

HM greets President of Côte d'Ivoire

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Dr Alassane Dramane Ouattara of the Republic of Côte d'Ivoire on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Dr Alassane and the people of his country.

SUNRISE - 05:39 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR - 04:18 AM
DHUHR - 12:18 PM
ASR - 03:42 PM
MAGHRIB - 06:51 PM
ISHA - 08:07 PM



P12

FRANCE SET UP FOOTBALL FINAL AGAINST SPAIN



P13

GREEN MOBILITY INITIATIVES AND INTELLIGENT TRANSPORTATION



P20

A PILGRIM'S JOURNEY: CYCLING FROM GERMANY TO MECCA



HM, UK Prime Minister discuss relations

LONDON: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Tuesday met Keir Starmer, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK), at the Cabinet's headquarters in London.

During the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan reviewed the deep-rooted historical relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom, as well as means of consolidating areas of bilateral cooperation to serve the joint interests of the two countries' friendly peoples.

The two leaders also exchanged views about developments on the regional and international arenas and other matters of common concern.

The meeting was attended from the Omani side by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Dr Hamad bin Said al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, and Badr bin Mohammed al Mantheri, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

On the British side, the meeting was also attended by David Lammy, Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, Liane Saunders, Ambassador of the United Kingdom to the Sultanate of Oman, and several other officials. — ONA SEE ALSO P3



HM, KEIR STARMER REVIEW DEEP-ROOTED HISTORICAL RELATIONS

TWO LEADERS EXCHANGE VIEWS ON REGIONAL, WORLD MATTERS

TALKS TO CONSOLIDATE COOPERATION TO SERVE JOINT INTERESTS

MUSCAT

APPLICATIONS FOR TRADEMARK RISE

The number of applications made for registration and documentation of trademarks in the Sultanate of Oman, under the international trademark system, grew by 11 per cent in 2023 to 13,043 as against 11,742 in 2022, according to the national Intellectual Property (IP) office in Oman. Ghalib bin Mohammed al Saidi, an intellectual property researcher at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said that the past two years saw a rise of 10 to 14 per cent in requests for trademark registration and documentation.



KAMALA HARRIS PICKS RUNNING MATE

Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris selected Minnesota Governor Tim Walz to be her running mate on Tuesday, choosing a progressive policy champion and a plain speaker from America's heartland to help win over rural, white voters. Harris announced the selection in a text message to supporters. "I'm pleased to share that I've made my decision: Minnesota Governor Tim Walz will join our campaign as my running mate," she said. "Tim is a battle-tested leader who has an incredible track record of getting things done for Minnesota families."

Omani financial system resilient, says CBO report

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman in its 12th Financial Stability Report (FSR) for 2024 emphasised the resilience of the Omani financial system amid heightened global geopolitical tensions and persistently elevated interest rates.

Despite these challenges, the FSR indicates that short-term risks to financial stability in Oman remain subdued, which is also echoed by positive rating actions from all three major rating agencies.

Regarding the banking sector, the report highlights that the banking sector maintained

robust capital buffers which, "further instils confidence in its resilience to weather any adverse shocks". It also notes that with the economic recovery, "banks witnessed improvements in their profitability metrics". Furthermore, the asset quality of the banking sector remained solid and banks held ample liquidity buffers.

The FSR also presents findings from the latest Systemic Risk Survey and Credit Conditions Survey conducted by the Central Bank of Oman. The Systemic Risk Survey revealed sustained confidence among the market

The banking sector maintained robust capital buffers which, further instils confidence in its resilience. With the economic recovery, banks witnessed improvements in their profitability metrics

CBO REPORT

participants in the Omani financial system. The Credit Conditions Survey indicated a notable increase in household loan demand.

This trend is anticipated to persist into 2024, driven by economic expansion, heightened consumer confidence and favourable lending rates.

The Composite Financial Stability Indicator (CFSI) of the Sultanate of Oman has revealed positive trends largely driven by favourable factors, particularly higher oil prices, improved debt sustainability and systemic risk indicators. — ONA

More rains likely to continue today

MUSCAT: Most of the northern governorates witnessed varying amounts of rainfall which led to the flow of wadis as the impact of a low pressure system in the Arabian Sea continues.

A child died when a vehicle carrying five people was swept away in the Wadi Andam on the Izki-Sinaw road. The other four were rescued and transferred to Ibra Hospital by police ambulance, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) announced.

The police aviation carried out a search and rescue operation for two people who were swept away in Wadi Bani Hani in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq on Tuesday morning. ROP advised the public to be extra cautious and not to risk crossing the wadis during rainfall.

According to the National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre at the Civil Aviation Authority, there are chances of rains on Wednesday over Al Hajar Mountains in the afternoon as the formation of local clouds continue over the area.

12 Palestinians killed in Israel West Bank raids

JENIN: Palestinian officials said Israeli forces killed 12 people in three separate raids in the northern West Bank on Tuesday, as violence in the occupied territory showed no sign of abating.

Five people were killed in the Jenin area and four in Aqaba town in Tubas district when Israeli forces carried out early-morning raids, the health ministry in Ramallah said.

The Palestinian Red Crescent had earlier reported deaths and



injuries "due to the occupation's shelling of two vehicles in the eastern neighbourhood of Jenin".

Aqaba residents said Israeli troops arrived at dawn and surrounded the house of Amid Ghanam, leading to clashes between troops and young Palestinians. Ghanam and two others were killed in the clashes, while another teenager was killed near a hospital, Tubas governor Ahmed Assad said.

"The army entered and surrounded the house as snipers

took positions on nearby rooftops and shot anyone who moved," he said. The teenager was shot when the troops "entered the area of the hospital", Assad said.

Meanwhile, Hezbollah group launched a series of drone and rocket attacks into northern Israel on Tuesday but warned that its much-anticipated retaliation.

Hezbollah said it launched a swarm of attack drones at two military sites near Acre in northern Israel.

SEE ALSO P6

TENDERS NOTICE



Mazoon Mining LLC (MMC), a subsidiary of Minerals Development Oman (MDO), is developing the Yanqul Copper Project in Al-Dhahirah Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman. The project consist of five open-pit mines will provide ore to a new processing plant that will produce copper concentrate.

Mazoon Mining would like to invite qualified and experienced local and International Companies to participate in the following tenders:

Tender No.	5185-5041
Tender Title	Supply of Belt Conveyors
Eligibility (Mandatory)	Bidders must have Proven experience in providing Belt Conveyors on major process plants or similar major infrastructure projects. Bidders must demonstrate a minimum contract value of more than OMR 1,500,000 on two (2) projects. At least one (1) of the projects must have been undertaken on a major industrial process plant.
Tender Fee	OMR 100/- A hundred Omani Riyals Only (Non-Refundable)
Tender No.	5185-5016
Tender Title	Supply of Blowers
Eligibility (Mandatory)	Bidders must have proven experience in providing Blowers on major process plants or similar major infrastructure projects. Bidders must demonstrate a minimum contract value of more than OMR 115,000 on two (2) projects. At least one (1) of the projects must have been undertaken on a major industrial process plant.
Tender Fee	OMR 25/- Twenty-Five Omani Riyals Only (Non-Refundable)
Tender No.	5185-5036
Tender Title	Supply of Centrifugal and Axial Fans
Eligibility (Mandatory)	Bidders must have proven experience in providing Centrifugal & Axial Fans on major process plants or similar major infrastructure projects. Bidders must demonstrate a minimum contract value of more than OMR 38,000 on two (2) projects. At least one (1) of the projects must have been undertaken on a major industrial process plant.
Tender Fee	OMR 25/- Twenty-Five Omani Riyals Only (Non-Refundable)
Tender No.	5185-5014
Tender Title	Supply of Centrifugal Solution Pumps
Eligibility (Mandatory)	Bidders must have proven experience in providing Centrifugal Solution Pumps on major process plants or similar major infrastructure projects. Bidders must demonstrate a minimum contract value more than, OMR 38,000 on two (2) projects. At least one (1) of the projects must have been undertaken on a major industrial process plant.
Tender Fee	OMR 25/- Twenty-Five Omani Riyals Only (Non-Refundable)
Tender No.	5185-5033
Tender Title	Supply of Compressed Air System
Eligibility (Mandatory)	Bidders must have proven experience in providing Compressed Air Systems on major process plants or similar major infrastructure projects. Bidders must demonstrate a minimum contract value more than, OMR 115,000 on two (2) projects. At least one (1) of the projects must have been undertaken on a major industrial process plant
Tender Fee	OMR 25/- Twenty-Five Omani Riyals Only (Non-Refundable)
Tender No.	5185-5029
Tender Title	Supply of Cranes & Hoists
Eligibility (Mandatory)	Bidders must have proven experience in providing Cranes & Hoists on major process plants or similar major infrastructure projects. Bidders must demonstrate a minimum contract value more than, OMR 269,000 on two (2) projects. At least one (1) of the projects must have been undertaken on a major industrial process plant.
Tender Fee	OMR 25/- Twenty-Five Omani Riyals Only (Non-Refundable)
Tender No.	5185-5050
Tender Title	Supply of Dust Collectors
Eligibility (Mandatory)	Bidders must have proven experience in providing Dust Collectors on major process plants or similar major infrastructure projects. Bidders must demonstrate a minimum contract value of more than, OMR 38,000 on two (2) projects. At least one (1) of the projects must have been undertaken on a major industrial process plant.
Tender Fee	OMR 25/- Twenty-Five Omani Riyals Only (Non-Refundable)
Tender No.	5185-2010
Tender Title	Supply of Reclaim Tunnel
Eligibility (Mandatory)	Bidders must have proven experience in providing Reclaim Tunnel Supply on major process plants or similar major infrastructure projects. Bidders must demonstrate a minimum contract value of more than OMR 400,000 on two (2) projects. At least one (1) of the projects must have been undertaken on a major industrial process plant.
Tender Fee	OMR 25/- Twenty-Five Omani Riyals Only (Non-Refundable)
Tender No.	5185-5094
Tender Title	Supply of Truck Weighbridge
Eligibility (Mandatory)	Bidders must have proven experience in providing Truck Weighbridge on major process plants or similar major infrastructure projects. Bidders must demonstrate a minimum contract value of more than, OMR 77,000 on two (2) projects. At least one (1) of the projects must have been undertaken on a major industrial process plant.
Tender Fee	OMR 25/- Twenty-Five Omani Riyals Only (Non-Refundable)
Tender No.	5185-5012
Tender Title	Supply of Vertical Cantilever Pumps
Eligibility (Mandatory)	Bidders must have proven experience in providing Vertical Cantilever Pumps on major process plants or similar major infrastructure projects. Bidders must demonstrate a minimum contract value of more than OMR 150,000 on two (2) projects. At least one (1) of the projects must have been undertaken on a major industrial process plant.
Tender Fee	OMR 25/- Twenty-Five Omani Riyals Only (Non-Refundable)

- Closing Date of Selling for All Above Tenders: 14 August 2024
 - Submission Date for All Above Tenders: 03 September 2024

- SMEs with Riyada card are exempted from payment of tenders fees.
 - Tenders fees shall only be accepted through bank deposit in the following bank account:

Account Name	:	Mazoon Mining LLC.
Bank Name	:	Sohar International Bank SAOG
Branch	:	Gurum Branch
Account	:	005020042486
IBAN	:	OM720300000005020042486

- A copy of the original bank deposit receipt confirming deposit and identifying the Tenderers' name and the Tenders number must be forwarded via email, to tenders@mazoonmining.om to request the release of the tender documents. Payments received after the submission date will not be refunded. MMC retains the right to correspond solely with companies satisfying the mandatory tender requirements before the release of the tender document Responses received that do not comply with th eligibility(mandatory) requirement will be removed from evaluation and will not be eligible for shortlisting.

- For any inquiries, clarifications, or submissions, please email: tenders@mazoonmining.om

‘Oman committed to promoting human rights’



The event was presided over by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs and Chairman of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking

STAFF REPORTER

MUSCAT, AUGUST 6

The Sultanate of Oman joins countries worldwide in celebrating the World Day Against Trafficking in Persons, observed on July 30 each year. This year's theme is ‘Leaving No Child Behind.’

To mark this occasion, the Ministry of Social Development organised a celebration in collaboration with the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking.

The event was presided over by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs and Chairman of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking.

Several dignitaries, honourees, and members of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking were in attendance at

the Diplomatic Club in Muscat.

During the ceremony, a speech was delivered by Dr Ahmed bin Taleb al Jabri, Vice-Chairman of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking. He emphasised that Oman's commitment to promoting human rights and raising awareness about crimes that violate human dignity is not just an international obligation but also a religious and national duty ingrained in Omani values and identity. Oman has enacted legislation, such as the Anti-Human Trafficking Crimes Law of 2008, to address human trafficking at both the international and local levels.

Dr Al Jabri highlighted Oman's efforts to raise awareness about human trafficking through campaigns like ‘Insan’ and the National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking. The plan focuses on prevention, protection,

prosecution, and regional and international cooperation.

Haitham bin Salem al Khadouri, Director of the Family Protection Department at the Ministry of Social Development, emphasised the ministry's role in providing shelter, care and rehabilitation to victims of human trafficking.

The celebration included presentations showcasing the efforts of authorities in combating human trafficking, along with three working papers. These papers discussed the efforts of the Public Prosecution, the Royal Oman Police, and the Ministry of Social Development in combating human trafficking, protecting lives and providing services to victims.

The event concluded with the recognition of presenters, partner organisations and members of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking.



APPLICATIONS FOR TRADEMARK REGISTRATION UP

MUSCAT: The number of applications made for the registration and documentation of trademarks in the Sultanate of Oman, under the international trademark system, grew by 11 per cent in 2023 to 13,043 as against 11,742 in 2022, according to the national Intellectual Property (IP) office in Oman. Ghalib bin Mohammed al Saidi, an intellectual property researcher at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said that the past two years saw a rise of 10 to 14 per cent in requests for trademark registration and documentation. – **ONA**

SCRAP COLLECTION IN RESIDENTIAL AREAS PROHIBITED

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

The Muscat Municipality has stated that collecting scraps from homes by travelling in vehicles around residential areas is prohibited to prevent any violations of private property that may occur due to the movement of scrap collection vehicles.

Similarly, companies in the scrap business must obtain a trade licence and a professional licence to engage in scrap collection and collect old items. This activity is limited to industrial areas, as outlined by the legal department of the Muscat Municipality.

This regulation is part of an effort to control scrap collection activities, ensure individual safety and privacy, and minimise the negative impacts of scrap collection.

Abdul Rahman al Hinai, a



Abdul Rahman al Hinai

member of the Legal Committee at the Municipal Council, explained that Regulation number 67/2022 has been issued to regulate this activity.

The goal is to establish a legal framework that enforces environmental and security standards, and eliminates uncontrolled practices that harm the environment and society.

“We aim to regulate the scrap sector and protect the personal space of individuals. Therefore, scrap collection is prohibited around residential areas and restricted to industrial areas. We

are working with specialists to designate specific sites for scrap collection from homes and utilise technology to organise the activity,” Al Hinai said.

There have been complaints about unregulated scrap collection causing security, environmental and economic issues. Scrap collection vehicles have been a source of annoyance to residents due to constant honking and frequent presence in residential areas.

The regulation and recent updates aim to control unplanned scrap collection practices, eliminate illegal trade, and ensure that scrap dealing and collection are conducted in an organised and safe manner. Licence holders will face a RO 500 administrative fine if their workers are found collecting scrap in residential areas in violation of regulations. Repeat violations will result in increased fines.



Follow us on **facebook**:
omanobserver

HIS MAJESTY MEETS UK PRIME MINISTER



LONDON: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik met Keir Starmer, Prime Minister of the United Kingdom (UK), in London on Tuesday. During the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan reviewed the deep-rooted historical relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom, as well as the means of consolidating areas of bilateral cooperation to serve the joint interests of the two countries' friendly peoples. — ONA



WE EXCHANGE TRUST



WORLD WIDE REMITTANCE



WE BUY & SELL GOLD & SILVER

1 gm to 1kg 24ct gold bars available at best international rate.

