

P12

MEDVEDEV
WINS
FOURTH TITLE
OF YEAR



P13

NEW MARITIME
LAW TO SUPPORT
SHIPBUILDING,
MARINE TOURISM



P20

AIN THOWARAH:
A PLACE FOR
ADVENTURE AND
RELAXATION



MUSCAT

**HM GREETINGS TO
SENEGAL PRESIDENT**

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Macky Sall of the Republic of Senegal, on the occasion of his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and his best wishes of good health and happiness to President Sall and the people of Senegal further growth and prosperity. — **ONA**

**CRUDE PRICE AT
\$84.11 A BARREL**

Oman oil price for June delivery on Monday reached \$84.11, comprising a rise by \$6.52. The average price of Oman oil for April delivery has stabilised at \$82.23 per barrel, thus \$1.31 per barrel higher than March delivery. Brent crude futures looked set for its biggest daily percentage gain in around a year, jumping 5.77 per cent to \$84.52 a barrel on news Opec+ would aim to cut output by around 1.16 million barrels per day. US crude climbed 6.22 per cent to \$80.38. **SEE ALSO P13**



OMAN OBSERVER
FIRST DEDICATED ENGLISH
NEWS APP IN OMAN
DOWNLOAD TODAY

INSIDE



FINLAND TO JOIN
NATO ON TUESDAY

P7

Ministry of Transport to focus on ongoing projects

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

The Majlis Ash'shura will host Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, who will deliver his ministry's statement before the council during a public session at its

twelfth regular session, on Thursday, based on Article (55) of the Council of Oman Law.

This was stated by Shaikh Ahmed bin Mohammed al Nadabi, Secretary General of the Majlis, who indicated that the statement of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology includes three main axes, the

policies, plans and programmes of the ministry in the field of transport and infrastructure during the Tenth Five-Year Plan and its activation in line with the axes of Oman Vision 2040.

NATIONAL STRATEGIES
This includes the current situation for the implementation of national

strategies that fall within the competence of the ministry in the field of transport, and the results achieved during the specified period of the plan, in addition to estimating the future needs in the transport sector and the increasing demands on this sector, and the emerging mechanisms that the ministry follows in

dealing with them. It will also deal with the applied programmes and mechanisms followed by the ministry to create a framework in the field of existing infrastructure projects, and the performance indicators used to raise the efficiency of spending on them and accomplish them at the required level.

Media's role in effective communication vital

MUSCAT: Represented by the Government Communication Centre, the Ministry of Information on Monday organised its 19th meeting titled 'Government Media Agenda — the Planning and the Outcome.'

Held in the presence of Dr Abdullah bin Nasser al Harrasi, Minister of Information, and representatives of communication and media departments, the gathering discussed the extent to which the government media agenda improves government communication.

During the meeting, Dr Abdullah stressed the importance of propagating information through accounts, platforms and other media, the impact of this on the recipient and the need to highlight the role and efforts of government institutions.

The gathering included a visual presentation on a draft agenda launched in 2017 by the Government Communication Centre in conjunction with government institutions.

The discussions covered the mechanism of espousing the draft agenda project, its significance and the gains that government institutions and the Government



There is importance
of propagating
information through
accounts, platforms
and other media

**DR ABDULLAH
AL HARRASI**
Minister of Information

Communication Centre can achieve through commitment to the government media agenda.

The project of the draft agenda lists media activities and events that are organised or hosted by government institutions in Oman.

The main objective is to help

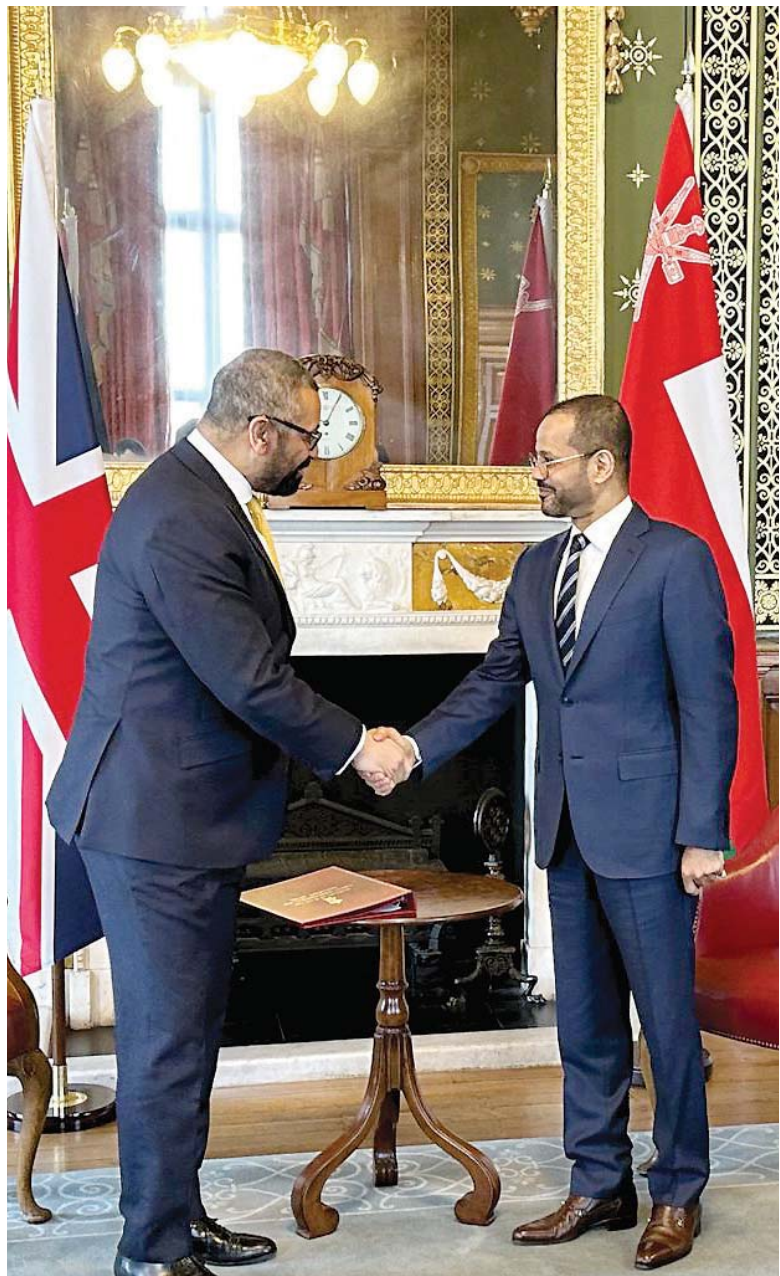
achieve appropriate communication planning through coordination with other institutions, so that media plans and joint projects and important activities could be promoted through different means of media, including digital media.

This is in addition to ensuring that key events do not coincide, to bring about an organised government action and to realise high-quality media appearance.

The meeting envisaged the dissemination of the government agenda through government communication platforms and social media, so that members of the public could get informed about government activities and events that take place during each month.

This agenda will constitute a reference for the media to explore and publish related details. This approach will facilitate the archiving and documentation of the most prominent government activities. The meeting also reviewed the main projects and events that the Government Communication Centre dealt with in cooperation with government institutions from November 2022 to March 2023. — **ONA**

OMAN, UK EXPLORE PARTNERSHIPS



Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, met James Cleverly, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of United Kingdom (UK) at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office in London on Monday. The meeting reviewed the existing relations of friendship and cooperation between the two countries. The meeting also explored opportunities for new partnership and investment in renewable energy projects, technical education and innovation. **DETAILS ON P3**

ROSE HARVEST SEASON BEGINS



Rose harvest season has kicked off in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah. The green terraces at an altitude of more than 3,000 metres are covered with more than 5,000 rose plants on an area of 7 to 10 acres. The amount of rose water produced from those trees is estimated at 28,000 litres. **DETAILS ON P3**

Arctic scientists race to preserve 'ice memory'

PARIS: Arctic scientists are set to start drilling to save samples of ancient ice for analysis before the frozen layers melt away due to climate change, mission organisers said on Monday.

Italian, French and Norwegian researchers have set up camp in Norway's Svalbard archipelago in what they called a race against time to preserve crucial ice records for analysing past environmental conditions. They will extract ice in a series of tubes from as far as 125 metres below the surface, containing frozen geochemical traces dating back three centuries.

Analysis of chemicals in deep

"ice cores" provides scientists with valuable data about past environmental conditions.

But experts warn that water from melting ice is leaking down and altering the geochemical records preserved in ancient ice beneath.

Ice scientists "are seeing their primary material disappear forever from the surface of the planet", Jerome Chapellaz, president of the Ice Memory foundation running the operation, said.

"It is our responsibility as glaciologists of this generation to make sure a bit of it is preserved."

Human-caused carbon emissions have warmed the planet



by 1.1 degrees Celsius since the 19th century. Studies indicate that the Arctic is warming between two and four times faster than the global average. One set of ice tubes will be used for immediate analysis while a second set will be sent to Antarctica for storage in an "ice memory sanctuary" under the snow, where the samples will be preserved for future generations of scientists.

The eight specialists on the mission have set up camp at an altitude of 1,100 metres on the crevasse-ridden Holtedahlfonna ice field and plan to start drilling on Tuesday, Ice Memory said. — **AFP**



No abrupt disconnection of water supply

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

All utility service providers in the Sultanate of Oman have been told not to indulge in the abrupt disconnection of the water supply at all times, especially during Ramadhan.

The chairman of the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) issued a decision on 8/2023 on Sunday with regard to the water supply, treated water, and wastewater collection and transportation services.

As per the decision, the service provider is obligated to prepare specific forms for each type of common complaint and to make them available to subscribers. Subscribers may file a complaint against the service provider in the event of a dispute, malfunction, damage, or dissatisfaction, and the service provider must register any complaint it receives.

The service provider may not terminate or close the subject of the complaint except after submitting a written response to the



complainant by any means. In the event of an error in reading the metre or calculating the bills, the service provider is obligated to correct the error and recalculate the bills correctly.

The decision specified the details of the service cut-off procedures, which include submitting a notice to cut off the service at least 10 days before the date of the plan, and the cut-off takes place according to five cases, including the subscriber's failure to pay financial dues, late financial dues, or using the service for a purpose other than that indicated in the connection request.

The decision also included taking into account not to cut off the service on the last day before the weekend and official holidays, that the service be cut off between 7 am and 5 pm, and it is not permissible to cut off the service for the subscriber from the residential category during the month of Ramadhan.

The decision also specified cases of returning the service to the subscriber from the residential category for the metre that has the smart valve feature within three hours, and 6 hours for subscribers who do not have the smart valve feature in the metre, in the case of paying a quarter or half of the amount and paying it in instalments over specific periods. in resolution.

The decision stipulates that it is not permitted to issue an invoice with an estimated reading for more than two consecutive months. Estimated invoices can be issued if there is an obstacle that prevents the service provider from taking the actual reading.

Oil spill in Dahariz

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The Environmental Emergency Center received a report of an incident of oil spill in the Dahariz area in Wilayat Salalah in the Governorate of Dhofar. Specialists have taken necessary measures to handle the situation in cooperation with the Dhofar Municipality and the Royal Oman Police.

“Work is underway to complete the clean the affected beaches from the effects of pollution,” said the statement from the Environment Authority of Oman.

The area is highly significant as Port Salalah is the biggest port in the Sultanate of Oman and according to the statistics nine vessels have arrived within the past 24 hours and 19 ships are expected to arrive in the next 30 days.

The port is located on the crossroads of trade between Asia and Europe.

The Dahariz beach is located on the Eastern part of Salalah. It's lagoon (Khor) has become a popular place for bird watching and it is just a few metres away from the beach.

OQ finances project to plant 250,000 wild trees

MUSCAT: OQ, the global integrated energy group, on Monday signed an agreement with the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) to plant 250,000 seedlings of wild trees.

This agreement aims to enhance efforts to expand the green area by planting 10 million wild trees as part of OQ's Green Initiative. The Agricultural Development Fund will oversee and follow up on the implementation of this agreement.

Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, signed on behalf on the ministry, while Talal bin Hamid al Aufi, OQ Group CEO, signed on behalf of OQ.

Dr Habsi expressed his appreciation for OQ's efforts to enhance the pursuits of governmental entities in expanding the green area in the Sultanate of Oman through its green initiative. He said that the initiative aims to promote public awareness about the importance of vegetation and



effectively contribute to supporting these efforts to achieve their desired objectives.

He highlighted the effective cooperation between the ministry and OQ in many initiatives including the projects of propagating economic types and varieties of fruits and combating pesticides using drones.

This agreement will contribute to planting a quarter of a million wild seedlings as part of the project to plant ten million trees in Oman.

The project aims to strike a balance between environmental components and reduce carbon emissions. The concerted efforts of the government and the private sector would result in achieving this objective.

OQ seeks to enhance efforts to expand the green area through the social investment programme, in which the environment is the main pillar.

The agreement embodies the social investment pillar and seeks to implement OQ's green initiative launched by the Group in an attempt to contribute to the environmental sustainability efforts by supporting many qualitative agricultural and environmental projects.

OQ moves forward to enhance the effective community partnership and support efforts made to add high value to developmental projects. These efforts will play a great role in achieving Oman's strategic objective to reach carbon neutrality by 2050. — ONA

Permits for commercial signboards via Invest Easy



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

As part of the efforts to streamline the process of conducting commercial activities and to improve the competitiveness of the Sultanate of Oman in the ease of doing business index, the authority responsible for issuing permits for commercial signboards will be the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) via Invest Easy platform.

The decision comes into effect from Tuesday, April 4, 2023, and will only apply to new branches.

The service fee will be RO15 once at the time of registration and there is no need to renew the permit.

Earlier the permit for commercial signboards was issued by the local municipalities.

The process involved a review of the size and the content of the board sign, approval of the model.

‘Al Arsa’ Ramadhan market in Shinas revives

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

Ramadhan this year is special for the people of Shinas as the ‘Al Arsa’ market has been revived after many years. The Wilayat of Shinas is famous for ‘Al Arsa’ Ramadhan market, as it attracts people from across the country.

The centrally located market has traditional settings, which attract entrepreneurial families, rural women, and small and medium enterprises in one place. It has 30 stalls meant for various Ramadhan food items, including vegetables and fruits.

Ramadhan meals such as ‘Harees’ and samosas are special attractions, while during the last days of the holy month and before the feast, special items for the feast start selling here. The market witnesses a good turnout allowing the participants to do brisk business.

Saif al Omari, Shinas resident who visited the ‘Al Arsa’ Ramadhan market, said, he was very happy to see the market revived after so many years. “It’s a really important part of our community and our Ramadhan traditions, so it’s great to have it back. There’s such a wide variety of Ramadhan foods, and it’s a really festive atmosphere. I



think it’s a great way to support productive families,” he said.

Shaikh Abdullah bin Salem al Hajri, Wali of Shinas, said during his visit to the market that the establishment of ‘Al

Arsa’ market comes as part of the Ramadhan activities in the Al Batinah North Governorate. He said there were integrated Ramadhan programmes in religious, cultural, and sports

fields. Additionally, supporting productive families and small and medium enterprises that target all segments of society and invest in the capabilities and talents of youth.

The market starts from three o’clock in the afternoon until sunset. The market attracts a large number of visitors who love to buy traditional Ramadhan food.

Special performances and competitions for children and adults, such as a circus show, a laser and fire show with face painting, and various competitions for children take place on Thursdays and Fridays.

For the attendees, there are gifts and other surprises.

Youssef bin Ahmed al Sharqi, one of the vendors in the Ramadhan market, said ‘Al Arsa’ is considered a popular Ramadhan market, and the best thing about it is its central location. It provides a beautiful service to the ‘productive families’ in Shinas by offering them a platform and an opportunity to sell their products without any fees.

He also added that this market is a source of income for these families and hopes that it will continue throughout the year by allowing productive families to display their products and not only during the month of Ramadhan.

“We thank the office of the Wali of Shinas, the municipality, and all those involved in making this market a success,” Al Sharqi added.



Follow us on **Twitter**
@omanobserver

oman

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

TUESDAY | APRIL 4 | 2023

3

MoL cracks whip on firms violating Wage Protection System

VINOD NAIR

@vinot_nair

The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has warned companies which do not comply with the transfer of employees' salaries via the Wage Protection System (WPS).

The warning holds significance as a number of private sector companies continue to defer payment of employee salaries by several months despite the overall economic situation in the country getting better over the past year.

In a statement, the Ministry of Labour said that as per Article (53) of Chapter One, part four of the Omani Labour Law issued by Royal Decree No. (35/2003), 'The employer will not be cleared of the employee's salary unless the amount is deposited in the employee's account at one of the locally approved banks.'

A resolution by the minister may determine the exceptions where the employee's salary may not be deposited in his or her account.

Any violator will be punished according to Article (116) of the same law. Whoever violates these provisions shall be punished with a fine not exceeding RO100 and the fine shall be multiplied by the number of workers who are the subject of the violation.

The non-compliant companies



may face suspension of their dealings with the ministry in terms of completing permit requests or loss of the membership of best-performing firms as well as other services available in the system.

Around 13,000 of the total 24,000 labour complaints received by the ministry in 2022 were related to payment of wages, this was confirmed by the Ministry of Labour in a statement.

The Wages Protection System (WPS) is aimed at ensuring fair pay for workers and improving working conditions and enhancing the welfare of all parties involved.

WPS is an electronic tool created by the Ministry of Labour and the Central Bank to supervise and track wage payments in private sector businesses,

guaranteeing their compliance with the Labour Law by transferring workers' salaries to their bank accounts.

WPS maintains a steady process of salary distribution, while also monitoring any payment delays, allowing the ministry to take preventive measures to ensure workers receive their pay and prevent any labour disputes, strikes, or work stoppages due to delayed payments.

WPS is deemed to be a vital part of economic reform, aimed at safeguarding the earnings of private sector employees and establishing a precise database of their salaries.

This system promotes a stable employer-worker relationship, increases productivity, and minimises wage-related conflicts.

The recently introduced system

aims to streamline the process of applying for various services provided by the ministry that require the attachment of wage-proof documents, including manpower recruitment permits, wage adjustments, and work leave reports. The system eliminates the need for individuals to attach physical wage files as verification can now be completed electronically through the platform. This results in a significant reduction in both time and effort expended by applicants.

