

P11

OMAN OLYMPIC
DRAWS WITH
ALGERIA IN ARAB
SPORTS GAMES



P15

UK-BASED
STRATEGIC
METALS FIRM EYES
PRESENCE IN OMAN



P18

ARTIFICIAL
INTELLIGENCE
AND INTERIOR
DESIGN



MUSCAT

HIS MAJESTY GREETINGS TO VENEZUELA, ALGERIA, CAPE VERDE

■ His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Nicolás Maduro of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes of good health and well-being to President Maduro.

■ His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik also sent a cable of greetings to President Abdelmadjid Tebboune of the People's Democratic Republic of Algeria on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health, well-being and long life to President Tebboune.

■ His Majesty has also sent a cable of greetings to President José Maria Neves of the Republic of Cape Verde on his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments to President José Maria Neves and the people of his country. – ONA

SAI ANNUAL REPORT SAFEGUARDS PUBLIC FUNDS, PROMOTES INTEGRITY

HIS MAJESTY PRESENTED WITH SAI'S 2022 ANNUAL REPORT

MUSCAT: Shaikh Ghosn bin Hilal al Alawi, Chairman of State Audit Institution (SAI), has presented SAI annual report to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. The report highlights the outcomes of SAI action for 2022.

SAI channelled all its resources and capabilities to perform its national duty in implementing terms of reference and achieving goals entrusted to SAI with a high level of efficiency and professionalism. The step comes within the framework of active partnership at the institutional and societal levels in a manner that serves the sustainable development march.

- SAI conducted 181 audit tasks in 2022, resulting in 147 audit reports
- 587 complaints and reports were addressed related to financial and administrative irregularities
- Implemented 259 media, awareness programmes, activities and events

SAI has also sent copies of its report to the Council of Ministers, State Council and Majlis Ash'shura in implementation of Article (66)



of the Basic Law of the State, promulgated under Royal Decree No 6/2021 and Article 29 of State Audit Law, promulgated under Royal Decree No 111/2011.

In affirmation of SAI's continuous development approach in preparing the content of the annual report, SAI took into account the rules, standards and technical guidelines as per relevant international organisations, in terms of inclusiveness, clarity, briefness, accuracy and objectivity.

SAI's 2022 annual report includes several topics according to its 2022 annual audit plan, in line with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

During 2022, SAI carried out 181 audit tasks that resulted in 147 audit reports, of which results were sent to

the authorities concerned. The departments concerned showed cooperation and response by taking corrective measures in relation to observations and recommendations made by SAI. Some irregularities with a nature of suspicions of crime were referred to the Public Prosecution Department to take action accordingly.

The report also contained a statement highlighting SAI's efforts in promoting integrity. The statement also included statistics on financial and administrative irregularities and the measures taken towards them.

TURN TO P2

BRUSSELS

NATO TO EXTEND STOLTENBERG'S TERM BY A YEAR



Nato decided on Tuesday to extend Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg's contract by a further year, opting to stick with an experienced leader as war rages on the alliance's doorstep rather than try to agree on a successor. Stoltenberg, a former prime minister of Norway, has been the transatlantic security alliance's leader since 2014 and his tenure had already been extended three previous times. Stoltenberg, 64, is widely seen across the alliance as a steady leader and patient consensus-builder. The decision to extend his tenure to October 1, 2024, comes ahead of a summit of Nato leaders in Vilnius, Lithuania, next week. Stoltenberg said he was honoured by the decision. **SEE ALSO P7**



ENCHANTING FOGGY PALM SCAPES

Assistant Professor of photography, Jerzy Wierzbicki from the Scientific College of Design, had an enchanting experience during his visit to Salalah for the Eid al Adha holidays. Captivated by the ethereal khareef season, he captured the mesmerising beauty of palm trees shrouded in fog in Al Hafa, Salalah.

PICTURE BY JERZY WIERZBICKI

SEE ALSO P3

Omani start-up opens facility for dental aligners

MUSCAT: A facility for an Omani start-up company in the field of manufacturing transparent dental aligners 'BClear Aligner' with specialised Omani cadres was inaugurated on Tuesday in Ghala.

The company is considered a first-of-its-kind in the Sultanate of Oman in this field.

Eng Yumna bint Ahmed al Sharji, founding partner of BClear Aligner, said that the company is one of the emerging Omani companies in the field of medical technology. It was established in the third quarter of 2021, and aims to localise and develop the transparent orthosis industry and provide the products to beneficiaries locally and regionally.

She stated that the transparent orthodontic aligners are made



of bio-acceptable materials approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in the human body.

The company's team consists of specialised doctors, engineers and technicians, and the percentage of Omanis in the company stands at 85 per cent. BClear Aligner works to localise all the necessary expertise to develop its products, depending on national human resources.

The inauguration ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health. — ONA

Temperatures seen surging as El Nino weather pattern returns

GENEVA: The United Nations on Tuesday warned the world to prepare for the effects of El Nino, saying the weather phenomenon which triggers higher global temperatures is set to persist throughout 2023.

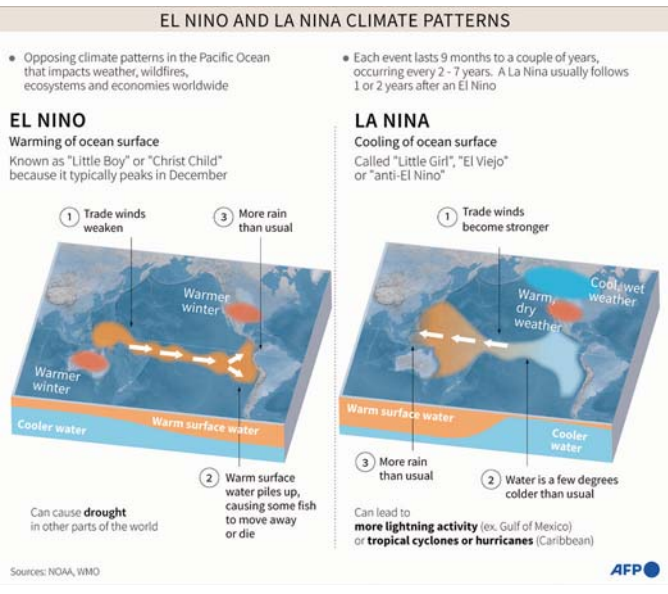
El Nino is a naturally occurring climate pattern typically associated with increased heat worldwide, as well as drought in some parts of the world and heavy rains elsewhere. The phenomenon occurs on average every two to seven years, and episodes typically last nine to 12 months.

The UN's World Meteorological

Organization declared El Nino was already under way and said there was a 90-per cent chance that it would continue during the second half of 2023.