PURSHOTTAM KANJI EXCHANGE

شركة برشوتم كانجي للتسراقة

Download & NOW!

www.pkexchange.com



BEACHGOERS, MIND YOUR CHILDREN



AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 6

Cloudy weather creates the perfect opportunity for families to go to the beach and enjoy playing and swimming, especially in the afternoon. However, amidst this enjoyable atmosphere, some may overlook the hidden dangers that could threaten the safety of children.

Therefore, it is important to realise the necessity of closely monitoring children during these activities to ensure their safety.

Although playing in the sea can be fun and beneficial for children, it also comes with many risks.

In cloudy weather, the weather conditions can change quickly, leading to unexpected changes in the waves and currents. These conditions can pose a significant risk to children who may not know how to handle them.

Besides the sea, many families consider home swimming pools a safe and fun alternative for their children. However, these pools are not free of risks either. Home swimming pools can be dangerous if children are not continuously supervised.

Monitoring children while playing in the sea or home swimming pools is extremely important.

Parents should stay close to their children at all times and remain alert for any signs of fatigue or difficulty swimming. Children, by nature, may not be able to appreciate the seriousness of the situation or act quickly if a problem occurs.

Mohammed Yousef, a swimming coach, said that the safety of children is primarily the responsibility of parents, especially when they are at swimming pools and beaches. He emphasised the need to follow the instructions of the authorities that identify areas unsuitable for swimming due to high waves and sudden currents.

Mohammed urged parents and caregivers to learn the basics of first aid and artificial respiration. He also stressed the importance of ensuring that doors leading to the pool are closed and secured after children finish using it, especially if there are children who do not know how to swim.

Mohammed noted that it is often seen that some parents watch their children from a distance when they go to the sea, which is one of the most dangerous things. In the event of a strong current in the waves, it would be difficult to catch up with them and provide help in time.

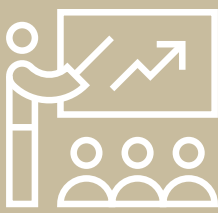
Therefore, he emphasised the importance of staying close to the children and swimming with them in the sea to protect them.

Children should be taught water safety rules and the importance of not swimming alone or without supervision. It is also important to ensure that rescue equipment such as rings and life jackets are available near the pool for emergency use, and not to leave children unattended in the pool even for a few seconds, as accidents can happen quickly.

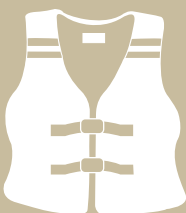
S A F E T Y T I P S



PARENTS SHOULD STAY
CLOSE TO THEIR CHILDREN
AT ALL TIMES



EDUCATE CHILDREN
ABOUT THE DANGERS
OF THE SEA



USE OF LIFE JACKETS FOR
YOUNG CHILDREN OR THOSE
NOT SKILLED IN SWIMMING



IT IS IMPORTANT TO MONITOR
WEATHER FORECASTS FOR
SUDDEN WEATHER CHANGES



HOME SWIMMING
POOLS SHOULD BE
FENCED



OMAN PUSHING FOR LOW-CARBON TRANSPORTATION

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 6

Governments worldwide are increasingly adopting low-carbon transportation strategies, and the Sultanate of Oman is actively participating in these efforts. Oman has set ambitious national goals to address climate change, with directives aiming to achieve net-zero carbon emissions by 2050. This target is part of a broader strategy to enhance environmental performance and is encapsulated in Oman Vision 2040. The vision outlines several precautionary measures, including the promotion of

electric vehicles, the use of hydrogen fuel cells for long-distance trucking and the adoption of biofuels. Oman is promoting the use of electric vehicles (EVs) by providing incentives such as tax reductions, subsidies and developing charging infrastructure. Additionally, the government is gradually transitioning its fleet to electric vehicles to set an example and drive the market for EVs. Hydrogen fuel cells are being explored as a viable solution for long-distance transport due to their high energy density and quick refueling times, with investments in research



Oman is promoting the use of electric vehicles (EVs)

and development to improve hydrogen production and storage technologies. Biofuels, produced from organic materials, are being integrated into the transportation sector to reduce reliance on fossil fuels. Oman is also exploring the use of locally available resources

to produce biofuels, thereby supporting local industries and reducing import dependence. In addition to technological advancements, behavioural changes are essential to reduce carbon footprints. Oman is investing in public transportation infrastructure, such as buses and metro systems, to make it more efficient and accessible. Public awareness campaigns are also being conducted to encourage the use of public transport over private vehicles. Furthermore, car-sharing initiatives are being promoted through shared mobility services, regulations and incentives to reduce the number of vehicles on the road and encourage shared rides. Global warming and the consequent climate changes have posed a significant challenge to our planet for several decades, leading to a pronounced disruption in environmental, climatic, social and economic systems. Various human activities have contributed to this problem, primarily through increased carbon emissions. Notably, the global transportation sector is responsible for nearly a quarter of global carbon dioxide emissions, with land transport alone contributing seventy-five per cent of these emissions.

Documentary exhibition disseminates knowledge



The exhibition aims to disseminate knowledge by enhancing national competencies with education and sciences, fostering communication and cohesion within the local community and beyond



SALALAH: HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, inaugurated the ‘Memory of a Nation in the Land of Frankincense’ documentary exhibition in Dhofar Governorate on Monday. The event is part of the ‘Return of the Past (Happiness)’ activities, organised by the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA) from August 5-21. The exhibition aims to disseminate knowledge by enhancing national competencies with education and sciences, fostering communication and cohesion within the local

community and beyond. It also underscores the authority’s commitment to the significance of documents in scientific research and intellectual creativity. The exhibition, showcasing more than 1,300 printed and digital documents, highlights the civilisational and historical contributions of the Sultanate through various eras and the role of Omanis in advancing human civilisation. It also focuses on the historical and cultural significance of Dhofar Governorate. Additionally, the exhibition highlights the diplomatic relations between Oman and Turkiye, displaying numerous historical documents, letters and diplomatic telegrams between the two countries. The exhibition is divided into seven sections: Oman throughout history that explores Oman’s history, from its early human settlements during the Stone Ages to its pre-Islamic and Islamic periods, Dhofar in the Memory of Omani History highlighting Dhofar’s significant historical role, Dhofar in newspapers and magazines that presents articles, photos and news about Dhofar

from local and international publications, and International Relations section that features documents that detail Oman’s diplomatic and friendly relations worldwide. Also, there is a section of Omani-Turkish Relations (Guest of Honour of the Exhibition) highlighting the historical relations between Oman and the Ottoman Empire, Manuscripts section showcasing original manuscripts as well as Digital Content section that is displaying currencies, postage stamps, maps, drawings and press clippings.

OPAZ UNVEILS ENHANCED SERVICES TO ATTRACT INVESTORS

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has introduced new initiatives aimed at improving services for investors in special economic zones, free zones and industrial zones. These efforts align with OPAZ’s strategy to attract foreign investments and support local business growth. Dr Said bin Khalifa al Quraini, General Director of Investment Development at OPAZ, emphasised, “We are committed to refining our strategies to enhance the business environment. This aligns with our core objectives of attracting foreign investment and fostering local investment growth in economic, free and industrial zones.” A key aspect of these initiatives is the Investor Services Project, which introduces advanced electronic services to meet investors’ expectations and needs. This project aims to streamline project establishment, improve service efficiency and enhance



Dr Said bin Khalifa al Quraini

competitiveness by utilising state-of-the-art technologies and best international practices. The platform offers e-government and operational services, significantly boosting investor convenience. Moreover, OPAZ is increasing coordination with the Invest Oman Lounge to attract strategic investments in the zones it oversees. This collaboration aims to strengthen the lounge’s role and promote investment opportunities at various local and international

events. Specialised communication tools will also be leveraged to optimise these efforts. In 2023, OPAZ successfully implemented several projects, including automatic licences, which allow investors to obtain project licences in just 15 minutes. Other achievements include launching a comprehensive service provider, establishing a strategic project management platform, enhancing the electronic land selection platform, and streamlining import and export procedures. Fee reductions were also introduced, with many services seeing cuts of up to 90 per cent and fees for small and medium-sized enterprises reduced by 50 per cent. Dr Al Quraini highlighted that OPAZ’s digital transformation has significantly encouraged investments in economic, free and industrial zones. Investors can now access over 80 electronic services across all zones, enhancing business efficiency and convenience.



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. (20/2024)

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

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last Date to Collect the Tender	Tender Return Date
PRE-23-102 Re-call	Design & Construction of Storm Water Channel in Bowsher (Re-tender)	31/08/2024	15/09/2024
PRE-24-211	Supply of Oils for Muscat Municipality Vehicles	31/08/2024	15/09/2024
PRE-24-212	Supply, Installation and Repair of Tires for Muscat Municipality Vehicles & Equipments	31/08/2024	15/09/2024
PRE/24/139	Additional Works of Construction of Dualization of Halban Street	31/08/2024	15/09/2024
PRE-24-217	Maintenance of Hallways “Al-Rawaqiyyin” in Muttrah Jibroh	31/08/2024	15/09/2024
PRE-24-218	Providing Flower Exhibition Event for Muscat Festival 2024	15/08/2024	21/08/2024

- Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.
- Clarification and Support:
 - For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
 - For technical support of e-tendering system please send an email to (etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om) or call (+968 24402200).

TENDER NOTICE



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

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

Tender No.	Tender Title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales End Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are Eligible to Participate	Tender Document Fee (R.O)
531/2024/MAFWR/HQ-42	Consulting Services for Designing Unified Buildings for Directorates in the Governorates	Monday 5/8/2024	Sunday 25/8/2024	Sunday 15/9/2024	Specialized companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board with first grade	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

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

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources



Hezbollah launches drone attacks on Israel

BEIRUT: Lebanon’s movement Hezbollah launched a series of drone and rocket attacks into northern Israel on Tuesday but warned that its much-anticipated retaliation for Israel’s killing of a top commander last week was yet to come.

Hezbollah said it launched a swarm of attack drones at two military sites near Acre in northern Israel, and also attacked an Israeli military vehicle in another location.

The Israeli military said a number of hostile drones were identified crossing from Lebanon and one was intercepted.

Israeli medical officials said seven people were evacuated to hospital, to the south of the coastal city of Nahariya, one in critical condition.

The Israeli military said an initial investigation indicated the injuries were caused by an interceptor that “missed the target and hit the ground, injuring several civilians.” It said the incident was still under review. TV footage showed one impact site near a bus stop on a main road outside Nahariya.

In a statement, the Israeli military said sirens sounded around Acre, but that turned out to be a false alarm.

Fears are rising that the Middle East could be tipped into full-blown war following vows by Hezbollah to avenge Hezbollah commander Fuad Shukr’s killing, and by Iran to respond to the assassination in Tehran last week of the head of Palestinian group Hamas. A

Hezbollah said it launched a swarm of attack drones at two military sites near Acre in northern Israel, and also attacked an Israeli military vehicle in another location

Hezbollah source said that “the response to the assassination of commander Fuad Shukr has not yet come.”

Earlier on Tuesday, four people were killed in a strike on a home in the Lebanese town of Mayfadoun, nearly 30 km north of the border, medics and a security source said.

Hezbollah and the Israeli military have been trading fire for the last 10 months in parallel with the Gaza war. Meanwhile, Israeli forces backed by drone strikes killed at least 12 people in the occupied West Bank, medics said on Tuesday, after raids around two flashpoint cities in the north led to gunbattles with Palestinian militants. The Israeli military said it conducted two separate air strikes in the volatile city of Jenin, hitting armed militant cells, but gave no details.

The Palestinian health ministry said five people were killed in the strikes against two vehicles in Jenin, one of the most turbulent centres of groups activity in the occupied West Bank. — **Reuters**



Smoke from Israeli bombardment billows in the background as a woman walks in Khan Yunis, Gaza City. — AFP

Bangladesh president dissolves parliament

DHAKA: Bangladesh’s president dissolved parliament on Tuesday, clearing the way for an interim government and new elections a day after Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina resigned and fled following a violent crackdown on a student-led uprising.

President Mohammed Shahabuddin’s office also announced that the leader of the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party, Begum Khaleda Zia, a former prime minister who had feuded with Hasina for decades, had been freed from house arrest.

Student protesters had threatened more demonstrations if parliament was not dissolved.

The movement that toppled Hasina rose out of demonstrations against public sector job quotas for families of veterans of Bangladesh’s 1971 independence war. About 300 people were killed and thousands injured in violence that ripped through the country since July.

The decision to dissolve parliament was taken following



Members of the army clear an entrance of the Ganabhaban, the Bangladeshi prime minister’s residence, in Dhaka. — Reuters

meetings with the heads of armed forces, leaders of political parties, student leaders and some civil society representatives, the presidential statement said.

Protests against Hasina were fueled in part by poverty. After years of strong economic growth as the garment industry expanded, the \$450-billion economy struggled with costly imports and inflation, and the government had sought a bailout from the International Monetary

Fund.

President Shahabuddin had said earlier that an interim government would hold elections soon after it takes over. Army Chief General Waker-Uz-Zaman was due to meet student leaders to discuss the formation of the government. Hasina flew to India and is staying at a safe house outside Delhi.

Indian media reported that Hasina may travel to Britain, where she has family including

The student leaders said they want Nobel Peace laureate Muhammad Yunus as the chief adviser to the interim government and a spokesperson for Yunus said he had agreed.

a niece who is a government minister. Britain’s Home Office declined to comment on Hasina’s specific case but said there was no provision in British immigration law allowing someone to travel to Britain to seek asylum.

India’s Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar told parliament that New Delhi had repeatedly “counselled restraint and urged situation to be defused through dialogue”.

The student leaders said they want Nobel Peace laureate Muhammad Yunus as the chief adviser to the interim government and a spokesperson for Yunus said he had agreed.

— **Reuters**

Hiroshima remembers A-bomb victims



Representatives lay flowers at the Peace Memorial Ceremony held at the Peace Memorial Park in Hiroshima. — AFP

TOKYO: The mayor of Hiroshima said on Tuesday that wars in Ukraine and Gaza were deepening fear and distrust worldwide, on the 79th anniversary of the atomic bombing that devastated the Japanese city.

Kazumi Matsui made a sombre speech at a memorial event to commemorate the victims of the US nuclear attack on August 6, 1945 that left around 140,000 people dead. “Russia’s protracted attack of Ukraine and the worsening situation between Israel and Palestine are claiming the lives of countless innocent people and shattering normal life,” he said.

“These global tragedies are deepening distrust and fear

among nations, reinforcing the public assumption that to solve international problems we have to rely on military force, which we should be rejecting.”

Days after the 1945 Hiroshima attack, a second US nuclear bomb hit Nagasaki in southwest Japan, killing around 74,000 people.

The two strikes led to the end of World War II, and to this day Japan remains the only country to be hit by atomic weapons in wartime.

During Tuesday’s ceremony, dignitaries including Prime Minister Fumio Kishida — all clad in black suits — bowed deeply and laid wreaths at the memorial cenotaph featuring the inscription “rest in peace”. — **AFP**

SHORT TAKES

KHARTOUM

Heavy rains kill nine in war-torn Sudan

Heavy rains have triggered building collapses that have killed nine people in northern Sudan, as the country reels from almost 16 months of fighting between rival security forces.

“Nine people have died as a result of their houses collapsing,” said an employee at a hospital in Abu Hamad, a small town in Sudan’s Nile state, some 400 kilometres north of Khartoum.

“Many injured people continue to arrive at the hospital,” the



source added.

