

Eid al Adha holiday announced

As per the Royal orders of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, it was decided that Eid al Adha holiday for employees of the departments of the state administrative apparatus and other legal entities, as well as private sector establishments will begin from Sunday, Dhul Hijjah 8, 1442 AH, corresponding to July 18 till July 22. Therefore, work will resume on Sunday (July 25). The decision allows employers and employees to agree on work arrangements to compensate this holiday, if necessity arises. — ONA



HM, SAUDI KING REVIEW RELATIONS

VISIT GIVES IMPETUS TO COOPERATION AND JOINT COORDINATION

OMANI-SAUDI COORDINATION COUNCIL ESTABLISHED

- Opens horizons towards realisation of aspirations
- Aspects of cooperation continue to gain grounds

NEOM: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of Saudi Arabia, held a round of official talks at Neom Palace here on Sunday.

At the outset of the talks, the Saudi monarch expressed his warm welcome to His Majesty the Sultan and commended the solid foundation of bilateral relations

and the strong ties between the two countries. King Salman lauded the progress made in all spheres, noting that this visit will give impetus to bilateral cooperation and joint coordination.

In turn, His Majesty the Sultan affirmed that Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, is progressing with firm confidence and shaping a brighter future.

His Majesty the Sultan pointed out that relations between the Sultanate and Saudi Arabia are based on strong bonds of history and affinity. Various aspects of bilateral cooperation continue to gain grounds, which opens wider horizons towards the realization of aspirations of Omani and Saudi peoples, His Majesty the Sultan said.

The two leaders expressed

their full satisfaction with joint coordination and understanding about issues of common concern, notably recent developments in the regional and international arenas in light of global events.

King Salman hosted at Neom Palace a luncheon in honour of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on the occasion of His Majesty's visit to the Kingdom.

— ONA

- Relations based on strong bonds of history
- Progress made in all spheres lauded



HM and King Salman exchange Orders

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of Saudi Arabia, exchanged Orders at Neom Palace on Sunday evening. His Majesty the Sultan conferred the “Al Said Order”, considered the loftiest Omani medal, on King Salman. Meanwhile, King Salman conferred on His Majesty the Sultan the “Order of King Abdulaziz”, the highest Saudi order of merit granted to monarchs and heads of state. The ceremony was attended by a number of senior officials and dignitaries from both sides. — ONA





OMAN-SAUDI TIES
A PROMISING FUTURE



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OMAN-SAUDI TIES A PROMISING FUTURE



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HM accorded grand welcome in Saudi

NEOM: The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), received at Neom Palace on Sunday His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, who arrived here on a two-day state visit to the Kingdom.

Upon His Majesty the Sultan's arrival at Neom Palace, King Salman led the welcoming party. Then, the two leaders took Arabian coffee and exchanged cordial talks, reviewing the strong relations binding the Sultanate and the Kingdom in light of their joint visions.

The meeting was attended from the Omani side by members of the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan, namely HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs,

Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court,

General Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office,

Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior,

Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister,

Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology,

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion,

Abdulsalam bin Mohammed



al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), and HH Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, the Sultanate's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

It was attended from the Saudi side by Prince Mohammed bin Salman al Saud, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and

Minister of Defence, Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud al Saud, Minister of Interior (Head of Mission of Honour), Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud, Foreign Minister, Dr Musaad bin Mohammed al Aiban, Minister of State and member of the Council of Ministers, and Dr Majid bin

Abdullah al Qasabi, Minister of Commerce.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq arrived in Neom city on Sunday. Upon his arrival at Neom Bay Airport, His Majesty was received by Prince Mohammed bin Salman al Saud, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister

and Minister of Defence in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

His Majesty the Sultan was accorded an official welcome ceremony. When the Royal aircraft entered the airspace of Saudi Arabia, it was escorted by warplanes from the Saudi Air Defence Force. As the aircraft came to a halt at

the designated place at Neom Airport, His Majesty the Sultan was accorded an official welcome. Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman, who led the welcoming party, greeted His Majesty the Sultan at the aircraft ladder, along with Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud al Saud, Minister of Interior (Head of the Mission of Honour).

Then, Prince Mohammed bin Salman accompanied His Majesty the Sultan to the dais, flanked by two columns of the Guard of Honour. The Omani Royal Anthem and the Saudi National Anthem were played to the accompaniment of a 21-gun salute, while military aircraft passed over the airport quarter, in a resounding salutation to His Majesty the Sultan.

After that, His Majesty the Sultan headed to the Royal Hall, where coffee was served in the presence of the Saudi Crown Prince and top officials and dignitaries.

Meanwhile, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman welcomed the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan, accompanied by the Saudi Crown Prince, joined the motorcade, which took them to Neom Palace, escorted by a cluster of motorbikes from the Royal Protocols. When the motorcade arrived, the cavalry lined both sides of the road in manifestation of warm welcome for His Majesty the Sultan. — ONA





OMAN-SAUDI TIES A PROMISING FUTURE



MOU SIGNED TO ESTABLISH OMANI-SAUDI COORDINATION COUNCIL



NEOM: Within the context of the state visit of His Majesty the Sultan to Saudi Arabia, the Omani and Saudi governments signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) here on Sunday to set up an Omani-Saudi Coordination Council, in the presence of the Custodian of Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud and His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq.

The MoU was signed on the Omani side by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy and his Saudi counterpart, Prince Faisal bin Farhan al Saud.

The signing of the MoU stems from the directives of the two countries' monarchs for consultation and coordination between the two countries on matters of common concern. It is also aimed at enhancing and expanding cooperation between the Sultanate and Saudi Arabia, which are expected to sign more agreements and memorandums to serve their joint interest.

The two countries hope that the coordination council will promote existing cooperation and joint projects with a view to achieving full integration in various spheres.

The ceremony was attended by senior officials from the Saudi and Omani sides. — ONA





OMAN-SAUDI TIES A PROMISING FUTURE



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HM, Saudi King review relations

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noting that this visit will give impetus to bilateral cooperation and joint coordination.

In turn, His Majesty the Sultan affirmed that Saudi Arabia, under the leadership of the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques, is progressing with firm confidence and shaping a brighter future. His Majesty the Sultan pointed out that relations between the Sultanate and Saudi Arabia are based on strong bonds of history and affinity. Various aspects of bilateral cooperation continue to gain grounds, which opens wider

THE TWO LEADERS EXPRESSED THEIR FULL SATISFACTION WITH JOINT COORDINATION AND UNDERSTANDING ABOUT ISSUES OF COMMON CONCERN, NOTABLY RECENT DEVELOPMENTS IN THE REGIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL ARENAS IN LIGHT OF GLOBAL EVENTS

horizons towards the realisation of aspirations of Omani and Saudi peoples, His Majesty the Sultan said.

The two leaders expressed their full satisfaction with joint coordination and understanding about issues of common concern,

notably recent developments in the regional and international arenas in light of global events.

The talks session was attended from the Omani side by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid

bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of Royal Office, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, and Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister.

WARM WELCOME

Earlier, King Salman received at Neom Palace His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, who arrived here on a two-day state visit to the Kingdom.

Upon His Majesty the Sultan's

arrival at Neom Palace, King Salman led the welcoming party. Then, the two leaders took Arabian coffee and exchanged cordial talks, reviewing the strong relations binding the Sultanate and the Kingdom in light of their joint visions.

It is worth mentioning that His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq was received upon arrival at Neom Bay Airport by Prince Mohammed bin Salman al Saud, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence in Saudi Arabia.



Ministers explore cooperation in commercial, investment fields

NEOM: As part of the programme of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq's current visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, ministers from both sides held meetings during which they explored ways of enhancing cooperation in commercial and investment fields.

In this context, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), held a meeting with Khalid al Faleh, Saudi Minister of Investment.

ECONOMIC ZONES AND PORTS

During the meeting, the two sides identified broad lines of cooperation based on empowering their private sectors. It touched on some projects that are capable of consolidating economic integration. Al Murshidi told Oman News Agency (ONA) that it was agreed to form a joint action team between the OIA and its Saudi counterpart. The team will be entrusted to conduct preliminary studies for the envisaged projects.

Al Murshidi pointed out that the meeting was an opportunity to promote the advantages of economic zones and ports of the Sultanate which, he said, was projected not only as a gateway

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to the East, but also as gateway to Saudi products targeting East Africa.

TRANSPORT AND LOGISTICS

Meanwhile, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, held a meeting with his Saudi counterpart Eng Saleh bin Nasser al Jasser, Minister of Transport and Logistics. The meeting discussed means of enhancing cooperation in the logistics sector through land transport, air transport, railways and the carriageway that will connect the two countries (Ramlat Khaliya

highway).

In a statement to ONA, Eng Al Maawali said that the meeting explored ways of harnessing the Omani-Saudi experience in the field of electronic trade.

COMMERCIAL EXCHANGE

In his turn, Qais bin Mohammed al-Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, met with Dr Majid bin Abdullah al-Qasabi, Minister of Commerce.

The meeting discussed cooperation in commercial and investment fields and envisaged working plans towards this goal.

Al Yousef told ONA that the meeting underscored the importance of consolidating commercial exchange and the flow of business activities between the two countries and agreed to form a working team to undertake this mission.

ROUNDTABLE MEETING

After separate meetings, the Omani and Saudi ministers held a roundtable meeting that focused on some economic feasibility projects.

It was agreed that the OIA and its Saudi counterpart will conduct feasibility studies for joint economic projects. — ONA

ELECTRONIC TENDERS

The Internal Tenders Committee of the Ministry of Higher Education Research & Innovation announced the following tenders:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Company that are entitled to participate	Tender Price	Last Date for purchasing Tender	The deadline for submission of Tenders
1/2021 Recall (1)	Providing cleaning services to Ibri Vocational College	Specialized in providing same service and registered with the Tender Board with Grade: Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	25 /= RO	21/07/2021	31/07/2021
03/2021 Recall (1)	Providing cleaning services to Saham Vocational College	Specialized in providing same service and registered with the Tender Board with Grade: Excellent, First, Second, Third, Fourth	25 /= RO	21/07/2021	31/07/2021

The purchasing of the tender documents by E-Tendering system will starting on Monday 12/07/2021 at 07:30 am. To purchasing, please visit the following link:
<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om/>

All companies that are bidding must provide a bank guarantee or a certified cheque from a bank operating in the Sultanate for at least (1%) of the tender value on behalf of His Excellency Dr. / Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee.

Preference will be given to companies' or small and medium enterprises registered with the General Authority for the development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) that includes the largest proportion of its tender Omization.

Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest or any other tender.

