

Oman, Senegal sign air services agreement

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), on Wednesday signed an air services agreement with the Republic of Senegal to regulate operational and technical procedures in a manner that serves the common interests of the two countries. The agreement comprised 24 articles, in addition to an appendix for the schedule of air routes between the two countries. Eng Nayef bin Ali al Abri, CAA Chairman, and Doudou Ka, Minister of Air Transport and Airport Infrastructure Development in the Republic of Senegal signed the agreement. — ONA



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AUSTRALIA BEAT ENGLAND BY 2 WICKETS TO WIN EDGBASTON TEST



P13

SIX-PRONGED STRATEGY TO BOOST MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE



P18

REMBRANDT SELF-PORTRAIT 'HOME AFTER 400 YEARS'



HM RECEIVES AMBASSADORS' CREDENTIALS



His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received credentials from Yahaya Lawal, Ambassador of the Federal Republic of Nigeria to the Sultanate of Oman, at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday. His Majesty the Sultan also received credentials of ambassadors of Poland, the Vatican, Mongolia, Venezuela, South Africa and the Kingdom of Denmark. **REPORT ON P2**



Oman's pilgrims start arriving in holy lands

MEDINA: Groups of pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman have begun arriving in the holy lands to perform the pilgrimage for AH 1444, on Wednesday.

The arrival of pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman in Medina through land has finished according to the plans devised by the Omani Haj Mission in cooperation with the Haj companies while pilgrims travelling through the air are still arriving in Medina.

Abdulaziz bin Saud al Ghafri, Vice Chairman of the Omani Haj Mission, said that the Omani Haj Mission has sent a team to Medina to deliver services to the pilgrims who arrived there. Pilgrims arriving in Medina make up 60 per cent of the total number of pilgrims for this year, which stands at 14,000 pilgrims.

A delegation from the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs began delivering lectures to the pilgrims at their accommodations. Another delegation overseeing the Haj companies visited the pilgrims to check the companies' commitment to the contracts they signed with the pilgrims, he added. — ONA

Sayyid Bilarab visits international organisations in Switzerland

GENEVA: Assigned by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Honorary President of Promising Omani Startups Programme, visited a number of international organisations, research centres and business incubators in Geneva in the Swiss Confederation.

HH Sayyid Bilarab met with Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, Director-General of the World Trade Organization (WTO).

During the meeting they discussed the leading role the WTO plays to overcome the challenges facing the global economy as well as the developments in negotiations at the Organization, global economic opportunities,



procedures for ratification of the WTO Agreement on fisheries subsidies, and opportunities of cooperation for supporting innovative and technological startu-ps.

HH Sayyid Bilarab also met with Daren Tang, Director-General of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

They reviewed aspects of cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO) and a number of other topics including the frankincense project which will be implemented in cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the WIPO, next July.

TURN TO P3

Oman, Iran affirm consensus on regional, global issues

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister said "the visit of his Iranian counterpart to the Sultanate of Oman aims to continue the consultations between the two sides and cooperation in many bilateral fields particularly those pertaining to following up the implementation and activation of the outcomes of the Royal historical visit of His Majesty the Sultan to the Islamic Republic of Iran."

In a statement to Oman News Agency (ONA), Sayyid Badr affirmed the remarkable consensus in visions of the two countries in a set of topics and latest developments at the region and the world.

Such topics, he said, were



discussed during the meeting and would contribute in realising security, stability and peace, as well as backing all efforts and endeavours that target achieving the noble goals at the region.

Sayyid Badr said that it is expected to reach more agreements, memoranda of



understanding (MoUs) and executive programmes that would benefit the mutual interests to serve welfare and growth of the two neighbouring countries' friendly peoples.

In a statement to ONA, Dr Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of

The Iranian minister described the bilateral consultations as "constructive and positive" during which consensus in views between leaders of the two countries were reviewed

the Islamic Republic of Iran, expressed his thanks and appreciation to His Majesty the Sultan for his constructive initiatives at the regional and international levels in a manner that serves peace and stability in the region and the world at large.

The Iranian minister described

the bilateral consultations held today as "constructive and positive" during which consensus in views between leaders of the two countries were reviewed particularly during the recent Royal visit of His Majesty the Sultan to Tehran.

He also pointed out that the bilateral cooperation between the two countries has transcended the stage of dialogue and discussion to the phase of active bilateral cooperation in all spheres. It is also agreed to hold meetings of the new upcoming round of the Joint Committee between the two countries, he added.

He also asserted that the relations between the two countries witness a remarkable progress. — ONA

SEE ALSO P3



HM receives ambassadors’ credentials



Robert Rostek, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland



Archbishop Nicolas Henry Marie Denis Thevenin, Ambassador of the Vatican

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik received, separately, at Al Barakah Palace on Wednesday, credentials of ambassadors of several countries appointed to the Sultanate of Oman. His Majesty the Sultan received credentials of the following ambassadors: Yahaya Lawal, Ambassador of the Federal

Republic of Nigeria, Robert Rostek, Ambassador of the Republic of Poland, Archbishop Nicolas Henry Marie Denis Thevenin, Ambassador of the Vatican, Bulgan Enkhtuvshin, Ambassador of Mongolia, David Velasquez Caraballo, Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, Mogobo David Magabe, Ambassador of the Republic of

South Africa, and Liselotte Plesner, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark. During their sidelines meetings with His Majesty the Sultan, the ambassadors conveyed greetings of their countries’ leaders and their best wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to His Majesty. They wished the

Omani people further progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty. They also expressed their great honour and delight at presenting their credentials to His Majesty the Sultan. They affirmed to exert sincere efforts to promote relations of their respective countries with Oman in various spheres

in a manner that serves the joint interests of the Omani people and their countries’ citizens. His Majesty the Sultan welcomed the ambassadors, expressing his gratitude for their leaders’ greetings and best wishes. His Majesty affirmed that they would receive all support from him, the Government and the

Omani people to facilitate carrying out their duties. The credentials presentation ceremony was attended by the Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, the Foreign Minister, the Commander of the Royal Guard of Oman, the Head of the Royal Protocols and the Military Aides to His Majesty the Sultan. — ONA



Bulgan Enkhtuvshin, Ambassador of Mongolia



David Velasquez Caraballo, Ambassador of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela



Mogobo David Magabe, Ambassador of the Republic of South Africa



Liselotte Plesner, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Denmark



Bilarab visits key international organisations



FROM PAGE 1

HH Sayyid Bilarab also visited the European Organization for Nuclear Research (CERN) which specialises in advanced physics research which is the nucleus for the foundation of the global information network (Internet).

HH Sayyid Bilarab also visited Campus Biotech, a leading foundation in providing the latest innovations, technologies and laboratories in the bio-energy field.

HH Sayyid Bilarab is accompanied during the visit by Qais Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Halima Rashid al Zaree, Chairperson of the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED), and owners of Omani startups whose business is based on innovation and technology.

The delegation also comprises working teams from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, ASMED, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and the National Programme for Investment and Export Development. — ONA



Royal Office Minister receives Iran's Foreign Affairs Minister

MUSCAT: Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, received on Wednesday Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran, currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged cordial conversation and discussed areas of bilateral cooperation and means of enhancing them to achieve the joint interests.

They also highlighted the march of the historical relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran.



The two sides also discussed several matters of mutual concern.

The meeting was attended

by the Ambassador of Iran to Oman and the delegation accompanying the guest.

— ONA

Khareef Dhofar offers many new entertainment opportunities

AFRAH AL BALUSHI

@Afrahalbalushia

Dhofar Municipality announced activity details of Khareef Dhofar, which will start on July 15 and continue until August 31. The emphasis will be on the continuity of the signature season of Dhofar and the comprehensive strategy launched last year.

Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, addressed a press conference along with Ammar bin Obed Ghawas, Director of Events and Awareness Department in Dhofar Municipality. General managers of different departments in Dhofar Municipality and representatives of various media were present on the occasion.

Dr Al Ghassani, who is also the Chairman of the Main Committee for Khareef 2023, mentioned some new tourist sites for the season.

"The activities this year include events in Al Haffa area, which include showcasing five elements of Dhofar -- urban, rural, marine, nomadic and agricultural. It will also have space for arts and events, restaurants for Omani meals, various heritage markets, craftsmen products, live performances and etc," said Dr Ahmed al Ghassani.

The "Ateen Square" event will include shopping activities, electric games, lighting and laser shows, drone shows, Teslenko family circus, and many different restaurants



and cafes. The Kiddy Time event in Awqad Park will have Smurfs Village, Masha and the Bear Village, and the Panda Village along with interactive games, Candy Museum (Nainaina), and the skating ring, ice, air games, Alice in Wonderland events, animated global events etc.

The events will also include many specialised exhibitions, such as the Salalah International Chocolate Exhibition (Choco Spray), which will include exhibitions of international chocolate companies, 100 chocolate figures, in addition, to live presentations of chocolate figures presented by international specialists. The specialised exhibitions will include the first jewellery exhibition, the Gulf perfume exhibition, and the Gulf fashion exhibition.

The 'Light Park', which will be held in Salalah Park, will include a theatre, an illuminated garden, a bird's corner, and the park site, which contains an open cinema corner in addition to a corner for cafes, restaurants and artificial

intelligence games.

"Salalah Eat - People's Kitchen" will be organised in the Garden of Happiness, in which a number of international restaurants and cafes, in the presence of a group of international chefs, and a cooking competition (Salalah Chef) will take place. At Al Morouj Theatre, many artistic concerts will be held, hosting artists from several countries, artistic summer sessions for Omani artists, and a number of local and international theatrical performances.

The Khareef Dhofar will also witness a number of sporting events and activities, such as sailing experiences under the supervision of specialised trainers, kayaks and rowing boats at Al Dahariz beach, while Al Dummar beach in the Wilayat of Mirbat will host the Dhofar International Racing Competition and a football sports event. Many tourist areas have been developed this year.

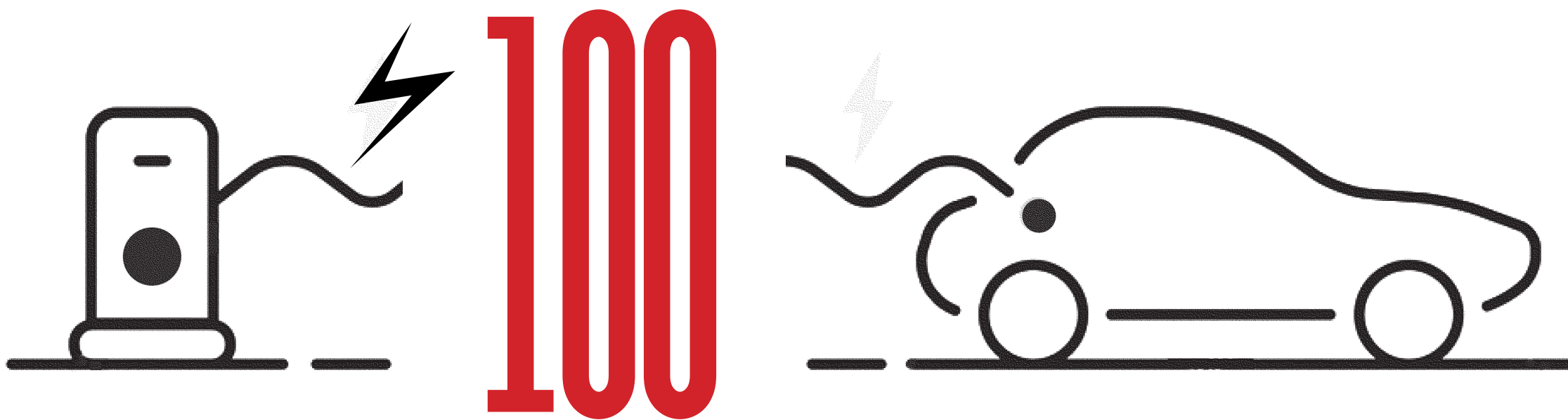
ROP CELEBRATES PASSING OUT OF POLICE RECRUITS



SALALAH: The Royal Oman Police (ROP) celebrated the passing out of batches of police personnel (who completed police skills training) and police recruits. The ceremony took place at the military parade grounds of Dhofar Governorate's Police Command in Salalah. The ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, in the presence of Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs. The ceremony was attended by senior officers of the ROP, security and military units. Also present were some members of the State Council, members of Majlis Ash'shura and directors-general of government departments in Dhofar. — ONA



OMAN POWERS AHEAD WITH E-CAR REVOLUTION



100

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AMBITIOUS
EV ADOPTION
TARGETS

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@Afrahalbalushia

WITH the rapid global expansion of the electric car market, there is a noticeable disparity between

the growth of the industry and the rate at which people are adopting this transformative technology. It is imperative, therefore, to explore the numerous advantages of electric vehicles (EVs) and highlight what sets them apart from their fuel-powered counterparts.

EVs are environmentally friendly and contribute to reducing pollution resulting from fuel combustion. This type of car also saves money, as it only needs to be recharged with electricity, which costs little money compared to fuel.

Furthermore, to not need engine maintenance, oil change and other things with the various procedures that a fuel-powered car needs, so its operating cost is lower than that of conventional cars, whether in terms of operating expenses or changing service and periodic maintenance and its spare parts are not considered expensive compared to mechanical cars.

The electric car is quiet, as the engine does not make a disturbing sound, and it is safe because it contains airbags, and the electrical supply can be cut off at any time to protect passengers.

Studies and research revealed a significant growth in the size of the global market for electric cars, as a study conducted by Bloomberg Corporation showed that electric cars account for 3 per cent of car sales around the world, and it is expected to grow by up to 10 per cent in 2025, and this percentage will rise to 28 per cent by 2030, to 58 per cent in 2040.

To encourage the transition to carbon-free vehicles, the government of the Sultanate of Oman has adopted a set of facilities and incentives, including exempting electric cars by 100 per cent of customs tax and EV registration fees at the ROP. The value-added tax rate for electric cars and their special spare parts will be reduced to zero per cent, provided that these incentives will be applied for a period of three years, which can be extended, and will come into force from July 1.

The amount of savings in the cost of electric charging for electric cars is RO 1 (\$2.6 US) or RO 2 (\$5.19) that can suffice to charge the car for a distance between 300 and 500 kilometres.

Hilal al Ghaithi, General Director of Energy at the Services Regulatory Authority, Oman, stated in a statement that the goal is to switch to electric cars to raise the percentage of electric cars in the Sultanate of Oman to 35 per cent by 2030 and 65 per cent in 2040, and seek to install a sub-meter to charge cars in homes with the same residential electricity tariffs, and ultra-fast chargers

will be installed at a rate of every 200 km on highways.

The Omani Public Services Regulatory Authority issued a regulation regulating electric vehicle charging activity in Oman, which came within the provisions of the law regulating and privatizing the electricity and water sector.

The regulation came as part of the Gulf state's efforts to popularise electric cars to accelerate the abandonment of internal combustion engine cars, in support of Oman's efforts to achieve carbon neutrality by the middle of the century, within Oman Vision 2040.

The regulation regulating electric car charging activity is added to a plan developed by the state to reduce emissions in the transportation sector, which includes three stages, the first stage of which aims to introduce seven thousand electric cars by 2030, at a rate of 35 per cent of new cars, and in the second stage, it aims the plan is to deploy 22,000 electric cars, 65 per cent of the new vehicles, by 2040, before the start of the third phase, which includes replacing all new cars with electric vehicles and hydrogen fuel cells, by 2050.

Within the three phases, the Sultanate of Oman aims to reduce emissions in the transport sector by 3 per cent by 2030, and this percentage will rise in the second phase to about 34 per cent in 2040 before reaching 100 per cent in the third phase by 2050.



Oman’s Green Hydrogen journey going full swing

MUSCAT: Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals and Chairman of the Board of Directors of Hydrom, a subsidiary of Energy Development Oman SAOC (EDO), earlier signed two new agreements awarding green hydrogen projects in Oman. The agreements were signed with the winning bidders of the round 1 of Oman green hydrogen auction process during a special event organised by Hydrom under the supervision of Ministry of Energy and Minerals at Crowne Plaza OCEC, Madinat Al Irfan. The event saw the attendance of senior officials from the public and private sectors. During the event, the round 2 public auction was launched, which will see new land blocks auctioned in Dhofar Governorate.