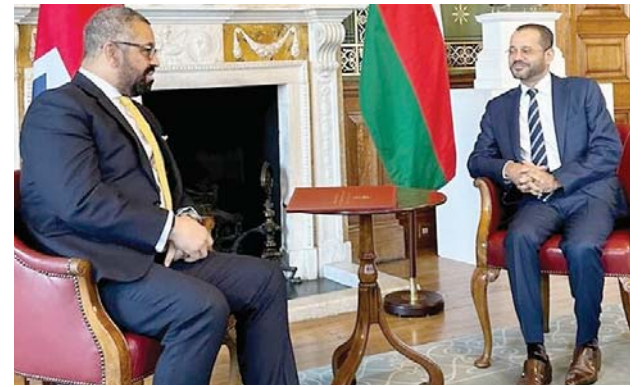
WPS also helps employees in small commercial private sector enterprises, as they are now obligated to open bank accounts for their expatriate workforce whose salary is less than one hundred Omani riyals.

Additionally, private sector institutions are required to update the wages of their workforce in the ministry's database.

It should be noted that the method for bank transfers of wages in the Sultanate of Oman varies depending on the transfer formula used by institutions and employers.

In some cases, the transfers may not be reflected in statistics and monitoring ratios by the Central Bank and the Ministry of Labour.

To ensure that all transfers are included within the wage system and accurately reported, the ministry is taking steps to protect the rights of workers and companies.



Sayyid Badr meets UK Secretary of State

LONDON: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister met with James Cleverly, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs of United Kingdom (UK) at the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office on Monday. The meeting reviewed the existing relations of friendship and cooperation between the two countries.

The meeting also explored opportunities for new partnership and investment in renewable energy projects, technical education and innovation.

The two sides affirmed their interest in encouraging the development of nascent companies, small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

The two sides also commended the works and efforts of the strategic consultation team and the joint working group in advancing cooperation programmes between the two countries, and exploring further opportunities for partnership, financial and economic cooperation.

The two sides also exchanged viewpoints on regional and international issues and latest developments. They also agreed to continue backing all endeavours aimed at consolidating peaceful approaches and enhancing pillars of security and stability.

The meeting was attended by Badr bin Mohammed al Mantheri, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the UK, and officials from both sides — ONA

'Community Give-Back' programme attracts 400 students

MUSCAT: As part of its annual community giving back programme that is specifically organised during the blessed month of Ramadhan, Knowledge Oman, the leading community knowledge sharing platform, held an exclusive interactive lecture for the Military Technological College,

that attracted over 400 college students and faculty members.

Yousif al Hassani, a coach in international protocol, was also hosted at the event to share a speech on the impact of charisma on relationships.

Knowledge Oman, which is committed to supporting the

'Community Giving-Back programme' for the fifth year running, has a multinational voluntary team that is excited to do their part in uplifting the next generation.

The idea behind the interactive event was in alignment with the spirit of the holy month of

Ramadhan, in which the purpose is about giving back to the community.

The interactive talk with the students and faculty members aimed to introduce to the attendees the different types of personalities, and the impact of charisma on these relationships.

Rose harvest season begins in Jabal Akhdhar

ALJABALALAKHDHAR: Rose harvest season has kicked off in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah.

The green terraces at an altitude of more than 3,000 metres are covered with more than 5,000 rose trees on an area of 7 to 10 acres. The amount of rose water produced from those trees is estimated at 28,000 litres.

Ali bin Saif al Shukaili, Assistant Director of Heritage and Tourism in Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, said that the rose harvest season in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar ushers in a state of tourism diversity and allows tourists to have a close look at traditional and modern methods of distilling rose water.

The season runs from the end of March and continues until mid-April every year. It is typically associated with the distillation of rose water, which serves as a key component of ornamental products, aromatics and sweets and Omani coffee, Al Shukaili added.

He pointed out that the ministry attaches great importance to encouraging investment in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, notably by attracting tourism projects like tourist resorts, hotels and guesthouses.

Such projects augment the local community's gains from the tourism movement activity, he observed.

Al Shukaili said that the Tourist Services Centre on Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Road provides guidance about how best a tourist can benefit from the rose harvest season. — ONA



SUHAIL AL NAHDI

MUSCAT, APRIL 3

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) handled 6,207 medical emergencies in all governorates since the launch of the Home Ambulance Service in February 2022.

CDAA aims to provide quality ambulance services and respond to critical medical cases at homes by rapidly transferring patients to the nearest health institution to receive medical care.

It's one of the services provided by the CDAA to the society with the aim of saving people's lives through applying advanced ambulance methods by competent experienced medical professionals.

As soon as receiving a service request via Nidaa app or through directly communicating with the operation centres, CDAA ambulances rush to the location and transfer the patient to a health institution.

The Home Ambulance Service was first launched in the governorates of Musandam, Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah, Al Wusta, North Al Sharqiyah and South Al Sharqiyah with the rest of the governorates followed in the second phase.

The service covers more than 14 types of medical emergencies related to the respiratory system, cardiac diseases, bone fractures, loss of consciousness, paralysis, severe bleeding, among others.



Madinat Al Sultan Qaboos Private School

Madinat Al Sultan Qaboos PVT School is currently seeking teachers to fill the following vacancies for the academic year 2023/2024:

- 1) Female English Teacher
- 2) Female Chemistry Teacher
- 3) Female Math Teacher (5-10)
- 4) Female Science Teacher for Primary Classes

Requirements: candidates must have

- ❖ B.A. in the subject
- ❖ Bachelor of Education
- ❖ Minimum 3 years of experience
- ❖ Must be resident in Oman
- ❖ Minimum score 6 in IELTS

Please submit your CVs via E-mail:
info@msqps.edu.om or schoolhr@gmail.com

Note: CVs from outside Oman will not be considered



AN OPPORTUNITY TO LOSE EXTRA WEIGHT



AFRAH AL BALUSHI
[@AfrahAlbalushia](#)

Ramadhan can be an ideal opportunity to adopt a healthy diet. In addition to investing hours of fasting and iftar meals, the month can be a good opportunity to lose weight. A study has shown that fasting during Ramadhan reduces body fat. During the fasting hours, the body uses fats and carbohydrates stored in the liver and muscles to provide energy from the foods eaten at night, while the kidneys conserve as much water as possible by reducing the amount lost in the urine. If some people start the new year with new decisions, then for others the blessed month of Ramadhan is an opportunity to evaluate and reconsider their life activities, to start a new start based on exercising and changing eating habits, then losing some kilograms in the event of excess weight. A study published in the National Center for Biotechnology Information stated that Ramadhan fasting can: Reduce body fat without losing protein in body mass, during which the body converts its energy source from glucose to fatty acids. The body releases fatty acids from the adipocytes. Another study reported that the encouragement

to exercise, as well as nutritional guidance and support, during the fasting period in Ramadhan and after Ramadhan, contributed to weight loss for many people, as fasting contributed to a significant decrease in weight and fat mass.

HYDRATION
To lose weight, hydration is key during Ramadhan, and hydration can be maintained by drinking sufficient amounts of water, about eight glasses at least. Secondly, the consumption of hydrating or high-water foods such as soups, vegetables, and fruits; such as cucumber, lettuce, tomato and watermelon during the suhoor and iftar meals. High temperatures can also lead to increased sweating, so it is important to drink fluids to replace what you lose during the day, and avoid sugary soft drinks because they add a large percentage of calories to the diet. It is important to eat a light and balanced iftar, as the secret to losing weight in Ramadhan lies in eating moderate meals without overeating, and these meals include: eating three dates for iftar, because dates are rich in fibre, and they are also a quick source of sugar that the body needs after fasting. Also, eat plenty of vegetables to provide vital

vitamins and nutrients, while choosing whole grains that provide the body with energy and fibre. Eat a moderate amount of meat, fish or chicken to get healthy protein. It is also preferable not to miss the pre-dawn meal. It is necessary to avoid eating a lot of sweets after iftar, as the sweets that are usually eaten in Ramadhan contain large amounts of sugar syrup. Therefore, it is recommended to eat fruits rich in water, such as watermelon or any other seasonal fruit such as peaches. In addition to limiting the consumption of foods rich in fat, including fatty meats, and foods made with pastries, while avoiding frying, other methods of cooking can be used, such as steaming, boiling and stewing while avoiding foods that contain large amounts of salt. Some sports activities can be practised for 30 minutes to help lose weight, by doing some exercises that can be done even from home. It remains to be noted that getting rid of excess weight during the month of Ramadhan by changing the lifestyle is possible, but provided that some rules are followed to achieve the goal of maintaining good health, and most importantly, not to give up this good lifestyle after the end of the holy month; because all the efforts you have made may go in vain.



Follow us on **instagram**
omanobserver

world

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

TUESDAY | APRIL 4 | 2023

5

Russia blames Ukraine, oppn for death of blogger

MOSCOW: Russia alleged on Monday the “terrorist attack” that killed a top military blogger the day before was orchestrated by Ukraine with the help of supporters of jailed Kremlin critic Alexei Navalny.

Russian investigators detained 26-year-old Darya Trepova, who was said to have links to Navalny, and posted a video in which she is heard saying she brought to the cafe a statuette rigged with an explosive device.

Ukraine has blamed Russia’s domestic infighting for the blast in a Saint Petersburg cafe that wounded dozens and killed

Ukraine has blamed Russia’s domestic infighting for the blast in the St Petersburg cafe that wounded dozens and killed an active promoter of the Ukraine offensive

Vladlen Tatarsky, an active promoter of the Ukraine offensive.

“The terrorist attack was planned by Ukrainian security services with the help of agents working with the so-called Anti-



A portrait of Russian military blogger Vladlen Tatarsky, whose real name is Maxim Fomin, who was killed in the April 2 bomb blast in a cafe, is seen among flowers at a makeshift memorial by the explosion site in Saint Petersburg. — AFP

Corruption Foundation,” Russia’s anti-terror committee said, referring to Navalny’s banned organisation.

A spokeswoman for Navalny’s foundation rejected the accusation.

“Alexei will soon be on trial for extremism. He is facing 35 years. The Kremlin thought: ‘It’s great to be able to add the terrorism charge,’” Kira Yarmysh said.

Russian state-run news agency RIA Novosti reported Trepova had been arrested for 10 days for taking part in a protest on February 25, 2022, a day after the launch of the offensive in Ukraine.

The Russian interior ministry

published a video of Trepova admitting to bringing a statuette that exploded.

Asked on camera who gave it to her, she said she would answer “later”.

Tatarsky was reportedly killed after receiving a gift statuette rigged with an explosive device during a talk at “Street Food Bar No 1”, located along the Neva river not far from the historic city centre.

“They put (the figurine) somewhere in the back without a second thought... and all of a sudden there was an explosion,” Alisa Smotrova, who was at the cafe, said. — AFP

US storms kill at least 32

INDIANA: The death toll from a violent storm that whipped up tornadoes in the southern and midwestern regions of the United States rose to at least 32 over the weekend, according to officials and media reports.

In Memphis, Tennessee, two children and an adult were found dead on Saturday after the storm’s heavy winds knocked trees onto several houses, according to the Memphis Police Department.

In Tennessee’s McNairy County, officials reported that an additional two people had died, having reported seven deaths earlier on Saturday, according to local media.

The Tennessee Department of Health on Sunday reported that there were an additional three weather-related deaths in three more counties, but did not provide more details.

In Owen County, Indiana, the bodies of a couple were found at a campground in McCormick’s Creek State Park, according to the state’s Department of Natural



Two severely damaged homes are seen in a neighbourhood in the aftermath of a tornado in Sullivan, Indiana. — Reuters

Resources.

Another 15 deaths from the storm, which generated tornadoes in several areas, were earlier reported in Arkansas, Illinois, Indiana, Delaware, Mississippi and Alabama. Scores of people were injured and many buildings damaged or destroyed.

US President Joe Biden declared a “major disaster” in Arkansas on Sunday, ordering federal aid to help with the recovery.

The president said in a

statement on Sunday afternoon that he and wife Jill Biden were praying for the people impacted by the weekend storms and ordered relevant federal officials “to help with immediate needs and long-term rebuilding.”

“We know families across America are mourning the loss of loved ones, desperately waiting for news of others fighting for their lives, and sorting through the rubble of their homes and businesses,” he said. — Reuters

New Finnish coalition unclear following Marin’s election defeat

HELSINKI: With the defeat on Sunday of Finland’s charismatic Social Democratic leader Sanna Marin, conservative ex-finance minister Petteri Orpo is likely to become the next head of government- but coalition talks are predicted to be long and tough.

“This is a considerable swing from left to right,” political scientist Juhana Aunesluoma of Helsinki University said on Monday.

“Forming a government will be difficult,” economist and election expert Juha Tervala said.

Orpo, from the National Coalition Party, would need either the right-wing populist party The Finns, headed by Riikka Purra,



Petteri Orpo

or Marin’s Social Democrats for a majority, plus at least one of the smaller parties.

Orpo might have opted for a centre-right alliance with The

Finns and possibly the Centre Party, but after a historically poor election result, Centre leader Annika Saarikko rejected that idea. “Our place is in the opposition,” she said.

This basically leaves Orpo and Purra with only a few smaller parties as possible junior partners.

On the other hand, Orpo could also move towards Marin. Large coalitions between conservatives and social democrats have happened more often in Finland.

However, they are far apart in their views on the state budget — the most important election issue — as Tervala points out. But he believes the two parties are capable of compromise. — dpa



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (14/2023)

Companies specialized in the field and registered with **Tender Board**, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Tender Fee	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date	Grade
2022/MM/QS-83 PRE/22/153 (Re Call)	Supply of Light Vehicles (Re-tender)	25	12/04/2023	19/04/2023	Specialist
2022/MM/QS-85 PRE/22/158 (Re Call)	Manufacture and Supply of Safety Barrier 2023 (Re-tender)	25	24/04/2023	18/05/2023	Specialist
2023/MM/QS-18 PRE/23/037	Maintenance Works for sea-front at Al Seeb (Dama Street)	25	24/04/2023	18/05/2023	First
2023/MM/QS-19 PRE/23/053	Replacement of Arch Fountain & Landscape Lights	25	24/04/2023	18/05/2023	Specialist
2023/MM/QS-20 PRE/23/072	Renewal or Replacement of F-Secure Enterprise Antivirus Solution	25	24/04/2023	18/05/2023	First & Excellent
2023/MM/QS-21 PRE/23/074	Beautification of the Green Yard in Mumtaz Area, at Muttrah	25	24/04/2023	18/05/2023	First

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically and an Electronic Bond (E-Bond) issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat municipality. The bond shall be (1%) of the tender value to be submitted through E-Tendering system, addressed to Muscat Municipality, valid for ninety (90) days starting from the date of bids submission.

Any tenders which do not meet the required bond shall not be accepted.

2. Clarification and Support:

- For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .
- For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).
- For technical support of E-Bond through e-tendering system please send an email to (esnad@gstb.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200/24402330).

B'deshi scribe gets bail in digital law case

DHAKA: A court in Bangladesh granted bail to a journalist on Monday after his detention under a controversial digital law prompted outcry.

Shamsuzzaman Shams, 38, a staff correspondent for the Prothom Alo newspaper, was arrested at his home on Wednesday after a politician filed a complaint over a story on the country’s cost-of-living crisis. Shams was freed from the Dhaka Central Prison at 6:30 pm, Tipu Sultan on the Bengali-language daily said.

“He secured bail from the Chief Metropolitan Magistrate court earlier in the day,” he said. A separate case under the same law against both Shams and the paper’s editor was criticised by local and international rights groups, political parties and journalist unions.

UN rights chief Volker Turk has called for an immediate moratorium of the Digital Security Act, which he said was being used “to arrest, harass and intimidate journalists and human rights defenders, and to muzzle critical voices online”. — AFP



TENDER

Nama Shared Services invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their best offers for the tender below:

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR)
NSS/2023/03	CALL FOR A CONTRACT RESOURCES FOR ORACLE UTILITIES AND SMART METERING APPLICATIONS AND RELATED APPLICATIONS	11-Apr-2023	24-Apr-2023	100/- Plus VAT Amount (5 OMR) Total: 105 OMR (Non-Refundable)

- Interested party may purchase the tender through the company website (www.nama.om/ar/new-tenders) &Supplier user guide is available to be downloaded at the same page.
- Payment of the tender fees to be done online through the link available in website. The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 12.00 pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through I-supplier portal before 03.00 pm time of the Sultanate on Monday 24-Apr-2023.
- Each bid should be accompanied with a temporary insurance, in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate, covering (1%) of the total bid value and valid for a period of (90) days from the last date for submission of offers. Tenders that do not include the required temporary insurance will not be considered. The original hard copy of the bid bond should be dropped in the tender box at Nama Holding reception.
- NSS is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.



Nama Holding
In Beach One Building, 3rd Floor (Units 305 & 307), Shatti Al Qurum
P.O Box 850, Post Code 116, Sultanate of Oman.
Phone Number: +968 24559200/246
E-Mail: Sharifa.AlShukaili@Holding.nama.om



Sisi visits Saudi Arabia



Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman meets Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia. – Reuters

RIYADH: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah El-Sisi visited Saudi Arabia on Sunday, Saudi state news agency SPA said.

Sisi was greeted at Jeddah airport by Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman and was waved off again several hours later.

Saudi Arabia has long provided financial support to Egypt but recently signalled it would no longer provide such backing without conditions attached.

The trip also comes amid a major diplomatic realignment in the region, with moves by Saudi Arabia and Egypt to ease tensions with Syria, Iran and Türkiye.

Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman met Sisi at the Saudi Red Sea

city of Jeddah, where they discussed bilateral ties and regional developments.

