

MoHT urges tourists to choose licensed tour companies

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) is dedicated to ensuring the safety of all tourists who embark on these adventures. To protect adventurers exploring the Sultanate of Oman, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) is advising tourists to avoid using unlicensed tour companies. "This initiative is all about guaranteeing that tourists have a safe and enjoyable time in Oman," MoHT said.

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SOHAR PORT & FREEZONE ADVANCES CIRCULAR ECONOMY WITH NEW FACILITY



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MUSEUMS IN OMAN ARE CATALYSTS FOR LEARNING



MUSCAT
MULTI-ENTRY VISA MUST FOR TURKIYE VISIT VIA IRAQ

Muscat: The Embassy of Oman in Iraq announced on Monday that all Omani citizens travelling by land to Turkiye via Iraq must obtain a multiple-entry visa for Iraq. In an online statement, the embassy urged Omani tourists to obtain a multi-entry visa when travelling to Turkiye through Iraq by car.

They can get this visa either upon arrival at the border crossings or through their respective embassies in these countries, allowing them to re-enter Iraq after returning from Turkiye.

According to the embassy, travellers from Turkiye must hold two types of visas:

The first is a pre-obtained Iraqi visa, typically stamped or added to their passport before entry.

The second can be obtained upon entering Iraqi Kurdistan as travellers can get a visa through the border crossings between Kurdistan and Turkiye or online via the Kurdistan E-Visa portal.

MILWAUKEE
TRUMP SET TO UNVEIL VICE PRESIDENT IN PARTY CONVENTION



Donald Trump was set to unveil his running mate on Monday as supporters gathered in Milwaukee for the Republican Party convention, an extravaganza turbo-charged by the attempted assassination of the former president. With the country still reeling from images of a bloodied Trump being escorted off a rally stage at the weekend, some 50,000 Republicans descended on the shores of Lake Michigan for the four-day convention. Trump will announce his vice presidential candidate later on Monday, according to Fox News, with the top possible names including two senators — J D Vance of Ohio and Marco Rubio of Florida — and North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum.

SEE ALSO P7

Oman’s representative appointed as head of UN’s Iraq mission

THE UNITED NATIONS: The United Nations on Monday appointed Dr Mohammed bin Awad al Hassan, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations, as Special Representative of the United Nations Secretary-General for Iraq and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) making him the first Arab to be appointed to this position.

The United Nations Assistance Mission for Iraq (UNAMI) is a special political mission established in 2003 by UN Security Council Resolution 1500, at the request of the Government of Iraq. The Mission has been operational ever since, and its role was greatly expanded in 2007 with the adoption of Resolution 1770.

UNAMI’s mandate is to prioritise the provision of advice, support, and assistance to the



Dr Mohammed bin Awad al Hassan

Government and people of Iraq on advancing inclusive, political dialogue and national and community-level reconciliation; assisting in the electoral process; facilitating regional dialogue between Iraq and its neighbours; and promoting the protection of human rights and judicial and legal reforms.

The Mission is also mandated to work with government partners and civil society to coordinate the

humanitarian and development efforts of the UN Agencies, Funds and Programmes. While UNAMI itself does not deliver humanitarian and development programmes, it raises the profile of development and humanitarian issues in Iraq and connects Iraqi partners – both the Government and civil society organisations – with the technical expertise available within the UN family in Iraq.

— ONA with agencies

MoHERI announces Upgrade winners



Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah with Upgrade winners in Muscat on Monday.

— PHOTO BY HUSSEIN AL MUQBALI

YUSEF A HABSI
Muscat, July 15

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation(MoHERI) announced the names of the projects that won the 7th edition of Upgrade Programme awards for converting student graduation projects into start-up companies, on Monday.

The closing ceremony took place at JW Marriott Hotel in Al Irfan District under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

Najah bint Mohammed al Rashidiyah, Director-General

of the Innovation Centre at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, underscored the importance of the programme in motivating researchers and innovators and supporting institutions to transform ideas into innovative start-up enterprises with value added that contribute to sustainable economic development, enhancing the ranking of the Sultanate of Oman in various global competitive indicators.

This edition of Upgrade Programme saw an increase in the registration rate and turnout as the recorded figures indicate that the total number of registrants

reached 108 projects in emerging technologies which received 75 projects and water category which received 33 projects. Twenty-four projects from different higher education institutions in the Sultanate of Oman were shortlisted and 9 won the awards (6 projects in emerging technologies and 3 in the water category).

On the sidelines of the ceremony, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation signed cooperation agreements with the partners of the Upgrade Programme. In accordance with the agreements, a package of various incentives will be provided to the winning teams of this edition of the programme.

EU imposes sanctions on five Israeli settlers

BRUSSELS: The European Union announced sanctions on Monday against five Israeli individuals and three entities, describing them as responsible for “serious and systematic human rights abuses” against Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem.

The list included Tzav 9, a group which it said had regularly blocked humanitarian aid trucks delivering food, water and fuel to the Gaza Strip.

Also on the list were Ben-Zion Gopstein, founder and leader of the Lehava organisation, and Isaschar Manne, whom the EU described as the founder of an unauthorised outpost in the Israeli-occupied West Bank.

Both have also been sanctioned by the United States, as has Tzav 9, which Washington said last week opposes Jewish assimilation with non-Jews and agitates against Arabs in the name of religion and national security.

There was no immediate comment by those sanctioned.

The European Union sanctions, under the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime, include an asset freeze and a travel ban to the EU countries.

Including Monday’s listings, 113 natural and legal persons and 31 entities from a range of countries have been sanctioned under the Regime. SEE ALSO P6



Palestinians inspect a house hit in an Israeli strike in Deir Al-Balah in the central Gaza Strip on Monday. – Reuters

Al Mughsail Beach stands out as Khareef Dhofar’s top tourist attraction

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, July 15

Al Mughsail Beach in the Wilayat of Salalah is experiencing a significant influx of tourists these days, coinciding with the start of the khareef season. This beach is one of the top tourist destinations in Dhofar Governorate, known for its unique location, diverse facilities, and stunning natural beauty.

This year, Al Mughsail Beach has undergone a major transformation thanks to a comprehensive development



Al Mughsail Beach is a major tourist draw during the khareef season

project carried out by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in collaboration with Dhofar Municipality and Omran Group.

The project included the creation of a large family park featuring vast green spaces, children’s playgrounds, organised parking

lots, and fully integrated service facilities such as restaurants, cafes, and shops.

Al Mughsail Beach is distinguished by its unique location, offering both a soft sandy beach and a rocky shore overlooking natural fountains. Outside of the khareef season, when the waves are relatively calm, this diverse geographical setting allows visitors to enjoy a distinctive experience, whether swimming in the sea, engaging in water sports on the sandy beach, or relaxing on the rocks and admiring the stunning natural

scenery.

Al Mughsail Beach boasts pleasant weather during Salalah’s khareef season, with lower temperatures and occasional rainfall, creating ideal conditions for a peaceful holiday and enjoying the picturesque natural views.

Al Mughsail Beach is easily accessible from the centre of Wilayat of Salalah via the Salalah - Al Mughsail road, with directional signs available along the way.

Thanks to its unique location, diverse facilities, and natural

beauty, Al Mughsail Beach is an ideal destination for an enjoyable holiday during Salalah’s khareef season.

A visitor from the United Arab Emirates said, “I’m no stranger to Salalah, having visited it several times.

But Al Mughsail Beach was a new experience for me, and I was amazed by the significant development the place has undergone. It has become much more beautiful and comfortable, making it an ideal destination for relaxation and enjoying the stunning natural scenery.”



Strategic, Defence Studies Academy celebrates passing out of 11th batch

MUSCAT: The Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies on Monday celebrated the passing out of the 11th batch that comprised senior officers from the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and other military and security departments.

The course also saw the participation of officials from ministries and civil institutions.

The passing-out ceremony was held under the auspices of Lt Gen Said bin Ali al Hilali, Head

of the Internal Security Service, in the presence of Maj Gen Hamid bin Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies.

During the ceremony, a visual display was made about the course and the study programmes, practical applications and visits related to the course, in addition to lectures and symposia presented by some military and security leaders. The Academy attracted heads



of regional and international organisations, senior military



commanders, experts, thinkers, strategic researchers and

decision-makers from the Sultanate of Oman and abroad.

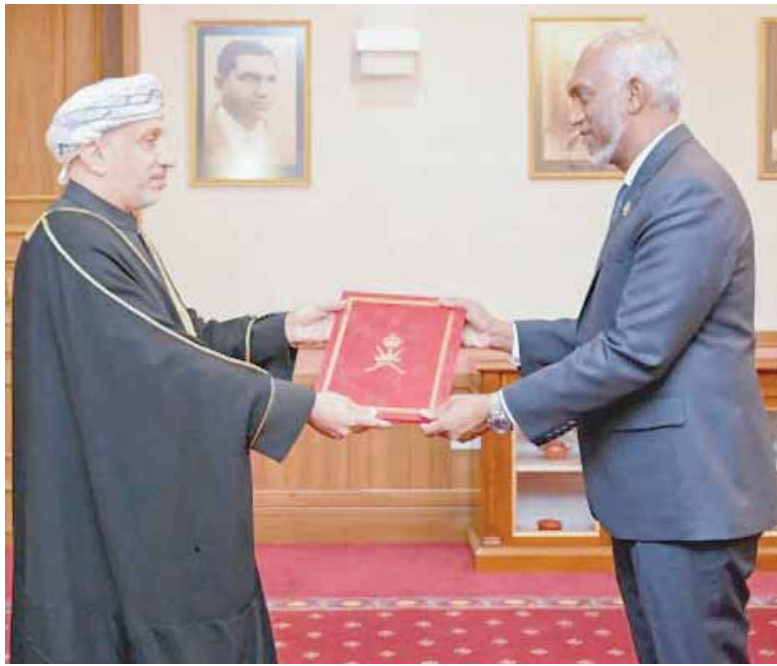
The chief guest also distributed certificates to the course participants.

The course, which began on September 7, 2023, provided an academic environment to stimulate innovation, learning, research and development. It provided the participants with practical knowledge and skills that would enable them to assume leadership positions

and actively contribute to devising public policies, national strategies and sound strategic decisions in the fields of security and defence.

The ceremony was attended by SAF commanders, military and security service leaders, some members of the State Council and Majlis Ash'shura, senior officers from the SAF and other military and security services and veteran officers.

— ONA



Ahmed bin Ali al Rashdi, Ambassador of Oman to Sri Lanka, presented his credentials as Oman's Non-Resident Ambassador to Maldives

Oman's Ambassador presents credentials

MALE: Ahmed bin Ali al Rashdi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka, on Monday presented his credentials as Oman's Non-Resident Ambassador to the Republic of Maldives. He submitted his credentials to Dr Mohamed Moiso, President of the Republic of Maldives.

The ambassador conveyed to President Dr Mohamed Moiso the greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, along with His Majesty the Sultan's wishes of good health and happiness to the President. He also conveyed His Majesty the Sultan's wishes of well-being to the people of Maldives.

The ambassador underlined Oman's keenness to consolidate relations and expand cooperation

with Maldives in all fields in a manner that serves the common interests of the two countries.

For his part, the President of Maldives asked the ambassador to convey his sincere greetings to His Majesty the Sultan. He wished the Omani people further progress and prosperity under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan.

The President welcomed the Omani ambassador and wished him success in his duties. He hoped that bilateral relations would continue to grow and prosper.

Later, the Omani Ambassador held a meeting with Moosa Zamir, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Maldives. The meeting touched on ways to enhance bilateral cooperation between the two countries. — ONA

WINNERS OF UPGRADE PROGRAMME ANNOUNCED

The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation announced the names of the projects that won the 7th edition of Upgrade Programme awards for converting student graduation projects into start-up companies, on Monday. The closing ceremony took place under the auspices of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation. — ONA



UNFPA LAUDS PROGRESS MADE BY ARAB WOMEN

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) praised the Arab countries that prioritise women and girls in their development efforts which have made significant progress amid emerging megatrends in the recent past.

Launching the 2024 State of World Population report commemorating the International Population Day in the presence of the media both online and offline, Laila Baker, UNFPA Arab states Regional Director at the UNFPA Arab States Regional office in Cairo, said that in the Arab region, countries that prioritise women

and girls in their development efforts have made significant progress in the face of polycrisis and emerging megatrends.

"Various Indicators such as life expectancy and maternal mortality have improved, while women enjoy greater autonomy and decision-making power. Family planning services and modern contraceptives have become more accessible, leading to a decrease in teenage pregnancy," she said.

Entitled "Interwoven Lives, Threads of Hope: Ending inequalities in sexual and reproductive health and rights", the State of World Population report is UNFPA's annual flagship publication published yearly

since 1978. The year 2024 marks the thirtieth anniversary of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD).

A Regional Media Declaration in support of the ICPD Programme of Action was also unveiled. The declaration was unanimously adopted by the members of the Regional ICPD Media Coalition to bolster efforts aimed at implementing the 1994 ICPD Programme of Action and the 2013 Cairo Declaration.

The members of the Coalition recommitted themselves to upholding various international agreements, including the ICPD Programme of Action, the Cairo Declaration, the 2030 Agenda

for Sustainable Development, and others. These agreements recognise the fundamental rights to dignity, equality, sexual and reproductive health, reproductive rights, and the autonomy of every woman and girl to make informed decisions about their lives in all contexts: development, peacebuilding process, and different humanitarian settings.

This year's report also includes contributions from several partners namely the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the UN Human Rights Office, and the Population Division of the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and more.

114 fish factories provide value-added products

MUSCAT: The number of fish factories in the Sultanate of Oman until the end of 2023 stood at 114 units that provide value-added fish products, achieve sustainable development, support economic diversification and enhance innovation in accordance with the aspirations of Oman Vision 2040.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources affirmed that the recent growth in Sultanate of Oman's fisheries sector constitutes one of the basic pillars of food security and provides ideal means of optimising the use of the country's resources.

The ministry pointed out that 81 fish factories have been granted a 'Certificate of Quality



Control and Export' to indicate that the units offer fish products that adhere to international standards, thereby meriting an opportunity to export to global markets.

The ministry explained that fisheries units operate in the

fields of processing, packing and freezing fish fillets, canning fish and manufacturing various food products from aquatic resources (fish burgers, nuggets and other products) that all meet the needs of consumers in local and foreign markets. — ONA

Hotel revenues in Oman surpass RO 108 million

MUSCAT: The National Centre for Statistics and Information has reported a significant increase in revenues from 3 to 5-star hotels in Oman, achieving a 10.2 per cent rise by the end of May 2024. The total revenue reached RO 108.379 million, compared to RO 98.340 million during the same period in 2023.

This growth is attributed to a 13.7 per cent increase in the total number of hotel guests, totalling 913,677 by the end of May 2024, up from 803,442 guests in May 2023.

Additionally, the occupancy rate saw a 6 per cent increase, reaching 51.5 per cent compared to the previous year.

The statistics reveal an 11 per cent rise in the number of Omani guests, totalling 306,255. Gulf guests increased

by 6.8 per cent, reaching 58,572, while other Arab guests rose by 13.2 per cent to 40,548. European guests saw a significant increase of 19.6 per cent, totalling 286,980.