Following the previous award of three projects earlier this month, Oman has in total awarded five large-scale green hydrogen projects, representing a total investment of more than \$30 billion and a total production of 750 KTPA.

The total investment in the two newly awarded projects signed with a POSCO-ENGIE consortium and Hyport Duqm is expected to exceed \$10 billion. The contracts are expected to yield a total production capacity of 250 KTPA from more than 6.5 GW of installed renewable energy capacity at the sites.

The first agreement was signed with the winner of the public auction process.



It is a consortium POSCO-ENGIEand consisting of POSCO Holdings, MESCAT Middle East DMCC, Samsung Engineering Co. Ltd., Futuretech Energy Ventures, Korea East-West Power Co. Ltd. and Korea Southern Power Co. Ltd. The consortium is expected to produce more than 200 KTPA of green hydrogen by 2030, utilising over 5.2 GW of combined wind and solar energy to produce and export ammonia. The plant will be built in Al Wusta Governorate.

The second project was signed with a consortium Hyport Duqm consisting of the,OQ Alternative Energy, and DEME Concessions NV, to produce green hydrogen. The consortium aims to produce more than 50 KTPA of green hydrogen by 2029 in the project's first phase. The signing of this agreement follows the earlier signing of commercial term sheets in March 2023.

During the event, Hydrom also launched the second bid round of its green hydrogen auction process, which provides companies with the opportunity to submit investment proposals to develop large-scale green hydrogen projects in some of the most

attractive locations of the Sultanate. In round 2, Hydrom plans to award up to three land blocks in Dhofar Governorate by the end of the first quarter of 2024. Companies interested in bidding can register through the Hydrom website <https://hydrom.om/>.

In parallel, Hydrom will finalise negotiations with companies with which it had signed commercial term sheets in March 2023, hoping to sign the full agreements before the end of 2023. Commenting on the agreements, Al Aufi stated, “We are pleased to witness the signings of these new agreements with such prestigious international companies. The fast-paced efforts behind the announcement of these new projects reflect Oman’s commitment to reinforce its leading position in the global green hydrogen sector in line with its energy transformation strategy.

“We are also delighted with the announcement of the launch of round 2 of the public auction for green hydrogen projects. This aligns with our ambitious plans to establish Oman as one of the world’s largest exporters of green hydrogen by 2030. We possess

valuable natural resources and geographical features that allow us to spearhead this promising sector and capitalise on its potential as the energy source of the future. The green hydrogen sector is one of the key enablers towards achieving the strategic goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040 and the country’s target of net-zero carbon emissions by 2050.”

“We are delighted with Hydrom’s accomplishments during the round 1 public auction process. We look forward to yet more remarkable milestones to come with round 2 and at the same accelerated pace. Doing so will support EDO’s vision towards developing Oman’s energy sector and leading Oman’s sustainable energy future. Furthermore, we will continue to provide the necessary support to Hydrom to achieve its vision,” said Eng Mazin al Lamki, CEO of EDO.

Speaking on the achievements, Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani, Managing Director of Hydrom, said, “We are proud of what we have accomplished so far towards developing the green hydrogen sector in the Sultanate. The signing of these agreements reflects the Sultanate’s commitment towards stimulating the growth of its green hydrogen sector and cementing its leading position regionally and globally. Hydrom conducted round 1 of the auction in record time. Today we also witness the launch of the round 2 public auction for new green hydrogen blocks.

Transport ministry distributes EV charging stations along main roads

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology announced the distribution of charging stations for electric vehicles (EVs) along main roads in Oman with the aim of inculcating a culture of espousing modern technologies as a means of diminishing carbon emissions.

The ministry pointed out that it seeks to provide a variety of green mobility solutions and enhancing the EV system in Oman. The approach fits with the ministry’s programme to achieve carbon neutrality (zero carbon emissions) in the transport sector by 2050.

The EV charging stations will be available in more than 90 locations. The 49 stations in Muscat Governorate are distributed as follows: 18 in Bausher, 2 in Muscat, 6 in Muttrah and 22 in Al Seeb.

Ten EV charging stations of North Al



Batinah Governorate are distributed as follows: 1 in Suhar, 1 in Shinas, 2 in Liwa, 2 in Saham and 4 in Al Suwaiq.

In Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, there are 8 EV charging stations, distributed as follows: 7 in Nizwa and 1 in Manah.

Al Wusta Governorate has 4 EV charging stations: 3 in Haima and 1 in Duqm.

Dhofar Governorate has 12 EV charging stations, distributed as follows: 4 in Thamrait, 3 in Maqshan and 5 in Salah.

Each of the governorates of Musandam, Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah and South Al Sharqiyah has one EV charging station.

Border areas have been accorded 4 EV charging stations. – **ONA**



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

INTERNATIONAL TENDERS NOTICE

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tender:-

Tender No.	Description	Tender Documents Price (R.O)	Class	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Last Date for Submission of Documents
390/2023/MAFWR/HQ-29	Consultancy Services for Update of Water Balance Computation for the Sultanate of Oman	300/-	First	Tuesday 20/6/2023	Monday 10/7/2023
393/2023/MAFWR/HQ-30	Consultancy Services for Updating and Preparing of Flood Hazard Maps and preparation of Flood Risk Management & Emergency Plans for Muscat, Dhofar and Musandam Governorates in Sultanate of Oman	300/-	First	Tuesday 20/6/2023	Monday 10/7/2023
394/2023/MAFWR/HQ-31	Consultancy Services for Design Review & Construction Supervision of Wadi Al Ansab Flood Protection Dams (Ans02 & Ans03) in Wilayat Bawsher, Muscat Governorate	300/-	First	Tuesday 20/6/2023	Monday 10/7/2023
397/2023/MAFWR/HQ-32	Consultancy Services for Updating and Preparing of Flood Hazard Maps and Preparation of Flood Risk Management & Emergency Plans for Sharqiyah, Wusta, Dakhiliyah, Dhahirah and Buraimi Governorates in Oman	300/-	First	Wednesday 21/6/2023	Tuesday 11/7/2023

- Interested Companies registered with Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) 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.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies, and for International companies that not have head quarters in the Sultanate of Oman should attach Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender) and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: **+968 24402200** or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

Experts discuss export solutions for businesses

SIHAM AL SAIDI
BATINAH NORTH, JUNE 21

As part of the strategic efforts in supporting all economic sectors in the Sultanate of Oman and in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040 aiming at creating a diversified economy through enhancing production and export of non-oil activities, a seminar on ‘Strengthening the Omani Export System’ was held in Al Batinah North Governorate under the auspices of Shaikh Mohammed bin Suleiman al Kindi, Governor of North Al Batinah.

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry’s North Al Batinah branch conducted and organised the seminar.

Shaikh Khalil bin Ahmed al Harthy, CEO of Credit Oman



company, presented views on insurance services and solutions provided by Credit Oman.

“Credit Oman was established in 1991 and owned by the Omani Investment Authority, covering more than 2,400 local buyers and investors and more than 6,800 buyers around the world. The value of insured sales amounts to more than RO 2.7 billion, with the growth rate of insured sales for Omani exports and local sales for the year 2022 at 148 per cent,” he said.

Al Harthy mentioned that Credit

Oman provides insurance for several sectors, including mining, foodstuff, petrochemical and plastic, packaging, building and construction materials, and agricultural materials.

Bader bin Saif al Amri, CEO of Oman Numbering Centre, gave a presentation about introducing Oman Numbering Centre GS 1, which is a non-profit organisation that develops and maintains global standards for commercial communications, the most important of which is the bar code, as 6 billion bar codes are scanned daily. Oman Numbering Centre was established in 2016, and in 2021 the centre became an official member of the global organisation GS 1 with coding (607). It was officially inaugurated on February 9, 2023, which coincided with Omani Industry Day.



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

Request for Expression of Interest Announcement

Request for Expression of Interest No. EOI.2/2023
Development, Management and Operation for Water Taxi Services in the Sultanate of Oman

The Internal Investment Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology is pleased to invite local and international companies, as well as specialized investors in maritime transportation services, to submit an Expression of Interest for the development, management, and operation of Water Taxi Services in the Sultanate of Oman, according to the conditions outlined below in this announcement.

Competition Submission Requirements:

- An expression of interest letter to invest in the development, management, and operation of Water Taxi Services in the Sultanate of Oman, in compliance with Oman Maritime Law No. 19/2023 and the Ministerial Resolution No. 33/2022 regulating the Water Taxi Services.
- Submission of a comprehensive operational model for the development, management, and operation of Water Taxi Services, including the business plan, marketing strategy, promotion, business attraction, investments, and In-country value added enhancement.
- Submission of company profile details, commercial registration, and relevant licenses to the activities of the interested company.
- Submission of an economic feasibility study for the project, including an analysis of service delivery costs, estimated revenues, and expected profits.
- Submission of documents demonstrating the company's and employees' expertise in the development, management, and operation of the Water Taxi Services.
- Any other supporting documents for the investor in the project.
- The documents should be submitted as PDF format and sent to the email address (investment@mtcit.gov.om), indicating the title and number of the Expression of Interest request.

Investors interested in developing, managing and operating the Water Taxi Services in the Sultanate of Oman are requested to submit their applications no later than August 31, 2023.

For any other inquiries, you can reach us via the following contact details:

PHONE NUMBER	E-mail
24685094 24685341	investment@mtcit.gov.om

INTERNAL INVESTMENT COMMITTEE

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www.mtcit.gov.om

LANDS FOR SALE

- Residential commercial land in Wilayat Bausher/ Al Gubrah Al Janubiyah adjacent to Oman Mall and overlooking Muscat Expressway and has an area of 5000 sqm.
- Residential commercial land in Wilayat Bausher/ Ghala has an area of 2934 sqm.
- 5 Industrial lands in Wilayat Duqm/ Duqm Al Hadithah and each has 7500 sqm.

Contact us by email info@alsakhaya.com
or by call through 97365922 / 92822040

Looking for job, car, flat and furniture? Check out the Observer classified page. It's where buyers meet sellers.



Israel to move ahead with 1,000 new homes in Eli settlement

JERUSALEM: Israel plans 1,000 new homes for Eli settlement in the occupied West Bank in a potential doubling of its population in response to a Palestinian gun attack nearby that killed four people, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office said on Wednesday. The statement did not make clear if the plan included homes previously approved for construction, nor detail the timetable.

The West Bank is among areas where Palestinians want to establish an independent state, and which has seen increasing spasms of violence with US-sponsored peacemaking efforts stalled for almost a decade.

Israel has peppered the West Bank with settlements that most world powers view as illegal. Israel disputes this, deeming the land a biblical birthright and security bulwark. Washington has urged its ally not to proceed with settlement projects in the territory, which Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East war.

On Tuesday, two Hamas gunmen killed four Israelis outside Eli. The group called the attack retaliation for a deadly Israeli raid elsewhere in the West Bank on Monday.

"Our response to terrorism is to strike at it mightily and build up our land," the statement from Netanyahu's office said.

It said Netanyahu, Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Defence Minister Yoav Gallant "agreed to move ahead immediately" with the new Eli



A picture shows burnt cars, reportedly set ablaze by Israeli settlers, in the area of in al-Lubban al-Sharqiya in the occupied West Bank. — AFP

homes. Settlement watchdog group Peace Now said Eli now has around 1,000 homes, meaning Wednesday's announcement could spell a doubling of its population.

The total settlement population in the West Bank has grown to 465,400, among 2.58 million Palestinians, according to Peace Now.

Meanwhile, Israeli settlers rampaged through Palestinian towns in the occupied West Bank on Wednesday, torching buildings

and cars in apparent retaliation for the killing by Hamas of four Israelis near a settlement the day before, residents and officials said.

One Palestinian was shot dead during the rampage, Palestinian health officials said.

In TurmusAyya, a prosperous town near Ramallah, footage showed cars ablaze with thick clouds of black smoke swirling above and Palestinian youths throwing stones.

Overnight, residents of a

number of other Palestinian towns also reported settler attacks as senior ministers in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's government called for a full-scale military operation across the West Bank.

Yaqoub Oweis, chairman of the village council of Al-Lubban Al-Sharqeya near Ramallah, said Israeli soldiers and police stood by as a large group of settlers burned a petrol station, orchards, a cement factory and dozens of cars. — Reuters

Pakistan village mourns 24 feared dead in Greek migrant tragedy

BANDLI: Death hangs over the Pakistan village of Bandli like a shroud, as residents absorb news that as many as 24 young local men may be among hundreds feared drowned in last week's Greek migrant boat tragedy.

The village was in mourning as relatives offered up DNA samples to identify bodies among the 82 recovered from last Wednesday's shipwreck in the Ionian Sea.

A procession of visitors came and went from the homes of families in distress, 95 kilometres southeast of Islamabad in Pakistan administered Kashmir. Parents sat listlessly in the street and funeral prayers were not yet held, as the faintest hope still lingered.

Authorities in Europe still have no clear idea how many people were aboard the boat when it sank — estimates range from 400 to over 700 — but likely

hundreds came from Pakistan, largely from the most populous Punjab province and Pakistan administered Kashmir.

The country's Federal Investigation Agency said on Wednesday they have collected DNA samples from families of 108 missing youths.

Sarfraz Khan Virk, another senior official from the FIA in Lahore, told reporters that following previous such disasters, many families have refused to speak to authorities.

"They said that we want to send a second son and we will suffer if you file a case," he said.

"There are families who had sent one brother to Italy and after a failed attempt with the second brother, want to send the third one. So we have many issues and the people are not cooperating with us." — AFP



Relatives of migrants wait to provide DNA samples at a hospital in Bandli village, Pakistan. — AFP

Sudan fighting resumes minutes after latest truce ends

KHARTOUM: Renewed artillery exchanges rocked greater Khartoum early on Wednesday as Sudan's warring generals resumed fighting just minutes after the latest US and Saudi-brokered ceasefire expired.

Already on Tuesday evening, an immense fire had engulfed the intelligence service's headquarters in the capital Khartoum with each side accusing the other of attacking it in violation of the 72-hour truce.

A source within the regular army, led by Abdel Fattah al-Burhan, accused rival paramilitaries loyal to his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo of shelling the building.

A source within the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces said an "army drone bombed the building where RSF fighters had gathered, sparking a fire and the partial destruction of the intelligence headquarters".



Sudanese refugees gather as Doctors Without Borders (MSF) teams assist the war wounded from West Darfur, Sudan. — Reuters file photo

On Wednesday morning, residents of Omdurman, just across the Nile from Khartoum, reported

heavy artillery exchanges within minutes of the ceasefire expiring at 6:00 am. Army warplanes flew low

over several adjacent districts, the residents said.

The ceasefire, which coincided

with an international donors' conference in Geneva on Monday, brought a brief respite to the millions of civilians who have been trapped by the fighting in greater Khartoum but an exodus of refugees continued to pour of the war's other main battleground Darfur.

Nationwide, more than 2,000 people have been killed since the power struggle between Burhan and Daglo erupted into fighting on April 15, the Armed Conflict Location and Event Data Project said.

According to the US State Department, up to 1,100 people have been killed in the West Darfur state capital El Geneina alone.

Bodies have remained on the streets of the city, where months of unrest have left shops either vacant or gutted by looters.

Residents have fled en masse,

grabbing whatever they could to escape to the border with Chad. At least 150,000 people have fled Darfur into Chad since the start of fighting, according to the UN.

Some described being shot at by fighters and subject to searches during the perilous journey.

The United Nations has spoken of possible "crimes against humanity" in Darfur.

Washington has said the RSF, which traces its origins to the Janjaweed, is "primarily" responsible for recent "atrocities" in Darfur, which is home to a quarter of Sudan's population.

Daglo denounced what he called "a tribal conflict" in El Geneina, claiming to have ordered his men "not to intervene" and accusing the army of "creating sedition by distributing weapons" to civilians. — AFP

TUNIS

Train derailment kills two, injures 34

Two people were killed and 34 injured when an overnight passenger train careered off the tracks and overturned in eastern Tunisia on Wednesday, the state-owned SNCFT rail company said.

The accident occurred shortly after midnight when a train operating between Tunis and the southern city of Gabes derailed near Msaken.

The driver and a passenger were killed while 34 other passengers were injured.



"An investigation has been opened to clarify the circumstances and causes of the accident and to determine who was responsible," the SNCFT said.

BAGHDAD

Authorities to launch indictments over torture

Iraqi authorities announced on Wednesday plans to prosecute police and civil servants accused of torturing detainees under the administration of former prime minister Mustafa al-Kadhemi.