The impact is expected to be worse this year after more than a year of fighting that has pushed millions of displaced people into flood zones. — **AFP**

LAGOS

Nigeria arrests protesters with Russian flags

Nigerian police said on Tuesday they had arrested more than 90 demonstrators carrying Russian flags as protests entered a sixth day.

A spokesperson for Nigeria’s DSS security agency said it had “apprehended some tailors in Kano State responsible for making the Russian flags being distributed in the area” and was investigating. “People supervising elements to push individuals to carry Russian flags in Nigeria, Nigeria sovereignty, that is cross-



ing the red line and we will not accept that,” General Christopher Musa warned at a briefing in Abuja. The Russian embassy to Nigeria denied involvement in a statement on its website. — **AFP**

BAGHDAD

Iraq condemns ‘reckless’ attacks on bases

Iraq’s military condemned on Tuesday “reckless” actions against bases on its soil and said it had captured a truck with a rocket launcher a day after at least five US personnel were wounded in the attack.

“We reject all reckless actions and practices targeting Iraqi bases, diplomatic missions, and the whereabouts of the international coalition’s advisers, and everything that would raise tension in the region,” the Iraqi military statement said.



The military did not confirm US personnel were injured, but did say two rockets were fired at Ain Al Asad air base in western Iraq from the nearby town of Haditha. — **Reuters**



omanobserver.com/podcast

world

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

WEDNESDAY | AUGUST 7 | 2024

7

In brief

■ LONDON



6,000 POLICE AT THE READY TO QUELL UK RIOTS: GOVT

The UK government said on Tuesday that 6,000 specialist police were ready to deal with far-right rioting after another night of destructive troubles in English cities. There has been a week of nightly riots in various cities since three children were killed in a mass stabbing. Six people were arrested and several police officers injured when they were attacked by rioters hurling bricks and fireworks in Plymouth. Officers in Belfast, Northern Ireland, were attacked as rioters attempted to set fire to a shop owned by a foreign national. There have been hundreds of arrests around riots that have flared up since. — **AFP**

■ COPENHAGEN



MAN DENIES ATTACK THAT INJURED DENMARK'S PM

A Polish man pleaded not guilty in court on Tuesday over charges that he attacked and injured the Danish prime minister during a chance encounter in June, in a case that raised concern over the safety of public officials in the Nordic country. The incident left Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen with a minor neck injury and led her to cancel several engagements while warning of rising aggression in public places. The 39-year-old defendant told the court he had recognised Frederiksen but denied touching her. The man said he could not remember much from the episode due to his intoxication at the time. — **Reuters**

■ ATLANTA



DEBBY POURS A FOOT OF RAIN ON COASTAL GEORGIA

Tropical Storm Debby inundated coastal Georgia and South Carolina with a deluge of rain that could flood Charleston, Savannah and other cities on Tuesday, a day after it slammed into Florida's Gulf Coast. At least six people have died in Florida and Georgia in the wake of the storm, which is expected to linger over the southeastern and mid-Atlantic coasts for days. Between 25 cm and 51 cm of rain was expected to fall along parts of Georgia, South Carolina and North Carolina through Friday. The governors of those states have declared states of emergency. — **Reuters**

Kamala picks Minnesota's Tim Walz for VP

WASHINGTON: Democratic presidential candidate Kamala Harris selected Minnesota Governor Tim Walz to be her running mate on Tuesday, choosing a progressive policy champion and a plain speaker from America's heartland to help win over rural, white voters. Harris announced the selection in a text message to supporters. "I'm pleased to share that I've made my decision: Minnesota Governor Tim Walz will join our campaign as my running mate," she said. "Tim is a battle-tested leader who has an incredible track record of getting things done for Minnesota families. I know that he will bring that same principled leadership to our campaign, and to the office of the vice-president." Walz, a 60-year-old US Army National Guard veteran and former teacher, was elected to a Republican-leaning district in the US House of Representatives in 2006 and served 12 years before being elected governor of Minnesota in 2018.

As governor, Walz has pushed a progressive agenda that includes free school meals, goals for tackling climate change, tax cuts for the middle class and expanded paid leave for Minnesota workers. Walz has long advocated for women's reproductive rights but also displayed a conservative bent while representing a rural district



Minnesota Governor Tim Walz (L) greets US Vice-President Kamala Harris as she arrives at the Minneapolis-St. Paul International Airport in Saint Paul, Minnesota. — **AFP file photo**

in the US House, defending agricultural interests and backing gun rights. Harris, the daughter of immigrants from Jamaica and India, is adding a popular Midwestern politician whose home state votes reliably for Democrats in presidential elections but is close to Wisconsin and Michigan, two

crucial battlegrounds. Such states are seen as critical in deciding the November 5 election, and Walz is widely seen as skilled at connecting with white, rural voters who in recent years have voted broadly for Republican Donald Trump, Harris' rival for the White House. Harris chose Walz over Josh Shapiro, the popular governor of

Pennsylvania, who had been seen as helpful to delivering his crucial battleground state. The Harris campaign hopes Walz's extensive National Guard career, coupled with a successful run as a high school football coach, and his Dad joke videos will attract rural voters who are not yet dedicated to a second Trump term in the White House.



Tim is a battle-tested leader who has an incredible track record of getting things done for Minnesota families... he will bring that same principled leadership to our campaign

KAMALA HARRIS
US Vice-President

Walz was a relative unknown nationally until the Harris "veepstakes" heated up, but his profile has since surged. A popular member of Congress, he reportedly had the backing of powerful former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, who was instrumental in persuading Biden to leave the race. Harris and Walz will face Trump and his running mate JD Vance, also a military veteran from the Midwest, in the November election. — **Reuters**

Russia says foiled Ukrainian attempted border incursions



Rescuers work at the site of a Russian missile strike, in Kharkiv, Ukraine. — **Reuters**

MOSCOW: Russia said on Tuesday it had repelled land and sea attacks by Ukrainian forces and claimed the capture of another village in eastern Ukraine. The governor of Russia's Kursk region said a woman was killed after Ukrainian forces attempted border incursions. "Today we are getting information from the Sudzha and Korenevo districts about attempts by Ukrainian armed forces to break through into the Kursk region," acting governor Alexei Smirnov said. He said that border guards and Russian soldiers "had prevented the border from being breached". Sudzha and Korenevo are close to Ukraine's northeastern Sumy region. Ukraine did not comment on the reports but the head of the Sumy region military administration, Oleksiy Drozdenko, told residents to pay attention to air raid alerts. Combatants from Ukraine

have made several brief incursions into Russia since the beginning of the conflict. These have involved units of Russians fighting in support of Kyiv — the Russian Volunteer Corps and the Freedom of Russia Legion. Russia has pushed back against the attacks but has sometimes needed to deploy artillery and aviation. In May, Russian forces launched a new offensive, crossing the border into Ukraine's Kharkiv region and taking a string of settlements. The Mash Telegram channel, seen as close to Russian security forces, wrote that the Ukrainian attack on Kursk began in the early hours involving small groups of Ukrainian soldiers and fighters from the Russian Volunteer Corps. Russian authorities also said that Ukrainian "saboteurs" had attempted a landing by sea on the Russian-held Tendra Spit in southern Ukraine.

"According to preliminary information, 12 high-speed craft were used — eight of them with the saboteurs and four with fire support," Moscow-appointed governor Vladimir Saldo said on social media. "Russian marines opened fire as the boats were approaching the Tendra Spit. Three boats were destroyed with their crews and sank. The others turned back," Saldo said. Russia's defence ministry said its forces had captured another village in eastern Ukraine, the latest in a series of gradual advances in recent weeks. Russian units "liberated the settlement of Timofeevka," it said on social media, using the Russian name for the village which is known as Timofiyivka in Ukrainian. The head of Russia's General Staff, Valery Gerasimov, visited troop positions in occupied parts of Ukraine's eastern Donetsk region. — **AFP**

CATALAN PARLIAMENT TO ELECT NEW LEADER

MADRID: The leader of Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's ruling Socialist party in Catalonia will likely face a vote in the region's parliament on Thursday to become its new leader, the head of the assembly said on Tuesday. Catalan regional president Josep Rull proposed the date for the vote to invest Salvador Illa as Catalonia's new leader. The move came after consultations with representatives of parties that won parliamentary seats in an inconclusive May election in the wealthy northeastern region of Spain. "After listening to the various parliamentary groups and weighing up the various proposals, I will propose... to convene the investiture plenary session on Thursday at 10:00 am," he told reporters. The Socialists won the most seats in the regional election but fell short of a majority, capturing just 42 seats in the 135-seat regional assembly. Illa has since secured the support of the six lawmakers of the far-left party that is part of the Sumar alliance as well the 20 belonging to leftist separatist party ERC. But the investiture vote

could be upended by the return of Catalonia's exiled former separatist leader Carles Puigdemont, who has vowed to attend even though he could be arrested. Puigdemont, the leader of the more hardline Catalan separatist party JxCAT, headed Catalonia regional government during a botched 2017 independence push. He fled abroad shortly after to avoid prosecution but is still wanted by Spain's justice system. Spain's Supreme Court ruled on July 1 that an amnesty law for Catalan separatists that came into force earlier this year would not fully apply to him. Puigdemont reiterated that he planned to return to Spain for the investiture vote even though this "may entail arrest and imprisonment". JxCAT Secretary-General Jordi Turull said on Tuesday that he would demand the investiture vote be suspended if Puigdemont is detained, while ERC spokeswoman Raquel Sans said it could delay the vote. If parties fail to agree on a new head of Catalonia's regional government by August 26, fresh elections will be called in the region in October. — **AFP**



Catalan regional president Pere Aragonés addresses a press conference, at the Generalitat Palace in Barcelona. — **AFP**

Muhammad Yunus: Bangladesh’s ‘banker to the poor’

SHAFIQUL ALAM

Nobel-winning microfinance pioneer Muhammad Yunus has been asked by Bangladeshi protest leaders to helm an interim government to replace ousted premier Sheikh Hasina, who has hounded him in speeches and through the courts.

The 84-year-old, known as the “banker to the poorest of the poor”, was awarded the Peace Prize in 2006 for his work loaning small cash sums to rural women, allowing them to invest in farm tools or business equipment and boost their earnings. Grameen Bank, the microfinance lender he founded, was lauded for helping unleash breakneck economic growth in Bangladesh, and its work has since been copied by scores of developing countries.

“Human beings are not born to suffer the misery of hunger and poverty,” Yunus said during his Nobel lecture, daring his audience to imagine a world where deprivation was confined to history museums. But his public profile in Bangladesh earned him the hostility of Hasina, who once accused him of “sucking blood” from the poor.

Before her hurried resignation and departure from Bangladesh on Monday, Hasina’s 15-year tenure was

characterised by a growing intolerance of dissent, and Yunus’s popularity marked him as a potential rival.

In 2007, Yunus announced plans to set up his own “Citizen Power” party to end Bangladesh’s confrontational political culture, which has been punctuated by instability and periods of military rule. He abandoned those ambitions within months, but the enmity aroused by his challenge to the ruling elite has persisted. Yunus was hit with more than 100 criminal cases and a smear campaign by a state-led Islamic agency. The government unceremoniously forced him out of Grameen Bank in 2011 — a decision fought by Yunus but upheld by Bangladesh’s top court. In January he and three colleagues from one of the companies he founded were sentenced to jail terms of six months — but immediately bailed pending appeal — by a Dhaka labour court which found they had illegally failed to create a workers’ welfare fund. All four had denied the charges and, with courts accused of rubber-stamping decisions by Hasina’s government, the case was criticised as politically motivated by watchdogs including Amnesty International.

Yunus said Tuesday he is ready to head a caretaker government . “If action is needed in Bangladesh, for my country and for the courage of my people, then I will take it,” he told AFP in a statement, also calling for “free elections”, Yunus said in an interview with India’s The Print that Bangladesh had

STUDENT LEADERS WHOSE PROTEST CAMPAIGN CULMINATED IN HASINA’S OUSTER ON MONDAY WERE EXPECTED TO MEET WITH THE MILITARY TO DEMAND YUNUS LEAD A CARETAKER GOVERNMENT.

been “an occupied country” under Hasina.

Yunus was born into a well-to-do family — his father was a successful goldsmith — in the coastal city of Chittagong in 1940. He credits his mother, who offered help to anyone in need who knocked on their door, as his biggest influence. Yunus won a Fulbright scholarship to study in the US and returned soon after Bangladesh won its independence from Pakistan in a brutal 1971 war.

When he returned, he was chosen to head Chittagong University’s economics department, but the young country was struggling through a severe famine and he felt compelled to take practical action. “Poverty was all around me, and I could not turn away from it,” he said in 2006. “I found it difficult to teach elegant theories of economics in the university classroom... I wanted to do something immediate to help people around me.” After years of experimenting with ways to provide credit for people too poor to qualify for traditional bank loans, he founded Grameen Bank in 1983.

The institution now has more than nine million clients on its books, according to its most recent annual report (2020), and more than 97 per cent of its borrowers are women. Yunus has won numerous high honours for his life’s work, including a US Presidential Medal of Freedom awarded by Barack Obama.

— AFP

Trump election case back on track but trial still far off

CHRIS LEFKOW

Former US president Donald Trump’s case on charges of conspiring to overturn the 2020 election is back on track, but whether a trial will be held before the November White House vote remains unlikely.

District Judge Tanya Chutkan regained jurisdiction over the historic case last week, after it was paused so the Supreme Court could rule on whether a former president is immune from criminal prosecution.

The conservative-dominated top court ruled 6-3 on July 1 that an ex-president has broad immunity from prosecution for official acts conducted while in office, but can be pursued for unofficial acts.

The case against Trump, the Republican presidential candidate, formally returned to Chutkan on Friday and she wasted no time in laying out a schedule for it to move forward, setting a calendar for the next proceedings.

A status hearing in USA vs Donald Trump is to be held on August 16 at a downtown Washington courthouse. Trump is not personally required to appear at the hearing, which is to be held three days ahead of the Democratic convention, where his November rival Vice President Kamala Harris is to receive the party’s presidential nomination.

Chutkan asked Special Counsel Jack Smith, who brought the charges against Trump and defence lawyers to file a schedule by Friday for pretrial proceedings. Chutkan also rejected a motion filed by Trump’s lawyers last year seeking to dismiss the case on the grounds of “selective and vindictive prosecution.” She said they could file the motion again once immunity issues have been resolved, but no “meaningful evidence” had been presented so far to back up defence claims that Trump was unlawfully singled out for prosecution to torpedo his renewed White House bid.

Trump is accused of conspiracy to defraud the United States and conspiracy to obstruct an official proceeding — the January 6, 2021 joint session of Congress that was attacked by a mob of Trump supporters. Trump is also accused of seeking to disenfranchise American voters with his false claims he won the 2020 election. He was originally scheduled to go on trial on March 4, but it was put on hold while his lawyers pushed his claim of presidential immunity all the way up to the Supreme Court.

Following the Supreme Court ruling, it will be up to Chutkan, an appointee of former Democratic president Barack Obama, to decide which of Trump’s actions regarding the 2020 election were official acts and which were unofficial acts subject to potential prosecution.

— AFP

The Internet of Things enhances efficiency, improves daily lives



Dr Khalfan Hamed al Harrasi

abusally@hotmail.com

“Necessity is the mother of invention,” and the IoT exemplifies humanity’s drive to innovate for convenience and efficiency. The Internet of Things (IoT) connects everyday objects and devices to the Internet, allowing them to send and receive data.

These “things” range from household appliances and wearable devices to industrial machinery and smart city infrastructure. By embedding sensors, software, and connectivity into these objects, IoT enables real-time monitoring, data collection, and automated decision-making. This enhances efficiency and improves our daily lives.

As “Rome wasn’t built in a day,” neither was the complex network of today’s IoT. The concept dates back to the early 1980s with the first internet-connected device: a Coke machine at Carnegie Mellon University. The term “Internet of Things” was coined in 1999 by Kevin Ashton during his work at Procter & Gamble. RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology was crucial in IoT’s initial stages. The evolution of IoT gained momentum in the 2000s with widespread internet access, wireless technology advancements, and miniaturised sensors and devices. Cloud computing further accelerated IoT development by providing expandable storage and processing power.