"The onset of El Nino will greatly increase the likelihood of breaking temperature records and triggering more extreme heat in many parts of the world and in the ocean," warned WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas.

"The declaration of an El Nino by WMO is the signal to governments around the world to mobilise preparations to limit the impacts on our health, our



ecosystems and our economies," said Taalas.

"Early warnings and anticipatory action of extreme weather events associated with this major climate phenomenon are vital to save lives and livelihoods."

The US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, which feeds into the WMO, announced on June 8 that El Nino had arrived.

"It is expected to be at least of moderate strength," the WMO said. It noted that El Nino's warming effect on global

temperatures is usually felt most strongly within a year of its onset — in this case in 2024.

El Nino is the large-scale warming of surface temperatures in the central and eastern equatorial Pacific Ocean.

Conditions oscillate between El Nino and its generally cooling opposite La Nina, with neutral conditions in between.

El Nino events are typically associated with increased rainfall in parts of southern South America, the southern United States, the Horn of Africa and central Asia. — AFP



■ OMAN, MOROCCO HOLD POLITICAL TALKS



RABAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister held a political talks session with Nasser Bourita, Minister of Foreign Affairs, African Cooperation, and Moroccan Expatriates in the Moroccan capital Rabat, on Tuesday. The two sides underscored the continuation of bilateral cooperation and enhancing partnership and investment in various economic sectors between the two countries. They also discussed a number of regional and international developments. — ONA

Al Ashkharah is a cool destination for aqua adventure in summer

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

With cool breeze and the temperature in the late 20s to 30 degree Celsius, Al Ashkharah is a place to be if one is looking for a pleasant summer escape.

While the Gulf as a region is handling summer degrees at 45 degrees Celsius and above, Al Ashkharah is gaining popularity mainly for water adventures. Also, there are tourists who enjoy the place to watch the sunrises and sunsets.

Al Ashkharah, located in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate is about three and a half hours from Muscat and about 80 km from Ras Al Jinz. The fishing town gets regional and international tourists and is gaining momentum as a destination for camping and Eid al Adha holidays have proven so.

“It is a great place to go surfing be it is normal surfing or kite and wind surfing,” Rose Ebuon said.

The reason for this weather in summer is the Arabian Sea and the Southwest monsoon. The



drizzle may not be there but the temperature is pleasant throughout the monsoon season.

So why is it cool? The Expert at Oman Met Office explained that the Southwest Monsoon wind has a typical phenomenon — the up-welling resulting in pulling of the cold water from the deep end to the upper surface while the warm water moves toward offshore.

“Basically the South west wind makes makes all the coastal areas of the Arabian Sea cool during the summer period. And this means all the way from Dhalkout in Dhofar Governorate to Ras Al Had in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate,”

explained the weather expert at Oman Met Office.

One of the popular places in Al Ashkharah for surfing is the Shipwreck Beach, in addition to Asilah Town. There are bays in Al Ashkharah that makes it further attractive for the beach enthusiasts. According to the surfers, waves could go up to 8 to 12 ft.

Al Ashkharah is part of the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali of the South Al Sharqiyah Governorate. While Sur, the place known for its historical dhow building industry is facing the summer heat, just few kilometres away from Al Ashkharah, in the Wilayat of



Jaalan Bani Bu Ali of the South Al Sharqiyah Governorate is immersed in cool breeze.

Once in Al Ashkharah fishing is also an experience people look out for. But during the summer the sea is rough on the coast. The small boats are not used during during this period from June to September except for large vessels as the waves can be high, noted the weather forecaster.

According to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) there are about 86 hotels in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate. All these features have made Al Ashkharah a destination for summer tourism.

One arrested for destroying green pasture in Dhofar

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 5

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) took swift action on Monday, apprehending a driver responsible for endangering green landscapes through reckless drifting. The suspect, of Arab nationality, was detained in the Governorate of Dhofar, and legal measures have been initiated against him, as confirmed by the ROP in an official statement.

Concurrently, the Environment Authority (EA) released a statement addressing the incident, highlighting that the offender would face severe legal consequences under Article 21 of the Environment Protection Law, which explicitly prohibits such harmful actions.

According to the EA, investigations revealed that the individual had engaged in drifting within green areas of the governorate, causing detrimental effects to the fungal life, botanical cover, personal safety, and overall local environment. Emphasising the importance of preserving natural surroundings, the Environment Protection Law strictly forbids the cutting, uprooting, or destruction of trees, shrubs, or grass that compromises the integrity of the ecosystem or leads to deforestation.

Under Article 38 of the same law, violators found in breach of these provisions face imprisonment for a minimum of 10 days and a maximum of 3 months.

Additionally, they may be

ROP arrests group of women for immoral activities

MUSCAT: The Muscat Governorate Police Command arrested a group of women on Tuesday of different nationalities in the Al Khuwair area on charges of violating morals and public morals.

They were also charged with violating the labour and residence law.

ROP has initiated legal procedures against them.

subject to fines ranging from RO 500 to RO 5,000, or both penalties in conjunction. In case of repeated offences, the penalties imposed will be doubled, as emphasised by the environment authority. Authorities are committed to upholding environmental conservation and safeguarding the natural heritage of Dhofar.

This incident serves as a stark reminder that reckless actions have consequences, not only for individuals but for the fragile ecosystems that define Oman’s rich biodiversity. As efforts to protect and preserve the environment continue, the ROP and EA urge all residents and visitors to demonstrate responsible behaviour, ensuring the sustainable coexistence of humans and nature.

Two held, one dead in electrical cable heist

MUSCAT: The police command in Al Batinah North Governorate arrested two citizens for stealing and vandalising electrical cables from a utility pole in the Wilayat of

Saham. According to Royal Oman Police (ROP), a third person died as a result of electric shock. Legal action against the defendants is underway, ROP stated.

China-Oman Cultural Exchange Conference and Dragon Boat Festival Celebration



Nearly 400 Omani and Chinese people participated in the China-Oman Cultural Exchange Conference and Dragon Boat Festival Celebration, experiencing firsthand the significance of this momentous event. Attendees from various countries and regions shared their thoughts about the event, all emphasizing the importance of the cultural exchange between Oman and China.

This remarkable gathering was organized by BGP Inc., China National Petroleum Corporation. As a globally trusted integrated geophysical service provider, they have served more than 300 energy companies during the last several decades with a remarkable footprint in over 70 countries, enabling BGP to become one of the leading geophysical contractors in the world today. Since its entry in 2003 BGP has earned notable results in Oman’s

market for two decades and holds the industry record for daily production and safety milestones.