The 14 alleged perpetrators, including nine police officers, were part of a cell known as Committee 29 which had a free rein in 2020 to interrogate senior officials suspected of having a hand in Iraq's endemic corruption.

The now-disbanded committee was headed by influential police



general Ahmed Taha Hashem. The government had decided to charge the police and civil servants after an enquiry found the committee had used "torture" and "extortion", according to an internal report.

BEIRUT

France's envoy lands in Beirut for talks

France's new special envoy for Lebanon arrived in Beirut on Wednesday for talks with Lebanese leaders, state media reported.

Jean-Yves Le Drian's three-day visit comes a week after Lebanese lawmakers failed for a 12th time to elect a new president, drawing condemnation from the international community.

Le Drian would discuss the crisis during meetings with officials, party heads and other politicians after arriving at Beirut's Rafic Hariri International Airport, the



National News Agency said. The former foreign minister was appointed France's special envoy to Lebanon earlier this month by President Emmanuel Macron.



In brief

■ GENEVA



PRESIDENT MAKES SURPRISE TO QUIT GOVERNMENT

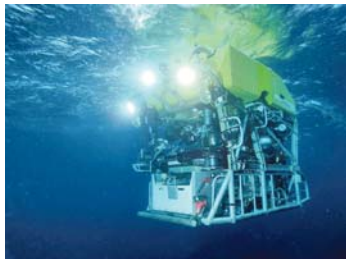
Swiss President Alain Berset announced on Wednesday that he will quit the government at the end of 2023, in a surprise move after more than a decade of ministerial service.

Berset, 51, said he would step down from Switzerland's Federal Council government at the end of year, telling a hastily arranged press conference in the capital Bern that it was "the right time to leave".

Berset is the youngest and also the longest-serving minister, having joined the government in 2012.

"I have the feeling that I've accomplished what is possible. I have given everything," he said.

■ BOSTON



DESPERATE SEARCH FOR TITANIC SUB CONTINUES

Rescue teams were racing on Wednesday to trace the origin of sounds heard from the depths of the North Atlantic in a search for a tourist submersible with five people on board that vanished on its descent to the century-old wreck of the Titanic.

The US Coast Guard said remotely operated vehicle (ROV) searches were deployed in the area where Canadian aircraft detected the undersea noises using sonar buoys on Tuesday. Estimates suggest the submersible's air supply could run out by Thursday morning.

"We don't know the source of that noise," US Coast Guard Rear Admiral John Mauger said.

■ LISBON



HUNDREDS OF LABOUR EXPLOITATION VICTIMS FOUND

Hundreds of alleged victims of labour exploitation were found on Wednesday in different locations near Portugal's capital Lisbon, including inside a big warehouse where they were kept to work in the illegal harvesting of shellfish.

The Maritime Police, which is leading the investigation, said in a statement that all of the 243 victims identified so far were migrants.

Four members of criminal networks linked to the illegal harvesting and trade of shellfish, such as clams, have been detained, the police said, adding the operation was ongoing.

Ukraine tells West it needs over \$6 billion more to rebuild



British PM Rishi Sunak delivers a speech as Ukraine's President Volodymyr Zelenskyy appears on the screen at the opening session on the first day of the Ukraine Recovery Conference in London. — Reuters

LONDON: Ukraine called on Wednesday for Western countries to pledge over \$6 billion more to help it rebuild over the next 12 months, saying Russia's war meant Kyiv was facing the largest reconstruction project in Europe since World War Two.

At a conference in London where Britain, the United States, the European Union and others pledged billions of dollars in additional help, Ukraine said it needed yet more capital and also commitments to specific projects to not only recover but to develop into a powerful member of the Western world.

Ukrainian Prime Minister Denys Shmyhal put the price tag at more than \$6 billion over the

next 12 months, a shortfall he said he would try to cover during the conference which London hopes will cement its position as a leading supporter of Kyiv.

"We have set an ambitious goal of securing pledges for this amount as a result of this conference," he said.

While expressing thanks for the support so far, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy was blunt - Kyiv also needed concrete commitments to projects that will help Ukraine not only recover but to further modernise.

After nearly 16 months of Russia's war on Ukraine that has destroyed homes, hospitals and other critical infrastructure, British Prime Minister Rishi

Sunak opened the conference with an appeal to businesses and governments to do more to help rebuild.

Addressing the key difficulty for most companies wanting to invest in Ukraine - insurance against war damage and destruction - Sunak announced the London Conference Framework for War Risk Insurance, which could pave the way for derisking investment.

"Together with our allies we will maintain our support for Ukraine's defence and for the counteroffensive, and we'll stand with Ukraine for as long as it takes as they continue to win this war," Sunak told the conference, which brought together more than 1,000 public and private sector decision

makers.

He said the London Conference Framework was "a huge step forward towards helping insurers to underwrite investments into Ukraine, removing one of the biggest barriers and giving investors the confidence they need to act".

Marsh McLennan, a professional services group that says it has been working on the British government programme, said a war risk insurance scheme has to be available at an unprecedented scale - and come with a government backstop.

Sunak unveiled measures including \$3 billion of additional guarantees to unlock World Bank lending. — **Reuters**

Blinken encourages Turkish counterpart to support Sweden's Nato bid

ANKARA: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken encouraged Ankara to support Sweden in its bid to join Nato in a meeting with new Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan on Wednesday, a State Department spokesperson said.

Türkiye has objected to Sweden's bid to join the Western military alliance, citing security concerns, but members of the bloc have expressed hope that it will become a member in time for a mid-July summit in Vilnius.

In a meeting with Fidan on the sidelines of the Ukraine Recovery Summit in London, Blinken stressed the importance of Nato unity at a critical time, spokesperson Matthew Miller said.

"(Blinken) also... encouraged Türkiye's support for Sweden to join the Nato Alliance now," he said.

Blinken welcomed Ankara's support for Kyiv and its work on the grain deal, which allows



US Secretary of State Antony Blinken meets with Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan at the Intercontinental O2 Hotel in London. — Reuters

Ukrainian exports from Black Sea ports, the spokesperson said.

Last month, Blinken urged Türkiye to finalise immediately Sweden's accession to the bloc. Sweden and Finland both reversed decades of military non-alignment last year and applied to join Nato following Russia's attack of Ukraine.

Finland joined Nato in April but Türkiye continues to block Sweden's membership. Last

week President Tayyip Erdogan said it should not expect a green light from Ankara at the summit unless it prevents anti-Türkiye protests in Stockholm.

Türkiye says Sweden harbours members of militant groups it considers to be terrorists. Sweden recently introduced a new law to make it harder to finance or support terrorist groups.

Swedish Foreign Minister

Tobias Billstrom said on Wednesday Türkiye's parliament should begin to ratify Sweden's bid because Stockholm has now met its obligations under a deal with Ankara.

Blinken and Fidan were in London to attend the conference on Ukraine at which allies were due to pledge billions of dollars in economic and reconstruction aid. Fidan said he was there to demonstrate Türkiye's support for Ukraine.

Last year Sweden and Finland both reversed decades of military non-alignment and applied to join Nato following Russia's attack of Ukraine.

Finland joined Nato in April but Türkiye continues to block Sweden's membership citing security concerns.

"Our judgement is that we have done what was expected of us, now it is time for the Turkish parliament to start the ratification process," Billstrom said on the sidelines of a meeting in parliament. — **Reuters**

Polish ruling party leader returns to govt ahead of election campaign

WARSAW: The head of Poland's governing conservatives, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, on Wednesday returned to the cabinet as deputy prime minister, in what the party hopes will strengthen its position ahead of an upcoming general election.

The 74-year-old has been widely regarded as Poland's de facto leader since his Law and Justice (PiS) party came to power in 2015.

Kaczynski's return to government "is a totally justified and necessary decision," President Andrzej Duda said during the appointment ceremony.

According to observers, Kaczynski's return is meant to bring stability to the government -- which has been plagued by infighting and internal conflicts -- and prepare the conservatives for an upcoming election which will likely take place in October.

"This is an important reinforcement ahead of the election and a clear message that we are fighting for victory," government spokesman Piotr Muller told state television.

Kaczynski is now the sole deputy prime minister.

Previously there were four deputy premiers in the cabinet, who all resigned from their posts alongside the moves announced on Wednesday.

They will remain members of the cabinet.

Kaczynski had previously served as a deputy prime minister in charge of security from October 2020 to June 2022.

"Jaroslaw Kaczynski's role will be different from last time," said Jacek Sasin, one of the deputy premiers who resigned.

"As of now he will coordinate all of the government's work."

Mateusz Morawiecki remains as the country's prime minister.

Polls show the PiS is polling first, but the main opposition party, Civic Platform (PO), has been gaining ground.

According to an opinion survey carried out this month by the CBOS institute, the PiS had 33 per cent of support, while the PO had 27 per cent — an increase of four percentage points compared with the previous poll. — **AFP**



Leader of Poland's ruling Law and Justice (PiS) party, Jaroslaw Kaczynski reacts after the first exit polls of general elections during the party's electoral evening in Warsaw. — **AFP file photo**

Dr Anchan C K

The writer is an international advisor

Energy works in a similar system as a currency like money. In other words, after you have spent it, you need to regain some more before you try to spend again. Otherwise, you end up going into a deficit. Energy deficits are not pretty.

You know you are in an energy deficit when you are tired, irritable, stressed, frustrated, and generally unenthusiastic. Ultimately, a check and balance must be made.

The cycle of perfect energy management is one where you are fully engaged and using all of your resources for maximum productivity, followed by a period of intensive recovery where you regain all of your energy for the task ahead.

When your body, mind, emotions and spirit finally declare bankruptcy, you crash and burn out as the eventual price of poor energy management is.

The key to effective energy management is to install habits into our life that promote cycles of deep engagement followed by recovery. Without this balance in the cycle, the system becomes unstable. Creating these habits means developing a ritual for recovering your energy. This could be as simple as

sitting back and relaxing for fifteen minutes or doing some light exercise.

To increase your energy, you must stretch it beyond its current capacity, and then recover it. This stretching of capacity is what most people refer to as stress.

Energy is more than just the physical energy you use from exercising. There are other levels of energy that work in a similar fashion but are equally important.

Physical: Physical energy is still incredibly important. This is the primary and most fundamental source of energy. Physical energy is also regulated by diet, exercise and sleep. This energy is tapped regardless of whether the task is physical. Most of us do not do, particularly physically demanding jobs.

Mental: I believe that mental energy is essential to the focus or direction of the energy we have. Mental energy can be increased through the stress and conditioning method, through challenging mental study and tasks, deep learning, and creative activities. Mental energy is our ability to concentrate, analyse and be creative.

THE KEY TO
EFFECTIVE
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Emotional: Emotional energy is our ability to control and maintain our emotions. People with a high amount of emotional energy will be positive, enthusiastic and happy. Low amounts of this energy are the manifestations of anger, despair and frustration. If physical energy represents capacity, mental represents direction, then emotional represents quality.

Spiritual: Spiritual energies not as being a religious or metaphysical type of energy but the energy we get when we are associated with purpose.

Regardless of your spiritual beliefs, purpose seems to be a necessary ingredient to live successfully. Spiritual energy represents the power or force of energy.

Energy management continues to be a subject that will fascinate many. By undertaking conditioning and progressive increments of stress followed by deep restoration we can even expand our capacity for energy.

I am quite confident that, by recognising the multi-dimensional aspects of energy we can really take control of a force that guides our life.

Take a break and get back with cash rich energies.

With rainfall increasingly scarce, irrigating crops can be a major challenge, but farmers in southeastern Spain have long relied on recycled wastewater in a model that is winning attention abroad. "Here the water is still dirty... but by the end, it will be crystal clear and bacteria-free," said Carlos Lardin, operations manager at Esamur, the public body overseeing wastewater management in the Murcia region.

At his feet, brownish water bubbled in a de-silting tank, the first step before being sifted, filtered and then biologically treated to give it “a second life”, explained the 45-year-old engineer.

Some 23 years ago, Murcia — an arid region with chronic water shortages that claims to be the EU’s leading producer of fruit and vegetables — set itself a huge challenge of reusing wastewater to irrigate its crops.

To that end, the region built a network of 100 treatment plants that process and disinfect water from the sewage system so it can be reused on the fields.

This treatment, which involves sand filters and ultraviolet rays, ensures that the water “is not contaminated” and doesn’t transfer bacteria “such as E.coli” to the fruit and vegetables, Lardin said.

As a result, some 98 per cent of the region's wastewater is reused today, compared with an average of nine percent across Spain and five percent across the EU, government figures show.

It is an important contribution given that the central government has recently restricted Murcia's huge water transfers from the Tagus River, whose levels have been dropping dangerously.

According to Esamur, 15 per cent of the region's irrigation needs are met by recycled wastewater.

It's not enough to cover the need, but it's still important, said Feliciano Guillen, head of the Ceuti irrigation organisation which allocates water resources among farmers in northeastern Murcia.

Farmer Jose Penalver, who owns 10 hectares of land in the hills above Campos del Rio, agreed.

"Whatever (water) can be collected is good wherever it comes from as long as it's put to good use," said the 52-year-old apricot grower.

In his fields, an automated drip-irrigation system lets him limit water use to what is strictly necessary, in this case, two hours per day.

“Without this (recycled) water, everything here would dry up,” he said. “Every drop counts.”

To protect its agriculture from the threat of global warming, the Spanish government in May pledged to increase the national rate of wastewater usage, releasing €1.4 billion (\$1.5 billion) to build the necessary infrastructure. — **AFP**

**ALAN FEUER, MAGGIE
HABERMAN AND
CHARLIE SAVAGE**

The federal judge presiding over the prosecution of former president Donald Trump in the classified documents case set an aggressive schedule on Tuesday, ordering a trial to begin as soon as August 14.

The timeline set by Judge Aileen Cannon is likely to be delayed by extensive pretrial litigation — including over how to handle classified material — and its brisk pace seems in keeping with a schedule set under the Speedy Trial Act. In each of four other criminal trials the judge has overseen that were identified in a *New York Times* review, she has initially set a relatively quick trial date and later pushed it back.

The early moves by Cannon, a relatively inexperienced jurist who was appointed by Trump in 2020, are being particularly closely watched. She disrupted the documents investigation last year with several rulings favourable to the former president before a conservative appeals court overturned her, saying she never had legitimate legal authority to intervene.

Brandon L Van Grack, a former federal prosecutor who has worked on complex criminal matters involving national security, said the trial date was “unlikely to hold” considering that the process of turning over classified evidence to the defence in discovery had not yet begun. Still, he said, Cannon appeared to be showing that she intended to do what she could to push the case to trial quickly.

"It signals that the court is at least trying to do everything it can to move the case along and that it's important that the case proceed quickly," Van Grack said.

“Even though it’s unlikely to hold, it’s at least a positive signal — positive in the sense that all parties and the public should want this case to proceed as quickly as possible.”

But it is not clear that the defence wants the case to proceed quickly.



Former president Donald Trump during a stop at the Versailles restaurant in the Little Havana neighbourhood in Miami.

Trump's strategy in legal matters has long been to delay them, and the federal case against him is unlikely to be an exception.

If a trial drags past the 2024 election and Trump wins the race, he could, in theory, try to pardon himself — or he could direct his attorney general to drop the charges and wipe out the case.

In public remarks after the indictment against Trump and one of his aides, Walt Nauta, was filed two weeks ago in US District Court in Miami, the special counsel, Jack Smith, who oversaw the investigation, said he wanted a speedy trial.

The schedule that Cannon set in her order on Tuesday clearly does that, requesting that all pretrial motions be filed by July 24.

She also ruled that the trial — and all the hearings in the case — will be held at her home courthouse in Fort Pierce, Florida, a small town in the northern portion of the Southern District of Florida. Trump's arraignment was held in the federal courthouse in Miami.

Pretrial proceedings in the case are highly unlikely to be done by August. Legal experts have identified a series of complicated matters that Cannon, the

defence and the prosecution will have to work through before the matter is ready to go in front of a jury.

For one thing, following Cannon's orders, Trump's lawyers started the process of obtaining the security clearances needed to deal with the significant classified evidence issues in the case only last week. The background check process to obtain the clearances can take months.

