

Oman condoles with Kuwait

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has expressed its sincere condolences and sympathy to the sisterly State of Kuwait, its government and people and the victims' families on the fire that broke out at a building in the Mangaf area. The Foreign Ministry issued a statement on Wednesday expressing its sincere wishes for a speedy recovery for the injured. **REPORT ON P7**

SUNRISE - 05:20 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR - 03:52 AM

DHUHR - 12:12 PM

ASR - 03:30 PM

MAGHRIB - 06:59 PM

ISHA - 08:22 PM



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P12

WARHOLM
LEADS GALAXY
OF STARS AT
CLASSY EUROS



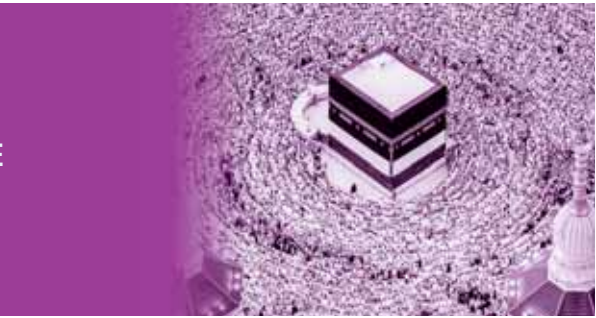
P13

OETC PLANS 41
TRANSMISSION
PROJECTS
ACROSS OMAN



P20

THE HAJ, ONE
OF THE FIVE
PILLARS OF
ISLAM



Royal Decree establishes Oman Endowment Foundation

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik issued a Royal Decree No 28/2024 on the establishment of Oman Endowment Foundation and promulgation of its system on Wednesday.

Article (1) stipulates that a public foundation

to be named "Oman Endowment Foundation" shall be established and that it shall enjoy financial and administrative autonomy and report to the Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. It also states that the provisions of the system/bylaw attached

to this decree shall be applied to the Foundation.

Article (2) states that Oman Endowment Foundation shall have its headquarters in the Governorate of Muscat. The Foundation may have branches in other governorates as per a decision

from its board of directors.

Article (3) says that the chairman of the board of directors of Oman Endowment Foundation shall issue necessary regulations and decisions to implement the provisions of this decree and the attached system.

Article (4) cancels all that contradicts this decree and the attached system or contravenes their provisions.

Article (5) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on its date of issue.

— ONA

Visa ban lifted for some Bangladeshis



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Oman has partially lifted temporary visa restrictions on certain categories for Bangladeshi nationals.

According to a statement from the Oman embassy in Dhaka, the exempted visa categories now include families, Bangladeshi residents in GCC, engineers, doctors, nurses, teachers, accountants, investors, and high net-worth tourists.

The note also mentioned that the local embassy will now receive and process all applications and related documents for these categories in coordination with the Royal Oman Police.

Furthermore, the embassy assured that both Omani and Bangladeshi authorities are working towards lifting the ban on work visas, a process that is currently in progress.

The temporary ban on all visa categories, except for official purposes, was imposed by the Royal Oman Police in October 2023. The Bangladesh government welcomed the Omani government's decision to withdraw restrictions from a few categories of visas for its citizens, a statement said.

FOUNDATION STONE LAID FOR RO 45M SAMAYIL HOSPITAL

SAMAYIL: The Ministry of Health on Wednesday laid the foundation stone for the establishment of Samayil Hospital in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, on Wednesday.

The foundation stone laying ceremony was held under the auspices of Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council.

The RO 45 million hospital's main building is composed of the ground floor plus four other floors. The hospital will occupy a total area of 250,000 square metres with a built-up area of 61,000 square metres. It has a cutting-edge design and specifications that are quite different from the existing ones.

Dr Said bin Harib al Lamki, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Health for Health Affairs, said: "Currently there are efforts to implement the strategic goals of the Oman Vision 2040 and align the health sector's strategic programmes to the vision. The



Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, lays the foundation stone of Samayil Hospital on Wednesday.

healthcare sector is witnessing more comprehensive services to achieve sustainable health for all with improved care and quality.

Al Lamki said that the hospital

will expand the umbrella of specialised healthcare services and rehabilitate referral hospitals to realise the comprehensive health coverage programme by

providing primary and secondary health care through establishing, replacing and upgrading the existing hospitals in most governorates of the Sultanate of

Oman. The number of health institutions in the Sultanate of Oman amounted to 265 health institutions at the end of 2023. These include 194 health centres, 21 health complexes and 50 hospitals with a total of more than 5,000 beds all of which provide all levels of healthcare with high efficiency and quality. In addition, the ministry is currently establishing nine new hospitals in all governorates of the Sultanate of Oman including Samayil Hospital, the official said.

The hospital will include a daycare department, a dental clinic, surgical and internal medicine wards, three operating theatres completed with every requisite equipment, a special intensive care department, and an integrated floor for gynaecology, paediatrics ward, a gynaecology and obstetrics ward, a maternity department, in addition to two operating theatres and a unit for the care of premature babies.

— ONA

250 DAYS OF WAR

Hamas seeks US guarantees in Gaza ceasefire plan

GAZA: Hamas wants written guarantees from the United States for a permanent ceasefire and withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip in order to sign off on a US-backed truce proposal, two Egyptian security sources said.

Mediators Qatar and Egypt said Hamas had responded on Tuesday to the phased ceasefire plan for an end to the eight-month war between Israel and the Palestinian militant group, without giving details.

The plan was made public at the end of May by US President Joe Biden. It



Palestinians inspect the damage in a house after an overnight Israeli strike on Al Daraj neighbourhood in Gaza City on Wednesday. — Reuters

entails the gradual release of Israeli hostages held in Gaza and pullback of Israeli forces over two phases,

as well as the freeing of Palestinian prisoners, with the reconstruction of the war-shattered territory and return

of the remains of deceased hostages in a third phase.

The United States has said Israel accepted the proposal, but Israel has not publicly stated this.

The Egyptian sources and a third source with knowledge of the talks said Hamas had concerns that the current proposal does not provide explicit guarantees for the transition from the first phase of the plan, which includes a six-week truce and the release of some hostages, to the second phase, which includes a permanent ceasefire and Israeli withdrawal. — Reuters

SEE ALSO P6



WILAYAT
IN FOCUS
P4

Tender



مدائن
madayn

The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Mada'ayn) announces the following Tender:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last date of Buying	Date of Submission	Type of Work	Register Degree	Fee (R.O)
11/2024/ PEIE/ HQ-11	Business Continuity Planning (BCP) and Disaster Recovery Planning (DRP) Consultancy Service and Implementation	26-06-2024	14-07-2024	Consultancy Services in Information Technology	Third and Above	50

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

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering System.

2. eTendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the eTendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om and +968 24402200.

Note: Bid Submission will be online only.

Mada'ayn is not bound to accept the lowest or any other Offer and has the right to cancel these tenders and the tenderers have no right to claim for any compensations.



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Oman ranked 5th globally for implementing air safety measures

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Sultanate of Oman was ranked fifth in the compliance index for effective implementation of air safety control in the Sultanate of Oman after scoring 95.95 per cent compared to 60.47 per cent and 133rd rank in 2020.

The Sultanate of Oman is ranked fourth globally in the aviation incidents and accident investigation index and second in the Middle East and North Africa, while it is ranked first regionally in the areas of airworthiness and air navigation safety.

The International Civil Aviation Organization's (ICAO) Global Air Safety Oversight Audit Programme aims to assess the extent to which ICAO member states comply with the air safety standards and recommendations, done through regular inspections and analysis of safety data to improve global air safety.

This result is the result of eight sub-areas in which the Sultanate



This result is a culmination of significant progress in eight subfields where Oman has excelled. — ONA

of Oman has made remarkable progress. The Sultanate of Oman achieved first place globally in the field of civil aviation legislation by scoring 100 per cent, which is on par with 16 other countries.

This result is due to the concerted efforts at the national level to modernise and develop laws and legislation related to civil aviation to ensure the safety and activities of the sector. It was ranked first in the field of government regulations, first regionally and in the Gulf, and 11th globally in the field of airworthiness, after obtaining

a percentage of 99 per cent, up from 79 per cent in 2020.

Speaking to the Observer, Naif al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), said, "We are proud of this achievement of being ranked 5th in the world for safety in the field of aviation as per the ICAO, which will also boost other sectors such as tourism, logistics and promotion of investments in the future. It will encourage other airlines to come to Oman or use the airspace of Oman and give confidence to any investors in the aviation industry."

In the field of air navigation safety, the compliance rate increased from 50 per cent to 97.27 per cent as a result of improvements in control and follow-up procedures to ensure air navigation safety and its adherence to international standards. In the area of flight permits, the percentage improved from 52.38 per cent to 96.43 per cent after comprehensive improvements in the procedures for issuing permits, licences, and approvals and ensuring their compatibility with international standards.

"These results are due to the efforts such as the new Civil Aviation Law and its guidelines, restructuring of the sector to include various specialisations, attracting national and international competencies, issuing the necessary licences for aircraft crews and maintenance stations, and concluding bilateral air agreements between the Sultanate of Oman and other countries, in addition to setting policies and controls to ensure airport security and air transport safety," Al Abri said.



Muslim employees in Oman get special leave to perform Haj once and only after one year of continuous employment

Oman Labour Law grants 15-day paid Haj leave

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

The Sultanate of Oman's recent Labour Law, introduced through Royal Decree No 53/2023, has brought several significant changes to improve employment conditions for Muslim employees wishing to perform Haj.

According to the law, those employees are entitled to a one-time paid leave of 15 days to perform Haj (pilgrimage to Mecca) during their employment period.

The decision reads as follows: "Muslim employees get special leave to perform Haj once and only after one year of continuous employment. The Haj-related paid leave may be up to 15 days, which shall be once throughout the service." Meanwhile, more than 1.5 million pilgrims arrived in Saudi Arabia to perform the annual pilgrimage of Haj from

all over the world.

In a statement carried by Saudi Press Agency (SPA), the Saudi General Directorate of Passports announced the arrival of 1,547,295 pilgrims during the current Haj season and they came through all the Kingdom's air, land and sea ports.

The overwhelming majority of foreign pilgrims came by air and their number reached 1,483,312, while the number of pilgrims who arrived through land ports stood at 59,273 pilgrims, and the number of pilgrims who came through sea ports reached 4,710.

The directorate stated that it is harnessing all its capabilities to facilitate the entry procedures for pilgrims, by supporting its platforms at international air, land and sea ports with the latest technical devices operated by qualified human cadres, who are proficient in different languages spoken by the pilgrims.

European military delegation visits MSC

MUSCAT: A delegation from the European Union Naval Force Operation ATALANTA led by Vice Admiral Ignacio Villanueva, Operation Commander of the force, on Wednesday visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC).

Members of the delegation were greeted upon their arrival at the MSC by Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman, Head of the Maritime Security Committee.

They were briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the



During the visit, a coordination and cooperation protocol was signed between the Maritime Security Centre and the European Union Naval Force Operation ATALANTA. — ONA

centre that contribute to the safety of the maritime environment in the Sultanate of Oman.

During the visit, a coordination and cooperation protocol was signed between the Maritime Security Centre and the European Union Naval Force Operation ATALANTA. It was signed by Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi and Vice Admiral Ignacio Villanueva. The signing ceremony was attended by Commodore Adil bin Hamoud al Busaidi, Head of the MSC, and a number of senior officers from both sides. — ONA



TEN OMANI PROJECTS QUALIFY FOR LONDON SCIENCE FORUM



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation announced on Wednesday the names of those who qualified to participate in the 65th edition of the London International Youth Science Forum in 2024. As many as 182 research projects were submitted for the competition, of which 25 projects were selected that met the conditions in the fields of science, technology, mathematics and engineering. The best ten projects were selected to represent the Sultanate of Oman at the forum, scheduled to be held during the period from July 24 to August 7. — ONA

CPA increases market monitoring efforts ahead of Eid, Khareef

SALALAH: Sulayem bin Ali al Hakmani, Chairman of the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA), embarked on a field visit to Dhofar Governorate on Wednesday. The visit, part of a series of ongoing initiatives, aimed to strengthen communication with consumers, assess local CPA operations, and coincide with preparations for the upcoming Eid Al Adha holiday and the Khareef season.

Al Hakmani met with Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality. Discussions centred on enhancing collaboration and coordination in consumer protection matters.

They reviewed efforts in market monitoring, addressing consumer concerns and ensuring readiness for the influx of tourists during



Chairman of CPA took a firsthand look at local markets by touring commercial centres while assessing the availability of goods and ensured compliance with consumer protection regulations

the Khareef season. Both officials underscored the importance of seamless cooperation between service, administrative and technical sectors to guarantee a successful tourist season and a positive consumer experience.

Al Hakmani presented a

comprehensive overview of the CPA's efforts, services and collaborative initiatives with other consumer protection bodies. He highlighted the supervisory activities conducted in markets, community engagement programmes and consumer



awareness campaigns.

Discussions further explored ongoing efforts towards decentralisation, streamlining procedures, expediting work processes and elevating service quality.

Al Hakmani took a firsthand

look at local markets by touring commercial centres. He assessed the availability of goods and ensured compliance with consumer protection regulations.

Engaging with suppliers, he underscored their crucial role as partners in consumer protection,

emphasising the importance of ethical practices, fair pricing and upholding high-quality standards. Al Hakmani also met with consumers, actively listening to their concerns regarding product availability, stability and quality. He addressed any challenges consumers faced, aiming to ensure a smooth shopping experience.

Concluding his visit, Al Hakmani met with staff of the Dhofar Governorate's Directorate-General of Consumer Protection. He commended their dedication to market supervision and consumer awareness initiatives. He encouraged them to prioritise exceptional service delivery, urging them to continuously improve their performance and enhance the efficiency of services offered.



Al Awabi

FRUIT BOWL OF OMAN



KOR AL GHABA in the village of Al Alia in Wadi Bani Kharous.

AHMED AL KAABI
AL AWABI, JUNE 12

The Wilayat of Al Awabi in Al Batinah South is distinguished by its picturesque natural landscape, surrounded by towering mountains on all sides, lush greenery, and adorned with deep valleys where fresh water is abundant.

It is blessed with diverse terrain, green orchards, springs and aflaj. Al Awabi offers various opportunities to enjoy and explore the beauty of nature, making it an ideal destination for exploration and relaxation.

Al Awabi houses many important archaeological and historical landmarks, including Al Awabi Fort, located at the entrance of Wadi Bani Kharous from the western side, dating back to the early 13th century. There is also Al Salut Fort, located atop a mountain overlooking the falaj of the village of Setal, and Al Hajir Fort, consisting of two separate buildings situated on a mountain plateau about 250 metres above sea level, and Al Safil Fort, located in Misfat Al Sharqiyyin in Wadi Bani Kharous.

In addition to the forts, Wadi Bani Kharous stands out with its stunning natural scenery, and Falaj Bani Khazir is one of the significant tourist attractions in the wilayat. The valleys in Al Awabi are particularly attractive tourist destinations during the rainy season, where pools form and remain for long periods, attracting tourists to enjoy the beauty of nature.