The Dragon Boat Festival Celebration provided the participants with a unique opportunity to immerse themselves in the fusion of Chinese and Omani cultures. Whether it was admiring the splendid showcase of Omani culture or being captivated by the elegance of Chinese traditions, every participant experienced the harmonious blend of these two ancient civilizations.

Among the attendees, many expressed admiration for the magnificent display of Omani culture. They were enthralled by the Al-Ayyala dance, a symbol of bravery and valor for the Arabian nomads. The soul-stirring performance on the traditional Omani musical instrument, the “Lamouni”, provided an immersive experience of the ancient trade routes’ sublime beauty.



Simultaneously, participants marveled at the portrayal of Chinese culture. They appreciated the gracefulness of Hanfu costumes, which elegantly showcased the poetic motifs of the Qin, Han, Tang, Song, and Ming dynasties. The Dunhuang music and dance performance revived the vibrant spirit of the “Flying Apsaras” depicted in the famous Dunhuang murals, allowing participants to appreciate the rich heritage of Chinese art.

Beyond the performances, participants enthusiastically engaged in interactive activities. They joined together to learn the art of crafting Zongzi, the delectable traditional Chinese sticky rice dumplings wrapped in fragrant bamboo leaves. Through these interactive experiences, participants deepened their understanding of Chinese cuisine and culture while fostering cultural exchange and friendship.

Everyone expressed their gratitude to BGP Inc., a subsidiary of China National Petroleum Corporation, for organizing such a significant cultural event. This event not only fostered profound bonds of friendship between the people of China and Oman but also provided a platform for deeper cultural understanding, mutual appreciation, and transcending borders and time.

As the China-Oman Cultural Exchange Conference and Dragon Boat Festival Celebration concluded, participants departed with enriched cultural experiences, carrying the spirit of cultural exchange and friendship with them. The event served as a testament to the enduring ties between China and Oman, nurturing a shared appreciation of their respective cultural heritages and fostered lasting connections between their peoples.

SAI Annual Report safeguards public funds

FROM PAGE 1

The report also contained SAI tasks of the Anti-Corruption Authority and following-up the implementation of the UN Convention Against Corruption.

The report also shed light on SAI efforts in the examination of draft laws, regulations and systems issued by the departments covered by audit and taking note of observations on the same.

The report also included SAI’s participation in meetings and conferences held on the UN Convention Against Corruption, Arab Anti-Corruption Convention, and the committees concerned with combating corruption in the GCC countries, as well as its participation in the meetings of anti-corruption law enforcement authorities in the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC).

The annual report included an audit conducted on different topics in the government units through the implementation of 103 audit tasks, which resulted in 89 audit reports including an audit of the 2022 final account of the state.

The report also contained an audit on tax assessment and tax collection activities, as well as an audit on financial and administrative activities, the performance evaluation of some departments and directorates in the

government units, in addition to audit on some aspects related to the sectors of commerce, agriculture, tourism, labour, health, education, and others.

SAI carried out 78 audit tasks, for which 58 audit reports were issued and sent to the authorities concerned. The reports included SAI observations and recommendations, in terms of aspects related to the activities of the authorities, investments, and companies concerned with the sectors of energy, aviation, environment, electricity and mining, and other significant aspects.

With regard to community partnership in accordance with the principle of partnership in oversight and protection of public funds, during 2022, SAI dealt with 587 complaints and reports related to financial and administrative irregularities, non-integrity of awarding in some tenders, abuse of power, etc.

SAI has studied and examined 84 per cent of the complaints and reports received via available communication channels.

In addition, SAI annual report reviewed the most prominent media and awareness activities, through which SAI aims to achieve optimal awareness and build honest practices at both institutional and societal levels. As many as 259 media and awareness programmes, activities and events were implemented in 2022. — ONA



OIA ranks 2nd globally in governance, sustainability performance index



MUSCAT: Oman Investment Authority (OIA) ranked second in the world in the index of development of governance and sustainability performance between 2022 and 2023. It posted 28 per cent improvement in its accomplishments, compared to 200 global sovereign funds.

This was unveiled in a new report issued by the International Forum of Sovereign Wealth Funds (IFSWE) in its platform, which affirms OIA's keenness to abide by international norms and principles of governance and transparency practices endorsed by IFSWE.

The report indicates that OIA seeks to achieve operational excellence and develop a global identity, notably after its emergence as a merger of the State's General Reserve Fund and the Oman Investment Fund.

The report notes that the data issued by OIA highlights investments and their strategies and an exit plan. It explains

that OIA is in the process of devising a new framework that corresponds to the goals of sustainable development.

The Oman Investment Authority adheres to a large proportion of Santiago Principles issued by the IFSWE. These comprise unified procedures related to the nature of functions of funds and their objectives. They define a standard structure that accurately reflects the requirements of disclosure, transparency, governance, accountability and risk management.

The OIA conducts regular assessment of its commitment to such criteria through its cooperation with the IFSWE. It aspires to keep pace with the latest governance requirements and achieve better operational and investment performance by applying the best international practices in the field. This qualifies the OIA to introduce an integrated, flexible and practical system. — ONA

ENCHANTING KHAREEF DHOFAR

Addressing congestion, enhancing tourism experience a priority

AHMED AL KAABI
SALALAH, JULY 4

The Khareef season in the Dhofar Governorate is one of the most exceptional seasons around the world due to its exceptional weather. With mild weather and a charming green nature, flowing water, the precipitation of mist, and the spread of thick fog over the mountains, Dhofar attracts many visitors from all over the world.

Each year, domestic tourism surges during this enchanting season, attracting visitors primarily by land vehicles from across Oman, as well as neighbouring Gulf countries and international travellers. However, due to the surge in traffic, Dhofar is expected to experience congestion, leading to delays, especially at the Khor Rori Bridge, where vehicles from mountainous regions and nearby states converge at the Darbat intersection, causing a temporary standstill for up to forty minutes sometimes.

Qasim al Maashani, hailing from Dhofar Governorate, highlights the lack of parking facilities at popular tourist destinations as one of the key factors contributing to traffic congestion. "As a result, visitors often resort to stopping on



the roadside, exacerbating the congestion issue," he said.

Addressing these challenges, Dhofar Municipality has undertaken substantial efforts to enhance various tourist sites for the season. Among the notable developments, the restoration of the Al Haffa area and the establishment of the 'Return of the Past' site stand out. The area will feature a heritage market, restaurants, an art area and numerous other amenities, providing visitors with an immersive experience.

Moreover, a myriad of activities

awaits visitors at Wadi Darbat, including kayaking and rowing boats. Awqad Public Park and Ateen Square will host a series of events, such as the 'Kiddy Time' event in Awqad Park and the captivating "Lights Park" event in Salalah Park. Additionally, the introduction of Darbat huts will offer an enchanting view of Wadi Darbat.