Trump's legal team is also still in flux. Nauta's lawyer, Stanley Woodward, is still interviewing Florida-based lawyers to assist him with the case. He expects to have someone in place when Nauta is arraigned next week.

Beyond the array of legal tactics Trump's lawyers may use to attack the validity of the charges against him, the parties in the case will also have to engage in significant closed-door litigation over how to handle the classified evidence at the heart of the government's prosecution. Trump has been accused of illegally holding on to 31 individual national defence documents, many of which were marked as top secret.

— The New York Times

To comment & email: opinion@omanobserver.om

OMAN Observer DAILY ESTABLISHED ON 15 NOVEMBER 1981	E D I T O R I A L					ADVERTISING Tel: 24649444, 24649430, 24649437, 24649401 Fax: 24649434	PRINTED AND PUBLISHED BY:
	EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Tel: 22651222	DESK Tel: 22651209	LOCAL Tel: 22651221	BUSINESS Tel: 22651208	SPORTS Tel: 22651205	FEATURE Tel: 22651220	Ministry of Information P.O. Box 974, Postal Code 100, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
	SECRETARY Tel: 22651200	ONLINE Tel: 22651202	DESIGN Tel: 22651210	TRANSLATION Tel: 22651204	PROOFREADING Tel: 22651206	DISTRIBUTION AGENT Tel: 24649351/24649360 Fax: 24649379	
Website: omanobserver.om		EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: Abdullah bin Salim al Shueili			e-mail: editor@omanobserver.om		
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Smile, looks good on you

Oral hygiene needs a larger scale of attention. It involves more than just being conscious to wash your teeth and using dental floss. It has to do with changing lifestyles.

Dental care is a financial investment; the return is self-confidence with a big smile, social opportunities and employability. But having a beautiful smile costs a lot of money, even when certain procedures are subsidised or segments of society have free access to dentists. Lately, the number of dental clinics has increased, including those specialised in kids' dental treatment – which is to be praised, and hopefully, more clinics will be opened beyond the urban areas.

The lack of concern about dental care can be said to be based on the absence of awareness of oral hygiene and the costs of dental checkups and treatment.

Not everyone can afford the high prices or specialised professionals, though expertise can reflect on the quality of the clinics. However, much of the odontological work requires special tools and highly trained professionals. Gingivitis is one of the biggest problems, and when not treated or improperly treated, it can turn into a much worse condition that can affect other health issues.

The situation with dental care has many facets, but many times the causes are improper brushing or dietary habits, the living standards of different regions, and access to dental care.

Assuming some parents are not keen on brushing their teeth, how can their children develop an understanding of oral hygiene? Some adults even use bubblegum to camouflage the smell of infected gums or tooth decay, yet they feel self-conscious about their teeth.

If children are made to wait until they start school to learn about dental care, it is already too late. Lack of oral care can result in ear infections and school absenteeism. Same with adults. If they don't have regular checkups and treatment, it will impact on their lives



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THE LACK OF CONCERN ABOUT DENTAL CARE CAN BE SAID TO BE BASED ON THE ABSENCE OF AWARENESS OF ORAL HYGIENE AND THE COSTS OF DENTAL CHECKUPS AND TREATMENT

through chronic health conditions, such as heart disease, anemia, or diabetes.

Elderly people can experience many dental problems due to the immune system, bone loss, poor treatment carried out years before, and other health conditions.

Just the other day, I had to do some paperwork, and while waiting for my number to be called, an Asian young lady sat down next to me. She was the motivation for this article. I don't understand dentistry, but I can smell foul breath. Her breathing smelled of infection. I wondered how much pain she was suffering. Can she sleep at night? Eat? If she were a housemaid, would she cook for the family? This woman in her early 30s would not have the money or the time to seek treatment; at most, she would have her teeth extracted.

The situation of the lady next to me could be the same for thousands of people who do not have regular checkups or treatment either offered for free or subsidised – that would mean time and money as expenditures and not investments from the employers' perspective.

Patients in remote areas may have difficulties accessing dental care; besides, most healthcare insurance includes minimal basic coverage. When in need of an appointment, patients have to wait for availability, often for weeks, and end up getting mouthwash and painkillers prescribed.

There is a shortage of dental care for people, regardless of whether they have free access to basic services or not. It is a health issue rather than just a beautiful smile.

Nowadays, for those who can afford it, the trend is to include cosmetic procedures such as whitening, veneers, or dental bonding. It is good to see efforts for oral and dental health campaigns. However, additional efforts need to be made to address the problem. People with poor dental health are sometimes unaware that they are less employable and have fewer social opportunities.

ANCIENT RITES AND MYSTERIES



Revellers sing as they stand by the stones and wait for the sun to rise at Stonehenge, near Amesbury, in Wiltshire, southern England, to celebrate the Summer Solstice Festival, which dates back thousands of years, celebrating the longest day of the year when the sun is at its maximum elevation. The stone monument – carved and constructed at a time when there were no metal tools – symbolises Britain's semi-mythical pre-historic period, and has spawned countless legends. – AFP

OQF: A comprehensive national framework for education and training

The Oman Qualification Framework (OQF) can be defined as a comprehensive, integrated and mandatory framework that includes qualifications from all public and private sectors of education and training in Oman.

The Higher Education Council issued the first version of the OQF in 2005. However, the framework is expected to consider the international best practices in building and classifying all Omani national qualifications. Because of that, the wholly modified second version of the OQF was approved in 2022.

Internationally, more than 150 countries, including Bahrain and the UAE, have adopted national qualifications frameworks.

In the Sultanate of Oman, the Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA) acts as the governance body of the OQF.

The OQF has different pathways of qualifications related to schooling, academic, technical, vocational and technological.

These pathways have many objectives namely quickly identifying the gaps related to the assessment, quality assurance requirements, recognising the foreign qualifications, and helping to adopt lifelong learning.



Dr Humaid Mohamed al Busaidi
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The writer is an expert at Sultan Qaboos University

THE OAAAQA ACTS AS THE GOVERNANCE BODY OF THE OQF. THE OQF HAS DIFFERENT PATHWAYS OF QUALIFICATIONS RELATED TO SCHOOLING, ACADEMIC, TECHNICAL, VOCATIONAL AND TECHNOLOGICAL

In addition, the OQF includes ten levels of education, starting from schooling (level one) to the doctoral degree (level ten).

For example, the General Educational Diploma is equivalent to level 4, and Bachelor's Degree is equivalent to level 8. There are three learning bands namely Access, Schooling and Higher Education. The idea behind identifying these bands is to continue improving the contents of the learning programmes and align them with future changes in advanced technology of learning.

Additionally, the OQF recognised prior learning so that the learner will not lose any credited hours or experiences gained previously that can be considered as prior learning.

The OQF was developed using an innovative approach that helps to identify the competencies needed to be acquired by the learners and help them to improve their learning outcomes. The learning outcomes have many advantages and determine the learning gained at a specific level.

In addition, the student can continue with one educational pathway or move to a different field of study, assuring him the continuity of lifelong learning.

The other benefit of the learning outcomes is to differentiate between the level of knowledge the learner acquires depending on the qualification, for example, Diploma, Bachelor and Master degrees.

Furthermore, applying the framework lies in listing the qualifications in the National Register of Qualifications (NRQ).

An online system will record all nationally recognised qualifications programmes or degrees that must be listed in the NRQ.

The OAAAQA will provide intensive training for all schools and Higher Education institutions (HEIs) that are

mandatory and requested by the law to list their qualifications.

The re-listing must occur again after the students graduate from a previously listed programme to ensure the components of the programmes and learning outcomes remain in place or need to be modified.

This could affect the programme contents, teaching hours and evaluation methods used in all years, which contributes to refining the learner or graduate with the skills and competencies required for the labour market. The listing procedures contribute to academic programmes' readiness to obtain a programme

accreditation from the OAAAQA or international organisation bodies.

The procedures for listing the qualifications in the NRQ started in June. At that time, HEIs in Oman could not offer educational programmes that ended with an academic qualification unless they fulfilled the listing requirements.

The OAAAQA body is working to benefit from the accumulative experiences and observations gained by conducting institutional accreditation.

However, some HEIs suffered from not passing the institutional accreditation in a granted period, and, therefore, the process of the NRQ will be a positive refinement step forward.

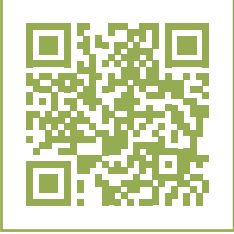
In the meantime, observers and academic staff are expected that the new OQF will require additional administrative workloads and financial resources.

To sum up, including all diversity qualifications in the NRQ will contribute to building a national framework with the highest standards in management, governance and quality assurance processes that will make the OQF more robust and solid.



sport

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MUSCAT: Oman veteran and skipper Zeeshan Maqsood, who in May had entered the top-five rankings of ICC ODI all-rounders, moved into the exclusive top-three club on Wednesday.

According to latest rankings from world cricket body (ICC), Maqsood achieved a career-best No.3 rankings for ODI all-rounders following his half-century and a wicket in the opening match of the ongoing ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifier in Zimbabwe.

Oman had stunned Test-playing Ireland in their opening Group B match in Bulawayo on June 19 with the skipper playing a key role to win the player of the match award.

He moved one place up, and is behind only Bangladesh's Shakib Al Hasan and Afghanistan's Mohammad Nabi.

Al Hasan has 367 rating points while Nabi has 305. Maqsood has garnered 262 and is followed by Afghanistan's captain Rashid Khan with 261. Papua New Guinea's Assad Vala and Zimbabwe's Sikandar Raza are joint fifth with 248 points each.

The 35-year old Maqsood is Oman's long-serving skipper and is a left-handed batter and left-arm orthodox bowler. This is the first time that an Omani cricketer has scaled such heights. He also made progress in ODI batters rankings as he rose six places from 65th to 59th and also gained five places to reach 40th in the bowlers' rankings.

Root takes over as World No. 1 batter



Joe Root's 30th Test century and a second-innings 46 in the first Ashes Test has given him the crown of the world's No. 1 Test batter in the latest ICC rankings update on Wednesday.

Marnus Labuschagne, who was the top-ranked batter before the Ashes began, dropped two places to the third position following scores of 0 and 13 in Edgbaston.

Labuschagne wasn't the only Australian who dropped places. Travis Head slipped from third to fourth despite a fifty in the first innings, while Steven Smith slid from second to sixth after ordinary scores in both the innings of the opening Test. Kane Williamson, who hasn't played a Test since March 2023 and is out with an

ACL injury, climbs up to No. 2 as a result.

Another batter to make gains within the top 10 is Player of the Match Usman Khawaja, progressing two places to seventh position after smashing 141 and 65 in the Ashes opener.

While each of England's three seamers are in the top ten of the Test rankings for bowlers, Ollie Robinson has breached the top five with his match haul of 5 for 98 against Australia.

James Anderson stays at No. 2, behind R Ashwin, while Stuart Broad maintains his position at nine alongside Ravindra Jadeja.

Pat Cummins slipped from third to fourth despite his four-wicket haul in England's second innings, and that pushed South Africa's Kagiso Rabada back to No. 3. Nathan Lyon moved one position up to No. 6 following his match haul of eight wickets.

Saurabh Netravalkar's four wickets in the ongoing ODI World Cup qualifiers have given a maiden entry for a USA player into the top 20 of the ICC rankings for ODI bowlers. He climbed five places to No. 18. Josh Hazlewood, Mohammed Siraj and Mitchell Starc remain as the top three.

The ICC Men's ODI Player Rankings sees notable gains for Oman batters: Aqib Ilyas, who rose four places to 51st, along with Kashyap Prajapati who is up five places to 91st.

OMAN SKIPPER RANKED WORLD NO 3 AT ICC ODI ALL-ROUNDERS



Ibrahim al Mukhaini best goalie in CAFA Nations Cup 2023

BRANKO SATISFIED WITH RED WARRIORS PERFORMANCE IN CAFA NATIONS CUP 2023

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 21

The Oman National football team coach, Branko Ivankovic, expressed his satisfactory on the team's performance at the Central Asian Football Association (CAFA) Nations Cup 2023, when clinched the bronze medals after beating Kyrgyzstan 1-0, and honoring Omani goalkeeper as the best in the tournament on Tuesday.

Ivankovic said, "Congratulations to the players for their performance and the registered result in the tournament. My players worked hard in all the games and I am happy with their performance. I am fully satisfied on the team's show in the third and fourth playoff and also in the previous matches. It was a difficult game against Kyrgyzstan and the climate impacted negatively on the players



performance," he expressed in the press meet after the Kyrgyzstan match. Iran crowned champions of the CAFA Nations Cup 2023 after defeated the hosts Uzbekistan 1-0 in the final clash on Tuesday. Oman ended the tournament in the third place after edging Kyrgyzstan 1-0 on Tuesday at Pakhtakor Central Stadium in the third and fourth playoff.

Oman's Ibrahim al Mukhaini was named as best goalkeeper in the tournament. Al Nahda's goalie was also took the same award in the last edition of the gulf Cup in Iraq, Basra city.

The Croatian man pointed out that the team played four crucial games within nine days. " It is not easy to play four matches within a short period of time. The team was



progressing from one match to another. It was great to participate in this preparatory event as the footballing season in Oman ended recently. The team achieved good result in the tournament by ending in third place," he said

The 69 years old told the reporters post the Kyrgyzstan match that the team missed attendance of five crucial players

including: Khalid al Hajri, Mohammed al Musallami, Al Mundher al Alawi, Fahmi Dorbeen, Amjad al Harthy, and Zahir al Aghbari in the last match. " There were many technical output behind team's participation in this event. As a coaching staff, we managed to stand on the player's technical levels and evaluate their weakness and

strength areas,"

At the end of the press meet, Oman head coach thanked the organising committee and he said it was a successful tournament.

Oman team commenced their campaign in the event by a 3-0 defeat against the hosts Uzbekistan in the opener. Then, Red Warriors was held to a 1-1 draw with Tajikistan before registering their first victory in the event against Turkmenistan 2-0. Oman finished the group stage as runners up with four points. Then, Oman beat Kyrgyzstan 1-0 in the third and fourth playoff.

The CAFA Nations Cup 2023 acted as a golden opportunity for Red Warriors to shape their readiness for the future assignment including in AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 finals and the qualifiers for Asian teams on road to the Fifa World Cup 2026 as well as the AFC Asian Cup 2027.



Oman Olympic compete in first group of the Arabian Games

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 21

The 15th edition of Arab Sports Games, set to take place in Algeria from July 5 to 15. The event will witness participation of all Arab countries in various games. The football being one of the prominent highlights. Recently Oman National Olympic team has been placed in the first group along the host Algeria, Lebanon, and Sudan.

The football competitions are scheduled to be held from July 2 to 14. The matches will take place in the three stadiums which located in Algiers, Constantine, and Annaba.

In the tournament, Oman, Algeria, Lebanon, and Sudan will compete together, while Palestine, Syria, Saudi Arabia, and Mauritania form the second group. The top two teams from each group will advance to the semi-finals.

In related news, the Oman Olympic team delegation arrived on Tuesday after

their successful participation in the fourth West Asian Championship held in Iraq. The team displayed success by qualifying for the Semi-final, securing victories over Lebanon and Yemen with clean sheets, and narrowly losing the semi-final match against Iraq with a score of 1-0.

Following short rest, the players will resume their training and preparations for the upcoming competitions. The Arabian Games in Algeria and the U-23 Asian Nations Qualifiers, are scheduled to be held in the Jordanian capital, Amman, in September.

The Olympic team is eager to showcase its talent, determination, and unwavering spirit as they compete against some of the strongest footballing nations in the Arab region. With a rich history and a strong footballing culture, Oman is poised to make a lasting impression in both the Arab Sports Games and the U-23 Asian Nations Qualifiers.

Game-changer: All eyes on Wembanyama at NBA

NEW YORK: A new era for basketball gets under way on Thursday when French prodigy Victor Wembanyama is set to be chosen by the San Antonio Spurs with the top pick in the NBA Draft.

The annual ritual to allocate the top young talent entering the league is often accompanied by a swirl of intrigue over which player is likely to be selected No. 1 overall.

But that guessing game will be notably absent at Thursday's event in Brooklyn, with San Antonio's selection of the 19-year-old Wembanyama a mere formality.

The 7ft 4in (2.24m) French teenager is widely regarded as a transformational talent, a once-in-a-generation player regarded as the most sought-after No. 1 pick since LeBron James entered the league two decades ago.