The number of guests from the Americas stood at 28,695, while there was a 1.6 per cent increase in guests from Africa, reaching 4,677. Asian guests saw a substantial rise of 21 per cent, totalling 133,771, and the number of guests from Oceania stood at 13,446.

The upward trend in hotel revenues and guest numbers highlights the growing attractiveness of Oman as a tourist destination, supported by improved services and infrastructure. This surge is expected to continue, further boosting the hospitality sector and contributing to the economy. — ONA



Oman, Algeria explore means of boosting investment

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria on Monday explored means of boosting investment and business cooperation.

This took place during the online meeting between Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and Tayeb Zitouni, Minister of Trade and Export Promotion of Algeria.

During the meeting, the two sides agreed on encouraging companies from both countries to enhance partnerships and transfer technology. — ONA



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MoTCIT to enforce Omanisation for ‘refrigerator truck driver’ job

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 15

As the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) has already announced that the ‘refrigerator driver’ profession will be reserved exclusively for Omanis, it reiterated that starting from September 2024, it will intensify its efforts to enforce this decision.

MoTCIT emphasised that only Omani nationals will be permitted to drive refrigerated trucks of all types and sizes. ‘This initiative is part of a



MoTCIT emphasised that only Omani nationals will be permitted to drive refrigerated trucks of all types and sizes

broader policy aimed at boosting local employment and is expected to significantly reshape the industry,’ it said in a statement. To ensure compliance with

this directive, land transport inspectors from the ministry will monitor and report any violations. Strict actions will be taken against those who fail to adhere to the new regulations.

The ministry is also encouraging all beneficiaries of direct and indirect services to report any violations they observe.

This decision aligns with the ministry’s authority as outlined in the Transport Law issued by Royal Decree (10/2016), its executive regulations, and Ministerial Decision No. (2022/235) issued by the Ministry of Labour.

Oman to boost FDI in conjunction with growth of knowledge-based economy



Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, with Dana Carmen Agarbicean, OBG’s Country Director for Oman, at the MoU signing.

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 15

Oxford Business Group (OBG) and Oman’s Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) have renewed their long-standing partnership through a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to collaborate on upcoming annual economic reports, starting with The Report: Oman 2024. This three-year partnership aims to provide an in-depth analysis of Oman’s business environment, focusing on key sectors and initiatives aligned with the national vision to create a competitive business hub underpinned by strong regulation and sustainability principles.

The ministry is committed to raising export levels, enhancing e-commerce, attracting foreign direct investments (FDI) and improving the ease of doing business, with a focus on the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, free zones at Salalah, Sohar and Al Mazyouna and the upcoming integrated economic zone in Al Dhahirah Governorate in partnership with Saudi Arabia. These efforts are part of a broader strategy to create a more attractive business ecosystem, encouraging both local and international investments in line with the sustainable development goals of Oman Vision 2040.

The collaboration will highlight Oman’s progress in leveraging artificial intelligence and advanced technologies to transition towards a knowledge-based economy. Additionally, diversification within the oil and gas sector, particularly the expansion into downstream industries and green hydrogen

capabilities, will be explored.

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, expressed the ministry’s commitment to fostering a dynamic and diversified economy. “The ministry’s renewed partnership with Oxford Business Group reflects our dedication to showcasing Oman’s outstanding business potential to the global investment community. By highlighting the exciting opportunities in manufacturing, mining, logistics, tourism, fisheries and more we aim to attract investment that will drive sustainable economic growth in communities right across Oman,” he stated.

Dana Carmen Agarbicean, OBG’s Country Director for Oman, underscored the significance of the partnership in providing valuable insights for international investors.

“This collaboration with MoCIIP is pivotal in delivering comprehensive analysis for The Report: Oman 2024. Our joint efforts will ensure that we convey the significant business opportunities available in Oman, particularly in emerging sectors such as manufacturing, tourism, mining, logistics and ICT” she commented. The Report: Oman 2024 will be the result of extensive research conducted by OBG’s team, featuring exclusive interviews with key stakeholders from government entities, chambers of commerce and leading corporations. The publication will provide a thorough examination of Oman’s economic landscape, focusing on priority sectors identified in Oman Vision 2040, such as industry and manufacturing, mining, fisheries, agriculture and health.

MoHT urges tourists to choose licensed tour companies

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JULY 15

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) is dedicated to ensuring the safety of all tourists who embark on these adventures.

To protect adventurers exploring the Sultanate of Oman, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) is advising tourists to avoid using unlicensed tour companies.

‘This initiative is all about guaranteeing that tourists have a safe and enjoyable time in Oman,’ a statement from MoHT said.

In 2021, MoHT rolled out decision No. 124/2021, which brought adventure trips under the umbrella of travel and tourism office activities.

This decision requires licensed companies to provide tourists with detailed trip information, potential risks and essential instructions.

They must also supply approved maps, ensure tourists are covered with comprehensive insurance against all adventure-related risks, and get approval from relevant authorities before organising trips in restricted areas.

MoHT is also working hand-in-hand with other government agencies to develop and enforce safety standards for adventure tourism. This involves training tour guides and other industry professionals, as well as creating emergency response plans.

To further ensure safety, the ministry is raising awareness among tourists by sharing safety tips on its website and social media channels.

According to the ministry, tourists coming to Oman for adventure should ensure that the tour operator is licensed and has a good safety record. ‘Tourists should be aware of their surroundings, and aware of potential hazards such as cliffs, rocks and water,’ the ministry stated.

It added that there is a need for appropriate gear and clothing with appropriate for the activity. It is advisable to prepare for the weather by checking the weather forecast before setting off and packing accordingly.



Oman has become a destination for thrill-seekers, offering a wide range of activities like hiking, camping, rock climbing and caving



جهاز الضرائب
TAX AUTHORITY



Announcement

The Tax Authority would like to draw the attention of taxpayers who are subject to Excise Tax and VAT to submit their returns for the third quarter of 2024, according to the forms prepared for this purpose through Tax Authority's Portal: www.taxoman.gov.om not later than **30 July 2024**. We hope that all taxpayers will abide and commit to the deadline of submitting.



 taxoman

 1020



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Defence
ENGINEERING SERVICES



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
11/2024	HVAC System Works- MAM	First and above - specialized in HVAC system	01/08/2024	02/09/2024	90/- R.O
13/2024	HVAC System Works- MAM	First and above - specialized in HVAC system	01/08/2024	02/09/2024	77/- R.O
15/2024	Building Works - MAM	Excellent	01/08/2024	09/09/2024	395/- R.O
17/2024	Replacement of Water Distribution Network - Izki	First & above - specialized in water distribution network	01/08/2024	02/09/2024	175/- R.O
18/2024	Building Works - MAM	First & above	01/08/2024	09/09/2024	380/- R.O
20/2024	Building Works - MAM	First & above	01/08/2024	02/09/2024	275/- R.O
21/2024	Building Works - BAF	Excellent	01/08/2024	09/09/2024	1500/- R.O
22/2024	Building Works - BAF	First & above	01/08/2024	09/09/2024	369/- R.O
23/2024	Building works - Bidbid	Excellent	01/08/2024	09/09/2024	1282/- R.O
24/2024	Electromechanical Work - (STP) DABA	First & above - specialized in Electromechanical work - STP	01/08/2024	02/09/2024	68/- R.O

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 - 1300 Hours).
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 - Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Labour (Updated Copy).
 - Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope of works and drawings.
 - Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as **SOFT COPY** (USB) in two separate files:
 - Financial (**bill 1&2 separated file from bill3**)
 - Technical files.
 - Confirmation of site visit.
 - All addendums and circulars.
 - List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 - List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 - Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 - Financial Statement for the last Three years.

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



THE HEAT WAVE EFFECT

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JULY 15

HEAT can affect a person’s memory, attention, and even reactions. For those having certain psychological conditions, these changes can increase the risk of developing dangerous symptoms or behaviour that are linked to aggression and violence.

A recent study published in *The Lancet Planetary Health* of September 2022 showed that extreme heat is associated with a rise in online hate speech.

Workers in the medical field and medical research say that high temperatures play an important role in the psyche and mentality of individuals, including hindering individuals’ concentration and attention.

Heat can also affect people’s moods, lead to increased

tension and a tendency toward violence, and hinder brain processes. High temperatures affect sleep quality.

Dr Hamed al Sinawi, a senior consultant psychiatrist, says: “There is new evidence linking the rise in temperature to an increase in aggression and criminal behaviour. I remember having a client in his forties who was traumatised during the hurricane that affected Oman in 2007 when his car drowned in the flooding. Since then, he has become extremely anxious and panicky when he sees heavy clouds stopping his family from leaving the house, and he will not relax until the clouds disappear.”

According to studies, people with underlying mental health conditions are at higher risk for death from increased heat and humidity by 25 per cent to 30 per cent

compared to those without such conditions.

Climate change may also affect early childhood development, while air pollution and higher temperatures increase the risk of stroke and dementia among older adults.

So, what can be done to reduce the psychological impact of climate change?

Globally, more strategies and action plans need to be implemented to address climate change and what can be done to prevent further damage to the ecosystem.

Funding for research on the psychological impact of climate change and what can be done to improve the psychological resilience of people and help them recover from the trauma they experience following extreme weather events.

It is imperative to design

culturally appropriate psycho-social interventions since people behave differently when facing atrocities.

Raising public awareness about climate change would encourage everyone to do their best to prevent further damage to the environment. Training volunteers to deliver psychological first aid would reduce the impact of weather conditions on those affected.

Negative effects of heat waves on mental health can be reduced through means, most notably ensuring the presence of air conditioning and proper ventilation and providing community counselling to keep the body cool for people at risk.

Increasing tree cover in cities, improving building standards, and strengthening mental health systems. It is also possible to exercise daily for at least 30 minutes.



Heat can affect people’s moods, lead to increased tension and tend towards violence hindering the brain processes

HEAT CAN AFFECT MEMORY, ATTENTION, AND REACTIONS

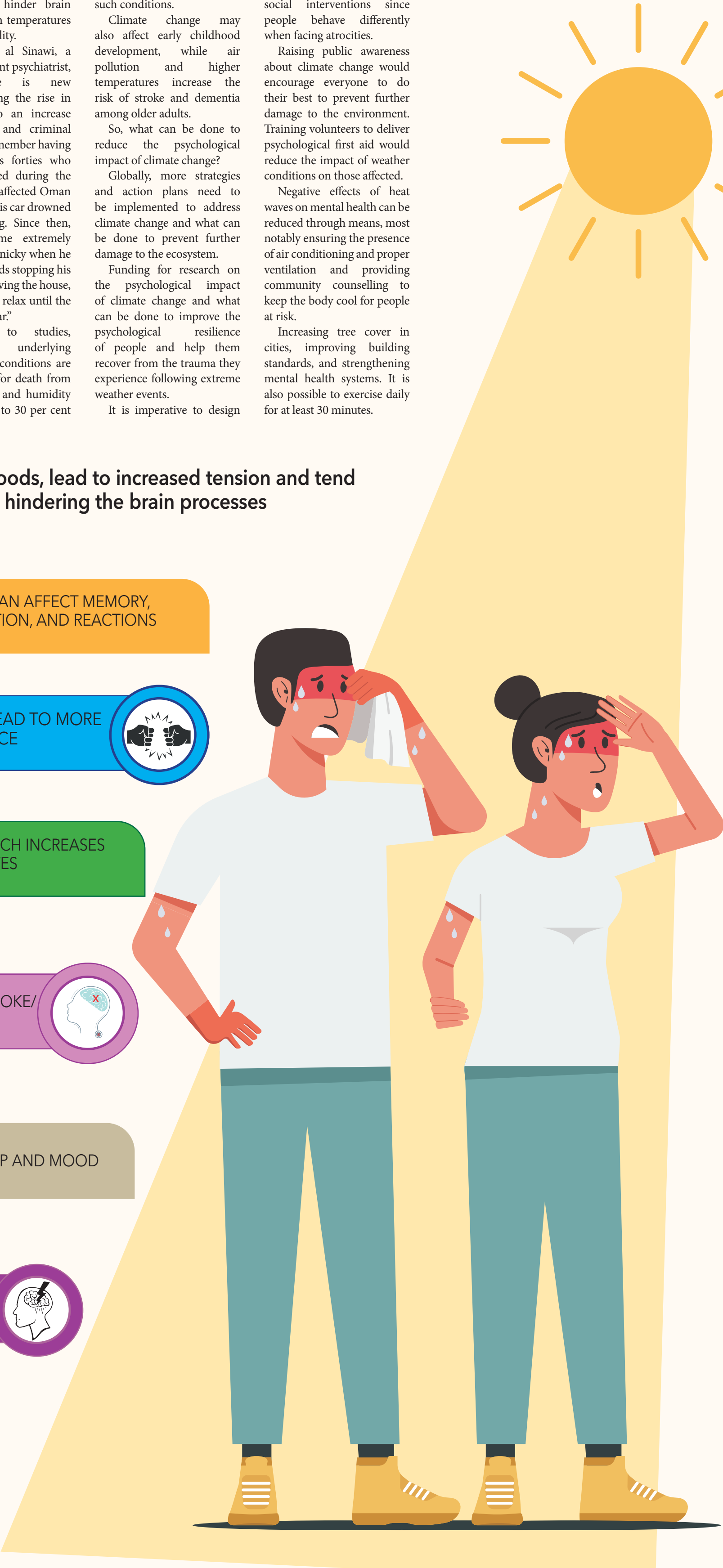
HOT WEATHER CAN LEAD TO MORE AGGRESSION, VIOLENCE

ONLINE HATE SPEECH INCREASES DURING HEAT WAVES

CLIMATE CHANGE INCREASES STROKE/ DEMENTIA RISK IN OLDER ADULTS

HEAT AFFECTS SLEEP AND MOOD

HEAT WORSENS MENTAL HEALTH CONDITIONS, INCREASING RISKY BEHAVIOURS





PDO celebrates graduation of 600 young Omanis

MUSCAT: Petroleum Development Oman (PDO) proudly marked the graduation of over 600 young Omanis from the 'Imdaad' programme at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. This initiative aims to create job and training opportunities for Omanis in both the oil and gas sectors and beyond.

The graduates completed a range of training programmes — technical and non-technical — designed to meet the skill requirements of PDO and its contractors, supporting government efforts to provide

employment for job-seekers. The training, lasting from 7 to 24 months, took place at various institutes and companies.

The programmes included the Lifting Operations Programme, Health, Safety and Environment Practitioners, Electrical Protection Engineering, Information Technology, among other specialisations.

Mohsin bin Hamad bin Saif al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, lauded PDO's efforts in training and qualifying Omani youth. He highlighted this achievement as



The training, lasting from 7 to 24 months, took place at various institutes and companies.

evidence of PDO's commitment to enhancing local content, especially in providing job opportunities through the 'Imdaad' programme.

