a series of prestigious events that will position the Dhofar Governorate and Oman as hubs for international sports and cultural activities. We eagerly anticipate welcoming players, fans, and guests to our world-class destination, where they can experience the very best that Oman has to offer."

# Al Harthy’s podium challenge ends in Texas final stage

**AUSTIN, United States:** Remarkable driving and tremendous tenacity from Ahmad al Harthy, Valentino Rossi and Maxime Martin in the ‘Lone Star Le Mans’ six-hour race in Austin, Texas, on September 1, almost delivered a dream podium return – until hopes were shattered with just 15 minutes to run.

Omani racer Al Harthy, making his maiden visit to the Circuit of the Americas in the USA, relished the new challenge in round six of the FIA World Endurance Championship season and, along with his No 46 BMW M4 team-mates, produced an incredible series of performances on race day.

Storming through from an uncharacteristic 15th on the LMGT3 grid, excellent pace and racecraft from the trio and superb strategy and pit-work from Team WRT ensured a possible podium finish was on the cards – certainly a top four result. With Martin at the wheel during the final stint, the deserved points haul looked assured but he was forced into retirement with power steering failure. After a positive first couple of free practice sessions at the Austin track on August 30, the No 46 entry lapping within 0.6 seconds of the top of the LMGT3 times in the day’s second outing, Al Harthy felt decidedly

under the weather on August 31, and so qualifying proved to be an even sterner test than would normally be the case.

Even so, the Omani did his absolute best in the circumstances and was initially within the top 10 spots for possible progression into Hyperpole. Before the end of the 12-minute session, though, the Team WRT BMW slipped to 15th on the times and so had the challenge of starting on row eight.

Al Harthy took the beginning of Sunday’s ‘Lone Star Le Mans’ and the OQ. Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Omantel, Experience Oman and BMW Oman partnered driver immediately made excellent progress, leaping into the top 12 and then moving into 11th place mid-lap.

Continuing to pick up his pace, on the third tour he passed the sister No 31 Team WRT car to break into the top 10. Pulling away and instantly pressuring the cars ahead, half an hour into the stint he claimed ninth. Motoring further away, but with over three seconds to make up to the next couple of cars, Al Harthy reduced the gap in no time but the battle then plateaued.

At the 50-minute mark, the No 777 Aston Martin pitted and so Al Harthy climbed into eighth as



- Near dream result at ‘Lone Star Le Mans’ for rapid Team WRT trio
- Ahmad al Harthy, Valentino Rossi, Maxime Martin impress in USA
- Cruel blow of power steering failure late-on ends certain P4 finish
- Team-mates deliver sensational showcase to go from P15 on grid

a result. This precipitated most of the other LMGT3 runners pitting, but the Omani stayed out and moved into the top three. He then pitted on lap 26, just ahead of the end of the first hour, with Martin taking over and joining the action in fifth position.

Taking fourth place on lap 35, Martin decimated the 10 second

gap to the podium placings and 40 minutes into his stint he successfully challenged for third position. Instantly on the tail of the second placed No 85 Lamborghini Huracan, Martin swept past on lap 50.

With one hour and 45 minutes of the race elapsed, the Belgian driver was just 1.5 seconds shy of the LMGT3 leading No 27 Aston Martin and he closed the gap in the blink of an eye before the Aston pitted. Martin then headed into pitlane a lap later from the LMGT3 lead.

Al Harthy returned to the driving seat for his second stint and threaded back into the race just before the end of the second hour in P2. Slipping back a couple of spots during the early going of hour three, passed by Gold and Silver graded drivers, Bronze graded competitor

Ahmad pressed on. Running in fifth position a third of the way through the stint, the Omani soon moved back into fourth when the No 85 Lamborghini had to pit with damage. With debris on the track, a Full Course Yellow cautionary period was duly called with racing resuming just a few minutes later. Al Harthy pitted from fourth nearing the halfway point of the race, handing over the BMW to Rossi for his first miles.

Holding seventh place initially, when the full race order settled after the third round of stops Rossi had risen to fifth. As the encounter hit the three hour mark, the MotoGP legend swarmed all over the back of the fourth placed McLaren – having rocketed up to the No 59 car – and he remained squarely in the fight for a dream podium, later

moving into the top four with some great driving.

**Ahmad al Harthy:**

“We had every emotion this weekend here in Texas! Vale and Maxime drove so unbelievably well in the race, and I was really happy with my pace and performance – especially the first stint to get us through the order after such a tough qualifying. The guys at Team WRT gave us a fantastic car and the strategy was perfect, an incredible performance to come through from P15 to P4.

“In the end it wasn’t to be, unfortunately, with the power steering issue. After so much hard work it does feel a cruel blow, but we’re proud of the performance we all delivered and it makes us even more determined and focused for Fuji in a couple of weeks.”

# Sinner, Medvedev set up quarterfinal showdown

**NEW YORK:** World number one Jannik Sinner and former champion Daniil Medvedev set up a US Open quarterfinal showdown on Monday as both men look to exploit the hole left by the shock exits of Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz.

Australian Open champion Sinner made the last eight for the second time by seeing off US 14th seed Tommy Paul 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/5), 6-1.

Medvedev, the 2021 champion and runner-up to Djokovic last year, outclassed Portugal’s Nuno Borges 6-0, 6-1, 6-3 to reach the quarterfinals for the fifth time in six years.

Women’s world number one Iga Swiatek, meanwhile, stayed on course for a sixth Grand Slam title with a straight-set win over Russia’s Liudmila Samsonova.

The Italian Sinner recovered from 4-1 down in the first set to see off Paul, who had been hoping to join compatriots Taylor Fritz and Frances Tiafoe in the quarterfinals in New York.

“It will be another tough match with Daniil. There will be a lot of rallies so I have to be ready physically,” said Sinner.

Medvedev is the only former champion left after the first week defeats of four-time winner Djokovic and 2022 champion Alcaraz.



Italy’s Jannik Sinner celebrates his win over USA’s Tommy Paul during their round of 16 match on day eight of the US Open tournament at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York City. – AFP

The world number five easily downed 34th-ranked Borges, whose challenge fizzled out under the weight of 51 unforced errors while Medvedev broke serve eight times.

Sinner and Medvedev will be meeting for the fourth time this year.

Sinner came back from two sets to love down to defeat the mercurial Russian in the Australian Open final and came out on top in the Miami semifinals.

Medvedev then triumphed at Wimbledon in a five-set quarterfinal.

“I will try to think more about Wimbledon than the Australian Open,” said Medvedev. “With Jannik, I feel like we know our games, what we will try to bring to the table, and then it comes to always this moment’s deuce, breakpoint, maybe try to surprise him or not, what he will do, what I will do.”

## DRAPER HAILS ‘ICON’ MURRAY

Jack Draper became the first British man since Andy Murray in 2016 to reach the quarterfinals by seeing off Tomas Machac of the Czech Republic 6-3, 6-1, 6-2.



Poland’s Iga Swiatek hits a return to Russia’s Liudmila Samsonova during their women’s singles round of 16 match on day eight of the US Open tournament at the USTA Billie Jean King National Tennis Center in New York City. – AFP

The 22-year-old left-hander has only dropped serve once over four matches on his way to a maiden Slam quarterfinal, winning 47 of 48 service games and saving 20 of 21 break points.

Draper hailed the influence of Murray, the former world number one and 2012 US Open champion who retired from tennis following the Paris Olympics.

“He’s a legend and an icon and if I have half the career that he had I will be a happy man,” said the 25th seed, who goes on to face Alex de Minaur. The 10th-seeded De Minaur won an all-Australian battle with Jordan Thompson 6-0,

3-6, 6-3, 7-5.

Four-time French Open winner Swiatek, the 2022 champion in New York, celebrated her 100th Grand Slam match by cantering to a 6-4, 6-1 win over 16th-ranked Samsonova.

The Pole will take on American sixth seed Jessica Pegula for a place in the semifinals.

“There will be some long rallies and intense hitting,” predicted Swiatek of facing Pegula, who she also beat in the quarterfinals on her way to the title two years ago.