Wild celebrations erupted among San Antonio's fans last month when the Spurs won the NBA Draft Lottery to determine which team would own the No. 1 pick.

Spurs staff also struggled in vain to keep a lid on their excitement, with chairman Peter J. Holt admitting: "I might faint."

San Antonio general manager Brian Wright sees Wembanyama, who will be formally unveiled by the team in Texas on Saturday, as a "unique talent."

"People talk about generational talent, and they only think on-court skill, but it's bigger than that," Wright told ESPN.

"You see him doing things that you wouldn't even have guessed someone could do," Wright added.

With his potentially dominant blend of size and skill, Wembanyama has already drawn a legion of admirers across the NBA before even setting foot in the league.

LeBron James says Wembanyama's skillset makes him



French NBA draft prospect Victor Wembanyama throws out a ceremonial first pitch before a game between the New York Yankees and the Seattle Mariners at Yankee Stadium. — USA TODAY Sports

less a "unicorn" and "more like an alien."

"No one has ever seen someone as tall as he is and as fluid and as graceful as he is on the floor," James said after watching Wembanyama play a game for French club Metropolitans 92 in Nevada last year. "He's for sure a generational talent."

TRUE GAME-CHANGER

Wembanyama, meanwhile, has remained level-headed as the hype surrounding reaches stratospheric levels. The teenager arrived in New Jersey on Monday for



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz in action against France's Arthur Rinderknech. — Reuters

Carlos Alcaraz hopes to thrive on grass after advancing at Queen's

LONDON: Carlos Alcaraz insisted he can challenge on the grass this summer despite needing a third-set tie-break to beat French journeyman Arthur Rinderknech at the cinch Championships.

The 20-year-old top seed and world number two was playing only his seventh match on the surface — and his first outside of Wimbledon — at Queen's Club.

Lucky loser Rinderknech only found out he was playing the Spaniard shortly before midday after fellow Frenchman Arthur Fils, Alcaraz's scheduled opponent, withdrew from the tournament.

But the 27-year-old almost knocked the headline act out, taking the first set and giving Alcaraz an uncomfortable afternoon before going down 4-6 7-5 7-6 (3) in just over two-and-a-half hours.

Alcaraz, the US Open champion who was playing his first match since losing to Novak Djokovic in the semi-finals at Roland Garros, said: "It has been a really tough match, he has played four or five matches on the grass and this was my first one. — dpa

Australia beat England by 2 wickets to win Edgbaston Test

BIRMINGHAM: Australia beat England by two wickets to win a thrilling first Ashes Test at Edgbaston on Tuesday.

Australia were struggling at 227-8, still 54 runs shy of a victory target of 281, when skipper Pat Cummins was joined in the middle by tailender Nathan Lyon.

But the pair's unbroken stand of 55 saw Ashes holders Australia home, with Cummins hitting the winning boundary to finish on 44 not out after opener Usman Khawaja had made a painstaking 65 to follow his first-innings 141.

Lyon was unbeaten on 16, with Australia now 1-0 up in this five-match series as they bid for a first Ashes campaign triumph on English soil in 22 years.

"The wicket didn't have too many demons in it," said Cummins at the presentation ceremony. "I thought it was well within our grasp."

World Test champions Australia, as they promised beforehand, played in their traditional fashion rather than getting drawn into the hype surrounding England's

aggressive style under captain Ben Stokes and coach Brendon McCullum.

And Cummins praised player of the match Khawaja by saying: "Incredible composure, he played his own method, didn't get caught up... I'm really happy for him."

This was just England's third defeat in 14 Tests under Stokes and McCullum, with the skipper defending his first-innings declaration before the close of the opening day.

"I thought that was a time to pounce. I am not going to change the way I have gone about my cricket because it is the Ashes," he said.

"Who knows, we could have got an extra 40 runs or lost two wickets in two balls. I am not a captain who gets by on what ifs." — AFP

BRIEF SCORES:
England 1st Innings 393-8 dec (J Root 118 no, J Bairstow 78, Z Crawley 61; N Lyon 4-149)
Australia 1st Innings 386 (U Khawaja 141, A Carey 66, T Head 50; O Robinson 3-55, S Broad 3-68)
England 2nd Innings 273 (P Cummins 4-63, N Lyon 4-80)
Australia 2nd Innings 282-8 (U Khawaja 65; S Broad 3-64)
Result: Australia won by two wickets
Series: Australia lead five-match series 1-0



Australia's Pat Cummins and Nathan Lyon celebrate after winning the first test. — Reuters



Australia's Pat Cummins celebrates after Australia win the first test by 2 wickets. — Reuters



Ronaldo gives Portugal late win on 200th international appearance



Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo celebrates with fans after scoring the 0-1 goal during the UEFA Euro 2024 group J qualification football match between Iceland and Portugal in Reykjavik. – AFP

PARIS: Cristiano Ronaldo marked his 200th international appearance with the winner as Portugal beat Iceland 1-0 in Euro 2024 qualifying on Tuesday, while Erling Haaland netted twice for Norway.

Elsewhere, Belgium brushed aside the Thibaut Courtois captaincy row by seeing off Estonia thanks to a Romelu Lukaku double in Tallinn and Moldova came from two goals down to stun Poland.

Portugal appeared to be heading towards a drab goalless draw in Reykjavik until Willum Thor Willumsson was sent off late on.

Ronaldo struggled for much of the match but repaid coach Roberto Martinez's faith by slotting home from Goncalo Inacio's knock-down in the 89th minute.

"It was a nice script (for Ronaldo). There was incredible celebration, the first men's player ever in world football to get 200 international games," Martinez told uefa.com.

The former Real Madrid and Manchester United star's record-extending 123rd international goal was initially ruled out for offside before being awarded by VAR. "For me it's an unbelievable achievement, it's amazing," said the 38-year-old Ronaldo. "And of course to score the winning goal, it's even more special."

Portugal remain two points clear of Slovakia at the top of Group J after a fourth straight win.

Slovakia, who are Portugal's next opponents in September, won 1-0 away to Liechtenstein to stay unbeaten.

Luxembourg gave their unlikely bid to reach a maiden major tournament a boost with a brilliant 2-0 away victory over Bosnia and Herzegovina to move third, just three points behind Slovakia.

The top two from each group qualify automatically for next year's finals in Germany.



Portugal's forward Cristiano Ronaldo (C) is honoured with a certificate of the Guinness World Records for having achieved 200 goals within almost 20 years of his career, prior to the UEFA Euro 2024 group J qualification football match between Iceland and Portugal in Reykjavik. – AFP

CAPTAIN LUKAKU STARS

Belgium goalkeeper Courtois had said he was "surprised" that coach Domenico Tedesco told a press conference he had refused to travel to Estonia after being overlooked for the stand-in captaincy last week.

Tedesco had wanted to hand Lukaku the armband for Saturday's 1-1 draw with Austria and give Courtois the honour in Tallinn, with regular captain Kevin De Bruyne absent.

But with Courtois instead back home, Lukaku was named skipper again and responded by scoring two goals in a 3-0 success which helped Belgium stay second in Group F.

Austria remained three points clear in first place, albeit having played a game more than Belgium, as Christoph Baumgartner scored twice in the last 10 minutes to clinch a 2-0 win over Sweden.

The Scandinavians are in danger of failing to reach a Euro tournament for the first time

since 1996, sitting four points behind Belgium.

Haaland's brace helped Norway bounce back from their dramatic defeat by Scotland at the weekend with a 3-1 victory against Cyprus.

That kept their slim hopes of reaching a first major tournament since 2000 alive, although they only sit third in Group A and just one point ahead of Spain having played two games more than the three-time champions.

Group leaders Scotland were not blown off course by a near two-hour interruption caused by heavy rain as they maintained their 100 per cent record with a 2-0 win over Georgia.

Callum McGregor scored in the sixth minute in farcical conditions before the game was suspended.

A number of pitch inspections then took place amid reports that Georgia wanted the game postponed before it eventually restarted at 9:35 pm local time (1935 GMT) and Scott

McTominay secured the points.

Poland in trouble
Poland fell to fourth place in Group E after blowing a two-goal lead to lose 3-2 to Moldova in Chisinau.

Moldova, who had won only one of their last 43 Euro and World Cup qualifying matches, appeared to have been safely dispatched by first-half goals from Arkadiusz Milik and Robert Lewandowski.

But Ion Nicolaescu's double left Poland reeling and Vladyslav Baboglo, who plays his club football for Ukrainian team Oleksandriya, headed past Wojciech Szczesny to score a dramatic 85th-minute winner.

Moldova, 171st in the FIFA rankings, are now third in the group standings, a point behind second-placed Albania who saw off the Faroe Islands 3-1.

Hungary moved top of Group G by cruising past Lithuania 2-0, level on points with Serbia after their 1-1 draw with Bulgaria.

— AFP

French World Cup winner Kante joins Saudi champions Al Ittihad

RIYADH: France's World Cup-winning midfielder N'Golo Kante has joined Saudi Arabian champions Al Ittihad, the club said in a statement on Wednesday, joining up with compatriot Karim Benzema. "Kante is an Ittihad player now!" the club said on Twitter, while chairman Anmar al-Hailee tweeted: "Welcome to our new tiger Kante," a reference to the team's nickname.

The 32-year-old becomes the latest in a line of European stars choosing to ply their trade in the desert kingdom, which is making big-money moves across elite sport.

A dynamic and industrious midfielder, Kante won the World Cup with France in 2018.

His club career also glitters. He won the Champions League and World Club Cup with Chelsea, as well as back-to-back Premier League titles with Leicester City and Chelsea.

Kante's contract with the London club was set to expire this month and they paid him a handsome tribute in bidding him farewell.

"N'Golo's impact and influence during his time at Chelsea cannot be overstated," said Chelsea's co-sporting directors Laurence Stewart and Paul Winstanley in a club statement.

"His tireless performances in midfield contributed to several trophy wins and has guaranteed him a place in the club's history."

He has signed a three-year deal with Al Ittihad, the Jeddah-based team said in a statement, though it gave no details of how much Kante will earn.

The Saudi club said: "Kante's addition to Al Ittihad is considered one of the most high-profile and impactful signings in the club's history."

"It is part of the club's efforts

to establish itself as a top choice for world-class players in the Saudi Professional League."

He will wear the number seven shirt, which he also donned at Chelsea.

Current Ballon d'Or holder Benzema joined Al Ittihad earlier this month, after 14 seasons with Real Madrid in which he won five Champions Leagues, four La Liga titles and three Copas del Rey.

Very excited

In a video posted online by the club, Benzema, 35, said in a message to his fellow Frenchman: "One time I told you, you're the best player, box to box, in the world. Now I'm happy to play with you again, and of course in the best team in Saudi."

Kante said he was "very excited to play for the Tigers".

The kingdom's league had already signed up five-time Ballon d'Or winner Cristiano Ronaldo, who joined Al Nassr in January.

His fellow Portuguese international Ruben Neves, currently of Wolves, is reportedly set to join Al Hilal.

Argentina legend Lionel Messi, widely considered the greatest player of all time, declined to make a similar move despite a lengthy Saudi courtship, and will instead join Inter Miami in the United States.

With its oil riches, Saudi Arabia — a conservative monarchy frequently criticised over its human rights record -- has swiftly achieved a prominent role in world sports.

In football, the presumed goal is hosting the World Cup, which is intended to lift Saudi Arabia's profile and prestige as it tries to diversify its oil-reliant economy by attracting tourists and investors. — AFP





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Six-pronged strategy to boost Muscat Stock Exchange

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, JUNE 21

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), in partnership with the National Programme for Financial Sustainability and Financial Sector Development, has announced six initiatives designed to invigorate and enhance the allure of the stock exchange, bolster its position, and foster increased investment.

These groundbreaking initiatives were unveiled during a well-attended press conference organised by the Muscat Stock Exchange today.

They encompass a wide range of areas within the market, including industry representation, securities lending and borrowing, pooled trading accounts, the creation of a market for companies and institutions, tripartite governance, and the establishment of a liquidity fund.

The Director of the National Programme for Financial Sustainability and Development of the Financial Sector emphasised

the programme’s unwavering commitment to a strategic direction focused on continuous improvement of the state’s public finances and strengthening the financial sector’s capacity to adapt to forthcoming transformations in the investment landscape.

The ultimate goal is to elevate the competitiveness rate. Moreover, there is a steadfast dedication to supporting the private financial sector by providing tailor-made financing options for diverse groups.

The Director underlined the support for the capital market, with a particular emphasis on expanding the size and depth of the Muscat Stock Exchange, enhancing its liquidity, and boosting the

efficiency and competitiveness of the financial services sector.

The CEO of the Muscat Stock Exchange expressed a resolute determination to establish an efficient investment environment that adheres rigorously to the best global standards and practices.

The objective is to present a diverse array of opportunities that align seamlessly with the vision laid out in Oman Vision 2040.

The CEO also disclosed that the stock exchange has granted approval to two companies to assume the role of market makers. This pivotal move aims to ensure the availability of liquidity for securities while maintaining a delicate equilibrium between supply and demand.

CMA appeals for fairness and integrity in Ahli Bank takeover and acquisition process

MUSCAT: The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has urged the two suitors in the Ahli Bank acquisition to exercise the “highest standards of integrity and transparency, as well as ensure fair treatment to all Ahli Bank shareholders” in structuring their offers.

In a statement issued here on Wednesday, the Authority said it was closely monitoring the disclosures published on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) website by Bank Dhofar SAOG and Ominivest LLC on their respective offers to acquire the shares of publicly traded Ahli Bank.

It is also responding to queries submitted to the CMA or posted on the Authority’s social media platforms from shareholders and other stakeholders involving in the takeover and acquisition offer.

“The CMA would like to confirm to all shareholders that this matter is regulated by the provisions of the Takeover and Acquisition Regulations issued by CMA’s Decision No 2/2019 dated May 9, 2019 and all the parties taking part in the takeover and acquisition process must comply with the regulations, specifically the provisions of Article (5) of the Takeover and Acquisition Regulations.

These provisions calls for observing the highest standards of integrity, transparency and providing fair treatment to all shareholders, while avoiding the selective release of information targeted at shareholders in the takeover offer. Information that misleads market players and the general public must be strictly eschewed as well.”

The Authority also called on the Investor Relators departments of the two suitors to open channels of communication with the public in accordance with the Directives for Interaction between the public joint stock companies, analysts, investors and reporters issued vide CMA’s Decision No. 109/2022.

MDO plans new mining port to unlock Dhofar’s huge mineral wealth

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 21

Construction work on the Al Shuwaimiyah Industrial Minerals Complex in Dhofar Governorate – one of the biggest mining ventures of Minerals Development Oman (MDO) – is set to begin in earnest next year.

The project will help unlock the mammoth limestone, dolomite and gypsum resources of the Wilayat of Shaleem and Al Halaniyat Islands, output from which will either be processed in value-adding domestic industries or exported globally to key markets in India, South-East Asia and East Asia via a new deep-sea port planned nearby.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Nasser al Maqbali – Chief Executive Officer, said the Al Shuwaimiyah Industrial Minerals Complex – a flagship initiative of MDO – is making good progress in its development.

“The project has advanced to the stage of conducting detailed economic feasibility studies, along with developing engineering designs for the port, as MDO has obtained the approval from the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology to establish a seaport linked to the project in the Wilayat of Shaleem and Al Halaniyat Islands,” Al Maqbali stated.

Covering concession areas of a massive 1,500 square kilometres, the Al Shuwaimiyah Industrial Minerals Project will seek to develop prodigious non-metallic minerals found in three mining concessions (61A, 61B and 61C) awarded to MDO in the wilayat.

The most prolific of the discoveries is limestone - a key

commodity with wide application in cement and steel manufacturing, mining, paper production, water treatment and purification, and plastic production.

Limestone reserves in the three concessions are estimated at 2.5 billion tonnes with purity pegged at 99 per cent.

Also found in abundance is dolomite with high concentrations of magnesium suitable for the fertiliser, steel and glass industries. Dolomite reserves are estimated at around 1.3 billion tonnes, with 19 per cent magnesium oxide (MgO) content.

Geological studies undertaken by MDO have also assessed the concession areas to hold a world-beating 960 million tonnes of gypsum (97 per cent purity), a non-metallic mineral used extensively in plaster, fertiliser and building materials, and a host of chemical compounds.