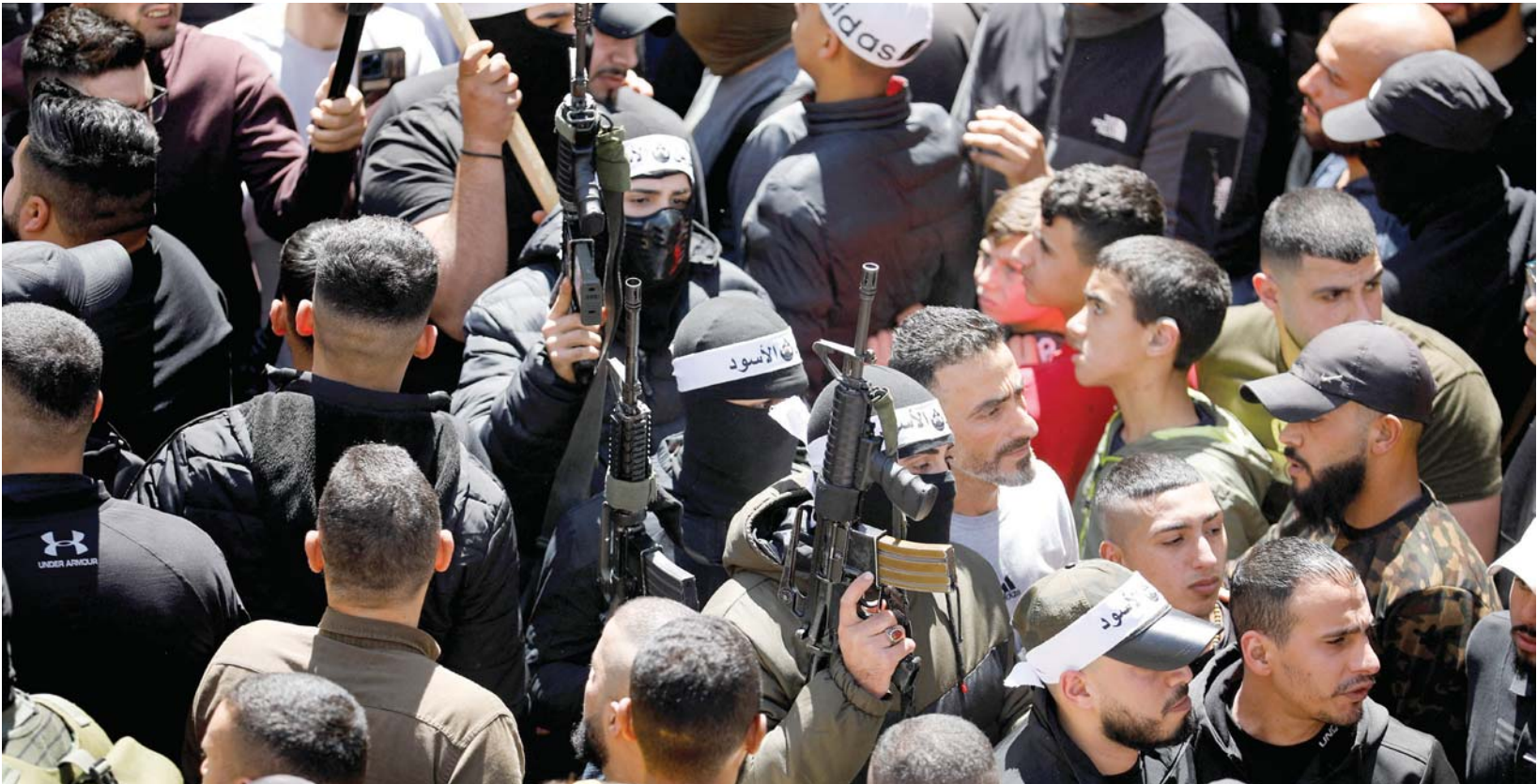
Other Saudi and Egyptian officials, including Saudi national security adviser Musaad bin Mohammed al-Aiban and Egypt's intelligence chief Abbas Kamel, attended the meeting, it added.

Saudi Arabia and its Gulf allies have repeatedly come to Egypt's help since Sisi led the country.

When Egypt's financial difficulties were exposed and exacerbated by the fallout from the war in Ukraine last year, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates and Qatar made deposits in Egypt's central bank and pledged major new investments.

—Agencies

Israeli forces kill two Palestinian during clash in West Bank



Palestinian gunmen attend the funeral of a Palestinian, who was killed by Israeli troops during a raid, in Nablus. – Reuters

RAMALLAH: Israeli forces killed two Palestinian during a clash in the occupied West Bank on Monday, factions and medics said, and shot down a drone over the Gaza Strip that Hamas claimed as part of its arsenal.

Tensions have been running high as Muslims mark the Ramadhan holy fast month during a surge in Israeli-Palestinian violence.

The latest shootings happened during a raid by the Israeli military in the northern West Bank city of Nablus.

The Lion's Den, a coalition of

Palestinians in Nablus, said one of its members was killed while battling the incursion.

A second slain gunman was claimed by the Fatah faction.

The military said its soldiers shot several gunmen after coming under fire in Nablus. There were no Israeli casualties.

During the raid, the Israeli military detained two people suspected of assisting a Palestinian who carried out a March 25 drive-by shooting that wounded two troops, the military said. The car used was also seized, it said.

In Ramallah, Nabil Abu

Rudeineh, the spokesman of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas, accused Israel of trying to “drag the region into a cycle of violence and instability”.

Over Gaza, the southern coastal enclave, an Israeli warplane shot down a unidentified flying object, the military said. The object had not crossed into nor threatened Israel, it added. Gaza residents heard explosions overhead.

Hamas said one of its “Shehab” drones, while on a training flight, had been shot down by Israel's air force.

Hamas said it responded

by firing anti-aircraft missiles at Israeli planes. The military confirmed that, saying no planes were hit.

In a 2021 statement, Hamas described the Shehab, which is around the size of a model aircraft, as an explosives-bearing suicide drone.

Around 90 Palestinians, including gunmen and civilians, have been killed by Israeli forces in 2023, the Palestinian health ministry said. Fifteen Israelis and a Ukrainian have died in Palestinian attacks, Israel's foreign ministry said. — Reuters

Philippines announces more military bases for US troops

MANILA: The Philippines announced on Monday the location of four additional military bases to be used by US troops.

The long-time treaty allies agreed in February to expand cooperation in “strategic areas” of the Philippines.

The 2014 Enhanced Defense Cooperation Agreement, known as EDCA, gave US forces access to five Philippine bases.

It was expanded to nine, but the locations of the four additional bases were withheld until Monday while the government consulted with local officials.

The four sites had been assessed by the Philippine military and deemed “suitable and mutually beneficial”, the Presidential Communications Office said in a statement.

It said the bases would also be

used for humanitarian and relief operations during disasters.

The US Department of Defense confirmed that the locations announced by the palace were the four new EDCA sites.

It also announced in a statement it would add to the “\$82 million we have already allocated toward infrastructure investments at the existing EDCA sites”, without specifying by how much.

Three of the sites are in the northern Philippines, including a naval base and airport in Cagayan province and an army camp in the neighbouring province of Isabela, the Philippine statement said.

The naval base at Cagayan's Santa Ana is about 400 kilometres from Taiwan.

Another site will be an air base on Balabac Island, off the southern tip of Palawan Island, near the

South China Sea.

The agreement allows US troops to rotate through the bases and also store defence equipment and supplies at them.

The United States has a long and complex history with the Philippines.

They share a decades-old mutual defence treaty, but the presence of US troops in the Southeast Asian country remains a sensitive issue.

The United States had two major military bases in the Philippines but they were closed in the early 1990s after growing nationalist sentiment.

US troops return to the Philippines every year for joint military exercises, including Balikatan, which kicks off next week. With more than 17,000 soldiers taking part, it will be the largest yet. —AFP



US and Philippine soldiers walk during a joint army-to-army exercise between the Philippines and the US at Fort Magsaysay. – AFP

SHORT TAKES

KUALA LUMPUR

MPs vote to axe mandatory death penalty

Malaysia's parliament passed a bill on Monday to remove mandatory death sentences, with rights groups welcoming the vote as an “important step” that could have a knock-on effect elsewhere in Southeast Asia.

Convictions for several offences, including murder and drug trafficking, previously came with automatic death penalties, giving judges no leeway.

The bill does not scrap death sentences, but grants judges the option to instead impose lengthy



prison sentences of between 30 to 40 years under certain conditions.

Deputy Law Minister Ramkarpal Singh said: “We cannot arbitrarily ignore the existence of the inherent right to life of every individual.” — AFP

DAMASCUS

Car bomb in injures two people

A car bomb rocked the Syrian capital late Sunday, causing panic and slightly injuring two people.

The state-run Syrian News Agency SANA citing a police source said an explosive device was detonated in a civilian car in al-Mezze neighbourhood.

“Two people who were passing by the area when the blast took place late Sunday were slightly injured,” the head of the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights, Rami Abdel Rahman, said.

The head of the Syrian hospital



Al Mouwasat said that the two people who were received at the hospital were injured in their feet.

According to a witness, the blast took place in an area where the United Nations headquarters.

JAKARTA

Graft agency arrests tax official

Indonesia's anti-graft agency on Monday arrested a senior tax officer on corruption charges, in a case that has sown distrust among the public against tax officials and triggered calls to boycott paying taxes.

Rafael Alun Trisambodo allegedly received about \$90,000 in kickbacks from taxpayers via a consultancy group he founded to resolve their tax disputes, Firli Bahuri, head of the anti-graft agency, KPK, said in a news conference.



The agency confiscated more than a dozen luxury bags, belts and stacks of cash worth 32.2 billion rupiah denominated in US and Singapore dollars and euros from Rafael's home and bank safety deposit box, Firli said.



omanobserver.com/podcast

world

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

TUESDAY | APRIL 4 | 2023

7

In brief

THE HAGUE



KOSOVO EX-PRESIDENT DENIES GUILT

Former Kosovo president Hashim Thaci led a violent campaign of murder and torture against opponents during the 1998-1999 independence war with Serbia, prosecutors told the start of his war crimes trial on Monday.

Thaci and three other leaders of the Kosovo Liberation Army (KLA) rebel group all pleaded not guilty to crimes against humanity and war crimes as the trial got under way at a special tribunal in The Hague. Protesters rallied in The Hague to support Thaci, who resigned in 2020 and has been detained by the court ever since, while thousands of demonstrators took to the streets in Pristina on the eve of the trial.

BERLIN



STREET TO BE NAMED AFTER HELMUT KOHL

The state of Berlin's new coalition government is to honour the late German chancellor Helmut Kohl with a street or square named after him, according to the coalition agreement, details of which were made known on Monday.

"We will initiate talks with the districts with the aim of naming a representative street or square after Helmut Kohl," the draft agreement hammered out by the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) says. Kohl (1930-2017) is seen as the "unification chancellor" for guiding the reunification of Germany in 1990 at the end of the Cold War during his period in office between 1982 and 1998.

STUTTGART



VILLAGE ELECTS SYRIAN REFUGEE AS MAYOR

A German village elected a Syrian refugee as its new mayor on Sunday with an absolute majority of 55.41 per cent of the votes, the municipality announced in the evening.

Ryvan Alshebl, 29, who fled Syria in 2015, stood as a non-party candidate to become mayor of Ostelsheim in the south-western German state of Baden-Württemberg. In his private life, however, he is a member of the Green Party.

He describes his experiences in the election campaign as "mostly positive."

At the age of 21, Alshebl had fled his home town of Sweida in the south of Syria.



The plane of Donald Trump is seen parked at the Palm Beach International Airport, in West Palm Beach, Florida, US, on Monday. — Reuters

Trump heads into unknown as New York arraignment looms

WEST PALM BEACH, United States: Donald Trump prepared to fly to New York for his historic arraignment on criminal charges, taking the United States and the office of the presidency into uncharted and potentially volatile territory.

The 76-year-old billionaire was indicted last week by a grand jury on a series of counts related to a hush-money payment made to a film star during the 2016 election campaign.

The Republican Party provocateur, who has already launched a 2024 White House bid, is the first sitting or former US president ever charged with a crime.

Trump said on his social media platform that he will decamp from his Mar-a-Lago home in Florida and fly at midday on Monday to New York, the city where he was born and made his name.

"I will be going to, believe it or not, the Courthouse. America was not supposed to be this way!" Trump posted on Truth Social.

"The Corrupt DA has no case," he said of the Manhattan district attorney prosecuting the case. "What he does have is a venue where it is IMPOSSIBLE for me to

get a Fair Trial."

As part of his arraignment scheduled for Tuesday afternoon, Trump will undergo the standard booking procedure of being fingerprinted and photographed, likely to result in one of the most famous mugshots of the modern era.

Trump, who plans to make public remarks on Tuesday at 8:15 pm (0015 GMT on Wednesday) from Florida, has denounced the legal proceedings as a "witch hunt" and "political persecution."

The New York Police Department is on high alert ahead of the arraignment, with a potential for street protests by Trump supporters and detractors. The force has ordered its 36,000 officers to be in uniform and ready to deploy, NBC News reported, citing official sources.

An arraignment is regular process, but there is no road-map for a former president's surrender to court authorities.

And it remains to be seen whether the famously unpredictable Trump will follow the script, or find a way to upend events. "It's all up in the air," Trump lawyer Joe Tacopina said on CNN Sunday.

But a "perp walk" — in which a

defendant is escorted in handcuffs past media cameras — is unlikely for an ex-president under US Secret Service protection, Tacopina said.

"Hopefully this will be as painless and classy as possible for a situation like this."

But Trump is girding for battle, Tacopina added.

While the specific charges still remain under seal, the case brought by Manhattan District Attorney Alvin Bragg revolves around the investigation of \$130,000 paid to Stormy Daniels ahead of the 2016 election.

Trump's former lawyer and aide Michael Cohen, who has since turned against Trump, testified before Congress that he arranged the payment to Daniels in exchange for her silence about a tryst she says she had with Trump in 2006.

Trump, who was already married to his wife Melania at the time, denies the affair.

But the Daniels case is only one of several investigations threatening Trump.

An independent prosecutor is looking into any potential role Trump played in the January 6, 2021 insurrection at the US Capitol, as well as his handling and keeping

of classified documents after he left the White House.

In the swing state of Georgia, Trump is under investigation for pressuring officials to overturn Joe Biden's 2020 victory there — including a taped phone call in which he asked the secretary of state to "find" enough votes to reverse the result.

Biden, knowing anything he might say could fuel Trump's complaints of a politically "weaponised" judicial system, is one of the few Democrats maintaining silence over the indictment of his political rival.

Republicans have largely rallied around Trump, including his rival in the party's presidential primary, Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, who called the indictment "un-American."

But some Republicans bristled at the prospect of a twice-impeached president facing multiple legal probes seeking the party's nomination. Former Arkansas governor Asa Hutchinson, who announced on Sunday he is running to be the Republican presidential nominee, openly questioned such a strategy and urged Trump to quit the race.

— Reuters

Finland to join Nato alliance on Tuesday: Stoltenberg



Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg speaks during a press conference to present the next North Atlantic Council Ministers of Foreign Affairs meeting at the Nato headquarters in Brussels on Monday. — AFP

BRUSSELS: Finland is to become the 31st member of Nato on Tuesday, the alliance's Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg has announced.

"We will raise the Finnish flag for the first time here at Nato headquarters," he said on Monday in a press conference ahead of a meeting of the alliance's foreign ministers in Brussels.

Finland applied together with Sweden for Nato membership in May 2022 in the aftermath of the Russian war on Ukraine, but its application got tangled up in Ankara's opposition to Sweden's entry.

All Nato members must unanimously agree to admit new members. After months of talks brokered by the alliance, Türkiye eventually relented and voted to admit Finland into Nato last week.

The decision ends Finland's decades-long neutral status amid perceived security risks due to Russia's war on Ukraine. The Nordic country shares a 1,340-kilometre-long border with Russia.

Finland is to be formally welcomed to the alliance with a flag-raising ceremony to mark the country's accession to Nato, Stoltenberg said.

— Agencies

Scholz in Bucharest to stress support for Romania, Moldova

BUCHAREST: German Chancellor Olaf Scholz visited Romania on Monday to underscore Western support for a key Nato ally that borders Ukraine and also for neighbouring Moldova, which has looked especially vulnerable since Russian war last year.

Moldovan President Maia Sandu, who has accused Moscow of fomenting unrest in her tiny former Soviet republic, was due to join Scholz and Romanian President Klaus Iohannis in Bucharest later in the day.

Russia denies causing trouble in Moldova, which is sandwiched between Romania and Ukraine, and aspires to join the European Union. Scholz's visit to Bucharest comes a day after German armsmaker Rheinmetall announced it was setting up a maintenance and logistics hub

in northern Romania to service weapons used in Ukraine.

Scholz praised Romania's willingness to take in refugees spilling over the border from the war in Ukraine, adding: "Germany stands firmly by Romania's side."

Asked why Romania specifically had been chosen to host Rheinmetall's servicing hub, Scholz said other European countries would also open maintenance centres to repair weapons such as tanks and Howitzers deployed against Russian forces.

Iohannis, who accompanied Scholz and the leaders of France and Italy on a visit to Kyiv last year, urged Nato to increase its presence in the Black Sea. Russia and Ukraine both share a coastline on the Black Sea, along with Nato members Romania, Bulgaria and Türkiye, as well as Georgia.



German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is greeted by Romanian Premier Nicolae Ciuca in Bucharest, Romania, on Monday. — Reuters

Iohannis also stressed the importance of supporting Moldova's "stability and resilience".

"Moldova's situation is very much complicated by hybrid attacks from Russia. A major

complication is the large number of Ukrainian refugees and the impact of the war in Ukraine on the Moldovan economy," said Iohannis.

A breakaway, mainly Russian-

speaking region of Moldova, known as Transdnistria, is controlled by pro-Moscow separatists and is also home to a garrison of Russian troops.

Its allegiance to Moscow and location on Ukraine's western border have been a constant cause of concern since Russian war on Ukraine in February last year that the war could spread to the region.

Scholz on Monday also backed Romania's efforts to join the EU's passport-free Schengen Zone this year, saying Bucharest fulfilled all the criteria. Romania and its southern neighbour Bulgaria have been kept out of the Schengen area due to concerns about unauthorised immigration.

Scholz's visit to Romania came as his Vice Chancellor Robert Habeck paid a surprise visit to Ukraine. — Reuters

Disclaimer: The views and opinions expressed in these pages are solely those of the authors and do not reflect the opinion of the Observer.

Centuries ago they wrote...

The northwesterly winds set in and we enjoy coolness of the air. It takes away the dry leaves and twigs from the trees. Sitting under the tree counting the unpicked riped and dried berries, makes one wonder about the berries that have been left uneaten.

In life too there are opportunities that are left untapped, resources that are unexplored and talents that were not developed into skills. And before we know the time line shifts and life has moved on. Along with it the trends and technology as well as mindsets.