IoT enhances urban infrastructure, public safety, and resource management, paving the way for smart cities. Applications such as smart lighting, waste management, and traffic control promote sustainable and efficient urban living. In healthcare, IoT transforms patient care through remote monitoring, personalised treatment, and improved chronic disease management. Wearable devices and smart medical equipment offer real-time health data, facilitating early diagnosis and better outcomes. “An ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure,” aptly reflecting IoT’s proactive approach in healthcare.

IoT is a cornerstone of Industry 4.0, the fourth industrial revolution. It automates manufacturing processes,

predictive maintenance, and real-time production line monitoring, enhancing efficiency, reducing downtime, and saving costs. IoT supports precision farming by providing data on soil conditions, weather patterns, and crop health, enabling farmers to make informed decisions, optimise resources, and increase productivity. From thermostats and security cameras to voice-activated assistants and connected appliances, IoT-enabled homes offer greater comfort and security. Additionally, IoT aids environmental conservation by delivering real-time data on air quality, water levels, and wildlife movements, helping manage natural resources and address environmental threats effectively.

IoT functions through a network of interconnected devices that collect, share, and act on data. Sensors detect environmental changes and transform this information into data for processing. Actuators receive commands from control systems and execute actions accordingly. Connectivity involves various communication protocols and networks that facilitate data exchange. Data processing entails analysing collected data to extract meaningful insights, which can occur locally, at the edge, or in the Cloud. Common communication protocols in IoT include Wi-Fi, Bluetooth, and Zigbee. Cloud computing employs remote servers to store, manage, and process data, while edge computing processes data closer to its source.

In smart homes, IoT-enabled devices allow homeowners to automate and control household systems remotely. Smart thermostats, lighting systems, and appliances can be programmed or controlled via smartphone apps, enhancing convenience and energy efficiency. IoT enhances home security through smart locks, cameras, and alarm systems, providing real-time monitoring, alerts, and remote access. Smart meters and energy management systems monitor and optimise energy use, reducing costs and environmental impact.

In industrial IoT (IIoT), sensors

keep a constant eye on machinery and equipment, predicting potential failures and scheduling maintenance ahead of time. IIoT facilitates the automation and optimisation of manufacturing processes, as sensors and connected devices collect production line data to boost efficiency and product quality. IoT improves supply chain visibility and efficiency by tracking goods in transit, monitoring storage conditions, and fine-tuning inventory management. In agriculture, IoT sensors offer real-time data on soil conditions, weather, and crop health, enabling farmers to make well-informed decisions, optimise resources, and increase yields. IoT devices also track livestock health and location, allowing farmers to monitor vital signs, detect illnesses early, and manage grazing patterns wisely. IoT-based irrigation systems utilise soil moisture data and weather forecasts to fine-tune watering schedules, conserving water and enhancing crop health.

In smart cities, IoT technologies manage traffic flow and reduce congestion through smart traffic lights, real-time traffic monitoring, and adaptive signal control systems. IoT-enabled waste bins monitor fill levels and optimise collection routes, improving efficiency and reducing costs. Streetlights equipped with IoT sensors adjust brightness based on time of day and occupancy, enhancing energy efficiency and reducing light pollution. In retail, IoT solutions track inventory levels in real-time, preventing stockouts and overstock situations. IoT devices collect customer preferences and behaviour data, enabling personalised recommendations and promotions, enhancing the shopping experience.

“A chain is only as strong as its weakest link,” and in IoT, securing every device is paramount. IoT devices are often cyberattack targets due to their interconnected nature. If one device is compromised, it can expose the entire network, leading to data breaches. Ensuring robust security measures for IoT devices is crucial to prevent unauthorised access.

IOT DEVICES CONTINUOUSLY COLLECT AND TRANSMIT DATA, RAISING PRIVACY CONCERNS ABOUT DATA USE AND ACCESS. CLEAR POLICIES AND REGULATIONS ARE NEEDED TO PROTECT USER PRIVACY AND ENSURE RESPONSIBLE DATA HANDLING.

The power of organ donation

We all know that charity is a virtue. But it is all the more so when we refer it to as an act of gifting a life to a person. Organ donation is one such generous and noble act that humans can do for their fellow beings.

Donation of organs benefits donors and recipients, their families, friends and colleagues who love and support those in need of transplantation. It is a life-giving and life-enhancing opportunity for those who are at the end of the line for hope.

We generally see that donation of an organ becomes possible in cases like a fatal accident, sudden cardiac arrest, or brain-dead events, but that too only if the bereaved family members agree.

It was a headline across India recently about the mother of a young software engineer who agreed to donate her dead son's organs in the most virtuous manner that his death enabled other patients to live longer.

Although organ donation is an individual choice, if more people come forward as this distressed mother did, it can help alleviate the suffering of thousands of people who die annually. This can also make use of a multitude of healthy organs that are buried in cemeteries or burnt away on funeral grounds every day.

Though organ donation, whether from the living or the deceased, is gaining momentum, there is still a widening gap between the need for and the supply of transplantable organs.

Thousands of people are waiting for organ transplants across the world. Sadly, many of those unfortunate will never get the call into the hospital for their transplant and will die due to a shortage of people willing to donate their organs.

According to data gathering firm Statista, there were a total of 157,494 organ transplants worldwide in 2022. Kidney is the most transplanted organ worldwide, followed by the liver and the heart.

Spain had the highest rate of



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

THOUSANDS OF PEOPLE ARE WAITING FOR ORGAN TRANSPLANTS ACROSS THE WORLD. SADLY, MANY OF THOSE UNFORTUNATE WILL NEVER GET THE CALL INTO THE HOSPITALS FOR THEIR TRANSPLANT

deceased organ donors among select OECD countries, with 47 people per million population. The United States registered 44.5 donors per million people in 2022.

In the Sultanate of Oman, a country with a population of about five million, reports show that there were 19 kidney transplants and 11 liver transplants in Oman in 2023, while the number of people who pledged to donate organs after death has crossed 12,000 during the same period.

Through its National Organ Transplant Programme, the Omani government sets strategies and national laws and policies and monitors organ transplantation in the country.

Unfortunately, our society is not ready to accept that donating body parts is an honourable and 'ethical' act. It doesn't understand the fact that "during one's life one may be just as easily a potential organ receiver as one is an organ donor."

Many are worried about losing their loved one and, as such, might not want to think about losing any organ of the dead.

But why is there resistance to organ donation that, on the other hand, will mitigate the misfortune of thousands? In many cases, as experts point out, it is because of a lack of awareness, religious and cultural influences, distrust of medicine and hostility to new ideas, ethical rules and misinformation. Experts believe that education can streamline public opinion, and this, on the other hand, will make society accept that organ donation is a moral act and a source of health for everybody.

Significantly, most religious groups accept organ donation. Many of them believe organ donation is an act of charity, and some have even gone to the extent of declaring that it is "a duty."

We know it is hard to think about donating organs, but the act can save lives.

The person in need of an organ today may be a stranger, but tomorrow he or she may be your benefactor and they will love you dearly! Organ donation is the right thing to do!

A SAND DUNE-RUN



■ A girl runs across the Sam sand dunes in Jaisalmer, in India's desert state of Rajasthan on Tuesday. — AFP

A neglected solution to development-finance gap

Last week, the United Nations convened world leaders and development experts in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, to try to focus minds on the need for more development finance. In the face of tight government budgets, a looming debt crisis, and the chronic challenge of attracting private investment, the outlook for many developing countries – especially in Africa – seems bleak.

Yet the situation need not be so dire. Astonishingly, governments, financial institutions, and investors have neglected a critical tool. Although new technologies enable easy access to data that earlier generations could only dream of, they are not being used to make the most of every available dollar.

As the UN's Financing for Sustainable Development Report 2024 shows, better data leads to better finance, and improving data systems can unlock new funds and improve the efficiency of resource allocation. Specifically, investment in data and digital technologies (including artificial intelligence) can help us mobilise more money in three ways.

The first channel is taxation. If governments are to provide the health and education services that people rightly expect, they need a sustainable source of revenue. But effective taxation requires knowledge of where people are and how much they can afford to pay. Some of the earliest writing specimens are marks made thousands of years ago by tax collectors recording household



Mahmoud Mohieldin

The writer is UN Special Envoy on Financing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, is the co-author of Business, Government, and the SDGs



Claire Melamed

The writer is CEO of the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development Data

assets on clay tablets. Today, the tablets are digital, but billions of people still lack a registered physical address.

Investment in data systems and digital technologies can help. A recent randomised trial in Ghana showed that equipping tax collectors with better data-collection technology more than doubled tax revenues to local governments and resulted in a more progressive tax system (meaning the highest earners pay the highest rate).

Despite these clear benefits, too many governments and development partners neglect the foundational elements of modern data systems – the census, administrative competence, and core capacity in statistics offices – and the efficiencies that would follow from sharing data across governmental and public institutions.

Second, better data are key to mobilising private finance, which is essential to meeting the goals enshrined in the UN's 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda. But companies have long argued that a lack of data constrains their ability to invest in digital infrastructure, clean transportation, housing, and so forth. They can neither identify investment projects nor calculate the risks and likely returns.

In fact, much of this information

does exist. For example, in 2022, data from multilateral development banks (MDBs) on their portfolios' returns and defaults was crucial in establishing a \$1 billion fund to bring in private capital for sustainable-development investments. The problem is that while some of these data are already available, they need to be made accessible at a more granular level to be useful to ratings agencies and other private-sector interlocutors. By focusing resources on such improvements, we can strengthen the link to private-sector investment flows.

Finally, we need better information not only to mobilise finance but also to make the most efficient use of available resources. Without data, allocating

resources – whether from domestic sources, bilateral or multilateral aid programmes, or private-sector investment – will depend on assumptions and guesswork. That is not good enough, especially nowadays, when every dollar needs to be leveraged as much as possible.

Reliable data enable decision-makers to focus directly on the greatest needs and to determine what is and is not working. Consider traffic accidents. Because improving infrastructure is costly, Kenya combined administrative, crowdsourced, and private-sector data to enable the National Police to generate 100 new variables for identifying crash hotspots; it turned out that in Nairobi, the capital, half of casualties occurred on just 5 per cent of the road network. Public

authorities have since focused their road-safety interventions on these high-risk areas, resulting in a much more efficient use of available funds.

Rapid advances in AI create even bigger opportunities to process and analyse data in similar ways. But to make the most of these technologies, political leaders first must invest more in data systems, mandate data sharing across institutions, and support the development of the right public-sector skills and capacities.

This should be an easy sell because investments in data pay off many times over. One recent study suggests that projects focused on strengthening data systems return an average of \$32 for every \$1 invested, whether through doubling tax revenues, raising billions in new private-sector investments, or achieving greater efficiency in the allocation of available resources.

If anything, AI and other data-driven technologies will supercharge this process, making such investments even more productive.

There is no magic money tree for global finance. But by failing to invest in data, and by failing to make the most of the data available, too many governments are making life harder for themselves. Data can unlock more financing. We just need today's leaders to turn the key.

© Project Syndicate, 2024



There is no magic money tree for global finance.

sport



OMAN’S ARMoured ‘B’ SNATCH FIRST TITLE

ARMoured ‘A’ FINISH SECOND, ROP ‘B’ THIRD AT DHOFAR KHAREEF TENT PEGGING

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 6

The Dhofar Khareef Tent Pegging Championship was launched on Monday evening at Ateen equestrian track in the Wilayat of Salalah. The event is part of equestrian activities during khareef season, organised by Oman Equestrian and Racing Federation, in cooperation with the Dhofar Equestrian Committee and support of Dhofar Governor’s Office, Dhofar Municipality, Dhofar Equestrian Company,

Dhofar Tourism and Salalah Flour Mills Company. The competitions witnessed seven teams from various cavalry units and private stables, seven rounds were on the first day represented by individual spear, double spear, and spear teams for different sizes of pegs. The Sultan of Oman’s Armoured Division (B) team won the first day title at team level, represented by Ahmed bin Khamis al Balushi, Mohammed bin Khamis al Siyabi, Hisham bin Ali al Bakri and Zaid bin Hamoud al Saidi. The Sultan

of Oman’s Armoured Division (A) team claimed second place, represented by Khalid bin Amer al Habsi, Khalid bin Salem al Maamari, Ali bin Khamis al Balushi and Nasser bin Rashid al Siyabi. Royal Oman Police (B) team finished third, represented by Salem bin Khamis al Harthy, Hussein bin Ali al Hosni, Mohammed bin Said al Abroui and Dawood bin Aajeb al Mashrafi. At the individual level, Nasser bin Rashid al Siyabi, from the Sultan of Oman’s Armoured

Division (A), won first place. Hussein bin Ali al Hosni, from the Royal Oman Police Cavalry won the second place. Namir bin Mohammed al Shidi of Namir Equestrian School was third. At the end of first day, Hamoud bin Ali al Nasiri, Secretary-General of Oman Equestrian and Racing Federation, crowned the champions at team and individual levels. **NOAH WINS 100 KM RACE** Recently, Knight Noah bin Abdulrahim al Balushi, riding



The Sultan of Oman’s Armoured Division (B) with the title.

the horse ‘Ghazi Al Ghawazi’, won the title of the Dhofar khareef 2024 Local Endurance Race for a distance of 100 km, which was held on Khor Al Dahariz beach with the participation of 38 horses. The horse ‘HM Love Kuwait’, ridden by Mohammed bin Sulaiman al Fouri, won second place. The horse ‘Aida’, ridden

by Mohammed bin Abdulaziz al Shamsi, won third place. The race included three stages: the first stage for a distance of 38 km and was given the white colour, the second stage for a distance of 38 km and was also given the white colour and the third and final stage was allocated the yellow colour for a distance of 24 km.

PSG sign midfielder Neves from Benfica on 5-year deal



Benfica’s Joao Neves. – Reuters

PARIS: Paris St Germain have signed highly rated 19-year-old Portuguese defensive midfielder Joao Neves from Primeira Liga side Benfica on a contract until 2029, the Ligue 1 champions said on Monday. Neither PSG nor Benfica disclosed the financial details, but The Athletic reported that the deal was worth around 60 million euros (\$66 million) plus 10 million euros in potential add-ons. A product of the Benfica academy, Neves has made 75 appearances for the club across all competitions and has been capped nine times for Portugal.

He won the Primeira Liga in the 2022-23 season and Supertaca Candido de Oliveira last year with Benfica. “Joao is one of the most talented players in Portugal and internationally,” PSG President Nasser al Khelaifi said in a statement. “He was so passionate to join PSG and determined to fight for the jersey - which is what we expect of all our players. “We continue to build a fantastic young team at PSG - based on teamwork, talent and collective spirit - which is the foundation of our club’s great future.” — Reuters

West Ham sign Rodriguez, Fuellkrug to boost squad

LONDON: Argentina international midfielder Guido Rodriguez became West Ham’s sixth summer signing on Tuesday. The 30-year-old, who was part of the Argentina squad which won the World Cup in 2022 and the 2021 and 2024 Copa America titles, was available on a free transfer following the expiry of his contract at Real Betis. Rodriguez spent the last four-and-a-half years in Spain, becoming a key player as Betis have qualified for European football in each of the past four seasons. “I feel like it’s every footballer’s dream to play in the Premier League, and I was very excited when I heard that West Ham were interested in me,” Rodriguez said in a club statement. “I will bring experience to the team, and though I’m aware the Premier League is very physical, I’m ready to put the work in to make sure I’m up to the task.” The Hammers have already added German international striker Niclas Fuellkrug, wingers Crysencio Summerville and Luis Guilherme and defender Max



Guido Rodriguez

Kilman to their squad for Julen Lopetegui’s first season in charge. Technical Director Tim Steidten said Rodriguez’s signing was a “statement of intent” as they aim to improve on finishing ninth in the Premier League last season. “This is a massive moment for West Ham United in bringing a player of Guido’s pedigree to the club,” said Steidten. “He is a player I have admired for a long time, and we couldn’t be happier to have completed the deal to bring him to east London.”