To help develop these rich resources, MDO plans to invest in a trio of mega-quarries each targeting the three mineral

resources in question. At peak capacity, total output from the three quarries is projected at 40 million tonnes per annum, underscoring the massive scale of the Industrial Minerals project.

Complementing this infrastructure is a plan for a deep mining port at Al Shuwaimiyah on the coast to handle the huge volumes of minerals coming out of the project for global export.

Dredged to a depth of 20 metres, the deep-sea port will feature at least three mineral berths, of which two will be designed to handle Panamax-size vessels while the third berth will be suited for Capesize carriers. Each of the berths will also be equipped with high-capacity loaders.

Following the completion of a preliminary feasibility study last year, the company has embarked on a detailed economic feasibility study along with the engineering design for a deep-sea port at Al Shuwaimiyah on the coast.

Also envisaged is a conveyor system that will carry mined ore

from the complex to the port at the rate of around 2,000 tonnes per hour.

It follows the completion of an economic feasibility exercise that assessed the conveyor system to be the most effective and cost-competitive logistics solution for the transportation of the ore to the coast.

Given the gigantic scale of the project, MDO is seeking a strategic international investor as a partner in the delivery of the giant venture. “Discussions are ongoing with potential international partners,” the CEO noted in this regard.

The strategic partner will not only invest in the upstream development of the Al Shuwaimiyah mineral site, but also support the construction of the deep-sea port, the official said.

The facility will be designed and built to handle large volumes of dry bulk commodities as well as other material, he said, adding that port operations are planned all year round, including in windy summer conditions.

Sohar International shareholders approve merger with HSBC Oman

MUSCAT: Sohar International Bank SAOG (Sohar International) shareholders on Wednesday voted in favour of the merger with HSBC Bank Oman at the Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) held on June 20, 2023. The shareholders of HSBC Bank Oman have also voted to approve the merger.

“We are working closely with HSBC Bank Oman to ensure a smooth process to minimise disruption, if any, to HSBC Bank Oman customers and, together, have set a tentative target date of 17th August 2023 as the date of completion of the merger.

This timeline remains subject to all formal steps and actions being completed without any delays on account of factors beyond the control of Sohar International and HSBC Oman,” Sohar International Bank said.

On completion of the merger, HSBC Oman customers and employees will automatically transfer to Sohar International, and the existing HSBC Oman entity will be dissolved.

SOHAR Port and Freezone launches ‘Maseer’ programme

SUHAR: SOHAR Port and Freezone, in collaboration with innotech, a leading company in educational technology, are organising the educational programme ‘Maseer’.

Running between July 9 and August 3, the programme aims to attract over 200 students from schools in Al Batinah North Governorate to develop their capabilities and skills in a variety of fields. Specialised training workshops will be organised to keep up with technological advancements and promote critical thinking and innovation.

These workshops will be conducted by field experts, ensuring the quality of training and its positive impact on participants.

Mohammed bin Ali a Shezawi, Vice-President of People and Support Services at SOHAR Port and Freezone commented, “Investing in future generations through Corporate Social Responsibility programmes is paramount. This programme demonstrates our commitment to the well-being of society and fosters sustainable development. By supporting education, we aim for positively impact young lives as such skill-building programmes create opportunities for growth and socio-economic empowerment.”



Saud Bahwan Automotive honoured with prestigious Yokohama award

MUSCAT: At a special ceremony held recently, Takeshi Fujino, General Manager Sales, Yokohama Tire, honoured Saud Bahwan Automotive with a prestigious award which recognised Saud Bahwan Automotive’s outstanding sales performance for 2022.

Receiving the award on behalf of the Group, was Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Managing Director – Corporate, Saud Bahwan Group.

Accepting the prestigious award, Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan said, “I take this opportunity to gratefully acknowledge the support and guidance extended to us at all time by Yokohama Tyres.

An achievement like this would not have been possible without it. I would also like to thank our valuable customers who have been with us for years together.”

The Yokohama Rubber Co Ltd is one of the world’s leading manufacturers of rubber products, offering an extensive range of tire, rubber and adhesive products.

Established in 1917, Yokohama



Rubber has expanded its worldwide business scope with a line-up of high-technology products meeting customer needs in the fields of automobiles, civil engineering, construction, marine engineering, aerospace and sporting goods.

Yokohama Tyres are manufactured at one of the world’s largest and the most advanced facilities of its kind, and are also torture-tested at D-PARC, one of the most challenging test tracks in the world, to ensure maximum

safety. In Oman, Yokohama tyres are marketed by Saud Bahwan Group, with an extensive network of more than 12 branches and over 350 dealers spread across the Sultanate of Oman.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds bags Bank Muscat Award for sixth time

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with a strong retail network of over 320 outlets spread across 11 countries received Bank Muscat Award for the sixth consecutive year. The company got the award in the category ‘Jewellery for the year 2022’.

The company has received Bank Muscat Award in the year 2015, 2016, 2017, 2018 & 2021 as well. Najeeb K, Regional Head – Malabar Gold & Diamonds, received the award from Shaikh Waleed al Hashar, Chief Executive Officer- Bank Muscat in the presence of Udesch P T, Branch Manager -Malabar Gold & Diamonds and other officials from Bank Muscat during a ceremony held on June 20 at the Kempinski Hotel.

Bank Muscat hosts the event to honour, recognise and celebrate the success of their top merchants.

“We are extremely happy to receive the ‘Bank Muscat Award’ for the 6th time in a row. At Malabar Gold & Diamonds, we have prioritised exquisitely crafted jewellery and unparalleled service to provide our customers with an immersive and enjoyable jewellery shopping experience.

This award is a humble recognition from our loyal customers. We dedicate this inspiring triumph to our millions of satisfied customers, team members and investors, for their unwavering and continued support over the years”, said Najeeb K — Regional



Head – Malabar Gold & Diamonds, speaking on the occasion.

Since its inception in 1993, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has developed a strong retail presence in India, Middle East, Far East , the USA & the UK, with a network of 320 outlets across eleven countries. With an annual turnover of \$5.2 billion, the company today ranks as the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally.

CCED continues to unlock potential of youth with Outward Bound Oman

MUSCAT: Focusing on education, training and capacity-building in its Corporate Social Responsibility strategy, CC Energy Development (CCED), and its partners in Blocks 3 & 4, Mitsui E&P Middle East B V and Tethys Oil Block 3 & 4 Limited, renewed their support to the Musta’ad Programme in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Outward Bound Oman.

The programme focuses on unlocking the potential of local young people through outdoor experiential learning and problem-solving activities.

CCED’s commitment to giving back locally includes providing young people with valuable training opportunities. As part of this effort, CCED sponsored 500 out of more than 1,000 participants joining the Musta’ad Programme in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Outward Bound



Oman. Provided with a non-classroom-based learning environment, participants are challenged to step out of their comfort zones. Thanks to the Musta’ad Programme, they will develop essential life skills, gain a sense of accomplishment, and are empowered to thrive in diverse environments.

Walter Simpson, Managing Director of CC Energy Development, said, “We are a diverse, ethical and responsible

organisation that believes people are key to our success.

We aim to give back to the communities we work with and our purpose-built Corporate Social Responsibility strategy covers a variety of themes including education, health and the environment. We focus on supporting initiatives that are aligned with our core values and we are committed to achieving sustainable socio-economic development for Oman and its people.”

Bank Muscat honours government institutions and corporates at Partners in Progress ceremony

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman celebrated the 16th edition of its annual Partners in Progress (PiP) awards ceremony at the Kempinski Hotel Al Mouj, Muscat to honour top merchant partners from government institutions and private sector companies.

The event was held in the presence of Shaikh Waleed K al Hashar, Chief Executive Officer, Bank Muscat and members of the bank’s Management Team.

The gala event was attended by representatives from the Top 40 institutions, who have implemented various payment



acceptance solutions using POS terminals.

Nine ministries and government institutions won awards for implementing the bank’s payment acceptance solutions using POS terminals at

the awards ceremony including the Royal Oman Police, Ministry of Labour, Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Health,

Oman Development Bank, Supreme Judiciary Council and Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources. Corporate merchant partner winners included: Omantel, Landmark Group, OIFC,

Otaxi, Awasr, Carrefour, Extra, NMC Healthcare, Ikea, Al Ahlia Insurance, Talabat, Lulu Hypermarket, Ooredoo, Al Shaya International, Shell Oman Marketing, Malabar Gold Jewellery, Pizza Hut, Muscat Pharmacy, ONEIC, Oman International Container Terminal, Apparel International, Salam Air, The International School of Choueifat, Global Exchange, Makkah Hypermarket, Thawani, Abdul Samad Al Qurashi, Tageer Finance, Six Senses Zighy Bay, Saud Bahwan Automotive and Al Fair.

On this occasion, Abdulnasir al Raisi, General Manager –

Personal Banking, Bank Muscat congratulated all the winners and thanked them for their efforts in promoting various merchant solutions.

He reiterated the importance with which Bank Muscat values its partnerships and added that the bank is very proud of this partnership with all its institutional customers and would strive to provide the best and latest services for its customers.

He added that Bank Muscat would work to further enhance and strengthen its partnership and wished everyone even greater success in the future.

National shrimp quarry inaugurated in Barka

MUSCAT: The inauguration of the National shrimp farm in Barka, Al Batinah South Governorate, took place yesterday at a cost of more than RO 600,000 on a 6,000 sqm area with an estimated capacity of 16,000 pairs capable of producing seedlings in the cultivation of white-legged shrimp.

The project comes in partnership between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and the Fisheries Development Oman (FDO) and includes the design, construction, management and operation of the farm, which is one of the most important biosecurity measures in fish farming.

The project works include receiving, monitoring and inspecting shrimp shipments imported from abroad for a certain period to ensure that they are free of any potential impacts on the shrimp project before they are



transferred to farms to maintain productivity and product quality.

Eng Yaqoub bin Khalfan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Fisheries, stated that fish farming is one of the fastest growing food sectors in

the world in light of the increase in the world's population. "We expect during the next two decades that there will be a large gap between supply and demand worldwide of about 40 million tonnes."

He added that fish farming can play an important role in

providing food, in addition to its contribution to food security and to the domestic product in economic terms. He pointed out that the ministry played a major role in developing and stimulating this sector and creating an attractive competitive

environment.

Last year it was able to reach 3,500 tonnes and the total value amounted to RO 7 million.

The ministry is moving forward in developing the fish farming sector and providing facilities and enablers for an environment Business for fish farming projects.

For his part, Mohammed bin Muzaffar al Wahaibi, the project manager, said the farm consists of three buildings, and each building accommodates about 700 grains of shrimp, adding that the period of quarantine for each batch lasts from 40 days to two months, after which it is sent to fish farming projects in various governorates of Oman.

The farm contains laboratories for testing samples and was designed to accommodate future plans in shrimp projects in the Sultanate of Oman.

Eng Nabil bin Salim al Bimani, CEO of Fisheries Development Oman (FDO), said that the opening of this project comes as part of the completion of the fish and aquaculture system and an affirmation of adherence to the highest standards of biological security and ensuring the quality of products farmed in Oman.

He also pointed out that FDO is working to finalise the technical designs and tender documents for the implementation of the project of natural shrimp farming in the Wilayat of Al Jazir which will have a production capacity of more than 20,000 tonnes annually.

Work is also underway on technical studies for a project in Bandar Al Khairan, which is one of the major projects and when it is completed, it will have a production capacity of more than 200,000 tonnes annually. — ONA



Financing pact signed for home owners at Sultan Haitham City

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) and the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning have signed a home financing agreement to provide competitive loan rates for the first 100 home owners in Sultan Haitham City.

The agreement was signed by Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, and Sulaiman al Hinai, Head of Wholesale Banking Group at OAB. Through the agreement, the bank will provide flexible loans at reduced rates to customers who wish to purchase homes in the first phase of the city of the future, named for His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

Sulaiman al Harthy, CEO of

Oman Arab Bank, said: "This agreement is a first step in our efforts to enable customers to own a home and live a sustainable and comfortable life in Sultan Haitham City. We aim to make homeownership at the groundbreaking futuristic urban landmark development more accessible and affordable."

He went on to add, "The project is one of many strategic developments the bank has partnered with in its efforts to play a bigger role in the economic growth of the country.

In fact, the city not only reflects key pillars within Oman's Vision 2040 goals, but also embraces an inclusive architectural vision for generations to come."

Oman airports record 4.209 million passengers until April 2023

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JUNE 21

The total number of passengers (arrival, departure and transit) that used the airports of the Sultanate of Oman reached 4,209,846 until April 2023. The figure represents a significant increase from the same period last year, indicating a steady growth in the aviation industry in Oman.

Also, until April 2023, Omani airports have witnessed a total of 28,265 flights taking off and landing.

According to a preliminary report issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), Muscat International Airport saw the highest number of passengers, with a total of 3,792,212 until April 2023, a 91.1 per cent increase compared to the same period last year with 1,984,428 passengers.

The number of flights through the airport itself also increased by 78 per cent, to reach 28,939 flights, compared to 16,262 flights by the end of April 2022. This growth in passenger traffic can be attributed to the increased connectivity and expansion of



Oman's aviation industry.

The country has been investing heavily in its airports and infrastructure to attract more tourists and business travellers.

Indian nationals were the top passengers using the Muscat International Airport with both arrivals and departures reaching 144,496 passengers. This was followed by Bangladeshis with 42,148 passengers and Pakistanis with 36,547 passengers.

Salalah Airport recorded 390,355 passengers until April 2023, a 36.8 per cent increase compared to the same period last year with 285,300 passengers. It also noted a 30.9 per cent increase in the number of flights with

2,842 compared to 2,121 until April 2022.

Meanwhile, Sohar Airport recorded a decline in both number of passengers and flights. Until April 2023 the airport recorded 5,669 passengers compared to 33,228 last year or an 82.9 per cent decline. It recorded 86 flights compared to 296 flights last year or a 70.9 per cent decrease.

On the other hand, Duqm Airport recorded a minimal 2.7 per cent increase in the number of passengers until April 2023 with 21,610 compared to 21,051 until April 2022. However, it noted a 9.7 per cent decrease in the number of flights to 204 from 226 last year.



CBO issues guidelines for digital onboarding and e-KYC

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JUNE 21

The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has issued instructions to all Banks and other licensed institutions on Digital Onboarding and Electronic KYC allowing them to digitally onboard new customers and provide access to financial services.

This aims to reform the way customer verification and onboarding process is done by financial institutions and individuals will be able to open bank accounts and access financial services remotely, securely, and efficiently.

This is a very important milestone and a key part of CBO's initiatives for digital transformation in the banking and financial sector demonstrating its commitment to leveraging technology for financial inclusion, enhancing customer experience, and ensuring the sector's security.

These initiatives set the stage for a future where technology and finance converge to create a more prosperous and connected society. Under the supervision of the Central Bank, a National Digital Onboarding Registry is developed by Oman Credit & Financial Information Centre (Mala'a), which will act as an independent and reliable data source for the institutions to verify information during digital onboarding.

The service extended by Mala'a will provide ease to institutions during verification, at the same time ensure authenticity, safety and confidentiality of customer information.

Inma hosts former Irish PM at SME forum

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JUNE 21

A small and medium enterprises (SME) forum featuring former Irish Prime Minister Enda Kenny took place yesterday in Muscat. The 3rd Leadership and Management forum was organised by the Omani Academy for Small and Medium Enterprises, and addressed various financial issues within the SME sector.

At the event, the chief guest Enda Kenny shared some of his experiences during his tenure as Prime Minister following the 2008 recession. "After many years of success in creating jobs and building up a strong economy and building a



strong reputation, we lost control of our economy following the global recession," he recalled.

"...we had disastrous consequences. We were blocked out of all the international money markets, interest rates were 15 per cent, unemployment was 15.5 per cent. Our national integrity and

our reputation were shattered.

The construction sector collapsed completely. A hundred thousand construction workers went back to Poland and Lithuania and Latvia, banks were nationalised with hundreds of thousands of people with serious mortgage difficulties as

a consequence, thousands of businesses closed down."

According to Kenny, job creation was one of Ireland's highest priorities.

"To create jobs was one of the, was one of the fundamental issues that we had to deal with after the recession... My intention was to make Ireland the best small country in the world in which to do business. And from that perspective, we put together a whole series of things from [the] government level to support ideas, initiatives, and innovation.