Chairman of tender committee
Ministry of Higher Education Research & Innovation

إعلان مناقصة Tender Notice

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology
In AL Khuwair invites for the Following Project:

TENDER NO	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
(MTCIT/HQ-18/18/2021)	DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF AN AT-GRADE JUNCTION TO REPLACE AN EXISTING ROUNDABOUT ON KARSHA – IZZ EXISTING ASPHALT ROAD (AL DAKHILIYYA GOVERNORATE)	12/07/2021	26/07/2021	9/08/2021	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE TENDER BOARD IN (FIRST CLASS)	(27/-) TWENTY SEVEN OMANI RIAL NON- REFUNDABLE

Interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document. Tenders should be submitted online on given website. The Tenderer should enclose scan copy of Bank Guarantee issued by local bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of (1%) of the Tender value validity for (90) days, and addressed to (Chairman of the Internal Tender Committee). And hard copy of the same should be submitted manually to the Tenders Section, Tenders and Contracts Department (1st Floor), Ministry of Transport Building at Al Khuwair before 11:00 am on submission date.

CORRESPONDANCE:

- Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
- E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:
Tel: +968 24166670, e-mail : etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

INTERNAL TENDER COMMITTEE

@mtcitoman www.mtcit.gov.om



OMAN-SAUDI TIES A PROMISING FUTURE



HM’s visit to deepen cooperation

SAMUEL KUTTY

@samkuttyvp

The relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia have touched a new peak forged by appreciation and respect of the leadership and people of these two brotherly countries.

With the objective of consolidating the bonds of fraternal ties and making the best use of cooperation in various aspects, the current discussions between His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud will see greater dimensions with more joint actions.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik’s trip to Saudi Arabia is his first foreign visit to the Kingdom after taking office in January 2020 and the second meeting with King Salman when he arrived in Muscat to offer his condolences on the death of late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said.

While the relation is cemented by cooperation and mutual respect between the two leaderships over a period of half a century, peoples of the two countries share common history, authentic Arab customs and traditions and deep-rooted fraternity.

The two countries have made tangible progress in political, economic, social, cultural and security spheres. It is a renewed evidence that these relations are continuous, open and are expected to see further comprehensive growth.

When it comes to the region, they work closely under the aegis of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC), with a common goal to achieve coordination and integration among member states in various fields.

Ever since he ascended to the throne, His Majesty the Sultan emphasised his determination to work in close coordination with his brethren, GCC states, for the realisation of achievements that respond to the aspirations of the people in the region.

His Majesty pledged to continue the approach that Oman has followed in its foreign policy, and its commitment not to interfere in the affairs of other countries, and to advance the process of joint action among the GCC member states.

The Sultanate always supported the Saudi Government vis-à-vis on a variety of issues. The Sultanate welcomed the initiative announced by its neighbour in March 2020 to reach a political settlement of the Yemeni crisis through dialogue with different parties and in cooperation with the UN efforts aimed at realising the desired political settlement in Yemen.

His Majesty’s visit to the Kingdom, as experts point out, as a dear guest of his brother the Saudi King confirms to the bonds of brotherhood on which Omani-Saudi relations are established.

“The visit reflects wisdom, foresight and extrapolation for the future, as it is a testament to the strength and depth of the solid and rooted relations between the two countries”, commented Dr Nayef bin Falah al Majraf, Secretary-General of the GCC.



OMAN AND SAUDI ARABIA HAVE MADE TANGIBLE PROGRESS IN POLITICAL, ECONOMIC, SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND SECURITY SPHERES. IT IS A RENEWED EVIDENCE THAT THESE RELATIONS ARE CONTINUOUS, OPEN AND ARE EXPECTED TO SEE FURTHER COMPREHENSIVE GROWTH

The keenness on exchanging points of view about matters of common concern is reflected in high-level meetings between the leaders and top officials of the two countries.

Omani and Saudi visions are identical in many ways. Both the countries have the necessary ingredients and capabilities that qualify them to establish real economic integration relations, based on Oman’s Vision 2040 and the Kingdom’s Vision 2030.

Both the programmes comprise huge opportunities and projects that can be utilised to make them strong partners in the region, reflecting positively

on the economic status of the two countries in terms of joint investments and job opportunities.

Both countries share common interest in the field of environment, which is considered one of the most significant international issues raised in the agendas of UN organisations.

The Green Middle East initiative announced by Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman represents a promising aspect for cooperation in combating climate change.

Another milestone achievement is the land port project linking the Sultanate and the Kingdom over a distance of more than 680

km. After its inauguration, it will contribute to accelerating and increasing the volume of trade and investment exchange between the two countries.

According to Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Oman’s Foreign Minister, the meeting is likely to witness the launch of a coordination council between the two neighbouring countries.

“The meeting is expected to witness the launch of Omani-Saudi Coordination Council that will act as the framework for several agreements between Muscat and Riyadh”, he said in an interview to *Asharq Al Awsat*.

The minister said that the

council will lead the way for promising logistic projects between the two countries.

The meeting will pave the way for the next phase in cooperation, and that it will likely witness the signing of several agreements and memoranda of understanding in several fields including business, investment, ICT, posts, transport, standardisation, media, youths, sports and culture.

These areas constitute significant pillars in Oman Vision 2040 and Saudi Vision 2030. They will definitely bring a wide range of benefits to the peoples of the two countries.

The talks are also expected to

contribute to resolving pending issues and shaping joint visions and consensus on current regional issues.

They will draw on the great political expertise of the two countries and their diplomatic traditions founded on solid grounds of sound foreign policy.

Yet successive changes in the region are pushing the leaderships of the two neighbouring countries for more cooperation in establishing permanent security and stability to ensure that their positive repercussions are reflected on development programmes in service of their nations.



OMAN-SAUDI TIES A PROMISING FUTURE



7

King Salman hosts luncheon in honour of His Majesty

NEOM: The Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) hosted at Neom Palace on Sunday a luncheon in honour of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on the occasion of His Majesty's visit to the Kingdom.

The luncheon was attended from the Omani side by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of Royal Office, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and HH Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, the Sultanate's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

It was attended from the Saudi side by Prince Mohammed bin Salman al-Saud, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence, Prince Abdulaziz bin Saud al Saud, Minister of Interior (Head of Mission of Honour), Prince Faisal bin Farhan al-Saud, Foreign Minister, Dr Musaad bin Mohammed al Aiban, Minister of State and member of the Council of Ministers, Dr Majid bin Abdullah al Qasabi, Minister of Commerce, Eng Khalid bin Abdulaziz al Faleh, Minister of Investment, Eng Saleh bin Nasser al Jasser, Minister of Transport and Logistics and Abdullah Saud al Anzi, KSA Ambassador to the Sultanate. — ONA



ROYAL VISIT TO CEMENT OMAN-SAUDI TIES

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, JULY 11

Dr Nayef Falah Mubarak al Hajraf, GCC Secretary-General, said that the historic visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and his meeting with King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of Saudi Arabia, cements the deep-rooted ties between the two countries.

The visit also responds to the hopes and aspirations of the peoples of the two states, he said. In A statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), Dr Al Hajraf underscored the significance of the visit, which, he said, reflects the wisdom and farsightedness of the leaders as they strive to enhance joint action.

He wished the GCC leaders success in realising further bounty, prosperity and security for their countries' citizens. Al Hajraf Pointed out that GCC citizens look forward to this visit and appreciate the efforts made by GCC leaders and their keenness on consolidating intra-GCC action and realising their ambitions. "Great Hopes are pinned on the exceptional ties among GCC leaders, their consultations, joint visions, full understanding and keenness to cooperate in all that safeguards the GCC's security and prosperity of its citizens," Dr Al Hajraf said.

Dr Abdel Aziz Aluwaisheg, GCC Assistant Secretary-General for Political



Great hopes are pinned on the exceptional ties among GCC leaders, their consultations, joint visions, full understanding and keenness to cooperate in all that safeguards the GCC's security and prosperity of its citizens

DR NAYEF FALAH
MUBARAK AL HAJRAF

GCC Secretary-General

Affairs and Negotiation, said the near-term priority for both countries continues to be combating the epidemic until the recovery is entrenched.

"Efforts have focused on addressing the health crisis (including vaccine rollout), supporting the recovery, minimising economic scarring, and mitigating risks to financial stability.

To this end, with a substantial recent increase in vaccine supply, vaccine rollout has picked up quickly. Last year, Saudi Arabia adopted a plan to stimulate the economy and help the business sector deal with the pandemic's challenges. Oman adopted an Economic Stimulus Plan in March 2021 to provide substantial support to affected sectors and strengthen the business environment. Both countries, first Saudi Arabia and now Oman, have introduced new taxes to shore up fiscal sustainability," he wrote in *Arab News* ahead of HM's visit to Saudi Arabia.

Dr Aluwaisheg hoped that the Sultan's visit would chart a new path to further their shared interests and align their approaches to regional issues.

"Saudi Arabia and Oman share similar views on regional issues, although their diplomatic styles may differ on some issues. However, the integration of those styles and at times division of labour between them have served them well and contributed to the cause of peace, security and stability in the region."



University of Technology and Applied Sciences COLLEGE OF APPLIED SCIENCES IBRI

Declaration of Tender

University of Technology and Applied Sciences (College of Applied Sciences Ibri) invites Tenders Contractor firms for below tender:

Tender No.	Tender Name	Company than are Entitled to Participate	Tender Price	Last Date for Buying Tender	The Deadline for Submission of Tenders
02/2021	Providing Irrigation and Horticulture Services to the buildings of Ibri College of Applied Sciences	Specialized in providing regained service and registered with the Tender Board	(25/= R.O) Twenty Five Rial Omani	12/08/2021	02/09/2021

Tender Documents can be obtained from Administration & finance Affairs at COLLEGE OF APPLIED SCIENCES IBRI, during normal working days starting from **Tuesday 13/07/2021 where copies will be distributed from 8:30 am to 2 pm.**

All companies must attach with their bid a temporary insurance in the form of bank guarantee or a certified check from a bank operating in the Sultanate of at least (1%) of the tender value addressed to the Chairman of the tender sub-committee and valid for a period of 90 days from the date of bid submission, and every bid that does not meet the required temporary insurance will not be considered. Bids shall be submitted signed and sealed on the form prepared for this and on the table of categories accompanying him in envelopes sealed with red wax and titled in the name of the Chairman of the Tender Sub-committee of College of Applied Sciences Ibri and written on it from the outside the number and name of the tender, provided that the name of the bidder is not written on the envelope or what he refers to it.

The bids must be placed in the bidding box in the department referred to above. Before ten o'clock in the morning of the day specified in the above schedule; The bids submitted after this date will not be taken into consideration, regardless of the reasons for delay.

Preference will be given to attribution to companies or small and medium enterprises registered with the General Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development whose bid includes the largest percentage of Omanisation and a possible purchase of national products.

The university is not restricted to lower acceptance bid.