This year's season demonstrates the government's commitment to diversifying activities and events, distributing them across different regions, and incorporating innovative ideas that cater to all age groups, aligning perfectly

with the dynamic trends and advancements of the present era.

These remarkable additions are expected to significantly attract tourists, particularly families, to Salalah this year. Consequently, it becomes imperative to develop a comprehensive city plan for Salalah that accommodates the growing tourism activity and population surge, particularly during the summer season. The authorities must prioritise traffic management and implement a well-thought-out plan to alleviate congestion effectively.

— PHOTO BY AJI GEORGE

STATE COUNCIL OFFICE DISCUSSES NEW STUDIES, PROPOSALS



MUSCAT: The State Council Office on Tuesday reviewed a number of studies and proposals submitted by the permanent and special committees of the Council. During the meeting, the State Council Office looked into a study submitted by the Culture, Information and Tourism Committee titled 'Scopes for promoting local tourism in the Sultanate of Oman' and a study submitted by the Social Committee titled 'Omani national identity'. The meeting also discussed a study submitted by the Technology and Innovation Committee titled 'The employment of technology in formulating an innovative system for performance governance in the state's administrative apparatus' and a study of the Legal Committee on the articles of the 'Internal regulations of the State Council'. The discussions took place during the 4th regular session's 7th meeting (Seventh Term), headed by Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council. — ONA

Official Haj delegation returns



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The official delegation that represented the Sultanate of Oman to Saudi Arabia for Haj returned home on Tuesday, according to the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

The members of the delegation were accorded a warm welcome at the Muscat International Airport by Dr Mohammed bin Said al Ma'amari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, Abdullah bin Saud al Anzi, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to the Sultanate of Oman, along with several officials from the Ministry

of Awqaf and Religious Affairs.

The Haj mission, headed by Sultan bin Said al Hinai, was deputed to provide its services to the Omani pilgrims in the Holy land during their performance of the Haj rituals.

The mission comprised members from Fatwa and Religious Guidance, Administrative and Financial Delegation, a committee supervising Haj companies, a medical delegation, representatives from the State Financial and Administrative Control Authority, a delegation from the Royal Oman Police (ROP), media representatives, and a scout delegation.

The delegation left the Sultanate of Oman on June 14, and it served the Omani pilgrims and supervised their performance of the rituals effectively during its presence at the holy cities of Mecca and Madinah and the holy sites.

"We were able to help and support 14,000 pilgrims to perform this year's Haj and facilitate their journey in Mecca and Madinah during the pilgrimage," said Ali al Hattali, representative of the ministry.

He further said that preparations are underway for next year's Haj pilgrimage in cooperation with the Ministry of Haj and Umrah in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

LANDS FOR SALE

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

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

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

جامعة صحر SOHAR UNIVERSITY

TENDER NOTICE No. 002/2023

Sohar University invites sealed tenders for renting the following Restaurant and Coffee Shops to provide catering services for students and staff from providers who have relevant experience in Public/Private Organizations.

Tender Number	Description	Fee OR	Submission Date
002/2023	Main Restaurant	50.000	31/07/2023
	Coffee Shop at Al-Khaboura Building		
	Coffee Shop at Al-Barka Building		
	Coffee Shop at Learning Resources Centre Building		

The tender document can be obtained from Procurement and Contracts Department from **05/07/2023 to 19/07/2023 from 8:00 am to 2:00 pm** at Sohar University main campus in Sohar after payment of OMR 50.000/- (Non-refundable) at the cashier counter located in the ground floor of Al Khaboura Building. The receipt of payment has to be provided to the Procurement and Contracts Department to collect the Tender Document.

Tender offers must be submitted in closed sealed envelopes. The tender number should only be written on the envelope, no other indication shall be written. The deadline to submit offers is **2:00 pm on 31/07/2023**.

Site visits will be on 20 & 23 July 2023 from 9:00 am to 12:00 Noon.

Offers should be addressed to the office of Pro. Vice Chancellor for Administration & Finance and deposited in the tender Box at PVCAF Office as shown below during office hours 8:00 am to 2:00 pm, Sunday to Thursday.

Office of the Pro. Vice Chancellor for Administration and Finance
Sohar University
P.O Box 44, P.C. 311, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman.
Telephone: 26850100 Ext.: 421 & 289 (Procurement and Contracts Department)

Sohar University reserves the right to accept or reject any offer without assigning any reason



EXPAT
OWNERSHIP
OF



VEHICLES
RESTRICTED
TO ONLY THOSE
WITH FAMILY
JOINING VISA



Recall

Isuzu D-Max RT74

Recall Date: 5 July 2023

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
Isuzu DMax RT74	2022- 2023	5

Description of defect:
Some of these vehicles there is possibility of the water could enter through the ground of harness, reach the EHCU and short circuit. In the worst case, a fire could occur.

Recall consequence

Procedure:
Dealers will inspect the EHCU harness connector and correction of earth terminal. If any warning light or DTC ECHU control unit replacement.

Recall Action

To check the serial Numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website for Recalls & Warnings: <http://recall.pacp.gov.om>
Toll free No 80050004 on all working days between 8.00 AM to 1.00 PM & 2.00 PM to 5.30 PM with effect: from Date 5/7/2023



Oman Trading Establishment LLC

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, JULY 4

Seeking to clamp down on expatriate drivers using their vehicles to provide illegal passenger transportation and goods delivery services, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) has clarified that expatriates are prohibited from owning or operating four-wheel (4WD) vehicles unless they possess a family joining visa.

The *Observer* has learnt that new registration of expatriate-owned 4WD vehicle is liable to be rejected by the ROP unless the owner can prove that their vehicles will not be put to illicit use. According to the ROP, expats will be able to register 4WD in their names only if they possess a family joining visa.

Khalid, who successfully found an expat buyer for his Chinese 4WD vehicle, was initially pleased with the agreement on the price. However, his excitement turned to disappointment when he

and the buyer approached the ROP traffic department for registration, only to be informed that it was not allowed due to the buyer’s family not being present in the country.

Khalid believes these regulations aim to prevent illicit activities associated with such vehicles, but he lamented missing out on the opportunity to sell his vehicle.

The traffic department of ROP clarified that expatriates can only own a four-wheel vehicle if their family is residing in the country, as this requirement serves as a justification for ownership. Without their family’s presence, there is no basis for possessing such a car, explained ROP officials.