But then we have to think about how we are still intrigued by thinkers of the ancient past, for instance Rumi. His words still strike a chord that makes you want to share it with others. In this information age Rumi still captures people's imagination for his quotes are still shared as social media post.

So what makes them relevant in this century as well?

No matter how far Artificial Intelligence, AI, advances and gets involved in the mainstream, Rumi's thoughts will still find inspiration and that is because the words connect with emotions. The originality of his concepts still hold people's attention.

While there are many popular quotes here are some which bring focus to the self. Ocean is always an inspiration and here he said, "You are not a drop in the ocean. You are an entire ocean, in a drop."

In other words we are not alone, we are not a separate entity. It also reminds us in the literal sense that what the environment is exposed to invariably has an impact on us.

A quote almost every one who knows Rumi's work is, "What you are seeking, is seeking you." The current day thinkers also say that what he meant was, 'What you are seeking, is within you.'

Of course translations and interpretations can be drawn out in so many ways. Life then would have been so different as he was reflecting on life in a world eight centuries ago.

His words intriguingly takes us inward as this quote does, "We carry inside us the wonders we seek outside



Lakshmi Kothaneth
@lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

IN LIFE TOO THERE ARE OPPORTUNITIES THAT ARE LEFT UNTAPPED, RESOURCES THAT ARE UNEXPLORED AND TALENTS THAT WERE NOT DEVELOPED INTO SKILLS

us." Think about it — how special our mind could be and should be, but what do we fill it with?

Doubts and self doubts, expectations and disappointments, ambitions and failures, desires and anxiety are just some of them. But it is from the same space where creativity churns out, ideas originate from and where solutions are thought about.

The Sufi poet was born more than 800 years ago, and he continues to be one of the most read poets in many countries.

His words alone took him across the various lands and it is even more today with the new technology. It is still amazing how he continues to be discovered by generations after generations. As a poet he wrote in the Persian language and the most famous work continues to the epic Masnavi — Yiti Ma'navi meaning Spiritual Couplets.

While he looked inward and urged others to do so, another writer who is often remembered and quoted is Ibn Battuta who born in Morocco. Before all the popular travelogues we have been reading and watching, Battuta was out there exploring people, culture and land and came out with the most famous travelogue titled, 'The Rihlah.'

According to the historians, Ibn Battuta travelled for almost 30 years and visited 44 countries. He was a trained judge and over the years he is known to be an adviser to many leaders. He was knowledgeable in geography, botany and experts of today say that he was also a social scientist, but writing he did and nations today preserve the writings with great historical value. He travelled and wrote what he saw and left a record of history and lifestyle. He would describe in detail about the cities he visited. One of the first quotes I read about was his description of Qalhat.

He had written, "It had fine bazaars and one of the most beautiful mosques."

It would be ideal for anyone who visits Qalhat, to read these words while looking at the archeological discoveries. They walked on this land and reflected by looking at the same moon and the oceans.

EIFFEL AND EIFFELA...



'Eiffela', a replica of the famous Parisian Tower, ten times smaller than its model and created by Philippe Maindrion and is pictured near the original one in Paris, France, on Monday. – Reuters

Tax the rich to save the planet

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) has issued a final warning to humanity: unless we halve greenhouse-gas (GHG) emissions by 2030, we will have no chance of capping global temperatures at 1.5° Celsius above pre-industrial levels. Achieving that target will be extremely challenging, but it is both possible and affordable – if we ensure that the world's wealthiest pay their fair share.

Inequality has skyrocketed in recent years. During the pandemic, as more than 160 million people were pushed into poverty, the world's ten richest people doubled their fortunes. The wealthiest 10 per cent of the global population now rake in 52 per cent of global income and hold 77 per cent of global wealth, while the poorest 50 per cent claim just 8 per cent and 2 per cent, respectively.

The gap continues to widen. Billions of people are suffering from rising living costs and stagnant wages, and with recession looming, prospects for achieving greater prosperity appear bleak. The world has never been so wealthy, yet most people endure chronic economic insecurity. This is a recipe for deeply polarised, dysfunctional societies, democratic decay, and a dangerously unstable world.

Economic inequality is reflected in climate inequality. As the IPCC notes, the 10 per cent of households with the



Owen Gaffney

The writer is Project Lead of Earth4All, is Chief Impact Officer at Nobel Prize Outreach

AS THE IPCC'S LATEST REPORT MAKES CLEAR, AVERTING THE WORST EFFECTS OF CLIMATE CHANGE DEMANDS A PROFOUND ECONOMIC TRANSFORMATION IN THE NEXT DECADE

highest per capita emissions – that is, the wealthiest households globally – contribute up to 45 per cent of consumption-based household GHG emissions. The bottom 50 per cent – four billion people, many of whom face severe energy insecurity – contribute just 13-15 per cent.

Here, too, the gap is continuing to widen: the richest 1 per cent – 63 million people earning at least \$109,000 per year – are the fastest-growing source of carbon emissions by far. And this is happening at a time when, every month, the world is burning through more than 1 per cent of its remaining carbon budget for limiting global warming to 1.5°C. But the discrepancy in emissions is only part of the story. As the IPCC's new report highlights, there is overwhelming scientific evidence showing that an equitable approach to climate action, in which the benefits and burdens of the needed transformation are distributed fairly, is vital to build social trust, without which the 2030 target will be all but impossible to meet.

This aligns with our assessment at Earth4All. We predict that, unless concerted action is taken, inequality will continue to grow throughout this century, leading to rising social tensions and unrest – and making it far more

difficult to tackle existential crises like climate change.

Concentration of wealth leads to concentration of power, with the wealthiest actors enjoying disproportionate influence over elections and public policy. This undermines trust in democracy, making it more difficult for governments to make long-term decisions that serve the common good. More egalitarian countries tend to have higher levels of trust in government, in addition to better outcomes when it comes to education, health and longevity, obesity, child mortality, crime, and the environment.

As the IPCC report makes clear, averting the worst effects of climate change demands a profound economic

transformation in the next decade. But that transformation can succeed only with broad public support, based on a new social contract that ensures a fairer distribution of wealth and income.

Specifically, by 2030, Earth4All proposes that the wealthiest 10 per cent in all countries should be claiming less than 40 per cent of national incomes, with their share remaining on a downward trajectory thereafter. Past experience shows that progressive taxation on both income and wealth for individuals and corporations would be an effective means of achieving this.

This means targeting the assets of the extremely wealthy wherever they are held, including

in tax havens, and developing and sharing national registries of assets held in different forms. Governments should also hike taxes on luxury-related consumption that drives GHG emissions, such as the use of private jets.

In addition, we recommend implementing a universal minimum corporate-tax rate that is close to the global average of 25 per cent – far higher than the 15 per cent rate agreed by the G20 in 2021. Multinational corporations should be subject to the same tax rates as domestic companies, with unitary taxation of global profits based on the share of sales, employment, and assets in each country.

We also propose taxing windfall profits in sectors like energy. While the world has confronted an energy crisis driven by the war in Ukraine, fossil-fuel companies should not have been able to pocket hundreds of billions of dollars in profits. Likewise, governments must close international tax loopholes and eliminate outsize subsidies on fossil fuels – now topping one trillion dollars annually – once and for all. The IPCC estimates that removing subsidies could lower GHG emissions by up to 10 per cent by 2030.

© Project Syndicate, 2023



Billions of people are suffering from rising living costs and stagnant wages.

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports
sport@omanobserver.om



NIZWA DOMINATE OMAN CLUB TO REACH SEMIFINALS

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

Nizwa Club secured a place in the semifinals of the 13th edition of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Basketball Shield 2022-23, after defeating Oman Club 76-44 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher on Sunday.

The match was marked by Nizwa's technical prowess and strategic focus, as the team capitalised on early opportunities to take the lead.

Akim Smart's two shots from under the basket put Nizwa ahead by four points, and the team continued to take advantage of Oman Club's mistakes, with Faisal al Jamudi scoring three points to widen the gap. Sami al Ghailani and Hussain al Kindi scored four points for Oman Club, but Nizwa responded with five points from Adel al Battashi and Akim Smart to lead 13-7. Nizwa added nine points in the first quarter, while Oman Club scored five, resulting in Nizwa leading 20-12.

In the second quarter, Nizwa Club maintained their offensive and defensive superiority, scoring 26 points and widening the difference, while Oman Club added 14 points, bringing the

score to 47-26 by half-time.

Nizwa Club's dominance continued in the third quarter, scoring 20 points while disrupting most of Oman Club's attacks, who only managed to score nine points. The third quarter ended with Nizwa ahead of Oman Club with a score of 67-35.

In the fourth quarter, Oman Club improved their performance, but the result remained in Nizwa's favour, with both teams scoring nine points each, making the final score 76-44 in favour of Nizwa Club.

IMPRESSIVE OUTING

The match was moderated by the international referees, Issam al Siyabi as the first referee, Rashid al Mashrafi as the second referee, and Wafaa al Samria as the third referee. Jumaa al Hinai, Mahmoud al Ajmi and Sharifa al Zadjali were the officials at the table.

Nizwa Club's impressive performance guarantees their qualification for the semifinals of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth Basketball Shield, accompanied by Al Bashayer in their group. The victory is a testament to the team's technical skills, strong focus, and ability to capitalise on opportunities.



Seeb need big win against Bahrain's Muharraq

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

Seeb will eye a triumph with more than two goals margin to keep their hopes alive when they face Bahrain's Muharraq club in the second round of the preliminary round of the King Salman Cup for Arab Football Clubs on Tuesday. The match will take place at Seeb Stadium and the fixture will start at 10 pm. The first leg match ended for Muharraq by 2-0 in Manama city on March 14.

The MG Cup Champions shaped their readiness for the crucial match and the team went for few training sessions under the watchful eyes of the national experienced head coach Rasheed Jaber. Today's win for Seeb with above 2-0 result means advancing of Oman's representative to the next round of the championship. The overall winner will meet either Tunisia's US Monastir or Yemen's Fahman club.

The Seeb board directors decided to open the doors of Seeb Stadium free of charge for the local audience to support the team in their crucial game against Muharraq club

Seeb are equipped with different key players who can play a major role in Tuesday's match including many national team stars like Salah al Yahyai, Abdulaziz al Maqbali, Mohsin al Ghassani beside Dijibola and the players in other areas.

The Muscat-based team is a well known side in the external participation as they had delivered a top show in the previous season. In 2021-22, Seeb had managed to clinch the coveted HM Cup, top tier of domestic league and lifting their maiden title of AFC Cup Tunisia's US Monastir in October 2022. In this season, Seeb ended HM Cup as

runners-up after losing 1-0 in the final against Al Nahda while their hopes are low in retaining the top flight league title as they are positioned in the sixth place with 29 points.

On the other hand, opponents Muharraq club will play the match much comfortably as a draw or 1-0 defeat will advance them to the next round. The Bahraini team comprises many top players including Victor, Mohammed Jafar, Sufyan Mahrooq and others. They will aim to end the match on apposite result that will ensure their progression into the next level of the tournament. The Muharraq club delegation arrived to Muscat on Sunday and they had their initial training sessions on the same day. The final training session was held on Monday at the match venue. The Seeb board directors decided to open the doors of Seeb Stadium free of charge for the local audience to support the team in their crucial game against Muharraq club.



Virat Kohli plays a shot in Bengaluru.



Faf du Plessis in action against Mumbai Indians.

Kohli, Du Plessis power RCB past Mumbai

BENGALURU: Virat Kohli and skipper Faf du Plessis led Royal Challengers Bangalore to a thumping eight-wicket drubbing of Mumbai Indians as the tournament's big guns ruled on an action-packed Sunday at the Indian Premier League.

England's Jos Buttler smashed a blazing fifty to help Rajasthan Royals hammer Sunrisers Hyderabad by 72 runs in the first match of the day.

Kohli (82 not out) and Du Plessis (73) capped off a run-filled day with an opening stand of 148 as Bangalore achieved their victory target of 172 with 22 balls to spare in front of a raucous home crowd.

The pair bossed the chase from the start with some assured strokemaking and regular boundaries to open their IPL campaign in style.

"I thought it was a phenomenal

win, a homecoming after four years. Couldn't have asked for a better game," an elated Kohli said as he reflected on a tournament which has reverted to a home-and-away format following a number of years impacted by the Covid pandemic.

Man-of-the-match Du Plessis, a 38-year-old South African veteran, said: "My first time playing here (at M Chinnaswamy Stadium) as a home player, especially batting with Virat Kohli. Energy bounces off him."

Five-time winners Mumbai looked clueless despite the presence of Jason Behrendorff, who came in as the "impact player" when they fielded, and the returning England fast bowler Jofra Archer.

Du Plessis smashed six sixes in his 43-ball knock before departing in the 15th over.

New man Dinesh Karthik soon

fell for a duck off Mumbai's big-buy Cameron Green.

Glenn Maxwell then struck two sixes and Kohli smacked the winning hit over the fence as Bangalore started their hunt for a maiden IPL title in season 16 of the cash-rich T20 tournament.

Mohammed Siraj led an inspired bowling attack with figures of 1-21 to keep down five-time winners Mumbai to 171-7 despite an unbeaten 84 by Indian talent Tilak Varma.

Varma, a 20-year-old uncapped India batsman, took charge after an early collapse when Mumbai lost their top three including Green (5) and skipper Rohit Sharma (1) inside six overs after being invited to bat first.

VARMA 'COURAGE'

Australia's Green, who was the second-most expensive buy after Mumbai forked out \$2.11 million

in the auction, was bowled by England left-arm quick Reece Topley.

Rohit lasted 10 balls before Akash Deep got the star batsman caught behind for one as Mumbai slipped to 20-3, but the all-format India captain praised Varma's fightback.

"Some of the shots he played today, he showed a lot of courage," said Rohit.

"We wanted to be courageous enough, and hats off to Tilak for getting us to the total. We did not bat to our potential."

Bangalore suffered a blow when Topley awkwardly landed on his right shoulder while fielding and left the ground with the physio.

Topley was believed to have suffered a dislocated shoulder, which was put back in place but the 2.01 metre tall (6 feet and 5 inches) player was ruled out of the rest of the match. — AFP

Renaissance claim third in Premier Division

MUSCAT: Renaissance Cricket Team claimed the third position in the Premier Division powered by Muscat Pharmacy of the Oman Cricket Domestic League 2022-23.

Renaissance defeated Yalla Shabab by four wickets in the third position match where Yalla Shabab batting first scored only 149 all out in 38.4 overs. Renaissance chased down the target scoring 152-6 in 32.5 overs. Imran Ali's 4-24 and Hammad Mirza's 38 off 46 balls was the key catalyst to their victory.

Through the season, Hammad Mirza was the best batter for Renaissance to notch 320 runs in 13 innings at an average of close to 25 followed by Shubo Pal scoring 265 runs in 12 innings.

Bilal Muhammed was Renaissance's key armer leading their pace attack picking 15 wickets in 9 innings followed by Fawad Ali claiming 11 scalps in 10 innings.

Nisal Fernando, head coach of the Renaissance CT, expressed delight on the victory.

"This is the second consecutive



year that we have finished among the top three. The boys worked very hard throughout the season, and I am thrilled at the outcome. I attribute this success to team discipline and mentorship from senior players. Renaissance performed brilliantly this season, putting up a good fight against tougher teams and snatching key games by the slimmest of margins."

"The next Premier Division season will be even tougher, but we will be going into it well-prepared and with the experience of having played all formats in 2022-23."

Renaissance won three out of their seven games in the initial round of the Premier Division positioned at number 4 and qualifying for the Super League.

ISC Open junior tennis tournament from tomorrow

KABEER YOUSUF

MUSCAT, APRIL 3

The Indian Social Club (ISC) is conducting an Open Junior Tennis Tournament 2023 for players of all nationalities from April 5 to 20.

Any player between the following age groups can register their interest and the deadline to register is 8pm on Tuesday.

There will be three categories starting from 10-year-old boys and girls combined, boys singles under-12, under-14 and 16 and girls singles under-12, under-14 and 16.

Speaking to the Observer, Sivan, tennis coach and the organiser said the more than 100 tennis aspirants are expected to

take part in the tournament.

"We are happy to be hosting the 15th edition of the Open Junior Tennis which is, as the name indicates, open to all and we are expecting more than 100 participants to the more than

two-week-long contests," Sivan added.

Accordingly, winners will be given medals and trophies for their mettle in tennis. The tournament, which is in the 16th year had to give the last edition a pass during Covid-19 pandemic.

Since its beginning in 2004, Ramniklal B Kothari was the sponsor of the event for the first four years whose baton was taken over by Muscat pharmacy since then and continued till 2018.



Delhi Capitals look to get the combination right



With the tournament walking just into its fifth day, most teams would like to re-evaluate their strategies, just to get the right combination and Delhi is surely one that team. If spoken about the social media, it is the video of Virat Kohli's dominance against the ace pacer Jofra Archer that's trending. A lot of people are asking on why is it that, Virat Kohli can't open batting for India in T20, although I feel that, Ruturaj Gaikwad is making a stronger case for himself day by day.

GUJARAT TITANS (GT) VS DELHI CAPITALS (DC)

● **TEAM INFO:** It's early days of the IPL and both teams wouldn't take the brilliance or disaster of

the first match to their hearts and would like to follow the process, just like a professional team. But, one thing that they would like to work on their mistakes. DC were undone by the pace of Mark Wood and GT has a decent pace attack. DC's bowling was struck by the likes of Kyle Mayers and here it's GT, who has a long line of free-flowing stroke makers. One thing is sure, that the professional Abhishek Porel will make his debut as a wicket-keeper.

● **Head-to-Head** - Played — 1; Won by GT- 1; Won by DC – 0

● **GT Possible Impact player** – GT had to make a forced replacement due to Kane Williamson's injury. Sai Sudarshan, Mohit Sharma, Jayant Yadav, Sai Kishore, Shivam Mavi and Pradeep Sangwan are the prime options.

● **DC Possible Impact player** – Aman Hakeem Khan was used against LSG, but in this game, it could possibly be Manish Pandey



or Lalit Yadav or Sarfaraz Khan or Nagarkoti or Praveen Dubey are most likely to have a run for this spot.

● **Pitch Report:** The surface at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in Delhi is typically a slower one; the side batting first would look for a high total due to the quick outfield. Spinners could take advantage of the slow pitch, but it is expected to be a batter-friendly surface,

and a high-scoring thriller can be expected.