Dr Aflah bin Said al Hadhrami, Director-General of PDO, emphasised that the national programme reflects the company's dedication to enhancing the skills and capabilities of Omani youth in the oil and gas sectors. Since its inception in 2011, 'Imdaad' has contributed significantly to creating thousands of job and training opportunities for Omanis. — ONA

MCBS awarded QS 5 Stars, joining the global elite

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 15

The Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS) was honoured with the prestigious QS '5 Stars' rating. This recognition places MCBS among the world's elite institutes of higher education, enhancing its reputation as a leader in the region's educational sector making MCBS stand out as the only Omani higher education institution to earn a comprehensive 5-star rating by QS

The award is the result of a rigorous and meticulous process of independent data collection and analysis by the QS Stars methodology. This thorough evaluation, which assesses universities globally across various categories, provides a reliable and comprehensive understanding of university strengths and areas for improvement, instilling confidence in the quality of education at MCBS and aiding prospective students in making informed decisions.

MCBS has excelled by achieving an overall rating of '5 Stars' as a result of evaluating its performance in academic areas related to the following categories: Teaching,



The award makes MCBS stand out as the only Omani higher education institution to earn a comprehensive 5-star rating by QS

Academic Development, Facilities, Employability, Internationalisation, Business Management Studies, Social Impact and Inclusiveness.

The QS states that "a university with a 5-star rating is considered world-class in a broad range of areas, enjoys a high reputation, and has cutting-edge facilities and internationally renowned research and teaching faculty."

Dr Muneer al Maskari, Executive Chairman of MCBS, commented: "This is an outstanding praise for MCBS. Receiving the '5 Stars' is a great honour, as it places MCBS among the top 150 of the world's excellent institutes of higher education. This recognition of the academic and professional standards comes as a result of the commitment of both

the management team and the faculty."

Dr Ashwin Fernandes, Regional Director, QS, said, "We congratulate MCBS on achieving the remarkable QS '5 Stars' rating. This accomplishment reflects MCBS's unparalleled commitment to providing high-quality education and promoting a favourable learning environment. MCBS's success sets a level for academic institutions and showcases its role in higher education."

Since its establishment in 1996, MCBS has been dedicated to upholding the highest standards in education, providing exceptional teachers, state-of-the-art facilities and enriching learning experiences for its students.

Workshop held to enhance air freight efficiency for fish and food products

SALALAH: The National Employment Programme, in partnership with various government and private institutions, has conducted a vital workshop aimed at improving the efficiency of air freight for fish and food products at Salalah Airport in Dhofar Governorate.

This initiative is part of the broader effort to implement executive plans by employment governance committees in the agricultural, fisheries, water resources, transportation and logistics sectors.

The workshop addressed several critical topics, starting with an in-depth analysis of the current state of air freight and food export.



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in a focused discussion on the logistics of shipping refrigerated fish from Oman via airports. The session included practical proposals to invigorate food and fish exports, interactive

discussions to identify challenges and potential solutions, and an emphasis on the support needed for this crucial sector.

The primary goal of the workshop was to foster consensus among the relevant stakeholders and enhance cooperation between air transport companies. This collaboration is expected to significantly improve the efficiency of air shipping for fish and boost Omani exports to global markets. This initiative represents an essential step in a long-term strategy to enhance infrastructure and develop logistics services at Salalah Airport, aligning with Oman Vision 2040. This vision aims to position Oman as a global logistics centre.

TURKISH TCG KINALIADA TO VISIT OMAN ON JULY 19

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 15

As part of the commemorations for the 100th anniversary of diplomatic relations between Türkiye and Japan, and the 134th anniversary of the Ertuğrul Frigate's sail to Japan, the Turkish Naval Forces' TCG Kinaliada (F-514) will embark on a significant port visit mission. This initiative aims to enhance the visibility of the Turkish Naval Forces, showcase national platforms and strengthen bilateral relations with the host countries.

The TCG Kinaliada (F-514) is scheduled to visit the following ports: Jeddah, Djibouti, Mogadishu, Male, Chittagong, Kuala Lumpur, Jakarta, Bangkok, Hong Kong, Busan,



A file picture of Turkish Naval Forces' TCG Kinaliada (F-514)

Kushimoto, Tokyo, Hiroshima, Manila, Singapore, Colombo, Mumbai, Muscat, Doha, Abu Dhabi, Karachi, Salalah, Djibouti and Aqaba.

During these port visits, the TCG Kinaliada (F-514) will engage in several activities. These include conducting joint exercises with the

naval forces of the host countries, organise ceremonies at Turkish Martyrs' Cemeteries in the visited countries and hold a special ceremony in Japan to commemorate the 134th anniversary of the Ertuğrul Frigate's sail to Japan.

In light of this mission, a press conference will be held onboard the TCG Kinaliada (F-514) at Port Sultan Qaboos on July 19, Friday, at 9:30 am. This briefing aims to inform the media about the 4.5-month mission of the TCG Kinaliada, which will navigate through the Red Sea, Gulf of Aden, Indian Ocean, Arabian Sea, Sea of Oman, and adjacent waters. This diplomatic mission underscores Türkiye's commitment to fostering international maritime cooperation and honouring its historic ties with Japan.



Sultanate of Oman The Supreme Judicial Council Tender Announcement

The Supreme Judicial Council announces its desire to Submit the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Vendor Grade	Tender Document Fee
17/2024	Construction of a first floor in the new Primary Court at Qurayyat, in addition to some maintenance work	25/07/2024	19/08/2024	Second, Third	RO 25/-

Where you can buy the more detailed tender documents electronically via the link below website:
(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Bidders must submit a letter of commitment to the bid, addressed to the Chairman of the Internal Tenders Committee of the Supreme Judicial Council, based on directives from the General Secretariat of the Tenders Council and the latest updates to the electronic bidding system. Based on Circular No. (1/2024) issued by the General Secretariat of the Tender Board.

- For inquiries and clarifications on the tender:**
Submit inquiries related to the project electronically through the website of the electronic tender system (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
- For inquiries and clarifications on the electronic bidding system:**
Submit inquiries regarding technical support for the electronic bidding system via e-mail and the phone number shown below:
Phone : +968 24402200
Email: etenderhd@ita.gov.om



Ministry of Health ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders:-

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of Tender Document	Closing Time/Day/Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
2663/2024/ MOH/ DGHSMU-7	Maintenance Works at Dibba Hospital in Musandam Governorate	24/July/2024	Before 10 am on Tuesday 20/August /2024	Construction & Maintenance Third & Fourth	R.O 25.000 Per set
2664/2024/ MOH/ DGHSMU-8	Supply and install of racking system for some facilities at Dibba Hospital in Musandam Governorate	24/July/2024	Before 10 am on Tuesday 20/August /2024	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25.000 Per set

- Tenders should be submitted **online** on the given website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> .
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.
- For any inquiries in regard to the tender, please contact through the information below:
(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)
Any Clarification, you may contact via
Telephone: 24402200
Email id etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om



■ SEEKING SURVIVAL IN WAR



A Palestinian youth carrying sacks of salvageable items walks past piles of waste, at the Al Maghazi Palestinian refugee camp. – AFP



A Palestinian woman reacts after the Israeli military bombardment of the UNRWA run Abu Araban school, in the Nuseirat refugee camp. – AFP

BRAZIL SLAMS ‘ENDLESS MASSACRE’ IN THE PALESTINIAN ENCLAVE

RIO DE JANEIRO: The government of Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva denounced Israeli strikes on southern Gaza, urging the world not to “remain silent in the face of this endless massacre.” “The most recent bombing in the Gaza Strip, which claimed the lives of hundreds of innocent people, is unacceptable,” read a statement from the presidency.

The health ministry in the Gaza Strip said at least 92 people were killed and 300 wounded in a Saturday strike on Al Mawasi, an Israeli-designated “safe zone” on the Mediterranean coast.

The civil defence agency said another 20 were killed in an Israeli strike on a makeshift mosque at Al Shati refugee camp in the territory’s north. 22 were killed in a Gaza school sheltering those displaced by the war, according to the civil defence agency.

“It is appalling that they continue to collectively punish the Palestinian people. Tens of thousands have already died in successive attacks since last year, many of them in delimited humanitarian zones that should be protected,” said the statement. “We, the political leaders of the democratic world, cannot remain silent in the face of this endless massacre.”

Brazil in May withdrew its ambassador from Israel over the conflict, ratcheting up tensions after he earlier accused the country’s government of genocide.

Israel reacted furiously, declaring the Brazilian leader persona non grata.

Meanwhile, the health ministry in Gaza said on Monday at least 38,664 people have been killed in the war between Israel and Palestinian groups. — AFP

Israel pummels Gaza strip

GAZA: Israel hammered the Gaza Strip from the air, sea and land on Monday as the war in the Palestinian territory showed no sign of abating.

Shells rained down on the neighbourhoods of Tal Al Hawa, Shaikh Ajlin and Al Sabra in Gaza City, correspondents reported, while eyewitnesses said the Israeli army had shelled the Al Mughraqa area and the northern outskirts of the Nuseirat refugee camp in central Gaza. Paramedics from the Palestinian Red Crescent said they had retrieved the bodies of five people, including three children, after Israeli air strikes in the Al Maghazi camp, also in the central Gaza Strip.

Meanwhile, eyewitnesses reported Israeli gunship fire east of Khan Yunis, in southern Gaza, and shelling and Apache helicopter attacks in western areas of the southernmost city of Rafah.

The Israeli military said in a statement that it was continuing its activity throughout the coastal territory, and said it had conducted raids in Rafah and central Gaza that killed “a number of” gunmen, as well as air strikes throughout the strip over the past day. It also said its naval forces had been firing at



Internally displaced children play in a burnt-out vehicle in the city of Deir Al Balah, in the central Gaza Strip. – AFP

targets in Gaza.

The relentless bombardments came as prospects dwindled for a truce and hostage release deal being secured any time soon.

Hamas, the Palestinian group that Israel has been fighting in Gaza for over nine months, said on Sunday it was withdrawing from ceasefire talks.

The decision followed an Israeli strike targeting the head of Hamas’s military wing, Mohammed Deif, which the health ministry in Gaza said killed 92 people.

Speaking after the strike on Al

Mawasi, a second senior official from the group cited Israeli “massacres” and its attitude to negotiations as a reason for suspending negotiations.

The war was sparked by October 7 attack on southern Israel, which resulted in the deaths of 1,195 people, based on Israeli figures. Israel responded with a military offensive that has killed at least 38,584 people in Gaza, mostly civilians, according to data provided by the Gaza health ministry.

The war and accompanying

siege have devastated the Palestinian territory, destroying much of its infrastructure, leaving the majority of its 2.4 million residents displaced and causing a dire shortage of food, medicines and other basic goods.

Among the devastated facilities have been multiple schools. On Sunday, Israeli forces struck a UN-run school in Nuseirat camp. The civil defence agency in Gaza said 22 people were killed in the strike, the fifth attack in just over a week to hit a school used as shelter by displaced Palestinians. — AFP

British foreign secretary reaffirms ceasefire call in Israel

TEL AVIV: Britain’s new Foreign Secretary David Lammy reaffirmed his call for a ceasefire in the Gaza war during a second day of talks with Israeli leaders on Monday.

Lammy, on his first Middle East trip since his Labour Party’s landslide win in the British election, had already called for a halt to hostilities in a meeting with Taimour Minister Benjamin Netanyahu on Sunday. He also met Palestinian Authority Taimour Minister Mohammed Mustafa with whom he pressed the case for reform to the authority, officials said.

“I hope ... that we see a ceasefire soon and we bring an alleviation to the suffering and the intolerable loss of life that we’re now seeing also in Gaza,” Lammy said during a meeting

with Israeli President Isaac Herzog on Monday, according to a statement released by Herzog’s office.

Lammy added that Palestinian group Hamas must release the captives seized in its October 7 attacks. He said he was “very conscious of the pain and anguish that many captives families are experiencing and the nation is experiencing”. Herzog said the more than 100 captives still in Gaza were the key issue for Israel.

The relentless bombardments came as prospects dwindled for a truce and captives release deal being secured any time soon.

A senior Hamas official said on Sunday that the group had halted negotiations with international mediators because of Israel’s recent attacks in Gaza and its attitude towards talks.



Palestinians gather to inspect a house hit in an Israeli strike, in Deir Al Balah. – Reuters

But according to the official, Haniyeh told international mediators Hamas was “ready to resume negotiations” when Israel’s government “demonstrates seriousness in reaching a ceasefire agreement and a prisoner exchange deal”.

Israel has not commented and Hamas said it was ready to return when Israel shows “seriousness in reaching a ceasefire agreement and a prisoner exchange deal”.

Lammy has also called for the speeding up of aid deliveries into Gaza. Going into the visit, he pointed to 680 tonnes of British aid that he said was waiting to enter the hunger-stricken and besieged territory. Last week, US President Joe Biden had suggested a deal might be close, saying that both sides had agreed to a framework. — AFP



In brief

■ TBILISI



GEORGIA PRESIDENT
URGES TO ANNUL
'FOREIGN INFLUENCE' LAW

Georgian President Salome Zurbishvili on Monday asked the country's top court to annul a controversial "foreign influence" law that has sparked mass protests and condemnation from the West. The law was adopted in May despite weeks of unprecedented street protests and warnings it would undermine Tbilisi's bid for EU membership.

The law forces groups receiving at least a fifth of their funding from abroad to register as "organisations pursuing the interests of a foreign power".

Zurbishvili filed a complaint to Georgia's constitutional court asking it "to suspend the law's enactment and to annul it definitively". — AFP

■ ISLAMABAD



PAKISTAN GOVT
TO SEEK BAN OF EX-PM
KHAN'S PARTY

Pakistan's government will seek to ban the political party of jailed ex-prime minister Imran Khan, the information minister said on Monday.

Information Minister Attaullah Tarar told reporters the government would now bring a case to ban PTI to the Supreme Court. "We will vigorously defend this case and spare no effort to contest it," he said.

Khan, 71, was banned from contesting the February elections, while PTI was sidelined. A PTI spokesman said in a statement that the bid to formally ban the party "is a sign of panic as they have realised the courts can't be threatened and put under pressure". — AFP

■ DUBAI



TANKER COMES
UNDER ATTACK OFF
YEMEN: UK AGENCIES

A tanker came under attack off Yemen by three small vessels and several missile strikes on Monday but continued its journey without reports of damage or crew injuries.

The ship was sailing southwest of the port city of Hodeidah, two of which had three people each on board, according to the United Kingdom Maritime Trade Operations (UKMTO). The third skiff was unmanned. The "unmanned small craft collided with the vessel twice and the 2 manned small craft fired at the vessel", UKMTO said.

The same ship later reported three missiles exploding in "close proximity," all of which failed to hit the vessel. — AFP

Biden and Trump seek calm as Republicans gather after shooting

MILWAUKEE: Donald Trump's Republican Party convenes on Monday hoping to chart his return to the White House after he survived an assassination attempt that prompted him and President Joe Biden, his Democratic rival, to call for national unity and calm.

The former president will announce at the convention this week his choice for a running mate, having cited as frontrunners Ohio US Senator J D Vance, Florida US Senator Marco Rubio and North Dakota Governor Doug Burgum, all of whom will speak at the gathering.

Trump held individual meetings with each of the three men late last week in what was effectively one last job interview, according to two sources who requested anonymity to disclose private conversations.

While the event in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, will be a festive affair to formally choose the party's presidential nominee, it occurs at a tense moment in US history on the road to the Novober 5 election rematch between Biden, 81, and Trump, 78.