Chairman of the Tenders Sub-Committee
College of Applied Sciences Ibri



OMAN-SAUDI TIES A PROMISING FUTURE



CITIES OF THE FUTURE NEOM & DUQM

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 11

The port city Duqm in the Sultanate and Saudi Arabia’s planned cross-border city (NEOM) are examples of the economic cities to keep pace with the requirements of the future as both countries seek to focus on economic diversification, attract investments, and provide a new way of living in line with the developments witnessed by the world.

NEOM is an exceptional project that is perceived differently, a city without vehicles, a life without noise. Thus, Neom was planned to be one of the urban models of the future.

The city was announced by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammad bin Salman at the Future Investment Initiative conference in Riyadh in 2017. He said it will operate independently from the existing governmental framework with its own tax and labour laws and an autonomous judicial system.

The initiative emerged from Saudi Vision 2030, a plan that seeks to reduce Saudi Arabia’s dependence on oil, diversify its economy, and develop public service sectors. The city stretches over an area of 26,500 square kilometres, with investments of over \$500 billion.

It is planned that the first phase of the city will be ready in 2025 and that the megaproject will be fully complete over the next 30 to 50 years.

The project highlights NEOM’s never-before-seen approach to 21st-century urban design. People and nature will reclaim the space once occupied by the car and congested roads through infrastructure that works in harmony with the environment, creating vistas of beauty and tranquility.

Communities will be powered by various types of renewable energy, allowing industry back into the heart of communities and creating an environment



free from pollution. This pedestrian-first approach ensures the communities are built around people, not cars, easily accessible and designed for convenience and walkability. Essential services and amenities will be accessible within a five-minute walk.

Infrastructure and support services — including transportation, utilities, digital infrastructure, and logistics — will be seamlessly integrated into dedicated spaces running in an invisible layer along the line.

High-speed transportation will make long commutes a thing of the past, making life simple and stress-free. So far, some infrastructure projects have been completed, including NEOM’s airport, and the construction of the residential area for construction workers, which will accommodate approximately 30,000 workers.

THESE CITIES WILL
POWER THE VISION
OF OMAN AND
SAUDI ARABIA TO
DIVERSIFY
NATIONAL INCOME,
ATTRACT FOREIGN
INVESTMENTS, AND
PROVIDE A NEW
WAY OF LIVING IN
LINE WITH THE
FOCUS ON THE
KNOWLEDGE
ECONOMY

The city will supply carbon-free hydrogen to power buses and trucks around the world by 2025 and eliminate three million tonnes per year (TPY) of CO2 emissions and smog-forming emissions and other pollutants from the equivalent of over 700,000 cars.

The joint venture project with NEOM and ACWA Power is based on proven, world-class technology and will include the innovative integration of over four gigawatts of renewable power from solar, wind and storage; production of 650 tonnes per day of hydrogen by electrolysis using thyssenkrupp technology through Air Products’ exclusive strategic cooperation agreement; production of nitrogen by air separation using Air Products technology; and production of 1.2 million tonnes per year of carbon-free ammonia using Haldor Topsoe technology through Air Products’ global alliance agreement.

DUQM

Duqm Economic Zone will be able to attract investment due to its strategic location and enhance its position as a regional centre for industrial, logistics, commercial, and tourism.

By offering facilities according to the highest standards, the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones is trying to keep pace with the aspirations of investors by providing them land with an integrated package of incentives and facilities.

In addition to the economic role, Duqm is considered one of the tourist attractions due to its atmosphere, charming beaches, and other attractions, including the rock garden.

Duqm hosts a wide range of hotels that provide services to investors and tourists, while work is under way on several new tourism projects.

The Duqm Refinery project, which is being built with Omani-Kuwaiti investments, is one of the projects supporting the petrochemical industries. With a completion rate of over 84 per cent, the project is designed to process crude oil and produce a wide range of oil derivatives.

One of the most important projects is the facility to store oil in large quantities, on an area of 1,600 hectares in Ras Markaz, which has been linked by a set of pipelines.

The total storage capacity is 5 million barrels of crude oil.

On the other side of Duqm, a multi-purpose port has been established to receive large fishing vessels and food vessels, connected to a food industries area, aimed at meeting the need for investment in the food industries.

There are currently many investment projects in Duqm, including the Karwa Motors bus factory, which is a Qatari investment with a capacity to produce 200 buses this year.



Has Biden lost faith in Afghan mission?

TREVOR HUNNICUTT

President Joe Biden’s frustrations with Afghanistan boiled over more than a decade ago, and they never again eased. On a trip to Kabul in January 2009, shortly before he was sworn in as vice-president, Biden warned Afghanistan’s then — president Hamid Karzai at a dinner that he could lose Washington’s support unless he started governing for all Afghans, hinting at corruption allegations targeting Karzai’s brother.

Karzai shot back that the United States was indifferent to the deaths of Afghan civilians.

As the dispute went on, Biden threw down his napkin and the dinner ended abruptly, according to several people in attendance. Biden had previously supported strong military and humanitarian efforts to rebuild Afghanistan after the United States toppled the Taliban government in retaliation for its aiding Al Qaeda leader Osama bin Laden, the mastermind of the September 11, 2001, attacks on the United States.

But the clash with Karzai and the rest of a discomfoting trip left Biden filled with a sense that Afghanistan’s war was ensnaring Washington and could be unwinnable. He returned to Washington with a stern warning to president-elect Barack Obama: Now is not the time to put more troops in Afghanistan.

“It wasn’t simply impatience”, said Jonah Blank, a longtime former Biden aide who was with him on the 2009 trip. “Year after year, his optimism started to drain away.”

Biden lost that policy dispute as Obama eventually ordered a surge of new troops into Afghanistan and extended the war through his term in office, which ended in 2017.

But Biden is now in charge at the White House and he is overseeing a near-total troop withdrawal despite the objections of some military experts, Democratic and Republican lawmakers and humanitarian officials.

Biden’s Republican predecessor, Donald Trump, struck a deal with the Taliban under which all US troops would leave by May of this year.

Sources say Biden worried that reneging on that deal would court further attacks on US troops and extend the war. — Reuters

“I made the decision with clear eyes. I will not send another generation of Americans to war in Afghanistan with no reasonable expectation of achieving a different outcome

JOE BIDEN
US President



MULTI-TASKING ROBOT

Palestinian engineers from the Shuaa Science Foundation demonstrate the skills of a multi-tasking robot they developed, capable of tackling dangerous remnants of war and putting out fires, in Gaza City, on Sunday. — AFP

Taken your dose of hope yet!



Abdulaziz Al Jahdhami
aljahdhami22@gmail.com

As the Coronavirus pandemic is still continuing the battle with humanity, the world has finally got the effective weapon to win the fight. Struggling to stop the virus from spreading all over, attacking people and taking life of many, effective vaccines have been already discovered now.

More than over a year had been spent in pain and struggle to get trusted Covid-19 vaccines, which luckily have been rolled out in many parts of the world. Thankfully, the vaccines reflect the sign of hope at the end of the tunnel to bring back life to normalcy.

Possible, as many people have the vaccine is feasibly the best hope for ending the pandemic and winning this tough and challenging battle. Being vaccinated for Covid-19 helps individuals, families and community from getting infected, so they all could pass these hard times safely. The more people who receive the coronavirus vaccines, the sooner vulnerable people can feel safe among others. Otherwise, as everybody knows that older people and those suffering from chronic medical conditions such as heart disease and diabetes are more likely to experience severe, or even fatal, cases of Covid-19 if they catch it.

Getting more people vaccinated worldwide means a better and faster

chance to return to normal. After over a year and a half of coronavirus pandemic lockdowns, cancellations and postponements, everyone is eager to think about full boarding at work, school, sports, family celebrations, friends gatherings and social activities. Though nobody knows when the pandemic will be over, everyone who gets vaccinated helps the world moving closer to bring back the normal life. Even getting at least the first does of vaccine, it takes you half way to full protection from catching the virus.

All what you might experience after the vaccination shot is just a sore arm, a mild fever or body aches, but this doesn't mean you have Covid-19. These symptoms, if they happen at all to some people, are temporary ones, which could last only a day or two. They signal a natural response as your body's immune system learns to recognise and fight the coronavirus.

With the possibility of catching the virus after receiving the first dose of vaccination, but severely affected by the virus is far better than never being vaccinated at all. Bearing a light pain of fever or other Covid-19 symptoms is much better and safer than being at risk of getting severely affected by the virus. Taking the risk of not having the vaccine could lead a worse result. In a

worst case scenario, one might end up being hospitalised for days or admitted in an intensive care unit (ICU). Such case mirrors if one is lucky enough, otherwise some spend days or months of suffering and probably end up in deaths record!

Is it worth taking the chance or risking others around at home or work? One has to think ten times before daring to risk his or others' life! Losing a relative, a friend or a loved one is more painful than the getting shot by a 2 or 3 cm, more or less, needle with a vaccine to save one's life! Not willing to have the vaccine is putting your life and safety of others at risk; a gamble that goes beyond one's right to have.

On the other hand, those who got vaccinated, even with 2 doses, do not have the right to give a cold shoulder to precautionary measures, which should be adhered to at all times. Facemask is a weapon against the virus, while sanitiser and regular handwashing mark reliable ways of protection. Keeping social distance and avoiding crowded public places and gatherings serve a very effective way of escaping the virus. One shall always stay safe and maintain social distancing as much as possible. Until the battle is over worldwide, no one shall surrender or leave the weapons aside.

The adventures of a blonde and a very old car...



Rachael MacIver
maciverry@hotmail.com

THE CAR, KNOWN AS OL' MARTHA, HAD BEEN MY FIRST VERY OWN CAR, BOUGHT FOR WITH MY VERY OWN MONEY. AND TO BE HONEST, I DIDN'T HAVE A CLUE ABOUT CARS

“Ok, ok, okaaaaaaay!”

The joke goes that you know you are in Oman when the driver behind you at the traffic lights, honks his horn impatiently a nano-second before the light in your lane actually has changed to green.

I inched forward very, very slowly. The accelerator level with the floor and groaning as the weight of my foot begged it to try even harder.

“Sorry, so so sorry”, I silently apologized to the cars trailing behind me. Trust me, I would have loved nothing better than to set off with screeching tyres, leaving the cars behind in a cloud of burning rubber and envy, but in my old Pajero, stuck in 3rd gear, it just wasn't possible.

The heavy car sighed and took

its time getting started in 3rd. I had come to loath and fear traffic lights. And roundabouts. And parallel parking. Once I got it going, the car worked without any complaints and would with its impressive bulk demand respect on the highway. Granted, it didn't do too well above the speed of 85 km/h either and usually got stuck in the middle lane, normally reserved for Corollas and cars unable to overtake. But at a steady speed on a straight road without traffic — my Pajero was great.