FAN COMMENTS

"No one can stop Gujarat, Pandya and Shami will rock again." – JP Shetty, 36, Sales Executive, Indian.

"Go Delhi Capitals, we're behind you all the way. Keep pushing and make us all proud." – Vishwesh Gaur, Performance Analyst, 27, Indian.

"Supporting GT, reasons captaincy, bowling attack and death bowling." – Tavish P Sharma, 22, Show Host, Indian. "I am supporting GT, they are the defending champions, hoping to see them finish as winners for this season as well." — Amol Sakhalkar, 43, Sales Executive, Indian.

MATCH PREDICTION

Ricky Ponting coached Delhi Capitals looked like a no-show in the first game and they will take a big, bold and strong effort to get out from where they are. They surely have the team for it, but a lot relies on the batting performance of Shaw, Marsh, Roussouw and Powell. On the other hand, Gujarat Titans looked like a well-balanced and extremely well strategised team. Ashish Nehra obviously makes a big impact with his clarity and Hardik Pandya follows his lead pretty well. It is always going to be difficult for Delhi to beat

defending champions Gujarat without the brilliance of any one specific match winner on the given day. Even the slow surface of Delhi, will assist the quality spin attack of Gujarat Titans. This one is going to be a one-sided affair for Gujarat.

Send us your comment for next day's match before 12 noon on WhatsApp on '00968 92470544' and the best comments will be included in our articles. "30 words on the team that you support" with full name, designation, age and nationality.

You could post us your views and question on our social media handles and we will pick the best question in our future articles, TWITTER — @OmanObserver @PranavMehtaOman OR INSTAGRAM — @OmanObserver @pranav_mehta_18. Dont forget to use the #OOIPL2023 for better reach.



Daniil Medvedev celebrates with the Butch Buchholz Championship trophy after his victory over Jannik Sinner (ITA) in men's singles final of the Miami Open at Hard Rock stadium. – USA Today Sports

Medvedev romps past Sinner for fourth title

MIAMI GARDENS: Russian Daniil Medvedev claimed his fourth ATP title of the year with an emphatic victory over Italy's Jannik Sinner in the final of the Miami Open on Sunday.

Sinner had upset world number one and defending champion Carlos Alcaraz in Friday's semifinal, but the 21-year-old struggled in the heat against the fourth seed Medvedev, who triumphed 7-5, 6-3.

The win was Medvedev's 19th career ATP title and his fifth in a Masters 1000 event and confirmed his dominance on hard courts in 2023. Sinner, also beaten in the Miami final two years ago and now with a 0-6 record against the Russian, said he had not been at 100%.

"We woke up this morning not at my best, I felt a little bit sick.... unfortunately today I couldn't play at my best," said the Italian who, however said there had been no question of him pulling out of the contest.

"No, it was not that bad. But, you know, with the heat, when you run a lot, it gets a little bit worse and worse. Obviously the first half an hour we played in the sun also," he said.

Medvedev, who had already won three titles in three weeks at Rotterdam, Doha and Dubai before losing to Alcaraz in the Indian Wells final, started confidently, holding serve to love while Sinner's first service game was a real battle.

Sinner had to save a break

Medvedev, looking composed and confident, grabbed the first set when Sinner was serving at 6-5 down and the Italian's poor shot into the net handed the Russian the crucial break

point and fought through a 26-shot rally before coming through at the end of a 10-minute game.

In contrast, Medvedev again served to love but Sinner was showing signs of settling as he held his serve and then the Italian broke Medvedev to go 3-2 up, with a deft touch volley.

Medvedev immediately broke back, however, with Sinner's effort clipping the net and going out and after the Russian held again, the Italian had attention from the ATP trainer.

Sinner, looking uncomfortable in the bright sunshine, took a pill along with a powder in his water in the 87 F (30.5 C) heat.

Medvedev, looking composed and confident, grabbed the first set when Sinner was serving at 6-5 down and the Italian's poor shot into the net handed the Russian the crucial break.

Medvedev quickly got ahead in the second set when Sinner sent a forehand long but just as quickly handed the break back to Sinner.

But Sinner was making too

many errors and when Medvedev broke again to go 3-1 up, the Italian was unable to turn things around and the world number five completed his first ever win in Miami.

"I'm really happy. Today was a tough match. It was probably the hottest day and the most humid during the day," Medvedev said.

"It was not easy conditions. I don't know if Jannik had a small injury or cramp. I was also struggling, tried not to show it," he added.

AT HOME ON HARD COURTS

Medvedev's 19 ATP Tour wins have come at 19 different events, but he had not won a Masters 1000 event since Toronto in 2021.

"I haven't won't such a big title in probably a year and a half. At the end I was quite shaky," he said.

"Not even tight, because I'm not scared to win. But still the hands get a little shaky so the serve is a little bit tougher... I managed to get myself together and close the match."

The 27-year-old has now won five of the six hard-court ATP Masters 1000s and has also reached the final at both hard-court Grand Slams, winning the 2021 US Open.

Now he must turn his attention to the clay courts where he has had much less success.

"I love hard courts, If it would be my choice there would be only hard courts," he joked. — AFP

Milan slam brakes on Napoli's title charge

MILAN: AC Milan hammered runaway Serie A leaders Napoli 4-0 on Sunday in an incredible performance which slammed the brakes on their opponents' charge to a first league title in over three decades.

Rafael Leao outshone Khvicha Kvaratskhelia in the battle of the wing wizards with a brilliant brace while Brahim Diaz and Alexis Saelemaekers netted the other goals for the rampant defending champions who move up to third.

The biggest win of the Serie A season for Stefano Pioli's side was also a third league defeat for Napoli, whose huge lead at the top of the table has been cut to 16 points after second-placed Lazio beat Monza 2-0 earlier on Sunday.

A difficult 2023 has left Milan 20 points off the pace but they have struck first blood in a trio of matches against Napoli which will conclude this month with the Champions League quarterfinal between the two Italian teams. "It's an incredible feeling, but even if I hadn't scored today, we still played very well," said Leao after his first goals since mid-January. Napoli were without injured star striker Victor Osimhen but an otherwise first choice line-up was humbled by Milan who have boosted their chances of qualifying for next year's edition of Europe's top club competition.

Milan are however only a point above local rivals Inter Milan and Roma, who sit fifth on goal difference following their 3-0 win over Sampdoria.

"It's only the first step... we have

ITALIAN SERIE A RESULTS ON SUNDAY:

Bologna 3 (Posch 3, Moro 12, Barrow 49) Udinese 0

Monza 0 Lazio 2 (Pedro 13, Milinkovic-Savic 56)

Napoli 0 AC Milan 4 (Leao 17, 59, Diaz 25, Saelemaekers 67)

Roma 3 (Wijnaldum 57, Dybala 89-pen, El Shaarawy 90+4) Sampdoria 0

Spezia 1 (Shomorodov 70) Salernitana 1 (Caldara 43-og)

PLAYED SATURDAY

Cremonese 1 (Ciofani 55-pen) Atalanta 3 (De Roon 44, Boga 73, Lookman 90+3)

Inter Milan 0 Fiorentina 1 (Bonaventura 53)

Juventus 1 (Kean 56) Verona 0

another 10 matches left in the league in which we need to have the same attitude," Pioli told DAZN.

"We threw away chances in the past and that can't happen any more. I'm happy with the win but it's only one game. "For this to be a good season we need to be playing in the Champions League next season."

Diaz was at the heart of Milan's fast start and it was his delightful pass which slipped through Leao and allowed the Portugal winger to dink the away side ahead in the 17th minute. And the home fans was stunned into near silence eight minutes later after more brilliant play from Diaz, who collected Ismael Bennacer's cross before cutting inside Mario Rui and then lashing in



AC Milan's Portuguese forward Rafael Leao (second right) opens the scoring past Napoli's Italian goalkeeper Alex Meret (left) during the Italian Serie A match between SSC Napoli and AC Milan. – AFP

from close range.

Napoli struggled to get anything out of a well-drilled Milan and Leao struck again just before the hour mark, showing why he is so important to his team by bursting past Amir Rrahmani and smashing a powerful finish into the top corner.

With Napoli reeling, Saelemaekers took advantage of more sloppy defending, dribbling through weak tackles and nutmegging goalkeeper Alex Meret to cap a perfect night for the

seven-time European champions.

LAZIO HOLD TO SECOND

Pedro's low finish in the 13th minute and a sensational free-kick from Sergej Milinkovic-Savic 10 minutes after half-time gave Lazio their fifth win in six league matches at Monza.

Milinkovic-Savic's goal was his first since scoring against Milan in January and his 65th for Lazio, making him the club's highest ever foreign goalscorer. "It's been a few

months that I've not played as well as I could have, it's been a hard period for me, but I give all I can to improve and today finally I scored a goal," Milinkovic-Savic said.

Roma overcame 10-man Sampdoria in Rome thanks to Georginio Wijnaldum's header six minutes into the second half and two late goals from Paulo Dybala and Stephan El Shaarawy.

Netherlands midfielder Wijnaldum struck five minutes after Jeison Murillo was sent off for two

bookable offences and then won the penalty from which Dybala scored his 10th league goal of the season with a minute remaining.

El Shaarawy swept home a fine stoppage-time finish to hand Samp their 19th defeat of the season and leave them 10 points behind Spezia, who sit just above the relegation zone and drew 1-1 with fellow strugglers Salernitana. Earlier, eighth-placed Bologna increased their hopes of European football next season with a 3-0 win over Udinese. — AFP



Oman crude price surges by \$6.52 per barrel

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

The price of Oman crude surged by more than 8.4 per cent on Monday to \$84.11 per barrel as the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and their allies (Opec+), including the Sultanate of Oman, on Sunday announced voluntary cuts to their production totalling about 1.16 million barrels per day in a surprise move aimed at supporting market stability.

The pledges bring the total volume of cuts by Opec+ to 3.66 million barrels per day or equal to 3.7% of the global demand.

The move is a precautionary measure taken on top of the previous output cut agreed during the October 5, 2022 Opec and non-Opec ministerial meeting held in Vienna, Austria.

The Sultanate of Oman will embark on a voluntary cut of its crude production by 40,000 barrels



per day starting from May until December 2023.

According to data from the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME), the price of Oman crude on Monday rose by \$6.52 to close at \$84.11 per barrel, the highest level since March 6, 2023.

The average monthly price for

Oman crude oil futures contract for April 2023 is 82.23 per barrel, an increase of 1.61 per cent or \$ 1.31 per barrel compared to March 2023 delivery which amounted to \$80.92 per barrel.

Meanwhile, international oil prices also surged on Monday, posting the biggest daily rise in

nearly a year, after a surprise announcement by Opec+ to cut more production jolted markets.

Brent crude was trading at \$84.22 a barrel by 0900 GMT, up \$4.33, or 5.4%, after touching the highest in a month at \$86.44 earlier in the session. US West Texas Intermediate crude was at \$79.84

a barrel, up \$4.17, or 5.5%, after earlier hitting the highest level since late January.

The Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries and their allies shook markets by announcing further production cuts of about 1.16 million barrels per day (bpd) on Sunday.

The Opec+ been expected to maintain its earlier decision to cut output by 2 million bpd until December at its monthly meeting on Monday.

As a result, Goldman Sachs lowered its end-2023 production forecast for Opec+ by 1.1 million bpd and raised its Brent price forecasts to \$95 and \$100 a barrel for 2023 and 2024, respectively, it said in a note.

The Biden administration said the move announced by the producers was unadvisable and some analysts questioned Opec+'s rationale for the extra production cut.

"It's hard to buy the 'pre-emptive'

and 'precautionary' reasoning — especially now, when the banking crisis had tailed off and Brent had crawled back up towards \$80 from its 15-month lows earlier in March," said Vandana Hari, founder of oil market analysis provider Vanda Insights.

The decision may mean Opec+ still sees economic storm clouds on the horizon, Jorge Leon, senior vice president at consultancy Rystad Energy, said.

"These cuts may be signalling that Opec+ believes that there are enough recessionary indicators in the market... (and) will further tighten the oil market for the rest of the year and could push prices above \$100 per barrel".

Brent fell last month towards \$70 a barrel, the lowest in 15 months, on concerns that a global banking crisis and rising interest rates would hit demand despite lower Opec oil output in March due to a halt in some of Iraq's exports. (With inputs from Reuters)

Syria seeks investments from Oman

KABEER YOUSUF
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

Unfazed by the recent earthquakes that shattered the economy, the Syrian Arab Republic is inviting more investors from across the region, with special

emphasis on the Sultanate of Oman, within the framework of government directives regarding strengthening economic and investment cooperation with Oman.

Syria has sought to upgrade economic relations to reach

the level of solid political relations, and to benefit from the capabilities and opportunities available in the two countries to achieve more economic and investment integration.

"We are glad to inform that Omani businessmen wishing

to invest in the Syrian Arab Republic can obtain the visas required to enter the country directly from the border posts upon their arrival at the borders, after submitting the necessary documents in those centres,"

TURN TO PAGE 15



New maritime law to support shipbuilding and marine tourism

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

Oman's new Maritime Law, promulgated recently by Royal Decree 19/2023, seeks to support the growth of a world-class shipping and maritime sector, while prioritising the safety of navigation, sailors and the maritime environment.

According to the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the new law also seeks to promote the efficiency of maritime training and safeguard the rights of seafarers, within both local and international frameworks.

Furthermore, it aims to support shipbuilding, commercial maritime activities, and tourism.

Article 2 of the Royal Decree empowers the ministry to issue the necessary regulations and decisions to implement the law. Meanwhile, the current regulations and decisions will remain in effect until such time provided they do not contradict the provisions of the new law.

Article 3 repeals the Maritime Law and the Law on the Regulation of Maritime Navigation in Territorial Waters, as well as any other laws that contradict the new law or conflict with its provisions.

The new law applies to all types of maritime navigation, ships, and



units, except for military and non-commercial state-owned ships.

Foreign ships must comply with Oman's laws, regulations, and instructions, while international agreements on maritime transport are complementary to the new law, the ministry said.

The law comprises various sections, including 'The Ship', which covers documents, supervision, inspection, ownership, management, sale, approvals, shipbuilding, licenses, registration, and ship's rights.

The section on 'Maritime Navigation Personnel' regulates maritime work, including maritime labour contracts and the duties of seafarers. Other sections

include property rights that apply to the ship, such as privilege rights, maritime liens, and reservations on the ship, such as precautionary seizure and executive seizure.

There are also sections on the ship's agent, cargo agent, freight forwarder, and details of ship exploitation materials, such as ship rental.

This new law is consistent with Oman's national and regional strategies to achieve carbon neutrality, and it demonstrates the country's commitment to maintaining a safe, secure, and sustainable maritime industry, said the ministry.

The law regulates shipbuilding, shipping agents, and brokers, and

it streamlines the procedures for registering ships under the Omani flag.

The law also introduces new provisions for investigating maritime accidents, fines, and penalties.

Additionally, the law regulates maritime tourism and includes numerous updates to the legislative aspects and provisions for implementing international agreements, as well as provisions for the transport of goods and marine debris.

Finally, the law integrates provisions of the law regulating maritime navigation in Omani territorial waters, the ministry added.

Trial operation of crude oil distillation unit begins at Duqm Refinery

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries Company (OQ8) has announced the start of the trial operation of the crude oil distillation unit at Duqm Refinery.

This step paves the way for operational readiness for all Duqm Refinery units, the most significant investment project in the refining and petrochemical industries sector.

The refinery has a capacity of 230,000 barrels per day, with its design based on a hydrocracking unit and a petroleum coke unit. It will produce liquefied petroleum gas, naphtha, jet fuel, diesel, sulphur, and petroleum coke upon operation.

Hilal bin Ali al Kharusi, CEO of the Commercial, Refining and Petrochemical Sector at OQ and Chairman of OQ8's Board, stated that the trial operation of Duqm Refinery is a development that moves forward according to the set plan.

The trial operation goes through several phases before reaching maximum capacity, followed by commercial operation, which is expected by the end of this year.

He added that all support units in the project, which has reached a completion rate of 97.5%,

have been operated, taking into account the priority of safe operation for all units.

He continued, "The company has carried out several exercises to evaluate the efficiency of the integrated emergency response plan, the emergency handling system, in addition to evaluating fire-fighting, rescue, containment of hazardous materials, and the followed security procedures."

Al Kharusi explained that the trial operation coincides with the progress made in the Ras Markaz Crude Oil Storage project — one of OQ's projects — which has completed the main construction works of its first phase and successfully received two crude oil ships.

Additionally, Marafiq, a subsidiary of OQ and Thai Gulf Energy Development, has completed the power and water station. This station will provide 326 megawatts of electricity and 36,000 cubic metres of industrial water daily, supplying energy and water to the Duqm Refinery and Petrochemical Industries (OQ8) as well as the Oman Tank Terminal Company (OTTTCO).

He affirmed that these projects are interconnected, and their completion represents a positive development and a significant step in enhancing investments in the Duqm Special Economic Zone.

Bank Nizwa announces Ramadhan auto finance campaign

MUSCAT: As a progressive Islamic bank that has taken concerted efforts to stay relevant to the evolving needs of the market, Bank Nizwa has announced recently Ramadhan auto finance campaign for the benefit of its customers.

Considering individuals' various preferences, the offer is applicable for both new and used cars. Committed to offering customers the most competitive propositions, the campaign features a competitive profit rate of and a finance tenure of up to 10 years. The offer also extends a 2-month deferral on instalments, enabling customers to drive home a vehicle of their choice without having to worry about immediate payments.

Khaled al Kayed, Chief Executive Officer of Bank Nizwa said, "As a customer-centric bank, we always endeavour to stay abreast of our client's needs. What makes this finance unique is that is based on Murabaha contract where the profit rate is fixed throughout the financing tuner. With the commencement of Ramadhan, numerous automobile companies announce



lucrative deals and Bank Nizwa wants to ensure its customers have the power to leverage these offers.

Ramadhan also draws emphasis on the values of Shariah, and by providing meaningful Shariah-compliant solutions that add value to the lives of people, Bank Nizwa has been able to further promote the benefits of Islamic finance.

One of the reasons that the Ramadhan auto finance campaign has gained increasing popularity is because it gives clients the assurance of adhering to the rules of Shariah. Moreover, the auto finance campaign has also been appropriately timed and customised to accurately address other critical parameters that customers prioritise, primarily flexibility, convenience and long-term benefits."