Trump and Biden are locked in a close election rematch, according to most opinion polls. The shooting on Saturday whipsawed discussion around the presidential campaign, which had been focused on whether Biden should drop out following a halting June 27 debate performance.

House Speaker Mike Johnson, the country's highest-ranking Republican, said on Sunday that all Americans needed to tone down their rhetoric. He accused Biden's campaign of making



A state trooper car blocks the entrance to the event grounds to investigate into gunfire at a campaign rally of Republican presidential candidate and former US president Donald Trump in Butler, Pennsylvania. — Reuters

hyperbolic attacks on Trump.

The US Secret Service said on Monday it would participate fully in probes announced by President Joe Biden and members of Congress, after its agents failed to prevent a gunman from shooting and injuring former president Donald Trump over the weekend.

The FBI says it is investigating the incident on Saturday at a Trump rally in Pennsylvania as an assassination attempt. Biden said on Sunday he had ordered an independent review, and Republican lawmakers vowed swift investigations.

The US Secret Service said that it would participate fully in probes, after its agents failed to prevent a gunman from shooting and injuring former president Donlad Trump

In her first major statement since the shooting, which killed a rally attendee, Secret Service Director Kimberly Cheatle said

the agency was increasing security for Republican presidential candidate Trump and the Republican National Convention in Milwaukee, which kicks off on Monday.

"I am confident in the security plan our Secret Service RNC coordinator and our partners have put in place, which we have reviewed and strengthened in the wake of Saturday's shooting," Cheatle said in a statement. She said the agency has implemented changes to Trump's security detail since Saturday to ensure his protection during the convention and the remainder of the campaign. — Reuters

Rwanda votes as Kagame expected to extend rule

KIGALI: Millions of Rwandans were voting in presidential and parliamentary elections on Monday, with the African nation's leader Paul Kagame widely expected to cruise to victory and extend his iron-fisted rule for another five years.

Rwanda's leader since the end of the 1994 genocide and president since 2000, Kagame faces only two challengers after several prominent critics were barred from standing.

The lineup is a carbon copy of the last election in 2017, when Kagame obliterated his rivals with almost 99 per cent of the vote, and there is little doubt about the outcome this year.

Frank Habineza, leader of the Democratic Green Party, and independent Philippe Mpayimana were the only two candidates approved to run against Kagame out of eight applicants. With 65 per cent of the population aged under



Incumbent President of Rwanda and Rwandan Patriotic Front (RPF) presidential candidate Paul Kagame casts his ballot, in Kigali. — AFP

30, Kagame — who is running for a fourth term — is the only leader most Rwandans have ever known. — AFP

Ukraine says Russia's last patrol ship leaving Crimea

KYIV: Ukraine's navy said on Monday that Moscow's last naval patrol ship had left Russian-occupied Crimea, "most likely" to rebase elsewhere after Kyiv's concerted military campaign to attack the Black Sea peninsula as it battles Russian attacks.

Though it has no major warships at its disposal, Ukraine has used missiles and naval drones to inflict significant damage to the Russian Black Sea Fleet, which has long been headquartered in Sevastopol on the peninsula seized by Moscow in 2014.

Vice-Admiral Oleksiy Neizhpapa, Ukraine's navy chief, said earlier that this month that Russia had been forced to rebase nearly all its combat-ready warships from occupied Crimea.

"The last patrol ship of the Black Sea Fleet of the Russian Federation is bolting from our Crimea just now. Remember this day," Navy spokesman Dmytro Pletenchuk said on Facebook.

Asked to clarify whether this was a permanent move, Pletenchuk said: "Most likely, this is a transition between bases," adding that Moscow did not usually send ships to the open sea for no reason. He said the vessel's designation was Project 1135.

Kyiv has destroyed or damaged 27 Russian naval vessels, Neizhpapa said. In May, Ukrainian authorities said they had destroyed the last Russian



A Ukrainian artillery fires a 2S1 Gvozdika self-propelled howitzer towards Russian troops, in Donetsk region. — Reuters

warship armed with cruise missiles that was stationed on the peninsula. Moscow's setbacks in the Black Sea come at a time when Ukrainian ground troops are on the back foot across a sprawling front and in particular in the east.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Monday he aimed to have all the elements of a peace plan ready in November so that Kyiv

Moscow's setbacks in the Black Sea come at a time when Ukrainian ground troops are on the back foot across a sprawling front and in particular in the east

could convene a second, follow-up international summit on his vision for peace.

Ukraine held a first summit in Switzerland last month that was attended by representatives of 92 countries, but not Russia. Kyiv has said it could invite representatives from Russia to the next one. "I set a goal that in November we would have a fully ready plan," Zelensky told a news

conference.

Zelensky made the remark in Kyiv after returning from a visit to Washington last week for a summit of the Nato military alliance more than 28 months since Russia's full-scale attack.

Ukraine has said the follow-up summit would discuss a plan that is devised by dozens of countries divided into working groups.

— Reuters

New policies boost jobs amid Omanisation drive



THE government's Omanisation efforts are progressing earnestly, and the Ministry of Labour (MoL) has recently intensified a long-standing programme to create employment opportunities for citizens by training and equipping them with additional skills.

The new policies issued by the Ministry of Labour (MoL) are gathering steam, especially now that the job market is low. The visa ban on specific job roles for expatriate workers in the private sector and in-depth training programmes introduced to sharpen the skills of Omanis have had a positive impact on Omanisation.

Recently, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) announced that the profession of 'refrigerator driver' would be reserved exclusively for Omanis starting from September 2024.

The ministry emphasised that only Omani nationals would be permitted to drive refrigerated trucks of all types and sizes. This initiative is part of a broader policy aimed at boosting local employment and is expected to significantly reshape the industry.

The ministry is also spearheading multiple initiatives aimed at boosting job opportunities for

Omanis in the transport, logistics, communications and information technology sectors.

These efforts are part of a broader strategy to regulate the labour market and achieve the goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, announced that from January 2025 till end of 2027, specific jobs across various sectors will be exclusively allocated to Omanis. This move aims to enhance coordination with the Ministry of Labour and align with the government's strategic initiatives.

The ministry's long-term goal is to Omanise professional roles in these sectors through a series of policies and initiatives.

Key policies include the restriction of certain professions to Omanis, the establishment of minimum employment levels proportional to sector growth and the governance of work permits.

For the communications and information technology sector, the initiative aims for Omanisation percentages between 50 per cent and 100 per cent by 2026, focusing on quality jobs.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has spoken about the role of education and vocational training in supplying the labour market with skilled national

THE IN-DEPTH TRAINING PROGRAMMES INTRODUCED TO SHARPEN THE SKILLS OF OMANIS HAVE HAD A POSITIVE IMPACT ON OMANISATION

workers. In this context, he gave directives to devise an integrated executive plan to develop this sector in cooperation with international institutions.

He also called for the development of the technical education sector to help provide the labour market with technical expertise.

It is important to classify the unemployed workforce, consider the capabilities and qualifications of the youth and then align with Oman Vision 2040. This will help locate projects that could be activated as soon as possible so that adequate training can be given to Omani candidates to take the jobs as the projects take shape.

To support local job-seekers, the Ministry of Labour, in collaboration with the Social Protection Fund, announced a one-year extension of the job security allowance for all beneficiaries who have completed six months of entitlement.

According to the ministry, the reductions will be implemented as follows: a 30-per cent reduction in the total allowance during the first four months, a 50-per cent reduction in the second four months, and a 70-per cent reduction in the final four months.

Despite these reductions, the allowance will not fall below RO 115, the minimum amount specified in Article (119) of the Social Protection Law.

Austria pivots towards mountain bike tourism as Alps warm

KIYOKO METZLER

Mountain bikers hurried on a summer day to catch the last gondola up the mountain at one of Austria's top Alpine resorts, loading their bikes onto racks usually reserved for skis. Leogang-Saalbach is one of many Alpine resorts betting on warm weather activities, as rising temperatures and dwindling snow have pushed Austria to invest in alternatives to winter sports.

Bikers from all over Europe are flocking to the Salzburg region in western Austria to race down the steep slopes. "It's just fantastic. Such kind of mountains and slopes, we just don't have them" in Estonia, 51-year-old mountain biker Jonas Ritson said of his home nation before hitting a downhill trail.

Since the pandemic, the economic significance of summer seasons has "slightly outweighed" winter seasons in the country, said Oliver Fritz, senior economist at the Austrian Institute of Economic Research (WIFO).

Traditionally summer and winter have both been responsible for about half of the tourist industry's annual revenue.

But following the pandemic, the percentage has tipped toward summer, with the warm season in 2023 bringing in over half of the \$31.9 billion the industry generated, Fritz added.

Bikers have also become the second largest group of summer tourists in Austria after hikers, according to a survey, rising from 22 per cent before the pandemic to 27 per cent in 2023.

According to a joint report by the weather services of Austria, Germany and Switzerland, last year's winter season in the Alps was "characterised by exceptionally mild temperatures", marking the second-warmest winter in Austria since records began in 1851.Less snowy winters have threatened the existence of Austria's famed ski resorts.

"Climate change has caused tourist destinations to rethink and pick up on trends, such as mountain biking," said Martin Schnitzer, a sports economist at the University of Innsbruck.

Austria's government is aiming to meet the rising demand for legal mountain bike trails by formulating a plan to sign more contracts with landowners including forest owners, who currently restrict access. Austria's rules, formulated nearly 50 years ago, include a default ban on biking across land unless the owner gives explicit approval. — AFP



Zahir al Mahrooqi

The author is writer and author of 'The Road to Jerusalem'

ROGER WATERS CHAMPIONS THE PALESTINIAN CAUSE, ENDURING HARASSMENT FOR HIS CONVICTIONS. HIS ACTIONS ILLUSTRATE HOW ART CAN HOLD SIGNIFICANT VALUE AND FULFIL A HUMANITARIAN ROLE

Roger Waters: The unyielding voice of justice in art



ROGER WATERS

SHOULD art convey a message? This debate has long been contentious, and British music icon Roger Waters has reignited it through his outspoken support for the Palestinian cause.

Speaking on the tragedy of Rafah, Waters directly addressed Israelis, saying, "You Israelis, you are a failed state. It's over, pack your bags and leave. It is time to do the right thing."

He further urged them to return to Eastern Europe and America, leaving the land to its rightful owners, the Palestinians. This clip went viral, widely shared on platforms like WhatsApp. Waters has been an unwavering advocate for Palestine, persisting despite threats and accusations of anti-Semitism due to his stance. He remains steadfast, consistently criticising the Israeli occupation for its acts of genocide against Palestinians and efforts to displace Gaza's population to the Sinai desert.

Waters' support isn't new; it precedes (Toofan Al Aqsa) or (the Al Aqsa Flood) but has only strengthened since. In an interview with American journalist Glenn Greenwald, he condemned Israeli crimes against Palestinians and reiterated his support for their struggle, highlighting Hamas' resistance as justified under the Geneva Convention.

Waters dons the Palestinian keffiyeh at his concerts worldwide, much to Israeli ire, and has notably refused to perform in occupied territories.

When asked by *Haaretz* about this, he bluntly stated: "I do not care about them, nor do I care if they attend my concerts. I cannot change people; that's not my job. I've been asked to perform in Tel Aviv to persuade them, but my response remains a continual boycott, as I firmly believe in human freedom."

On whether his fame could prevent him from being silenced by pro-Israel lobbies, Waters answered himself in an interview with a German newspaper.

He detailed how these lobbies relentlessly target him for his pro-Palestinian views, trying to smear him with anti-Semitism — an allegation he strongly denies.

Waters states, "I was never anti-Semitic and never will be."

Yet, anyone supporting Palestinian rights faces such accusations, intended to silence voices like his.

Despite efforts to cancel his concerts, particularly in Germany last year, Waters remains resolute in his commitment to justice and equality: "They want to silence my voice for justice and equality which has been my mission since childhood. The apartheid regime in Israel will not stop me. Together, we will achieve liberation."

Western governments' official stances are often antagonistic towards the Arab world and the Palestinian issue.

This bias has become more evident post-Al Aqsa Flood, yet it doesn't reflect the sentiments of all Western individuals. Protests in American and Western universities show that many have been misled by official media but are beginning to see the truth.

Waters' actions affirm that there are those who support justice globally. Remember, he was among

600 musicians who signed a letter urging fellow artists to boycott Israel until Palestine is free.

They formed "Musicians for Palestine," advocating against performances in Israeli cultural institutions complicit in oppression and supporting Palestinian sovereignty and freedom. Contrastingly, some Arabs, including officials and media figures, support the Zionist entity against their religious and linguistic brothers.

Reflecting on 2011, Waters wrote in *The Guardian* about his initial exposure to the Palestinian plight through an academic boycott appeal. Invited to perform in Tel Aviv, Waters was persuaded by Palestinian activists who revealed Israeli government's violations. His UN-protected visit to Jerusalem and Bethlehem, witnessing the apartheid wall, solidified his resolve to support Palestinians and boycott Tel Aviv. His observations highlighted the severe impact of Israeli blockade on Gaza, invoking global support for Palestine through his poignant descriptions.

Roger Waters, now over 80, unwaveringly champions the Palestinian cause, enduring harassment for his convictions. His actions, more honourable than some Arab officials and public figures, illustrate how art can hold significant value and fulfil a humanitarian role. There is little difference between a meaningful song, a sincere word and a bullet in the fight for justice.

Waters' stance underscores that the Palestinian issue defines the line between right and wrong. One must choose to be free and just, despite sacrifices, or be subservient to falsehood, losing their integrity in the process.

**The original version of this article was published in the print edition of Oman Arabic newspaper on July 15.*

Translated by Badr al Dhafari

Where did the ‘wow factor’ go?

Remember the first time you travelled to a new country? And what about coming across new toys as a child? It was amazing to see the sand dunes of Oman as a child and to run across it with the wind blowing. It must have been early summer.

For the last few days, I have been asking friends when we began to lose the ‘wow factor’ in life.

The ‘wow factor’ is the surprise element we come across in life.



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

In advertising terms it is a promise of a new experience that is guaranteed by the use of a new product.

One friend pointed out that it could be an age factor. As we age we begin to lose the fascination and most importantly interest.

And I thought to myself and expressed, no wonder some people keep travelling in life. To see new sights and lights and sounds and flavours. And when you begin to miss the taste of your cuisine and mother tongue, we rediscover a newfound fondness for things we are used to.

So what about people who cannot travel wide to seek experiences due to reasons related to health or wealth?

Should people lead a boring life? Not quite so.

A whole lot of friends have retired. Some chose to relax and lead a quiet life, while others reinvented themselves. A totally different career were explored bringing a new interpretation to life. And for those who toiled away throughout their career, retirement has been a gift to enjoy bringing in relaxed moments of life.

So there must be a bit of a ‘wow factor’ there too.

So what do we do to even look for the ‘wow factor’?

LIFE IS NOT JUST MEANT TO EXIST BUT IT IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO FEED OUR MIND SOMETHING THAT MAKES US THINK OR STOP ON OUR PATH

We can even look at each day. Was there something that was impressive or memorable on this day?