"And in that sense that you sent out a message that you were open for business, that young people would have the opportunity to set up their companies and do their thing in their way and move on

from that," the former PM noted.

In his talk, Kenny discussed various topics such as the importance of financial management in ensuring sustainability, managing budgets and resources, and investments. It was followed by a panel discussion on financial resources, investment leadership, and fintech trends.

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund (Inma) was established in 2014 to support the SME sector in the country through entrepreneurial development, financing, nurturing and legitimising. In 2019, Inma established the Oman Academy for SMEs to provide entrepreneurs with the necessary skill sets to succeed.

Oman’s new labour law: Striking a balance for an attractive job market



ABDULAZIZ DARWISH
AL ZADJALI

The enactment of labour laws presents one of the greatest challenges for any government, given that it touches upon the three pillars of production: employees, employers, and the government. Consequently, it is imperative that such legislation be parallel and well-balanced to appease all parties involved. In light of the historical context of Oman’s labour law, initially

introduced in 1973, revised in 2003, and subsequently updated in 2006 to include provisions pertaining to labour unions and the seamless transition of workers between projects, and further augmented in 2011 to incorporate minimum wage regulations, it is evident that the law is dynamic and continually evolving to align with global economic and local social developments. With this in mind, the Omani government is diligently working

towards the enactment of a meticulously crafted labour law that takes into account the shared interests of all stakeholders. To this end, the involvement of the General Federation of Oman workers, representing private sector workers, and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, as representatives of employers, has been sought. Additionally, the Council of Oman (comprising the State Council and Majlis Ash’shura)

has been engaged in the review process, contributing eight additional articles to the existing 69. The Omani government’s unwavering commitment to issuing a labour law that aligns with the aspirations and expectations of Omani society is unmistakable. Such legislation is poised to attract greater foreign investments, which undoubtedly will breathe new life into the domestic economy and create numerous

employment opportunities for citizens, all within an attractive and conducive work environment. The anticipated law seeks to enhance productivity while addressing the multifaceted challenges of stakeholder satisfaction, ultimately prioritising the broader national interest, which serves as the cornerstone for sustainable growth in a thriving labour market for investment and the continuous upskilling of the private sector workforce.

Promising growth outlook of Islamic sukuk in Oman



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

Securities are important tools for the development of local economies represented in stocks, bonds, Sukuk, and others. These securities have been diverse in their offering in the Omani market.

Currently, private companies now offer Islamic sukuk following the recent approval by the Capital Market Authority of new sukuk regulations.

The authority issued an administrative decision approving a private company’s prospectus for a sukuk issuance of RO 58 million. Earlier, Omani companies operating in the insurance, tourism, urbanisation and other sectors did issue some sukuk certificates.

Of particular significance today is a new sukuk issuance planned by Mohammed al Barwani LLC, a leading player in the Oil & Gas, investment and energy sector in Oman.

It is expected that the issuance be subscribed by investment funds interested in supporting feasible investment projects. Such opportunities will contribute effectively to the growth of administrative and technical jobs for Omani job-seekers as well as drive socioeconomic development.

Some Omani banks have started promoting the sukuk to help secure the funding required by the issuer to start a number of scheduled projects. The success of the company in this endeavour will

prompt more Omani companies and institutions to turn towards investors in financing future projects that Oman seeks to achieve within the framework of the 2040 Vision.

As it is known, sukuk are securities that are compatible with Islamic Sharia, and give the bearer ownership of a share in a completed project or under construction and development or in a specific investment, but the sukuk shareholders’ share with the executing company the profit and loss, based on the jurisprudential rule that is, sharing in the profit and loss.

Some believe that Islamic sukuk has a characteristic that distinguishes it from other investment tools, which makes it attractive to investors, institutions and governments that implement such projects.

Some experts cite the projects of Fitch Ratings which expects the global sukuk sector to grow to reach a value of about \$40 billion in 2023.

This growth will be concentrated in a number of countries, including the Gulf Cooperation Council states, and other Islamic countries such as Egypt, Malaysia, Indonesia and Turkey.

If we look at the Omani market, we find that the number of sukuk issuances is very small compared to other Gulf markets, at a time when Islamic banks and windows in Oman seek to participate in promoting such projects that are looking for large funds.

In general, there are many features that characterise sukuk, the most important of which is flexibility, as the holder of the sukuk can sell, mortgage, or gift it to anyone in accordance with the law, while some governments issue sukuk in order to cover any financial deficit they have, considering that it is a testimony of indebtedness, ownership and investment in the assets of the institutions.

Credibility crisis requires Bank of England to write new plot



FRANCESCO GUERRERA

The author is global economics editor for Breakingviews, based in London.

Since May 24, thousands of British people have had their homeownership dreams dashed by a sudden spike in mortgage rates. The immediate culprit is higher-than-expected inflation in April, which spooked markets.

Underlying that, though, is the flawed way in which the Bank of England (BoE) communicates future monetary policy. The inaccuracy of the forecasts and their negative impact on the real economy suggest that it’s time to take a different approach.

“I never predict anything, and I never will”. This unwittingly funny quote, attributed to 1990s football star Paul Gascoigne, could equally apply to the BoE’s approach to forecasting. Unlike many other central banks, the BoE doesn’t provide its own forecasts of how consumer prices will evolve in coming years.

Instead, Governor Andrew Bailey and the other eight members of the Monetary Policy Committee chart inflation’s path based on the level of interest rates implied by the prices of overnight indexed swaps, a type of derivative. By using OIS rates, rather than their judgement, UK policymakers de facto outsource inflation forecasting to traders.

This creates several problems. One is that markets are not perfect, so the BoE’s predictions of where inflation will be in two years’ time – its forecast horizon – are often wildly wrong.

The BoE’s projections missed the actual inflation numbers by an average of 6 percentage points between December 2021 and March this year, according to calculations of data collected by Berenberg analysts. That’s a huge error considering that Bailey’s target is to bring inflation down to 2%.

Other institutions, like the US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank, also underestimated the post-pandemic upsurge in



Mounted police officers sit in outside the Royal Exchange and the Bank of England in London. – Reuters

consumer prices. But in those cases, markets can compare a higher-than-expected inflation print with policymakers’ predictions, or those of their staff, and bet on the future direction of interest rates.

In the Fed’s case, they can even look at rate-setters’ anonymous views of where rates are heading, handily summarised in a “dot-plot”. All that traders and mortgage lenders know about Bailey and his colleagues’ thoughts, however, is that their latest Monetary Policy Report assumes inflation will be 2.3% by the end of 2024.

Even that is based on the derivatives-derived interest rate path, which is again no more than the market’s guess of what the Bank will do. The BoE does offer predictions based on different models, but investors know they aren’t central to policymaking.

The upshot of this relative information vacuum is that traders tend to overreact to economic surprises. The latest mortgage bloodbath is a case in point. On May 24, Britain’s statistics agency said that consumer prices in April had risen at an annualised 8.7% – well ahead of the market’s expectations of 8.2%.

Before those numbers, traders were expecting one more hike to bring the benchmark Bank Rate from 4.5% to 4.75%. Some were even forecasting cuts later this year.

Shortly after the inflation data, the market’s allergic reaction was such that it immediately shifted to price in up to four more hikes.

That assumed rates would jump to a 16-year peak of 5.5% in 2023, with no cuts this year.

The whiplash occurred because traders had to digest the inflation shock without any interest rate guidance from policymakers.

Since the BoE was still maintaining that inflation would head towards 2% in 2024, the market naturally moved to hike its own interest rate expectations, by pushing up OIS rates. Because most banks price home loans off those derivatives, it sent mortgage rates rocketing.

This system – dubbed “incestuous” by former MPC member Charles Goodhart in a 2009 research paper – is arguably causing unnecessary pain for homebuyers. Within two weeks of the inflation data banks had withdrawn more than 500 mortgage products – or nearly 10% of available home loans – because their rates were too low, according to data provider Moneyfacts.

Lenders replaced them with more expensive products. The average rate for a five-year fixed-rate mortgage for buyers who borrow 75% of the price of the property is around 5.5%, Moneyfacts estimates. It was around 3% a year ago.

The BoE’s public statements suggest it’s aware there may be a problem. Bailey recently admitted that conditions were so unusual the BoE had ditched its own model.

“We have taken a conscious decision to aim off (the model’s predictions),” he told a

parliamentary committee last month, according to the *Financial Times*. Last week the central bank also agreed to launch an independent investigation into its forecasts after pressure from parliament.

Bailey could improve matters by simply copying the ECB and the Fed.

First, the BoE could stop using OIS rates in its forecasts and just provide its best view of where inflation is heading if interest rates remain at current levels. That way markets, households and firms could estimate the path of monetary policy without being conditioned by traders’ guesses.

Crucially, this change would boost the central bank’s credibility. Even if price rises deviated markedly from the BoE’s forecasts, markets would be able to figure out the likely policy response – and hence the pace of inflation’s return to the 2% target.

Secondly, the BoE’s policymakers could publish their individual predictions in a Fed-like “dot-plot”. That would create an even more powerful absorber against economic shocks, limiting overreactions, because markets would know how rates are likely to move to bring consumer prices under control.

Instead of following Gascoigne’s musings on predictions, Bailey and his colleagues could learn from another famous quote, apocryphally attributed to the Roman philosopher Seneca: “To err is human but to persist is diabolical”. — Reuters

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FRIDAY, JULY 10, 2020 DHUL QAADA 18, 1441 AH

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ESTABLISHED IN 1981 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: ABDULLAH BIN SALIM AL SHUEILI VOL. 39 NO. 239 | PAGES 16

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER



MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Chairman of the Administrative Judiciary Court and Fisheries Dr. Saad bin Hamoud bin Ahmed al-Haili, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, took the oath of office at Al Rashid Palace on Thursday. SEE ALSO P2

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

MUSCAT: To mark the 50th anniversary of the Omani Renaissance and in commemoration of the memory of its founder late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) issued a sixth series of new RO 50 banknote, which will begin circulation this month. CBO will also issue new banknotes for all other denominations during the last quarter of 2020. TURN TO P4

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

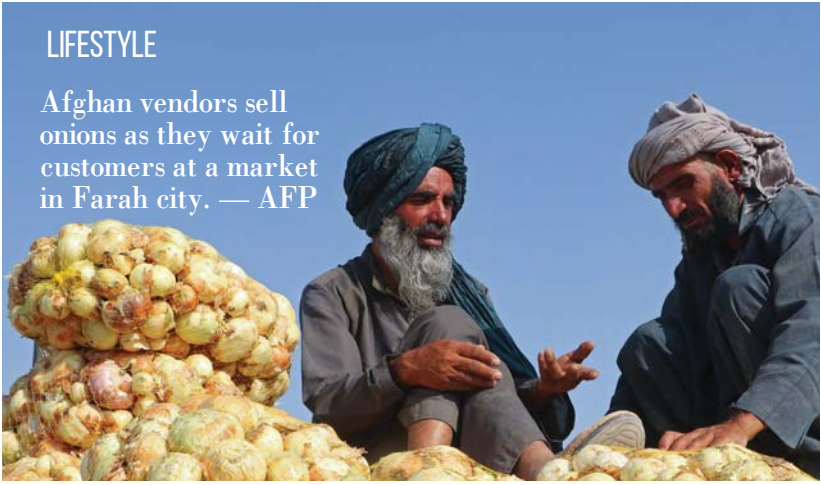
MUSCAT: The frequent orders and fervent appeals by the authorities to follow social distancing guidelines are falling on deaf ears. A drive around the downtown Muscat and its adjoining areas reveals how recklessly people crowd at different corners and walk shoulder-to-shoulder. While most people across the country are following the guidelines that health authorities say are necessary to keep the coronavirus from spreading, many are not. "In these critical moments of uncertainty with both physical and mental strain, we should discipline ourselves, and in some cases, it is necessary to police the behaviour of other people as well," said Hamad al-Wahabi, who stopped his car to scare away a group of people at a sidewalk in Ruwi. The Supreme Committee and the Ministry of Health have said it more than enough times that social distancing is the best way to slow the spread of COVID-19. While expressing his concern, Hamad said, "The attitude of some people is not acceptable that they pave the way for the spread of the infection. Even if we do not have the authority to lay charges on the offenders, at least we can scare them away," he told the Observer. TURN TO P4

UN HAILS OMAN'S SUPPORT FOR PEACE IN YEMEN

NEW YORK: Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has commended the role of the Sultanate in supporting international efforts to establish security and peace in Yemen. In a virtual video call to countries backing the global ceasefire initiative, Guterres said that the international community is grateful to the Sultanate of Oman for its crucial role in enhancing efforts aimed to establish peace and security in Yemen. "The United Nations values this vital and positive role," he said. Guterres added that the Sultanate represents a unique model, not only in the Middle East, but also in the world. "He urged other countries to follow the example of the Sultanate in advocating and supporting peace and stability." — OMA

LIFESTYLE

Afghan vendors sell onions as they wait for customers at a market in Farah city. — AFP



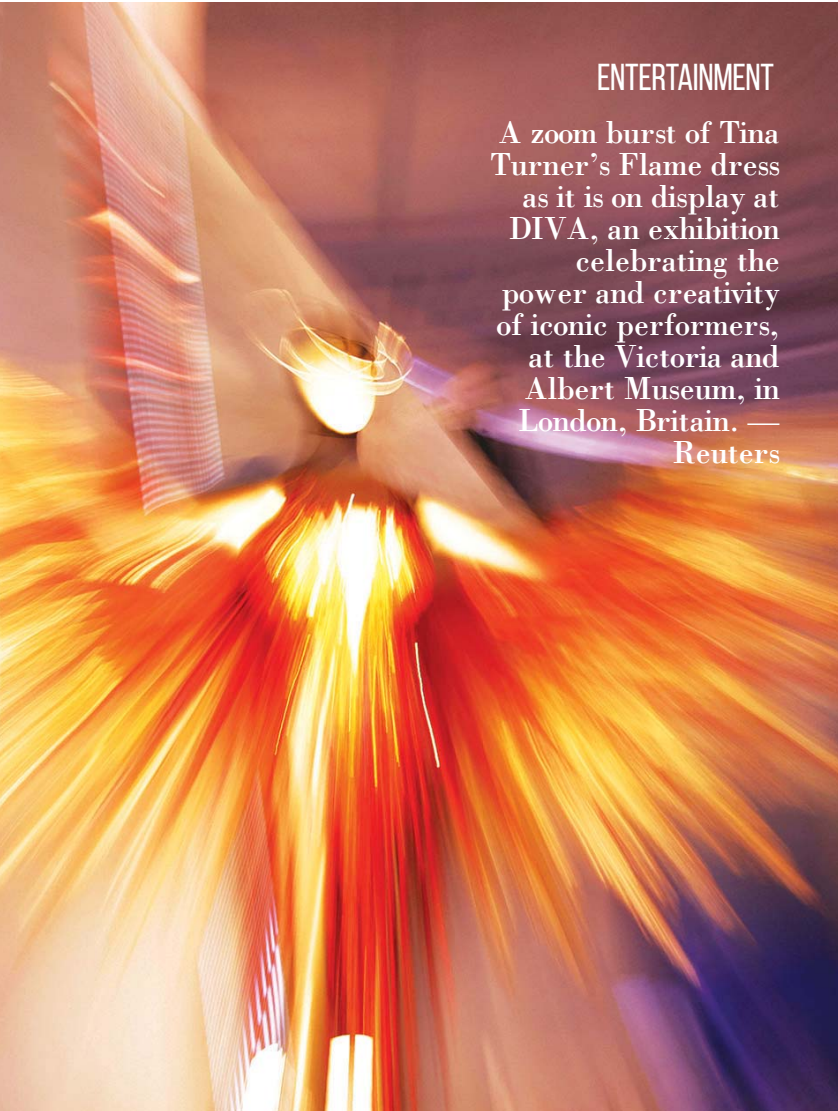
TRAVEL TALES

The Eiffel Tower dominates the skyline, as seen from an elevated vantage point in central Paris. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

A zoom burst of Tina Turner's Flame dress as it is on display at DIVA, an exhibition celebrating the power and creativity of iconic performers, at the Victoria and Albert Museum, in London, Britain. — Reuters



MUSIC

Ghost performs on the Helviti stage during the Copenhell Heavy Metal Festival in Copenhagen, Denmark. — AFP



FASHION

A model presents a creation from the Giorgio Armani Spring/Summer 2024 men's collection during Fashion Week in Milan, Italy. — Reuters



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Al Mudhaibi's Grape Festival is a big boost to farmers

The festival witnessed grape grower families working together to create beautiful stalls. A fruitful event that allowed farmers to meet other farmers who are passionate about growing grapes including investors who can help the industry develop

ENTERTAINMENT

Rembrandt self-portrait 'home after 400 years'

A REMBRANDT self-portrait bought from the Rothschild family with 150 million euros (\$162 million) of Dutch state cash went on display at Amsterdam's Rijksmuseum on Thursday.