Spar Oman and Dar Al Atta'a launch 6th Ramadhan charity drive

MUSCAT: Reflecting the spirit of giving during the holy month, Spar Oman has launched its 6th Ramadhan charity drive in association with Dar Al Atta'a, at a special event organised at its Madinat Sultan Qaboos branch. Each year, Spar Oman celebrates the spirit of Ramadhan with community-centred initiatives and promotions during the holy month.

Conducted annually in partnership with Dar Al Atta'a, Spar Oman's Ramadhan charity drive aims to nurture a sense of solidarity and foster the spirit of compassion amongst Spar's loyal shoppers, employees and the communities it serves. Building on the success of previous years, collection boxes have been placed at 25 Spar Oman outlets throughout the Sultanate of Oman, wherein Spar shoppers are encouraged to donate non-perishable Ramadhan food essentials.

The donated supplies will be



distributed to lesser privileged families and communities preparing for Eid, by Dar Al Atta'a.

Moosapeta Sridhar, CEO of Consumer Products Goods, KR Group stated: "The holy month of Ramadhan is an ideal opportunity to reinforce our commitment to the community. Organising the Ramadhan charity drive annually holds the core importance of respecting and providing to those who are less privileged and making efforts to give what we can, with the aim of bettering their quality of life during this special month of Ramadhan.

My team and I would like to

Mazda Oman launches 'So generous, it's inspiring' campaign

MUSCAT: Mazda Oman is proud to launch its exciting 'So generous, it's inspiring' campaign, which started on March 13, 2023. It's an exciting opportunity for all the motorists in Oman who want to purchase a stylish & powerful Mazda this season.

Cash gift starting from RO 1,050 to RO 3,900, and AAA roadside assistance valid for the first three years from the date of retail purchase.

You can obtain an IINJAZ service package for 5 years or 100,000 kilometres (whichever comes first) by paying RO 200 (plus VAT) for only the new Mazda model purchased from Towell Auto Centre.

(Prospective buyers may be advised that the benefits vary between model variants, model year and manufacturing year. Conditions apply. Visit the showroom for exact details).

Whether you're looking for a sleek and stylish sedan or a rugged and reliable SUV, Mazda has a wide range of models, which includes the Mazda 6, Mazda CX-30, Mazda CX-9, and Mazda CX-5.

Mazda 6

The Mazda 6 is a sedan that exudes sophistication and style



while offering an impressive range of features and specifications. With its elegant design, luxurious interior, and state-of-the-art safety features, the Mazda 6 stands out from its competitors in its class.

The Mazda 6 is starting from RO 8,450 (after cash gift), so what are you waiting for? Don't miss an opportunity to drive luxury with a statement on the wheels.

Mazda CX-30

The Mazda CX-30 is a stylish SUV and it is built with a modern design that exudes confidence on the road. Its innovative features such as adaptive LED headlights, lane departure warnings, and a 360-degree camera make driving this car a safe and enjoyable experience.

So, what are you waiting for? This is your time to crossover to the next level with Mazda CX-30

by availing cash gift offer, starting from RO 8,650 (after cash gift).

Mazda CX-9

The Mazda CX-9 is a turbocharged 7-seater SUV that combines style, performance, and practicality. It is equipped with Mazda's i-Activ all-wheel-drive system that provides excellent traction and stability in any road condition.

So, why not level up the thrill with Mazda CX-9 — turbocharged 7-Seater SUV, starting from RO 11,900 (after cash gift).

Mazda CX-5

The Mazda CX-5 is a mid-segment SUV that offers an impressive combination of style, performance, and comfort.

The CX-5 offers a range of advanced safety features, such as blind spot monitoring, rear cross-traffic alert, and lane departure warning. So, experience the fusion of elegance and toughness with the Mazda CX-5 starting from RO 9,350 (after cash gift).

In Oman Mazda vehicles are brought to you by Towell Auto Centre LLC. To know more about the products or to book a test drive and to know the latest offers visit the nearest Mazda showroom or log on to www.mazdaoman.com.

Khedmah wins most powerful Omani brand award in electronic payment category

MUSCAT: In appreciation of its leadership in developing electronic payment solutions for many services within one platform, Oman Investment and Finance Company (Khedmah), won the award for the most powerful Omani brands in the 'electronic payment' category within the awards of the world of economics and business for the strongest Omani brands.

During the 2023 edition of this annual ceremony, it noted the auspices of HH Sayyid Mohammed bin Salim bin Ali al Said, at the Al Bustan Palace Hotel, in the presence of a number of officials from the public and private sectors. Khedmah won this prestigious award basis on a voting poll conducted by the World of Economy Specialised Magazine in cooperation with the Arab Research House.



The winning companies were chosen according to the results of the poll in which a large number of officials in the higher departments and executive departments of public and private sector institutions in the Sultanate of Oman participated.

Khedmah has been a pioneer in billing and collection services in the Sultanate of Oman for over

four decades. It always strives to improve its services in this area by improving the electronic payment system and expanding the number of services that cover it.

Since the launch of the Khedmah application at the end of 2016, the application has grown significantly to reach a large number of users.

More than 150 entrepreneurs to take part in Souq Al Wathbah

MUSCAT: The SMEs Development Authority and Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, have teamed up to organise Souq Al Wathbah for this year at the Bank Muscat head office at Airport Heights. The Souq will be held for three days, from Thursday, April 6 to Saturday, April 8.

This annual CSR initiative aims at providing a supportive avenue for home-based projects and entrepreneurs, give them the opportunity to display their different products and expand their

relationships through networking with other entrepreneurs to exchange expertise for the sake of business development.

More than 150 entrepreneurs, small and start-up businesses will participate in this year's edition of Souq Al Wathbah, where various products encompassing fashion, health and beauty products, home decorations and accessories, food and beverages, traditional wares and perfumes will be showcased at competitive prices. The three-day Souq will be open from 8 pm to 12 midnight.



Since its first launch, the Ramadhan Souq constitutes one of the key steps to support small and start-up businesses and is

one of the most important forums for entrepreneurs. It also comes within the strategies of both the SMEs Development Authority and

Bank Muscat to support Omani entrepreneurs and SMEs and startups.

The Ramadhan Souq is expected to witness excellent participation from the public and the media, especially as it is one of the well-known souqs held during the month of Ramadhan. Bank Muscat is committed to implementing its strategic plans to support SMEs.

For this particular purpose, it has launched many other initiatives including Al Wathbah Academy, Al Wathbah Businesswomen's Forum

etc. Al Wathbah SME department offers a comprehensive suite of tailor-made finance solutions and non-financial services targeted at small and medium enterprise in the areas of education, coaching, networking opportunities and workshops.

Bank Muscat is continuously partnering with both government agencies and the private sector to promote entrepreneurship in Oman, particularly amongst the youth, as part of its focus on supporting the strategic goals of Oman Vision 2040.



Oman's ICT spend forecast to reach \$1.4 billion in 2026



BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

ICT spending in the Sultanate of Oman is set to reach \$3.23 billion in 2023 and \$3.49 billion by 2026, according to the latest predictions by International Data Corporation (IDC).

Announcing its regional forecasts for the year ahead, IDC revealed that it expects telecommunications services spending in Oman to increase, with IT spending set to grow from \$1.30 billion in 2023 to \$1.42 billion in 2026.

This aligns in support of Oman's endeavour to build ICT infrastructure to reduce the digital divide through its National Broadband Strategy, which envisions providing broadband service to more than 90 per cent of urban areas by 2030.

"To navigate storms of disruption, organisations in Oman will need to invest in strengthening their digital resiliency so they are better positioned to succeed in new market environments as conditions continue to change," says Jyoti Lalchandani, IDC's group vice president and

regional managing director for the META region.

"Regardless of what the economy throws at us over the coming 12 months, the implementation of further digitalisation in critical areas such as customer experience, operations, and financial management — together with a more rapid shift to a 'digital business' approach — will be key to separating the thrivers from the survivors.

To this end, we expect to see digital transformation spending as a share of overall IT spending continue to grow, reaching \$1.42 billion in 2026, up from \$1.30 billion in 2023," he added.

In a digital-first economy, where an enterprise's competitiveness is tied to its digital business model, leaders will avoid wholesale cutbacks in tech.

Further, new tactics will be employed as tech leaders seek to realise maximum business value from their tech investments. In Oman, spending on Enterprise IT will reach \$0.55 billion and consumer spending will reach \$0.70 billion in 2023.

Opportunity Oman: Mining



DR YOUSUF BIN HAMED AL BALUSHI

The author is the founder and CEO of Smart Investment Gateway; email: yousufh@omaninvestgateway.com

As part of its Vision 2040, the Government of Oman has identified a number of strategic sectors that are key catalysts to support the country's growth and development as it attempts to transition away from its traditional hydrocarbon economy.

Mining has been highlighted as one of the top priority sectors and it is not hard to see why.

Mining in Oman dates back to the third millennium BC when the country was a significant regional copper producer. Due to its strategic position as a major regional trading hub, Oman became historically known as Majan — the land of copper.

Over the past 50 years, various local and international explorers, geologists and academic researchers have contributed to the establishment of Oman's mineral inventory and provided astonishing insight and understanding of the variety of minerals, lithology and deposits currently present.

Offering an exposed ophiolite geological outcrop containing minerals such as copper, gold, silver, chromite, lead, nickel, manganese, zinc, dolomite, limestone, gypsum, silica,



cobalt, marble and iron, Oman's untapped mineral resources have the potential to unlock major economic value, ensuring that mining becomes the next resource industry to support future growth in the Sultanate of Oman.

Oman's mining industry already has a successful track-record of producing high-quality mineral resources, with the country being the first GCC producer and exporter of ferrochrome with production reaching 210,000 metric tonnes in 2020 contributing 1.4% to the country's GDP, a sizeable increase from 0.6% in 2019 with the country exporting over \$1.5 billion worth of minerals and mineral products which the government aims to increase to 10% by 2040.

In 2017, the Sultanate of Oman surpassed Thailand as the largest exporter of gypsum in the world, seeing a total of 7.4 million tonnes of gypsum supplied to major international markets.

In 2020-2021, that numbers changed dramatically, with Oman accounting for 44.4% of the world's gypsum supply, covering roughly 17.5 million tonnes per year.

As a result, Oman has been dominating the regional export markets of Asia, South & Eastern Africa and the GCC.

In order to capitalise on this momentum and achieve its Vision 2040 targets for mining, the Government has started to invest a significant amount of resources to progress and further develop the industry — its main investment being a \$260 million injection into Minerals Development Oman (MDO) — the Sultanate of Oman's flagship mining holding company that oversees a growing portfolio of mining assets and projects.

Despite these significant developments, Oman's mining sector remains largely untapped and undeveloped, and this opens the door for major business opportunities such as:

- Exploration and processing of metallic minerals such as gold, copper, chromite and magnesium
- Exploration and processing of non-metallic minerals such as marble, limestone, dolomite and gypsum
- Establishing manufacturing plants and quarries for non-metallic minerals
- Provide technical expertise

and know-how and

■ Market identification and promoting local produce to identified export markets.

With the country's strategic location and stability investor-friendly policies and well-established infrastructure, Oman is becoming an attractive destination for foreign direct investment (FDI), and the Government is establishing an inventory of regulatory measures and structures to actively incentivising FDI into mining for both local and international investors, developers and companies.

In conclusion, investment in the mining sector in Oman presents significant prospects and has numerous benefits and potentially positive financial returns for both investors (local and foreign) and the people of Oman.

With the country's rich mineral deposits, favourable business and tax incentives, a well-established infrastructure, strategic location, and a supportive regulations and processes, investors can expect to see positive financial returns on their investments with generous growth prospects ahead.

Oman set to launch work on Phase 2 of power interconnector project

New milestones: Tenders for 3 new grid stations and other works to be floated in the coming months, says OETC

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, APRIL 3

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), the sole owner and operator of the nation's two principal standalone transmission systems, says it is preparing to embark on the second phase of its landmark project to interconnect the two networks into one unified national grid.

The North-South Interconnector project, also known as 'Rabt', is being spearheaded by majority state-owned OETC — part of Nama Group — with an investment of around RO 372 million over two phases.

Phase 1, currently nearing completion, covers the construction of around 660 kilometres of 400kV overhead transmission lines linking the Main Interconnected System



(MIS) in the north of Oman with the isolated networks of Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) and the Rural Areas Electricity Company (Tanweer) in Duqm.

In Phase 2, due to commence later this year, 400kV transmission lines will run from Duqm further south for a distance of about 502 kilometres to link up with the existing Dhofar System.

In a post, OETC said it is gearing up to kick off construction work on Phase 2 of the Rabt project.

"Moving on to the second phase of the project, Rabt2, which involves the construction of three additional grid stations, we are currently in the process of preparing for tenders that will be floated in the coming months.

We are excited to move forward with this phase and continue our commitment to expanding and improving the Sultanate of Oman's power sector," the company stated.

The announcement comes as the transmission company brings phase 1 of the interconnection project to a successful close later this year. It was launched in October 2020 with the signing of contracts totalling RO 183 million in value.

"The first phase is well under way, with the construction of five grid stations: Nihayda GS, Barik GS, Suwaihat GS, Duqm GS, and Mahout GS, along with 400 kV transmission lines that connect the grid stations.

We are pleased to report that

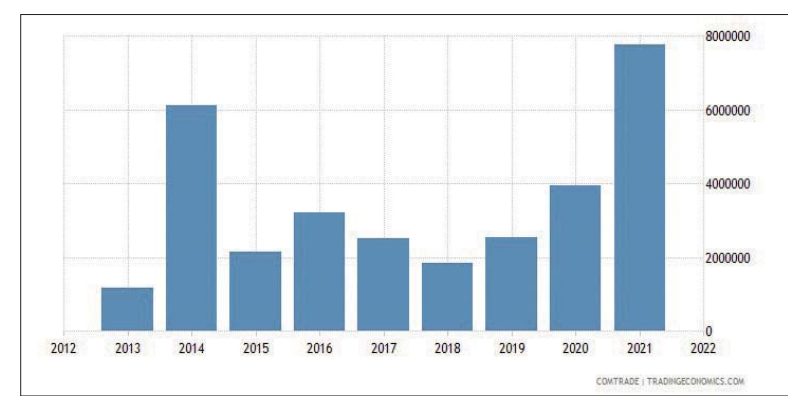
completion of this phase has already reached about 93 per cent, and we expect to finish these projects by the end of the third quarter of this year," the national transmission company noted.

As a strategic national initiative, the Rabt project will unlock benefits that go far beyond the obvious advantages offered by the interconnection of Oman's standalone networks into a national grid.

Besides integrating far-flung Haima and Mahout in Al Wusta Governorate into the national grid, the interconnected system will also strengthen electricity supply to PDO areas, currently served by a 132kV network.

Additionally, the project will reduce PDO's dependence on gas-fired power generation for its electricity needs. Importantly, interconnection will pave the way for vast areas of Al Wusta Governorate, which are deemed optimal for solar and wind power projects, to be developed as part of the country's future green energy ambitions. Energy efficiency and security of supply are added advantages as well.

Syria seeks investments from Oman



FROM PAGE 13

a spokesperson from the Embassy of Syria told the Observer. Accordingly, any investor from the Sultanate can get a visit or multiple entry visa to Syria based on their document submission and purpose of visit and they are free to make any investments there.

With this aim, the two countries formed the Syrian-Omani Business Council last year.

"We are working with the Sultanate of Oman to develop bilateral economic relations, and in this regard, we have formed the Syrian-Omani Business council at the initiative of Mohammad Samer al Khalil, Syrian Minister of Economy and Foreign Trade.

The establishment of the

council aims to enhance the role of the private sector and benefit from its capabilities in developing economic relations between Syria and the Sultanate of Oman in trade, investment, industry, agriculture and tourism.

Syria had expressed its willingness to expand cooperation with the Sultanate of Oman in the industrial sector by entering new investments, especially in cement manufacturing as Syria needed it for its reconstruction phase at the 4th Cement Conference 2022 held in Damascus and underlined the necessity of the two sides bolstering industrial and commercial cooperation and export of industrial products produced by small enterprises in Syria to Oman.

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

- Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
- Choose from a wide range of brands & models
- PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
- Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

Classifieds



To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER,

WhatsApp
 <your name> to
96473232



النماني للشحن
 AL NAMANI CARGO
 DOOR TO DOOR AIR AND SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE

DOOR TO DOOR CARGO
ALL OVER INDIA 0.650 BAIZA/KG



24/7 FREE PICKUP

WHATSAPP **96353654**
 TOLL FREE NUMBER **80066766**
 Follow us: f i n t w www.alnamanicargo.com

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

SIT. WANTED

ACCOUNTANT and audit assistant, Indian male, 27 years, M. Com and competed 3 years of CA articleship, have more than 5 years of experience in this fields in India. Seeking a position in accounts/ audit fields. Contact Mobile: 78052900, email: ranjithdevan24@gmail.com

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: **99639264**

EAGLE FREIGHT EXPRESS
 DOOR TO DOOR COURIER SERVICES
 INDIA | NEPAL | BANGLADESH

WORLD WIDE CARGO SERVICE Tel.: 99432926, 78211708, 92319472, 93350126
 Head Office (H.O.) Room No.: 218, 1st Floor, Aircargo Complex, Branch Al-Hail, Email: eaglefreightexpress@gmail.com

25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE FAST DELIVERY EXCELLENT SERVICES

AIR & SEA CARGO
 FREE PICKUP 24/7 SERVICE

AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION

Contact: **97239696**
95355638

Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit
 Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Sur

SKT سماء الخضراء للتجارة
SAMA AL KHADRA TRADING

SERVICES:

PIPING SYSTEMS VALVES
DRAINS INTERCEPTORS

Tel: 24501568, 24502479 • Fax: 24503566
 Email: sales@samaalkhadra.com
 Website: www.samaalkhadratradingco.com

FOR RENT

FLATS 2BHK and 1 bhk in Mumtaz. Contact 99341138 and 90991079.

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN male, B.Tech (Civil Engineer). Total 8 years experience included 4 years in Oman. Valid Oman D/L. Experience in Government and Private Projects. Looking for suitable positions in reputed firms. Valid visa/NOC available. Join immediately. Contact-96354303.

STORE manager/In Charge, Indian, above 18 years experience in Supermarket and leading retail chain in Oman and India, on visit visa, seeks immediate placement. 99697179 E-mail: mailshaijuvarghese@gmail.com

FRESH civil engineer (female). Looking for suitable placement: 99385214/ 93867323.