Are we actually on a lookout for something new? Would a new makeover bring in the freshness of a ‘wow factor’? It is not just to impress others but to bring up the positivity within ourselves.

It seems it is the younger years when we have gone through the most number of wow moments. So is it the aging that takes away the spark in life?

No more surprises? Or could it be the overload of information which is a trait of this era?

An aunt chose to learn traditional art forms in her 70s and actually has gone on to perform. That must be the zest we are talking about it in the ‘wow factor’. Should we think of what others might say or follow our hearts and thoughts?

Life is not just meant to exist. It is an opportunity to feed our mind and brain something that makes us think or stop on our path. While others inspire us we can leave something for others’ imagination too.

A thought of creativity can only come from a fertile mind and that mind needs good seed to be sown. You want a garden and not just a land with weeds.

After all, it is this mind which is your true home. You cannot pop it with paint, colours or artwork. It needs good thoughts. And for this we need to read and meet people.

And here you want to be liked and accepted and appreciated. So this is one place where the choice is completely yours.

The most beautiful thing is self-acceptance and self-love which gives you the energy to love and respect others and their feelings.

Just like what the air hostesses say - first, you wear the oxygen mask and then help others, even if they are children.

PARIS WELCOMES OLYMPICS



The Photograph shows the Olympic Rings on the Eiffel Tower ahead of the traditional fireworks marking the annual Bastille Day in Paris. The torch relay ahead of the Paris Olympics reached the French capital for the first time, with organisers hoping to build enthusiasm for the Games. – AFP

The stark divides of the Korean Peninsula; A tale of one nation and two regimes

THE Korean Peninsula presents one of the starkest examples of how governance or differing political ideologies can shape the fate of a nation.

More than seven decades since the armistice that halted the Korean War, North and South Korea remain embodiments of contrasting socio-economic systems and human rights landscapes, each a reflection of their political ideologies and governance.

The aforementioned contrast is best exemplified by the diverging paths which they have followed, the resultant socio-economic status quo, and finally Human Rights practices.

Post-1953, the two Koreas embarked on divergent developmental paths underpinned by distinct political regimes. South Korea, under a capitalist democracy, rapidly industrialised and embraced a market-driven economy.

It transformed from a war-ravaged nation into one of the world’s leading economies, a phenomenon often referred to as the ‘Miracle on the Han River’.

This transformation was fuelled by policies that encouraged export-oriented industries, technological innovation, and foreign investment.

Today, South Korea boasts a GDP



Ahmed Al Mukhaini

The writer is a Muscat-based policy analyst and international interlocutor

SOUTH KOREA’S TECHNOLOGICAL PROWESS AND ECONOMIC RESOURCES COULD BE INSTRUMENTAL IN MODERNISING NORTH’S INFRASTRUCTURE AND AGRICULTURE, POTENTIALLY OPENING NEW MARKETS

per capita of approximately \$33,121 (World Bank, 2023), reflecting its high standard of living and robust democratic system.

In stark contrast, North Korea, under the authoritarian rule of the Kim dynasty, pursued stringent state control over all aspects of life, including a centrally planned economy. The regime’s focus on military-first policies (Songun) and its nuclear ambitions have come at a significant cost to economic development and the welfare of its people.

North Korea remains one of the most isolated and economically disadvantaged countries in the world, with estimates suggesting a GDP per capita as low as \$790 (UN estimates, 2020). Authoritarianism itself is not a bad tool if used wisely and benevolently. Singapore has been a case in point.

The socio-economic status quo in South Korea is characterised by technological advancement, high education standards, and a thriving middle class. The country ranks high in human development indices, and

its citizens enjoy a plethora of freedoms and economic opportunities.

Conversely, North Korea is marked by chronic food shortages, poor health conditions and an impoverished populace, the majority of whom are dependent on the state for their survival.

The economy is heavily militarised, diverting scarce resources from essential public services to sustain its expansive military ambitions.

The human rights contrast between the two Koreas could not be more pronounced. South Korea, despite challenges, respects the rule of law, freedom of speech, and political pluralism. Its citizens participate in free and fair elections, can access a free internet, and engage openly with the global community.

In North Korea, the regime maintains control through an extensive surveillance state, severe restrictions on movement, expression and access to information, and a brutal system of political repression. Human rights organisations consistently document egregious human rights abuses, including political prison camps, public executions

and forced labour.

As I conclude, this divide is a sombre reminder of the Korean War’s lasting legacy and the ongoing human cost of political ideology. As the world continues to engage with both Koreas, the stark differences in freedom, prosperity and human dignity offer critical insights into the power and consequences of governance.

However, the differences between North and South Korea, while profound, also present unique opportunities for complementarity and cooperation. Recognising that each system has developed capabilities that the other lacks, there is potential for economic and cultural exchanges that benefit both. South Korea’s technological prowess and economic resources could be instrumental in modernising North Korea’s infrastructure and agriculture, potentially opening new markets for South Korean goods and investments.

Furthermore, the reunification of Germany in 1990 provides a valuable lesson. While the contexts and conditions differ, Germany’s experience illustrates

the importance of gradual integration, economic adjustment support, and the healing of social divisions. For Korea, a gradual approach that initially focuses on economic cooperation and cultural exchanges might pave the way for deeper integration.

While the path to reconciliation and unification is fraught with challenges, the Korean Peninsula could greatly benefit from viewing its ideological divide as a bridge rather than a barrier. By fostering conditions for peaceful coexistence and mutual benefit, the prospects of a united Korea might eventually transform from a distant dream into a tangible reality, offering lessons of resilience and unity to the world.

In conclusion, the Korean Peninsula not only exemplifies the extremes of political ideology but also serves as a poignant case study of the human capacity to endure and evolve under varying degrees of freedom and repression. As such, it should remain a focal point in global efforts to understand and advocate for better human rights practices and economic policies worldwide.

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Oman U17 football team begin domestic camp

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 15

The Oman Under-17 football team started training on Saturday marking the second phase of their domestic preparatory camp. The initial camp was held earlier this month and the second phase commenced under the guidance of national coach Anwar al Habsi. This will continue until Wednesday in Muscat at the Royal Court Affairs Stadium. Oman U-17 team boys will take on Al Amerat U19 Club on Tuesday as part of the ongoing camp.

The warm-up match will serve as a good opportunity for the coaching staff to stand on the player's performance and will be very crucial to all the young players with valuable match experience and to apply their training instructions in a competitive environment.

Playing against Al Amerat Club will provide the team to test their strategies, improve their coordination and identify areas



needing improvement. Furthermore, the match will act as a practical assessment of the team's readiness. The purpose of the current internal camp is to shape the readiness of the players for the forthcoming assignment which is taking part in the 2025 AFC U17 Asian Cup Qualifiers. The

Sultanate of Oman team will aim for an outstanding show in the qualifiers to book a spot in the Asian finals and attend the Asian meet for the 11th time in history. Oman team will compete against Tajikistan, Guam and the hosts Singapore in Group J for the 2025 AFC U17 Asian Cup Qualifiers. The qualifiers will

take place from October 19 to 27 in Singapore. The ten group winners and five best second placed teams will advance to the finals accompanied by the hosts Saudi Arabia during April 3 to 20. The national team will meet the hosts Singapore in the opener of the qualifiers on October 23 before meeting Guam in a key match on October 25. Then, the national team boys will conclude their group matches with an essential game against Tajikistan who is ranked as the top seed team in the group. During the previous domestic camp, the team focused on enhancing their technical skills and fitness levels. In the current phase, the coaching staff has shifted their focus to the team's physical conditioning, technical abilities and tactical strategies. The players will undergo rigorous physical training to boost their stamina, strength, and overall fitness while also refining their strategic gameplay.

Al Harthy team outstanding in Sao Paulo

BRAZIL: Team WRT drivers Ahmad al Harthy, Maxime Martin and Valentino Rossi combined to perfectly execute an excellent strategy during round five of the FIA World Endurance Championship in Sao Paulo on Sunday, to claim a highly competitive top five finish. Marking a very welcome return to the LMGT3 class points with a fantastic performance from 12th on the grid, the No.46 BMW M4 entry impressed throughout the Rolex 6 Hours of Sao Paulo with all three team-mates shining beneath the hot Brazilian sun. Ending the encounter a mere 0.7 seconds shy of fourth place, Martin heavily pressuring the No.59 McLaren 720S during the final 10 minutes of action, the points for fifth in LMGT3 mean Al Harthy, Martin and Rossi depart South America an improved sixth in the provisional driver standings. Al Harthy took the start of the race and he made absolutely sensational progress from 12th on the grid during the opening hour, charging through into the top six with some expert driving to put the Team WRT entry into the thick of the action. Handing over the car to Martin at the opening pit-stop, he continued the terrific rise through the

order and moved into the podium placings to run third ahead of the next round of pit-stops where Al Harthy returned to the driving seat for his second stint. Holding seventh when he emerged from the pits, the Omani immediately got down to business and made his way back into the top six in quick order. Racing faultlessly, including some breath-taking four-wide action on the Tribunas Straight — which culminated with Al Harthy exquisitely taking the BMW to the head of the group — he rose as high as second before pitting late in the third hour. Martin got back into the driving seat and headed out of the pits in seventh, then climbing into the top five. Just under an hour later, he dived back into the pits to hand over the BMW to Rossi for his first miles of the race. Running in fifth early in hour five, Rossi traded position with the No.81 Corvette and with less than 90 minutes of the encounter remaining he was third as the next round of stops started. The Italian pitted and re-emerged in eighth with 75 minutes left on the clock and rose again to third as the different strategies played out.



Omani racer Ahmad al Harthy

'FATINA' WINS SHEIKH ZAYED CUP RACE IN SPAIN

The mare 'Fatina', owned by Royal Cavalry, won first place on Sunday, in the Sheikh Zayed bin Sultan Al Nahyan Cup race for purebred Arabian horses over a distance of 1,600 metres, which was held at the Donostia-San Sebastian racecourse in the Spanish capital, Madrid. 'Fatina' was led by jockey Michael Forrest and supervised by Frederic Sanchez.



Argentina defeat Colombia to win 16th Copa America

MIAMI: Lautaro Martinez scored an extra-time winner as Argentina beat Colombia 1-0 to win a record 16th Copa America title at Hard Rock Stadium on Sunday.

A game of few chances, which had been marred by security and crowd issues, forcing a 82-minute delay, was decided by a quality finish from substitute Martinez — who finished the tournament's top scorer with five goals.

The win was the third straight major tournament title for Argentine following their 2021 Copa victory and their triumph in the 2022 World Cup in Qatar.

There were tears before the celebrations though with Argentina captain Lionel Messi going off injured in the 66th minute watching the rest of the game distraught on the bench, while there was an emotional farewell for Angel Di Maria in his final game for the national team.

For Colombia, whose only title came in the 2001 Copa America and who were unbeaten in 28 games, it was a disappointing night when the little seemed to work for Nestor Lorenzo's team.

There was chaos around entry to the stadium for fans, with organisers blaming supporters for trying to enter without tickets while fans blamed the lack of an efficient entry system to the venue.

The scenes were alarming with some fans needing medical attention for heat exhaustion but after the decision to suddenly throw open the gates, with no checks on those entering, the situation was largely resolved and the game went ahead.



Colombia's Jhon Corboba hit the bottom of the post with a speculative shot in the seventh minute but neither side were able to find their flow in the early stages.

Di Maria found Messi in the 20th minute with a low ball into the box and Messi's left-foot shot was saved by Colombia keeper Camilo Vargas.

Colombia had looked the more lively in the opening period and they went close in the 33rd minute when Jefferson Lerma tried his luck from 25 yards out and his low drive forced Emiliano Martinez into a diving save.

There was concern for Messi in the 36th minute when he dribbled to the byline but was halted by a sliding challenge from Santiago Arias which was ruled fair left the Argentine captain needing treatment.

Messi, who now plays his club football in Miami, then curled a free-kick in from the left flank but Nicolas Tagliafico's header was just off target.

It had been a disappointing first half and it didn't improve much after the break, when the fans had at least received some entertainment from Colombian singer Shakira.

Argentina failed to deal with a James Rodriguez corner and the ball looped to Davinson Sanchez but he was unable to keep down his header which floated over the bar.

There was finally some of the expected quality when Di Maria produced one of his trademark runs in from the left and forced Vargas into action, the Colombia keeper turning the ball wide of the post.

Then came a major blow for Argentine hopes when Messi went down, without contact, as he ran in midfield, and clearly in pain he went off to be replaced by Nicolas Gonzalez in the 66th minute.

It was too much for Messi, in what may have been his last major tournament, as he sat in tears on the bench, unable to hold back his emotions.

The Argentine fans thought they had grabbed a winner in the 75th minute when Tagliafico found Gonzalez in the box, who beat Vargas with a low drive but the effort was ruled out for offside. — AFP



UEFA
EURO2024
GERMANY



Spain's Alvaro Morata lifts the trophy with teammates. – Reuters

Euro is beginning for new generation: Spain

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BERLIN: Spain conquered Europe for a record fourth time on Sunday as they beat England to win Euro 2024 and want this historic night to be the beginning of a new period of dominance.

Led by young stars Lamine Yamal and Nico Williams, 17 and 22 respectively, many in Luis de la Fuente's superb side will hit their prime in the years ahead.

Between 2008 and 2012 Spain dominated international football, winning the Euros in those years and the 2010 World Cup in the middle.

A fallow period followed with Spain falling badly short in most competitions until reaching the semi-finals of Euro 2020.

It was a positive sign but a last 16 defeat by Morocco at the 2022 World Cup spelled the end of Luis Enrique's reign and the start of what was to come.

No longer dependent on dominating possession, Luis de la Fuente's Spain play to a wide variety of strengths.

Their elation in Germany comes after a troubled period in which the Spanish football federation became a global laughing stock.

After their brilliant women's team won the World Cup in Australia last August, disgraced former president Luis Rubiales sparked worldwide controversy by forcibly kissing player Jenni Hermoso.

The man who appointed De la Fuente as Luis Enrique's replacement eventually stepped down from his post three weeks later under heavy pressure from the government and the women's players, who went on strike.

De la Fuente came close to the brink himself after applauding a fiery Rubiales speech initially refusing to resign, but apologised for it later, saying he was under "psychological stress" in the situation.

The coach had also come under heavy



Spain's Lamine Yamal and Nico Williams celebrate after winning. – Reuters



Dani Carvajal holds the trophy. – AFP



Oyarzabal celebrates with Remiro. – Reuters

scrutiny after a shock defeat by Scotland in Euros qualifying in March 2023, but steadied the ship by winning the Nations League three months later, confirming Spain were on the right track, at least on the field.

With the team no longer dependent on stars from Real Madrid and Barcelona, but instead a real mix including a strong Basque

contingent from Athletic Bilbao and Real Sociedad, Spain believed in themselves and their plan, even if others viewed them as lacking players to compete with the likes of France and England for the trophy.

They beat both, as well as hosts Germany and Euro 2020 winners Italy — the other four of Europe's 'big five'. — AFP



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SOHAR Port & Freezone advances circular economy with new facility

BUSINESS REPORTER
SUHAR, JULY 15

SOHAR Port and Freezone recently celebrated the ground-breaking of Elite Hazardous Waste Management Solution (FZC) LLC, a project poised to revolutionise industrial waste recycling, treatment, and disposal in Oman.