It hadn't always been stuck in 3rd gear, of course. That came later.

The car, known as Ol' Martha, had been my first very own car, bought for with my very own money. And to be honest, I didn't have a clue about cars. Or money.

Up until the point where the beaming old man had handed over the keys to me, I had, like most other expats in Oman, enjoyed various company cars. These always seemed brands and models you would never have been able to afford yourself back home and were of course part of your salary. Except, unlike your salary, you had to hand it back when you resigned. So my car, as I had come to think of it, which had served me for years, and which had been serviced and cleaned, filled up with a little gold edged company petrol card, sadly had to stay in the company compound, the day I left the company for good. At least I had had the foresight to steal the little dangly strawberry air freshener. Just to make a point.

The old owner had assured me that Ol' Martha was a bargain. He explained that he himself had bought the car in Dubai and brought it back to Oman. Ohhhh Dubai, we thought, then it must be a god car. Everything is always bigger, better and newer in Dubai, right?

“She is yours now”, the old man laughed and held out the keys to me, like a carrot on a stick in front of a donkey. And this donkey had walked right into the trap. “Sure, I can give you a lift home”, I had agreed to the now carless old man.

After that, it was downhill from there really.

I had attached the stolen dangly air freshener in my new car, sighed with pleasure and set off in a synthetic strawberry

haze. In the early days of the relationship it was more of a honeymoon period. The car and I got to know each other's flaws, but love was still in the air. I learn for instance, that the plastic knob on the volume button on my radio would come off if I tried to twist it, and it was therefore only possible to listen to music on full volume. I also learned to turn a blind eye to the fact that the clock was constantly stuck on 4.05 pm, January 1, 2001, which I found slightly confusing considering the car was a model 2005. But like with all honeymoon discoveries, you tend not to dwell on them.

So, the lights changed to green, and I knew regardless of how slowly I moved, at least I was moving forward. Even if it meant going in 3rd gear.



OMAN-SAUDI TIES
A PROMISING FUTURE



HIS MAJESTY VISITS SAUDI ARABIA



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq left here Sunday heading to Neom city, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), on a two-day state visit.

His Majesty's visit comes in affirmation of the depth of historical relations between the Sultanate and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), based on the keenness of the two countries' leaderships to enhance joint ties. The visit also comes in response to an invitation from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of KSA.

HM WAS SEEN OFF AT THE ROYAL AIRPORT BY His Highness Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers; HH Sayyid Fatik bin Fahar al Said, Special Envoy of His Majesty the Sultan; HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth; Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council; Sultan

bin Salim al Habsi, Minister of Finance; Nasr bin Hamoud al Kindi, Secretary-General of the Royal Court Affairs; Shaikh Abdullah bin Mohammed al Salmi, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs; Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Health; Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shibaniyah, Minister of Education; Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of State and Governor of Muscat; Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs; Lt Gen Said bin Ali al Hilali, Head of the Internal Security Service; Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis al Raeesi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces; Maj Gen Matar bin Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman; Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman; and Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasser al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman.

During the visit, His Majesty is accompanied by an

official high-level delegation comprising HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs; Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court; Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of Royal Office; Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior; Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; Qais bin Mohammed al Yousuf, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion; Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA); and HH Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, the Sultanate's Ambassador to Saudi Arabia.

May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty the Sultan wherever he might be and grant him continued good health and success to realise further prosperity for Oman and its people. — ONA



OMAN-SAUDI TIES A PROMISING FUTURE



HUGE OPPORTUNITIES IN CULTURE & SPORTS

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Oman and Saudi Arabia enjoy more than 50 years of relationship. However, there is more to be explored that would see a connection between people of both nations, and that is through arts and sports.

“There is a gap that exists between perception and reality and how that perception in our minds and hearts of each other is still quite focused in terms of not just lack of clarity of what does the country and the people stand for beyond what we know,” said HH Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, Ambassador of Oman to Saudi Arabia.

After visiting and seeing different parts of Saudi Arabia, reflecting on that, he said most of the people know about Salalah but not the other tourism areas of Oman.

There has been quite a lack of exchange in terms of how we promote each other. We still need to do so much more to get people to know about one another, and here the media has a significant role to play,” pointed out Oman’s ambassador.

How would you build stronger bridges and connections?

He said Riyadh alone has almost eight million people. “This is just one city. Where do you start! Do we talk about frankincense or our culture, our history, our food, arts, music etc? Here, individuals, institutions



What is expected is development at different levels — political diplomacy, foreign relations, economy, culture and sports and most importantly connection between people of two nations

HH SAYYID FAISAL
BIN TURKI AL SAID
Ambassador of Oman
to Saudi Arabia

and organisations can become complementing the ambassadorial role. The opportunities are huge.”

According to HH Sayyid Faisal, His Majesty Sultan Haitham’s visit has brought in great interest in the media.

All of a sudden, there is a huge interest in people who, for the first time, walked into our embassy just passionate about sharing and wanting to know more about this visit.

“Social media influence, for example, who have good content balance can be encouraged to visit,” he noted.

The other area of interest is sports, and it is more than football.

“There’s so much already happening in the context of the GCC and how we as countries basically collaborate in many things. But when it comes to the bilateral, there is always room for unique

opportunities to work together that suits us specifically as two nations in our own bilateral context.

I am interested in exploring sports beyond the typical conventional interests of football — interests seen in our youth and of Saudi Arabia such as adventure, sports, horseback riding, you name it. We can. Of course, football would be one of those things, but what can we do beyond that already exists.”

“What is expected is development at different levels — political diplomacy, foreign relations, economy, culture and sports and most importantly connection between people of two nations,” he said.





OMAN-SAUDI TIES
A PROMISING FUTURE



HM visits Ithra Informatics Centre



NEOM: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq on Sunday visited “Ithra” Centre, an advanced knowledge institution affiliated to King Abdulaziz Centre for World Culture in Neom city.

The visit comes within the

context of His Majesty the Sultan’s current state visit to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) in response to an invitation from the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques King Salman bin Abdulaziz al Saud of the KSA.

When His Majesty the Sultan arrived at Ithra Centre, he was received by Prince Mohammed bin Salman al Saud, Crown Prince, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence.

The reception party included

senior Saudi officials, as well as the Centre’s CEO and working team.

His Majesty the Sultan went on tour of Ithra Centre and had a close look at the major projects that stem from Saudi Vision 2030.

At the conclusion of the tour,

His Majesty the Sultan signed the Visitors Register, expressing his appreciation for the efforts made by those running the centre, wishing them success in their mission.

The state-of-the-art Ithra Centre is set up on an area of 80,000

square metres in an innovative style envisaged by Aramco. Its external structure combines the best of traditional and modern architecture that portrays the Kingdom’s brilliant future outlook.

— ONA







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HAISARAH

Making it Easy

Regulator initiates steps to enable direct power sales in Oman

FUELLING COMPETITION:
NEW MARKET LIBERALISATION MEASURE AIMS TO AUTHORISE BILATERAL SUPPLY AGREEMENTS BETWEEN GENERATORS AND LARGE CUSTOMERS BYPASSING OPWP

CONRAD PRABHU
@conradprabhu

Oman’s Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), the entity tasked with regulating the electricity and related desalinated water sectors, among other sectors, says it is weighing steps to enable direct power sales by producers to large customers, bypassing Oman Power and Water Procurement Company (OPWP), currently the sole offtaker of electricity output under the sector law.

The move is part of a series of measures being mulled by the regulator to help further liberalise the electricity sector in the Sultanate, as well as drive competition among producers and other market players.

“The Authority believes that the market is ready for this liberalisation measure and will undertake a revision of the legal and regulatory framework to enable liberalisation of this measure”, the regulator stated in its 2020 Annual Report released here last week.

Under the sector law, OPWP — member of Nama Group — is the sole procurer of new power generation and water desalination capacity, as well as the sole buyer



Picture for illustration only

of output from these producers. But in a move to encourage competition between different generators, as well as enable the utilisation of existing capacity that has fallen out of contract, the Authority is creating the groundwork to enable direct power sales between producers and consumers — an arrangement also known as ‘bilaterals’.

The Authority noted in the report that it considers the liberalisation measure to support direct electricity sales “ready for implementation subject to the government’s approval”. Its engagement with different stakeholders also elicited “positive feedback” from market players “who showed interest to explore the potential for bilateral agreements further”.

It announced that it has decided to initiate a project to start implementing the possibility of direct sales of electricity. “Direct sales are a means of introducing competition for access to eligible

customers — typically the largest customers. In Oman, these would be all or some subset of the existing Cost Reflective Tariff (CRT) customers”, it noted. CRT covers major government, industrial and commercial customers whose annual requirement is 100 megawatt-hours or more of electricity. They are subject to tariffs that are essentially subsidy-free.

Some technical issues will, however, have to be dealt with before direct power sales become a reality in Oman, according to the Authority. These pertain to, among other things, the need to ensure that physical connections, dispatch implications, metering data and settlement implications are suitably catered for. Additionally, there are “complex commercial and economic implications related to the price signals that direct sales proponents and eligible customers perceive”, it further noted.

In light of these considerations, the proposed project to explore

the feasibility of direct power sales will be undertaken in phases, the Authority said. The goal is to ensure that the measure is economically feasible and meets with regulatory and technical criteria, it added.

Earlier this year, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals — which is the policymaker for the electricity sector — said APSR is developing regulations to support a number of market liberalisation objectives, promote energy efficiency, and aid the transition away from CO2 emitting energy sources towards renewable and alternative energy sources.

The initiatives include new regulation authorising bilateral electricity deals between large consumers and generators; the mandatory appointment of Energy Efficiency Officers to oversee conservation measures by large consumers; and the planned introduction of a credit trading system to monetise energy efficiency gains.

CMA unveils draft Sukuk and Bonds Regulation for public feedback



Picture for illustration only

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 11

The Capital Market Authority (CMA) invited all public joint stock companies, audit firms, law firms, investors, academicians, interested persons and the general public to provide their comments, observations and input on the draft Sukuk and Bonds Regulation which is posted on the CMA’s website.

The draft regulation is a response to the rapid legislative developments in the capital market since the issuance of the Commercial Companies Law in 2019 and the Regulation for Public Joint Stock Companies early this year

market to improve the efficiency of such debt instruments in moving the wheel of the national economy to contribute to furnishing appropriate credit environment to finance the development projects of the government and the private sector.

The draft regulation aims to regulate the issuance of bonds and Sukuk by adding a set of detailed clauses prepared by specialised work team constituted by the CMA for more resilience to ease the processes of issuance of bonds and Sukuk as financing instruments.

CMA applies the public consultation approach to obtain the input of the stakeholders of the industry. Responses will be received on email oe@oma.gov.om for three weeks as from July 7, 2021.