Al Awabi experiences a significant influx of tourists, especially during the winter when the peaks of the mountains and valley bottoms can be easily accessed from the wilayat centre.

The village of Al Alaya in Wadi Bani Kharous enjoys significant tourist importance due to its geographical location bordered by Al Jabal Al Akhdhar from the south and the Wilayat of Nakhl from the north. It is characterised by its moderate climate during most summer

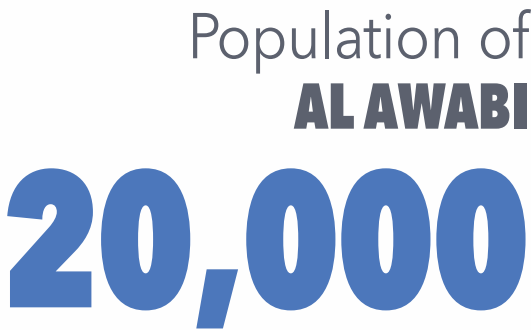
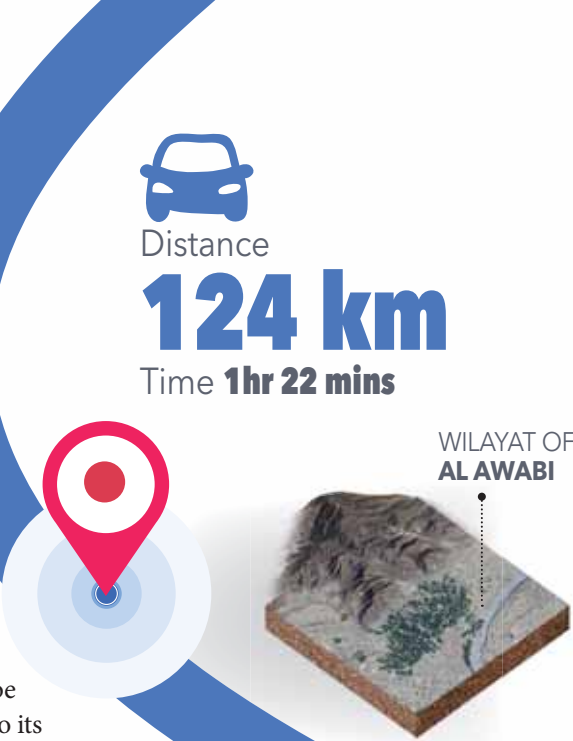
periods, its stunning natural views, and its pools that can be reached on foot, in addition to its archaeological sites and historical landmarks.

Al Alaya boasts of high-quality crops, thanks to its fertile soil, fresh water, and moderate climate, all of which contribute significantly to the abundance of diverse agricultural production. Al Alaya is particularly famous for its various types of fruits such as quince, mango, grapes, pomegranates, peaches, apricots, figs, and olives, which are among the best in the Sultanate of Oman. These fruits are much sought after in the local and neighbouring markets. These seasonal crops are a primary source of income for farmers who rely heavily on them.

In addition to fruits, Al Alaya cultivates garlic, onions, wheat, and barley, along with various types of dates like Naghal, Khalas, Zabad, Khunizi, and Khasab. All these factors make Al Alaya a rich agricultural town that significantly contributes to supporting the national economy.



AL AWABI FORT



FROM MUSCAT



This cafe is a symbol of creative business

Nestled in the heart of Al Awabi, Jalb Cafe stands as a beacon of creativity and perseverance. Founded by a group of talented young individuals, this cafe is a testament to their belief in their wilayat's potential to attract tourists and enrich the local culture.

Jalb Cafe has become a prominent landmark in Al Awabi tourism, drawing visitors from around the world. Jalb Cafe's exceptional location, overlooking picturesque green orchards, provides a tranquil and scenic setting to savor coffee and a variety of beverages.

The owners of Jalb Cafe meticulously designed the space in a modern style that blends with nature. The walls are adorned with artwork depicting Al Awabi's landmarks and history, while natural materials like wood and stone are used extensively in the decor.

Jalb Cafe's distinction extends beyond its location and design. It offers an exceptional coffee experience through a specialised cart equipped with state-of-the-art equipment, where the Omani staff brew a diverse menu of hot and cold beverages, along with pastries and light snacks to suit all tastes.

The cafe has also become a haven for photography enthusiasts, as its breathtaking views of the green

orchards offer stunning opportunities to capture memorable images.

"Jalb Cafe plays an active role in promoting domestic tourism in Al Awabi, attracting tourists from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman," said Mahmoud al Bahri, one of the cafe's owners.

Jalb Cafe's social media accounts have played a significant role in promoting Al Awabi and attracting tourists. By sharing images and videos that showcase the area's beauty and heritage, the cafe has reached a wide audience worldwide.

Al Bahri encourages the youth of Al Awabi to take the initiative and launch their own projects, believing in their potential and skills. He calls upon all young people to contribute to the region's development and attract tourists by launching projects that highlight its beauty and heritage.

Al Bahri also revealed a new and unique experience offered by the cafe to its visitors. This experience is called the "Grape Package," which provides visitors with an immersive opportunity to learn about the grape's journey from farming to harvest.

The package begins with a tour of the grape orchards, where visitors are introduced to the stages that a grapevine goes through, from pruning to harvest. During this tour, visitors learn about the ideal conditions for grape cultivation and how to care for these trees.

Next, visitors head to Jalb Farm, where they are provided with a comprehensive overview of the various crops grown on the farm. One of the most important parts of the package is the grape-picking process. Visitors participate in picking grapes themselves and learn about the proper methods for harvesting this delicious fruit. The package concludes with a unique experience: tasting fresh grape juice called Iksir Al Azmanah.





‘Habta’ markets bring in vibrancy, excitement

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

As Eid Al Adha approaches, villages across Oman are awakened during the first nine days of Dhul-Hijjah, with people flocking to the traditional open-air markets known as habta.

These fairs, steeped in rich cultural history, have long been the heart of festive preparations, where communities gather to buy everything from livestock to handcrafted goods, and where social bonds are strengthened through shared customs.

Historically, habtas were the quintessential destination for Omani families to prepare for Eid.

Located in squares between historic forts and valleys with flowing waters, these markets offer a wide array of products, including fresh fruits, vegetables, sweets, spices, traditional clothing and ornate crafts.

Some habtas even sell traditional lightweight weapons like rifles, daggers, sticks, belts and swords that men of all ages adorn themselves with, as well as Omani garments like the massar, kumma and dishdasha.

The air becomes thick with the scent of frankincense and the sounds of merchants calling out their wares, creating an atmosphere of excitement and anticipation.

However, with the advent of modern shopping malls and commercial centres, the role of habtas has evolved. While contemporary retail establishments provide convenience and a broad selection



Despite the rise of malls and new shops, habta markets remain an integral part of Omani heritage



of goods under one roof, they lack the unique cultural essence and communal spirit that characterise the traditional habtas.

Today, the habta is predominantly known for its livestock market, where goats, sheep and cattle are sold for the sacrificial rites of Eid Al Adha.

“Previously, habtas were mostly attended by locals from the town and surrounding villages due to difficulties travelling. Designated areas sold dates, livestock, agricultural products like grains, and household goods. The habta day was a grand celebration, with men sporting their traditional daggers, rifles and belts and women and children dressed in traditional attire. Some habtas even hosted Arabian horse races, cultural folk dances, with most products being locally made in Oman,” Khater al Alawi, a poet and a vendor in Sur habta.

Despite the rise of malls and new shops, habta markets remain an integral part of Omani heritage. These markets serve as a living testament to the nation’s traditions. The hustle and bustle of buying livestock for Eid sacrifice is a scene of enduring cultural significance.

Families often bring their children to experience the sights and sounds of the habta, ensuring that the younger generation remains connected to their roots. It remains a source of excitement for kids who wake up early, many in traditional dress, eagerly spending their saved money on different toys and accessories to proudly show off at home, fulfilling one of the aims of the joyous Eid celebrations.

Musandam launches electronic customer services

KHASAB: Musandam Governorate today launched a digitised version of customer service through the governorate’s electronic portal.

The service constitutes the first step in electronic transition espoused by the governorate to keep pace with the ongoing development in government services.

Besides providing efficient and accurate services, the portal will enable the customers to complete their transactions online and save their time and effort.

Mubarak bin Ali al Rahbi, Head of Musandam Governor’s Office, said, “The new electronic service constitutes a timely shift from transactions based on paperwork to electronic



The service will revolutionise customer experience and link relevant procedures and transactions with high performance. – ONA

transactions that make optimum use of information and communications technology.”

“The service will revolutionise customer experience and link relevant procedures and transactions with high

performance, thus saving users’ time and effort,” Al Rahbi added.

He pointed out that the service would also enhance beneficiaries’ satisfaction with government services provided by the governorate. — ONA

BURAIMI MUNICIPAL COUNCIL MEETING COVERS INITIATIVE FOR URBAN RENEWAL



AL BURAIMI: The Municipal Council in the Governorate of Al Buraimi on Wednesday held its 6th meeting for 2024 under the chairmanship of Sayyid Dr Hamad bin Ahmed al Busaidy, Governor of Al Buraimi, Chairman of the Council. During the meeting, the Directorate General of Housing and Urban Planning in the Governorate highlighted the initiative for urban renewal in the Wilayat of Al Buraimi. The meeting also covered a spectrum of topics, including the mechanism of employment in local companies and various projects being implemented in the Governorate. – ONA

Oman Sail, Renaissance sign agreement to support youth

MUSCAT: Oman Sail has welcomed Renaissance Services on board as the official partner of the Renaissance Sailing Programme, a community-focused sailing initiative designed to create opportunities for the young people.

A signing ceremony was held at Oman Sail between CEOs Dr Khamis al Jabri of Oman Sail and Stephen R Thomas of Renaissance Services to celebrate the agreement.

Together, the two organisations will prioritise the development of the Omani youth through sailing and create long-term learning opportunities while promoting the benefits of an active and healthy lifestyle.

Renaissance Services is a long-time partner of Oman Sail and has collaborated on events and initiatives including Sailing Arabia – The Tour, the Extreme Sailing Series and Inter Schools Regatta since 2009. The latest agreement aims to support the growth of young people in communities across the nation, spread environmental awareness and help the youth develop a passion for the sport of sailing.

Dr Khamis al Jabri, Oman Sail CEO, said, “We are very proud to continue our association with Renaissance Services, which will now extend to more than 13 years. Our two organisations



Together, the two organisations will prioritise the development of the Omani youth through sailing

enjoy a shared vision to provide opportunities for the youth and help keep them engaged in a

healthy and active lifestyle. The Renaissance Sailing Programme will prove to be a valuable initiative

in teaching valuable skills, introducing children to sailing and connecting the next generation to an important aspect of Omani culture, and we are delighted to be working with Renaissance Services to deliver the programme over the coming year.”

Stephen R Thomas, CEO, Renaissance Services, added, “We are strong believers in the power of sport to teach, inspire and have a lasting positive impression on young people. Oman Sail has shown how successful sailing can be in reaching young people and teaching them about the importance of a healthy lifestyle and regular exercise, as well

as promoting leadership and teamwork. We look forward to being part of the Community Sailing Programme and supporting communities across the country through sailing.”

The Renaissance Sailing Programme aims to teach a total of 900 students aged 8-10 from government schools in Al Batinah South, Al Sharqiyah South and Muscat governorates each year through a coordinated approach at Oman Sail’s sailing schools in Al Mouj Muscat, Al Musannah and Sur. Each student will take part in a five-week sailing course with one weekly session using the Optimist boat.



Israeli forces walk on a street during a raid in the Al Faraa camp for Palestinian refugees near Tubas city in the West Bank. – AFP

Army accused of ‘active’ support in West Bank violence

DUMA: As violence surges in the occupied West Bank, Palestinians and human rights groups decry an increasingly blurry distinction between the Israeli army and settlers, emboldened by the current pro-settlement government.

In the West Bank, the “line that never really existed between the army and the settlers” has now “been completely erased”, said Joe Carmel, advocacy coordinator for Breaking the Silence, an Israeli anti-occupation NGO made up of former soldiers.

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) recorded 1,096 settler attacks on Palestinians in the territory between October 7 and March 31. That represents an average of six attacks per day, up from two a day in 2022. Israeli human rights group Yesh Din, which also records settler violence, said 2023 was already a peak year.

With each attack, a similar story — armed settlers, sometimes wearing the army’s khaki fatigues, attack Palestinian villagers, burn their houses and cars, and steal their livestock, sometimes under the passive gaze of soldiers.

On April 13, Palestinians in the northern West Bank village of Duma watched in terror as hundreds of settlers attacked their village and stabbed a villager after an Israeli teenager who often visited a nearby settlement outpost was found dead. Human Rights Watch concluded in April that “the Israeli military either took part in or did not protect Palestinians from violent settler attacks in the West Bank”.

“Evidence shows that armed settlers, with the active participation of army units, blocked roads and attacked Palestinian communities on several occasions: they have detained, assaulted and tortured inhabitants, and evicted them from their houses and land,” HRW concluded. — **AFP**

Gaza war rages as mediators study replies of truce plan



Palestinian men walk along a narrow street past destroyed buildings in Khan Yunis, in the southern Gaza Strip. – AFP

GAZA: Deadly fighting rocked Gaza on Wednesday as US top diplomat Antony Blinken on a Middle East tour pushed for an elusive truce and captives release deal to end the war raging since October 7.

US Secretary of State Blinken arrived in Qatar on his latest regional crisis tour, to promote a ceasefire deal outlined by President Joe Biden on May 31.

US, Qatari and Egyptian mediators were studying a reply Palestinian Hamas issued late on Tuesday, but there was no news of a breakthrough as it has insisted on a complete end to the war

including a ceasefire timeline and the complete withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza, a source familiar with the talks said.

As the Gaza war has raged for more than eight months, claiming a spiralling civilian death toll in the besieged territory, deadly violence has also flared along Israel’s northern border with Lebanon.

Israeli’s military also kept up its bombardment and ground operations inside Gaza, where the

US, Qatari and Egyptian mediators were studying a reply Palestinian Hamas issued late on Tuesday, but there was no news of a breakthrough as it has insisted on a complete end to the war

Baptist Hospital said a pre-dawn air strike killed seven people in a family house in Gaza City.

Further south, a child was killed and several wounded in an Israeli bombardment targeting a house in Rafah, a medic at Al Nasser Hospital said. Air strikes and shelling also hit the city of Khan Yunis.

The Israeli military said that “over the past day troops eliminated a number of armed terrorist cells in close-quarters encounters” in Rafah, and that the air force struck “over 30 targets throughout the Gaza Strip”.

Biden on May 31 outlined what he called an Israeli plan that would start with a six-week ceasefire and the exchange of captives for Palestinian prisoners and, in three negotiated phases,

lead to the rebuilding of Gaza.

Washington has maintained that Israel is on board and has pushed Hamas to also agree, but neither party to the war has yet published its formal response.