Strategically located within the SOHAR Freezone, this initiative underscores a steadfast commitment to sustainable development and the circular economy, enhancing SOHAR's reputation as a hub for innovative solutions.

The ceremony, graced by Shaikh Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North, saw attendance from representatives of Elite Hazardous Waste Management Solution (FZC) LLC, numerous partners, and the executive management team of SOHAR Port and Freezone.

Spanning 10,000 square metres and involving a RO 1.3 million (\$3.5 million) investment, the new facility will employ advanced, eco-friendly technology to reduce carbon emissions. It will feature cutting-edge pollution control equipment to safely treat



SOHAR Port and Freezone and Elite Hazardous Waste Management Solution (FZC) LLC officials ground-break the new facility.

industrial waste, including oil sludge, and rubber.

Key outputs will include heavy oil for slow-moving machinery and low-contamination carbon dust for use in cement manufacturing or road construction. The facility's initial capacity of 40 tonnes per day is expected to double to 80 tonnes per day within a year.

Shiv Sood, Co-owner of Elite Hazardous Waste Management Solution (FZC) LLC, remarked, "Partnering with SOHAR Freezone aligns with our dedication to advancing

sustainable practices and pioneering the circular economy.

This milestone highlights our leadership in innovative waste management and our shared vision for a future where SOHAR Freezone continues to drive environmental stewardship and economic growth."

Omar al Mahrizi, CEO of SOHAR Freezone and DCEO of SOHAR Port, added, "This new facility is a pivotal step in promoting the circular economy. By integrating advanced technology and adhering to stringent environmental

standards, we enhance our waste management capabilities while contributing to Oman Vision 2040's circular economy objectives."

The ground-breaking of Elite's Hazardous Waste facility signifies a significant step in their sustainability journey, marking the seventh circular economy project at SOHAR Port & Freezone. This diversification into various fields, including industrial and marine waste management, solidifies SOHAR Freezone as a premier choice for industries committed to the circular economy.

Construction of Ghubrah-3 desalination project kicks off

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, JULY 15

Douglas OHI, an Omani contracting firm, has embarked on the construction of temporary office facilities and essential utility infrastructure, marking the initial steps towards the realisation of the Ghubrah-3 Desalination Plant.

This project, designed and executed by GS Inima, holds profound significance as a lifeline for Muscat's 2.5 million residents. With a planned capacity to produce 300,000 cubic metres of water per day, expandable to 315,000 cubic meters during peak demand, the Ghubrah 3 plant stands as a cornerstone in meeting the governorate's pressing water needs. Aaron Hennessy, Group Managing Director of

Douglas OHI, emphasised the company's extensive track record in delivering successful projects within the Power and Water sectors. He expressed confidence in their partnership with GS Inima, the EPC contractor, affirming, "Our team is fully committed to ensuring the successful execution of this project."

The construction activities marks a milestone in the journey towards completing Oman's largest desalination plant, estimated to cost \$325 million. Expected to commence operations in the first quarter of 2027, the plant will occupy 70,400 m2 of land and include a 45,000 cubic metre potable water reservoir, bolstering Oman's water security and fostering sustainable infrastructure development.



Ghubrah-3 will bolster Oman's water security.

Sewerage network to cover 79% of Oman by 2040

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, JULY 15

Nama Dhofar Services, in collaboration with the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), organised a forum here on July 14, 2024 yesterday on the theme, "Maximising the Use of Treated Water for Sustainable Development."

Participants discussed various topics, including the regulation of the water and sewage sector in Oman, the use of treated sewage water in agriculture, Octal's initiative in using treated water, and the importance of treated water products.

During the forum, chaired by Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, Nama Dhofar Services highlighted that sewage treatment services are provided through nine treatment plants with a total capacity of 60,000 cubic metres per day.

The treated sewage water is triple-treated at the main treatment plant in Raysut, Salalah, adhering to local and international standards. The sewage service covers several wilayats in Dhofar,

with the sewage network in Salalah city spanning over 1,000 kilometres.

The company aims to cover 95% of Salalah's sewage network by 2025. Nama Dhofar Services explained that the treated sewage water is disinfected with ozone, which is one of the most effective disinfection methods, eliminating germs, viruses, and parasites without side effects.

Ozone treatment improves water quality and removes unpleasant odors by breaking down organic pollutants and harmful chemicals.

The treated water is used to create an injection well network to pump treated water underground, protecting groundwater reservoirs from saline seawater intrusion.

The project includes 48 injection wells along the coast to create a freshwater barrier, preventing seawater from contaminating the groundwater.

Additionally, treated water can be used for cooling machinery, industrial processes, and irrigation of green spaces and agricultural fields. During the forum, Nama Dhofar Services signed three agreements



Treated effluent usage targeted to rise to 71% by 2040.

with Octal, Salalah Port, and the Oman National Engineering and Investment Company to utilise treated water services.

Dr Ahmed bin Salem al Busaidy from Sultan Qaboos University presented a paper titled "The Use of Treated Sewage Water: Opportunities and Challenges." Said bin Salem al Kathiri, General Manager of Customer Services at Nama Services Dhofar, emphasised the importance of treated water in reducing the

depletion of potable water and preserving groundwater reserves.

The company offers competitive prices and technical facilities for entities interested in using treated water as an economical and environmental alternative for industrial and civil purposes and for irrigating green areas.

Eng Mohammed bin Khalfan al Alawi of APSR discussed the regulation of the water and sewage sector in Oman. He stated that the coverage of the government water

THE TREATED SEWAGE WATER IS TRIPLE-TREATED AT THE MAIN TREATMENT PLANT IN RAYSUT, SALALAH, ADHERING TO LOCAL AND INTERNATIONAL STANDARDS

network in Oman stands at 73 percent, with a target to increase this to 96 per cent by 2040.

The coverage of the sewage network is currently 34 per cent, with a goal to increase it to 79 per cent by 2040. The usage of treated water is targeted to rise to 71 per cent from the current 50 per cent.

Reviewing the regulatory initiatives of the Authority, he explained that the cost control mechanism for operating companies (2022-2024) aims to reduce overall costs without affecting the expansion of networks, projects and service quality.

This includes reviewing capital and operational costs for operating companies, determining returns on capital investments, and incorporating a "loss reduction" indicator in drinking water

networks.

The water loss management project aims to identify technical and commercial losses in drinking water networks, understand and account for all financial revenues, and establish appropriate governance methodologies and performance indicators according to best global practices.

Ali bin Salem al Maashani, Head of Marketing and Events at Nama Dhofar Services, presented a paper on the importance of treated water products. He highlighted that water scarcity is one of the major future challenges worldwide, with an annual water deficit of around 12 million cubic meters.

Treated water is a crucial alternative for industrial and agricultural uses.

He pointed out that Salalah relies on rainfall during the khareef season as the main source for replenishing freshwater groundwater reserves.

Treated sewage water, undergoing biological, chemical, and ozone disinfection processes, can be a strategic alternative for addressing water shortages in agriculture and industry.

Al Mouj Muscat and MoHERI announce eleventh edition of Science Café

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Muscat, in collaboration with the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation (MoHERI), represented by Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Centre (Mawarid), has proudly hosted the eleventh edition of the Science Café.

Building on the successes of previous instalments, this initiative aims to enhance scientific literacy and fostering discussions on critical issues such as genetic resources, biodiversity, and the impact of carbon sequestration on global warming.

This latest edition of the Science Café, held at Al Mouj Muscat, welcomed more than 60 attendees.

It was moderated by Dr Mutassim al Maamari and featured distinguished speakers Dr Maryam bint Mohammed al Busaidiyah, head of the National Programme for Carbon Sequestration, and Sara bint Zaher

al Affaniyah, Manager of Farm Planning at Nakheel Oman. Dr Maryam provided an insightful introduction and a comprehensive review of the government's carbon sequestration efforts.

Following her presentation, Sara al Affani discussed the impact of carbon sequestration on the agricultural sector.

The event emphasised the crucial role of genetic resources, particularly in aquatic ecosystems and forests, in carbon sequestration and combating global warming.

The panel highlighted that about 45 per cent of CO2 emissions from human activities remain in the atmosphere, significantly contributing to global warming.

They also engaged with attendees, addressing a range of questions and fostering an informative and dynamic discussion.

Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said, "Al



Mouj Muscat's commitment to promoting scientific discussions and fostering local talent through platforms such as the Science Café reinforces our mission to maintain strong corporate responsibility.

Our collaboration with MoHERI allows us to take a major step in supporting Oman's Vision 2040 by contributing to the

growth of local professionals and of scientific industries."

Dr Saif bin Abdullah al Haddabi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation for Research and Innovation, said, "Our collaboration with Al Mouj Muscat is instrumental in fostering a robust ecosystem for

scientific research and innovation in Oman.

"This partnership enhances opportunities for joint initiatives and supports the development of a knowledge-driven community.

"By committing to advancing educational cooperation and cultivating local talent, we advance our vision for a robust economy."

National Finance partners with leading brands to offer seamless financing



MUSCAT: Committed to being a trusted Partner for Growth to all, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman's leading finance company, has proudly partnered with renowned retail brands ARINA Home, Danube Home, Abraj Muscat Electronics and ALMA Kitchens to offer Consumer Durables Finance (CDF) on a wide range of products including furniture finance, electronics, home appliances finance and various equipment finance.

These partnerships aim to empower customers with convenient and flexible financing options, enabling them to realise their lifestyle aspirations.

Enhancing accessibility to high-quality products, National Finance enables customers to procure stylish home décor and furnishings at ARINA Home and Danube Home to transform their living spaces; while at Abraj Muscat Electronics, customers can purchase electronics, household appliances, central air conditioners, Turkish interior and exterior doors, and natural marble.

ALMA Kitchens extends the opportunity to manifest dream kitchens.

Commenting on these collaborations, Tariq bin Sulaiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer, National Finance, said, "It is our endeavour at National Finance to bring ease and financial flexibility to our valued customers, so that they may enjoy enhanced accessibility to a myriad of durable, stylish and on-trend lifestyle products.

We understand the ever-evolving needs of our customers, and through our Consumer Durables Finance offering, we aim to alleviate any financial constraints they may encounter during their purchases."



NBO and Landmark Group join hands to double shopping delight

MUSCAT: Marking a significant step towards enhancing customer experiences, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) has announced a new partnership with Landmark Group, enabling its customers to convert their NBO Rewards Programme points into Shukrans.

This collaboration allows customers to redeem their rewards across a vast selection of 25 Landmark Group brands, reflecting NBO's commitment to providing its customers with enhanced value and a broader range of reward options.

Maha al Raisi, Assistant General Manager and Head of Retail Products at NBO, said: "The National Bank of Oman is thrilled to partner with Landmark Group to bring our customers even more value through the NBO Rewards Programme. By converting their NBO Rewards into Shukrans, our customers can enjoy a wide range of shopping options across various leading brands, making their rewards more versatile and valuable.

"This collaboration marks NBO as the first bank in Oman to offer such a feature. We encourage all our customers to take advantage of this opportunity by logging into their NBO App and converting their rewards today. This partnership is a testament to our commitment to enhancing customer satisfaction and delivering increased delight in reward redemption. We are confident that our customers will enjoy this exciting new way to shop."

Shukran, the largest and most successful retail loyalty programme in the Middle East, offers a highly rewarding shopping experience. With Shukrans, customers can shop at a wide range of brands, including Centrepont, Lifestyle, Babyshop, Shoe Mart, Max, Home Centre and E-max.

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the flagship financial institution in the Sultanate of Oman, announced its preliminary unaudited results for the six months ended June 30, 2024.

The Bank posted a net profit of RO 112.12 million for the period compared to RO 104.32 million reported during the same period in 2023, an increase of 7.5 per cent.

The key highlights of the results for the period are as follows:

- 1) Net interest income from conventional banking and net income from Islamic financing stood at RO 190.63 million for the six months period ended June 30, 2024 compared to RO 184.71 million for the same period in 2023, an increase of 3.2 per cent.
- 2) Non-interest income



was RO 75.27 million for the six months period ended June 30, 2024 as compared to RO 66.48 million for the same period in 2023, an increase of 13.2 per cent.

This increase was due to overall improvement in various business lines and volume increase.

3) Operating expenses for the six months period ended June 30, 2024 was RO 102.13 million as compared to RO 97.44 million for the same period in 2023, an increase of 4.8 per cent.

4) Net Impairment for credit and other losses for the six

months period ended June 30, 2024 was RO 29.96 million as against RO 30.11 million for the same period in 2023.

5) Net Loans and advances including Islamic financing receivables increased by 3.3 per cent to RO 10,209 million as against RO 9,880 million as at June 30, 2023.

6) Customer deposits including Islamic customer deposits increased by 5.3 per cent to RO 9,563 million as against RO 9,084 million as at June 30, 2023.

The full results for the six months period ended June 30, 2024 along with the complete set of unaudited financial statements will be released following the approval of the Board of Directors of the Bank at its meeting scheduled later during July 2024.

MHD Automobiles announces exclusive summer offers on Jeep, Dodge and RAM vehicles

MUSCAT: MHD Automobiles, the esteemed distributor of iconic Stellantis brands including Jeep, RAM, Dodge and Alfa Romeo, is thrilled to unveil its exclusive summer offers. This limited-time promotion provides customers with exceptional benefits on a wide range of vehicles, making it the perfect season to drive home in a new car.

Exciting summer offers: MHD Automobiles' summer offers include a variety of incentives designed to deliver outstanding value to customers. The offers vary by model and include:

Free service up to 5 years or 100,000 kms (whichever comes first): The Jeep Wrangler and Dodge Charger are eligible for 3 years or 60,000 kms free service, and the Jeep Grand Cherokee, Grand Wagoneer, Dodge Durango, and the RAM 1500 Range are eligible for 5 years or 100,000 kms free service.

5 years or 100,000 kms warranty: All models come with

5 years or 100,000 kilometres warranty, whichever comes first.

5 years or 100,000 kms roadside assistance: All models will be provided with roadside assistance for 5 years or 100,000 kms, whichever comes first.

Free first year insurance and registration: All models will be provided with free first year insurance for Oman and the UAE and first year registration.

Special trade-in bonus up to RO 500: Customers can also benefit from a trade-in bonus of up to RO 500, based on the evaluation of their current vehicle by the MHD used car team.

Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO, MHD Automobiles, said, "We are delighted to offer our customers these exceptional summer deals."

"At MHD Automobiles, we are committed to delivering unparalleled value and service excellence. These offers reflect our dedication to ensuring that our customers enjoy the best



ownership experience possible with our iconic Jeep, Dodge and RAM vehicles. There has never been a better time to join the MHD family and drive home in a vehicle that stands for quality, performance and reliability."

These unparalleled offers ensure that customers can enjoy peace of mind and significant savings with their new vehicle purchase.

The comprehensive service and warranty packages provide long-



term value and reliability, while the free insurance and registration for the first year reduce the initial cost of ownership. Additionally, the trade-in bonus makes upgrading to a new vehicle more accessible than ever.