Pegula made the last eight for the second time with a 6-4,

6-2 victory over Russia’s Diana Shnaider. Beatriz Haddad Maia became the first Brazilian woman to reach the quarterfinals since Maria Bueno in 1968 when she defeated 2014 runner-up Caroline Wozniacki.

The 22nd-ranked left-hander converted a third match point to defeat the former world number one 6-2, 3-6, 6-3.

She will next face 2023 semi-finalist Karolina Muchova, who knocked out French Open and Wimbledon runner-up Jasmine Paolini, the fifth seed, 6-3, 6-3.

Muchova, ranked 52 and who only returned to the tour in June after 10 months out with a wrist injury, has yet to drop a set and knocked out two-time champion Naomi Osaka in the second round. — AFP

## US OPEN DAY 8 RESULTS Men (fourth round)

Jannik Sinner (ITA x1) bt Tommy Paul (USA x14) 7-6 (7/3), 7-6 (7/5), 6-1; Daniil Medvedev (RUS x5) bt Nuno Borges (POR) 6-0, 6-1, 6-3; Jack Draper (GBR x25) bt Tomas Machac (CZE) 6-3, 6-1, 6-2; Alex De Minaur (AUS x10) bt Jordan Thompson (AUS) 6-0, 3-6, 6-3, 7-5

## Women (fourth round)

Iga Swiatek (POL x1) bt Liudmila Samsonova (RUS x16) 6-4, 6-1; Jessica Pegula (USA x6) bt Diana Shnaider (RUS x18) 6-4, 6-2; Beatriz Haddad Maia (BRA x22) bt Caroline Wozniacki (DEN) 6-2, 3-6, 6-3; Karolina Muchova (CZE) bt Jasmine Paolini (ITA x5) 6-3, 6-3

# business

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## 22 professions in transport, IT sectors to be Omanised

BUSINESS REPORTER  
MUSCAT, SEPT 3

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) has announced a major initiative to Omanise 22 professions across the transport, logistics, communications and information technology sectors. This effort is part of a broader strategy to enhance local employment and reduce reliance on expatriate labour, aligning with national goals to strengthen the Omani workforce. The Omanisation process, set to take place between 2025 and 2027, follows Ministerial Resolution No 501/2024 issued by the Ministry of Labour. It marks a significant step towards increasing the participation of Omani nationals in key sectors critical to the nation's economy. In the communications and IT sector, eight professions have been earmarked for Omanisation. By January 2025, three key roles—systems

analyst, information systems network specialist and computer maintenance technician—will be exclusively filled by Omanis. These roles are vital for maintaining and advancing the nation's IT infrastructure. By 2026, three more professions—computer programmer, computer engineer and computer operator—will be Omanised. These positions are crucial for software development and the operation of computer systems, both of which are essential to Oman's digital transformation agenda. In 2027, the final two professions in this sector, website designer and operations analyst, will also be Omanised, ensuring that Omani talent is at the forefront of both creative and operational aspects of the IT industry. The transportation and logistics sector, a key pillar of Oman's economy, will see the Omanisation of 14 professions. This initiative began on September 2, 2024, with the Omanisation of roles such as commercial broker, forklift



The effort is part of a broader strategy to enhance local employment and reduce reliance on expatriate labour.

driver, marketing specialist, ship mooring and stabilisation worker, labour supervisor and travel agent. These positions are crucial to the daily operations of the transportation and logistics industries and their Omanisation is expected to enhance efficiency and local expertise.

Additionally, by January 2025, the professions of marine controller and ship traffic controller will be Omanised. These roles are critical for managing Oman's maritime activities, ensuring safe and efficient operations within the sector. The Omanisation of

these 22 professions is expected to significantly impact the sectors involved by accelerating the replacement of expatriate workers with qualified Omani professionals. This initiative will create quality job opportunities for Omani youth, contributing to reducing unemployment

and ensuring that the nation's workforce meets its economic needs. The Ministry aims to achieve Omanisation rates of 20% to 50% in the transportation and logistics sector by 2025, with a gradual increase to 100% by 2040. In the communications and IT sector, the target is to reach Omanisation rates between 50% and 100% by 2026. These ambitious goals reflect the Ministry's commitment to building a strong, local workforce capable of driving Oman's economic development. To support this initiative, the Ministry is implementing a range of policies, including mandatory employment thresholds for Omanis, training and qualification programmes, and enhanced governance of work permits and professional assessments. These efforts are designed to ensure the success of the Omanisation initiative, helping to build a resilient, self-sufficient economy driven by local talent and innovation.

## Construction bids invited for landmark Muttrah Square project

CONRAD PRABHU  
MUSCAT, SEPT 3

Development of the Muttrah Square project—a landmark initiative to enhance the appeal of the popular Muttrah waterfront in Muscat Governorate—is set to commence in earnest, with Muscat Municipality, the project developer, floating a tender for the implementation of the iconic structure. Interested construction contractors have until September 16, 2024, to collect tender documents from the General-Secretariat of the Tender Board, with final submissions due by October 14, 2024. The Muttrah Square project is based on the winning entry submitted by a trio of Omani designers and architects during the inaugural edition of the Bilarab Bin Haitham Award for Architectural Design conducted in 2022. It is the first of an array of monuments and edifices planned to be developed at key locations around the country, showcasing Omani architectural, environmental and historical themes. According to Muscat Municipality, Muttrah Square will be developed on a 7,500-square-metre site located directly in front of the equally splendid Muttrah Fish Souk overlooking the waterfront. At its centre is a cantilever bridge that will afford spectacular views of the waterfront and surrounding landmarks to visitors and tourists.



Artist's rendering of the Muttrah Square project.

The Municipality explained: “Central to this development is a prominent pedestrian viewpoint bridge, featuring a 64-metre cantilever extending over the sea. The bridge, designed as a structural element, is constructed from high-grade steel, ensuring both durability and structural integrity. Its sleek, modern design incorporates tempered glass railings that provide unobstructed views of the waterfront and urban landscape while ensuring safety for all users. The access ramps leading to the bridge are meticulously engineered in compliance with international accessibility standards, ensuring universal access and ease of use for all individuals.” Also envisioned around the sky bridge is an urban park featuring landscaped settings with meandering pathways and populated with a diverse selection of trees, including palms and

vibrant flowering plants. “These landscaped areas, complemented by strategically placed seating zones and open spaces, create an inviting environment for leisure and social interaction,” it noted. In addition, a circular fountain is planned within the public park to serve as a focal point for visitors. In addition to the construction of the sky bridge, the selected contractor will also construct two wings of shop units comprising a total of 14 shopping units, a pump room for the fountain, and a steel canopy. Other utilities—electrical, telecom, water, and drainage—have also been specified. “This development, with its robust construction standards and aesthetic landscaping, provides a vibrant and attractive public space for the community, making it a standout feature of the Muttrah waterfront,” the Municipality added.

## OMAN-INDIA BUSINESS FORUM EXPLORES STRATEGIC INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

MUSCAT: The Omani-Indian Business Forum, organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), brought together business leaders from Oman and India to explore and expand joint investment opportunities across a range of key sectors. The event, a significant platform for enhancing economic cooperation, underscored the deep-rooted and growing partnership between the two nations. Eng Redha bin Jumaa al Saleh, a member of OCCI's Board of Directors, emphasised the forum's goal of elevating trade and investment exchanges to reflect the strong bilateral ties between Oman and India. He highlighted that the forum serves as a comprehensive platform for businesses from both countries to identify and pursue investment opportunities in critical sectors, including food security, building materials, petroleum, pharmaceuticals, textiles, plastics and jewellery. The forum comes at a crucial time, with bilateral trade between Oman and India reaching approximately RO 1.2 billion (\$3.1 billion) by the end of June. This growth reflects the increasing economic interdependence between the two nations. The discussions also touched on the nearing conclusion of a free trade agreement, which is expected to further solidify this partnership and place the private sectors of both countries at the forefront of future economic integration.