Palestinian Hamas on Tuesday submitted its response to Qatar and Egypt, which passed it along to the United States. The group characterised its reply as “reasonable, serious and positive”.

Blinken sent two senior advisers to review the Hamas response with Egyptian intelligence chief Abbas Kamel, a US official said. The secretary of state, on a four-country swing around the Middle East, was to later meet the top leadership of Qatar, which has transmitted messages to the Palestinian group. — **AFP**



A displaced Palestinian woman uses water as she cooks as Gazan families struggle with water pollution and scarcity, in Jabalia refugee camp. – Reuters

Families desperate for water with no relief in sight

GAZA: It is not only the ever-present danger from Israeli bombardment or ground fighting that makes life a trial for Gaza’s Palestinian civilians. It is also the sheer daily slog to find bare necessities such as water, to drink or cook or wash with.

For the Shenbary family, that can be a walk of 90 minutes, jerry cans at the ready, in the hope of finding a makeshift distribution point among the mounds of grey, dusty rubble of the Jabalia urban refugee camp in northern Gaza.

“Now that Jabalia has all been bulldozed, all the wells are bulldozed with it. There’s not a single water well left,” family father Ahmed al Shenbary said last Saturday. “Water is a big tragedy in Jabalia.”

Israel’s retaliatory offensive has not only killed more than 37,000 people but created a humanitarian crisis with shortages of food, fuel and medicine as well as water in a territory whose housing and infrastructure is now little more than rubble.

“Children and their families are having to use water from unsafe sources that are highly salinated or polluted,” said Catherine Russell, executive director of the UN children’s fund UNICEF.

“Without safe water, many more children will die from deprivation and disease in the coming days.”

People have dug wells in bleak areas near the sea where the bombing has pushed them, or rely on salty tap water from Gaza’s only aquifer, now contaminated with seawater and sewage. Children walk long distances to line up at makeshift water collection points. Often not strong enough to carry the filled containers, they drag them home on wooden boards.

“As you see, we bathe our children in a small basin. It’s water from washing dishes, not clean water, because of the water shortages,” said Ahmed’s wife Fatima. — **AFP**

UN probe accuses Israel of crimes against humanity

GENEVA: A UN investigation concluded on Wednesday that Israel has committed crimes against humanity during the war in Gaza, including that of “extermination”, while saying Israel has committed war crimes.

The independent Commission of Inquiry’s report is the United Nations’ first in-depth investigation into the events of the war that erupted on October 7.

It found that Israel had committed war crimes, crimes against humanity and violations of international humanitarian law (IHL) and international human rights law (IHRL).

The report noted “a widespread or systematic attack directed against the civilian population in Gaza.”

“The commission found that the crimes against humanity of extermination; murder; gender persecution targeting Palestinian men and boys; forcible transfer; and torture and inhuman and cruel treatment were committed,” it added.



Palestinians collect water near buildings destroyed in the Israeli bombardment of Khan Yunis. – AFP

Israel rejected the conclusions by accusing the UN commission of “systematic anti-Israeli discrimination”.

The Israeli army launched a devastating offensive on the Gaza Strip that has left more than 37,000 people dead, the majority of them civilians, according to the territory’s health ministry.

The unprecedented Commission of Inquiry was established by the UN Human Rights Council in May 2021 to investigate alleged violations of IHL and IHRL in Israel and the Palestinian territories.

“It is imperative that all those who have committed crimes be held accountable,” said the commission’s chair Navi Pillay, a former UN rights chief and an ex-International Criminal Court judge.

“Israel must immediately stop its military operations and attacks in Gaza. Hamas and Palestinian armed groups must immediately cease rocket attacks and release all captives.”

In their actions in Gaza, the commission found the Israeli authorities “responsible for the war crimes of starvation as a method of warfare, murder or wilful killing, intentionally directing attacks against civilians and civilian objects, forcible transfer, physical violence, torture and inhuman or cruel treatment, arbitrary detention and outrages upon personal dignity”.

Starvation will affect the Gaza population, particularly children, “for decades to come”, the report said, while “the siege it imposed... constitutes collective punishment and reprisal against the civilian population, both of which are clear violations of IHL.”

The report is based on interviews with victims and witnesses conducted remotely, and in Turkiye and Egypt, and through studying thousands of verified open-source items, satellite imagery and forensic medical reports, the commission said. — **AFP**



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THURSDAY | JUNE 13 | 2024

7

In brief

■ PARIS



MACRON 'SUSPENDS' NEW CALEDONIA VOTING REFORM

President Emmanuel Macron said on Wednesday that a voting reform that triggered deadly riots in French Pacific territory New Caledonia would be "suspended" in light of snap parliamentary polls.

Instead he aimed to "give full voice to local dialogue and the restoration of order" after weeks of unrest in which nine people died, Macron said.

The reform would have allowed people resident in New Caledonia for at least 10 years to vote in local ballots — unfreezing electoral rolls that have gone unchanged since 2007. The reform was waiting on a constitutional congress of both houses to become part of the basic law. — AFP

■ NICOSIA



GREECE, JORDAN ASSIST IN TACKLING CYPRUS WILDFIRE

Aircraft from Greece and Jordan were helping Cypriot authorities battle a large wildfire in the southwestern Paphos region believed to have been started by an illegal landfill, officials said on Wednesday. The fire broke out on Tuesday east of the village of Giolou, triggering a national emergency plan that saw civil defence evacuate five mountain villages at risk.

Officials said two air tractors from the Royal Jordanian Air Force and two planes from Greece were deployed on Wednesday to tackle the blaze in the rugged terrain. Over 300 people, including fire crews, supported by bulldozers, were working to secure the perimeter of the fire. — AFP

■ BAKU



AZERBAIJAN SAYS PEACEKEEPERS COMPLETED EXIT

Russian peacekeepers on Wednesday completed their withdrawal from Azerbaijan's Nagorno-Karabakh region, which Baku recaptured last year from Armenian separatists, officials in Baku said.

"The process of the full withdrawal of the manpower, weapons, and equipment of Russia's peacekeeping contingent (in Karabakh) from Azerbaijan was completed on June 12," the defence ministry in Baku said.

The withdrawal, which began in April, has been agreed between Russian President Vladimir Putin and his Azerbaijani counterpart Ilham Aliyev. — AFP

Biden heads to G7 summit focused on Ukraine aid



US President Joe Biden alutes as he boards Air Force One at Joint Base Andrews in Maryland. — AFP

WASHINGTON: US President Joe Biden departed for Italy on Wednesday to meet with Group of Seven leaders in an effort to increase pressure on Russia over its war against Ukraine.

The G7 leaders arrive at the summit confronting myriad woes at home even as they seek solutions for many of the world's most pressing problems.

Biden, 81, spent Tuesday evening at his home in Wilmington, Delaware, after a 12-member jury convicted his son Hunter Biden of lying about his drug use to illegally buy a gun in 2018, making him the first child of a sitting US president to be convicted of a crime.

The trial followed the May 30 criminal conviction of Republican former President Donald Trump, the first former US president to be found guilty of a felony.

The heads of the world's most developed democracies will address multiple challenges during the June 13-15 meeting, including wars in Ukraine and the Middle East

The heads of the world's most developed democracies will address multiple challenges during the June 13-15 meeting, including wars in Ukraine and the Middle East, threats posed by artificial intelligence and development challenges in Africa.

The leaders will announce new sanctions and export controls against Russia that target entities and networks helping President Vladimir Putin's forces fight the war in Ukraine, White House spokesperson John Kirby said on Tuesday. "We're going to continue to drive up costs for the Russian war machine," Kirby said.

Washington plans to widen sanctions on the sale of semiconductor chips and other goods to Russia, sources familiar with the plans said late on Tuesday.

The administration will announce it is broadening existing export controls to include US-branded goods, not just those made in the United States, the sources said. It will identify certain Hong Kong entities it says are shipping goods to Moscow.

Shoring up funding for Ukraine will be a top priority

at the G7 meeting, with US and European officials eager to lock in solutions, ahead of a possible Trump re-election.

The Group of Seven nations and the European Union are considering how to use profits generated by Russian assets immobilised in the West to provide Ukraine with a large up-front loan.

"We will announce new steps to unlock the value of the immobilised Russian sovereign assets to benefit Ukraine and to help them recover from the destruction that Mr. Putin's army has caused," Kirby said.

Biden will press other G7 leaders to agree to an innovative plan to use future interest on some \$281 billion of Russian central bank funds to back up a \$50 billion loan to Ukraine.

— Reuters

Japan biochemist who discovered statins, Akira Endo, dies

TOKYO:

Japanese biochemist Akira Endo, who discovered cholesterol-lowering statins, has died aged 90, his former student and colleague said.

Statins, which can prevent heart attacks or strokes, are among the most commonly prescribed drugs worldwide.

Keiji Hasumi, a professor who was a long-time associate of Endo, said the scientist had died on June 5.

"His work was truly great. Statins didn't exist before Endo," Hasumi said. "It has the same value and impact as the discovery of penicillin."

Johns Hopkins Medicine says more than 200 million people take statins. Studies say the global market for them was worth \$15 billion in 2023 and is expected to grow.

Endo experimented on thousands of microbes to reach his 1973 discovery of mevastatin — an agent derived from penicillin that reduces so-called "bad" cholesterol in the blood.

The researcher "was a tough, strict person. He was insightful and perceptive," and "able to see the hidden essence of things", Hasumi said.

His ambitions began early thanks to his grandfather, who was interested in medicine and became a "great home teacher", Endo said in a 2008 autobiographical essay.

As a student, Endo became interested in antibiotics like penicillin, "deeply impressed" by how many lives they had saved, his essay in the journal Nature Medicine said.

Endo carried out research in New York in the late 1960s, when coronary heart disease was the main cause of US deaths. — AFP



Akira Endo

Death toll rises to 49 in Kuwait tragic building fire

KUWAIT CITY: Forty-nine people have died in a major blaze in a residential building housing foreign workers in Kuwait, the interior ministry said on Wednesday, updating an earlier toll.

"The number of deaths as a result of the fire in the workers' building in the Mangaf area has risen to 49," the ministry said.

Forty-three people were injured, the health ministry said, in the blaze in the Mangaf area south of Kuwait City which is heavily populated with migrant labourers.

"Unfortunately, we received a report of a fire at... exactly 6:00 am in the Mangaf area," Major General Eid Al Owaihan, head of the interior ministry's General Department of Criminal Evidence, said at the site.

Images from the scene showed soot blackening the exterior of the six-storey building which housed 196 workers, according to information given to the minister by their employer.

An Egyptian who survived



A Kuwaiti police officer is seen in front of a burnt building following a deadly fire, in Mangaf, southern Kuwait. — Reuters

the fire and worked as a driver in Kuwait, told local media the fire had started on a lower floor and that those on higher levels were unable to escape. He said the building had filled with thick smoke. According to a source in the General Fire Department, the victims suffocated from rising

smoke after the fire broke out on the ground floor.

Forensic teams are working at the site and have identified three bodies so far, Owaihan said.

The nationalities of the victims have not been announced but the Indian ambassador, when contacted by reporters, said he was

at the hospital visiting survivors.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi described news of the fire as saddening in a post on social media platform X.

"My thoughts are with all those who have lost their near and dear ones. I pray that the injured recover at the earliest," he said.

An Egyptian who survived the fire said that the fire had started on a lower floor and that those on higher levels were unable to escape because of thick smoke

The building's owner has been detained in an investigation into potential negligence, Interior Minister Shaikh Fahd Al Yousef said as he visited the scene.

Any properties found to have violated safety regulations will be evacuated immediately, he warned.

"We will work to address the issue of labour overcrowding and neglect," the minister said. "We will detain the owner of the property where the fire broke out until legal procedures are completed."

The blaze is one of the worst seen in Kuwait, which borders Iraq and Saudi Arabia. — Reuters

Berlin harnesses rain in climate shift

CAMILLE KAUFFMANN AND
CLAIRE MORAND

In two years’ time, a massive hole in the heart of Berlin will become the German capital’s biggest reservoir, capturing an increasingly precious resource — water.

Once a swamp centuries ago, Berlin has gone from a city trying to keep its abundant groundwater from overflowing to one scrambling to keep its forests green. “Before, the aim was to evacuate rainwater to be able to cross the city without having to put on rubber boots,” Stephan Natz, the spokesman for Berlin’s water management services, said from the edge of the crater, 20 metres (66 feet) deep.

But in 2018, the city adopted a “paradigm change” and is now finding ways to store rainwater to both combat drought and prevent flash floods.

In essence, it is applying the sponge city concept, which emerged as a theory in the 1970s and which has found favour in growing urban centres across the United States, China and Europe, as climate change makes weather systems more mercurial and

more intense. Berlin’s 150-year-old sewage drainage system was not built to cope with today’s heavy deluges. “In case of heavy rain, the waters are mixing and flooding the Spree River, sparking the deaths of fish and pollution that is visible,” said Natz.

At the same time, Berlin has faced severe water shortages in recent years as drought conditions in the capital leave the ground too dry to absorb sudden and strong rainfall.

As a result, the capital’s groundwater has still not returned to its normal level after five years of drought, according to the Leibniz Institute of Freshwater Ecology and Inland Fisheries.

“There is now a realisation of the value of water in Berlin. It’s one of the driest places in Germany,” said Darla Nickel, the director of the agency that manages rainwater in the capital.

In a symbol of the ongoing transformation, the giant water reserve under construction is smack in the middle of the capital — fewer than two km away from the Brandenburg Gate.

The reservoir, 40 metres in diameter, will collect almost 17,000 cubic metres of water — or five times the capacity of an Olympic-size pool. It will store the

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rainwater before sending it to a treatment plant.

Besides the mega reservoir, Berlin is now requiring new housing projects to have a rainwater collection strategy. Quartier 52, built five years ago in the southwest of the city, offers a model.

Three large ponds have been dug around the housing estate, offering residents a scenic walk on sunny days while serving as catchment when it rains.

Rainwater is “collected on green roofs and then in these ponds,” said Nickel. “The water evaporates and in turn creates a more agreeable atmosphere.” The pavements are also gently sloping, allowing water to run down into the ground. “You see that it can be really simple,” said Nickel.

The challenge would be to replicate such measures across the city. “We have advanced much more slowly with existing buildings than with new constructions,” said Nickel. In all, about 30 projects are ongoing under the sponge city plan, including at the central Berlin Gendarmenmarkt area, usually a tourist magnet. The city is also asking residents to install water collectors or plant green roofs, dangling an exemption of fees for management or purification of rainwater.

— AFP

Jill Biden emerges as centre of gravity for US first family

AURÉLIA END

One day, she is firmly grasping the hand of her president husband at the White House. Then she is in court in Delaware, supporting their son Hunter.

As election season ramps up in the United States, First Lady Jill Biden is emerging as the rock of the presidential family, which has known its share of trauma.

On Tuesday, she was at the side of the president’s youngest son as a jury in Wilmington found him guilty of federal gun charges — a historic first criminal prosecution of the child of a sitting US leader.