Oman-UK bilateral trade hits RO 590 million in 2020

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 11

Total trade in goods and services (exports plus imports) between the UK and Oman was £1.1 billion (approx RO 590 million) in the four quarters to the end of Q4 2020, a decrease of 22.8 per cent or £332 million (RO 177m) from the four quarters to the end of Q4 2019, the UK Department for International Trade said in its latest bulletin.

Of this £1.1 billion, total UK exports to Oman amounted to £876 million (RO 469m) in the four quarters to the end of Q4 2020 (a decrease of 16.0 per cent or £167 million compared to the four quarters to the end of Q4 2019). Total UK imports from

Oman amounted to £247 million (RO 132m) in the four quarters to the end of Q4 2020 (a decrease of 40.0 per cent or £165 million compared to the four quarters to the end of Q4 2019).

Of all UK exports to Oman in the four quarters to the end of Q4 2020, £456 million (52.1 per cent) were goods and £420 million (47.9 per cent) were services. In the four quarters to the end of Q4 2020, UK exports of goods to Oman decreased by 20.1 per cent or £115 million compared to the four quarters to the end of Q4 2019 while UK exports of services to Oman decreased by 11.0 per cent or £52 million compared to the four quarters to the end of Q4 2019.

In the four quarters to the end



of Q4 2020, total UK imports from Oman were £247 million (a decrease of 40.0 per cent or £165 million compared to the four quarters to the end of Q4 2019).

Of all UK imports from Oman in the four quarters to the end of

Q4 2020, £171 million (69.2 per cent) were goods and £76 million (30.8 per cent) were services. In the same period, UK imports of goods from Oman decreased by 31.6 per cent or £79 million compared to the four quarters

KEY TREND: UK reported a total trade surplus of £629 million with Oman, compared to a trade surplus of £631 million in the four quarters to the end of Q4 2019

to the end of Q4 2019 while UK imports of services from Oman decreased by 53.1 per cent or £86 million compared to the four quarters to the end of Q4 2019.

“This means the UK reported a total trade surplus of £629 million with Oman, compared

to a trade surplus of £631 million in the four quarters to the end of Q4 2019. In the four quarters to the end of Q4 2020, the UK had a trade in goods surplus of £285 million with Oman, compared to a trade in goods surplus of £321 million in the four quarters to the end of Q4 2019. Meanwhile, in the four quarters to the end of Q4 2020 the UK reported a trade in services surplus of £344 million with Oman, compared to a trade in services surplus of £310 million in the four quarters to the end of Q4 2019”, the bulletin noted.

Oman was the UK’s 70th largest trading partner in the four quarters to the end of Q4 2020 accounting for 0.1 per cent of total UK trade.

Report sees positive growth opportunities for GCC FDI inflow

ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION: GCC COUNTRIES SHOULD PREPARE FOR A WIDE VARIETY OF SCENARIOS TO COUNTER THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC, SAYS REPORT

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 11

Countries across the GCC can significantly increase foreign direct investment (FDI) inflows by applying different mechanisms and methodologies, according to a new report published by Oliver Wyman and the World Government Summit (WGS). Titled “De-risking the Investment Landscape: High-impact FDI Policies for the GCC”, the report details FDI fluctuations within the region and ways they can be addressed. The report comes as part of a series by the WGS that aims to enhance government activity in the post-pandemic recovery phase. Matthieu De Clercq, Partner Public Sector and Economic



WITH CURRENT UNCERTAIN EVENTS DUE TO THE ONSET OF THE PANDEMIC AND THE RECOVERY PERIOD TO FOLLOW, GCC COUNTRIES SHOULD PREPARE FOR A WIDE VARIETY OF SCENARIOS TO COUNTER THE SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC

Development, Oliver Wyman, said: “Earlier this decade, worldwide economic trends paired with reduced investor appetite made it harder for GCC countries to garner investments from foreign countries. However, economic diversification in UAE ensured that FDI remained

resilient even with low oil prices, which allowed for a higher inflow of FDI into the country. Soon after, Saudi Arabia began implementing policy reforms, which increased the country’s attractiveness. Still, Covid-19 has had unprecedented impacts, stalling much of the progress that has been in the

works over the past few years.” “With current uncertain events due to the onset of the pandemic and the recovery period to follow, GCC countries should prepare for a wide variety of scenarios to counter the social and economic impact of the pandemic. These include strong and strategically targeted policies aimed to enhance the long-term structural attractiveness of key economic sectors to foreign investors”, added De Clercq. Globally, countries use targeted policies to attract FDI. Some targeted policies proposed by Oliver Wyman and the WGS include providing fiscal incentives, implementing regulatory policies, and generating outreach among others. The potential benefits from attracting FDI into the GCC are diverse and include boosting human capital, providing technology transfer, and increasing private market competition in the GCC. “To fully realise the opportunities of foreign investment, GCC countries should tailor policies to attract FDI. This will allow each country to choose the appropriate policy mix that best suits its goals and circumstances”, concluded De Clercq.

More than RO 250,000 in BankDhofar’s Savings Scheme Mid-Year Grand Prize Draws

MUSCAT: BankDhofar has recently conducted the Mid-Year Grand Prize Draws of the Savings Account Scheme 2021. The draw saw two winners of RO 25,000 each and one Al Riadah Priority Banking winner of RO 200,000. The bank also conducted draws of the monthly guaranteed prizes monthly Prizes for children, monthly prizes for youth, and monthly prizes for Amaan Retirees Banking Services’ customers. Congratulating the winners, Dr Tariq bin Taha, Chief Retail Banking Officer at BankDhofar said: “I would like to congratulate the winners of the mid-year grand prizes. BankDhofar’s Savings Scheme aims to spread the culture of saving within the society, and provides chances of winning to all family members. I encourage our customers to continue saving as they might be the lucky winners in the coming draws including the monthly draws, occasion draws, and year-



Dr Tariq bin Taha

end mega draws.” With a total of RO 2.304 million, the scheme is valid till December 2021. As per the prize draw scheme, BankDhofar customers who save a minimum of RO 100 in their accounts are eligible to enter the draws and get the chance to win in the Monthly Guaranteed Prizes for branches, worth total of RO 708,000 (59 winners per month/RO 1,000 for each winner), Monthly Prizes for Children, worth total of RO 177,000 (59 winners per month/

RO 250 for each winner) and Monthly Prizes for Youth, worth total of RO 30,000 (5 winners per month/ RO 500 for each winner). In order to show our respect for the retirees in the society, we have also introduced for the first time ever, monthly Prizes for Amaan Retirees Banking Services’ customers, worth total of RO 300,000 (5 winners per month/ RO 5,000 for each winner). BankDhofar will continue celebrating occasions with customers, the 2021 scheme includes Omani Woman’s Day Prizes, worth total of RO 10,000 (10 winners / RO 1,000 for each winner), and National Day Prizes, worth total of RO 59,000 (59 winners / RO 1,000 for each winner). In addition to the Grand Prizes; Mid-Year Grand Prizes, worth total of RO 50,000 (2 winners / RO 25,000 for each winner), and Year-End Grand Prizes worth total of RO 100,000 (2 winners / RO 50,000 for each winner).

Bank Nizwa awarded top rating in quality assessment

MUSCAT: Continuing to lead the Sultanate’s Islamic finance industry, Bank Nizwa has added yet another milestone in its journey, with the bank’s Internal Audit Group achieving the highest possible rating of “Generally Conforms” in an External Quality Assessment. The rating implies that the relevant structures, policies and procedures of the Department, as well as the processes by which they are applied, comply with the requirements of the Standards of Institute of Internal Auditors and Code of Ethics in all material respects. The main objectives of the Quality Assessment were to evaluate conformance of Bank Nizwa’s Internal Audit Activities to the norms of Central Bank of Oman, Capital Market Authority and The Institute of Internal Auditors (IIA). They were also aimed at evaluating the effectiveness in carrying out its mission as set forth in its Charter,



the expectations of Bank Nizwa’s Board Audit Committee and identify opportunities to enhance management and work process. Speaking on this milestone, Sayyid Amjad bin Mohammed Ahmed al Busaidy, Chairman Audit Committee, said, “Bank Nizwa is committed to the highest degree of corporate governance and enhancement of controls as it continues to provide value added services to its ever growing customer base. The results are a testimony to the effective risk based internal audit services being administered at Bank Nizwa especially during these challenging and unprecedented times.”

Qatar tourism body announces new appointment

MUSCAT: Qatar National Tourism Council (QNTC) has appointed Deveekaa Nijhawani (pictured) to lead the International PR and Communications team, to assist in marketing the destination in key markets as part of the country’s strategy to become a world-leading tourism destination. Deveekaa’s remit covers key markets including India, United Kingdom, Germany, Australia and United Arab Emirates with a focus on engaging and penetrating travel trade and consumer media. Deveekaa said: “I am very excited to join QNTC and embrace this new challenge. I am looking forward to developing and implementing a holistic integrated PR and Communications strategy to position Qatar as a popular tourist destination, while promoting the country’s rich cultural heritage and diverse offerings.”



Elevate stylish experiences in the luxury Lexus ES

MUSCAT: The Lexus ES makes an impressive mark with its sleek style, thoughtful interiors and elevated luxury experiences. From its low profile to its eye-catching grille, headlamps, alloy wheels and more, the Lexus ES strikes a fine balance in power, luxury, craftsmanship and technology. The Lexus ES is available in four different versions — the ES 250, ES 350, ES300h (Hybrid Electric Vehicle) and the ES F Sport. The ES350 is powered by a 3.5-litre V6 engine that is designed to deliver commanding acceleration along with an

invigorating sound. With the D4-S fuel injection system, the impressively smooth engine produces 298 hp and 36.3 kg-m of torque, while the ES250 is powered by, high-efficiency 2.5-litre 4-cylinder engine that produces 204 hp and 24.8 kg-m of torque. The two powertrains on ES350 and ES250 are paired to an eight-speed direct-shift automatic transmission. The ES300h is a class-leading hybrid electric model with a battery warranty of 8 years /160,000 kms. The battery is automatically



charged either by petrol engine or during braking or decelerating, eliminating the need to plug in a power cord. Furthermore, it hosts number of advanced technologies, yet drives like any other conventional car and does not require special fuel. The ES300h offers an impressive 24.1 km/L mileage. The powerful and sporty Lexus ES350 F Sport model, further enhances the driving excitement so that drivers can enjoy a sense of oneness with the car, born of its ability to respond immediately to driving enthusiasts’ intentions

in various situations. In addition to a thrilling exterior that highlights its bold and aggressive personality, the Lexus ES350 FSPORT features numerous such as a retuned suspension, 19-inch wheels and tyres, and unique aluminium interior trim that gives the machine a more dynamic look and feel. In Oman, every Lexus vehicle comes with special benefits and privileges such as manufacturer’s warranty of 4 years/100,000 kms (whichever is earlier) and 24 hours on-road assistance from AAA.