The forum's goal is to elevate trade and investment exchanges to reflect the strong bilateral ties between Oman and India.

Paresh Mehta, Regional President of the Federation of Indian Export Organisations (Western Region) and head of the Indian delegation, recognised Oman's strategic importance as a gateway to the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. He reaffirmed India's commitment to strengthening trade and investment partnerships with Oman, aiming to accelerate the growth of economic relations between the two countries. During the forum, participants were presented with a visual overview of Oman's attractive business environment, highlighting recent improvements in credit ratings and international ease-of-doing-business indicators. The presentation also focused on the sectors pivotal to achieving the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, such as logistics, industry, tourism and food security, alongside emerging sectors like health, education, and information technology. The incentives and regulatory framework offered to investors

in Oman were also outlined, showcasing the country's commitment to fostering a conducive environment for foreign investment. The Federation of Indian Export Organisations also presented insights into potential growth areas for Indian exports and discussed efforts to forge partnerships with Omani businesses, particularly in sectors where both countries see significant opportunities for mutual benefit. The forum concluded with a series of bilateral meetings between Omani and Indian business leaders. These discussions focused on enhancing cooperation, consolidating trade relations, exchanging expertise, and identifying concrete joint investment opportunities. The event highlighted the mutual interest in building a stronger economic future together, leveraging the unique strengths and resources of both nations.

# BYD listed on Kantar BrandZ top 50 Chinese global brand builders

MUSCAT: On June 20, 2024, Google, in collaboration with Kantar, released the “2024 Google x Kantar BrandZ Top 50 Chinese Global Brand Builders” list, which evaluates the performance and influence of Chinese brands in their global development. The list includes brands from various industries, with BYD ranking 15th, up seven places from last year. Since the establishment of this list in 2017, BYD has been featured for seven consecutive years.

As a global company operating across four major industries—automotive, rail transit, new energy, and electronics—BYD continues to accelerate its global expansion. As of May 2024, BYD's new energy passenger vehicles have entered 77 countries and regions, including Brazil, Germany, Japan, and Thailand, and the company has invested in factories in Brazil, Hungary, and Thailand.

In 2023, BYD sold a total of 3.02 million vehicles, retaining its title as the global annual sales champion for new energy vehicles. Among these, BYD's



overseas new energy passenger vehicle sales exceeded 240,000 units, representing a year-on-year increase of 337%.

To date, BYD has cumulatively sold more than 7.6 million new energy vehicles.

BYD has consistently adhered to its development philosophy that prioritises technology and innovation. From DM (Dual Mode) plug-in hybrids and e-Platform 3.0 to Blade Battery, CTB (Cell to Body), DiSus Intelligent Body Control System, and further to the e<sup>4</sup>Platform,

DMO Super Hybrid Off-road Platform, as well as the fifth-generation DM technology, an increasing number of core technologies have continually enriched its technological content.

In 2023, BYD's R&D investment reached nearly 40 billion RMB, with over 102,800 R&D talents, making it the largest automotive R&D team globally, leading the wave of technological innovation in the global automotive industry.

This year, BYD became an

official partner of UEFA EURO 2024 and a regional partner for CONMEBOL Copa América 2024 in Latin America. From actively promoting dragon boating as an Olympic sport to supporting young Chinese footballers on the world stage, BYD, as a global leader in new energy vehicles, is integrating into top-tier international sports events, injecting vitality into the global green dream.

Kantar BrandZ is the most authoritative and valuable brand list worldwide, combining Kantar BrandZ's analytical techniques with Google's global audience reach and data collection capabilities to provide authoritative third-party brand rankings.

BYD's inclusion in this list reflects the support and recognition of global consumers. In the future, BYD will continue to drive high-quality brand development through technological innovations, leveraging leading technology and diversified products to “Cool the Earth by 1°C” and establish a respected world-class brand.

## Tyreplus Oman launches exclusive summer offers

MUSCAT: Tyreplus, a division of MHD ACERE, is excited to announce special summer promotions on a wide range of products. Since its establishment in 2002, Tyreplus has grown to over 1,600 franchises across 26 countries. In Oman, Tyreplus operates nine strategically located branches, including four in Muscat (Wadi Kabir, Al Khuwair, Al Athaiba, and Maabala), as well as branches in Barka, Suhar, Nizwa, Khat Al Batinah and Salalah, to serve customers effectively across the nation. Now is the perfect opportunity to upgrade your passenger car or SUV with premium Michelin tires with our offering of additional cashback of up to RO 50 on select Michelin 2023 & 2024 DOT tires

The offer is subject to terms and conditions. Additionally, you can save on Motul oils and Varta batteries.

Have your battery tested free of charge and receive 20% off on every VARTA battery purchase. It doesn't end there! With Motul oils as well, get a flat 20% off on all Motul oils. These offers are only available through MHD-affiliated Tyreplus branches. We invite all motorists to visit our outlets and take advantage of these fantastic deals on tyres, battery and motor oil.

Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, commented, “As temperatures soar, vehicle safety becomes even more crucial. We emphasise thorough vehicle checks at Tyreplus in order to ensure safe driving. Additionally, we offer discounted Michelin tires, Motul oils, and free battery testing with discounts on VARTA batteries. With our extensive network across Oman, we continue to deliver exceptional service and maintain high safety standards.”

At Tyreplus, we pride ourselves on being a one-stop solution for car care and recognise the critical importance of vehicle safety, especially during the scorching summer months when the risk of car-related issues increases.



# NBO Muzn Islamic launches eco-friendly Sharia-compliant credit cards

MUSCAT: In a significant step forward in its commitment to sustainability and innovation, NBO Muzn Islamic Banking has launched its new range of eco-friendly Sharia-compliant credit cards.

These cards combine responsible banking with ethical finance, allowing customers to manage their finances while supporting environmental sustainability.

Designed to align with Sharia principles, these cards offer a greener way to bank, blending modern convenience with a commitment to ethical and eco-friendly practices.

Salima al Marzouqi, Chief Islamic Banking Officer at NBO Muzn Islamic Banking, said: “We are committed to meeting the diverse needs of our customers through innovative and customised financial solutions that address their current and future needs. Our newly introduced Gold, Platinum and Signature eco-friendly credit cards exemplify this commitment, offering special services that



cater to varying lifestyles and preferences.

These cards provide exclusive perks such as airport lounge access, hotel discounts, and special services such as chauffeur trips and embody our ethos of responsible and sustainable banking. We believe in contributing to sustainability with cards made from eco-friendly materials and ensuring our customers experience the best in banking, reflecting our continuous commitment to excellence and customer satisfaction.”

The new environmentally friendly credit cards are unveiled as part of Muzn Islamic Banking's offerings, catering

to both premium and mass segments. The Gold Credit Card, part of the mass segment, combines financial convenience with eco-conscious values. It offers global acceptance and a range of benefits, including discounts on car rentals and bookings through partner platforms, as well as easy payment plans to make your transactions more manageable and rewarding.

The Platinum Credit Card, part of the Privilege Banking segment, offers exclusive benefits, including complimentary visits to airport lounges, exclusive merchant discounts, and special rates at partner hotels worldwide through Visa Platinum Hotel Discounts. Additionally, it offers the Visa Platinum Entertainer Xperience App with exclusive deals and discounts.

The Signature Credit Card, included with Priority Banking, offers a variety of privileges, such as access to the Visa Platinum Entertainer Xperience App for special offers and discounts.

## Join the Kia SUV family with benefits and win amazing prizes



MUSCAT: Immerse yourself into Kia's innovative SUV line up with Kia's spring celebrations. Enjoy free service, insurance, and registration benefits.

Become a Kia customer and win incredible prizes with the assured Scratch & Win coupons, such as gold coins, an iPhone 15 Pro Max, and service upgrades up to 200,000 km.

“Avail this limited time offer before the offer ends on 23rd October 2024. We invite you to visit your nearest Kia showroom and find your perfect ride with Kia's high-tech SUV range,” Shared an official from the Kia Oman team.