The 73-year-old first lady has been a near-constant presence in the courtroom, even travelling back and forth across the Atlantic multiple times to fulfil her family and official obligations.

After court last on Wednesday, she headed to France to be at Joe Biden’s side for ceremonies on Thursday marking the 80th anniversary of D-Day in Normandy. The next day, she was back in court.

And then on Saturday, she was once again in Paris for a state dinner at the Elysee Palace in her husband’s honour. She smiled broadly for cameras in her Schiaparelli gown, without a visible trace of fatigue or stress.

Biden, an English professor, is smiling and warm at public events, well aware that she should not distract from her husband, but serve as a positive force for his image.

While the 81-year-old president can sometimes seem stiff and make more than the occasional gaffe, the first lady often takes his arm or hand, seemingly guiding him through the daily challenges of White House life.

“She’s the glue that held (my family) together, and I knew that I wanted to marry her shortly after I met her,” the president once said in an interview.

Jill Biden entered his life in 1975. She was separated from her first husband at the time, and the senator from Delaware was a young widower, having lost his first wife and daughter in a 1972 car crash. He was a single father to Beau and Hunter.

The politician with the broad grin and early-onset baldness ardently courted the blonde, blue-eyed Jill, whom he first saw in an ad for a local park in Wilmington.

He had to ask her to marry him five times before she said yes.

Beau and Hunter “had lost their mum, and I couldn’t have them lose another mother. So I had to be 100 per cent sure,” she later said.

— AFP

Shrinking the size of school bag



DR KHALEFAN
HAMED
AL HARRASI

The issue of heavy school bags has garnered significant attention worldwide due to its adverse effects on children’s physical and psychological well-being. Numerous studies have demonstrated the negative impact of carrying heavy loads on students’ health, prompting educators and policymakers to explore innovative solutions.

Research has shown that heavy school bags are associated with back, shoulder, and neck pain in children. For instance, a study in Uganda found that about 30.8 per cent of students carried bags exceeding 10 per cent of their body weight, leading to a high prevalence of musculoskeletal pain and postural changes.

Another study highlighted that carrying heavy loads can cause increased thoracic spine rotation and kyphosis, particularly in young boys. These postural changes can lead to long-term health issues, including chronic back pain and spinal deformities such as scoliosis.

The physical burden of heavy school bags also translates into psychological stress. Students carrying heavy bags often experience increased fatigue, reduced concentration and higher stress and anxiety levels.

The constant discomfort can negatively impact their academic performance and overall school experience. In extreme cases, the strain can lead to sleep disturbances and social withdrawal, affecting the child’s emotional and psychological development.

The issue of heavy school bags has been recognised in Oman, with the media and the government addressing the concern. *The Observer* highlighted the adverse impacts of heavy school bags on children’s health and emphasised the importance of adhering to weight limits recommended by medical professionals. The Consumer Protection Authority has set standards for school bags to ensure they are lightweight and ergonomically designed.

Additionally, the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Oman has taken steps to alleviate this issue. Where possible, the MoE has advised schools



The MoE has advised schools to install lockers for students. They also recommended reducing the number of books students carry and limiting homework to decrease the overall load.

to install lockers for students, especially those in Grades 1 to 4, to reduce the daily burden of carrying heavy school bags. They also recommended reducing the number of books students carry and limiting homework to decrease the overall load.

Many countries have successfully implemented measures to address the issue of heavy school bags, focusing

RESEARCH HAS SHOWN THAT
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CHILDREN

on reducing the physical burden on students and promoting healthier practices. Spain has been proactive in reducing the weight of school bags by installing lockers in schools and promoting the use of digital textbooks. Italy has established guidelines limiting the weight of school bags to 10-15 per cent of a child’s body weight.

Schools have also introduced locker systems and ergonomic designs for school furniture to support better posture and reduce strain.

These measures have effectively

reduced the physical burden on students, promoting better health outcomes.

The UAE has conducted extensive health campaigns to educate parents, students, and teachers about the risks associated with heavy school bags. These campaigns promote proper packing techniques and the use of ergonomic backpacks.

India has issued detailed guidelines through educational boards like NCERT and CBSE to limit the weight of school bags for different grade levels.

Several strategies can be employed to alleviate further the burden on students. Digital textbooks can significantly reduce the physical load on students. Transitioning to digital resources like e-books and tablets eliminates the need for multiple heavy physical books.

Sharing resources within the school can minimise the need for each student to carry individual copies of all materials. Schools can provide classroom sets of textbooks and maintain resource centres with various learning materials. This approach reduces the physical burden and fosters a sense of community and cooperation among students.

Embracing minimalist approaches in educational settings can further reduce the physical and psychological burden on students. This involves encouraging students to carry only essential items and leveraging digital and shared resources. Encouraging students to bring only the core materials needed for each day can significantly reduce the weight of school bags. Implementing a rotation system for books and supplies based on the daily schedule can help manage the load more effectively.

Using multi-functional tools and compact storage solutions can minimise the number of individual items students need to carry. For instance, pens with multiple ink colours and notebooks with removable pages can reduce the overall weight of school supplies.

By promoting minimalist approaches and leveraging modern technology, schools can create a healthier and more supportive learning environment for students, ensuring their overall well-being and academic success.

History behind an Arabic song

On June 5, the Arab world commemorated the 57th anniversary of the Naksa (setback) or what’s known to the world as the six-day war or the war of 1967. Being a sentimental nation, we always link it with a song that wasn’t even written for the occasion.

The song is called Oulu Li Ain El Shams (Tell the sun’s eye) by Egyptian singer and actress Shadia (1931-2017) who combined looks and talent that earned her the nickname of “The Silver Screen’s Sweetheart”.

But what’s the history behind it? The opening verse of the song: “Tell the sun’s eye not to heat / As my beloved is walking early morning” comes from Egyptian folklore with three stories about its origins. The first says that it comes from the time when Suez Canal was being built by the French (1859-1869) and was sung by Egyptian village mothers following their children who were being led by soldiers for forced labour. The second links it to the Denshawai Incident in 1906 where five British soldiers went pigeon hunting in a village. When the villagers tried to stop them, the soldiers opened fire killing a woman and injuring four men. The soldiers fled the scene and one died of a heat stroke. Hence, some linked his death with the occurrence of the song.

The last story is also linked to the incident where after the unfair trial led by the minister of justice Boutros Ghali, four villagers were hanged for murdering the dead soldier which stirred the Egyptians’ nationalism and anti-colonialism feelings against the British. In 1910, a young man called Ibrahim El Wardani assassinated Boutros Ghali and was to be executed publicly. There were public demonstrations where it was prohibited to mention Ibrahim’s name openly. As he was led to the



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THE SONG HAS BEEN LINKED TO THE NAKSA AND ALL THE LOSSES THAT CAME WITH IT OF LIVES, MORALS AND LAND. YET IT STILL CARRIES IN ITS ESSENCE THE UNCONDITIONAL LOVE OF A MOTHER

gallows early in the morning, those who were attending started singing: “Tell the sun’s eye not to heat / As the earth’s dearest is walking early in the morning.”

Fast-forward to the start of the 1960s, when Egyptian music genius Baligh Hamdi decided to revive folklore music heritage and travels throughout the country gathering songs. He comes across the famous verse and decides to turn it into a complete song. He composes the music and then meet his multi-talented friend Majdi Najeeb — who was a poet, a writer and a painter — and asks him to add lyrics to the given verse and music composition, which was Herculean task as Najeeb didn’t have much to work with. However, he succeeds in composing lyrics that reflect the love and suffering of mothers helplessly watching their children being taken away.

The second verse that Najeeb composes is: “Oh pigeons! fly before him now / And turn the sun rays into silk” Baligh’s choice for the singer wasn’t welcomed by many at the time as Shadia had a mature voice that many critics didn’t appreciate and openly published articles asking her to retire, deeming her voice “unrecognisable”. Nevertheless, Shadia succeeds in reflecting a mother’s sadness and loss, especially in the second verse where her voice resembles a heart-wrenching wail. The song was aired in 1966 and the year after the Naksa happened. The Israelis — with their twisted sense of humour that we Arabs are plagued with — decide to gloat in their own way by re-airing the song to the Egyptians with changed lyrics: “Tell the sun’s eye not to heat / As the Egyptian army is walking early.” Since that time, the song has been linked to the Naksa and all the losses that came with it of lives, morals and land. Yet it still carries in its essence the unconditional love of a mother.

POLL NOT AN EASY TASK



Britain’s Liberal Democrats leader Ed Davey falls as he attempts an Aqua Jungle floating ropes course during a visit to Spot-On-Wake in Henley-in-Arden, Warwickshire, on Wednesday in the build-up to the UK general election on July 4. – AFP

The most courageous thing that Biden can do

In 1977, Ronald Reagan shared his thoughts on the Cold War with his aide Richard Allen. “My idea of American policy toward the Soviet Union is simple, and some would say simplistic,” the future president said. “It is this: We win, and they lose. What do you think of that?” This year, Joe Biden cast the purpose of his presidency as a struggle against authoritarianism, at home and abroad. What’s his theory of victory? He doesn’t appear to have one. His style of governance is to manage threats, not defeat them. He has sought to provide Ukraine with sufficient weaponry not to lose to Vladimir Putin. But even before congressional Republicans forced a spending hiatus, he was reluctant to give Ukraine the types or numbers of weapons it needed to evict Russian forces from its territory. He believes Israel has a right to protect itself. But his previous insistence that Hamas has to be defeated has given way to a US-backed cease-fire resolution that effectively ensures Hamas’s survival.

He has vowed that Iran will never get nuclear weapons. But in the face of Iran’s refusal to give international inspectors access to its nuclear facilities, the United States worked to soften a diplomatic censure. He has promised to defend Taiwan



BRET STEPHENS

in the event of an invasion. But projected US military spending, when adjusted for inflation, is essentially flat, and US naval power isn’t keeping pace with China’s growth. What about the threat at home? Biden is sleepwalking to defeat against a felonious adversary who three years ago incited violence to overturn an election. He has the lowest approval rating of his time in office: 37.6 per cent, according to a polling average. Jimmy Carter and George H.W. Bush were in similar territory at similar points in their one-term presidencies. Joe Biden desperately needs some wins — real, not cosmetic, ones. Who in his administration is thinking about how to get him some? The Gaza ceasefire isn’t it, at least not in itself. It merely punts a problem that needs to be solved: Hamas’s continued grip over the territory. It begins with a six-week pause in the fighting that might lead to the release of some Israeli hostages in exchange for hundreds of Palestinian prisoners. But it risks falling apart because no Israeli government will retreat from all of Gaza while Hamas retains power, and Hamas

HIS PREVIOUS INSISTENCE THAT HAMAS HAS TO BE DEFEATED HAS GIVEN WAY TO A US-BACKED CEASEFIRE RESOLUTION THAT EFFECTIVELY ENSURES HAMAS’S SURVIVAL

won’t release all the hostages or meet the deal’s other terms while Israeli forces remain in the territory. That means the ceasefire could fall apart closer to the election, when Biden will least want another Middle East crisis. What could rescue it is a deal with Saudi Arabia — the kingdom’s recognition of Israel plus an Arab security force in Gaza in exchange for a US defence guarantee and ambiguous Israeli promises of an eventual Palestinian state. Will it work after the administration has done so much to insult and antagonise

dislikable leaders in Jerusalem and Riyadh? Or will those leaders bide their time to deliver the prize to Donald Trump? That’s a question — and a lesson — for the future. Ukraine could be another win for Biden, an easier one. It’s good that Washington finally supplied the Ukrainians with longer-range ATACM missiles that allowed them to hold a wider range of Russian targets at risk. What took so long? Why does Ukraine always need to come to the verge of defeat before the president finally relents and gives it the weapons it needs? Ukraine still doesn’t have F-16s, a year after they were promised. Why not add US-made cruise missiles to the mix, to make the F-16s that much more potent? Or better, open a US air corridor to Kyiv in the spirit of Harry Truman’s Berlin airlift? It would signal American determination to come to the defence of embattled allies without fear of their despotic foes. The more Biden does to “Trump-proof” US support for Ukraine against the risk of losing in November, the more secure his legacy will be. But the biggest win Biden will need will be domestic. It won’t be his executive

order all but banning asylum for migrants: That only confirmed that he had failed to use every option at his disposal to tackle the crisis. It won’t be low unemployment: No magic wand will erase 2022’s inflation or today’s high interest rates. It won’t be Trump’s legal travails, which seem to have galvanised his supporters at least as much as it has delighted his opponents. And it won’t be finding a way to offload Kamala Harris from the ticket, easing the apprehension many voters have about a feeble president being succeeded by his unpopular and unconvincing vice-president. Pushing out the first Black female vice-president would alienate a lot of Democratic voters. It all leaves the president with one option that can be a win for America and, ultimately, his place in history. He can still choose not to run, to cede the field to a Democrat who can win — paging Josh Shapiro or Gretchen Whitmer — and do the hard and brave things it will take to secure security and peace for the free world. There’s still time, if only just. It would be a courageous, honourable and transformative legacy. — The New York Times



MUSCAT TO HOST WEST ASIA JUNIOR BADMINTON IN OCTOBER

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

The Sultanate of Oman represented by Oman Racket Sports Committee (ORSC) will host the West Asia Junior Badminton Championship in Muscat from October 7 to 12 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. ORSC, which was established in July 2023, had organised the first international event represented by 2023 Oman Squash Open Championship in last December and registered top success.

Oman's bid to host this major event was accepted and supported by the executive committee of the Badminton Asia. ORSC officials had prepared a comprehensive bid that covered all the requirements to host this event with ensuring that organisation of the championship will be held successfully.

"Our target from hosting of West Asia Junior Badminton



Abdulrahim al Droushi

Championship in Muscat is to raise Oman's ranking as a contributor to the development of badminton in the region. In the previous year, the committee successfully organised Oman's first international ranking squash tournament, which enhanced Oman's reputation in racket sports," Abdulrahim bin Musallam al Droushi, Chairman of ORSC, said.

"By organising such high level competitions in Oman will provide the required motivation in the national team players besides potentially fostering future talents for the national training centres and school tournaments," the chief of ORSC concluded.

It is expected that the West Asian Championship will feature participation of 10 countries including all members of the West Asia Badminton Association including Jordan, the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Yemen, Qatar, Lebanon, Syria, Palestine, and the hosts Sultanate of Oman.

The tournament will be played based on the regulations of the Badminton Asia. The participating teams will be divided into two groups. Teams will compete within their groups while the top two from each group will advance to the knockout stages. The championship will feature



singles and doubles events for boys and girls besides mixed doubles in Under-15 and Under-17 age categories.