The Netherlands agreed to buy "The Standard-Bearer" with public money in 2022, after Paris cleared its sale despite the painting being considered as a "national treasure" in France.

The painting had spent centuries in the hands of private collectors, most recently the Rothschild banking family, who had owned it since 1844.

"This is a party... it's really the housewarming party for Rembrandt who came home after nearly 400 years," Rijksmuseum director Taco Dibbits said.

The canvas, painted in 1636 when Rembrandt was 30 and showing him in a military uniform, is hanging alongside his famous "The Night Watch" in the museum's Gallery of Honour.

The museum held a ceremony performed by eight classes of schoolchildren who had designed their own banners, while entry to the Rijksmuseum will be free on



Saturday to celebrate the painting's return.

"This is one of the most important self-portraits by Rembrandt. It's painted at a turning point in his career" when he began to fully express himself artistically, added Dibbits. The painting portrays Rembrandt as one of the standard-bearers positioned ahead of the troops in the 80 Years' War, the war of independence which led to the creation of the Netherlands in 1648, the Rijksmuseum said.

"In this large self-portrait, Rembrandt paints himself looking rebellious and full of bravado. It was this artistic breakthrough that would lead to The Night Watch," it said.

Paris said in December 2021 that it would allow a sale on the open market, after the Louvre had reportedly tried but failed to raise the funds to buy it.

As well as the Dutch parliament approving 150 million euros of public cash, the Rembrandt Association added 15 million euros to the pot and the Rijksmuseum funded 10 million.

The Rijksmuseum said it now had 22 Rembrandt paintings. — AFP

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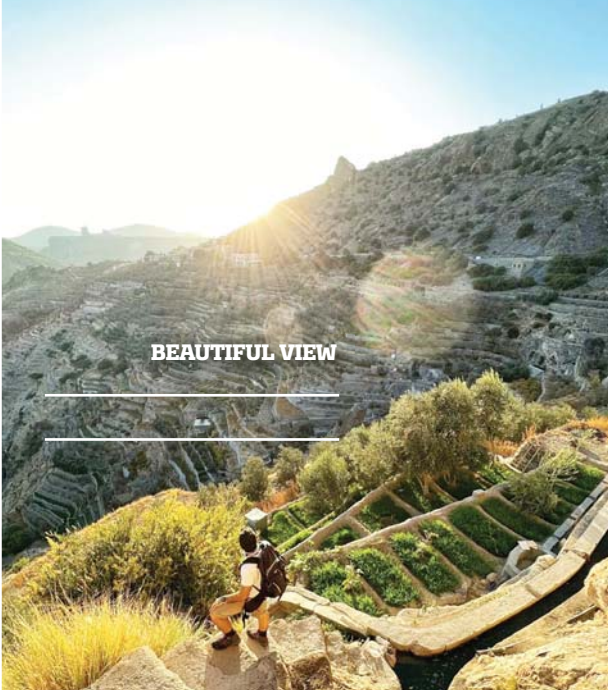


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By Yeru Ebuon
Instagram: @yru_here

In the two-day Grape Festival held in Al Mudhaibi, about 45 grape growers from across the country gathered to showcase the abundant harvest they experienced this year.

Grapes had been grown in various parts of Oman, most especially in the mountainous regions where the climate is more temperate but Al Mudhaibi was the perfect location for the festival as it's right in the middle of the crossroad and barely an hour away from places like Wakan, Al Rustaq, Samayil and even Al Jabal Al Akhdhar where grapes are produced in larger quantities.

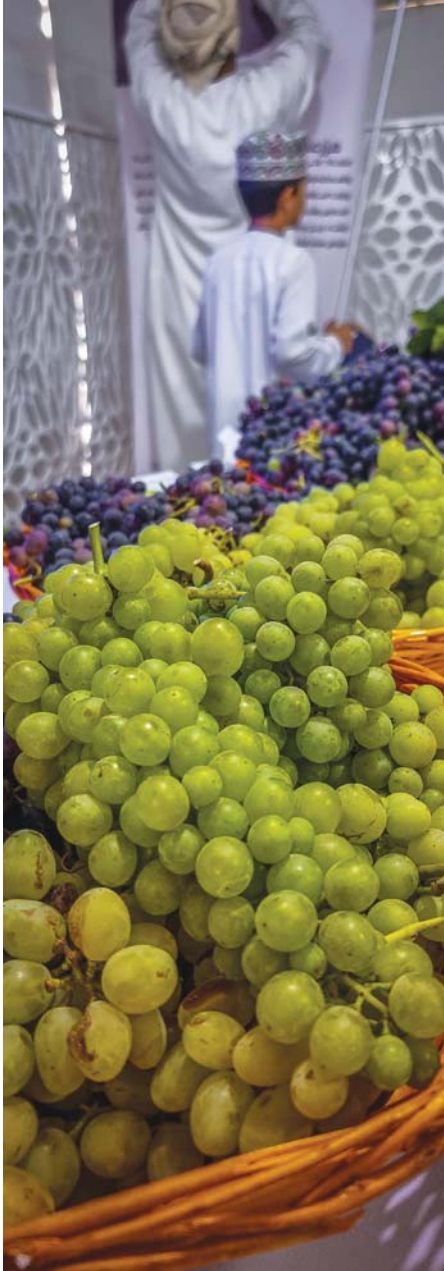
The festival witnessed grape grower families working together to create beautiful stalls. At the centre of the festivities are the children of the farmers who are an important part of making sure that agricultural farming becomes sustainable and the knowledge is passed to the next generation.

For this year's festival, a large tent was set up for the farmers. Each of them was given a stall that they can decorate and put their harvested grapes on display. At the entrance, a giant arch was erected covered with grape leaves and fruits while a centrepiece is placed at the centre of the event tent pregnant with different coloured grapes.

"There are several varieties of grapes in Oman — some of them are local and some of them are imported. This kind of festival will bring the necessary awareness and the importance of the agricultural sector in Oman including grapes and other agricultural products," shared Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, Minister of Economy, during a local TV interview.

Talking to the farmers, it is easy to assess that there are more than 30 grape varieties in Oman. The Omani grape is one of the most heavily produced primarily because it has adapted well to the country's often harsh climate.

While there are numerous answers to the question of what makes a grape Omani, one thing is clear — the Omani grapefruit is usually smaller in size but rounder and smoother compared



to other grapes. The colour can also vary ranging from green to golden yellow, and even reddish-purple for some varieties. The skin of Omani grapes is often thin and delicate.

Taste-wise, the festival was the perfect place to learn that Omani grapes also come in different complex flavours. Some, when green or golden, can either be acidic or sour. Farmers, however, explained that there are varieties that are juicy and have a pleasing texture.

In a previous interview with a grape grower from Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Mussabah al Awaimari explained that in the beginning, it was difficult to cultivate grapes but over time, when they learned some of the more helpful methodologies, grapes had been the easiest to propagate that when he started, he only has 20 vines, now he has over a hundred spread across his two gardens — one in his home and the other in his actual farm in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

Mussabah was not only to attend this year's grape festival but believe that it is necessary to create visibility about what they go through as farmers and will also allow people to understand that locally produced grapes are not necessarily inferior to imported ones. He also thinks that with more investment into the sector, grapes in Oman will only get better as farmers also learn more techniques on how to make their grapes sweeter and better.

To the farmers who attended the

festival, it was a fruitful two days as they not only meet other farmers who are passionate about growing grapes, but the government also gave them ample opportunity to meet with investors and the public and create awareness about the locally produced grapes.

For the visitors, the grapes were not only sold at very affordable prices but they are also given the opportunity to buy grape plants ready for transplanting.

TRAVEL TALES

Versailles reopening Marie-Antoinette's private rooms

THE CHATEAU OF VERSAILLES will reopen the private rooms of Queen Marie-Antoinette as part of its ongoing 400th anniversary celebrations.

The restored apartments will reopen to the public on June 27, featuring 100 square metres (1,000 square feet) of luxurious living space where France's last queen played with her children and received friends.

It is the final part of a restoration of the Queen's Hamlet and Trianon, a series of cottages and getaways built away from the main palace.

It gives a "new understanding of history, with this paradox between public and private life, etiquette and intimacy, an extraordinary summary of history within a few square metres," said Catherine Pegard, who runs the



palace.

The palace, which welcomed nearly seven million visitors last year, dates to late 1623 when King Louis XIII ordered the expansion of a small hunting lodge on the 800-hectare site.

"This anniversary is primarily aimed at expressing the continuity of history at Versailles for these past 400 years and to show that we will continue to open and restore (parts of the palace) and bring them to life," said Pegard.

Marie-Antoinette's apartments include a boudoir, library and billiard room. She accessed the refuge

through a secret door hidden in her official bedroom.

The palace is also preparing a new gallery dedicated to its history, to open in September.

"At Versailles, the work never ends," said Pegard, who has overseen a wide array of restorations since taking over in 2011.

These have included the Buffet d'eau Fountain, the apartments of Louis XV's son, the Dauphin Louis-Ferdinand, as well as those of his favourite mistress, Jeanne du Barry — who is the centre of a new film starring Johnny Depp as the monarch, that was filmed at the palace. — AFP

DISCOVERY

Scientists discover super-sized skink once roamed Australia

A FOSSIL LIZARD discovered by researchers at an Australian university has been described as "the largest and most bizarre skink" that ever lived.

The tiliqua frangens, or frangens for short, was as big as an arm and covered in thick armour, researchers at Flinders University said in a statement on Wednesday.

The lizard lived during the Pleistocene, alongside the famous megafauna such as marsupial lions and short-faced kangaroos, researchers said.

The frangens was 1,000 times bigger than the common Australian garden skink, which weighs about 2 grammes, researcher Kailash Thorn said.

"It reveals that even small crea-



tures were supersized during the Pleistocene."

The frangens also had "a unique chunky, spiked profile," Thorn said.

The creature was pieced together from bones unearthed from Wellington Caves in the Australian eastern state of New South Wales and from fossils already held in museums around the country, co-author Diana Fusco said.

"In the dig at Wellington Caves, we started finding these spiked armoured plates that had surprisingly never been recorded before. We knew we had something interesting and unique."

The lizard may have filled the

"ecological niche" of small land tortoises, researchers said. The name frangens means to break into pieces or smash, describing how strong the jaw was.

Its extinction coincides with the disappearance of the megafauna and suggests these end-Pleistocene extinctions were more extensive, affecting smaller creatures as well.

"Deciphering how Pleistocene animals adapted, migrated, or what eventually caused their extinctions might help us conserve today's fauna, which faces pressures such as changing climate and habitat destruction," Thorn said. — dpa



CULTURE

Gravity-defying: revamping an Inca rope suspension bridge

DANGLING OVER a vertiginous gorge, the Apurimac River flowing around 10 stories below, Indigenous Peruvians show no fear as they repair a centuries-old Inca rope suspension bridge — the world's last.

Every June, members of the Quechua Indigenous group come together to braid thick ropes made from a type of Andean straw, then brave the chasm without harnesses to replace worn parts of the Q'eswachaka bridge.

It is a ritual that connects communities to one another but also to their ancestors, according to Quechua belief.

"It is a matter of pride for us to (renovate) this bridge," Braulio Huilca, a 34-year-old student said of his role in the annual rite.

Inscribed on Unesco's list of Intangible Cultural Heritage 10 years ago, the bridge has become a key tourist attraction and source of income in the Peruvian region of Cusco — also home to the Inca citadel of Machu Picchu.

"If we abandon this, the tradition would be lost, and there would... be no income," said Felipe Hanampa Huamani, 40.

JEALOUS MERMAIDS

The bridge, made of fibres obtained from q'oya, a straw-like plant, was first built about 600 years ago.

Nearly 30 meters (100 feet) long and 1.2 meters wide, it hangs over a gorge around 28 meters deep.

For several weeks every year, residents of four towns in the province of Canas gather and prepare straw for rope-making.

With sickles, women in multi-coloured skirts cut the q'oya and gather it in bundles that are soaked in a well and then crushed with stone.

They then braid the ropes, sitting in groups on the side of a dusty road.

Within hours, they have made thick ropes that men carry on their shoulders along winding paths and steep steps up to the bridge.

"If we don't renew it, (god) punishes us. We could have an accident or something could happen to us," said 54-year-old Emperatriz Arizapana Huayhua,



a small-scale farmer in the region involved in rope production.

Crucial in the initial phases of the operation, women are not allowed to take part in the final steps: according to local beliefs, the mermaids of the river are jealous.



ANIMAL SACRIFICE

To guarantee that "no accident happens during the reconstruction," a shaman sacrifices a lamb to the gods as part of the ritual.

As men in "chullos" — colourful woollen caps with earmuffs — tear down the old structure, worn and blackened braids plummet into the Apurimac river.

The hanging bridge has several thick ropes that serve as a platform, with two more for holding on on either side.

The replacement of the old ropes takes three days. Some of the workers chew coca leaves for energy.

There is a narrow metal bridge next to the rope structure that communities also use for trade and transport.

The work is finished when the two groups working from either side of the gorge meet in the middle.

Cries of "Hayllí Q'eswachaka!" are heard in Quechua, signalling that the time has come for the celebratory festival.

Next year, they will do it all over again. — AFP

THE CHANGING WORLD OF MEN



SHADDAD AL MUSALMY

Father's Day: Our fathers never gave up on us... remember that?

THIS WEEK, THE world celebrated Father's Day, and this space today is dedicated to all the great fathers out there who experience the unexpected challenges of being the men of their houses.

For me, the main thing I have learned as a father is the real struggle of bringing up my boys, who will soon turn into real men.

But in the process, you develop an unconditional love for your children from the first time you see them, and with each day of being able to watch their personalities grow.

One of the toughest things about being a father is letting go. In all these years, I have learned a great deal about sacrifice, patience, and fear. It's been worth every single second.

Fatherhood has definitely changed me, for the better. It has made me much more emotional. I now find myself tearing at sad movies where I would just feel nothing before I was a father.

The thing that amazes me most about being blessed with four boys is, how different they are to each other.

One is active and energetic, the other is gentle while the third sensitive and the last hilarious and daring.

One taught me kindness, while the other calmness. Another one taught me caution, and the other taught me excitement and fun.

Despite their differences, both of them taught me love, care, patience and joy.

Becoming a father is an amazing experience which can also bring lots of changes and challenges.

The first year of your child's life is a time of great joy but also a big adjustment for both you and your partner.

Babies don't come with instruction manuals, and it takes a while to get to know yours. It can be hard to balance caring for your baby, yourself and your partner, and your new role may feel overwhelming at times.

While writing this column, I struggle to deal with the grief and emptiness that comes with not having a father myself.

My father passed on years ago and now that he is gone, I continue to celebrate his life and his contribution to the family and to the community.

I will oblige my heart to find comfort in celebrating his life and on this note, I promise myself to use him as an example to be a great father.

The way he made me happy with whatever I needed when I was little, I will try and do the same for my children.

Becoming a father means making changes to many aspects of your life. Your identity, responsibilities, daily routines and relationships will all be impacted.

If you feel shocked by these changes and how much is involved with being a parent, you are definitely not alone.

In between all of this, there can be moments of joy as you get to know your baby. However, the new responsibilities of parenting can become overwhelming and exhausting but we should never give up.

Hard as it is while trying to balance work and family, it's important not to let go the responsibilities that come with being a father. Our fathers never gave up on us ... Remember that?

Till next, Happy Father's Day.

Shaddad al Musalmy is a seasoned Omani journalist who worked for top newspapers in the country. He's currently one of Oman Observer's senior editors and contributes across different beats. His commentaries about life in general paints a vivid picture of the changing landscape in Oman.

FOR FEEDBACK, EMAIL THE AUTHOR AT SHADADM75@GMAIL.COM