“Double your savings with 1st year free insurance, 1st time registration fee waiver, and access to exclusive service opportunity up to 30,000 km/3 years.

Who knows, you might get luckier and get the chance to win additional service upgrades up to 200,000 km/20 years or walk away with 10-gramme, 24-carat gold coins and the latest iPhone 15s,” he added.

Don't miss out and check out

Kia's SUV range in Oman, which includes the Kia Seltos, Sorento, Sportage, Telluride, Sonet, and the all-electric EV9.

Made to live the city life, the Kia Seltos SUV is a blend of style and comfort, making a fine impression on the road.

Powered by a 1.5-litre gasoline engine producing 113 HP paired to a VVT transmission, the Seltos is excellent for squeezing into tight urban spaces. Young or old, all age groups can have tons of fun in this compact SUV.

Made for large 7-member families, the spacious and powerful Kia Sorento makes every journey a breeze. Powered by a 3.5-litre V6 engine, it produces an exceptional 268 horsepower and 33.8 kg/m of torque paired to an 8-speed transmission.

The SUV projects a futuristic appeal, cutting-edge ergonomic controls, and a 616-litre boot capacity in the rear with a smart power tailgate option.

The classic Kia Sportage has settled in the hearts of many customers. The AWD is best known

for its world-class cargo space up to 591L. The second-row folding option gives you enough room to load your camping gear. Make way through the Middle Eastern horizons and enjoy the ride with the comfort of ventilated front seats and plethora of other cutting-edge safety features.

The Sportage is powered by a 1.6-litre engine, delivering 176 rpm & 2.0-litre engine producing 157, both trims are paired to a 6-speed transmission.

Make a smooth transition to an SUV with Kia's spring celebrations. Kia's innovative thought process goes beyond manufacturing vehicles; we aim to inspire a movement, and that reflects in our dynamic product line-up.

Get answers to your product-related question and complete your buyer's journey with Kia's professional sales staff.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), Kia's distributor in Oman, ensures a rewarding ownership experience with excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities.

# Nikon announces launch of Nikon Z6III and SR-1 in Oman

MUSCAT: Nikon, the leading name in photography and imaging products in Oman, is proud to announce the launch of the highly anticipated Nikon Z6III along with the new SR-1, Nikon's Small Robotic Head. Nikon's exclusive distributor, Khimji Ramdas is excited to bring this cutting-edge mirrorless camera to photography enthusiasts and professionals in Oman.

The Nikon Z6III represents

the next generation of Nikon's renowned Z series, offering superior performance, advanced features, and unparalleled image quality. With its 24.5-megapixel full-frame sensor, partially stacked and AI powered autofocus system, and powerful EXPEED 7 image processor, the Z6III is designed to meet the demands of both still photography and videography, making it the ideal choice for creators looking to push the



boundaries of their craft.

The SR-1 Small Robotic Head revolutionises professional photography and videography with its compact, lightweight

design. Featuring an effortless setup, smooth, versatile movement, and advanced remote-control capabilities for seamless operation in tight spaces, it's

the perfect tool for capturing dynamic angles in a range of environments.

Nailesh Khimji, Director, Khimji Ramdas mentioned: “We are honoured to celebrate our long-standing association with Nikon, a brand that has consistently set the standard in imaging technology.

Over the decades, Nikon's commitment to innovation has not only made it the preferred choice for professionals but

has also inspired countless amateurs to explore the art of photography.”

Sachin Malhotra, COO, KR Lifestyle Cluster opined: “We're thrilled to unveil two groundbreaking products: the Nikon Z6III, which furthers the legacy of the iconic Z series, and the SR-1 Small Robotic Head, designed to enable photographers, media houses, and broadcasters to capture a diverse range of angles in their work.”



# Green hydrogen sector to unlock major job and localisation opportunities in Oman

HIBBA AL KINDI  
MUSCAT, SEPT 3

The emerging green hydrogen sector in Oman presents various employment and localisation opportunities across all supporting sub-sectors, according to recent remarks by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufo, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

Speaking at the launch of the Green Hydrogen Ecosystem Readiness Laboratory earlier this week, Al Aufo shared that an estimated 40 million solar panels would be required to actualise the country's goals of producing 1 million tonnes per annum of green hydrogen powered by 35 GW of renewable energy by 2030. "Today, the Omani market in terms of renewable energy has become a giant market, capable of accommodating many industries. The numbers I mentioned are not just for effect, but also for the private sector to understand that we need forty million solar panels to reach the 2030 target.

This means that the local Omani market has become promising and capable of truly absorbing these industries," Al Aufo said.

But he emphasised the need to look beyond the sole objective of manufacturing solar panels and instead focus on developing a wider manufacturing ecosystem. "We must start thinking about these industries, not just in terms of solar panels, but the panel needs a frame, and this frame requires bases, cables, installation and connectors for the devices. When we visited some sites, we found many things besides the panel itself that can be manufactured in the country," he stated.

Furthermore, he highlighted the significance of planning towards the future.

"Certainly, the first project will not be installed 100 per cent by Omani personnel nor will it be 100 per cent locally manufactured, meaning not everything is produced in the country. However, we need to consider future projects to



Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufo, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of Hydrom, speaking at the opening of the Green Hydrogen Ecosystem Readiness Lab on Monday.

determine whether we will continue to rely on importing items and having them installed by international workers, or whether we will start planning today on which items to manufacture domestically and which professions we can train the local population to perform." Importantly, continuity is also crucial to actualising the nation's goals of achieving the target of producing 8-9 million tonnes of

**According to initial estimates shared by the minister, a labour force of approximately 70,000–80,000 would be required to actualise each of the 8 signed green hydrogen projects in the country.**

green hydrogen per annum by 2050, the minister stressed.

"There needs to be continuity. This is essential because we manage 3-4 projects annually, and our target for 2050 is not merely one million tonnes of green hydrogen but 8-9 million tonnes. To achieve this goal, we need approximately 300 million solar panels, indicating that expansion is necessary, but action must be taken today."

According to initial estimates

shared by the minister, a labour force of approximately 70,000–80,000 would be required to actualise each of the 8 signed green hydrogen projects in the country, which aim to produce 1 million MT per annum of green hydrogen by 2030. Additionally, approximately 2,000-3,000 wind turbines would need to be installed, in addition to the previously mentioned 40 million solar panels. Together, they open up various opportunities across various sectors, he noted.

According to Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani, Managing Director of Hydrom, the local content track has been added to the Green Hydrogen Laboratory's remit, which previously focused only on four main tracks: logistics, regulations, construction and manpower.

He shared that despite its intersection with the other sectors, it was crucial to sufficiently address the axis, in order to actualise the laboratory's goals of achieving economic

diversification. Total investment in the 8 green hydrogen projects signed to date is estimated at \$127 billion.

According to the National Strategy for the Orderly Transition to Net Zero, the green hydrogen sector is expected to potentially contribute an additional 50 per cent to the GDP by 2050.

According to a report by the International Energy Agency (IEA), Oman's green hydrogen sector is expected to generate annual revenues of \$2 billion from the export and domestic use of green hydrogen starting from 2030, with the potential of this figure growing to "double-digit USD billion levels" in the long term.

A report by business management consulting firm Guidehouse Germany also estimates that the sector is expected to create 291,000 to 381,800 employment opportunities based on 2050 goals.

## Key workshop explores opportunities for SMEs in renewable energy sector

NASRULAH AL AJMI  
MUSCAT, SEPT 3

The Ministry of Economy (MoE), in cooperation with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), held a workshop yesterday, September 3, 2024, on 'Renewable Energy and the Development of Small and Medium Enterprises: Challenges and Opportunities'.

The workshop was held under the auspices of Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Maawali, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Economy, and attended by a number of under-secretaries, along with a select group of experts, specialists, and representatives from government entities and SMEs.

The workshop saw participation from various SME owners and representatives. It featured a comprehensive programme where everyone engaged in group sessions focused on SME case studies.