NATIONAL TEAM PARTICIPATION
The Oman team will have an intensive preparatory programme in run up to the West Asian Junior Badminton Championship.
"The national team players will attend in this championship for the first time and it will be a significant motivator for the players marking their inaugural involvement in such a major event. The players will have a busy schedule of training in different training centres have been established for both boys and girls at the Oasis Badminton Academy and AMM Badminton Centre. These centres offer training sessions led by Badminton Asia certified coaches. This summer, the committee will

launch eight training centres across Muscat, Al Batinah North, Al Dakhiliyah, and Dhofar, targeting children aged 8-16. The committee has also identified the top players from the latest Oman Club Championship to form the national under-15 and under-17 teams. A training camp is planned for August in Muscat to prepare for the West Asia Championship," Ruqaya al Omairi, Board member of ORSC, said.
Ahead to the championship, there will be a four-day officiating workshop for the umpires to update them on the latest international rules and regulations. The workshop will feature some practical sessions with mini-tournaments. Each participating country will send two referees, who will then officiate the championship matches. The workshop will be conducted by specialists from Badminton Asia and managed by the West Asia regional office.

Oman continue winning results in Bangkok

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

The Oman national beach handball team will conclude its series of friendly matches against Thailand on Thursday with the sixth match in the series of friendly matches played on the sidelines of the current training camp in Bangkok, which will conclude on Friday, in preparation for participation in the 11th Men's and Women's Beach Handball World Cup, which will be held in the Chinese city of Pingtan from June 18 to 23.

On Wednesday, Oman beat Thailand in two matches. Oman

won the first match 2-1, as the Thais took the first set 18-14. Oman came back in the second set to win it 16-12, and the two teams went to a penalty shoot-out that ended in favour of Oman 8-6. In the second match, Oman repeated the win by the same margin. Oman claimed the first set at 14-13, while Thailand equalised by taking the second set 15-12. The match was decided by the golden goal, which came in favour of Oman.
The team delegation is scheduled to travel to Pingtan on Friday to acclimatise the players to the atmosphere of the tournament and the ground of the stadiums where the matches



will be played, in addition to playing several friendly matches with the participating teams before the start of the competition.
EIGHTH APPEARANCE
The team delegation is headed by Dr Said bin Ahmed al Shahari, Chairman of the Oman Handball Association, accompanied by Said al Hosni, team manager, Talib al Balushi, team administrator, the technical staff led by coach Hamood al Hasni, Jaber bin al Balushi, assistant and physical trainer and goalkeeper coach, Hossam El Din Adli, physiotherapist, in addition to 10 players.

This qualification marks Oman's eighth appearance in the World Cup, having previously participated in 2004, 2012, 2014, 2016, 2017, 2018, and 2020. The team has also achieved numerous other accomplishments at the Asian, Arab and GCC levels. Most notably, they won the first Asian Championship hosted in Muscat in 2004.
They also finished fourth in the Beach World Cup held in Taipei, China in 2009 and came second in the Asian Championship held in Hong Kong in 2013. Most recently, they finished second in the seventh Asian Championship in China in 2019.

Sri Lanka staring at early exit after Florida washout

FLORIDA: Former champions Sri Lanka are on the brink of an early exit from the T20 World Cup after heavy rain washed out their Group D match against Nepal in Lauderhill, Florida on Tuesday.

The 2014 champions badly needed a win to keep their tournament hopes alive after defeats by South Africa and Bangladesh in their first two matches.

Wanindu Hasaranga's team are bottom of the group with just one point and look certain to crash out unless other results go their way.

"It's not going to be easy for us and it would be a miracle actually," Sri Lanka spinner Maheesh Theekshana said of their chances of advancing.

They will conclude their group campaign against the Netherlands on Sunday and Theekshana acknowledged

nothing had clicked for them in the 20-team tournament.

"We didn't bat well, we didn't assess the conditions really well and our plans, everything went wrong," the off-spinner said.

Nepal are also winless after two matches and on Friday they face unbeaten group leaders South Africa, who sealed their place in the Super Eight after three straight victories.

"Obviously we want the sun to shine and have a proper game," Nepal coach Monty Desai told reporters.

"We know that we are walking into the unknowns. We have never played South Africa before.

"But at the same time, the morale in the camp (is high)..."

Rain and thunderstorms are predicted for the remainder of the week during which India, Pakistan, Ireland and Canada have fixtures scheduled in Florida. —Reuters



Match officials wipe water from the pitch as it rains ahead of the ICC Twenty20 World Cup 2024 Group D match between Sri Lanka and Nepal at Central Broward Park & Broward County Stadium in Lauderhill, Florida. — AFP

Pakistan keep Super 8 hopes alive with win over Canada

NEW YORK: Mohammad Rizwan scored a timely half-century and Babar Azam played a captain's knock as Pakistan bounced back from successive defeats to beat Canada by seven wickets on Tuesday, keeping their hopes of reaching the T20 World Cup Super Eight stage alive.

Pakistan, third in Group A with two points after one win in three matches, have a shot at advancing to the next round if one of the group's top two sides India and United States lose both their remaining matches and Pakistan beat Ireland on Sunday.

Canada, also on two points, need United States or India to lose their remaining games and beat India themselves on Saturday to have a shot at finishing in the top two. Batting first, Canada's Aaron Johnson (52) waged a lone battle against Pakistan's pace attack. Mohammad Amir (2-13) and Haris Rauf (2-26) led the charge, while Shaheen Afridi (1-21) and Naseem Shah (1-24) helped ensure Canada were unable to find rhythm.

Only three Canadian batters reached double digits and if not for Johnson's maiden World Cup fifty and a late flurry from Kaleem Sana (13 not out), Canada would have struggled to reach the modest total of 106-7 they posted.



Pakistan's Mohammad Amir (L) celebrates the dismissal of Canada's Navneet Dhaliwal as Canada's Aaron Johnson looks on. — AFP

The temporary arena in East Meadow, where India and South Africa defended less than run-a-ball targets in recent days, looked on course for another competitive low-scoring match as Saim Ayub (6) fell early and Pakistan looked shaky at 21-1 after five overs.

However, Rizwan (53 not out) and Azam (33) steadied the ship, taking few risks and frequently rotating strikes. A measured Azam hit one six and one four before he fell to Dillon Heyliger (2-18), but Pakistan comfortably reached their target with 15 balls to spare. "That was a very important win," player of the match Amir said. "One more, who knows?" — Reuters

Zampa milestone as Australia march into Super 8 of T20 WC



Australia's Adam Zampa (R) celebrates the dismissal of Namibia's Zane Green during the ICC Twenty20 World Cup 2024 Group B match against Namibia at Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in North Sound, Antigua and Barbuda. — AFP

NORTH SOUND, Antigua and Barbuda: Australia marched into the Super Eights of the T20 World Cup with a nine-wicket demolition of Namibia at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Tuesday.

Adam Zampa led the rout of an outclassed Namibia with figures of 4-12, becoming the first Australian man to reach 100 T20I wickets.

The southern Africans were bundled out for just 72 off 17 overs after batting first.

With victories under their belt over Oman and arch-rivals England, Australia then sped to the target in just 5.4 overs for the loss of one wicket.

Travis Head finished unbeaten on 34 and captain Mitchell Marsh struck the winning boundary to be 18 not out.

Put in to bat in breezy, drizzly conditions, Namibia were first strangled by the 2021 champions' efficiency with their new-ball bowlers and some safe catching.

Zampa then took over, the leg-

spinner ripping through the lower half of Namibia's demoralised batting line-up.

His fourth wicket came off the last ball of his four-over spell when he bowled Bernard Scholtz to reach his milestone of 100 wickets in the shortest format.

"I bowled a couple of pies (bad balls) tonight to get a couple wickets but that happens at times," said Zampa after receiving the Man of the Match award.

"I've been feeling really good and encouraged by the captain to

take wickets through those middle overs. It is a bit of a challenge here in the Caribbean but it's something you have to cope with for sure. "This is the first step in trying to take the trophy home, but there is a long way to go," he added. — AFP

BRIEF SCORES: Namibia 72 all out off 17 overs (Gerhard Erasmus 36; Adam Zampa 4-12, Marcus Stoinis 2-9, Josh Hazlewood 2-18) v Australia 74-1 off 5.4 overs (Travis Head 34 not out, David Warner 20; David Wiese 1-15)

Oman hope to end campaign with good show

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA: It is a showdown of pride and pressure as Oman brace themselves to face defending champions England in their final Group B encounter of the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium in Antigua on Thursday.

The match begins at 3 pm local time (11 pm Oman time).

Having displayed resilience in their previous matches, despite being winless in the tournament so far, Oman seek to bid farewell with a memorable performance against England.

Over the past two weeks, Oman have shown remarkable character, especially in their close encounters against Namibia and Australia in Barbados before crashing to big defeat at the hands of Scotland in Antigua.

England go up against Oman knowing that only a win will do if they wish to have any chance of progressing from Group B. Jos Buttler's side realistically need to produce one of their most dominant performances in the history of this competition to catch-up with Scotland's superior net-run-rate (NRR).

Australia are top of the group with six points from three matches after their thumping win over Namibia on Tuesday night in Antigua. The nine-wicket win powered the Aussies into the knockout phase, the second team in the tournament, to confirm their berth in Super Eight stage after South Africa had earlier booked their spot from Group D with three wins and a washout between Nepal and Sri Lanka on Tuesday.

Scotland are close behind with five points and Namibia are third with two points from three and England have just one point from their two matches.

At the start of the tournament,



Ayaan Khan of Oman hits 4 during the match against Australia. — AFP

holders England and Australia were expected to stroll through the group that had three Associate nations in Oman, Scotland and Namibia. However, England face the genuine prospect of an early exit, after their opener against Scotland was washed out and handing the teams a point each.

England suffered a big defeat at the hands of Australia and now face the prospect of being knocked out if they are unable to garner huge net run-rate (NRR) in their must-win games against Oman and then Namibia.

Scotland have already positioned themselves in a good position with a healthy NRR of +2.164 with one match remaining, a fixture against Australia on June



England's captain Jos Buttler hits six during the match against Australia.

15. The Aussies have a huge NRR of +3.580 after their rout of Namibia, who have -2.098 and England have -1.800. Oman, who are out of reckoning, have -1.613.

Oman meet England for the first time in a T20I clash. They will hope to exploit the advantage of assessing the playing conditions earlier than England at the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium after their seven-wicket defeat to Scotland on June 9.

"The team failed to capitalise on the favourable batting conditions and the batters did not use the strong winds to their benefit," lamented Oman skipper Aqib Ilyas, highlighting the missed opportunities against Scotland.

Oman batter Pratik Athavale, who top-scored against the

Scotland with 54, the highest score by an Omani in the tournament so far, said: "We will take positives from the defeat against Scotland here [in Antigua] and also have learnt our lessons during our losses against Namibia [Super Over] and Australia respectively."

Opener Athavale emphasised the need of early breakthroughs in powerplay and building partnerships while batting. He said: "We were unable to make the best use of the conditions against Scotland. We will go into Thursday's match with positive intent and do our best."

Athavale said: "We will be having our second outing in Antigua and second against such a big team in the tournament [England]. I think we are better prepared to take on England."

BUTTLER HAS CLEAR TARGET

Meanwhile, England skipper Jos Buttler is clear about what he expects in the game against Oman.

"I think it's quite clear what we need to do and how we need to play. First and foremost, we need to win the game against Oman to have any chance going forward into the next one. So, we have to earn the right to try and win the game. And if we can get ourselves in a position to affect our net run-rate, obviously that's what we need to do."

For England to nudge their NRR up ahead of Scotland's over their next two games – to ensure they would progress even in the event of the narrowest of Australia wins on Sunday (via a Super Over) – Oman and Namibia need to be defeated by a combined margin of 117 runs or more. Oman may opt for couple of changes in the match while England are also expected to ring in few changes and shuffle the batting order.



WARHOLM LEADS GALAXY OF STARS AT CLASSY EUROS

PICHARDO
SHINES
IN TRIPLE
JUMP



BOL NAILS
SECOND
TITLE IN 400M
HURDLES



TAMBERI THE
SHOWMAN
SEALED THE
WIN WITH A
RECORD JUMP
OF 2.37M



Norway's Karsten Warholm celebrates after winning the men's 400m hurdles final. — Reuters

ROME: Norway's Karsten Warholm fired out a broadside at Olympic contenders in the run-in to the Paris Games by winning a third successive European title in Rome on Tuesday as a galaxy of global stars showcased some scintillating form.

Warholm, the Olympic champion and a three-time world gold medallist, timed 46.98 seconds for the victory. "I felt strong and I was in control," said Warholm. "Now it's back to training and keep on pushing. This is a good step on the road but this is more to build confidence and get the gold medal. In Paris I'll try to be as sharp as possible."

It was the first of four stunning championship records in a heady night of track and field at the Stadio Olimpico, with a large, raucous, flag-waving crowd in to support Team Italy captain Gianmarco Tamberi in the high jump.

The performance of the night arguably came in a thrilling men's triple jump competition.

Defending champion Pedro Pichardo, the Olympic and 2022 world champion, went out to a Portuguese record of 18.04 metres to better Briton Jonathan Edwards' previous championship best of 17.99m. But Spain's Jordan Alejandro Diaz Fortun fired back in his penultimate jump with a massive 18.18m.

The winning distance was the third longest in history: only Edwards with his 18.29m world record from 1995 and Christian Taylor of the USA have gone further.

"Seeing Pichardo jumping 18m was a motivation to jump even further because nobody came to to these championships to finish second or third," said Diaz Fortun.

Back at the hurdles, Dutch star Femke Bol nailed a second women's title in 52.49sec, also a championship record.

The 24-year-old, who has also won bronze

as part of the 4x400m mixed relay, will aim for a second gold in the women's 4x400m relay on Wednesday. "I worked hard for these championships and I arrived here in good shape," Bol said. "I believe I can be even better at the Olympics."

TAMBERI THE SHOWMAN

While the crowds have been sparse for some sessions at the cavernous Olympic Stadium, there was no such fear given the presence of Tamberi. Even Italian President Sergio Mattarella was present.

And, ever the showman, the world and Olympic champion was afforded a standing ovation as he entered onto the track.

The Italian, as is occasionally his wont, left the left half of his face unshaved. Hushing the baying crowd gathered behind the jumping arena, Tamberi sailed over his opening effort of 2.22m to huge applause.

A couple of blips at 2.29 and then 2.33m saw him gamble and skip up. It paid off as Tamberi went on to seal a third European title in a championship record of 2.37m, a mile ahead in class from the rest of the field.

"I knew I was in a superb shape and I proved it," said Tamberi.

"I was a bit shaky a 2.29m, but then the show began. I did great things: now it's time for the Olympics."

Tamberi stated pre-tournament that he wanted Italy to top the medals table and his teammates have provided.

Shortly before Tamberi soared for his win, Nadia Battocletti wrapped up a 5-10,000m golden double to send the crowd into delirium. It left Italy in number one spot in the table with 10 golds, seven silvers and three bronzes in a medal haul of 20 after five days of competition and with a sole session remaining, on Wednesday evening. — AFP



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OETC plans 41 transmission projects across Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), the operator of the country's national grid, has lined up a portfolio of as many as 41 projects for implementation across Oman over the 2024 – 2028 timeframe as part of its mandate to develop and strengthen the capabilities of the grid.