Niclas Fuellkrug

FUELLKRUG MOVE COMPLETED On Monday, West Ham signed Germany striker Niclas Fuellkrug from Borussia Dortmund for a reported fee of £27.5 million (\$35 million). Fuellkrug scored 16 goals in his sole season at Dortmund to help the German giants reach last season’s Champions League final. The 31-year-old also netted twice despite starting all five matches on the bench as Germany reached the quarter-finals of Euro 2024 on home soil.

A battering ram of a centre-forward, Fuellkrug is a huge fan favourite in his homeland, with many calling for him to start ahead of Arsenal’s Kai Havertz at the Euros. “I think the Premier League is the best league in the world, and for me it is the right time to move over to England and play for a big club like West Ham,” said Fuellkrug in a club statement. West Ham have been one of the busier Premier League sides during a quiet transfer window so far. Wingers Crysencio Summerville and Luis Guilherme and defender Max Kilman have also joined the 2023 Europa Conference League winners for Julen Lopetegui’s first season in charge. “We are delighted to have signed Niclas,” said West Ham technical director Tim Steidten, who previously worked with Fuellkrug at Werder Bremen. “I have worked with him previously and I know what he will bring to us in terms of his physical and finishing qualities, as well as his character and mentality.” — AFP

BILES EXITS GAMES WITH SILVER, HODGKINSON CLAIMS 800M GOLD

Duplantis soars to world record

PARIS: Armand Duplantis fulfilled a childhood dream as he broke his own pole vault world record in retaining his Olympic crown on Monday but Simone Biles showed she is human after all.

The day after US sprinter Noah Lyles blasted his way into the record books with the narrowest of wins in the men's 100m, a pulsating Stade de France witnessed another historic evening of track and field action.

Not for the first time, the night belonged to the invincible Duplantis.

The US-born Swedish great was the sole vaulter to go beyond the six-metre mark, leaving American Sam Kendricks trailing in a distant silver, with Greece's Emmanouil Karalis in bronze.

After securing gold again, it was then a case of how high the 24-year-old Duplantis could go.

He set a record of 6.24m in April but with the Stade de France holding its breath, he bettered that on his third and final attempt at 6.25m before milking the deafening applause of the crowd.

"What can I say? I just broke a world record at the Olympics, biggest possible stage for a pole vaulter," Duplantis said. "The biggest dream since a kid was to break the world record at the Olympics and I've been able to do that in front of the most ridiculous crowd I've ever competed in front of."

Kenya's Beatrice Chebet produced a masterful display of tactical running to win the women's 5,000m and end defending champion Sifan Hassan's dream of a long-distance treble.

Britain's Keely Hodgkinson produced a thrilling gun-to-tape run to win the women's 800m while America's Valarie Allman defended her discus title.

In early action at the track, the "big three" advanced comfortably in the heats of the men's 400m hurdles, seen as one of the most competitive races of the Games.

Defending champion Karsten Warholm and his challengers, American Rai Benjamin and Brazilian Alison Dos Santos, all cruised through and eased up well before the line.

Fresh from his breathtaking

triumph, Lyles breezed to victory in his 200m heat with a time of 20.19sec to reach the semifinals.

BILES SETTLES FOR SILVER

Earlier in the day, all eyes were on Biles to see if she could write some more history of her own.

Widely considered the greatest gymnast in history, the American was bidding to add to her Paris haul of three golds in balance beam and floor finals at the Bercy Arena, in her final day of competition.

But the 27-year-old slipped off the beam while walking backwards in her routine, the unusual error gifting gold to Italy's Alice D'Amato.

A furious Biles exited the arena to prepare for her floor exercise final, which also ended in heartbreak as two landing hiccups sent her into silver behind Brazil's Rebeca Andrade. "Today has been absolutely wild," Biles said, adding that she was "actually very happy, proud and even more excited that it's over".

She famously fell victim to the debilitating mental block gymnasts call the "twisties" at the Tokyo Olympics three years ago but has bounced back emphatically to silence critics who slammed her as a quitter.

Biles ended her campaign in Paris with three golds and a silver, bringing her total Olympic haul to 11, seven of which are gold.

The River Seine was judged clean enough to stage the mixed triathlon relay following uncertainty over pollution levels and illness in the build-up.

The race turned out to be a thriller, Germany's Laura Lindemann holding off a fierce challenge from the United States and Britain to take gold.

In a packed day 10 schedule, track cycling began at the National Velodrome.

Britain gave what they hope will be a taste of things to come by storming to the first gold, in the women's team sprint, with the world record shattered five times in the session.

South Korea's An Se-young won women's badminton gold, with Denmark's Viktor Axelsen retaining his men's crown. — AFP



Sweden's Armand Duplantis passes 6.10m and sets the new Olympic record in the men's pole vault final of the athletics event at the Paris 2024 Olympic Games at Stade de France in Saint-Denis, north of Paris. — AFP



Britain's Keely Hodgkinson celebrates after winning the women's 800m final of the athletics event at Stade de France in Saint-Denis. — AFP



Kenya's Beatrice Chebet crosses the finish line to win the women's 5000m final of the athletics event at Stade de France in Saint-Denis. — AFP



US' Simone Biles competes in the artistic gymnastics women's balance beam final at the Bercy Arena. — AFP

Chopra gets superb start to javelin title defence

PARIS: India's javelin hero Neeraj Chopra underlined his claim as the favourite with a single throw on Tuesday, launching his Olympic title defence with 89.34 metres in qualification.

He delivered India's first athletics gold three years ago and looked ready to bring home more hardware with the farthest throw of the day and his best of the season.

"It was a good throw. Maybe the biggest ever in qualifying

for me. All the throwers look in good shape," he said.

"I know I have not reached my peak. I am not yet as good as I would like to be technically or in distance, so I want to improve and throw further. And I want to set an example for other Indian athletes so that we can compete here with the best."

Grenadian Anderson Peters was second in their Group B with 88.63 on one attempt and hopes to dismantle Chopra to add Olympic gold to his 2022



Neeraj Chopra of India in action in men's javelin throw qualification. — Reuters

and 2019 world championship titles.

Pakistan's world silver medallist Arshad Nadeem (86.59) was also among the 12 best performers to move on to Thursday's medal round.

German Julian Weber endured fourth-place heartbreak in Tokyo and again at the two most recent worlds but was ready to fight again for the podium as he reached 87.76 on his lone attempt to finish at the top of Group A.

"It would mean everything to me (to win a medal). It's my biggest dream," he told reporters. "I will go all in on Thursday and hopefully I get one."

Kenyan Julius Yeo, the silver medallist in 2016, stepped awkwardly on his approach and crashed to the ground as he hurled the javelin 85.97 to reach the final on his last attempt.

Czech Jakub Vadlejch, silver medallist in Tokyo, also moved on with 85.63. — Reuters



France's Jean-Philippe (L) celebrates with Desire Doue. — AFP



Spanish midfielder Fermin Lopez celebrates after scoring their first goal. — AFP

France set up football final against Spain

LYON: Jean-Philippe Mateta scored twice as hosts France came from behind to beat Egypt 3-1 after extra time on Monday and set up an Olympic men's football final showdown with Spain, who edged Morocco 2-1.

Thierry Henry's France looked to be heading for defeat in their semifinal in Lyon after Mahmoud Saber put Egypt ahead against the run of play just after the hour mark.

But Crystal Palace striker Mateta levelled late on to force extra time, in which he headed France in front after Egypt's Omar Fayed was sent off.

Michael Olise then sealed the win on 108 minutes and France, looking for their second Olympic men's football gold medal and first since 1984, will now face Spain at the Parc des Princes in Paris on Friday.

"When you see France picking up medals all over the place, you say to yourself it is up to us now to not let everyone down," said France coach Henry.

"You don't want to be the team who don't win a medal so at least that is done. Now we will see what colour we get, but honestly, I am living a dream here and I don't want to wake up."

France hit the woodwork through Loic Bade late in the first half and were caught out by a sucker punch when Saber fired Egypt ahead against the run of play on 62 minutes.

The hosts then pushed frantically for an equaliser and struck the woodwork twice in a matter of seconds, captain Alexandre Lacazette heading off a post and Bade nodding the follow-up against the bar.

The leveller arrived in the 83rd minute, with new Bayern Munich signing Olise the creator as he cut through the middle on a driving run before playing in

Mateta to finish.

France hoped to find a winner before extra time, but a penalty appeal after Fayed blocked a Bade header with his hand was dismissed after a long VAR review.

Egypt were quickly reduced to 10 men in extra time when Fayed — already booked for arguing against the penalty call — saw yellow again for chopping down Desire Doue.

France went ahead in the 99th minute when Kiliann Sildillia headed Olise's delivery back across goal for Mateta to head in his fourth goal of the tournament.

EGYPT AND MOROCCO TO FIGHT FOR BRONZE

The excellent Olise fired in the third at the start of the second half of extra time after a clearance struck Doue and fell into his path and France celebrated wildly at full-time. Earlier, substitute Juanlu Sanchez struck a late winner for Spain as they fought back to beat Morocco in the first semi-final in Marseille.

Morocco had led through a Soufiane Rahimi penalty towards the end of the first half, a sixth goal at the Olympics for the tournament's top scorer, and his fourth to come from the spot.

That sent the large Moroccan support at the Stade Velodrome wild, but Spain kept their cool to equalise through their own star man in the 66th minute.

Fermin Lopez, a member of Spain's triumphant Euro 2024 squad, who scored twice in the Olympic quarter-final against Japan, pounced in the 66th minute when the ball broke loose in the box and fired low into the net to make it 1-1. With extra-time looming, Spain won it in the 85th minute as Lopez found Sanchez bounding into the area, and he sent a shot low into the far corner. — AFP



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 6

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Economy

TENDER NOTICE

The Ministry of Economy
Announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Document Fees in Omani Riyals	Last Date For Tender Submission
2024/11	Supply, Installation, Testing, Commissioning, migration to DMZ, Support, and Maintenance of New Servers	LO: 25 SME: 10 RE: 25	9/9/ 2024

First

- All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender tender from the following website: www.etendering.tenderboard.gov.om

The bidders must submit their offers electronically via the website.

Second

- Tenders that does not meet the above conditions shall not be considered. The ministry shall have the right to reject any tender, and shall not be obliged to award the tender for the lowest bid without giving reasons.

For inquiries regarding tenders, please contact through the website of the electronic tendering system; <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

For inquiries regarding the technical support of the electronic tendering system, please contact via e-mail and phone :

✉ etenderhd@mtc.gov.om
☎ + 96824402200

National Finance records exceptional Q2 financial performance

MUSCAT: Continuing its distinguished journey of excellence, National Finance, the Sultanate of Oman's leading finance company, has recorded outstanding financial performance for the period ended June 30, 2024.

This remarkable achievement reflects the company's resolute commitment to surpassing customer expectations and enhancing shareholder value.

It also underscores the efficacy and precision of its comprehensive growth and expansion strategy, further solidifying its leadership position in the finance sector.

Reflecting its prudent expenditure efficiency measures, robust risk management capabilities and strategic focus on sustainable growth, National Finance reported an 11.29% surge in operational profits for the period ending June 30, 2024, amounting to RO 8.20 million, up from RO 7.37 million in June 2023.

The company's Net Investment in Lease reached RO 534.94 million, marking a 9.88% growth from RO 486.86 million in December 2023. Profit after tax increased by 8.28% to RO 5.86



million, compared to RO 5.41 million in June 2023.

Cementing its strong market position and its potential for exponential growth, National Finance's total regulatory capital of RO 140.93 million is the highest among Finance and Leasing Companies (FLCs).

Additionally, the company remains the largest finance and leasing company in the country, in terms of asset size, branch network, revenues and profit.

Expressing gratitude to the contributors who have fuelled the company's ongoing success, Tariq bin Suleiman al Farsi, Chief Executive Officer at National Finance, commented, "Our

success and growth are primarily attributed to the support from the Central Bank of Oman, the Financial Services Authority, the Muscat Stock Exchange, as well as our bankers and depositors.

Their backing has been crucial in enabling us to diversify our product offerings and expand our reach nationwide.

We also extend our gratitude to our vehicle and equipment dealer partners, customers, and shareholders, whose significant contributions have propelled National Finance's growth.

Above all, we express our deepest appreciation to the company's leadership, management, and dedicated staff,

whose relentless hard work has secured our top position within the sector."

National Finance's robust performance is directly attributed to its continuous investment in human capital development.

Central to its operational strategy is the prioritisation of training and upskilling initiatives, reflecting the company's commitment to equipping employees with the skills needed to assume higher responsibilities and enhance leadership capabilities, providing them with opportunities for career growth and personal progress.

Furthermore, in an exemplary showcase of nurturing local talents, National Finance boasts an impressive Omanisation rate of 91.15%, surpassing the targeted rate of 90%, with 340 Omani employees out of the total workforce of 373.

As a responsible corporate citizen, National Finance makes a lasting impact through Imtidad, its corporate social responsibility arm, which empowers the communities it serves and partakes in sustainability initiatives that contribute towards a promising future for the country.



Al Mouj Muscat: A catalyst for Oman's thriving tourism sector

MUSCAT: Oman's travel and tourism sector continues to demonstrate significant economic expansion, predicted to grow four times faster than the national economy over the next 10 years and increase its GDP contribution to more than RO 3.3 billion in 2024, representing 7.6% of the country's economy according to the World Travel and Tourism Council.

In 2023, the Sultanate of Oman welcomed close to four million international arrivals – up by a third on the previous year – and was ranked among the top 20 global destinations.

Al Mouj Muscat has proven to be a key player in that ongoing success story, not only overcoming the challenges posed by two financial crises and a global pandemic but also positively thriving as a vibrant integrated tourism development.

By attracting more than four million domestic, regional and international visitors and tourists annually, Al Mouj Muscat owes its success to its key tourism assets including its premium residential offerings, luxury hotels, world-class marina and 18-hole championship golf course.

This perfect blend of amenities not only keeps pace with such impressive visitor figures but actively drives growth.

A substantial driver for tourism in Oman, drawing sports enthusiasts, leisure seekers and food connoisseurs alike, Al Mouj Muscat boasts world-class amenities such as the 400-berth Al Mouj Marina, the largest in the country; Al Mouj Golf, an 18-hole championship golf course designed by Greg

Norman and ranked second in the region; 2km of beach; and more than 85 retail and dining experiences.

It is also host to major global sporting events such as the America's Cup (sailing), European and Asian tours and Oman Open (golf), and Al Mouj Muscat Marathon (athletics), firmly placing the Sultanate of Oman on the global sports tourism map.

Al Mouj Muscat's financial figures are an equally impressive feat. Since inception, Al Mouj Muscat has attracted more than \$ 883 million (RO 340 million) in foreign direct investments, with expectations for continued growth as international investors' appetites expand.

Assets have grown by 777% and are projected to reach \$3.5 billion (RO 1.35 billion) upon project completion.

Throughout its 18 years, Al Mouj Muscat has given back to the surrounding community through various corporate social responsibility outreach programmes and activities, totalling RO 4.5 million, with more than 100 SMEs operating within its community.

It has created more than 2,200 permanent jobs, of which over 75% of these positions are occupied by Omani nationals.

Upon project completion, this number is expected to rise to 5,500 permanent positions.

"Placemaking is at the heart of what we do and we are proud that our comprehensive sustainability framework is generating a positive socio-economic impact that is fully aligned with national directives and priorities," said Nasser al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat.