CBO issues
RO 31.15m
worth of
treasury bills

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has announced that the total value of government treasury bills allocated for this week amounts to RO 31.15 million.

In a statement, the bank detailed that bills worth RO 15 million were allocated for a maturity period of 28 days.

These bills were issued at an average acceptable price of RO 99.650, with the lowest acceptable price also at RO 99.650 per 100.

The average discount rate for these bills is 4.56250 per cent, yielding an average return of 4.57852 per cent. For the 91-day maturity period, bills valued at RO 16.15 million were allocated.

These were issued at an average acceptable price of RO 98.732, with the lowest acceptable price being RO 98.730 per RO 100. The average discount rate for these bills stands at 5.08402 per cent, providing an average return of 5.14929 per cent. — ONA

National forum spotlights institutional innovation and change management

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JULY 15

The third edition of the 'National System for Institutional Innovation and Change Management', a key forum organised by the Ministry of Labour, began here yesterday, July 15, 2024, under the auspices of the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, Ahmed bin Saleh al Rashdi.

Speaking to the press, the Under-Secretary underscored the significance of the forum, saying: "There is no doubt that institutional innovation and change management are very important, as they are independent fields with many rules that everyone should know in their application."

He added: "Change management is highly important; understanding those involved in change and the principles of change is crucial. We truly thank the Ministry of Labour for its attention to this aspect and we also thank everyone who participated in this forum for its success,



Presentations during the national forum focused on the need to drive institutional innovation in government departments.

including researchers, supporters, and participants."

Mohammed al Kalbani, Director General of Development and Quality Assurance at the Ministry of Labour, emphasised the importance of the forum which aligns with Oman Vision 2040 by promoting institutional innovation in government units.

He pointed out that the outcomes of the previous edition of the forum were implemented

by over ten government and private entities, benefiting more than 48 government units and delivering key messages in leadership, planning, institutional change, and human resource system enhancement.

Furthermore, Ministry officials unveiled the launch of an online platform for administrative research.

Speaking to the press, Abdulrahman al Busaidy,

to apply their research in government work environments to solve institutional challenges." Al Busaidy added: "Additionally, it will enable all government entities to access a wide range of research, studies, and best practices applied in scientific fields from the private and government sectors.

Examples of these practices include change management, improving performance governance in institutions in general, and enhancing institutional performance."

The forum also witnessed of signing of multiple cooperation agreements with various public and private sector entities, including an agreement with Petroleum Development Oman for managing and monitoring development programmes in institutional innovation, an agreement with Weatherford for cooperation and knowledge transfer for effective change and internal auditing of government units, and an agreement with Marsh Oman for the design of a comprehensive risk management framework for government units.

44.01's \$37m Series A funding: A leap forward in global CO2 mineralisation

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, JULY 15

Oman's award-winning climate tech startup, 44.01, has successfully completed a \$37 million Series A funding round, marking a significant milestone in the fight against climate change. Internationally, the funding round was led by Equinor Ventures with Shorooq Partners in the UAE.

Innovation Development Oman (IDO) is among a number of Omani investors. Other investors include (in alphabetical order) Air Liquide Venture Capital (ALIAD), Amazon's Climate Pledge Fund, Climate Investment, Salica Oryx Fund, Siemens Financial Services and Sumitomo Corporation.

Existing investors including Breakthrough Energy Ventures have also recommitted to 44.01's technology by participating in the round.

44.01's technology, which has been piloted in Oman and the UAE, leverages the natural mineralisation process to permanently eliminate carbon dioxide (CO2). The startup's recent funding will be instrumental in refining this technology, developing commercial-scale projects, and expanding its reach internationally.

Talal Hasan, Founder and CEO of 44.01, expressed gratitude for the investors' commitment and highlighted the technology's potential to protect and repair the climate.

In an exclusive interview with the *Observer*, Charlie Booth, Head of External Relations at 44.01, elaborated on the specific advancements and refinements that the new funding will enable.

He said that the \$37 million Series A funding will enable 44.01 to increase the efficiency of its technology and reduce costs, ensuring it can be deployed globally. Advancements are expected in areas like borehole drilling, water efficiency, and material selection, with several exciting projects in the pipeline.

The pilot projects in Oman and the UAE have been pivotal in demonstrating the technology's effectiveness. "Our initial pilot in Oman was the first time anyone had ever mineralised CO2 in peridotite," Booth noted.



44.01's pilot in the UAE emirate of Fujairah. Image for illustration only.

In the UAE, 44.01 became the first company to use seawater for successful CO2 mineralisation.

These projects have provided valuable insights that will inform the startup's future international expansion efforts.

The diverse group of investors backing 44.01 brings a wealth of expertise in climate investment and geological carbon storage, which the company plans to leverage to enhance its technology and commercialisation strategies. These investors have developed world-leading carbon storage projects and climate technologies, providing valuable knowledge to help 44.01 scale its technology quickly.

Rasha Sulaiman, Acting CEO of IDO, said "IDO is delighted to invest in such a leading Omani startup. We believe 44.01's technology can play a big role in supporting the Sultanate of Oman to reach its Net-Zero target, while also attracting investment and economic prospects to the country."

Head of Equinor Ventures, Lars Klevier, said "Equinor Ventures is proud to announce the investment in 44.01, a company specialising in carbon dioxide (CO2) mineralisation technology. This investment represents another step in Equinor's commitment to test and explore innovative solutions for climate change mitigation. We are excited

to support 44.01 as they continue to break new ground in CO2 mineralisation and look forward to work together to mature the technology and verify its potential."

The diverse group of investors backing 44.01 brings a wealth of expertise in climate investment and geological carbon storage. Booth emphasised the importance of leveraging this expertise to enhance the company's technology and commercialisation strategies.

"Our investors have successfully developed world-leading carbon storage projects and commercialised climate technologies. We plan to work closely with them to scale our technology as quickly as possible," he said.

Scaling 44.01's technology across different geographical and regulatory environments presents both challenges and opportunities. The company aims to work closely with regulators worldwide to ensure safety and compliance, while also ensuring that host communities are involved and benefit from the projects.

In Oman, 44.01 collaborates with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, the Environment Authority, and the Governor of Al Sharqiyah North, among others, to ensure proper regulation and understanding of its processes.

44.01 envisions a significant role within the broader carbon sequestration and climate protection landscape. The involvement of major investors like Amazon's Climate Pledge Fund and Siemens Financial Services will be crucial in scaling the technology globally. The company believes it can export this Omani technology to provide a truly global climate solution, as peridotite, the rock used in the mineralisation process, comes to the surface on every continent.

The International Energy Forum estimates that Oman's ophiolite has up to 8.2 gigatonnes of carbon storage potential, which could provide significant economic benefits.

Additionally, Carbon Capture and Storage and Hydrogen technologies could add up to \$44 billion in GVA and create 245,000 jobs in the GCC by 2050.

44.01's technology has been assessed by numerous international bodies and has won prestigious accolades, including the Earthshot Prize in 2022 and being named an XPRIZE Carbon Removal Top 20 Finalist. With the completion of its \$37 million Series A funding round, 44.01 is poised to make significant strides in CO2 mineralisation technology, offering hope for a sustainable future.

Oman Shell appoints pre-FEED contractor for Blue Horizons project

CONRAD PRAHU
MUSCAT, JULY 15

Oman Shell has announced that its landmark low-carbon hydrogen and ammonia project — dubbed 'Blue Horizons' — has entered the key pre-FEED (front-end engineering design) phase.

In a post on Monday, July 15, 2024, Walid Hadi — Senior Vice-President & Country Chair — Shell, also revealed that Wood plc, a global leader in engineering and business consulting, has been awarded the contract to deliver the pre-FEED package for the Blue Horizons project planned at the Duqm Special Economic Zone.

Also as part of the pre-FEED package, Wood will handle the CO2 pipeline and CO2 injection facilities as well.

"The facility will utilise Shell's Blue Hydrogen process and KBR's Synloop Ammonia technology, selected after an independent technology evaluation to deliver both cost-competitive and low carbon intensity products," said Hadi.

"The proposed Blue Horizons project, to be located in Duqm Oman, aims to supply low-carbon blue hydrogen and ammonia to local and international markets, enabled by capturing and storing carbon dioxide (CO2) associated with the production process.

A suitable CO2 store for the proposed project has been selected," he further stated.

Under a Joint Study Agreement signed early in 2023, Shell announced a collaboration with OQ, the integrated global energy group of the Sultanate of Oman; OQ Gas Networks (OQGN), the owner and operator of the country's



Development of Shell's ambitious 'Blue Horizons' project makes headway at Duqm SEZ.

national gas transportation network; and Petroleum Development Oman.

The partners, together with Shell as lead developer of the project, had committed to collaborating on the pre-FEED elements for this initiative.

"Through our role in this low-carbon hydrogen and ammonia project, Shell continues to support Oman's Vision 2040 and its ambition to reach Net-Zero Carbon Emissions by 2050 by supplying low carbon fuels domestically and abroad," Hadi stated.

The partners, he said, aim to mature the technical design during the pre-FEED stage, chalk out the commercial arrangements with the Government of the Sultanate of Oman and customers, and "demonstrate the broader in-country benefits" of the project.

"Shell's blue and green hydrogen projects in Oman are complementary and we are therefore pleased to be the lead developer of both the Blue Horizons project and the Green Energy Oman renewable hydrogen project," the official added.

Avoid sharing your hotspot, as it may land you in serious problems



TARIQ AL BARWANI
The author is founder of Knowledge Oman knowledgeoman.com

A MOBILE HOTSPOT IS LIKE A PERSONAL AND PORTABLE ROUTER THAT YOU CAN USE TO ALLOW (OR ENABLE) OTHERS TO CONNECT TO THE INTERNET VIA YOUR MOBILE INTERNET-CONNECTED DEVICE.

An old man asked me for a hotspot connection while we were commuting, as guests from the hotel I was staying at during my holidays, to an evening event here in Phuket, Thailand. Out of courtesy, my personal nature of giving and caring, and of course, being a technologist and cybersecurity aware, I did open my mobile hotspot connection and provided him with the necessary access to communicate with his family via Google Meet (a video conferencing application). You may note that I profiled the stranger as a family man and the kind of application he was using (i.e., Google Meet). Furthermore, I was aware of the risks associated with such an activity and hence decided that my article this week should revolve around the dangers that one could get into for providing hotspot connections to others. No, you aren't being kind,

caring, or generous. Instead, you are putting yourself in great danger and risk by sharing your Internet connection. Again, I did it, fully aware and protected from the risks (usage of a VPN being one), but I expect many wouldn't know, hence the article this week. First and foremost, let me define a hotspot for those who don't know. A hotspot is a physical location where people can access the Internet, typically using Wi-Fi, via a wireless local area network (WLAN), with a router connected to an Internet service provider. A mobile hotspot is like a personal and portable router that you can use to allow (or enable) others to connect to the Internet via your mobile Internet-connected device. Your phone and your tablet can be gateways to the Internet. Many devices have this feature. You only need a connection to the Internet (and the hotspot feature enabled) to allow others to

connect to the Internet through you (your device, be it a mobile or tablet). The incident that has happened to me can happen to you or your loved ones, where a stranger can request your or their help by asking for a hotspot connection in order to connect to the Internet to communicate with their families, check e-mails, and/or search for information (an address or location per se). This can happen to you while you're working and/or on the go (be it while travelling, waiting in a line, at a hotel, airport, hospital, etc.) or in a public place. You being generous (and as one of the beautiful traits of most Omanis), open your hotspot, and boom, share the connection. That's dangerous and risky and should be avoided at all costs (especially with strangers and people you don't know). Let me tell you why. First, anything you do while connected to the Internet revolves around

you transmitting data over the connection. This data is mostly not encrypted (i.e., not converted into a cipher code). As a result, someone that you are sharing a hotspot connection with may be able to intercept and read your data, which could be sensitive, such as passwords, financial details, and/or personal communication. Secondly, most people subscribe to packages that have a download or upload size limit. The person you share a connection with may consume your data allowance, causing unexpected results and forcing you to pay costly charges (especially if you are on a roaming network). Thirdly, your battery will be drained quite fast due to sharing a hotspot, which may leave you without access (especially if you don't have a portable charger or an adapter around with you). Fourthly, do you know that anything the stranger does (for example, sites he or she visits,

posts, or uses) that is unlawful will be pointed back to you at the end? Yes, you will be responsible because they were using your connection and representing you on the network. Last but not least, you are exposing your personal data and device, which may also lead to unauthorised access and data breaches (due to sharing your hotspot connection). These are some of the dangers and risks you may face due to hotspot sharing. Sharing your mobile hotspot may seem convenient, caring, and giving, yet the reality is that you are taking a great risk. Avoiding sharing your Internet connection is the best thing you can do, especially with strangers whom you may never be able to find once you get into some of the problems and troubles I have shared in my article today. Better be safe than sorry. Not everyone in this world is as kind and caring as yourself. Be vigilant and stay safe. Until we catch up again next week, keep winning.

Do we need a Plaza Accord 2.0?