Furthermore, ROP strictly prohibits expatriates from owning pickup trucks intended for commercial purposes, including compact, mini, midsize, or coupe trucks. However, expatriates can register Luxury/Heavy Duty pickup trucks under their names if they can demonstrate

that these vehicles serve a legitimate purpose aligned with their professional responsibilities. Notably, popular brands like Tahoe, GMC, RAM, and similar models fall into this category. Nevertheless, expatriates are prohibited from using these vehicles for transportation purposes, especially if their driver’s licence only applies to ‘private light’ vehicles.

Exceptions are made for expatriates employed in specific professional roles such as managers, technicians, engineers, and other similar positions. These individuals are eligible to own and register such vehicles, as confirmed by the official statements.

ROP warns that if an expatriate is caught using a 4WD or pickup truck for commercial purposes, they will face a fine of RO 35. In case of repeated offenses, their case will be escalated to the Public Prosecution for further action. The enforcement emphasises the seriousness of adhering to these regulations.



China warns of ‘multiple natural disasters’ in July

BEIJING: Chinese authorities have warned of extreme weather and “multiple natural disasters” in the coming month, as heavy rain damaged infrastructure and forced thousands to be evacuated.

An alert was in place on Tuesday for rain-triggered disasters in large swathes of central and southwestern China, according to the official Xinhua news agency.

Meteorological authorities have warned the country will face “multiple natural disasters in July, including floods, severe convection weather, typhoons and high temperatures”, the agency said.

And in a sign of the damage caused by the downpours, workers on Tuesday discovered that a closed-off railway bridge on the outskirts of southwestern metropolis Chongqing had collapsed after it was “damaged by the impact of mountain torrents”, state broadcaster CCTV said.

More than 400 emergency personnel have been sent to

Scientists say rising global temperatures — caused largely by burning fossil fuels — are aggravating extreme weather worldwide

survey the damage and secure the area, with dozens of trains redirected, according to CCTV.

In the neighbouring province of Sichuan, authorities on Tuesday said more than 460,000 had been affected by the heavy rain this month, Xinhua reported.

About 85,000 people have been evacuated from their homes as a result of the rain, officials said, with “flash floods in mountainous areas” and “possible mudslides in some parts” expected this week.

More than 10,000 people have

also been evacuated after floods in the central Henan province damaged more than 2,000 homes, provincial officials said on Sunday.

And over the weekend, dozens of homes and roads were damaged in Shaanxi province during “once-in-fifty-years” torrential rains, the Communist Party-owned Chongqing Daily said on Monday.

Chinese media published footage of cars drifting down a flooded road in Hunan last week, with murky torrents gushing past apartment blocks and shops.

Scientists say rising global temperatures -- caused largely by burning fossil fuels -- are aggravating extreme weather worldwide, and many countries in Asia have experienced deadly heat waves and record temperatures in recent weeks.

China has set a target of peaking carbon emissions by 2030 and achieving carbon neutrality 30 years later.

The floods coincided with



Paramilitary policemen evacuate a resident after flooding caused by heavy rains in China's southwestern Chongqing. — AFP

record heat waves in other parts of China, with the country's National Meteorological Centre warning residents in the capital Beijing and a dozen other regions to stay indoors with temperatures exceeded 35 degrees, the highest since national records began in 1961, according to a National Meteorological Centre statement on Sunday. — AFP

■ RAINFALL IN INDIA



A Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) officer patrols at the Taj Mahal during a heavy rainfall in Agra. — AFP

Turkiye says will not be pressured over Sweden's Nato bid

ISTANBUL: Turkiye warned on Tuesday it will not be pressured into backing Sweden's bid to join Nato and said it was still assessing whether the Nordic country's entry would benefit or hurt bloc.

Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan's comments came two days before he was due to meet his Swedish counterpart in Brussels to discuss Stockholm's attempt to become the 32nd member of the US-led defence alliance.

Nato hopes to welcome Sweden by the time alliance leaders hold a summit in Lithuania on July 11-12.

But Turkiye and fellow Nato member Hungary are holding up ratification over a range of individual disputes with both Stockholm and Brussels.

Unanimous approval from current members is required for new countries to join the world's most powerful defence organisation.



Turkiye's newly appointed Foreign Affairs Minister Hakan Fidan delivers a speech in Ankara. — AFP file photo

“We never approve the use of time pressure as a method,” Fidan said in press conference.

Ankara has been frustrated by decisions by the Stockholm police to grant permits for protests at which anti-Islamic figures have burned pages from the Holy Quran outside the Turkish Embassy and mosques.

The last such protest on the first day of the Eid al Adha holiday last

week drew strong condemnation from across the Muslim world.

Fidan referred to the incident as an example of Sweden failing to live up to commitments it made when it won Turkiye's initial backing for its application in Madrid one year ago.

“Sweden's security system is not able to stop provocations. This is not bringing more strength but more problems to Nato,” he said.

“In terms of strategy and security, when we are discussing Sweden's membership of Nato, it's a question of whether it will be a benefit or a burden.”

The Swedish government on Sunday condemned last week's burning of the Holy Quran.

But it added in a foreign ministry statement that Sweden had a “constitutionally protected right to freedom of assembly, expression and demonstration”.

The Stockholm police ruled prior to last week's protest that the risks associated with the Holy Quran burning “were not of a nature that could justify, under current laws, a decision to reject the request”.

Sweden and its neighbour Finland dropped decades of military non-alignment and applied to join Nato in the wake of Russia's attack of Ukraine.

Finland formally joined the bloc in April. — AFP

Greece to discuss Frontex migration concerns: Minister

ATHENS: Greece is to meet with EU border agency Frontex after last month's migrant trawler disaster led to fears the agency could pull out of the country, the new migration minister has said.

According to reports, the human rights chief at Frontex indicated the agency could suspend operations in Greece over the treatment of migrants, including illegal pushbacks that Athens categorically denies.

“I consider Frontex leaving our country inconceivable, in the sense that I don't imagine they would shoot their own feet,” migration minister Dimitris Kairidis told state TV ERT on Monday.

Kairidis said he had seen the minutes of a Frontex board meeting in the wake of the June 13 trawler tragedy, in which a discussion was held “regarding its presence in Greece.”

The tragedy saw 104 people rescued and 82 bodies recovered but as many as hundreds of others on board may have perished, by some estimates.

Kairidis said the discussion was mainly driven by Frontex fundamental rights officer Jonas Grimheden, and that Athens was ready to “address any complaint.”

A professor of international relations, Kairidis said he would

hold talks with the Warsaw-based agency in coming days.

“We want good cooperation... I take the criticism very seriously,” he said.

Survivors have accused the Greek coastguard of causing the accident by attempting to tow the vessel, an allegation the coastguard denies.

“Nobody knows exactly what happened,” Kairidis said on Monday, but he called the criticism of Greece “unfair” and said international media had a “tendency to focus on the negative, which sells.”