Distributed across the Main Interconnected System (MIS) and Dhofar System, the large majority of the projects are “designed to increase the transmission system capacity to meet the future growth in demand, connect new generations, connect new rural areas, and meet the Transmission Security Standard”, said Eng Saleh bin Nasser al Rumhi, CEO — OETC.

The new projects comprise, among other initiatives, grid stations to enable the evacuation of renewable electricity from an array of solar and wind power schemes currently in various stages of procurement and

development at key locations around the country.

Also envisioned are 400kV transmission networks, cross-border interconnection initiatives, and a landmark backbone transmission system as well, he added in a preface to OETC's newly launched 5-Years Annual Transmission Capability Statement.

The 41 transmission projects, said Eng Al Rumhi, have been conceived in sync with the capacity generation and distribution needs of the country as envisaged by Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (NPWP), as well as the two main distribution companies — Nama Electricity Distribution Company (NEDC) and Nama Dhofar Services (NDS).

Currently in hand for development are transmission projects connecting three solar PV schemes that are presently either under construction or procurement. Manah I and II —two side-by-side solar PV schemes of 1,000 MW capacity



New grid stations are mushrooming all over Oman as part of an expanding national transmission system.

in total — are scheduled to be connected to the grid by mid-year 2024, although the solar plants themselves will be energised by Q2 2025.

Next on OETC's agenda are transmission projects to connect the proposed 500MW Ibri III Solar IPP to the transmission grid by Q1 2026, as well as a new green-

field 500 MW capacity Solar IPP planned in Al Kamil for launch in Q2 2027.

A flurry of new Wind IPPs, slated for procurement by Nama PWP over the next several years, are also envisioned for integration into the national grid via multiple transmission projects.

Within the Main

Interconnected System (MIS), wind IPPs are planned at Jaalan Bani Bu Ali (200 MW), Mahout (400 MW) and Ras Madrasah (300 MW).

In the Dhofar System, wind farms are due to come up at Harweel (200 MW) and Sadah (70 MW). They will be connected to the grid at different intervals

during 2026 and 2027.

Other transmission projects currently in various stages of implementation are linked to OETC's landmark North-South Interconnection Project (Rabt). Phase 2 of Rabt, which kicked off earlier this year, is slated for completion by Q2 2027.

Commenting on the significance of the project, Al Rumhi added: “The interconnector (Phase 1&2) will add significant benefits for the Sultanate of Oman due to expected fuel savings from the improved dispatch coordination among different power systems, access to areas with renewable energy potential, sharing of spinning reserves (reducing operating costs), reduction of dependency on diesel generation, generation capacity harmonisation and improvement of grid resiliency.

In addition, it will contribute to the evacuation of new renewable sources, future connection of large-scale potential hydrogen project integration and enhancing MIS and Dhofar systems resiliency”

Sectorial readiness key to successful green hydrogen ecosystem



Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of Hydrom

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JUNE 12

Sectorial readiness is key to establishing a successful green hydrogen ecosystem and achieving a target of 1 million tonnes of H2 by 2030, according to Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of Hydrom.

Speaking at a workshop held here yesterday, June 12, 2024, aimed at assessing the readiness of the green hydrogen ecosystem in the country, Al Aufi underscored the significance of identifying challenges within supporting sectors. These include logistics, permits and licensing, contracting, and labour.

The minister shared that following the strides made in the green hydrogen sector, including

the signing of 8 green hydrogen concessions with an investment value of over \$40 billion, the need for 30 GW of energy has been identified to power these projects. In comparison, the country's current production capacity stands at 11 GW of conventional electricity and 600 MW of solar energy, he noted.

In order to generate the required renewable power for green hydrogen production, an estimated 40 million solar cells and 2,000-2,500 wind turbines will be required, which in turn will necessitate sourcing, transporting, and installation, he said.

Furthermore, Al Aufi shared that the ecosystem will also require an estimated workforce of over 52,000 individuals, representing a significant employment opportunity,



Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani, Managing Director of Hydrom

although environment, health and safety considerations need to be factored in.

Accordingly, an integrated and coordinated approach to the sector's ecosystem is crucial due to its economic significance and to solidify Oman's position as a potential global hydrogen producer, he stressed.

Later, in remarks to the Observer, Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani, Managing Director of Hydrom, shared that the signed projects are expected to have a cascade effect on the local economy and attract further investments.

“[The recent signed contracts] will have a cascading effect on the overall economy, presenting both challenges and opportunities across various sectors, including ports, logistics, SMEs, manufacturing, and

even in areas like training and accommodation,” he said.

“So we anticipate that these investments will stimulate further investments and opportunities in other sectors,” he added.

According to the International Energy Agency (IEA), Oman is expected to generate revenues of \$2 billion from the export and domestic use of green hydrogen starting from 2030 with the potential of this figure rising to “double-digit USD billion levels” in the long term.

Furthermore, according to the National Strategy for the Orderly Transition to Net Zero, the sector is expected to potentially contribute an additional 50% to the GDP by 2050. The outcomes of the workshop are expected to be published within the following weeks.

MoTCIT launches smart mobility service using electric scooters



The ministry aims to regulate the transportation service by electric scooters as an effective and sustainable means of transportation.

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) in cooperation with Knowledge Oasis Muscat, the technical arm of Madayn, launched the ‘Smart Mobility Service Using Electric Scooters’ experiment implemented by the Omani company SLC.

This experiment is the first project to be adopted through the ‘Sandbox’ ecosystem initiative.

Affiliated with the ministry, as the Knowledge Oasis Muscat will be the incubating environment for this experimental phase.

Through this experiment, the ministry aims to regulate the transportation service by electric scooters, and provide it as an effective and sustainable means of transportation.

It will also help encourage the use of alternative means of transportation and reduce traffic congestion and carbon emissions.

It is expected that this experiment will contribute to enhancing the transportation experience for citizens and residents in the Sultanate of Oman, and creating new horizons for innovation and development in the transportation and logistics sector, and encouraging startups to provide services for smart mobility.

The operational trial of the electric scooter service in the Knowledge Oasis Muscat is scheduled to extend for a period of six months, to allow users to try this service and evaluate its effectiveness and the extent of its impact on the transportation experience in cities.

This trial is considered an important step towards enhancing sustainability and development in the transportation sector in the Sultanate of Oman, and the beginning of more innovative initiatives in this field.

Saud Bahwan Group inaugurates new Chery Showroom in Suhar

MUSCAT: Recently Saud Bahwan Group inaugurated Chery's new showroom in Suhar, thereby in a short time, increasing Chery's presence in Oman to three. Present at the occasion was Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah al Busaidy, Wali of Suhar, and distinguished guests from the public and private sectors.

The showroom in Suhar offers automotive enthusiasts an impressive range of Chery vehicles that are equipped with the latest features and technology promoting some of the finest driving experiences. Speaking on the occasion, a representative from Saud Bahwan Group said, "Saud Bahwan Group is focused on offering some of the finest products and services that customers will love.

On its journey to establish a wider network of Chery showroom in Oman, the Group has also offered exciting employment opportunities to talented Omanis, whilst also making investments in sales and service facilities, contributing to Oman's growing economy." Sharing his thoughts on the partnership between Chery



Exterior of the Chery showroom in Suhar.

Automobile and Saud Bahwan Group he said, "Chery's passion for quality and advancements in features and technology makes owning a Chery vehicle absolutely delightful.

This when combined with Saud Bahwan Group's strengths promotes Chery ownership experiences to even greater levels."

The event showcased a range of Chery vehicles offering customers

an opportunity to get close to their favourite Chery vehicle and learn more about its high quality build and range of advanced features and technology.

Chery's car range in Oman consists of an impressive line-up of the Tiggo8 Pro Max, Tiggo4 Pro, and Arizzo6 Pro.

The Tiggo8 Pro Max and Tiggo4 are power-packed high-impact SUVs with subtle ambient lighting



Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdullah al Busaidy, Wali of Suhar, inaugurating the plaque.

and unmatched fuel efficiency.

The sedan-styled Arizzo6 pro dons a sleek front and rear profile, impressive interiors and high-end modern technology offering enhanced safety and usability features.

Redefine your lifestyle choices with Chery's commitment to providing an unparalleled driving experience for the driver and the passenger.

National Finance showcases company milestones

MUSCAT: Celebrating its milestones and acknowledging the relentless hard work of its talented team, National Finance, the leading finance company in the Sultanate of Oman, hosted a celebration for their employees under the theme 'Partnering Ambition Together'.

The momentous occasion honoured the innovation, integrity and excellence exhibited by the company's employees, recognising their invaluable contributions to the company's overarching success.

During the event, attendees were taken through National Finance's illustrious journey, highlighting the benchmarks the company has set along the way.

Tariq bin Suleiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer of National Finance, addressed the gathering, expressing his gratitude and emphasising the pivotal role the employees have played in the company's growth.



He shared his insights and vision for the future, inspiring the staff to strive towards the company's goals and a promising future.

Al Farsi said, "Over the past year, National Finance has achieved remarkable milestones, thanks to the ingenuity and relentless pursuit of excellence by OUAT National Finance, we recognise that the heartbeat of any thriving

enterprise is its workforce.

This gathering is a testament to our collective commitment and the ambitious spirit that drives the company forward.

This event provides us with an opportunity to celebrate our outstanding team, whose dedication, tireless efforts, skill and expertise are pivotal to our journey towards achieving our ambitious goals."

As a people-centric organisation, National Finance emphasises four core elements - professional growth, supportive culture, work-life balance and transparency and equality.

Recognising these as critical for sustainable growth, the company empowers its staff with ongoing training and development opportunities.

A culture of collaboration and camaraderie ensures employees feel valued and motivated to exceed their potential.

Furthermore, the company

encourages a holistic approach to well-being, promoting a healthy work-life balance that enhances job satisfaction and productivity.

With transparent policies and an inclusive environment, National Finance continually nurtures trust and fairness, fostering a workplace where employees can flourish.

The gathering featured a variety of games, raffles and interactive events like 'National Finance Has Got Talent' that fostered friendly competition and showcased the diverse talents of its employees.

A notable moment was the presentation of long-service awards to individuals who have demonstrated resolute dedication and made substantial contributions to the company's achievements over the years.

Additionally, a brief video presentation highlighted the accomplishments of all employees, celebrating the unique bond that unites them.

Ellesmere Muscat opens registrations for the new academic year

MUSCAT: Underscoring its innovative approach to education and its strong traditional values, Ellesmere Muscat is inviting applications from prospective students for the new academic year.

As a vibrant co-educational International Baccalaureate (IB) World School, with a deep foundation in Islamic values, Ellesmere Muscat offers a unique blend of gold-standard IB education grounded in universal values. It is structured to prepare students to become successful global citizens, starting from early years to Grade 12.

Established in 2012, Ellesmere Muscat boasts a distinguished history of academic excellence. In 2016, it transitioned to the Canadian curriculum, before earning distinction as the first Omani IB Continuum K-12 World School in 2021. It now offers the prestigious Primary Years Programme, Middle Years Programme and Diploma Programme.

Highlighting the school's commitment to excellence, Principal Neil Tomalin said, "At Ellesmere Muscat, we cultivate well-rounded individuals who not only excel academically but also develop strong social and emotional skills. Our curriculum ignites a passion for learning, inspiring students to reach their full potential and become 'Life: Ready' global citizens, who are prepared to make a difference."

Ellesmere Muscat goes beyond traditional education, fostering a supportive and enriching environment where students can discover their unique potentials. The school's innovative approach emphasises inquiry, critical thinking and creativity, while also nurturing strong leadership skills and a sense of global responsibility.

Students also benefit from a curriculum that combines a strong foundation in Islamic values with contemporary teaching methods. This approach prepares them for academic success and personal growth within a supportive Islamic environment; it allows them to both learn and discover their unique potential.

Registration process:

The school is inviting prospective students and families to express interest by filling out the online inquiry form, following which they will receive detailed information about the registration process.

To streamline the online process, applicants are required to gather transcripts, recommendation letters, test scores (if applicable) and a passport-sized photo. Depending on the grade level, applicants may undergo an assessment or interview to better understand their strengths and interests. Successful applicants will receive an acceptance letter with enrolment details.

Interested applicants could also experience the vibrant learning environment by scheduling a personalised tour (via www.ellesmeremuscat.com/tour or by calling 2455 4711 / 91112605) or attending an open house event.



Sohar International signs pact as exclusive banking partner for Socca World Cup 2024

MUSCAT: Sohar International, Oman's Best Bank has signed an agreement to become the exclusive banking partner in the golden category for the Socca World Cup 2024.

The upcoming event, organised by Sport Makers, is scheduled to take place from November 29 to December 7, 2024, at Madinat Al Irfan, and marks the pinnacle of the International Socca Federation's annual calendar for Six-a-Side Football.

This landmark collaboration underscores Sohar International's strategic focus on positioning Oman as a premier destination for global sports tourism, while also empowering Omani youth

by offering them invaluable exposure and experience through participation in international events.

Commenting on the sponsorship, Ahmed al Musalmi, Chief Executive Officer, Sohar International said, "As the exclusive banking partner for the Socca World Cup 2024, Sohar International aims to position Oman as a premier destination for global sports tourism.

The event presents an opportunity for the Sultanate of Oman to showcase its exceptional organisational capabilities in hosting large-scale international events, spotlighting its world-class locations, facilities and renowned



Omani hospitality. Our objective is to play a complimentary role in further enhancing Oman's

positioning as a dynamic centre for sports and entertainment, drawing sports enthusiasts and

tourists from around the world."

Al Musalmi added, "Additionally, the influx of tourists

and participants will stimulate the local economy, supporting local businesses and creating job opportunities, thus driving significant economic growth.

As a sport that is as popular as conventional football, the event also offers young Omanis the chance to participate in and learn from an international event, enhancing their skills and providing them with invaluable experience.

Furthermore, this event will create a platform for local talent to interact and engage with the international sports community on a deeper level, inspiring a new generation of players to achieve their full potential."



Port of Salalah's \$300m expansion project to boost container handling

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 12

With the arrival of the final four of ten supersized ship-to-shore cranes this week, the Port of Salalah's \$300 million expansion plan remains on track. By the end of the year, the Port will have increased its annual container handling capacity from 5 million to 6 million TEU, the port said in a press statement.

Despite the extensive upgrade works that commenced last year, the company managed to maintain its outstanding port stay record for shipping lines. In the 2023 Container Port Performance Index (CPPI) published this month by the World Bank and S&P Global Market Intelligence, Port of Salalah retained its position as the second most efficient container port in the world for the third consecutive year.

"We expect these cranes to help us reduce port stay even further by giving us faster access to top tiers on the ship," says Scott Selman, COO — Port of Salalah.

"They will also increase our capacity to bring in the world's largest ships built to date —



Port of Salalah took delivery of four new STS cranes earlier this week.

fulfilling a need for our customers and giving us an opportunity to handle more volume."

The first four new ship-to-shore (STS) cranes that arrived in February this year are already being tested for operational readiness and on track to contribute to terminal productivity from August this year.