Virus variants threaten global recovery, G20 warns

VENICE: An upsurge in new coronavirus variants and poor access to vaccines in developing countries threaten the global economic recovery, finance ministers of the world's 20 largest economies warned on Saturday.

The G20 gathering in the Italian city of Venice was the ministers' first face-to-face meeting since the start of the pandemic. Decisions include the endorsement of new rules aimed at stopping multinationals shifting profits to low-tax havens.

That paves the way for G20 leaders to finalise a new global minimum corporate tax rate of 15 per cent at a Rome summit in October, a move that could recoup hundreds of billions of dollars for public treasuries straining under the Covid-19 crisis.

A final communique said the global economic outlook had improved since G20 talks in April thanks to the rollout of vaccines and economic support packages, but acknowledged its fragility in the face of variants like the fast-spreading Delta.

"The recovery is characterised by great divergences across and within countries and remains exposed to downside risks, in particular the spread of new variants of the Covid-19 virus and different paces of vaccination", it

The global economic outlook had improved since G20 talks in April thanks to the rollout of vaccines and economic support packages, but acknowledged its fragility in the face of variants like the fast-spreading Delta

read.

While G20 nations promised to use all policy tools to combat Covid-19, the Italian hosts of the meeting said there was also agreement to avoid imposing new restrictions on people.

"We all agree we should avoid introducing again any restriction on the movement of citizens and the way of life of people", said Italian Economy Minister Daniele Franco, whose country holds the rotating G20 presidency through to December.

The communique, while stressing support for "equitable global sharing" of vaccines, did not propose concrete measures, merely acknowledging a recommendation for \$50 billion in new vaccine financing by the International Monetary Fund, World Bank, World Health Organization and World Trade Organization.



Participants attend the G20 high-level tax symposium during the G20 finance ministers and central bank governors' meeting in Venice, Italy. — Reuters

Differences in vaccination levels between the world's rich and poor remain vast. WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has called the divergence a "moral outrage" that also undermines wider efforts to tame the spread of the virus.

While some of the wealthiest countries have now given over two-thirds of their citizens at least one shot of vaccine, that figure

falls to well below 5 per cent for many African nations.

Brandon Locke, of the public health non-profit group ONE Campaign, decried what he described as the G20's inaction, calling it "a lose-lose situation for everyone."

"Not only will it cost lives in poorer countries, it increases the risk of new variants that will wreak havoc in richer ones", he said.

Italy said it the G20 would return to the issue of vaccine funding for poor countries ahead of a Rome summit in October and that new variants was an area that needed to be looked at. It did not give further details.

"We must agree on a process for everyone on the planet to be able to access vaccines. If we don't, the IMF predicts that the global economy will lose \$9

trillion", religious development organisation Jubilee USA Network said.

It was referring to an IMF forecast that international cooperation on Covid-19 vaccines could speed world economic recovery and add \$9 trillion to global income by 2025.

A tally of new Covid-19 infections shows them rising in 69 countries, with the daily rate pointing upwards since late-June and now hitting 478,000.

IMF Managing Director Kristalina Georgieva said the world was facing "a worsening two-track recovery" partly driven by the differences in vaccine availability.

The biggest policy initiative at the talks was a well-flagged agreement on the global corporate tax rate, capping eight years of wrangling on the issue.

Setting a floor of 15 per cent is intended to stop multinationals shopping around for the lowest tax rate. It would also change the way that companies like Amazon and Google are taxed, basing it partly on where they sell products and services, rather than on the location of their headquarters.

US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said any countries opposed to it would be encouraged to sign up by October. — Reuters

Multinationals tax shift unlikely until 2022, says Yellen

VENICE: US Treasury Secretary Janet Yellen said that a newly endorsed mechanism to allow more countries to tax large, highly profitable multinational companies may not be ready for consideration by lawmakers until spring 2022.

Yellen told a news conference after a G20 finance leaders meeting that the OECD re-allocation of taxing rights was on a "slightly slower track" than a global corporate tax of at least 15 per cent as part of a tax deal among 132 countries.

G20 finance ministers and central bank governors endorsed the deal over the weekend, but questions remain over the ability of US President Joe Biden's administration to persuade a deeply divided Congress to ratify the changes.

Yellen's comments suggest a two-step process for implementing the OECD tax deal, with the global minimum tax moving first. — Reuters

Sohar International to hold Prize Scheme 2021 half-year draws

MUSCAT: Delivering on its promise of creating more winning journeys and providing more value to customers, Sohar International is set to conduct its half-year draws under its popular Prize Scheme 2021.

Everyone is invited to the virtual event which will be streamed live on the bank's official Instagram page - @sohar_intl - at 5:30 pm on Tuesday, July 13.

While the event will witness four lucky winners win from a total cash prize of RO 200,000, as part of the half-year draws, there are prizes to be won for those who tune in to the virtual event.

Emphasising on the objective of the Sohar Prize Scheme, Khalil al Hedaifi, Chief Retail Banking Officer said, "With the purpose of helping people 'win', Sohar International has always advised and encouraged customers to save judiciously, to help them realise their aspirations and dreams.

Our prize scheme's diverse eligibility criteria, which promises more winners and more value for all customer segments, make regular saving an easy practice for them. In fact, our virtual events, witness great attendance, and audience engagement, fulfilling the Bank's objective of staying connected to a wider base of individuals."



Biden signs order to promote competition in US economy

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden signed a sweeping executive order to promote more competition in the US economy, urging agencies to crack down on anti-competitive practices in sectors from agriculture to drugs and labour.

If fully implemented, the effort will help lower Americans' Internet costs, allow for airline baggage fee refunds for delayed luggage, among other steps.

The order instructs antitrust agencies to focus on labour, healthcare, technology and agriculture as they address a laundry list of issues that have irritated consumers, and in the case of drug prices, has bankrupted some.

"No more tolerance of abusive actions by monopolies. No more bad mergers that lead to massive layoffs, higher prices and fewer options for



US President Joe Biden delivers remarks prior to signing an executive order at the White House in Washington. — Reuters

workers and consumers alike", Biden said at a White House signing ceremony.

The president noted areas where advocates feel that prices are too high, wages are tamped down or new businesses excluded from competition.

"Let me be very clear, capitalism without

competition isn't capitalism, it's exploitation", he said.

The White House says the rate of new business formation has fallen by almost 50 per cent since the 1970s as large businesses make it harder for Americans with good ideas to break into markets.

— Reuters

Lulu, Sadia to donate over RO 10,000 to Dar Al Atta'a

MUSCAT: As part of its corporate social responsibility initiatives, Lulu Oman has partnered with Sadia Chicken for a good cause. Lulu Group and Sadia have donated over RO 10,000 to Dar Al Atta'a association to make a difference in the lives of the underprivileged.

A cheque of RO 10,271 was handed over by Ananth A V, Director — Oman, Sri Lanka and India of LuLu Group, and Shabeer K A, the Regional Director of Lulu Oman, to Dr Shamsa al Harthi,

Director General of Dar Al Atta'a Association. The amount will be given to eligible families registered with Dar Al Atta'a Association.

As part of the initiative, held during the holy month of Ramadhan, an amount of RO 0.100 was passed on to Dar Al Atta'a on every purchase of Sadia products at Lulu.

Dr Shamsa al Harthi expressed her thanks and gratitude to Sadia for their partnership with Dar Al Atta'a. She said that the initiative came during the



month of Ramadhan, which is an opportunity for serving the society. "The initiative's revenue generation is for the needy families registered with Dar Al Atta'a", she added.

Commenting on the charity event, Ananth stated, "Our strategic intent is to serve the community we are part of by supporting local organisations and charities. We appreciate Sadia Chicken for their partnership with us and helping us do our fair bit for the society. We

understand the needs of our clients and communities and will do everything to help make their lives better.

Didier Gabriel, General Manager of BRF (Sadia chicken) in Oman, said that the company has always been proud of maintaining their partnership with Dar Al Atta'a and has worked with all partners on provision of innovative and sustainable solutions to ensure the success of such charity initiative, during the month of Ramadhan.

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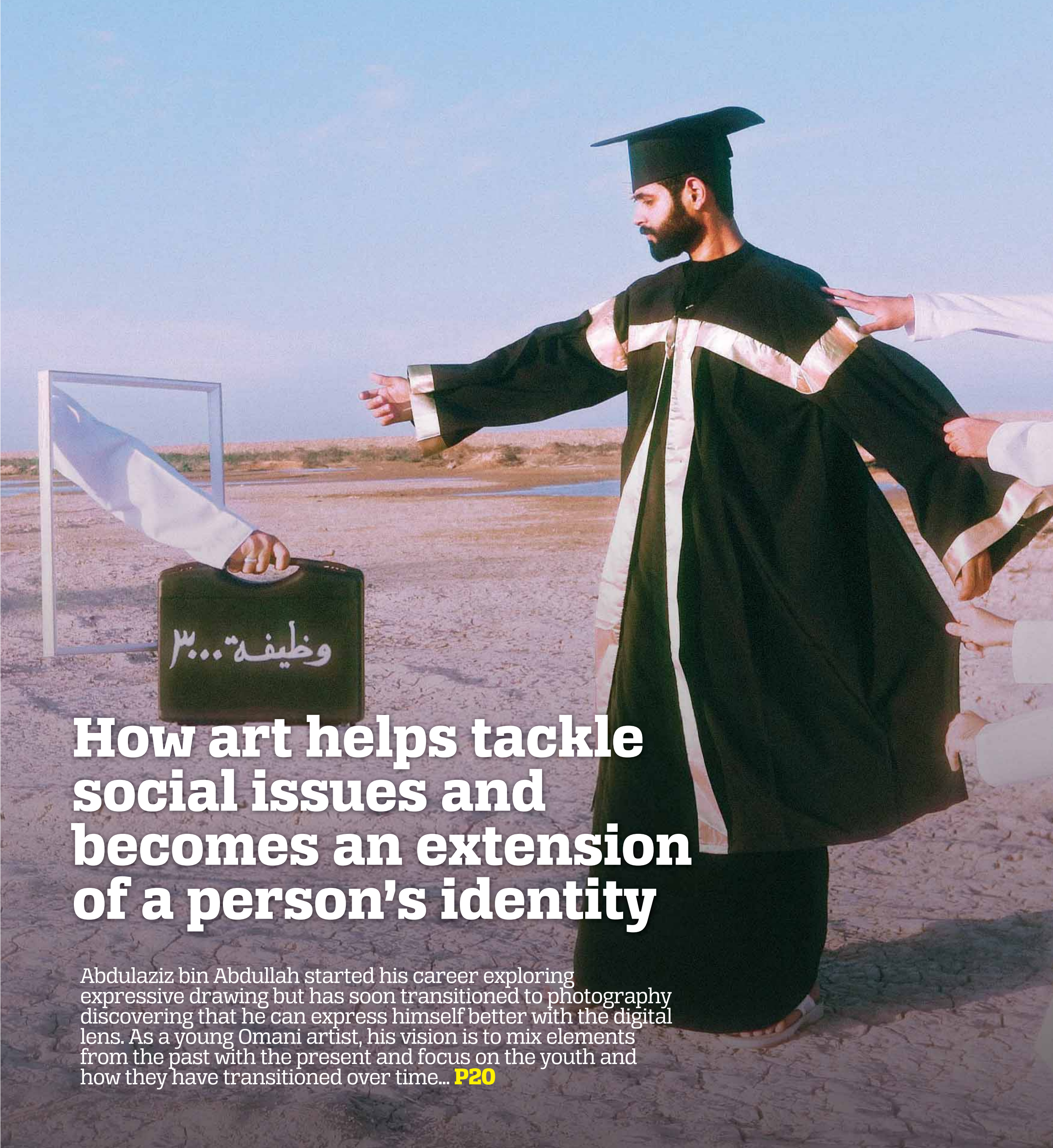
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How art helps tackle social issues and becomes an extension of a person's identity