The minister said Greece was in favour of setting up agreements “so that (the boats) can return safely back to the Libyan coast, sending a message to illegal smugglers and to those tempted to risk their lives.”

Kairidis was appointed to the post after the conservative New Democracy party won a second four-year term on June 25.

He said boosting integration programmes and encouraging legal migration are among the ministry's priorities. Greece has already signed migrant worker agreements with Bangladesh and Egypt as it had a demand for at least 100,000 jobs in the agriculture, tourism and construction sectors, he said. — AFP



A migrant is helped as he and other migrants arrive at the port of Kalamata, Greece. — Reuters file photo



UN agencies ‘alarmed’ at scale of Jenin ongoing raid

GENEVA: UN aid agencies on Tuesday voiced alarm at the scale of the ongoing Israeli military operation in the West Bank town of Jenin, where 10 Palestinians have been killed, saying there were restrictions on medical access.

The operation, which involved drone strikes and hundreds of troops and was one of the largest of its kind in years, entered a second day on Tuesday, prompting the evacuation of thousands of people from a refugee camp.

“We are alarmed at the scale of air and ground operations that are taking place in Jenin in the occupied West Bank, and air strikes hitting a densely populated refugee camp,” Vanessa Huguenin, a spokesperson for the UN humanitarian office, told a briefing, saying three minors were among those killed. She did not immediately respond to a request for the victims’ ages.

Damage to infrastructure caused by air strikes have cut off

The Red Cross said it was “extremely concerned by the alarming intensification of armed violence” in Jenin

most of the water and electricity at the camp, she added. The Palestinian Red Crescent previously said it has evacuated around 3,000 people.

The Red Cross said it was “extremely concerned by the alarming intensification of armed violence” in Jenin.

The World Health Organization and medical charity MSF both raised concerns about access.

“Attacks against healthcare including prevention of access to persons injured are extremely concerning,” said WHO spokesperson Christian



An Israeli armoured vehicle fires tear gas during an ongoing military operation in Jenin city in the occupied West Bank. – AFP

Lindmeier, adding that restrictions put in place by Israeli forces meant first responders could not reach those critically

injured within the camp. Medical charity MSF said that military bulldozers had destroyed roads leading to

the camp, making it nearly impossible for ambulances to reach patients. “Palestinian paramedics have

been forced to proceed on foot, in an area with active gunfire and drone strikes,” it said.

Meanwhile, a Palestinian rammmed a pickup truck into pedestrians in Tel Aviv and then went on a stabbing rampage on Tuesday in an attack claimed by the Hamas group that Israeli authorities said wounded eight people.

The 20-year-old Palestinian, from the occupied West Bank, was shot dead by an armed civilian, police said.

Hamas claimed him as a member, saying he struck in Israel’s commercial capital in retaliation for the ongoing military raid in the flashpoint West Bank town of Jenin, in which 10 Palestinians have been killed during clashes with local gunmen.

“This heroic operation is an act of self-defence in the face of the ongoing massacre in Jenin, the crimes of displacement, killing and destruction executed by occupation forces,” Hamas said. — Reuters

Egypt, Turkiye appoint ambassadors to upgrade diplomatic relations

ANKARA/CAIRO: Egypt and Turkiye said on Tuesday they had appointed ambassadors to each others’ countries for the first time in a decade, in the latest sign of warming ties.

Cairo and Ankara both issued statements announcing “the upgrading of diplomatic relations between them to the level of ambassadors”.

The two foreign ministries said the move “aims at the re-normalisation of relations between the two countries and reflects the mutual will to develop bilateral relations”.

The appointments mark a rapprochement between Egypt’s President Abdel Fattah el Sisi and his Turkish veteran counterpart Recep Tayyip Erdogan.

Relations were severed a decade ago when the two countries went through diplomatic dispute.

At the time, Erdogan said he would never speak to “anyone.”

In 2014, El Sisi became president of the Arab world’s most populous nation.

The first signs of a thaw came in May 2021 when a Turkish delegation visited



Turkish Foreign Affairs Minister Mevlut Cavusoglu (R) and Egyptian Foreign Affairs Minister Sameh Shoukry shake hands as they hold a joint news conference in Ankara. – AFP file photo

Egypt to discuss a possible normalisation.

Last November, Erdogan and El Sisi shook hands in Qatar in what the Egyptian presidency heralded as a new beginning in their relations.

The two leaders then spoke

by telephone in February.

After a series of further steps towards rapprochement, Egypt’s Foreign Minister Sameh Shoukry visited Turkiye to show solidarity after the massive earthquakes that killed more than 50,000 people in Turkiye

and Syria in February.

While relations were long frosty, trade continued. In 2022, Turkiye was the largest importer of Egyptian goods, totalling \$4 billion.

Disagreements remain as Turkiye is home to many Arab journalists critical of their governments, which has been outlawed by Cairo.

Cairo and Ankara also back opposite sides in conflict-torn Libya where two rival administrations vie for power.

Amr Elhamamy will become Egypt’s ambassador in Ankara while Turkiye nominated Salih Mutlu Sen to become its ambassador in Cairo, the foreign ministries said in a joint statement.

The appointments marked an important milestone in the normalisation of relations, Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said following the announcement.

“From now on, our relations will continue to improve rapidly in political, economic and all other fields. This is the will of our president and government,” Fidan told a news conference.

— Agencies



Sudanese fleeing violence arrive in Gadaref, the capital of Sudan’s eastern state of Gadaref. – AFP

Sudan fighter-jet shot down as battles rage across capital

WAD MADANI: Heavy fighting raged on Tuesday across the Sudanese capital where witnesses reported a fighter-jet being shot down and artillery and machine gun fire rocking several neighbourhoods.

“We saw pilots jumping with parachutes as the plane plunged to the ground,” said a witness in northern Khartoum who, like others, asked not to be named citing security fears.

A source from the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces said the RSF had shot down the Sudanese Armed Forces jet.

The RSF said they “arrested the pilot after he landed with a parachute”, in a statement

that also accused the SAF of “heinous massacres” in greater Khartoum.

The armed forces led by Abdel Fattah al Burhan have been at war with the RSF -- led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo -- since April 15, in a brutal conflict that has killed nearly 3,000 people and displaced millions.

A witness in Omdurman, located across the river from Khartoum’s city centre, also reported “heavy clashes using various types of weapons”.

Others said they could see “air strikes in the area of the state television building”, where the RSF had launched an attack this week and fired anti-aircraft weapons on Tuesday. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

BANGKOK

Thai House picks compromise speaker

The Thai parliament appointed a compromise candidate to the powerful role of House speaker on Tuesday, potentially complicating progressive party leader Pita Limjaroenrat’s efforts to form a government.