INDIAN male graduate Executive Secretary/ Stenography/ Oman DL and Muscat experience available. Contact: 79256679.

Indian male, civil engineer, seeking job. Having 15 years experience with Oman D/L. NOC available. Contact: 93313224.

ELECTRONIC Engineer, seeking job

Experienced Electronic and Instrumentation Engineer (male) with BE and Diploma seeking job. Skills: plant engineering, electronics maintenance, SMT operation, control systems, software (C++, C, PLC). Contact: 92929736. Email: farookjalal5@gmail.com

JOB VACANCY

We are looking for the following Position

Accountant,

may be considered for higher level based on experience & qualification

Experience:
 Minimum 5 years in Tally Accounting.

Qualification:
 Minimum Bachelor of Commerce, additional qualification such as CA, CMA, MBA, etc. is desirable.

Please send your CV: **recruitments@edara-re.com**
jowhara@edara-re.com

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocroaches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
 Direct Line: 24786077
 GSM: 99382355, 99172309
 pcomctom@omantel.net.om
 P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman



SERVICES

BUILDING of 1.500 sqm 3 stories, accommodation, store and office at Misfa. ☎99432177, 99010964.

RENT A CAR

LUXURIOUS Toyota bus 2016, air-conditioned, 30 passengers, offered for daily/monthly/annually. Muscat. Contact: 98080609, 96316269.

FOR SALE

A TWO stories villa in a separate land in Southern Ghubrah, in front of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. For more details, please contact the following numbers: 77331311 or 96559696 on WhatsApp only.

Now get news on the go

To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER, WhatsApp <your name> to **96473232**

Now get news on the go

To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER, WhatsApp <your name> to **96473232**

OMAN OBSERVER www.omanobserver.om

we shall overcome

Observer

86 new Covid-19 cases in Oman, Muscat crosses 1,000 mark



OMAN OBSERVER
Observer

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
 m.alrahdhi86@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
 wadiameeh@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
 bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
 nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

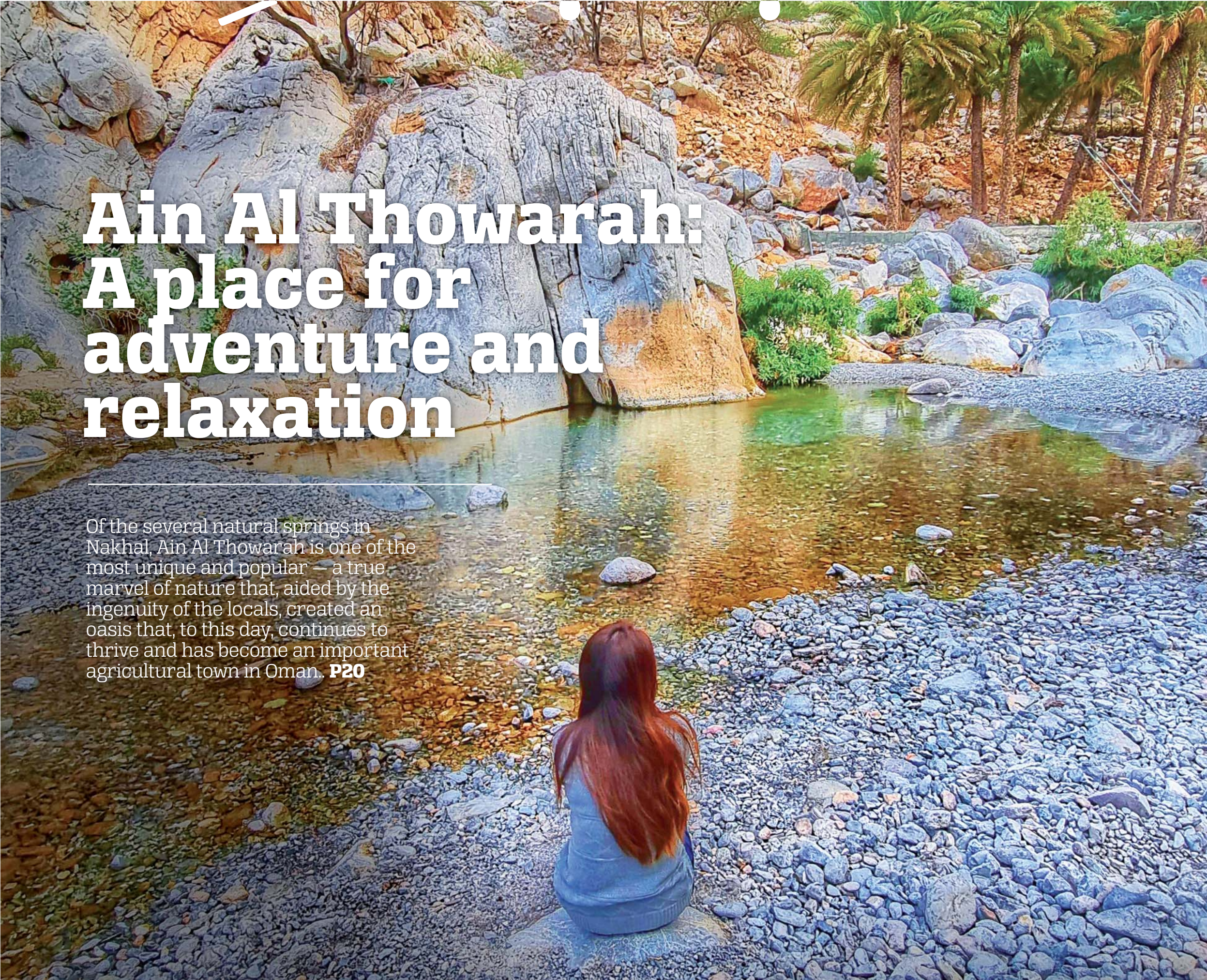
Suhar Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
 sohardaily@outlook.com



YouTube Instagram Facebook Twitter @omanobserver www.omanobserver.om

ramadhan



Ain Al Thowarah: A place for adventure and relaxation

Of the several natural springs in Nakhal, Ain Al Thowarah is one of the most unique and popular – a true marvel of nature that, aided by the ingenuity of the locals, created an oasis that, to this day, continues to thrive and has become an important agricultural town in Oman. **P20**



QURAN VERSE OF THE DAY

Say, [O Muhammad], "If you should love Allah, then follow me, [so] Allah will love you and forgive you your sins. And Allah is Forgiving and Merciful."

Surah Aali 'Imran

HADITH A GUIDE FOR THE FAITHFUL

Abu Barza al Aslami said, "I said, 'Messenger of Allah, show me an action by which I will enter the Garden!' He said, 'Remove harmful things from people's path.'"

HEALTH TIPS

Try not to rely on Iftar to meet all of your nutritional needs if you want a balanced diet. Before going to bed, you may eat some dried fruit and nuts, a whole-wheat cheese sandwich, or another light meal. Don't forget to consume your Suhoor, which may consist of whole wheat bread, some lentils, and a glass of low-fat milk.

The Companion of the Two Gardens

ALLAH THE ALMIGHTY SAYS:
And present to them an example of two men: We granted to one of them two gardens of grapevines, and We bordered them with palm trees and placed between them [fields of] crops. Each of the two gardens produced its fruit and did not fall short thereof in anything. And We caused to gush forth within them a river. And he had fruit, so he said to his companion while he was conversing with him, "I am greater than you in wealth and mightier in [numbers of] men." And

he entered his garden while he was unjust to himself. He said, "I do not think that this will perish - ever. And I do not think the Hour will occur. And even if I should be brought back to my Lord, I will surely find better than this as a return." His companion said to him while he was conversing with him, "Have you disbelieved in He who created you from dust and then from a sperm-drop and then proportioned you [as] a man? But as for me, He is Allah, my Lord, and I do not associate with my Lord anyone. And why did you, when you entered your garden, not say, 'What Allah willed [has occurred]; there is no power except in Allah.'? Although you see me less than you in wealth and children, It may be that my Lord will give me [something] better than your garden and will send upon it a calamity from the sky, and it will become a smooth, dusty ground, Or its water will become sunken [into the earth], so you would never be able to seek it." And his fruits were encompassed [by ruin], so he began to turn his hands about [in dismay] over what he had spent on it, while it had collapsed upon its trellises, and said, "Oh, I wish I had not associated with my Lord anyone." And there was for him no company to aid him other than Allah, nor could

he defend himself. There the authority is [completely] for Allah, the Truth. He is best in reward and best in outcome.] Surah Al Kahf

THERE WERE TWO FRIENDS one was rich and the other was poor. The poorer friend lived in the path of Allah, and contributed most of his assets towards charity, thus living a very simple and frugal existence.

The rich companion owned two lush gardens of grapes, date palms, and cultivated crops, and the gardens consistently bore abundant varieties of healthy produce. Rivers and streams flow in between the two gardens, providing ample fresh water to irrigate the farmland. The two fertile gardens continuously yielded magnificent harvests without fail and thus became a reliable source of great income for its owner.

The abundance of wealth made the richer companion arrogant and diverted him from the path of Allah. He took great pride in his abundant crops, financial and social strength, and the respect that he commanded from his peers.

He used to spend many hours in the two gardens, marvelling at his accomplishments, being

boastful and arrogant. He frequently boasted of his wealth to his companion. His boastful attitude also extended to his children, who outnumbered his companions. His conceit, in calculating his material accomplishments, made him look down on the poor.

He became so dazzled by his wealth, that arrogance, pride, and disbelief blinded his heart. He felt secure and invincible with his vast possessions and the status they brought him. He began to formulate the view that his garden was indestructible, and would never perish.

He felt so secure in his materialistic cocoon that he even began to deny the coming of the Day of Judgment or the concept of resurrection before his Lord.

He rationalised that even if the Day of Judgment existed, he would be granted an even better garden. He was deceived into thinking that the worldly favours bestowed on him by his Lord were because of his superiority over others and that it would extend to the Hereafter.

His poorer companion tried to counsel him to be more grounded and humble. He reminded his rich friend of his lowly origin that applied to all human beings.

The poorer companion was never aggrieved that he was not as rich or bestowed with as many children as his rich friend. He accepted this as this from Allah, realising there existed higher wisdom in it in this world and in the hereafter in what Allah granted or withheld from him.

He was also acutely aware of the temporary and fleeting nature of any material accomplishments, and that Allah can bestow or deny in the blink of an eye.

Therefore, he continued reminding his friend not to place too much emphasis on his material accumulations, for these were all subject to his Lord's determination.

One day, the rich man awoke to find his garden completely ruined. All the years of hard work and cultivation were obliterated overnight, all his crops were destroyed, and the water in the river had been sucked back into the ground. He regretted his actions.

To his dismay, he found that none of his friends, children, social connections, or in fact anyone, could help him against Allah's will. He was even incapable of defending himself against Allah.

STORIES FROM THE QURAN



RECIPE

This Ramadhan, why not give Egyptian Koshari a try?



EGYPTIANS AROUND the world are celebrating the holy month of Ramadhan, a time of spiritual reflection, charity, and family gatherings. And with Ramadhan comes the opportunity to enjoy the most popular dish of the season: Koshari.

Koshari is a traditional Egyptian dish that has been enjoyed for generations. It's a hearty, filling meal that is perfect for breaking the fast during Ramadhan. Made from a combination of rice, lentils, macaroni, and chickpeas, Koshari is a delicious, satisfying meal that is both vegetarian and budget-friendly. The recipe for Koshari is relatively simple. Here's how to make it:

INGREDIENTS:
1 cup of rice
1 cup of lentils
1 cup of macaroni
1 cup of chickpeas
1 onion, finely chopped
2 cloves of garlic, minced
2 tablespoons of olive oil
1 tablespoon of cumin
Salt and pepper to taste
Hot sauce to taste (optional)

DIRECTIONS:
Cook the rice, lentils, macaroni, and chickpeas separately, according to their individual instructions.

In a large skillet, heat the olive oil over medium heat. Add the onion and garlic and sauté until the onion is translucent.

Add the cumin, salt, and pepper to the skillet and stir well.

Add the cooked rice, lentils, macaroni, and chickpeas to the skillet and stir until they are well combined.

Serve hot, with hot sauce if desired.

Koshari is a staple of Egyptian cuisine and a beloved dish during Ramadhan. It's a hearty, nutritious meal that is perfect for breaking the fast and sharing with family and friends. So, as you gather with loved ones this Ramadhan, why not give Koshari a try?



Egypt Ranks Among Top Countries with Most Muslim Population

EGYPT HAS LONG been considered one of the most significant countries in the Islamic world, both historically and culturally. With a population of over 100 million, Egypt is home to one of the largest Muslim populations in the world.

According to recent data from the Pew Research Centre, Egypt ranks among the top countries with the highest Muslim population. The report shows that Indonesia leads the list with approximately 230 million Muslims, followed by Pakistan with over 180 million, and India with over 170 million. Egypt ranks fourth with an estimated 95 million Muslims, making up around 90 per cent of the country's population.

Islam has played a crucial role in shaping Egypt's history and identity. The country is home to numerous mosques and Islamic landmarks, including the Al-Azhar Mosque, one of the oldest

and most prestigious Islamic universities in the world. Egypt is also the birthplace of several influential Islamic scholars, such as Imam Shaf'i and Ibn Rushd (also known as Averroes).

Despite its significant Muslim population, Egypt is a secular state that values religious freedom and tolerance. The country's constitution guarantees the right to freedom of belief and worship for all citizens, regardless of their religious affiliation.

However, in recent years, Egypt has faced challenges related to religious extremism and terrorism. The government has taken measures to combat these issues, including increasing security measures and cracking down on extremist groups.

As Egypt continues to grapple with these challenges, its Muslim population remains a vital and integral part of the country's rich

cultural and historical heritage.

HISTORY OF ISLAM IN EGYPT
Egypt has a rich history of Islamic culture, spanning over 1,400 years since the religion was first introduced to the country in the 7th century. Today, Islam remains the predominant religion in Egypt, with an estimated 90 per cent of the population being Muslim.

The arrival of Islam in Egypt is traced back to the Arab conquest led by Amr Ibn al-As, a companion of the Prophet Muhammad, in 640 AD. The Muslim rule brought with it significant changes, including the construction of mosques, the introduction of Arabic as the official language, and the spread of Islamic values and teachings.

During the Islamic Golden Age, Egypt became a centre for learning and scholarship. Scholars and intellectuals from across the Muslim world flocked

to Cairo, the capital of Egypt, to study at the Al Azhar University, which is one of the oldest universities in the world.

Today, Egypt is home to several important Islamic landmarks and attractions, including the Mosque of Ibn Tulun, one of the oldest mosques in Egypt, and the Al-Hussein Mosque, which is considered one of the holiest sites in the country.

As the holy month of Ramadhan approaches, Muslims in Egypt are preparing to observe the annual fast, which involves abstaining from food and drink from sunrise to sunset. The month of Ramadhan is also a time for spiritual reflection and worship, with many Muslims increasing their charitable contributions and performing additional prayers.

In Egypt, it is common for families and friends to gather together for the pre-dawn meal known as Suhoor and the post-sunset meal known as iftar. These meals often include traditional Egyptian dishes such as ful medames (fava beans) and ta'meya (Egyptian falafel).

Another significant tradition during Ramadhan in Egypt is the recitation of the Quran. Many mosques hold nightly Taraweeh Prayers, which involve reciting portions of the Quran over the course of the month.

Overall, the Muslim community in Egypt has a rich history and tradition that continues to shape the country's culture and society today, particularly during the holy month of Ramadhan.

Basquiat-Warhol: a rare artistic duo, reunited in Paris

THERE ARE VANISHINGLY few great collaborations in the annals of fine art. For a brief moment in the 1980s, Andy Warhol and Jean-Michel Basquiat showed the world how it was done.

It started with a bang. Warhol, 54, met Basquiat, 22, for lunch in October 1982 and took a polaroid of them together.

Basquiat took it to his studio and returned just two hours later with a portrait. Warhol was stunned by its brilliance.

Soon they were working together on portraits that combined their favoured tropes: Basquiat's masks, skulls, graffiti and obscure symbols; Warhol's pop-art imagery, logos and newspaper headlines.

The brief, intense collaboration lasted from 1983 to 1985 and produced some 160 works.

An unprecedented number of them — 70 — have been brought together for a show at the Louis Vuitton Foundation in Paris that opens on Wednesday, mostly plucked from private collections.

"It's definitely the most successful col-

laboration in the history of art between two great artists. It's never been matched at this level or in this short space of time," said Dieter Buchhart, the show's lead curator and a Basquiat expert.

In room after room, two different aesthetics, generations and temperaments collide — and find an unexpected synergy.

"It is neither Warhol, nor Basquiat, but a third artist that emerges," said Suzanne Page, the museum's artistic director.

"There was a great generosity between the two. They played with and provoked each other," she said. "Warhol allowed himself to be completely subverted by Basquiat's interventions."

At their best, it is hard to tell where one artist begins and the other ends, as in the monumental, 10-metre-long (33 feet) "African Masks".

Others are unexpected: "Ten Punching Bags", never shown in their lifetimes, has the bags suspended in a line and decorated with the face of Jesus Christ inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's "The Last Supper", drawn by Warhol with the



word "judge" and a crown of thorns added by Basquiat.

Cartoonist Keith Haring, a close friend of both — and who makes a cameo in the exhibition — praised their collaboration at the time as a "conversation in painting".

But there were doubters as well. Many felt portraits should be the singular vision of an individual artist.

Their supporters saw the two artists more like great jazz musicians, riffing off each other. Basquiat was inspired by the

master, Warhol was reinvigorated by his young friend.

"It released an incredible energy," said Page, and on a more straightforward level, they shared an intuitive genius for composition and combining colours.

If Basquiat was the more serious, the more socially engaged — "carried by anger" at the invisibility of black people — Warhol was not as detached as he sometimes came across.