Abdulaziz bin Abdullah started his career exploring expressive drawing but has soon transitioned to photography discovering that he can express himself better with the digital lens. As a young Omani artist, his vision is to mix elements from the past with the present and focus on the youth and how they have transitioned over time... **P20**

DIGITAL TREND

READ

THE FRUITS OF YOUR LABOR
BY ANDREW TOBIN

This book explores the size progression of a baby in the womb in relation to a fruit or vegetable. Beginning at the size of sweet pea and growing to the size of a watermelon.

South Korean toilet turns waste into power and digital currency

USING A TOILET can pay for your coffee or buy you bananas at a university in South Korea, where human waste is being used to help power a building.

Cho Jae-weon, an urban and environmental engineering professor at the Ulsan

National Institute of Science and Technology (UNIST), has designed an eco-friendly toilet connected to a laboratory that uses excrement to produce biogas and manure.

The BeeVi toilet - a port-manteau of the words bee and vision - uses a vacuum pump

to send faeces into an underground tank, reducing water use. There, microorganisms break down the waste to methane, which becomes a source of energy for the building, powering a gas stove, hot-water boiler and solid oxide fuel cell.

"If we think out of the box, faeces has precious value to make energy and manure. I have put this value into ecological circulation," Cho said.

An average person defecates about 500g a day, which can be converted to 50 litres of methane gas, the environmental engineer said. This gas can generate 0.5kWh of electricity or be used to drive a car for about 12km.

Cho has devised a virtual currency called Ggool, which means honey in Korean. Each person using the eco-friendly toilet earns 10 Ggool a day.



Students can use the currency to buy goods on campus, from freshly brewed coffee to instant cup noodles, fruits and books. The students can pick up the products they want at a shop and scan a QR code to pay with Ggool.

"I had only ever thought that faeces are dirty, but now it is a treasure of great value to me," postgraduate student Heo Hui-jin said at the Ggool market.

"I even talk about faeces during mealtimes to think about buying any book I want." — **Reuters**



Wadi Mistal's early start for grapes season

IT'S HARD to imagine Wadi Mistal as one of the places in Oman that produce some of the best varieties of grapes but you're in for a surprise if you find yourself visiting this village within this month.

The villages of Wadi Mistal in the Wilayat of Nakhl are famous for the cultivation of several seasonal crops, the most important of which are grapes, mountain pomegranates and apricots.

During these days, the farmers of the wadi began marketing their agricultural products in the Wilayat market with the beginning of harvesting grape, pomegranate and mango crops in the agricultural fields in the villages of Al Qura, Wakan and Al Hajar.

The cultivation of grapes requires special effort and attention. Farmers are keen to take care of these fruit trees by carrying out regular irrigation, fertilising, pruning and cutting the branches of the nurseries from time to time.

During these days, the crop is offered at auction in the market of Nakhl and Rustaq, and it is also sold in the neighbouring markets and to the tourists who come to the villages. However, its quantities in recent years have decreased than in previous years.

The grape harvest season is a commercial phenomenon that contributes to revitalising the commercial movement in the market, as the farmers and buyers benefit from it.

Wadi Mistal, which is located



within the groove of the Western Hajar Mountains overlooking the Wilayat of Nakhl, in recent years has become an important tourist attraction in the Wilayat and frequented by visitors daily. It is characterised by its seasonal crops, the most important of which are black grapes, whose season began during this period. It is one of the products that abound in the mountainous villages of Wadi Mistal due to the cold weather.

ENVIRONMENT

ESO joins global plastic-free July movement



BUILDING ON ITS efforts to promote sustainable behaviour in the Sultanate, the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) is joining the global movement 'Plastic-Free July' with a series of engaging events. This will include a month-long social media campaign, animation videos, and a calendar of virtual webinars, all aiming to raise awareness about the impact of single-use plastics on the environment and our health, and to encourage people, whether as consumers or producers, to help tackle the problem. The webinars, which will be in Arabic, are open to the public and kick off with a plastics awareness presentation being held on the 11th of July.

Supported by long-term partners Oman LNG and Sabco Group, Plastic-Free July is part of a wider campaign that ESO launched earlier this year called 'It's Time'. The ESO campaign aims to encourage the adoption of environmentally-conscious community behaviours across Oman, focusing on three key aspects, littering, recycling and single-use plastics.



"Our fight towards eliminating plastic began a long time ago, but since hygiene concerns surrounding Covid-19 have triggered a significant increase in plastic consumption, it is even more pertinent now. Every day we see more people looking for alternatives to replace single-use plastics but we still need to increase our efforts, as a nation, to work towards solving this issue," said Sayyidah Tania al Said, President of ESO. "We appreciate the continuous support we receive from our partners and the local community and truly believe that together, we can make a difference."

Sayyid Aymen al Busaidy, Vice-Chairman, SABCO Group said, "We are always keen to join hands with ESO on their valuable work in addressing environmental challenges, and plastic pollution is no exception. Raising awareness is the first step in creating change and we will continue to be involved in various ways to motivate people to replace conventional plastics with alternative materials, while incorporating it into our work culture."

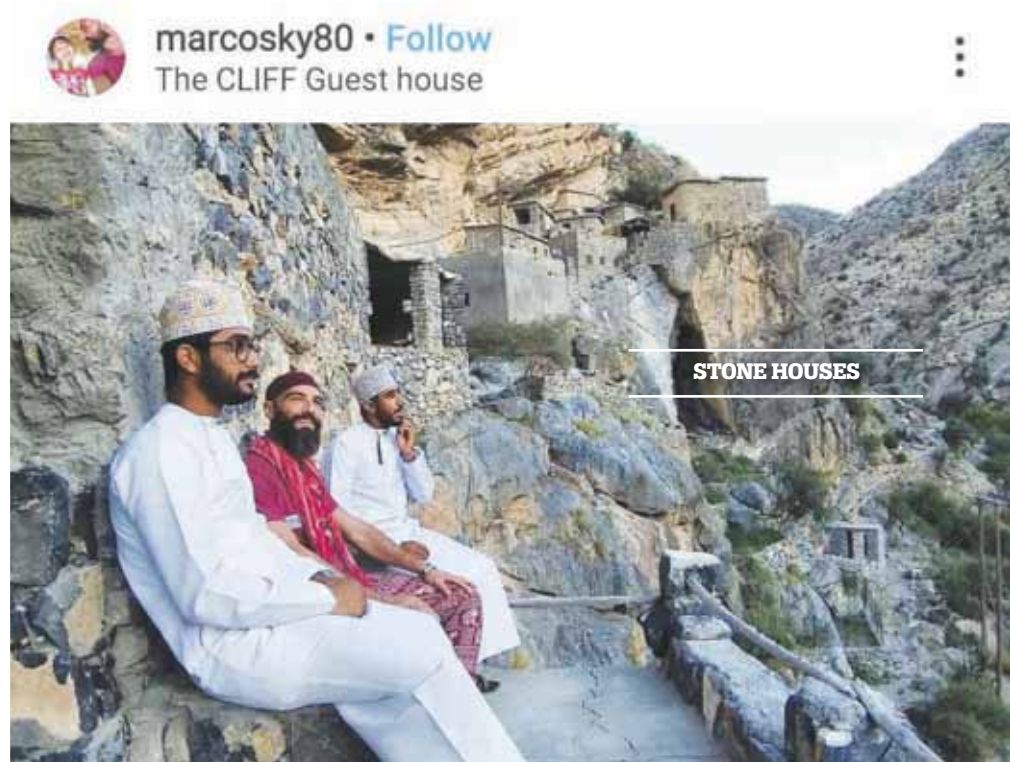
Early this year, Oman issued a Ministerial Resolution 23/2020 to ban single-use shopping bags from January 2021, an important milestone in its efforts to kick-start nationwide change. Meanwhile, ESO has been advocating for the plastic-free agenda since its inception and is committed to promoting the adoption of environmentally sustainable behaviours amongst all members of society.

To register for one of the virtual events, or to find out more, keep an eye out on Instagram @esooman, Twitter @eso_oman_ and ESO's Facebook page.



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FILM

Netflix expands deal with 'Bridgerton' producer Shonda Rhimes



NETFLIX ON THURSDAY expanded its deal with "Bridgerton" tv producer Shonda Rhimes, including characteristic movies, gaming and reside occasions to its pact with her company.

Netflix stated the deal with Rhimes and her Shondaland Media company would give the streaming platform the chance to "exclusively produce, stream and distribute feature films as well as potential gaming and virtual reality content."

"The pact currently includes a branding and merchandise deal for Shondaland Media content, which will now add live events and experiences," the company stated in an announcement.

"Bridgerton," a contemporary twist on Jane Austen-style historic romance, was an enormous hit for Netflix and three extra seasons have already been ordered.

Rhimes, who additionally created the hit ABC tv exhibits "Grey's Anatomy" and "Scandal," was one of many first huge TV producers to be lured to Netflix when she signed a multi-year deal to provide content material for the streaming platform in 2017.

The expanded deal with Netflix may even embody monetary assist for a range initiative launched by Shondaland geared towards growing the numbers of girls and other people of shade within the leisure trade.

Rhimes stated in an announcement she was excited to increase her relationship with Netflix and praised the company for "supporting my creative vision and showing a continued dedication to the innovation that has made Netflix such a powerhouse." — **Reuters**

DISCOVERY

Scientists learn how otters stay hotter



SEA OTTERS ARE a hardy lot. The smallest of all marine mammals with the thickest fur of the animal kingdom, they can hold their breath for up to eight minutes while they dive for prey like clams and crabs, which they're known to crack open using rocks.