MFP has cobbled together an eight-party coalition that also includes election runners-up Pheu Thai, but it still remains well short.

One of the first jobs will be deciding the timing of the vote for prime minister. The



powerful speaker role also sets the parliamentary agenda.

Analysts say the fact that MFP was unable to get the coalition to back its own speaker candidate.

— AFP

TUNIS

Man stabbed to death in clash with migrants

Three African migrants have been arrested as suspects in the stabbing death of a local man in Tunisia’s coastal city of Sfax, a court spokesman said on Tuesday.

Police fired tear gas on Sunday to disperse residents and migrants throwing stones at each other.

Faouzi Masmoudi, spokesman for the Sfax prosecutor, said the victim, aged in his early 40s, was fatally stabbed late on Monday during a scuffle between local



residents and migrants from sub-Saharan Africa.

Masmoudi said three suspects, from Cameroon according to initial information, had been arrested.

— AFP

KABUL

Taliban order beauty parlours to shut

Afghanistan’s Taliban authorities have ordered beauty parlours across the country to shut within a month, the latest curb to squeeze women out of public life.

The order will force the closure of thousands of businesses run by women and outlaw one of the few remaining opportunities for them to socialise away from home.

Women have also mostly been barred from working for the United Nations or NGOs, and thousands have been sacked



from government jobs.

UN Deputy High Commissioner for Human Rights Nada al Nashif said: “Every aspect of women’s lives has been restricted.” — AFP



omanobserver.com/podcast

world

OMANDAILYOBSERVER

WEDNESDAY | JULY 5 | 2023

7

In brief

■ CHISNAU



GUNMAN DIES AFTER KILLING TWO AT AIRPORT

A Tajik man, who shot dead two people at Chisinau airport while being repatriated from Moldova under escort, has died from injuries sustained during an exchange of fire, police said.

The 43-year-old shot dead a border policeman and an airport security employee on Friday after grabbing a gun from a border police official. He had been banned from entering Moldova for security reasons and was being sent home. The man, wanted in his country for the kidnapping of a senior bank official, died on Monday, police said in a statement. Moldova's President Maia Sandu declared a day of national mourning on Tuesday for the victims.

■ VIENNA



UN TO DEBATE THE HOLY QURAN BURNING

At the request of Pakistan, the UN's Human Rights Council is to convene an urgent meeting on the recent burning of the Holy Quran outside a Swedish mosque, a council spokesman said in Geneva on Tuesday.

The council would hold an urgent debate to "discuss the alarming rise in premeditated and public acts of religious hatred as manifested by current desecration of the Holy Quran in some European and other countries," he said. The debate was likely to take place this week, it said.

The burning was the first incident of its kind in Stockholm for some months. Police allowed the demonstration to go ahead after similar actions were banned in February.

■ ROME



1 MILLION ASYLUM APPLICATIONS IN 2022

About 1 million people applied for asylum in EU member states in 2022, with Germany topping the list of countries applied to, the EU Asylum Agency (EUAA) said on Tuesday.

According to the agency, this marks an increase of approximately 50 per cent compared to 2021 in the so-called EU+ countries, including Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland.

The majority were received by Germany (244,000), France (156,000), Spain (118,000), Austria (109,000), and Italy (84,000), totalling 996,000 applications.

Russia says drone attack near Moscow a 'terrorist' act by Kyiv



Firefighters work at a site of a Russian military strike in the town of Pervomaiskyi, in Kharkiv region, Ukraine. — Reuters

MOSCOW: Russia said on Tuesday it had downed five Ukrainian drones in the Moscow region, calling it a "terrorist act" that briefly disrupted air traffic at an international airport in the capital.

Ukrainian authorities meanwhile announced that Russian shelling on a residential area in the southern frontline city of Kherson had killed two people.

"An attempt by the Kyiv regime to attack a zone where civil infrastructure is located, including an airport that receives international flights, is a new terrorist act," foreign ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said.

The early-morning attack is the latest in a series of recent

drone incidents that Moscow has blamed on Kyiv, and have targeted both the Kremlin and cities near the border with Ukraine.

The military said it had downed all five drones and that there was no damage or casualties.

Four were destroyed by anti-air defence systems while a fifth was neutralised by "electronic means," it said.

Emergency services cited by the state-run RIA Novosti news agency said one of the drones was neutralised at Kubinka, about 40 kilometres from Vnukovo airport.

Several flights were redirected to other airports and Russia's air transport agency said traffic at Vnukovo resumed at 0500 GMT.

Russia's Federal Air Transport Agency said that other airports in

Moscow and the Moscow region were operating normally.

RIA Novosti also reported that two drones had been downed near the village of Valuevo, citing emergency services.

Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanin described the incident as "another Ukrainian drone attack attempt."

Drone attacks have hit Russian cities throughout Moscow's offensive in Ukraine, but have intensified in recent months.

Moscow and its environs, lying some 500 kilometres from the Ukrainian border, have up to now been rarely targeted.

In early May, two drones were shot down above the Kremlin, and later the same month drones hit Moscow high-rises.

Kyiv said early on Tuesday that Russia had launched attack drones at the Sumy, Donetsk and Zaporizhzhia regions.

It also announced that Russian shelling of the southern city of Kherson, which is regularly shelled by Russian forces, had left two residents of the city dead.

"Today began with tragic news for the Kherson region. A Russian artillery strike ended the lives of two civilians in Kherson," Oleksandr Prokudin, the head of the Kherson region's military administration said.

The drone attacks on Moscow come several weeks into a Ukrainian counter-offensive to claw back territory captured by Moscow since large-scale hostilities erupted last February. — AFP

Nato agrees to extend boss Stoltenberg's term by a year

BRUSSELS: Nato decided on Tuesday to extend Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg's contract by a further year, opting to stick with an experienced leader as war rages on the alliance's doorstep rather than try to agree on a successor.

Stoltenberg, a former prime minister of Norway, has been the transatlantic security alliance's leader since 2014 and his tenure had already been extended three previous times.

The decision means continuity at the top of Nato as its 31 members grapple with the challenge of supporting Ukraine in repelling Moscow's attack while avoiding a direct conflict between Nato and Russian forces.

Stoltenberg, 64, is widely seen across the alliance as a steady leader and patient consensus-builder. The decision to extend his tenure to Oct. 1, 2024, comes ahead of a summit of Nato leaders in Vilnius, Lithuania, next week.

Stoltenberg said he was honoured by the decision.