KOICHI HAMADA
The author is Professor Emeritus at Yale University, was a special adviser to former Japanese Prime Minister Abe Shinzō

THE DOLLAR AND THE YEN, NOW COUPLED WITH THE RENMINBI, ARE IN A SITUATION THAT RECALLS THE 1980S, WHICH HAS LED SOME POLITICIANS TO CONSIDER CREATING A PLAZA ACCORD 2.0. INSTEAD, THEY SHOULD FOCUS ON THE BENEFITS PROVIDED BY FLEXIBLE EXCHANGE RATES

Thanks to sustained high interest rates in the United States, the dollar has been soaring against other currencies. That's bad news for domestic US producers and good news for those abroad. These developments hark back to the conditions that led to the 1985 Plaza Accord, which transformed a dominant Japan into a country whose productivity growth lagged behind that of other developed countries. To be sure, Japan was simultaneously facing a technical slowdown and a rapidly aging population, but the Plaza Accord, named for the New York City hotel where it was negotiated, was a crucial factor in its economic stagnation. In hindsight, the Plaza Accord did deliver some of the desired outcomes, at least for the US, by raising the value of the yen and curtailing Japan's decades-long growth spurt. And the negative consequences for Japan were partly the result of the Bank of Japan's overly hawkish monetary policy. It is understandable, then, that some politicians are considering creating a Plaza Accord 2.0. But this time, the US is confronting China as well as Japan, and negotiating with China, its great-power rival, would be more politically challenging than negotiating with Japan, a staunch US ally, in the 1980s. But before policymakers make up their minds, they need to consider why the dollar and the yen, now coupled with the renminbi, are in a situation that recalls the 1980s. The answer lies in flexible exchange rates, the basic mechanism that led to currency arrangements like the Plaza Accord. The cross-border effects of monetary policy depend on whether exchange rates are fixed or flexible. Under a fixed



In the modern financial system, the exchange rate between two currencies is determined by the existing assets denominated in each. – Reuters

exchange-rate regime, a country's monetary expansion acts as a stimulus for itself and its trading partners. But when the exchange rate is flexible, a country's monetary expansion acts as a stimulus only for itself, and has a contractionary effect on its trading partners. In the modern financial system, the exchange rate between two currencies is determined by the existing assets denominated in each. Just as the relative price of apples and oranges is affected by their quantities in the market, monetary expansion that increases assets denominated in a country's currency tends to depreciate the exchange rate. Conversely, monetary expansion by its partner country tends to cause that currency's exchange rate to appreciate. Exchange-rate interventions may be temporarily effective but cannot have enduring effects unless supported by appropriate monetary policy. To strengthen the value

of the yen in 1985, the Plaza Accord had to be supported by contractionary monetary policy in Japan and relatively expansionary monetary policy in the US. Unfortunately, the BOJ kept monetary policy too tight, and Japan was mired in deflation and recession for two decades. The interdependence between the US and Japan in this situation can be viewed as a game, in which each country has two basic instruments: its own monetary expansion and monetary expansion by its partner. These instruments determine the exchange rate, but are highly dependent on each other – like the relative price of apples and oranges. Suppose each country in this scenario has its own desired level of inflation. One country may aim for slightly higher inflation because, as indicated by the Phillips curve, it is associated with lower unemployment, and also because, as US Treasury Secretary Janet L Yellen has argued, a "high-

pressure economy" could boost productivity. Fortunately, in this simplified game, each country's monetary policy is chosen depending on the other's policy. This interdependence would generate desired inflation, which in turn would produce ideal levels of unemployment and technological progress. In other words, monetary policy should target optimum inflation in each country, while accounting for the effect of its partner country's monetary policy. For example, in response to US monetary expansion after the Lehman Brothers collapse in 2008, Japan should have launched substantial monetary expansion; and it should respond to interest-rate hikes in the US since the Covid-19 pandemic with its own moderate rate increases. But the benefits of this approach to pursuing each country's best optimal inflation rate under a flexible exchange-rate regime would be lost if countries have balance-of-

payments or fiscal-consolidation objectives. This implies that, under flexible exchange rates, monetary authorities around the world could solve the problems of inflation, unemployment, and technological progress at the same time. Instead of determining appropriate exchange-rate levels, the Plaza Accord should have provided a venue for this monetary-policy game. Today's policymakers must concentrate on the benefits provided by flexible exchange rates. A strong dollar was necessary to tame inflation in the US after the Covid-19 crisis, and initially provided a boon for business in Japan. But there are already signs that the yen is too weak: a steep decline in outbound travel, higher spending on energy imports, and the threat of future inflation. To remedy the situation, the BOJ should quickly adjust short-term as well as long-term interest rates accordingly. © Project Syndicate, 2024

SPACE

An artist's illustration shows ESO-1, the nearest brown dwarf to Earth. ESO-1. — Reuters



MUSIC

Changbin of Stray Kids performs at the British Summer Time (BST) festival at Hyde Park in London, Britain. — Reuters



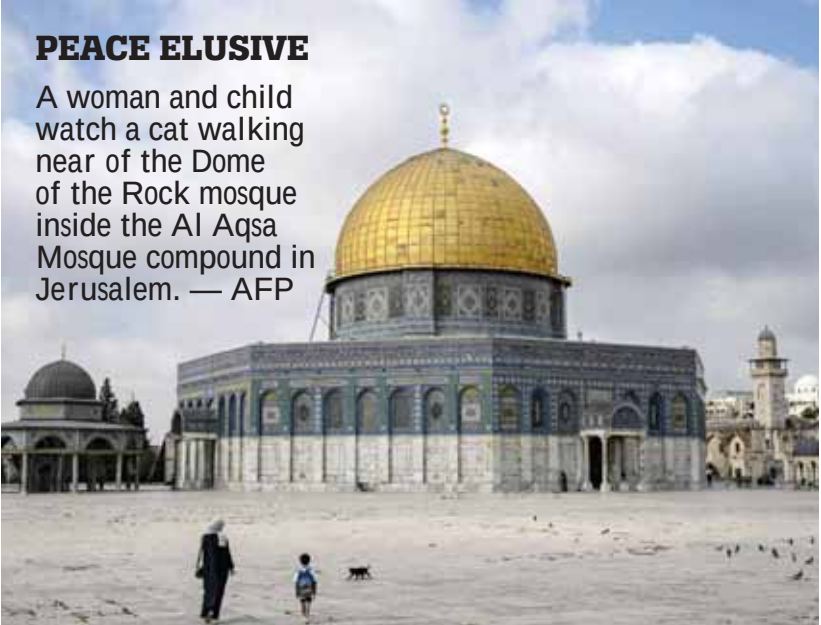
EQUESTRIAN SKILL

A rider takes part in a tent-pegging equestrian competition in Yemen's capital Sanaa. — AFP



PEACE ELUSIVE

A woman and child watch a cat walking near of the Dome of the Rock mosque inside the Al Aqsa Mosque compound in Jerusalem. — AFP



HOLLYWOOD

US film-maker Lee Isaac Chung attends the CTAOP (Charlize Theron Africa Outreach Project) 2024 block party at Universal Studios backlot in North Hollywood, California. — AFP



art & life

TUESDAY | JULY 16, 2024 | MUHARRAM 10, 1446 AH

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Sunshine seems to make a strong case against daily sunscreen

When we step outside on a clear day, the sun's ultra-violet light triggers the body to produce endorphins that lower stress and boost mood. UV rays also tell our skin to make vitamin D. And when we look up at the morning sun, our bodies recognise daytime and adjust our sleep-wake cycle accordingly.

That might be enough to tempt some people to skip the sunscreen — indeed, dermatologists say their patients often worry they'll miss out on these benefits.

"This is one of the biggest obstacles in people's minds: the idea they shouldn't use sunscreen for fear they won't get vitamin D," said Dr Steven Q. Wang, director of dermatologic oncology and dermatology at the Hoag Memorial Hospital Presbyterian in Newport Beach, California.

Recent surveys reflect this fear: In one poll of more than 1,000 adults in the United States, 11 per cent of respondents said they thought wearing sunscreen was more harmful than direct sun exposure. In another, 15 per cent said they thought sun exposure was the only way to get vitamin D.

But sunscreen also is our best weapon against skin cancer, which can be deadly. The sun's UV rays damage the DNA in your skin cells, and that damage can add up over time. Every time DNA repairs itself, there's a chance it develops a mutation that turns into cancer.

We asked nine experts whether you actually need to use sunscreen daily and whether the sunlight's potential benefits ever outweigh its risks. All said that there is no safe amount of unprotected sun exposure and said you should be wearing broad-spectrum sunscreen with an SPF of 30 or more — every single day. Here's what they want you to know about sunlight, sunscreen and your health.

Does sunscreen block the sun's mood-boosting benefits?

Not necessarily, said Dr Elisabeth Richard, an associate professor of dermatology at the Johns Hopkins University School of Medicine. Even with daily sunscreen, you can still enjoy a mood boost from the sun's visible light, or the light we can see with our own eyes. Visible light doesn't cause DNA damage like UV rays do, but it can increase serotonin, a chemical in the brain that helps regulate mood. This is why using a light box can ease symptoms of seasonal affective disorder, said Dr Deborah Sarnoff, a professor of dermatology at New York University.

Richard said that if you're concerned you're missing out on endorphins from sun exposure, staying active can make up for it. And being outside generally, whether for a solo walk, a day of gardening or a picnic with friends, can boost your mood even beneath a generous layer of sunscreen.

"People are happier when they're under the sunshine," Wang said. "They're more likely to lead an active lifestyle and enjoy social gatherings."

Will sunscreen throw off my sleep cycle?

Your body's internal clock relies on sunlight. When the sun goes down, your body releases the hormone melatonin, which promotes sleep. When the sun rises, it does the opposite to wake you. But just seeing sunlight can make this happen, Richard said.

"We get this benefit through our eyes, not our skin," she said. Even when you wear sunglasses — which protect your eyes from UV rays — you see enough light to get the circadian rhythm promoting benefits of sunlight, she said.

Can I get enough vitamin D with daily sunscreen?

Our bodies need vitamin D to absorb calcium and stave off conditions like osteoporosis, said Dr Robert Ashley, an internal medicine doctor at UCLA Health.

When we're exposed to UV rays, our skin cells produce vitamin D. But you can also get vitamin D through your diet, Ashley said. — **NYT**



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TUESDAY | JULY 16 | 2024

19

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



oman_tourism_love and 2 others
Fazayah Beach Salalah Oman



alainluck
Wadi Tanuf



michaelclicks_birds_wildlife
DOONE, Rystn - Simba



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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



Museums in Oman are catalysts for learning

STAFF REPORTER

Museums offer a vibrant and dynamic environment for children to immerse themselves in new experiences and explore diverse topics. Through interactive exhibits and hands-on activities, children can take charge of their learning, nurturing their curiosity and fostering creativity, critical thinking, and a deeper connection to the world around them.

Museums serve as portals to other worlds, linking us to our past and to ancient civilisations. They are the guardians of history, preserving irreplaceable works of art and artefacts.

The Sultanate of Oman boasts a rich cultural heritage, showcased in its numerous museums. These institutions preserve rare artefacts from various historical periods, serving as significant tourist attractions for both locals and

visitors. They offer an opportunity to delve into Omani culture and history, providing a profound educational experience.

Visiting museums enriches children's education by exposing them to culture and history through artefacts and educational exhibits. This experience enhances cognitive skills such as observation and critical thinking. Interactive activities in museums promote curiosity, social interaction, and peer learning, making museums invaluable for children's learning and development.

Museums take visitors on an educational and cultural journey through historical artefacts and artworks, employing advanced technology for realistic experiences. They organise educational programmes, interactive activities, and temporary exhibitions showcasing diverse cultures and heritages, offering unique and exciting experiences without the need to travel.

The Oman Across Ages Museum is an ideal destination for families, especially those unable to travel due to financial constraints. The museum offers various events and initiatives for all age groups, combining entertainment and intellectual enrichment. It provides educational opportunities about the country's history and culture.



Oman Across Ages Museum provides an affordable educational and historical experience for families and visitors of all ages. Offering discounts for students and schools, as well as free entry for seniors and children, reflects the museum's commitment to community care and educational accessibility. The museum's focus on inclusivity and public education enhances cultural awareness and adds value to the local community.



K-pop group NMIXX break fresh ground, tease new music

PERFORMING WITH A LIVE band gave South Korean girl group NMIXX new means to connect with audiences as they brought their "mix pop" sound to the British Summer Time (BST) Hyde Park Festival in London on Sunday.

The main stage performance marked a first for the six-piece, which is made up of members Haewon, Lily, Sullyoon, BAE, Jiwoo and Kyujin.

"When I heard that we were performing in this historical park, like, even just visiting here would have been fun but performing here is so crazy," Australia-born vocalist Lily said in a post-show backstage interview.

"We honestly don't have a lot of experience with festivals but this time we were lucky enough to perform with a band," the 21-year-old singer said.

"When you're doing it with a back-track, you can't manipulate it as you go. But with a band you can work together and have good synergy and you can kind of slow it down if you want to or make it faster. I think

that was an interesting thing that we were kind of all getting used to while preparing for the festival." NMIXX made their debut in early 2022 and have since released two extended play records, three single albums and toured across Asia and the United States.

The group's track "Love Me Like This" recently surpassed 100 million streams on Spotify, with songs "O.O" and "DASH" closing in on 200 million streams on the digital music service.

The members have also attended European catwalk shows for a Spanish luxury brand, as an increasing number of fashion houses hire Asian stars for their highest-profile global promotional gigs.

Fans will not have to wait long for new music, said the group, who gave audiences at BST a taste of their as-yet-unreleased song "Moving On".

"We're working hard to bring out music that's new and different," Kyujin said. "I think you're going to get a hip mix that we haven't shown you yet. It's a little bit more free," added Sullyoon. — Reuters



Journey through time at a house museum

BY SIHAM ALSAIDI

Stepping curiously into Mohammed al Rubaee's house museum feels like taking a step back in time. As I wandered through rooms filled with intricate and beautiful antiques, an old sandal immediately transported me to my childhood, evoking memories of playing in the dusty streets with friends.

This powerful experience is what makes Mohammed's collection so special; it's not just the items themselves but the emotions and memories they reveal.

Mohammed al Rubaee, a keen collector from Oman, showcases an impressive array of antiques and memorabilia. Among his prized possessions are two gold medals celebrating Oman's 15th and 20th National Days, his first acquisitions that ignited a lifelong passion for collecting antiques.

"Every piece is significant to me," Mohammed says. "But the medals from the 15th and 20th National Days hold a special place in my heart, being my first collectibles." Another valuable piece is an old document over 100 years old, belonging to his family and preserved by his grandfather.

Mohammed's journey began during his school days, driven by a fascination with historical artefacts. He started by collecting any old items he could find, storing them in boxes in his room. His ambition was clear: to create a personal museum once he finished his studies. Today, that dream has become a reality.

His dedication and effort culminated in a remarkable achievement last year when he participated in the Kuwait Expo. There, he was honoured

by Shaikh Ahmed al Fahad al Ahmed al Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defence of Kuwait, for his unique talent and passion.

His exhibition was crowded with visitors at the Expo. He has also participated in events in Oman, where people were impressed by his pieces and offered to buy them, but he refused to part with any of his treasures.

Mohammed's primary focus is preserving items that evoke childhood memories and family heritage. His collection spans beyond Oman, including rare finds from Iran, Yemen, UAE, Saudi Arabia, and Kuwait. Friends and contacts help him acquire these treasures, which often involves extensive searching and significant expenses. "I don't buy just any old piece," Mohammed explains. "I only collect items

that truly captivate me. The process is incredibly challenging and expensive, but it's worth it."

His collection includes vintage items like old drink cans and food tins, historical documents and bank cheques, antique cups, saucers, and plates, some extremely rare, vintage telephones and perfumes, old toys, lighters, and food containers, record players and televisions, leather goods, military medals and badges, and old Omani licence plates.

These pieces, collected over several years, are invaluable both to Oman and beyond.

When visitors see these pieces, they are often transported back to their childhoods or family histories. "Seeing people's reactions is incredibly rewarding," Mohammed expresses. "Many visitors light up when they recognise items from their past. It's like they're

reliving those moments." One frequent visitor, Salim, recalls the joy of finding a toy from the 1970s in Mohammed's collection. "It was like being a kid again. That toy brought back so many memories of playing with my friends." Another visitor, Aisha, was moved by seeing an old perfume bottle her grandmother used to have.

"The scent brought back cherished memories of my grandmother's house. It's amazing how a single item can evoke such strong emotions."

These reactions support Mohammed's efforts and fuel his passion for collecting. "People often don't realise the emotional power these items hold until they see them," he explains.

"It's not just about the objects themselves, but the memories and stories they carry," Mohammed understands the power of his pieces

and strives to protect them from damage.

hobbies represent the complexity and challenges of collecting antiques.

Each item holds a unique story and often comes with a high price tag.

"People might see my collection and think it's simple, but only those who collect understand the challenges," he says. "I once paid 25 Omani Riyals for a tiny old cup, which is a good deal compared to others priced at 80 Riyals." Despite the difficulties, Mohammed remains passionate about his hobby.

His home museum stands as a testament to his dedication, preserving a tangible connection to the past for future generations to appreciate. Through his collection, he not only protects historical artefacts but also keeps the treasure of memories alive.