"He accepted the social engagement side of Basquiat, and shared it," Page

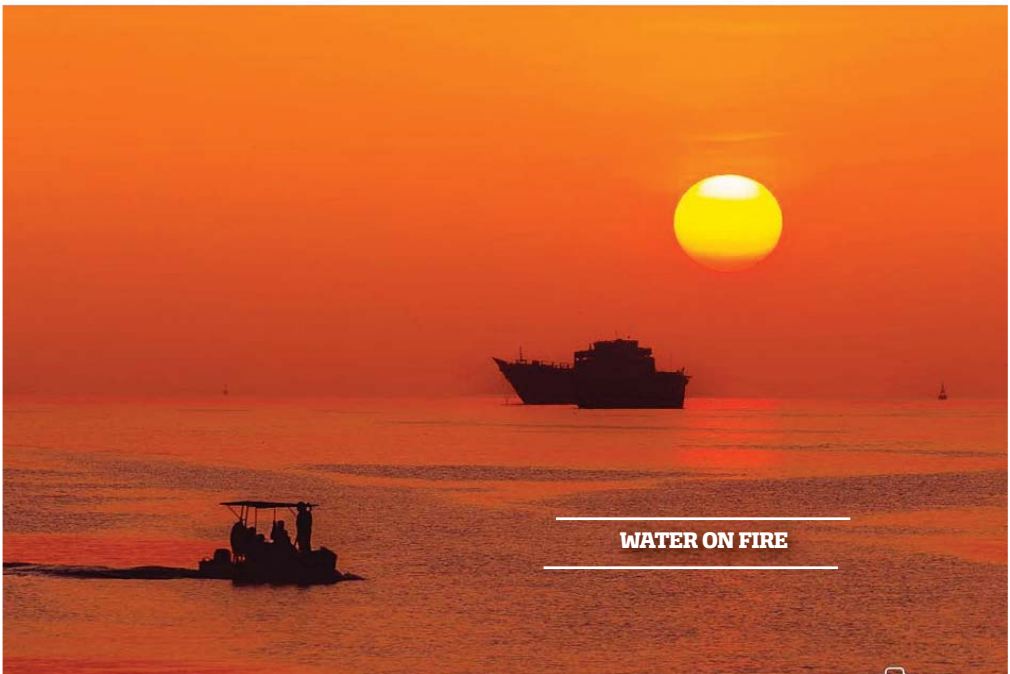
said. "Warhol was engaged too, in his own way. He was a very complex creature."

What might have been seen as insolence in Basquiat's approach — scrawling over works that Warhol had left around his Factory studio, for example — was totally accepted by the elder artist.

Their collaboration ended happily. But within two years both were dead — Warhol following routine surgery and Basquiat from a heroin overdose. Already global superstars, their fame would only continue to grow. — **AFP**

 **sushants_photography**
Salalah, Oman

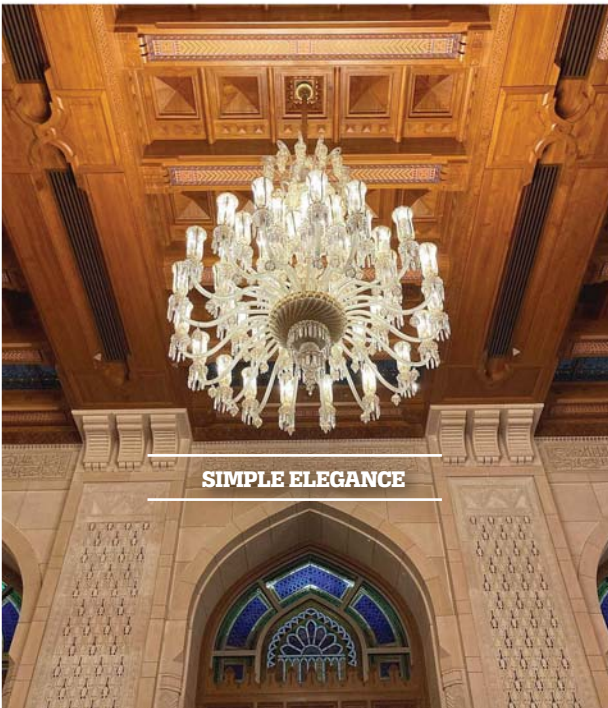
Follow



WATER ON FIRE

 **theflossymind**
Muscat, Oman

Follow



SIMPLE ELEGANCE

 **whisk_and_zoom**
Al Batinah North Governorate

Follow



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use **#OmanObserver** and **#BeAnObserver**.



AROUND THE WORLD

ENTERTAINMENT

My Neighbour Totoro, Paul Mescal, Jodie Comer win at Olivier awards



A STAGE ADAPTATION of Studio Ghibli's 1988 animated film "My Neighbour Totoro" was the big winner at the Olivier Awards on Sunday, picking up six prizes at Britain's top theatre extravaganza.

The Royal Shakespeare Company's (RSC) critically acclaimed production, based on the much-loved film by Japanese animator Hayao Miyazaki about two sisters who discover friendly forest spirits when they move to a new country house with their father in post-war Japan, had led nominations with nine nods.

It won best entertainment or comedy play as well as the director, set, lighting, sound and costume design category prizes.

"My Neighbour Totoro' is a story about kindness, courage and imagination and we will forever be grateful for the kindness, courage and imagination of the extraordinary people that came together to make this production," Griselda Yorke, executive producer at the RSC, said.

A revival of Tennessee Williams' "A Streetcar Named Desire" won three awards at the event that celebrates the best shows in the capital and is named after the famed British actor Laurence Olivier.

It won best revival, best actor for Paul Mescal for his role as Stanley Kowalski and best actress in a supporting role for Anjana Vasan, for her portrayal of Stella.

"I just have to thank Tennessee Williams really ... he gave us magic instead of realism and that's what we all needed," director Rebecca Frecknall, who last year won best director for "Cabaret," said.

"Standing at the Sky's Edge," about three families living for a period of over 60 years in a council housing estate in the English city of Sheffield, won best new musical and best original score or new orchestrations for musician Richard Hawley and composer Tom Deering.

"Killing Eve" star Jodie Comer won best actress in one-woman play "Prima Facie," in which she portrays a barrister who defends men accused of sexual assault before herself being assaulted. The production was named best new play and the 30-year-old, who won rave reviews for her West End debut, reprises the role on Broadway this month.

"This play has changed my life so much," she said in her acceptance speech.

A new production of Rodgers and Hammerstein's "Oklahoma!" won best musical revival and best actor in a musical for Arthur Darvill. Katie Brayben won the best actress equivalent for musical "Tammy Faye."

Other honourees included veteran actor and two-time Olivier winner Derek Jacobi, who was given a lifetime achievement award.

"It feels wonderful particularly to be given an award in his name, because he was a vital part of my early career," Jacobi said of Olivier. — Reuters

LIFESTYLE

Ghosts in their machines: Thai livestream spooks a new generation



IT IS ALMOST MIDNIGHT, and above a semi-abandoned Bangkok shopping centre, Ghost Radio is on air. Rapid-fire comments ping across the studio's screens as thousands tune in online to hear callers describe their encounters with Thailand's supernatural.

Belief in spirits runs deep in the kingdom, which has a celebrated canon of ghosts from individuals like Mae Nak, a woman who haunted her village after dying in childbirth, to more sinister creatures like krasue — bodyless women who float through the night looking to devour flesh.

Now these ancient tales are being reinvented through online platforms like YouTube, TikTok, WhatsApp and even delivery app Grab.

"She met a man in a white suit who told her that her time was up, and that she had to go with him," the first caller recounts, her voice quavering.

"But when she turned back, she could see her body lying in bed."

In the studio, host Watcharapol Fukjaidee listens patiently, gently prying out details. The charismatic 46-year-old, also known by his nickname Jack, films two live episodes a week from 11 pm to dawn, fielding calls from spooked Thais as millions tune in and thousands comment online.

"When there is more technology, the chance to see ghosts increases," he says.

"Ghosts come with apps, chat lines, phone calls. Technology becomes the channel where they can contact people."

Watcharapol recounted a caller who was contacted by a distant friend, asking him to meet at a temple, but when he got there he made a chilling discovery.

"It turns out that his friend had died and his phone was put into the coffin," he says, raising his eyebrows, a mischievous chuckle lurking.

GHOSTLY MEET-UPS

The host got his break 20 years ago under Thailand's "godfather of ghosts" Kapol Thongplub, whose late-night call-in show was a favourite with the capital's taxi drivers.

It is now food delivery riders rather than cabbies who frequently encounter the supernatural as they endlessly crisscross Bangkok

channel has almost three million subscribers and is sponsored by various local firms as well as pulling income from the themed cafe on the ground floor.

Watched over by an eclectic collection of ghost-themed toys, Khemjira sifts through scores of submissions, weeding out political stories or anything that might touch the kingdom's tough laws against insulting the monarchy. Not every tale makes it on air, but Khemjira is confident the people telling them believe them to be true.

"I think people meet ghosts a lot. We hardly ever hear the same story," she says.

SCARED TO DEATH

As Watcharapol listens upstairs, downstairs his cafe is raucous with young fans and families.

Munching on a tombstone-shaped brownie, 25-year-old policeman and regular caller Chalwat Thungood explained how he shares his colleagues' tales.

His own spooky experience came on a call out to a house.

As he arrived he glimpsed the shadow of an overweight man walk into a bathroom.

He struggled to open the door — until suddenly it gave way.

"I found a big man who had been dead for at least five hours.

It proved to me that I saw a spirit of the big man walking into the bathroom," he said.

"I 100 per cent believe that ghosts exist."

Watcharapol refuses to be drawn on whether he actually believes, stating he has to maintain an open mind before admitting he is "scared to death" of hospital ghosts. People tune in to his show, he says, to find a like-minded community "because sometimes they can't speak to their family about their ghostly experiences".

Lit up by the multiple screens in his plush studio, Watcharapol says: "No one can prove it is real except the caller."

And then he grins. — AFP

DISCOVERY

Those protruding T Rex teeth? They were covered by lips: study



SORRY, JURASSIC PARK and toymakers everywhere.

Tyrannosaurus rex probably did not have those exposed jagged teeth.

The fearsome choppers of arguably the most celebrated of dinosaurs were likely covered by lips when the mouth was closed.

It's not an open and shut case, but that's the conclusion of a team of international researchers whose findings are published on Thursday in the journal Science.

"Animals like T-Rex, theropod dinosaurs, most likely had some sort of lips, like a soft tissue covering on their mouth to cover their teeth," said one of the authors of the study, Thomas Cullen, an assistant professor of paleobiology at Auburn University.

"This is different than what a lot of prior assumptions had been — which was that they looked more like crocodiles, having the teeth exposed when the mouths were closed and having no lips."

To reach their conclusion, Cullen and the other researchers studied a range of different theropods from various museums and followed several lines of inquiry.

They looked at wear patterns, for example, on the enamel of dinosaur teeth and crocodilians, the most closely related animals to theropods alive today.

"We did that because enamel, as some people have been told by their dentists, has to stay healthy and stay hydrated in order to remain healthy," Cullen said. "If it's exposed to air for too long it gets brittle, is more likely to crack or get diseased."

Cullen said the enamel on the outer sides of the teeth of living crocodilians wears down faster than that on the insides because they don't have lips.

"When we looked at enamel thickness on the inside and outside of the teeth in large Tyrannosaurs, they don't show that pattern like a crocodile," he said.

"They show a pattern more like an animal that has lips," he said. "Their enamel thickness is the same on the outer side and on the inner side."

TEETH TOO BIG FOR THE MOUTH?

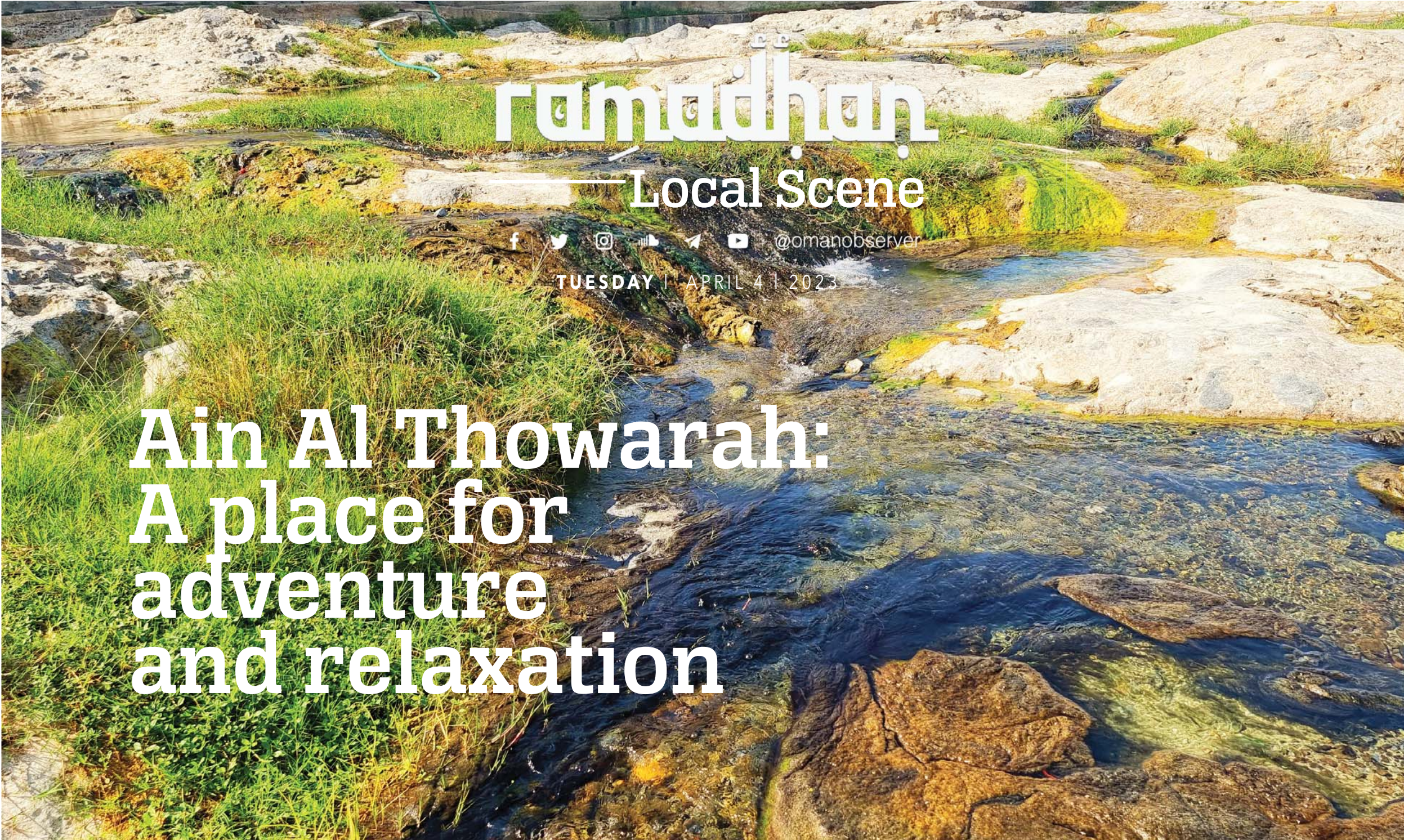
The researchers also studied whether T-Rex's teeth may have simply been too big to fit in the dinosaur's mouth, comparing them to a number of present-day lizards that have lips.

"Some of the monitor lizards today have absolutely massive teeth," Cullen said. "It looks almost unbelievable that those teeth could be fully covered in lips and yet they are."

"And we found that sort of relationship, that scaling relationship, is almost identical in theropod dinosaurs."

As for how the findings will affect popular depictions of theropods, Cullen said the blockbuster "Jurassic Park" franchise "did a great job at the beginning of trying to stick with what was known at the time."

"But it's gone pretty off the rails since then in terms of any attempt to stick to accurate depictions of dinosaurs," he added. — AFP



By Yeru Ebuén
Instagram: @yru_here

Nestled at the foothills of Oman's beautiful mountains, Nakhal is a hidden gem that offers an amazing escape for travellers seeking adventure and relaxation.

It is a year-round destination boasting natural beauty and cultural heritage. Its long history that spans centuries is eye-opening for everyone seeking enlightenment and knowledge and is an entertaining and educational destination as not only did it become a vital stronghold for the Al Ya'ariba dynasty in the 17th century, but it also witnessed significant development and is now home to beautiful forts, ancient structures, and ruins showcasing its important place in Oman's history.

Surrounded by towering mountains that offer a stunning backdrop to the town's beautiful landscapes, one of the top attractions in Nakhal is its natural springs that offer relief

perse the water throughout the area. Over time, Ain Al Thowarah became a hub for agriculture, where crops like dates, bananas, and papayas are grown in abundance.

With the Nakhal Fort towering nearby, even those who built and lived at the fort may have been dependent on its waters for bathing and home use.

Beyond its history, Ain Al Thowarah continues to attract adventure seekers to this day. Surrounded by stunning natural beauty, its towering cliffs, rugged mountains, and lush vegetation are perfect for enthusiasts to engage in activities like hiking, rock climbing, and wildlife spotting.

In fact, Ain Al Thowarah and the nearby date plantations have been a muse to several photographers, and images of the area have graced exhibitions across the country.

The winter season, from December to February, is the best time to visit Ain Al Thowarah. Temperatures range from 20 to 25 degrees Celsius, which is mild and



in the usually humid and hot desert climate of Oman. The warm waters of its springs are believed to have therapeutic properties, and to this day, locals can be seen bathing in these springs both for leisure and wellness.

Of the several natural springs, Ain Al Thowarah is one of the most unique and popular—a true marvel of nature that, aided by the ingenuity of the locals, created an oasis that, to this day, continues to thrive and has become an important agricultural town in Oman.

While it's hard to pinpoint the exact date of the discovery of Ain Al Thowarah, locals believe that its history can be traced back to ancient times as the natural spring has flowed all year round, even during the dry season.

Realising the importance of the spring, the inhabitants of the area started constructing a sophisticated network of falaj and pools to dis-

comfortable. It can also be visited at other times of the year, but prepare for a hotter climate, especially during the summer.

Today, a visit to Nakhal and Ain Al Thowarah has been elevated with several local attractions, including cafes and restaurants built on the location that cater to people who would like to experience local tastes and flavours.

On some weekends, the spring also hosts impromptu festivals as locals living in the surrounding areas bring with them their drums and musical instruments and showcase some of the traditional music usually played during small celebrations.

Whether you enjoy hiking, climbing, or just a hardcore nature lover, there is something for everyone in Nakhal and Ain Al Thowarah. And with its off-the-beaten-path location, you'll have the opportunity to experience a side of Oman that few visitors ever see.