Two additional cranes are currently being commissioned.

Four smaller cranes have been decommissioned, increasing the number of cranes at the Port from 21 to 27 by the end of the year.

The new fully electric cranes are among the largest equipment of their kind in the world and set

new standards in terms of size and efficiency.

They can handle vessels 26 containers deep, have a lifting height of 58 metres above the rail and 77 metres total hoist height (including below rail).

A max lifting capacity of 105 tonnes under means they are capable of serving the largest Ultra Large Container Vessels currently in operation.

Additional equipment to support the expansion includes 12 hybrid rubber-tyred gantry cranes, two reach stackers, six empty handlers, and 30 terminal trucks and trailers.

Considerable infrastructure work has been carried out to

upgrade the Port's existing electricity grid, including a new high-capacity power substation and high-voltage feeder lines, and reinforcing the Port's original electrical infrastructure built in 1998.

This will future proof the terminal for the additional demand due to the electrification of equipment.

With abundant renewable energy sources, the Sultanate of Oman is making rapid strides with ambitious plans towards hydrogen and renewable electricity in the near future.

The Port of Salalah is already making the significant investments required to be net-zero by 2040, in line with APM Terminals industry-leading net-zero ambition.

Further works include expansion of the yard and a new access road. Upgrades to four existing berths to support the new cranes are already complete, with two berths remaining and in progress.

The additional capacity will enable the terminal to handle the demands of the Gemini Cooperation hub scheduled for commencement from Q1 2025.



Oxy Oman's ICV strategy demonstrates its efforts to contribute to the local economy in line with Oman Vision 2040 strategy.

Oxy Oman signs contracts boosting its ICV initiatives

MUSCAT: As part of its commitment to In-Country Value (ICV), Oxy Oman signed new contracts with PCM Muscat LCC for the supply of PCP (Progressive Cavity Pump) equipment and support services and Al Khazain Oilfield Services for fuel generator services. The signing ceremony was held at Oxy Oman's headquarters in Muscat.

Steven Lauver, President and General Manager of Oxy Oman, along with Felix Meza, Oman Country Manager of PCM Muscat LCC and Gharib bin Saad al Junaibi, Chairman of Al Khazain Oilfield Services were signatories for their respective organisations. Abdulkarim al Ghassani, Vice-President for Supply Chain at Oxy Oman, and other senior executives were present at the ceremony.

Oxy Oman signed with PCM Muscat LCC for the supply of PCP equipment and support services for its operations at Block 53 in south-central Oman. As part of an ICV initiative to support local manufacturing, this contract enables the establishment of a facility in Nizwa by PCM Muscat to assemble, test, and repair PCP systems.

The facility, with a capacity to assemble 2500 PCPs per year, serves as a distribution centre for the pump systems in the region, further promoting local manufacturing capabilities.

Oxy Oman's contract with Al Khazain Oilfield Services for the provision of temporary power generator services will provide fuel generator sets in support of various projects within Mukhaizna Field.

The contract underscores Oxy Oman's commitment to supporting local businesses and ensuring operational efficiency.

"These contracts exemplify Oxy Oman's dedication to fostering local partnerships and advancing economic growth in Oman. Through strategic collaborations with PCM Muscat LCC and Al Khazain Oilfield Services, we aim to strengthen local manufacturing capabilities and ensure operational excellence," said Lauver.

Oxy Oman's ICV strategy demonstrates its efforts to contribute to the local economy in line with the Omani government's Vision 2040 strategy. Oxy Oman endeavours to support economic development in the country under the umbrella of strategic partnerships and continuous collaboration with key stakeholders.

Asyad Drydock showcases integrated capabilities at Posidonia

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 12

Asyad Drydock, a member of the Asyad Group, recently participated at the Posidonia International Shipping Exhibition, one of the world's largest shipping events, which attracts thousands of exhibitors and visitors from near and far to the Greek capital city of Athens.

During the 5-day event, Asyad Drydock showcased its world-class facilities and competitive solutions, as well as the company's innovative one-stop approach, which comprises of ship building, maintenance, and conversion facilities for engineering, electrical, propulsion, fitting, blasting, and painting services, as well as procurement, testing, trials, and class surveys for all types of vessels.

"Our participation is part and parcel of Asyad's strategy to reinforce the group's position as a leading global integrated solutions provider,



Asyad Drydock team at the Posidonia expo.

including drydock and maritime services and to expand our presence in international markets by attracting new customers and potential investors," said Dr Ibrahim bin Bakhit al Nadhairy, CEO of Asyad Shipping & Drydock.

"It also presents us with a platform to be side by side with the biggest players in the industry, learn from the best of the best, exchange

knowledge and share our own experiences to further support the advancement of the sector."

Al Nadhairy went on to say that the integration of drydock services in Duqm is a key competitive advantage that reduces deviation time and that all eyes are now focused on the European markets, particularly Greece which represents 30 per cent of Asyad Drydock's customer base.

Dr Abdulsalam al Rabaani, Chief Commercial Officer of Asyad Drydock added, "We are excited to forge new strategic partnerships and alliances at Posidonia as we aim to raise market share of the commercial operations of the drydock in Duqm by attracting more customers from Europe who can benefit from our state-of-the-art maintenance and conversion services for vessels of all types and sizes.

We are proud that we were able to secure 230 contracts from more than 40 countries in 2023, a 4 per cent growth compared to the previous year, and are looking forward to achieving greater results in the years to come."

The St Regis Al Mouj Resort Muscat opens in Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 12

Alfardan Group and St Regis Hotels & Resorts have announced the highly anticipated opening of The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, marking the debut of the brand in Oman. Blending local heritage, avant-garde design and the timeless glamour of the St Regis brand, the resort introduces the signature hallmarks to the region's luminaries.

As part of the renowned Alfardan Group, The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort stands as a testament to the group's dedication to setting new standards in the luxury hospitality industry.

"The opening of The St Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort perfectly showcases our dedication to luxury and outstanding hospitality," said Omar Hussain Alfardan, President and CEO of Alfardan Group. "This resort exemplifies our commitment to providing top-tier experiences and solidifying Oman's position as a premier destination



The exquisite resort is a gateway to the captivating cultural wonders of Oman.

for discerning travellers and residents. It is a destination that complements ancient heritage with contemporary modernity, offering an exceptional experience that reflects the genuine Omani hospitality."

"The debut of the St Regis brand in Oman marks a significant milestone as we continue to grow our portfolio of the best

addresses around the world," said Jenni Benzaquen, SVP The Ritz-Carlton, St Regis and Bulgari Hotels & Resorts.

"Oman is known for its vibrant cultural heritage, pristine landscapes and warm hospitality.

We look forward to inviting guests to experience this thriving leisure destination, coupled with the anticipatory service and

cherished rituals for which the St Regis brand is renown."

Located in the heart of Al Mouj, one of Oman's most exclusive neighbourhoods known for its luxurious beachfront living, the exquisite resort is a gateway to the captivating cultural wonders of Oman including the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, the Al Hajar Mountains, the natural



The resort is positioned on the tranquil shores of the Al Mouj waterfront.

pools of Wadi Shab, and the crystal water of Daymaniyat Islands.

The resort is positioned on the tranquil shores of the Al Mouj waterfront with direct access to a secluded white sand beach and views across the lush, manicured greens of the adjacent, award-winning golf course.

The resort's curved superyacht-style architecture, designed by

Ibrahim Jaidah Architects and Engineers, draws inspiration from the surrounding environment and features a unique wave design while the interior design is curated by Smallwood.

A soothing palette of oceanic tones imbued with rich tan and local natural stone set the tone for the design, a nod to Oman's breathtaking landscape.

Imperatives of fostering an enabling business environment in Oman



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The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for CBO and OCCI

The private sector is a crucial partner in the national economy and a valuable tool for promoting sustainable development. As such, governments provide many facilities and capabilities to the sector and work to adopt policies that align with its aspirations. It is the primary sector for employing national workers. Governments continue to support and reform companies, entrepreneurs and initiative owners, enabling them to obtain services, loans, support, incentives and exemptions that enhance the sector’s activities and ensure their sustainability in commercial, industrial and other businesses.

Today, the private sector in the Sultanate of Oman needs more stimulation, as companies and commercial institutions are facing difficulties due to the lack of facilities and support. People perceive that matters have become more complex in government institutions, exacerbated by bureaucratic delays in daily work and the high cost of services and fees. These issues negatively impact the real estate sector and the daily sales of commercial institutions. Acknowledging the existence of these problems is crucial to finding necessary solutions so that the national economy can maintain its vitality as it did in previous decades. We understand that the state is focused on repaying public debt, which has led to a decline in Oman’s credit rating in recent years. This is a sound policy because it will result in a higher credit rating and enable institutions to obtain multiple financial facilities in the future. The government’s commitment to social protection disbursements for elderly citizens, children and various societal groups helps recipients cope with inflation and rising prices. These payments also encourage citizens to save, moving away from reliance on personal loans. While these measures help citizens manage their monthly expenses, they do not address the problems facing commercial institutions in the country, which are experiencing a business decline. These institutions need ongoing support, incentives, and prompt payment for their work with public government institutions to continue their operations and provide annual job opportunities for citizens. Any decline in commercial activity leads to layoffs of national and expatriate workers, potential bankruptcies and defaults, further compounding their financial obligations and debt. Recently, several announcements have highlighted the commercial bankruptcies of institutions due to high debt, business decline, swelling inventories, decreased demand for services and increased indebtedness. The current period requires better coordination and alignment between government institutions and the private sector to address these issues, promote business and develop private sector institutions effectively. This need was emphasised by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in his first speech, where he stressed the importance of government institutions providing necessary plans and support for the private sector. Such measures will enable the private sector to thrive, attract more citizens to work in available jobs, increase business activity, realise more projects and activate partnerships between the public and private sectors.

Oman unveils ambitious carbon capture plans



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The Sultanate of Oman recently unveiled an ambitious carbon capture strategy meant to dramatically expand its renewable energy sector — a big step toward sustainability. This programme is a vital part of the Oman Vision 2040, which places a strong emphasis on energy diversification and sustainable development. As worries about climate change spread around the world, Oman is leading the way in green technology and innovation and serving as a formidable role model for other countries. The country is dedicated to reaching Net-Zero Emissions by 2050, in line with worldwide efforts to combat climate change and limit global warming to 1.5°C relative to pre-industrial levels, as per the goals of the Paris Agreement, under the visionary leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The many technological avenues that can be used to reduce carbon dioxide (CO2) emissions must be understood as the world community steps up its efforts to address climate change. While clean energy is generated by renewable energy sources like solar and wind power, carbon capture and storage (CCS) and carbon capture, utilisation, and storage (CCUS) technologies provide distinct perspectives and complementary approach. In contrast to renewable energy sources, which take the place of fossil fuels, CCS and CCUS technologies are mostly associated with emission-producing industries and the power sector. Their primary aim is to capture CO2 emissions from the source and store them underground or use them for industrial purposes, which will provide a substantial contribution to the achievement of Net-Zero emissions. It is crucial to comprehend the distinct roles and uses of CCS and CCUS to recognise their significance within our broader plan to mitigate climate change. Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) plays a pivotal role in reducing greenhouse gas

emissions. The main idea is to CO2 emissions that come from power plants and industrial activities. After being caught, the CO2 is carefully moved and kept underground to avoid being released into the atmosphere. Particularly relevant industries for CCS include those with high emissions, such as steel, cement and fossil fuel-based power generation. Building on this foundation, CCUS takes this concept a step further. Above and beyond simple storage, CCUS explores innovative ways to utilise carbon. Consider turning CO2 into valuable products like chemicals, plastics or even fuels. By seamlessly integrating storage with utilisation, CCUS aims not only for Net-Zero emissions but also economic opportunities. In contrast to renewable energy solutions, which are mostly concerned with fossil fuel replacement, CCS and CCUS deal directly with emissions from already-existing infrastructure. By integrating these technologies, industries and power plants may significantly reduce their carbon footprint. Globally, CCS and CCUS technologies are vital for reaching Net-Zero emissions targets, as they address emissions from sectors that are difficult to decarbonise through renewable energy alone. The International Energy Agency (IEA) estimates that CCS might account for 15 per cent of the total CO2 emission reduction required by 2070 to meet global climate targets. Furthermore, according to the Global CCS Institute, there will be 30 commercial CCS facilities operating globally by 2023, absorbing about 40 million tonnes of CO2 yearly. With projects like the Petra Nova facility in Texas, which can capture 1.4 million tonnes of CO2 annually, the United States is leading the world in the adoption of CCS. Comparably, since it began operations in 1996, Norway’s Sleipner project has effectively stored nearly 20 million tonnes of CO2 in underground geological formations beneath the North Sea. Specifically in Oman, the nation’s environmental strategy



Carbon capture and storage (CCS) and carbon capture, utilisation and storage (CCUS) technologies provide distinct perspectives and complementary approach. Image for illustration only.

may undergo a radical change because of the implementation of CCS and CCUS technology. A sizeable amount of Oman’s annual CO2 emissions, or about 55 million tonnes, are attributable to the country’s industrial sector. This carbon footprint can be considerably decreased by putting CCS and CCUS into practice. For instance, Oman may possibly reduce emissions in the steel and cement industries by up to 90 per cent if it implements CCS, which would equate to a reduction of about 10 million tonnes of CO2 annually. Additionally, Oman can provide new economic opportunities and promote innovation and economic diversification by converting captured CO2 into valuable products. To facilitate CCUS technology, Oman is actively forming its policies, with a strong emphasis on cooperation, environmental protection and the development of economic value. Oman has implemented initiatives and regulatory measures, such as the National Climate Change Strategy, which contains provisions for developing and deploying these technologies, to promote their implementation. Through partnerships with academic institutions and foreign partners, the government is collaborating to stimulate innovation through research and development investments. Pilot projects are being carried out in a number of industries, including the oil fields for enhanced oil recovery activities, to evaluate the viability of CCS and CCUS. In addition, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals is actively working with early CCUS adopters to develop a legal framework that fosters the expansion of the CCUS sector. Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and Oman Shell’s Blue Horizons initiative is a prime example of Oman’s dedication to investigating CCUS solutions. A Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) was also recently signed by the Ministry with important parties, such as Oxy, PDO, Oman Shell, OQGN and Oman Shell, establishing a ‘House of Expertise’ to provide a strategic and regulatory framework for initiatives related to CCUS and Blue Hydrogen. Public-private partnerships make use of the capital and experience of the private sector, while tax breaks, grants and other financial incentives serve as additional motivators for adoption. Oman gains access to funding possibilities and technical skills through its active engagement in international collaborations, which also improves its capabilities. The National Strategy for an Orderly Transition to Net-Zero emphasises the critical role that CCUS investments play in helping Oman meet its aggressive Net-Zero targets by calling for a 15-per cent carbon abatement contribution from CCUS by 2050. Realising the full potential of CCS and CCUS technologies in Oman requires navigating technological and economic obstacles. In order to put these solutions into practice, a variety of obstacles must be overcome, from technological limitations to issues with economic viability. Overcoming these challenges will enable Oman to fully utilise the revolutionary potential of CCS and CCUS, influencing the country’s sustainable future in addition to reducing carbon emissions. Furthermore, to promote innovation in CCS and CCUS technologies, industry, academia and research institutions must work together. The economic aspects of ensuring cost feasibility, infrastructure development and public perception present challenges for CCS and CCUS in Oman. On the other hand, opportunities for these technologies’ advancement and long-term sustainability include industrial integration, energy transition and research collaboration.