An enduring mystery, however, was just how the mustelids manage to stay warm in the chilly waters of their Pacific habitat, bereft of the blubber that insulates seals, whales and walruses.

The answer, according to a new paper published in the journal *Science* on Thursday, is a unique energy conversion system whereby their muscle tissue "leak" large amounts of heat throughout their bodies.

That's unlike other mammals, which have to put their muscles to work through exercise, or involuntary shivering, to achieve the same result.

Lead author Traver Wright of Texas A&M University said that while sea otters' dense, water-resistant fur offsets some heat loss, it isn't enough by itself to cope with the frigid waters off Alaska, where most of them reside. Scientists already knew the sea otters burn a lot of energy — approximately three times greater than predicted for mammals of their size, and to keep up with the demand, they may consume up to 25 per cent of their body mass in a day.

It was unclear, though, which tissues were making use of this energy and how it was going towards producing heat. To find out, Wright and colleagues took muscle samples from sea otters that were already dead, or, more happily, had been rehabilitated by the Monterey Bay Aquarium and were being prepared for release.

They then used a device to measure oxygen consumption.

'MAKING HEAT BY BEING INEFFICIENT'

The main function of muscles is generally to be able to move the body, but in the otters, much of the metabolic energy produced by breaking down sugars and fats was lost as heat instead of being used by mitochondria, the powerhouses of cells, to do work such as powering muscle contraction.

This effect had been predicted for polar animals, but was observed for the first time in sea otters in the new paper. "One of the interesting things that we found is that they're really good at making heat by being inefficient," said Wright.

What the team observed would be considered wasteful in land mammals like humans, "but if you're an animal that's trying to warm up, then that 'wasted' energy and heat is a good thing." In other words, ideal for helping maintain a body temperature of 37 degrees Celsius (98.6 degrees Fahrenheit) in freezing conditions.

The team found that this "thermogenesis" effect was present in sea otters from the time they were babies to adults, and there was no difference in captive and wild-raised animals.

Sea otters and marine mammals more broadly might have evolved such traits when their terrestrial ancestors began taking to the oceans 50 million years ago, but that hypothesis will require more research to confirm. Learning how sea otters' metabolic system functions differently from ours could one day also help humans solve obesity issues, added Wright.

"If you can figure out how to increase the leak and metabolic rate, you could theoretically have humans revving up the metabolism and burning off additional calories." — **AFP**

FASHION

Fendi celebrates eternal city Rome at haute couture show



ITALIAN FASHION house Fendi used soft colours and marbled patterns for its haute couture collection on Thursday, presenting a line of luxurious gowns and outfits.

Designer Kim Jones said he looked to late Italian film director Pier Paolo Pasolini's depictions of Rome, where Fendi is based, for inspiration.

He presented the line digitally with a film by Italian director Luca Guadagnino. Models including Kate Moss and her daughter Lila Grace wore embroidered dresses, satin gowns in marbled prints, embellished jackets and mosaic-like designs.

"Pasolini observed Rome become modern — and that is what is interesting to me: connecting eras, the old with the new, the past with the present," Jones said in a statement.

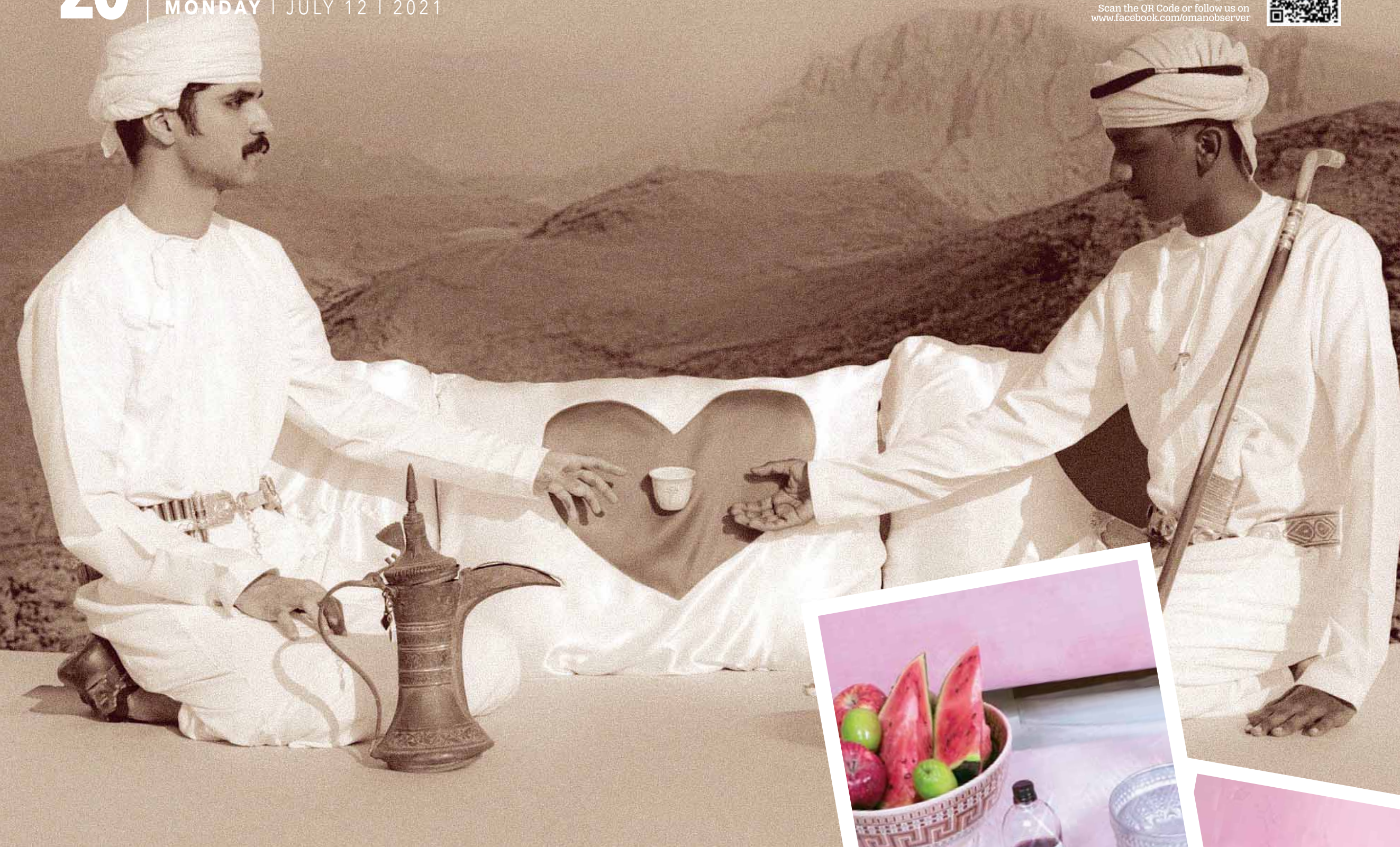
"Rome is a fascinating city because it has so many pasts." The British designer stuck to a mainly neutral colour palette, showing plenty of white, cream and shades of brown for his second couture collection at Fendi, which is known for its fur designs.

Models also wore strapless see-through gowns with embroidered florals, ruffled frocks, short lace dresses, printed coats and trouser suits adorned with acorn depictions. One voluminous dress in soft grey was adorned in floating feathers, while other evening looks included sparkly sequined creations.

Jones, also at the helm of menswear at French fashion house Dior, is artistic director for womenswear and couture at Fendi, part of luxury conglomerate LVMH.

He works alongside the founding family's scion Silvia Venturini Fendi, who looks after menswear and accessories.

While haute couture week has seen the return of in-person shows as lockdown restrictions ease in France, some brands, like Fendi, have opted for digital presentations. — **Reuters**



How art helps tackle social issues and becomes an extension of a person's identity

By Sara Al Harthi

Are Omanis uncomfortable in expressing their emotions? This subject is one of the social topics touched upon by the 21-year-old artist and photographer Abdulaziz bin Abdullah in his latest collection of work made available to the public recently.

Abdulaziz, who started his career exploring expressive drawing, has ventured into the friendlier territory of photography discovering that he can express himself better with the photographic lens.

As a young Omani artist, his vision is to mix elements from the past with the present and focus on the youth and how they have transitioned over time.

One of the photos he created that explored a modern youth's emotion was named "Habayb Club" — with the idea behind it having a club for people who are scared or uncomfortable to express their emotional feelings

— which is a very common phenomenon in the Arab community. Every object in the project symbolises something. For instance, the pink kumma (traditional Omani cap) with hearts embroidered on it symbolises the harmony of love with the traditional clothes and the traditions. The blood-red love potion that is shown in the picture is a magical drink that makes the fears go away and gives the courage to express ones' feelings, and the glass ends up breaking on the floor symbolises how fragile the whole social construct is.

Art has always been used as an escape by many people to express their emotions and communicate thoughts, for both artists and non-artists. Art is historically considered one of the most effective ways to show inner feelings. The exposure of an artist's private self and inner thoughts is very intimate because it reflects the inner state of the artist, which can help create art

that people can relate to.

For photographer's like Abdulaziz, it is important to find their style and something that makes them stand out. It is for this uniqueness and originality that the community usually notices them and pays attention to what they do and have to say.

Having started in expressive drawing, Abdulaziz is used to communicating ideas and emotions via his art. What he learned from this art form is that expressive drawings may capture movement and energy, feelings, memories, or even the spiritual realm.

When he shifted to photography, Abdulaziz built on the foundation of his original art form using whatever was available and tangible around him. After experimenting with photography, he realised that it is better than drawing because it can translate his thoughts in a better way. Learning how to take pictures for him came after a long process of rebuilding ideas that failed countless times.

He said, he has had a hard time expressing his emotions through words and was very happy to find a creative and fun outlet.

Owning a camera is the last thing he thought of, even though he is a professional photographer; Abdulaziz most often borrows a camera from his friends to create his art because the content and the message behind the pictures is what matters the most.

"Expressing myself through art is my love language to myself", he said.

He considers his style to be very realistic and inspired by what he experiences in his everyday life.

His drive and passion come from his pent-up energy, where he analyses what he and the youth of his generation go through from obstacles that can prevent them from being creative and directing their energy to the right place.

With his latest social commentary, Abdulaziz encourages young people like him to never give up and to create beauty out of a struggle. He said that the community is filled with challenges that can be overcome by adopting or subscribing to an art form that works with the person.

Some of his favourite photographers that he gets a lot of ideas and inspiration from are include @mahmood_zadjali, @mouslam-rabat, @spacemanone. To see more of Abdulaziz's work, follow him on Instagram: @azizzilll