The workshop aims to enhance cooperation between relevant government and private entities by exchanging ideas and perspectives among participants and providing practical solutions to overcome the challenges faced by SMEs in this field.

The workshop opened with a welcoming speech delivered by Shaikh Humaid al Saadi, Director-General of Economic Sectors at the MoE. He emphasised the significant role SMEs play in supporting the national economy, noting that these enterprises form the backbone of the economy. He also highlighted that supporting SMEs in adopting renewable energy solutions is a crucial step towards achieving sustainable development goals and net-zero emissions by 2050.

Eng Saeed al Hosni, CEO and Founder of Voltech, speaking to the *Observer*, commented: "We see a promising future in these fields with many opportunities for investment.

The challenges in this sector are constant, with technological advancements happening rapidly. However, we believe that every challenge brings with it new and important opportunities. We always strive to leverage these positive opportunities to achieve sustainable growth and success in our business."

During the workshop, several working papers were presented in cooperation with the National Net-Zero Programme, the Authority for Public Services Regulation, and Nafath Renewable Energy LLC. These papers covered topics such as incentives and facilities for the use of renewable energy, aligning sustainable SMEs with the energy transition, and showcasing success stories of SMEs in renewable energy projects. The workshop included a discussion session on the challenges faced by institutions using renewable energy and those operating in the sector, as well as proposed solutions and initiatives.



Dignitaries attending the opening of a workshop.

### ■ OMAN PARTICIPATES IN GCC TAX DIRECTORS MEETING



DOHA: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the 13th meeting of the Committee of Heads and Directors of Tax Departments of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which was held in Doha, Qatar. The delegation was headed by Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Chairman of the Tax Authority. The meeting aimed to enhance cooperation between Gulf tax authorities and departments and improve the efficiency of tax systems in the GCC countries. The meeting also discussed the best practices followed and combating tax evasion, to build a more just and transparent Gulf tax system. — ONA

## Oil falls as Chinese demand concerns overshadow Libyan export halt

LONDON: Brent oil prices declined 2 per cent on Tuesday as sluggish economic growth in China, the world's biggest crude importer, increased demand concerns that overshadowed the impact of halted production and exports from Libya.

Brent crude futures fell by \$1.65, or 2.1 per cent, to \$75.59 a barrel. West Texas Intermediate crude futures, which did not settle on Monday because of the US Labour Day holiday, were down \$1.06, or 1.4 per cent, at \$72.11.

"The weaker than expected Chinese manufacturing PMI over the weekend likely exacerbated concerns about the Chinese economy's performance," said Charalampos Pissouros, senior investment analyst at brokerage XM.

"The Libya and Middle East stories are keeping a floor below prices, leaving the door open to a further recovery in the foreseeable future."

On Monday, China reported new export orders fell for first time in eight months in July and that prices of new homes rose in August at their weakest pace this



A worker checks pipes and valves at Amaal oil field in eastern Libya. — Reuters

year. In Libya, oil exports at major ports were halted on Monday and production curtailed across the country, six engineers said, continuing a standoff between rival political factions over control of the central bank and oil revenue.

So far there is limited upside support from large production disruptions in Libya, owing to the uncertainty over how long those outages might last, said UBS analyst Giovanni Staunovo.

Libya's National Oil Corp (NOC) declared force majeure on its El Feel oilfield from September 2. Total production had plunged to little more than 591,000 barrels per day (bpd) as of August 28 from

nearly 959,000 bpd on August 26, NOC said. Production was at about 1.28 million bpd on July 20, the company said.

Some supply is set to return to the market as eight members of Opec and affiliates, together known as Opec+, are scheduled to boost output by 180,000 bpd in October. The plan is likely to go ahead regardless of demand worries, industry sources said.

"It remains to be seen how low prices can go before Opec+ reacts, as most cartel members need prices above current levels to come close to balancing budgets," said Panmure Liberum analyst Ashley Kelly. — Reuters

# New government to push ahead with audit reform



ANDY JALIL  
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

Among the UK Labour government's priorities for the economy is the push to bring forward a bill to strengthen audit and corporate governance. The sector has been battered by scandals including Carillion, BHS and Patisserie Valerie in recent years. However, plans to create a strong and strict regulator – the Audit, Reporting and Governance Authority – have been repeatedly pushed back in the past.

Chief executive, Richard Moriarty, of the current watchdog, The Financial Reporting Council (FRC), welcomed the government's announcement of draft legislation to modernise supervision of the sector.

“The FRC has transformed in recent years into a more robust

and effective regulator. But despite this progress, there are serious gaps in the regulatory toolkit that have long been identified as being in need of reform so we can act fully in the public interest and support growth and the abilities of companies to attract the capital they need,” said Moriarty.

“Without these changes we are the regulatory equivalent of being a sheriff for only half the county and with weaker powers than are needed,” he added.

Former FRC chair Keith Skeoch said he was “pleased to see it included and recognition that audit reform is not just a priority but an important part of the wider growth agenda. What's really important is that FRC are given the statutory powers to ensure the transformation into ARGA (Audit, Reporting and Governance Authority) happens.”

ARGA will be the new regulatory body in the UK with the intention of replacing the FRC. It will oversee the audit market to protect against conflict of interest at audit firms, establish a local audit system and have the power to investigate and sanction company directors for serious failures in their financial reporting and audit responsibilities. The chief executive of professional body the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales, Alan Vallance, also welcomed the announcement.

“More than six years on from the collapse of Carillion, we are delighted that the new government has named legislation to reform corporate governance and audit as one of its priorities for the next parliament, he said.

“Reliable, trusted reporting by companies is fundamental to investor confidence which in turn is key to economic growth and stability. This long-awaited reform will not only reduce the risk of disorderly business failure, but will contribute to the transition to net-zero,” he added.

Labour had pledged to put economic growth “at the heart of its legislative agenda” and “take the brakes off Britain” when the King's speech, in July, set out its platform of new laws. Outlining Labour's upcoming legislative plans, King Charles had said the government “will seek a new partnership with both business and working people and help the country move on from the recent cost of living challenges by prioritising wealth creation for all communities.”

More than 35 bills were being

worked on for potential inclusion, the government had said back in July, spanning issues including energy, planning and fiscal rules.

Other topics announced at that time include a bill on workers' rights and reforms to the House of Lords. An expected bill on AI regulation did not make the cut but the King said in the speech that the government would establish “appropriate legislation”.

Labour has already pushed through its legislation for a national wealth fund to drive investment into the United Kingdom. While reports have suggested some top private equity dealmakers are eyeing a move to locations such as Milan amid Labour's plans to hike taxes on the sector, other business leaders have rallied around the party and its promise to bring more stability to the UK economy.

## Fading China optimism hits iron ore prices, but not yet volumes

China's iron or futures suffered their worst one-day price drop for almost two years on Monday, but the evaporating optimism in the market has yet to show up in imports of the key raw material for making steel.

Contracts on the Dalian Commodity Exchange ended day trading on Monday at 723.5 yuan (\$101.83) a metric tonne, 4.83% down from the previous close and the largest daily loss since Oct. 31, 2022.

The catalyst for Monday's weakness was a raft of data that indicated that the world's second-biggest economy is struggling to gain momentum.

The private Caixin/S&P Global Purchasing Managers' Index (PMI) rose to 50.4 in August from 49.8 the previous month, beating analysts' forecasts in a Reuters poll of 50.0 and moving above the 50-level that demarcates expansion from contraction.

While this may initially appear like a solid outcome, the detail was less bullish with the key sub-index for new exports orders falling for the first time in eight months and at the fastest pace since November last year.

The Caixin PMI covers smaller and more export-orientated firms, so weakness in this measure is likely more significant than the strength in the rest of the survey.

The official PMI was also downbeat, with the August reading coming in at 49.1, down from July's 49.4, and falling for a sixth consecutive month.

The National Bureau of Statistics PMI focuses more on large and mainly state-controlled corporations and includes the key steel sector.

Further bad news for the steel industry came on Sunday, with the average price for new homes across 100 cities nudging up 0.11% in August from July, slowing from the previous month's 0.13% gain, according to data from property researcher China Index Academy.