TANISHQ MAKES SPARKLING DEBUT IN OMAN WITH FIRST SHOWROOM AT OMAN AVENUES MALL

MUSCAT: Tanishq, India's largest jewellery retail brand, recently celebrated the grand opening of its first showroom in Muscat at Oman Avenues Mall in partnership with Khimji Ramdas, a prominent business conglomerate in Oman. This collaboration marks a significant milestone, bringing Tanishq's exquisite jewellery collection to the region.

Located in this popular shopping centre, the new store offers a unique shopping experience, attracting many visitors. The prime location and elegant design of the showroom are set to make it a favourite spot for discovering Tanishq's beautiful jewellery.

With the support of Khimji Ramdas, the showroom is poised to become a go-to destination for jewellery enthusiasts in Muscat.

The grand opening ceremony, held on August 6, 2024, was a celebration of elegance and tradition, reflecting Tanishq's commitment to excellence and innovation in jewellery design. The event was attended by esteemed



guests, including local dignitaries, celebrities, and key figures from the business community.

Occupying a spacious 1500+ square feet, Tanishq's new showroom at Oman Avenues Mall features an elegant and contemporary design, creating a luxurious shopping environment that showcases the brand's extensive collection. From intricately crafted gold jewellery to

stunning diamond pieces and timeless traditional designs, customers will find an array of options that cater to every occasion and preference.

"Expanding into Oman marks a significant milestone for Tanishq. We are thrilled to bring our legacy of exquisite craftsmanship and innovation to this vibrant market. Our new showroom at Oman

Avenues Mall represents our dedication to offering the highest quality jewellery and a personalised shopping experience. We are eager to forge new connections with our customers in Oman and provide them with a memorable and delightful experience," said Kuruvilla Markose, CEO, International Business at Titan.

"We are delighted to announce the opening of the first Tanishq showroom in Oman, at Oman Avenues Mall. Tanishq has had an amazing growth journey since its inception in the 90s and is today, one of the most admired jewellery brands under the esteemed TATA umbrella.

At Khimji Ramdas, we take immense pride in our association with Tanishq and are confident that this new showroom will receive tremendous response from our valued customers. We look forward to continuing this successful partnership and offering great products to the people of Oman," said Nailesh Khimji, Director at Khimji Ramdas.

Lexus RX: Redefining luxury and experiences

MUSCAT: Lexus has continuously thrived in bringing premium luxury experiences and promises an uncompromising attitude on quality, style and design that echoes the brand's ethos.

The RX creates an exceptional driving experience and delivers an unparalleled command on the road with its bold aesthetics, ravishing appearance and high-tech ergonomic controls. The Lexus RX line-up is a powerhouse of technology and innovations that are clustered for the high-tech modern world.

The RX SUVs are available in three fuel-efficient variants; the gasoline-powered RX350, the hybrid-electric RX350h and the RX500h F Sport which are a powerhouse of technological innovations.

The RX continues to make a statement with its outclass rear and bumper design seamlessly blending into the L-shape combination lamps and LED headlamps with AHS. It features a persona-exclusive grille complimenting the lightweight aerodynamic design. The RX sets a benchmark in the SUV product lineup. The RX350 is powered by a 4-cylinder, 2.4-liter turbocharged engine that produces 275 hp and 430 nm of torque and is paired to a new 8-speed Direct-Shift automatic transmission (8AT).

Meanwhile, the RX350h features a hybrid-electric system combining a 2.5-liter petrol engine and electric motor to produce a total of 247 hp, which is paired to an electronically controlled continuously variable transmission (E-CVT) to provide



a fuel consumption value of 20.7 km/L. The all-new RX500h F Sport is all about performance. Complementing its gratifying

demeanour, the F Sport version runs on a hybrid-electric system, pairing a 2.4-litre turbocharged engine with an electric motor with a

combined power of 366 hp mated to a 6-speed automatic transmission. The Lexus RX represents high-end class with its distinctive

outlook, bold contours, and stunning leather-coated premium interiors with multi-colour ambient lighting and 3-zone AC.

View the outside world with its panoramic sunroof while maintaining focus on the road with a head-up display, panoramic view monitor, and digital rearview mirror.

Indulge in seamless connectivity with wireless charging trays, the Mark Levinson premium surround sound system, 12.3" rear seat entertainment system with 2 pieces headphones, and the integrated e-latch system.

Delve into bespoke luxury this summer and experience luxe automobiles from Lexus. Get a first-hand experience and request a test drive at your nearest Lexus Oman Showroom.

EA CHAIRMAN KICKS OFF HIGH-LEVEL PLANNING FOR OMAN CLIMATE WEEK



Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, presides over the inaugural meeting of OCW 2025's Executive Committee held recently.

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 6

Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, presided over the inaugural meeting of the Executive Committee overseeing the delivery of the first edition of the Oman Climate Week (OCW), scheduled to be held in Muscat during February 24-27, 2025.

Al Amri was joined by distinguished figures representing key Omani, regional and international stakeholders in the global campaign against climate change. In welcome remarks to the committee members – attending in-person and virtually – he affirmed the importance of crafting an impactful forum, underpinned by action-oriented programmes and initiatives, to help galvanise the international community forward in the achievement of global net-zero goals.

Lending their significant expertise in the drafting of the forum agenda as Executive Committee members are: Dr Mohammed al Kalbani (Environment Authority); Dr Amer al Hinai, Dr Malik al Wardi and Dr Ghazi al Rawas (Sultan Qaboos University); Rumaitha al Busaidi (Environmental Society of Oman); Shamsa al Rawahi and Muaadh al Madhani (44.01); Ahmed al Rawahi (Asyad Group); Dr Samir Tantawi (UN IPCC); Dr Alexandra Soezer (Climate Action Centre); Emma Champion (Bloomberg); Miraq Al Jubouri (UN ESCWA); and Hussam Othmany (Gulf Organisation for Research and Development).

Proceedings during OCW 2025, focusing on the overarching theme, 'Uniting the World for a Sustainable Tomorrow', will encompass a broad array of topics at the heart of the global net-zero journey. This list includes: Climate Mitigation, Climate Adaptation, Climate Finance, Carbon Markets, Climate Technologies, Loss and Damage, and Social Inclusion.

Supplementing this list, based on the recommendations of the newly constituted Executive Committee, are topics focusing on Sustainable Finance, Training and Capacity Building, Remote Sensing Technologies, and Satellite Observatory Systems.

Furthermore, with the goal of delivering an inclusive and well-rounded forum, committee

members also called for the incorporation of a Future Leaders Awards session into the programme agenda.

Additionally, local and international climate tech start-ups, NGOs and young entrepreneurs will be invited to present their climate and environmental tech innovations in a dedicated area within the exhibition. Field trips to places of environmental interest around Oman will also be organised for the benefit of international delegates.

OCW 2025 is also envisioned to be an action-packed three-day forum featuring not only the Strategic Conference as its centrepiece, but also Masterclass Workshops, Tech and Science Talks, and exclusive sessions dedicated to Future Climate Leaders and Women in Climate.

Prominent international experts will be among a stellar line-up of speakers who will address the main summit and workshops.

Additionally, global energy companies and technology providers will have the opportunity to showcase their capabilities at an exhibition planned alongside the forum.

Given Oman's burgeoning role as a frontrunner in the global energy transition, OCW 2025 will also serve as an opportunity for researchers and innovators to present their tech solutions to an international audience.

In this regard, a Scientific Committee composed of SQU experts has been tasked with reviewing research papers presented during the forum before they are compiled into a special journal to be issued with the support of a reputed publisher.

Supporting the Environment Authority in organising a high-impact launch edition of Oman Climate Week is local Omani energy-centric events firm Birba.

By leveraging its consideration expertise in the events space, Birba has also pledged to harness what is anticipated to be OCW 2025's robust appeal to advance a number of Oman's strategic national objectives: Supporting economic diversification and job creation, Boosting business tourism, Positioning Oman as a hub for innovation, Highlighting opportunities for investment, and Strengthening Oman Vision 2040 goals.

Nama Water Services enhances Oman water security, sustainability

MUSCAT: Nama Water Services is intensifying efforts to achieve water sector sustainability and security in Oman through a series of strategic projects that span the governorates from Musandam to Al Wusta.

Eng Ahmed bin Nasser al Abri, General Manager of Projects for the Central and Western Sectors, emphasised the company's vision to lead in water services and contribute to Oman's sustainability.

One of the key initiatives is the water transmission project from Suhar's desalination plant to Al Dhahirah Governorate, launched in 2023 at a cost exceeding RO 150 million.

This project includes a 230-kilometre water transport line and 15 tanks with a storage capacity of 451,000 cubic metres. Another significant project is the enhancement of the water system between Barka and Suhar desalination plants, completed at a cost of RO 86 million.

This initiative involves laying 140 kilometres of pipelines and establishing three pumping stations with a capacity of 238,000 cubic metres per day.



One of the key initiatives is the water transmission project from Suhar's desalination plant to Al Dhahirah Governorate, at a cost exceeding RO 150 million.

It aims to secure water supply for Al Batinah North and Al Batinah South governorates and improve interconnections with desalination plants in Qurayat, Al Ghubrah, Barka and Suhar.

The water transmission enhancement to Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, completed at over RO 128 million, includes a 173-kilometre pipeline from Al Khoudh in Al Seeb to Al Dakhiliyah. It features a strategic reservoir of 350,000 cubic metres and five balancing tanks with a total capacity of 90,000 cubic metres.

This project aims to meet

the rising water demand in Al Dakhiliyah and supports inter-governorate water supply flexibility. Work is also progressing on the water transmission system between Al Sharqiyah North and Al Sharqiyah South governorates, at a cost of RO 125 million.

This project, starting from the new desalination plant in Asilah, involves 312 kilometres of pipelines, four new pumping stations and 17 tanks with a total capacity of 265,000 cubic metres.

It includes necessary civil, mechanical, electrical and control systems.



Eng Ahmed bin Nasser al Abri

Additionally, the long-term water solutions project for Al Seeb, costing RO 45 million and expected to be completed by the last quarter of 2025, aims to ensure potable water sustainability until 2050.

This project includes the construction of transmission and distribution lines, 13 strategic tanks with a capacity of over 110,000 cubic metres, and a main pumping station with sterilisation and monitoring systems.

It has so far created a local added value of RO 10 million through the use of local materials and employment of national manpower, with small and medium enterprises contributing business worth RO 3 million.

Competition watchdog green-lights economic concentration in steel sector

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 6

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), represented by the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre, has approved a request for economic concentration in the steel sector.

This move is aimed at enhancing economic efficiencies by fostering more competitive market conditions, creating more efficient economic entities and benefiting the final consumer.

Last September, the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre pledged to work closely and collaboratively with the local business community to combat anti-competitive practices in Omani marketplaces.

According to a high-level representative, the Centre will focus on the importance of fairness and responsibility in business practices.

Nasra al Habsi, Assistant General Manager, acknowledged that some types of tenders, which may stipulate certain minimum criteria



The steel sector is a rapidly expanding industry in Oman. – Picture for illustration only

in support of Omanisation, in-country value (ICV) creation, and so on, may shut out some companies from bidding. While such stipulations are in the strategic national interest, other practices that are inherently anti-competitive will not be acceptable.

Sultan bin Saif al Maawali, Head of the Economic Concentration Requests Control Department at the Ministry, noted that some economic concentration requests might have adverse effects on competition, potentially

creating barriers to market entry and expansion.

This could restrict the ability of current or potential competitors to compete and hinder the flow of both local and foreign investments, especially new ones, which are crucial for increasing production capacities.

The Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre aims to enhance the effectiveness of the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Law, issued by Royal Decree No 67/2014.

The goal is to regulate fair competition across all economic sectors to drive economic development, encourage and attract investments and contribute to the growth of various economic sectors by attracting both national and foreign investments.

Additionally, the Department of Economic Concentration Requests Control conducts subsequent oversight of economic concentration requests in cases of mergers or acquisitions. Oversight of economic concentration requests is one of the most important functions within the department.

Asyad Shipping targets 2pc carbon reductions annually

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 6

Asyad Shipping revealed its decarbonisation strategy in its latest Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) report. Aligned with IMO and international requirements, Asyad Shipping has adopted a clear decarbonisation strategy, believing in its role as an international player committed to achieving net-zero emissions.

Environmental management is among the highest organisational priorities for Asyad Shipping.

The company has defined robust risk management practices to ensure compliance with a wide range of regulations, requirements and international



Asyad Shipping owns and operates a sizable fleet of ocean-going merchant ships.

standards.

Asyad Shipping has implemented various protocols to ensure environmental protection through specific internal governance mechanisms.

Asyad Shipping aims to achieve a 2-per cent reduction

in carbon emissions year over year, demonstrating a steadfast commitment to decarbonisation.

The company adheres to the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) global cap of 0.5 per cent sulphur content in fuels and complies with the latest

2023 regulations.

By establishing a baseline and tracking 100 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions, Asyad ensures comprehensive monitoring and accountability. Additionally, the company tracks 100 per cent of sulphur oxides (SOx), nitrogen oxides (NOx), and particulate matter emissions.

Efficiency improvements are also a priority, with a target of a 5-per cent improvement in the Carbon Intensity Indicator (CII) from the 2019 baseline, alongside a 2-per cent year-over-year enhancement until 2026.

Dr Ibrahim al Nadhairi, CEO of Asyad Shipping and Drydock, stated, "We have invested in systems that will allow us to monitor the impact of our ships

and operations.

"We have invested in energy-saving devices and have also started discussions with our stakeholders on the design aspects of ships that will assist in achieving the goal of reducing CO2 emissions."

Asyad Shipping's ESG strategy emphasises sustainability and its integration into business practices to drive innovation, build stakeholder trust and enhance long-term resilience.

Aligned with Oman Vision 2040, Asyad supports national priorities through actionable targets and goals. A cornerstone of this strategy is a commitment to environmental stewardship.

Furthermore, Asyad Shipping is committed to the installation

of ballast water treatment systems across its fleet, ensuring compliance with international environmental standards.

The company is dedicated to maintaining a zero-spill incident record for each vessel and a zero-discharge incident record. By reducing sludge generated from fuel by 1 per cent, Asyad further demonstrates its commitment to environmental protection.

In terms of waste and hazardous materials management, Asyad Shipping measures and tracks the total weight of hazardous and non-hazardous waste, with a breakdown by disposal methods, ensuring that waste sorting for recycling is implemented on a minimum of 80 per cent of building waste.

Business services now UK’s largest export sector



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

The business prowess of firms in the financial district of London (known as “The City”) has helped power the UK’s strength in services since Brexit, a new report shows, but overall trade has still taken a hit. According to the report, UK in a Changing Europe

(UKICE), services trade has been more resilient than almost all other advanced economies since Brexit. Imports of services have increased 42 per cent in nominal current price terms since February 2020, while exports of services have increased nearly 29 per cent. The boom in services trade has been driven by ‘other business services’, which include accountancy, management consultancy and legal services. Unlike finance, these services are less reliant on EU membership and so Brexit has imposed fewer costs. Business services are generally less heavily regulated than financial services and so the barriers to exchange are often lower. ‘Other business services’ has now overtaken machinery and

transport to be the UK’s largest export sector.. Goods trade, however, has performed much worse since leaving the EU. In particular, chemicals and fuel trade has been on a steady downward trend as a share of GDP since the early 2010s. The report noted that UK trade with the EU has been more resilient after Brexit than many forecasts suggested, - but still suggested the UK’s departure has had a meaningful impact. It said that if the UK’s exports to the EU had grown at the same rate as intra-EU trade, EU exports would be 27 per cent higher in August 2023. Trade with the EU in areas which are more tightly regulated – such as finance and transport – has also been weak, the report said.