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B. COM. 35 years of experience in accounts, sales coordinator, admin, HR, personal assistant, document controller with Oman D/L, looking for a job. Contact: 92558734

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ANIMALS

A giant panda cub eats bamboo shoot at Ya'an Bifengxia, Sichuan province, China. — REUTERS



MUSIC

A Palestinian medical student, Rahaf Nasser, plays music surrounded by rubble, amid Gaza war. — REUTERS



FUN

Boys on motorcycles pass people buying cakes ahead of Eid Al Adha near a livestock market in Sibreh, Aceh province. — AFP



FASHION

Welsh singer Jamie Miller attends the world premiere of 'Inside Out 2' in Los Angeles, California. — AFP



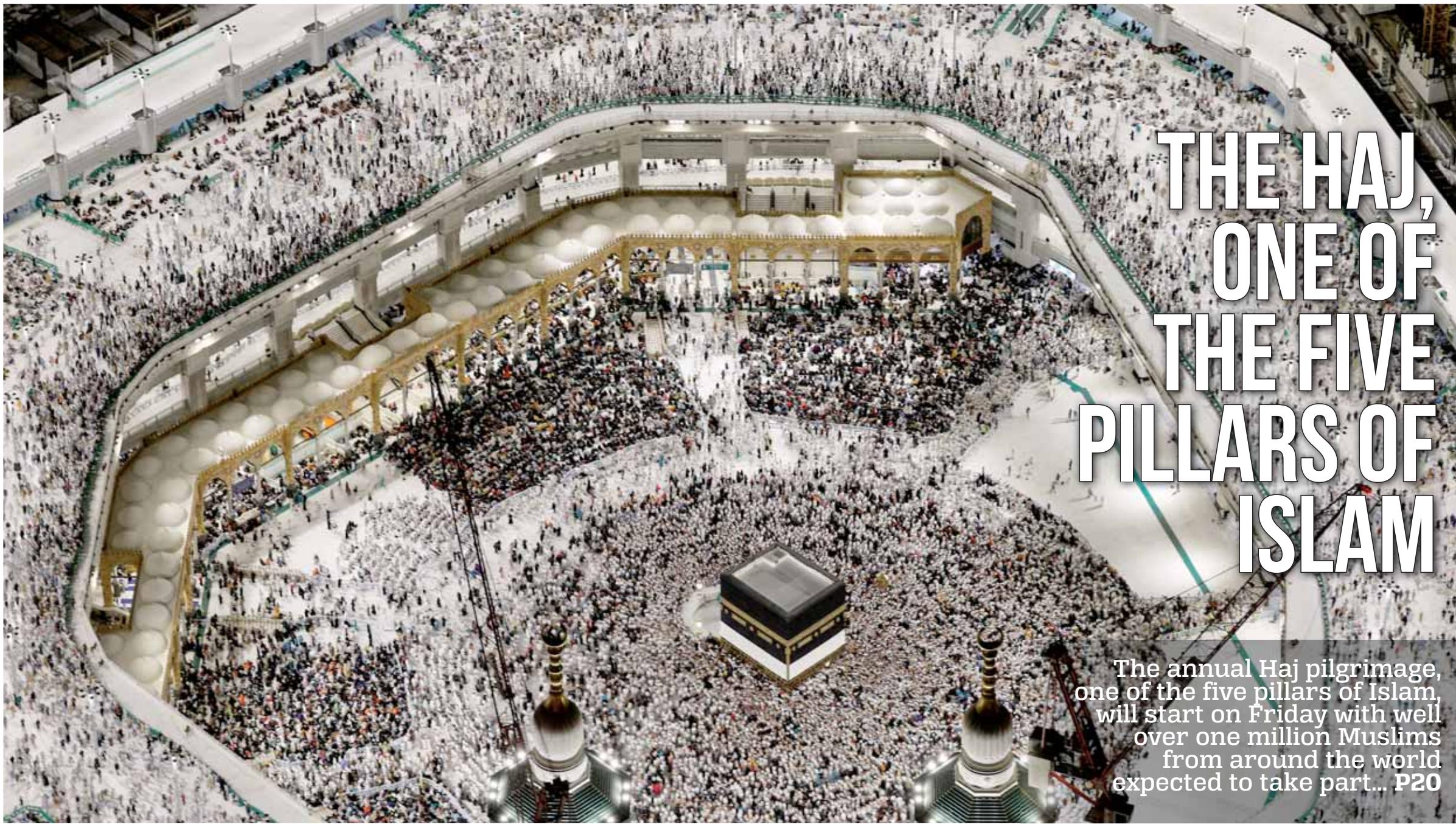
TRAVEL

A man takes pictures in front of Hiroshima Prefectural Industrial Promotion Hall, commonly known as the atomic bomb dome in Hiroshima. — AFP

art & life

THURSDAY | JUNE 13, 2024 | DHUL HIJJAH 6, 1445 AH

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THE HAJ, ONE OF THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

The annual Haj pilgrimage, one of the five pillars of Islam, will start on Friday with well over one million Muslims from around the world expected to take part... P20

MUSIC

K-POP STARS SEVENTEEN TO BECOME UNESCO AMBASSADORS

K-pop megastars Seventeen will become UNESCO "goodwill ambassadors" from June 26, the United Nations body announced on Tuesday. "Seventeen and UNESCO share the same commitment to empowering young people to drive change and address the challenges of our century," said Audrey

Azoulay, Director-General of the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation, in a statement. "They also inspire and support young people around the world with their music and positive energy," she added. Seventeen, the 13-strong South Korean band found-

ed in 2015, were second only to Taylor Swift for global revenue last year, according to the International Federation of the Phonographic Industry (IFPI). They also topped the IFPI album charts in 2023 with "FML" and have racked up billions of streams online. They will officially take on their UNESCO functions — which involve promoting youth-focused projects around the world — in a ceremony at its Paris headquarters on June 26. The group has already been working with the organisation less formally and performed at the UNESCO Paris office in November. Other current ambassadors include Brazilian footballer Vinicius, actors Rossi de Palma and Forest Whitaker, and Italian-Argentinian chef Mauro Colagreco. — AFP





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MOBY: MY JOB NOW IS ANIMAL RIGHTS NOT MUSIC

MOBY IS TOURING Europe for the first time in over a decade and donating all the proceeds from his concerts to animal rights, which he says has become his real job.

There is no doubting the electro star's commitment — the words "ANIMAL" and "RIGHTS" are tattooed in huge letters up his arms and "Vegan for Life" on the side of his neck. "I've been vegan for 37 years," he told AFP. "Working on behalf of animal rights is my life's purpose."

"I don't think of music as my job any more. music has become a joyful, calm refuge."

Moby, real name Richard Melville Hall, made an era-defining record 25 years ago in "Play" and has sold more than 20 million records worldwide.

Now 58, he is returning to Europe for seven dates, with the money divided between eight or nine animal rights and climate organisations. The names are due to be announced in the coming weeks.

Moby says he is dedicated to playing the hits — mostly from "Play" and "18".

"It's what the audience is paying to hear. When I go see my favourite bands, it's very sad when they don't play the songs I know and love. It seems selfish to me," he said.

He takes issue with Radiohead, who famously refuse to play their biggest hit, "Creep".

"That's a great song. People like it. If you can make someone happy, why not play it?"

That attitude comes from clear memories of his scrappy start in punk bands around New York.

"I remember one show in a Chinese restaurant and there were four people in the band and two people in the audience... I never expected to have music that people knew or liked."

- not to trust humans-

"I learned from an early age not to trust humans, whereas animals were very predictable," he said.

There was a time when he would get even more directly involved, visiting animals as they were being taken to the slaughterhouse — "bearing witness", offering moments of kindness before their deaths.

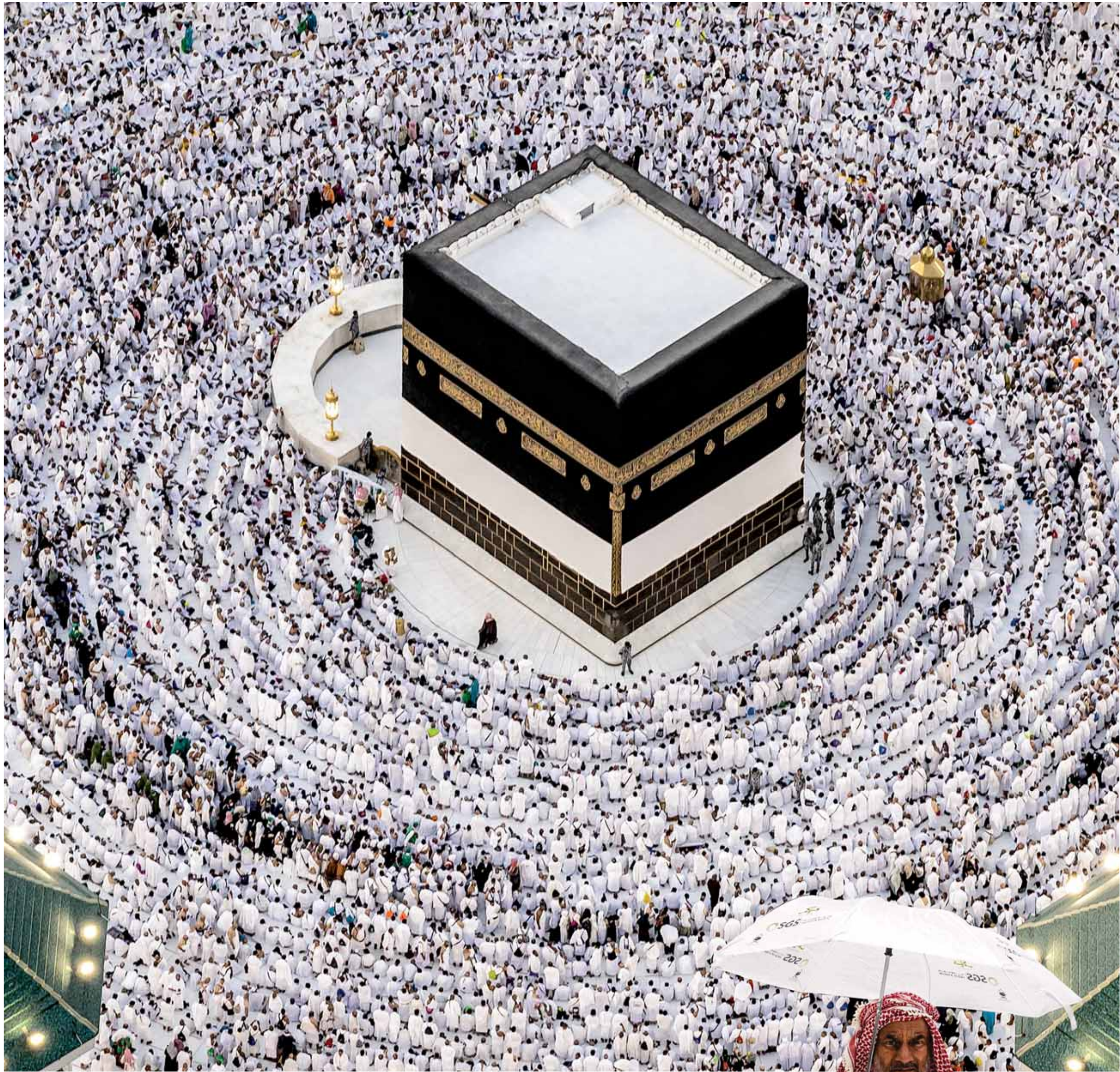
He says the meat companies got round them by shifting their animal deliveries to the middle of the night.

"Very few people are willing to get up at 2:30 am to drive across town and be one of three people standing in the freezing cold. They won that round."

Now he tries to approach his activism "in a very strategic way".

"It involves working in politics, philanthropy, venture capital for young vegan companies, media," he said.

"I try to identify all the things that are moving the needle away from the status quo and figure out how I can help them."



THE HAJ, ONE OF THE FIVE PILLARS OF ISLAM

The annual Haj pilgrimage, one of the five pillars of Islam, will start on Friday with well over one million Muslims from around the world expected to take part. Last year, the Haj drew more than 1.8 million pilgrims, according to official figures, after authorities lifted pandemic-era restrictions and scrapped age limits. All Muslims are expected to complete the Haj to Mecca — from which non-Muslims are strictly banned — at least once in their lives if they have the means to do so. Believers converge on the holy city for several days of rituals in which they retrace the (PBUH) Prophet Muhammad's (PBUH) last pilgrimage. Here is a rundown of the ceremonies at what is usually one of the largest religious gatherings in the world:

WHITE GARMENTS

Pilgrims must first enter a state of purity, called Ihram, which requires special dress and behaviour. Men wear a seamless shroud-like white garment that emphasises unity among believers regardless of their social status or nationality. Women must wear loose dresses, also white, exposing only their faces and hands. Pilgrims are not allowed to argue, bicker and are prohibited from wearing perfume, cutting their nails, or trimming their hair or beards.

RITUALS BEGIN

The first ritual requires walking seven times around the Kaaba, the large black cubic structure at the centre of Mecca's Grand Mosque. Made from granite and draped in a heavily-embroidered cloth featuring verses of the Quran, the Kaaba stands nearly 15 metres (50 feet) tall. Muslims, no matter where they are

in the world, turn towards the Kaaba to pray. The structure is believed to have been first erected by Adam, the first man, and then rebuilt successively, including by Abraham around 4,000 years ago. Pilgrims next walk seven times between the two hills of Safa and Marwa. They then move on to Mina, around five kilometres (three miles) away, ahead of the main rite of the pilgrimage at Mount Arafat. The climax of the Haj is the gathering on Mount Arafat, about 10 kilometres (six miles) from Mina, where it is believed the Prophet delivered his final sermon. Pilgrims assemble on the 70-metre (230-foot) high hill and its surrounding plain for hours of prayers and Quran recitals, staying there until the evening. After sunset, they head to Muzdalifah, halfway between Arafat

and Mina, where they each gather dozens of pebbles so they can perform the symbolic "stoning of the devil". 'STONING OF THE DEVIL' The last major ritual of the Haj is back at Mina, where pilgrims throw seven stones at each of three concrete walls representing Satan. The ritual is an emulation of Abraham's stoning of the devil at the three spots where it is said Satan tried to dissuade him from obeying Allah's order to sacrifice his son, Ishmael. After the first stoning, the Eid Al Adha feast of sacrifice begins. Sheep are slaughtered, in reference to the lamb that Allah provided for sacrifice instead of Ishmael, in a ceremony that is held at the same time around the world. — AFP