The property sector has so far failed to respond to a series of stimulus measures from Beijing,

and remains a drag on the overall economy.

Against this backdrop its perhaps no surprise that iron ore prices are struggling.

But what is perhaps surprising is how strong China's iron ore imports have been. China is the world's biggest buyer of seaborne iron ore, accounting for about 75% of the global total.

Official customs data for August will be released next week, but data from commodity analysts Kpler points to imports being the strongest since January.

August imports are estimated by Kpler at 109.1 million tonnes, which would be up from the customs figure of 102.8 million and the most since January's 111.9 million.

For the first seven months of the year iron ore imports rose 6.7%, and if August's official numbers are in line with the Kpler estimate, this pace of growth is likely to increase.

Part of the explanation for the increase in iron ore imports this year has been that inventories needed to be rebuilt, after dropping to the lowest in seven years in October of last year.

But since then more than 45 million tonnes have been added to port stockpiles monitored by consultants SteelHome , taking the total to 150.8 million as of last week.

This is close to the 27-month high of 151.8 million from late July and is a sign that inventories are at a comfortable level, and may be even too high given steel production is subdued.

In addition to re-stocking driving iron ore imports, it's also likely that optimism over the stimulus measures being put in pace encouraged some speculative buying of cargoes, especially as the iron ore price has trended weaker since early July.

But that optimism is also likely to have been dented by the ongoing soft data, leaving lower prices as the sole reason for China to import more iron ore than it needs to meet its current and likely future steel production. — Reuters

## Global universities lead the way in strategic sustainability



DR MYTHLI KOLLURU

The author is a National Level Award-Winning Outstanding Women Educator and Scholar in Strategic Management. She is an assistant professor at the marketing and management department of the College of Banking and Financial Studies in Muscat and a member of Knowledge Oman.



A man walks in front of the buildings of Oxford University. Image for illustration only. – Reuters

Sustainability, the principle of meeting present needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet theirs, emerged after World War II alongside the founding of the United Nations. Today, the world faces an array of global challenges, such as climate change, environmental degradation, weapons of mass destruction, overpopulation, persistent poverty, global health crises, inequality, and religious and ethical conflicts. These challenges are interconnected and transnational, demanding coordinated global efforts and collaboration among various stakeholders.

Higher education institutions play a crucial role in addressing these global threats. Although sustainability has become a trendy term, its integration into mainstream education has only gained momentum in recent decades. These institutions have a significant responsibility in promoting sustainable development by embedding sustainability as a fundamental principle across teaching, research, operations, and knowledge transfer. The United Nations' 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) provide a framework for this, emphasising education as key to achieving a sustainable, peaceful, and equitable future.

Sustainability within higher education involves advocating for

a green economy, fostering social transformation, and building resilience. Universities serve as agents of change, influencing behaviour and driving societal progress toward sustainability. Strategic positioning within these institutions—differentiating themselves by adopting unique approaches to sustainability—can lead to superior performance and contribute to a more sustainable future.

Strategic positioning for sustainability offers several advantages to higher education institutions. Firstly, it provides a competitive edge by attracting environmentally conscious students, faculty, and staff. By integrating sustainability into all aspects of their operations, institutions enhance their reputation, boost enrolment, and forge partnerships with like-minded organisations. Secondly, it aligns institutions with stakeholder expectations. In an era of heightened awareness and concern for sustainability, there is an expectation that universities will lead in addressing social and environmental challenges.

In our research, my co-author and I used data from the Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2023 to examine the strategic positioning of universities concerning sustainability. We analysed 13 top universities across different regions, including Oxford University (UK), Harvard University (USA), ETH Zurich (Switzerland), and Tsinghua

University (China), among others.

Using document analysis and a case study approach, we explored how these leading universities engage in strategic sustainability positioning. Each institution has identified three to four unique sustainability pillars, which, though distinct, generally revolve around common themes such as research, education, innovation, environmental impact, interdisciplinary collaboration, and resource efficiency.

These universities have established comprehensive management frameworks for sustainability, encompassing committees, programmes, and initiatives that underline their deep commitment to sustainable practices. This holistic approach demonstrates that sustainability is more than just a trend—it's a core principle embedded in their operations.

The transition management framework has proven effective in engaging stakeholders across the campus, communicating sustainability goals, implementing changes in infrastructure, and monitoring progress. Furthermore, universities are incorporating sustainability into their educational programmes, equipping students with the skills necessary to tackle current and future sustainability challenges. However, balancing sustainability goals with other institutional priorities is challenging.

Organisational complexity often hinders the development of a unified sustainability strategy and coordination across departments. Financial constraints pose another challenge, as investments in green infrastructure and renewable energy can be costly in the short term, though they offer long-term benefits.

Engaging and motivating staff and students to adopt sustainable practices is another hurdle. Behavioural change is difficult, and the structural design of universities can complicate the development of cohesive strategies. Additionally, operational challenges such as data collection, analysis, reporting, and tracking progress can slow down the journey toward sustainability.

In the 21st century, humanity's most pressing challenge is to ensure sustainable development that safeguards our long-term survival. Numerous studies affirm that education, especially at the higher level, is crucial in achieving this goal. By equipping individuals with the necessary knowledge and skills, universities can play a pivotal role in addressing global challenges and promoting sustainability. Our research provides practical insights that can guide strategic decision-making and policy development within higher education, enriching the discourse on sustainability—an issue of paramount importance for humanity's future.

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**LIFESTYLE**

Milton Villavicencio, master restorer shows a photograph of the first musicians displayed in the Jesuit Missions of the Chiquitos, in Concepcion, Bolivia. — Reuters



**HERITAGE**

This photograph shows a carved chair in the altar in the Lampaul-Guimiliau Parish close (Enclos paroissial), in Lampaul-Guimiliau, western France. An "extraordinary" heritage of inland Brittany, the parish enclosures of Finistere remain largely unknown to the general public. — AFP



**FASHION**

A model displays a creation from PH MODE x TYO by Manila Fashion Festival during Tokyo Fashion Week in Tokyo. Philippine's leading designers created an exclusive collective ensemble by merging Japan's quality fabric with Philippine's indigenous material. — AFP



**FILM**

Italian actress Caterina Murino arrives at the Excelsior pier during the 81st Venice International Film Festival at Venice Lido. — AFP



**TRAVEL**

A man walks with plastic bags along a narrow alley in the Dahana neighbourhood in the centre of old Baghdad. — AFP



# art & life

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## ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN AL ARID SHED LIGHT ON OMAN'S EARLY BRONZE AGE

The collaborative efforts of researchers, local authorities and international partners led to the discovery of a significant site at Al Arid in Oman, revealing ancient artefacts and architectural remnants vital in better understanding of the country's ancient past... **P20**



## Almodovar back at Venice with stars Julianne Moore, Tilda Swinton

**SPAIN'S PEDRO ALMODOVAR** returns to the Venice Film Festival on Monday with his first feature film in English, "The Room Next Door", starring Julianne Moore and Tilda Swinton.

A meditation on death and friendship set in New England, "The Room Next Door" sees regular Almodovar collaborator Swinton as a war correspondent suffering from terminal cancer, with Moore as her friend, a successful novelist who agrees to be at her side in her final moments.

Actor John Turturro completes the leading trio in the film that translates into English what the director has been developing for more than a decade in his native language — an increasingly melancholy cinema prone to analysing the fear of death or physical decline.

"My insecurity disappeared after the first table read with the actresses... The language wasn't going to be a problem," Almodovar has said of his latest film, which has its world premiere on the Lido on Monday evening.

"People talk a lot in my films... In "The Room Next Door" Tilda Swinton and Julianne Moore carry the weight of the whole film on their shoulders, and they are a spectacle," he said.

It is not Almodovar's first foray into English-language filmmaking. His first, the short-format "The Human Voice", premiered at Venice in 2020, featuring Swinton as an abandoned lover.

At Cannes last year, the director presented "Strange Way of Life", another short-format film, starring Ethan Hawke and Pedro Pascal.