The report pointed out that the global economic environment is less open to trade than it was when the UK left the EU. Both the EU and the US have increasingly made trade decisions based on their security interests, such as through the Inflation Reduction Act and the EU’s green industrial strategy. “The dilemma for the UK is that it has to reorganise this when negotiating its trading relationship with them,” the report said. Stephen Hunsaker, a researcher at UKICE commented: “The landscape of UK trade has irreversibly changed and the UK continues to become a service-oriented economy. Brexit looks to have only exacerbated that shift. “The ever-changing geopolitical environment makes it clear that the UK cannot rely on previous ideas of ‘Brexit freedoms’, like new

free trade agreements, as the end-all-be-all”, he added. UK firms are betting on growth in the coming months after activity across the private sector showed its “firmest outturn” in nearly two years, a closely watched survey has revealed. According to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI’s) composite growth indicator, which surveys some 680 businesses, activity across the private sector “stabilised” with growth of two per cent in the three months to June, compared to a contraction of 14 per cent during the first quarter. The uptick was driven by a steady of the services sector, which dipped one per cent in May after a sharp 21 per cent fall the previous month, according to the CBI. While firms have been tempering their expectations for

growth this year, bosses are still pricing in expansion in a sign that sentiment is shifting among UK businesses, the CBI said. “That expectations for growth remain positive should give further reassurance that things are heading in the right direction,” said Alpesh Paleja, lead economist at the CBI. “But the recovery remains in the early stages, and firms in some sectors – particularly consumer-facing ones – continue to struggle.” Companies across Britain are now gearing up for “modest but broad-based growth”, with activity expected to rise across distribution, manufacturing and services firms, the CBI found. The business and professional services sectors were the main drivers of activity with firms reporting a four per cent bump in activity.

Bangladesh becomes global firms’ next big unknown

UNA GALANI

Firms can add Bangladesh to their growing list of big unknowns. Protests may ease now Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina has resigned and fled the South Asian country home to 170 million people. But her extraordinary ousting on Monday following 15 years of iron-fist rule leaves multinational firms, not least those in the clothing industry, with a lot to worry about. Shareholders of fast-fashion retailers took Hasina’s departure in their stride. H&M sources from about 1,000 factories from the world’s third-largest exporter of clothing and said it was “concerned” about the developments in Bangladesh. Yet its stock and that of Levi Strauss and Zara-owner Inditex fell barely 1% on Monday, even amid a broader, unrelated global sell-off in equities. Activity at factories had already been disrupted after a weeks-long crackdown on student-led protests over job-quotas left hundreds of people dead. Investors will also hope Bangladesh’s high dependence on its textile industry provides an incentive to ensure any continuing disruptions are temporary: ready-made garments will account for 90% of its \$55 billion of annual exports in the financial year 2024, according to International Monetary Fund estimates. The initial signs of what comes next appear encouraging for foreign investors: The army pledges

there will be an interim government, and some protesters are calling for Nobel Peace Prize laureate Muhammad Yunus to be its chief adviser. The banker and economist are well placed to help Bangladesh stabilise remittances, tackle a jobs crisis and tame inflation currently running at around 10%. Yet elections will have to follow sooner or later, and Yunus’ previous efforts to enter politics fell flat. That leaves a lot of uncertainty over the long-term outlook. Hasina turned Bangladesh into one of the fastest-growing economies in the world, but her Awami League ruled over an increasingly one-sided democracy. The main opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party has boycotted national elections, and last week she outright banned militants that were barred for over a decade from participating in polls. Though Washington was critical of the way Hasina ruled, she was widely seen as having a firm hand on radical militants and a strong ally for neighbour India. Her departure also provides China an opportunity to increase its influence in Bangladesh through its Belt and Road infrastructure projects. Global firms have a high tolerance for political earthquakes in emerging markets and are grappling with a growing list of supply-chain headaches around the world. Even so, Bangladesh offers fresh unknowns that could yet send them into a spin. — Reuters

China rules solar energy, but its industry at home is in trouble



KEITH BRADSHER

The author is Beijing bureau chief for The New York Times, part of a team of Times reporters covering a wide range of news in China.

Over the past 15 years, China has come to dominate the global market for solar energy. Nearly every solar panel on the planet is made by a Chinese company. Even the equipment to manufacture solar panels is made almost entirely in China. The country’s solar panel exports, measured by how much power they can produce, jumped another 10% in May over last year. But China’s solar panel domestic industry is in upheaval. Wholesale prices plummeted by almost half last year and have fallen another 25% this year. Chinese manufacturers are competing for customers by cutting prices far below their costs, and they still keep building more factories. The price slashing has taken a severe toll on China’s solar companies. Stock prices of its five biggest makers of panels and other equipment have halved in the past 12 months. Since late June, at least seven large Chinese manufacturers have warned that they will announce heavy losses for the first half of this year. The turmoil in the solar energy sector amid enormous factory capacity and booming exports highlights how China’s industrial policymaking works. The government decided 15 years ago to put extensive support behind solar power, and then let the companies claw it out. Beijing has shown a high tolerance for letting firms stumble and even fail in large numbers. Beijing’s spare-no-expense policies are in particular focus as



A solar farm in Weifang, China. – The New York Times

China increases factory exports to compensate for a slowing domestic economy — drawing criticism from the United States, the European Union and other trading partners who contend that China’s heavy support of its industries is unfair. China’s Communist Party leadership called recently for further investment in high-tech industries, including solar power. In his speech at the Republican National Convention, former President Donald Trump called for an end to the Biden administration’s renewable energy programmes, which he labeled a “green new scam.” The rise and fall of Hunan Sunzone Optoelectronics in Changsha, the capital of Hunan province in south-central China, is a case study of how China’s policies work. Started in 2008, the solar panel manufacturer benefited from practically every possible subsidy. It got 22 acres of prime land in the heart of the city almost for free. One of China’s biggest state-owned banks arranged a loan at a low interest rate. The Hunan provincial government then agreed to pay most of the interest. Despite the financial help, Sunzone’s factory now sits empty. A large “Sunzone” sign on the

second floor rusts in the swampy heat of Changsha. The only person still working at the site on a recent afternoon, a security guard, said that manufacturing equipment was removed in January and the factory was set to be demolished and turned into office buildings. Sunzone epitomises how lavish lending from state-owned banks and generous local subsidies have produced manufacturing overcapacity. Solar companies cut costs and prices to maintain market share. That led to a few low-cost survivors while many other competitors were driven out of business in China and around the world. China’s banks, acting at Beijing’s direction, have lent so much money to the sector for factory construction that the country’s solar factory capacity is roughly double the entire world’s demand. Sunzone’s 360-employee factory was big when it was built. Within a few years, rivals elsewhere in China were building much larger factories. Sunzone’s rivals, including Tongwei and Longi Green Energy Technology, gained formidable economies from large-scale production. They have plowed part of their extra revenue into

developing solar panels that are more efficient at converting sunlight into electricity. Many other factories, like Sunzone’s, become obsolete. “Enterprises continue to put advanced production capacity into operation to maintain competitiveness,” said Zhang Jianhua, director of China’s National Energy Administration, at a news conference in June. “At the same time, the outdated production capacity is still extensive and needs to be gradually phased out.” Solar manufacturers across China have been laying off thousands of workers to cut costs — and those workers may be the lucky ones because they qualify for months of severance pay. Other big solar companies have resorted to tactics like giving yearlong unpaid vacations or 30% pay cuts for employees who keep their jobs. Yet some companies say that they are furloughing workers only in preparation for even bigger production pushes. “We’re saying, ‘Go back to your farm and help with the harvest, and come back in the autumn when the new equipment is ready,’” said Zhang Haimeng, group vice president of Longi. — The New York Times

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

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

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

اوربیت
ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

ALL SEASON AYURVEDA CLINIC

The most efficient and authentic Ayurvedic Treatment & Medicine, Panchakarma, Yoga, Kalari, Massage Dhara etc... Rehabilitation, Marma Therapy & Post Delivery Care

Zaher Building, 1st Floor, Flat 8A, Al Khuwair Service Road, Near Al Zawawi Mosque & Burger-King
Tel: 24475280, GSM: 95371664, 92504980, Website: www.siddhayur.com

Auditors & Accountants

• Audit & Accounting • CFO Services • Secondment
• VAT & Tax Return Filing • VAT Refund Assistance

Contact: 92182750 • Email: contact@umpauditors.com

ROYAL CARGO

ALL OVER INDIA
INDONESIA ► NEPAL
AIR EXPORT (Port to Port)
SEA EXPORT (Container Booking)

SERVICES BY AIR & SEA

FOR MORE INFORMATION JUST DIAL
CUSTOMER CARE 93213207

PICK UP FREE ANYWHERE IN MUSCAT 93213206

SIT. WANTED

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

WE ARE HIRING

Exciting Opportunities Al Baraka Group Oman

- General Manager (6-8 years experience in hotel & hospitality)
- Operations Manager (5-7 years experience in hotel & hospitality)
- Front Office (Receptionist) (5-6 years experience in hotel & hospitality)
- Housekeeping Supervisor (2-4 years experience in hotel & hospitality)
- Sales and Marketing Executive (Hotel & Hospitality Industry) (3-5 years in look for candidates with a solid background in marketing, preferably within the hospitality industry)
- Executive Chef (5-7 years experience in hotel & hospitality)
- Chef De Partie (5-7 years experience in hotel & hospitality)
- F & B Manager (5-7 years experience in hotel & hospitality)
- Barista (3-5 years experience in renowned restaurant & cafe)

SEND YOUR CV
hr.albarakagroup@omninet.om
CV must be in MS Word or PDF format.
Please mention the post in the subject line.

If you're interested in joining our team, please send your CV to in our HR department.

SIT. WANTED

Indian male 14 years experience light/heavy driver. Looking for suitable opening currently in Oman.
Contact: 77050986/ 91280205, email: kokkadmou@gmail.com

Planning Engineer, PMP. Indian male 11 years experience in Construction Projects. Well versed with Primavera P6 Software, strong communication skills, Interpersonal skills, EDT Claims, Recovery schedules, project control.
Having Omani Driving License.

Contact: 78002582, email: engineer4planning@gmail.com

Indian male 6 years experience in accounts/ automobile/admin. Seeking for suitable opening in any field, currently in Oman.
Contact: 78988055/ 92850930, email: ullasmon8@gmail.com

UNCLAIMED MACHINERY, TOOLS AND EQUIPMENT FROM KR – EPS SERVICE CENTRE

Khimji Ramdas LLC – EPS division wishes to inform all its customers that a number of mechanical, electrical and industrial equipment and engineering products from various brands including but not limited to such as Snacon, Blue point, Usag, Raasm, Robinair, Karcher, Shamal, Rothenberger, Enerpac, Hydratron, Ingersoll Rand, etc sent to our service centre in Muscat before 31/3/2024 have not been collected so far.

Customers are hereby informed that all such items must be collected within 15 days from the date of this announcement on submission of the official job card copy and/or notification slip.

Items not collected on or before 25/08/2024 will be disposed of as deemed by us and recover the cost of work, storage and the company will not accept any claim whatsoever in this regard. The cost and consequences are at customer's responsibility and our rights are expressly reserved.

FOR RENT

WAREHOUSE / workshop 2,600 sqm for rent in Misfa near Oman Cement Factory including accommodation contact: GSM 98286899, email: sales@jetsoman.com

16,000 sqm (2 portions of 8,000 sqm each). Open yard/ storage area with compound wall 24 hours CCTV surveillance & other amenities for rent in Jifnain close to Muscat Nizwa Highway. Contact: 99105784.

IN Ruwi, 2 bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, hall, kitchen, with car parking. RO 150 monthly only. Tel: 94402003.

Driving School

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

Contact No: 99074072

URGENT HIRING

LEADING LAB CHEMICAL/CONSUMABLE/EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION COMPANY IN OMAN HIRING

SALES EXECUTIVE

- Preferred knowledge of lab chemical, consumable and lab equipment
- Minimum 2-year sales experience in Oman/GCC
- Driving license in Oman preferred

Suitable candidate can send CV to: recruitment74@gmail.com

SIT. WANTED

I am Filipina looking for part-time/ full-time job. I have work experience as a saleslady, school work, teacher assistant/ nanny, hotel receptionist/ housekeeping & caregiver/ housemaid work as well. I can join immediately. You can reach me on this number: 96213157.

INDIAN male (B Tech, MS) with 3 years experience (sales/ engineering) in Oman, valid Oman D/L, seeks job in sales, engineering, projects. Contact: 71980489.

LOOKING for job, 1 year experienced mechanical engineer, available in Muscat. jibinpmathew1999@gmail.com, 98916196.

INDIAN female, C.A/MBA (Finance) experience (Indian), 3 years Auditor, 5 years Finance mgr. PH: 95334069/ rainakp28@gmail.com

28 YEARS Experience in Oman in sales, marketing and management, Indian with DL and release. Looking for a good job change.
Contact: 78501743.

FOR SALE

FIND your dream home in Muscat's finest residential neighbourhoods near a children's park and sports promenade, a 6 room villa in Al Ghubrah South opposite Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. For more details, contact: 91377029.

SIT. WANTED

29 YEARS old Indian female, MBA holder with 2 years experience. Seeking a suitable position. Currently in Muscat on visit visa. Contact: 78641071, shazashakeel@gmail.com

To advertise in Ministry of Information channels

Observer

To advertise 71455532- 71455531- 71455530
adv@omaninfo.om
izdiyar_info izdiyar.info

URGENT HIRING

LEADING LAB CHEMICAL/CONSUMABLE/EQUIPMENT DISTRIBUTION COMPANY IN OMAN
URGENT HIRING
TECHNICAL SUPPORT ENGINEER

- More than 2-year work experience in Oman/GCC
- Degree of bachelor of Mechanical Engineering
- Driving license in Oman preferred.

Suitable candidate can send CV to:
recruitment74@gmail.com

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

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

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

**Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309**

pcomctom@omantel.net.om
P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

FOUR STAR TECHNICAL SUPPLIES LLC
(Formerly OMEIR NASSER AL FALAHY & PARTNERS TRAD. CO. LLC)
"Quality products, exceptional service, guaranteed"

Our products:
Electrical, Building Material, Hardware, Oilfield Industrial Equipment & Tools

P.O. Box 3897, P.C. 112, Ruwi, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman
**Tel.: +968 24837874, Fax: +968 24831341
Mobile: +968 99354944
Email: onasser@omantel.net.om / nelson@onasser.com**

SIT. VACANCY

BACHELOR degree in mechanical or electrical engineering ASNT level 2 (NDT), ASNT level 3 (NDT) additional advantage.
LEEA foundation, LEEA lifting accessories diploma (LAC).
Contact: pipe2566@yahoo.com

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN female, B tech, Electronics and Communication graduate 2yr experience, looking for suitable job, now in Muscat. Call: 94061884, whatsapp: +919946440893
email:anjupg62@gmail.com

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: 99639264

SIT. WANTED

LOOKING for sales executive job. 15 years experience in building material company. With valid Omani driving licence. Please call mobile No: 78609346. Email: yaseen1973@gmail.com

INDIAN male 6 years of experience in accounts / automobile / admin. Seeking for suitable opening in any field, currently in Oman.
Contact: 78988055 / 92850930, email: ullasmon8@gmail.com

Graduate Architect- Indian female with proficiency in various design softwares. Having Omani driving licence. Contact: +968 93249129
Email: psmenez2015@gmail.com

A SUDANESE resident in Salalah, Bsc of administrative sciences with 21 years of experience in the fields of (sales/ management/ logistics and fleet). Contact: +968 98510880.

Accountant with overs 6 years of experience
Detail-Oriented Financial Professional: Expert in Accounting, Audit Prep, and Expense Management: Contact: +968 78320801, Ready to join immediately.

OMAN DAILY
Observer

FREE* CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

* NOW FREE CLASSIFIED IN OMAN DAILY OBSERVER ON THE ABOVE CATEGORIES ONLY

Send your advertisement (Only one per coupon & no photocopies), either by mail or in person, with your local identity.

To advertise please contact:
**Tel: 71455532/ 71455531/ 71455530
Email: adv@omaninfo.om**

To advertise 71455532- 71455531- 71455530
adv@omaninfo.om
izdiyar_info izdiyar.info

اردھار
izdiyar

IZDIYAR_INFO



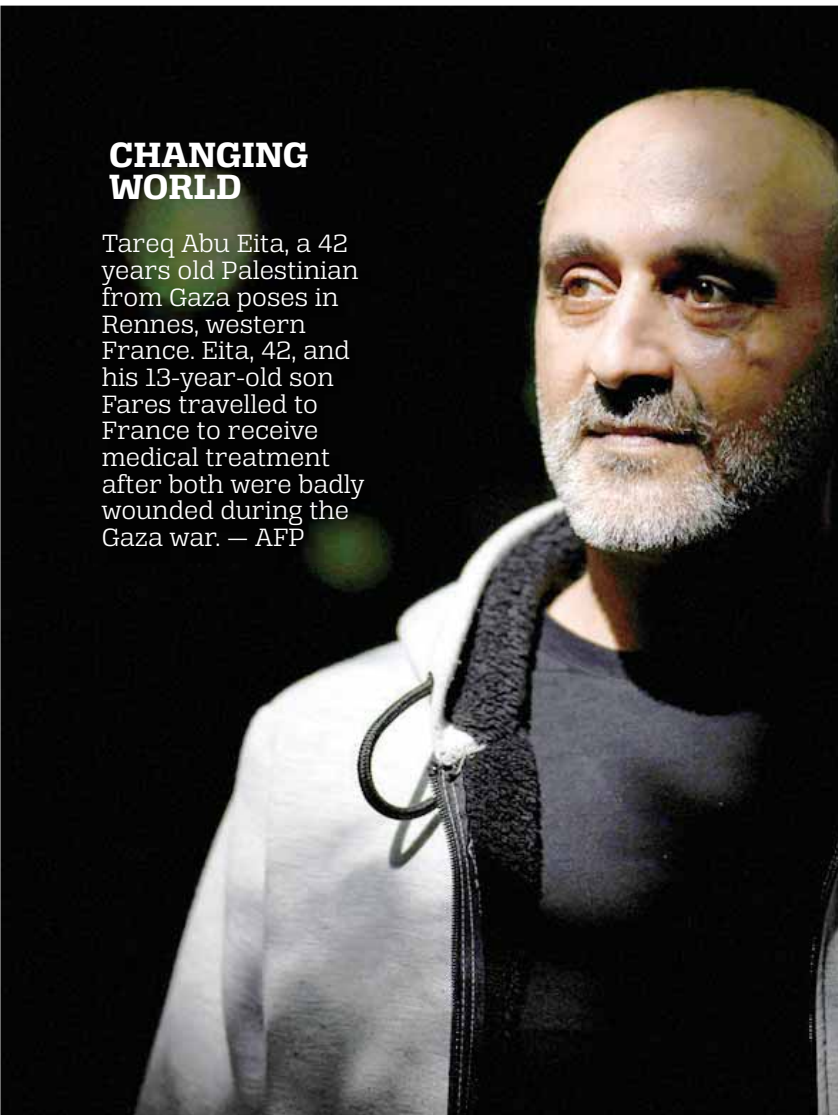
TRAVEL

People travel during a hot day in Wuhan, central China's Hubei province. — AFP



MUSIC

Singer Park Sung-on performing on stage during a concert at a venue in Seoul. Once dismissed and widely ridiculed as music for pensioners, trot blends traditional Korean music with elements of Western jazz, swing and Japanese Enka. — AFP



CHANGING WORLD

Tareq Abu Eita, a 42 years old Palestinian from Gaza poses in Rennes, western France. Eita, 42, and his 13-year-old son Fares travelled to France to receive medical treatment after both were badly wounded during the Gaza war. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

Visitors watch a kimono-clad performer roaming around while groaning like a zombie at a haunted house of the Namjatown indoor theme park in Tokyo. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

Aerial view of farmers harvesting gorgon fruit in a pond in Taizhou, in eastern China's Jiangsu province. — AFP

art & life

WEDNESDAY | AUGUST 7, 2024 | SAFAR 2 , 1446 AH | OMAN OBSERVER | www.omanobserver.om | features@omanobserver.om



A PILGRIM'S JOURNEY: CYCLING FROM GERMANY TO MECCA

Bilal Higo, a psychologist, cycled 5,600 kilometres from Germany to Mecca, visiting mosques across 16 countries. His journey aimed to perform Haj and spend Ramadhan at Al Aqsa Mosque. This spiritual pilgrimage, now a book, enriched his understanding of culture, hospitality, and personal growth... P20

A LOOK AT THE ACADEME



DR ZAINAB AL AJMI

Dr Zainab al Ajmi, an erudite academic and dedicated educator, brings insightful perspectives to her columns. With a wealth of experience in teaching and research, her writings delve into the intersection of academia and societal issues, fostering intellectual discourse with clarity and depth. For feedback, you can email her at zeinbf@moe.om

Summer Learning Programmes for Students: Benefits and Gains

SCIENTIFIC STUDIES on summer learning loss indicate that summertime is a crucial period for youth development and education. The substantial set of evidence supporting the existence of summer learning loss has led researchers to emphasise the importance of utilising the summer months to enhance learning and development among young people (Georgia, Kristen & Julie, 2017). Summer learning programmes have the potential to help children and youth improve their skills. However, despite their benefits, these programmes are often neglected by decision-makers or absent altogether, especially in contexts where funding is limited. Studies show that there is a gain in summer programmes. Students who participate in summer programmes are more likely to

have high levels of social competence among both peers and adults and fewer behavioural problems. The most effective summer programmes involve complementary academic content, individual support, and hands-on activities. In addition to the benefits and gains above, summer programmes that combine a youth development framework with academic enrichment also demonstrate potential for reversing summer learning loss and increasing educational equity. In this aspect, the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine; Division of Behavioural and Social Sciences and Education; Board on Children, Youth and Families; Committee on Summertime Experiences and Child and Adolescent Education, Health, and Safety; Hutton R, Sepúlveda MJ, editors. Washington (DC): National Academies Press (US); (2019 September 26) offers numerous benefits for summer programmes. Here are some of the key benefits: 1. Physical and Mental Health: Summer programmes can be designed to improve the physical health and well-being of children. One study found that overweight children and youth in a

physical health summer programme who attended for at least (29) days had short-term weight loss, improved blood pressure, and increased aerobic fitness. Mental Health: Indeed, summer is a time when children and youth with mental health needs can participate in targeted programmes that support them. 2. Voluntary Academic Programmes: Some schools, districts, universities, and community partners offer voluntary academic summer programming to children and youth with the intent of improving students' success in school, most often in reading and mathematics. These programmes usually target students performing below grade level. The content and structure of studied programmes vary from one another in the following ways: By grade level: Some programmes targeted certain grade levels (e.g., early elementary, middle grades), while others span multiple grade levels (e.g., grades 1-7). By duration: Some programmes were offered as half-day sessions, whereas others ran from 3 to 6 weeks over the summer. By content: Some programmes focused on one academic subject, others span multiple subjects, and many included non-academic enrichment activities (e.g.,

arts or sports). By curriculum: Programmes tended to have a set curriculum; however, each programme offered a different curriculum, and some studies did not describe the curriculum that was used. 3. Social and Emotional Development: Summer is a great time for all children to advance their social and emotional skills. Studies found moderate evidence that programmes designed to meet the specialised needs of specific groups of children and youth produced social and emotional benefits. For instance, the study found moderate evidence from a 3-week Canadian therapeutic summer programme for children and youth with learning disabilities coupled with social, emotional, or behavioural issues, namely that the programme reduced social isolation and improved self-esteem into the next school year. In sum, studies demonstrate that summer programming designed to meet specific student needs and linked to desired outcomes can measurably benefit across multiple domains. Sustained attendance is crucial, with significant academic gains for students attending at least (20) days, and greater benefits accruing with participation over multiple summers.

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS

itchytraveller

Six Senses Zighy Bay

Follow

taralamers

Wahiba Sand Desert, Oman

Follow

hassan_ali_tamim

Al Amirat

Follow

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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

Parlez-vous surf? Promoting French language on the Olympic world stage



JIHAN AMMAR

SAY “PLANCHE A ROULETTES” and not “skateboard”, s’il vous plait. And stare in amazement at a “figure” rather than a “trick”. Merci! Throughout the 2024 Paris Olympics, France is on a mission to promote the French language in a sports world increasingly dominated by English, and to erase anglicisms including terms used in hip newer sports.

Daniel Zielinski coordinates a group of experts at the French sports ministry who propose terminology to the Academie Francaise – the institution that has produced state-sanctioned dictionaries for three centuries.

For the Paris Olympics, the language committees focused on four of the newer Olympic sports – breakdancing, surfing, skateboarding and sport climbing.

Glossy brochures with titles like “Parlez-vous surf?” (Do you speak surf?) offer translations for anglicisms – such as “planche à roulettes” for skateboard, “figure” for trick or, in surfing, “rouleau de cap” for point break.

They have already started preparing for the 2028 Los Angeles Games.

“We are working on vocabulary for sports like baseball,



softball and flag football,” Zielinski said of the American pastimes which will feature in LA.

Ahead of the Games, the national parliament approved a motion urging organisers, athletes, trainers and journalists to use French at the Paris Olympics as much as possible.

But English resolutely dominates and in the “parc urbain” (street park) in the Place de la Concorde which hosts the skateboarding competitions, competitors of all nationalities talk of their “tricks” and “runs”.

“English established itself as the successor to French (at the Olympics) in the 1930s and even more so after World War II,” said historian Patrick Clastres.

This is particularly galling from a Gallic perspective given that the modern Games were invented by a 19th-century French aristocrat, Pierre de Coubertin.

French is the fifth most spoken language in the world, used by 320 million speakers worldwide.

But it struggles to stave off encroachment by English in sport, except perhaps in fencing, where referees still tell competitors: “En garde. Etes vous prêts? Allez!” (“On guard. Ready? Go!”).

The Paris Olympics organisers have gone all out to promote France in general, with the opening ceremony featuring Lady Gaga for a song in

FOR THE PARIS OLYMPICS, THE LANGUAGE COMMITTEES FOCUSED ON FOUR OF THE NEWER OLYMPIC SPORTS – BREAKDANCING, SURFING, SKATEBOARDING AND SPORT CLIMBING.

French inspired by the Paris music hall tradition.

“Success in sports is a form of soft power and offers a powerful way to market a country internationally,” noted Mark Cruse, French professor at Arizona State University.

The lure of world-class sport has not gone unnoticed by Cecilia Jourdan, 35, who produces snappy videos on learning French, chatting to her 1.5 million followers on Instagram as she strolls around Paris.

“Videos specifically about the Olympics get a much higher reach. We get more views and more engagement,” she said.

– AFP

LIFESTYLE



Banksy adds to animal collection in London with new elephant design

WORLD-RENOUNDED graffiti artist Banksy has unveiled another new artwork in London depicting two elephants poking their heads out of blocked out windows.

The Bristol-based street artist shared a photo of the

artist’s migrant boat installation which was crowd-surfed at Glastonbury in June during performances by Bristol indie punk band Idles and rapper Little Simz.

It was described by then-home secretary James



wall art, which features two elephant silhouettes with their trunks stretched out towards each other, on Instagram on Tuesday.

The artwork is in southwest London near Chelsea and appears to be painted on the side of a house.

It comes after Banksy revealed an artwork of a goat perched on top of a wall near Kew Bridge in Richmond on Monday.

The piece features a silhouette of a goat painted on top of a ledge with rocks falling down below it and a CCTV camera pointed towards the animal.

Banksy did not write a caption for either Instagram post causing fans to speculate on the meaning of the artworks.

The artworks follow the

Cleverly as “trivialising” small boats crossings and “vile”, but the artist responded saying his reaction was “a bit over the top”. The Bristol artist said it was the real boat he funded being detained by Italian authorities, after it had rescued unaccompanied children at sea, that he deemed “vile and unacceptable”.

In March, the artist created a tree mural in north London, which saw a tree cut back with green paint sprayed behind it to give the impression of foliage.

A stencil of a person holding a pressure hose was also sketched on to the building. The vivid paint colour matched that used by Islington Council for street signs in the area. — PA Media/dpa

A PILGRIM'S JOURNEY: CYCLING FROM GERMANY TO MECCA

BY LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

Bilal Higo, a clinical and cultural psychologist, has embarked on a remarkable journey from Germany to Saudi Arabia to perform the Haj, which he plans to document in an upcoming book. His journey was unique not just for its destination but also for his mode of travel—by bicycle.

The Observer caught up with Bilal in Muscat, where he had temporarily rested from cycling after achieving his goal. "I intended to cycle to Mecca and spend the last ten days of Ramadhan at Al Aqsa Mosque. Once I accomplished these, I decided to rest my bicycle. Being so close to Oman, a country I had heard much about, I couldn't resist visiting," he explained.

With three master's degrees and currently pursuing a PhD, Bilal has long aspired to perform the Haj since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. "As a Muslim, performing the Haj is an obligation. For me, it was more than just participating in rituals; it was a process of mental, physical, and spiritual preparation. It took time to prepare myself, and the more I understood it, the more I wanted it to be a journey of personal and professional growth. Cycling had become part of my life in Germany, offering a unique perspective on my environment and it seemed the right time to embark on this journey," Bilal reflected.

Initially, not everyone understood Bilal's objectives. However, his journey covered 5,600 kilometres and passed through 16 countries, including Austria, Slovenia, Croatia, Bosnia, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Bulgaria, Türkiye, Cyprus, Jordan and Palestine, before reaching Saudi Arabia. He attempted to follow the ancient routes used by ancestors travelling by camel to Mecca.

Bilal aimed to visit three significant mosques: Al Aqsa, Medina and Mecca. "Whenever I travel, I seek out mosques," he noted. This passion has led him to pray in over 800 mosques. "I wanted to end my cycling journey in Mecca. Now, my bicycle will serve as a decoration."

Regarding his mosque visits, Bilal stated that his first instinct upon arriving in a new country

was to find the nearest mosque. "It became a habit to connect to Wi-Fi at airports to locate mosques. I started counting my mosque visits three to four years ago, especially after the Haj was cancelled during the Covid-19 pandemic. I initiated a 'hundred mosques challenge' in Türkiye," he shared.

While in Muscat, Bilal chose accommodation in Ghubrah to be close to the Sultan Qaboo Grand Mosque. "I had heard positive things about Oman from newspapers and television. During my master's in 'Intercultural Communication' in 2019, colleagues spoke highly of Oman as a simple, peaceful, and humble society. Once I reached Saudi Arabia, I knew I had to visit Oman," he explained.

For Bilal, mosques are not just places of worship but starting points to connect with people and explore the local culture. "In mosques, I meet trustworthy people, connect with locals and learn about the culture and history. At the Sultan Qaboos Mosque, I met Egyptians who took me on a short tour of Muscat, which included sightseeing and enjoying a cup of karak tea."

Historically, mosques have accommodated travellers, especially those on spiritual journeys. "This journey taught me valuable lessons. In Western countries, individualism prevails, but in small towns and villages, I experienced remarkable hospitality. I learned to trust the journey and go with the flow. Most of the time, kind people accommodated me, and I never had to stay in a hotel in Germany. In Austria, people even offered me money, which I declined, as their generosity was a way of supporting the journey."

Bilal's journey spanned four months, with three months spent cycling and one month at Al Aqsa Mosque during Ramadhan. "I visit Al Aqsa Mosque every year for Ramadhan. This year was unique as I arrived by bicycle. The last ten days of Ramadhan are the most important, and I even slept at the mosque," Bilal said.

Now back in Germany, Bilal continues practising psychology, enriched by his journey of spirituality and humanity.