An iconic voice in Spanish cinema, Almodovar began with kitschy black comedies, such as "Pepi, Luci, Bom and Other Girls on the Heap" or "What Have I Done to Deserve This".

His breakout film was 1988's "Women on the Verge of a Nervous Breakdown", which won the award for best screenplay at Venice and the Academy Award for best foreign language film.

But with time, the more circumspect streak of the prolific Spanish director has prevailed, developing from films such as 2002's "Talk to Her" — which won Almodovar the Oscar for best original screenplay, a rare feat for a non-English film — and 2004's "Bad Education" to the more recent "Pain and Glory" from 2019, about his career as a film-maker.

"Parallel Mothers", the story of two women who give birth the same day, won a best actress award for Penelope Cruz at Venice in 2021.

Almodovar's film is one of 21 competing for the prestigious Golden Lion prize, to be awarded on September 7. — AFP



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# WAR-DAMAGED SOUKS REOPEN IN SYRIA'S ALEPPO

**FOUR HISTORIC SOUKS** in northern Syria's Aleppo, heavily damaged during some of the most intense fighting of the 13-year civil war, reopened this week following their restoration.

"After I reopened my old shop, following the renovation of the market, I felt my spirit return with it," said merchant Omar al Rawwas, 45, who inherited his family's carpet business at the capital.

Four souks in the Old City, restored through combined public and private efforts, reopened on Wednesday evening – drawing officials, residents and charity representatives to the celebration.

"Thank God, things have improved and the country has gotten better," Al Rawwas said, noting that some of his business is from people returning to Aleppo since calm returned.

"Today, expatriates return from abroad to their homes, finding their rugs damaged by moths. They have them repaired because some of these rugs hold personal memories and others have special value to them."

The revived strip of shops, some reduced to ashes at the start of the conflict, stretches for about 100 metres (330 feet) across the Old City.

In previous years, three other souks of the total of 37 that once completely destroyed.

The Syrian army recaptured eastern Aleppo from opposition groups after a siege and heavy bombardment that forced tens of thousands of civilians and fighters to flee.

"In 2012, we fled the souk under bombardment and gunfire. We didn't leave by choice but were forced to," said Abdallah Chawwa, 49, who sells Aleppo's famous olive oil soap.

"I am now back in my shop and my spirit has returned to me." — AFP

Contestants run at a long pole on one side of a canal, jump in and while the pole is tipping over to the other side they climb in as high as they can, to land as far as possible on the opposite bank.

"There are so many elements to it where it could go wrong, which makes getting an



## Dutch canal vaulting competition keeps centuries old tradition alive

**CONTESTANTS FROM** all over the Netherlands gathered in the central village of Polsbroekerdam on Saturday for the yearly national 'fierljeppen' or canal vaulting contest.

Over 2,000 people gathered to watch 48 competitors across five categories battle it

optimal jump really difficult," 23-year-old competitor Lucas van Eijk said.

The name 'fierljeppen' comes from the Frisian language and originally meant 'graceful jumping', according to the Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage.



out for the championship where contestants have to vault the greatest distance across the water using a pole.

"Fierljeppen is a really extreme sport," organiser Danny Baas said.

In the Netherlands, where much of the agricultural land is reclaimed from the water, pastures are often divided by canals. Farmers used a vaulting pole to avoid walking long distances to crossing points



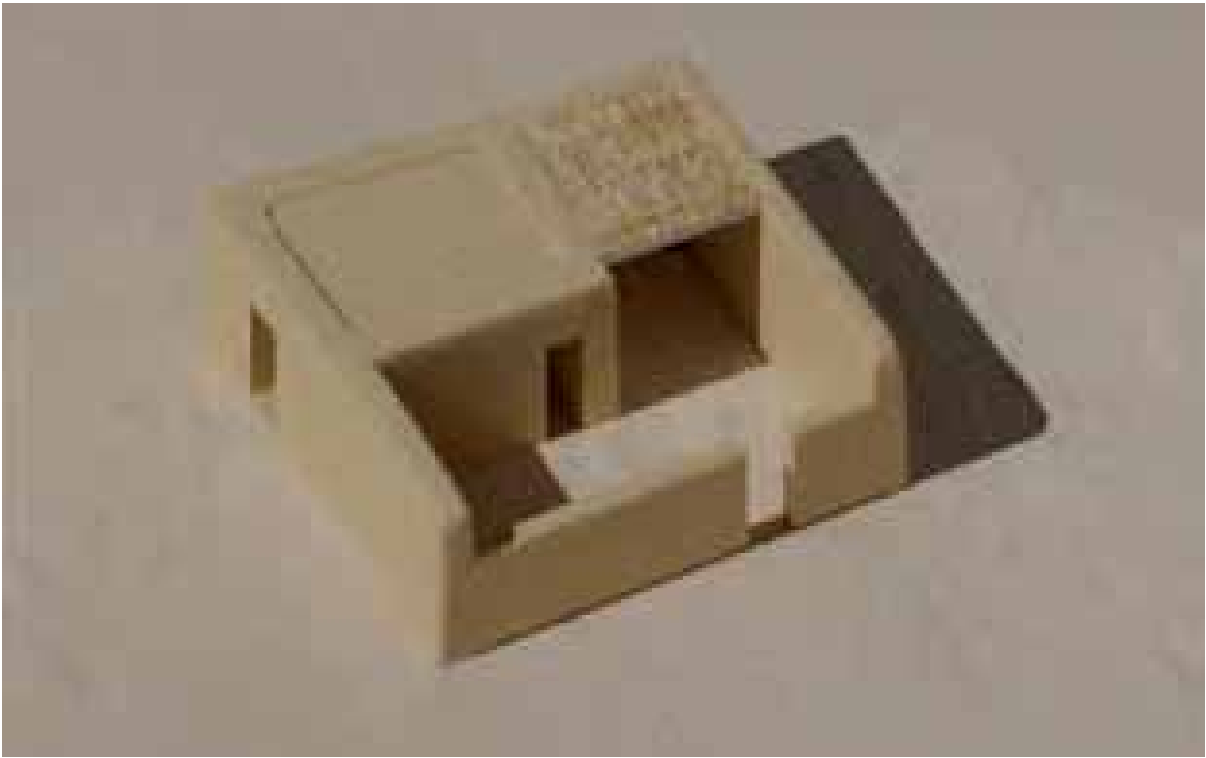
Contestants run at a long pole on one side of a canal, jump in and while the pole is tipping over to the other side they climb in as high as they can, to land as far as possible on the opposite bank.

"There are so many elements to it where it could go wrong, which makes getting an

before cars and bicycles became common place in the early 20th century. Over time, competitions were set up, with the first officially recorded match taking place in 1767. There are now some 600 'fierljeppers' active in the Netherlands across a handful of organisations. — Reuters

# ARCHAEOLOGICAL DISCOVERIES IN AL ARID SHED LIGHT ON OMAN’S EARLY BRONZE AGE

A recent archaeological excavation at the ancient settlement site of Al Arid, located in Al Dhahirah Governorate, has provided new insights into the Early Bronze Age in Oman. The site, which lies 15 kilometres northwest of the well-known settlement of Bât, has revealed remarkable findings that contribute to the understanding of third-millennium BCE settlement patterns in the region.



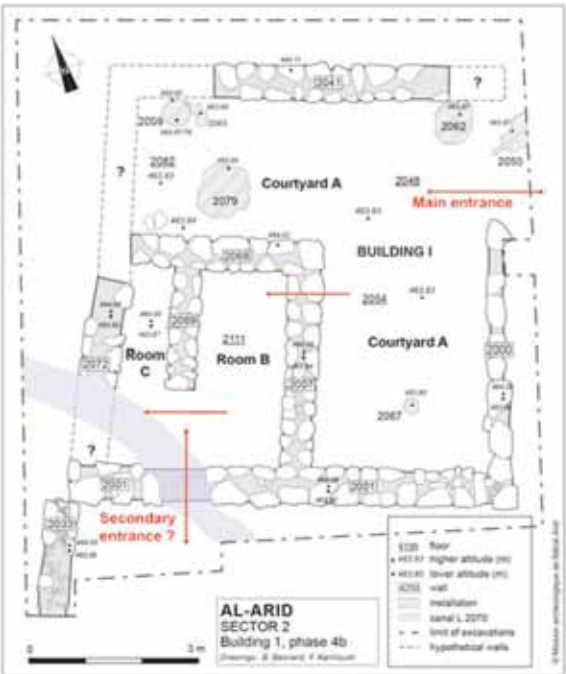
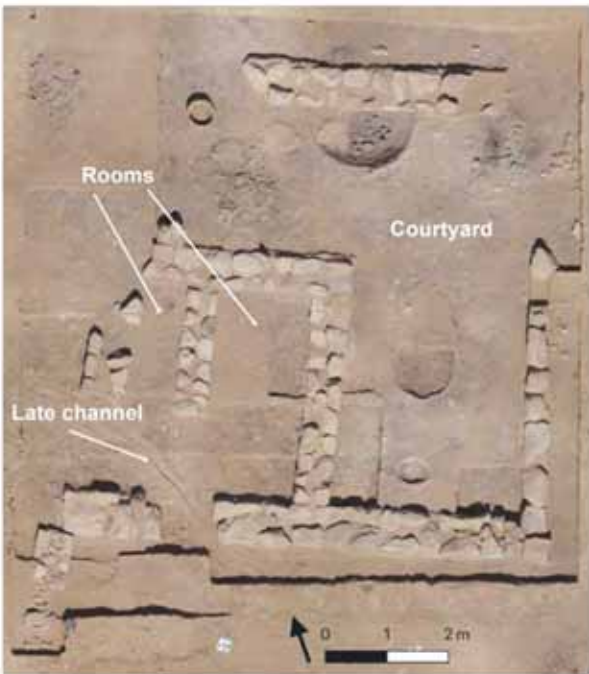
A 3D model of Building I. Archeologists look at two hypotheses, with and without a light-weight structure sheltering one part of the courtyard, and a section showing the nature of the walls with a stone basement and mud-brick superstructure (©Archaeological Mission at Bât/Al Arid. O. Aldbiyat and C. Castell).

BY YERU EBUE

The ongoing research across Oman is driven by the understanding that the country still holds many unexplored sites that can offer new insights into its ancient past. Given Oman's unique geographical position as a crossroads of civilisations, there is likely much more to discover. Continuous research ensures that these historical treasures are preserved and that the story of Oman's past continues to unfold, adding depth and context to our understanding of early human societies. Thus, archaeological research in Oman is not merely about uncovering the past; it is about preserving and under-

sible food preparation or small-scale metalworking activities. Further exploration of the site included the excavation of two ancient irrigation canals, one of which predates the Islamic period and may have been in use during the Hafit period, around 3180 BCE. These canals underscore the importance of water management in sustaining early settlements in Oman's harsh environment. The research team also continued their study of a tomb in a nearby cemetery, which, despite being disturbed in later periods, has yielded valuable information about burial practices in the Hafit era. The findings from Al Arid not only enhance the understanding of Oman's Bronze Age history, but also highlight the region's

only enhances our understanding of the origins of human society, including the development of agriculture, trade and social structures, but also contributes to a broader comprehension of the region's historical significance. For Oman, these discoveries serve as a vital link to its rich cultural heritage, revealing the historical importance of the region as a hub of early civilisation. They underscore Oman's contributions to the broader history of the Arabian Peninsula and beyond, fostering a sense of pride and identity among its people. By uncovering and preserving these ancient sites, Oman can celebrate and showcase its historical legacy on both a national and international stage. The educational value of



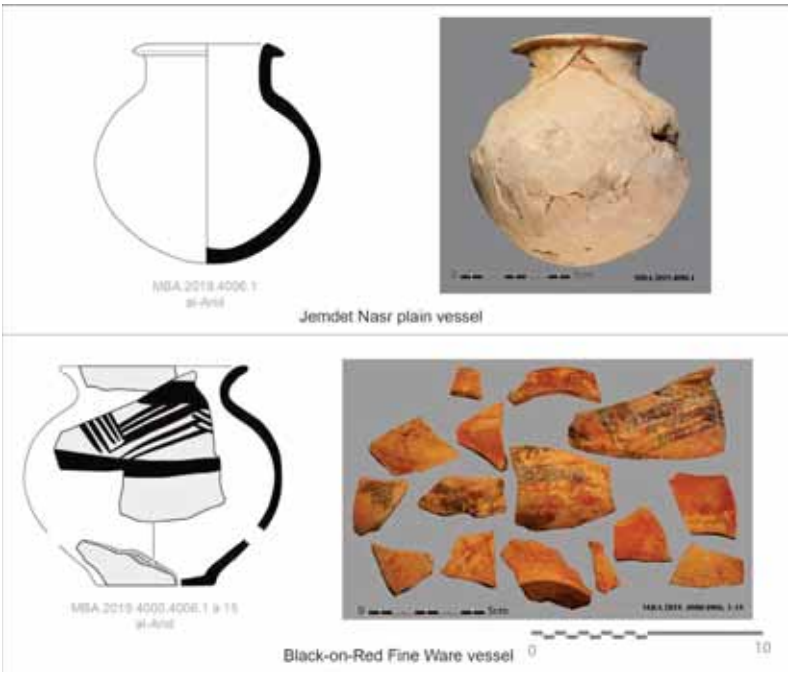
Vertical image of Building I during the excavation and plan of phase 4b.

standing it in a way that enriches the present and informs the future. A recent archaeological excavation at the ancient settlement site of Al Arid, located in Al Dhahirah Governorate, has provided new insights into the Early Bronze Age in Oman. The site, which lies 15 kilometres northwest of the well-known settlement of Bât, has revealed remarkable findings that contribute to the understanding of third-millennium BCE settlement patterns in the region. The excavation, carried out by the Mission Archéologique de Bât/Al Arid, marks the second season of research at Al Arid. A multidisciplinary team of specialists, under the supervision of Corinne Castel, conducted the work during the winter of 2020, uncovering key structures and artefacts that date back to the Umm Al Nar period, around 2500 BCE.

**STRUCTURAL DISCOVERIES AND THEIR FUNCTION** Among the most significant discoveries were two previously unknown towers, bringing the total number of towers at the site to seven. These towers, constructed with radial mud-brick walls, offer insights into the architectural practices of the time. Tower 3, the best-preserved of the group, was found to contain sherds from both the Umm Al Nar and late Islamic periods, suggesting that the structure was reused over many centuries. In addition to the towers, the team also excavated a building known as "Building I", located northeast of Tower 3. This structure, believed to have served a communal function rather than a residential one, has raised intriguing questions about its use. The discovery of multiple hearths and ovens, along with copper fragments, hints at pos-

strategic importance as a hub of early civilisation. As the excavation continues, archaeologists hope to uncover more details that will shed light on the complex cultural and historical dynamics of ancient Oman.

these findings cannot be overstated. They provide tangible evidence that can be utilised in schools, museums and cultural institutions to teach the public about their heritage and the broader history of humanity. This educational aspect fosters



Top: Jemdet Nasr plain vessel from the tomb; Bottom: Umm Al Nar Black-on-Red Fine Ware vessel from the tomb

**INSIGHTS INTO HUMAN HISTORY AND CULTURE** The recent discoveries at Al Arid are of significant importance, offering deep insights into both human history and contemporary cultural identity. These archaeological findings provide invaluable information about early civilisations, allowing researchers to reconstruct how ancient peoples lived, worked and interacted with their environment thousands of years ago. This reconstruction not

a deeper appreciation for history and archaeology, ensuring that the knowledge gained is passed on to future generations. Moreover, well-preserved archaeological sites have the potential to become significant tourist attractions, drawing visitors and researchers from around the world. This not only contributes to the local economy by creating jobs and generating revenue, but also promotes international interest in Omani culture and history.