"The transatlantic bond between Europe and North America has ensured our freedom and security for nearly 75 years, and in a more dangerous world, our Alliance is more important than ever," he said. US President Joe Biden and leaders of other Nato nations also hailed the decision. — Reuters



Nato Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg (L) talks to the media as he arrives for a European Council Summit, at the EU headquarters in Brussels. — AFP

France says overnight protest violence falls sharply

PARIS: Overnight violence in French cities has halved in 24 hours, the interior ministry said on Tuesday, a week after riots erupted over the police killing of a teenager at a traffic stop.

Seventy-two people were arrested overnight nationwide, including 24 in and around Paris, and 24 buildings torched or damaged, it said.

A statement said 159 vehicles had been set ablaze, and 202 fires set in rubbish bins or elsewhere in public areas.

Four offices of police or gendarmes came under attack, but there were no injuries.

Police mobilisation had been kept at the same level as the two previous nights, at 45,000 in all of France.

The government has battled riots and looting since 17-year-old Nahel M. was killed by an officer during a traffic stop on Tuesday just outside Paris, rekindling long-standing accusations of systemic racism among security forces.

Mayors across France held rallies on Monday calling for an



France's President Emmanuel Macron addresses the mayors of cities affected by the violent clashes during a meeting at the presidential Elysee Palace in Paris. — Reuters

end to the violent clashes.

Monday's demonstrations calling for a "return to republican order" came after the home of the mayor of a Paris suburb

was rammed by a burning car, prompting widespread outrage.

A total of 157 people had been arrested overnight Sunday to Monday -- already a sharp decline

from the number held the night before.

President Emmanuel Macron was on Tuesday to meet with the mayors of 220 municipalities that

suffered damage during the riots.

Macron hopes to "start the painstaking, long-term work needed to understand the profound reasons that led to these events", an official at the president's office said.

The French President raised the idea of handing out quick-fire fines to the parents of children caught committing vandalism or robberies as part of the government's response to days of rioting.

Meeting police officers in Paris on Monday evening, Macron thanked them for their work and floated the idea of speedy punishments for parents who fail to control their children.

"With the first crime, we need to find a way of sanctioning the families financially and easily," he said, according to comments reported by the Parisien newspaper.

At the height of the rioting last Friday, Macron had appealed to parents to control their offspring.

"It's the responsibility of parents to keep them at home," Macron had said. "It's not the state's job to act in their place." — AFP

The challenges of being a boss



SAIF AL SHAIBANI

The writer is a banker by day and a storyteller by night

Being bossy is never something the intention, but being bossy will never make you win any awards nor bring out the best in your employees. You are more likely to have demotivated, uninterested employee.

So as the story goes. You got promoted after years of hard work, and you have been introduced to the team as their boss. Feelings are high your first day goes well, motivated, hopeful, enthusiastic, and ready for anything.

Weeks passed by you started to settle into your role, you worked hard in creating a healthy work environment, bringing the team together, and instilling your ideas and work ethics you do your best in bringing out the best of your colleagues.

But you started to notice a change a shift in moods as if the fresh paint had worn off. Chinese whispers flying around the office the words being said about you.

You are still focused, ignoring the whispers and continuing on with your job.

In the back of your mind, remember the day when you were that person complaining, but still

determined to show your colleague you are not like the other bosses. ‘That you’re different’.

As months pass you gained confidence in yourself, and you start to develop and show results. All is well right? Well not really.

What you see as a normal day at work, your hard work in setting up your office and creating a smooth workflow. Your colleagues will notice a difference in you ‘he is not the same person when he was one of us’.

The whispers about how you have changed like the bossing around, the workload, the pressure, and the list goes on.

While in reality, it is never that simple, you are trying to do a job and trying your best to get the best out of your team. You are simply trying your best to do your job, making the best out of it, and surviving it as much as the next person.

You cannot blame the human mind or their emotions, it can take us far away past the point of rational thinking. Basically, we will see the person in the reflection of our emotions and then use our real sense to make judgments.

So when exploring, for example, the employee’s expectations they want a boss who is compassionate,

BALANCING LEADERSHIP AND EMPATHY PROVES TO BE A CHALLENGING JOURNEY FOR A NEWLY PROMOTED BOSS. AS WHISPERS CIRCULATE AND PERCEPTIONS SHIFT, THEY STRIVE TO CREATE A HARMONIOUS WORK ENVIRONMENT WHILE BRINGING OUT THE BEST IN THEIR TEAM

decisive, a decision maker and a leader, a figurehead, and respectful.

When exploring the expectation any boss from their employees is reliable, consistent, hardworking, able to listen to instructions, a team player, and respectful.

But, whatever the case is the person in charge is only trying to do their job and make the most out of it.

Yes, we all de-rail from the track, but open communication will support that issue. So, it helps to have an open mind.

Also, the idea to control another person is never the intention nor is making anyone miserable at work. We should remember seating on that seat comes with its own challenges, pressure, and stress with the weight of responsibilities on the shoulders of that person.

It would be good to make a point of that.

Yes, it does look good on paper the title, responsibility, the pay rise, parking space, and others. But that only adds up to the stress that comes with the chair.

One should not be an envoy, but an empathic of the colleague with the pen and the one holding the pen should be patient with the person they call their peer.

‘Shocked’ stage stars fear for future of British arts

RANA MOUSSAOUI

As a wealth of British theatre and opera maestros cross the Channel to perform at French festivals this summer, many are worried about the state of live arts back home. The combined impact of Brexit, the Covid-19 pandemic, rising inflation and a Conservative government that sees live arts as a low priority have all taken their toll.

“In the UK, a lot of small places are closing — I’m not optimistic about the direction it’s going,” said Tim Crouch, who is directing two plays at the Avignon Festival in southern France that starts this week. In October, Arts Council England announced several London institutions would face cuts after the government asked it spread funds to other areas.

Among the victims was the English National Opera, set to lose £12.6 million next year and possibly relocate out of the capital.

Funds were frozen at the BBC, the biggest employer for classical music in the country, forcing it to shed 20 per cent of staff at its three English orchestras.

A plan to scrap the “BBC Singers”, the country’s only permanent professional choir, was only overturned after an open letter from 700 composers around the world.

French artists worry about declining support, too, but still enjoy some of the most generous state subsidies in the world, and festivals such as Avignon and Aix-en-Provence attract many classical and stage stars from Britain.

Among them is composer George Benjamin, premiering a new opera, “Picture a Day Like This”, in Aix on Wednesday. He was “angry and shocked” over the BBC cuts, he said.

“The BBC is the greatest benefactor and patron of music that our country has ever had in its whole history,” he said.

“Closing down the BBC Singers and reducing and humiliating their wonderful orchestras, it feels terribly sad — a worrying and mistaken moment.”

Star conductor Simon Rattle said he understood the world was going through a “complicated and difficult time”, but said it was a shame that the first instinct of British politicians was always to cut arts funding.

“It seems to be part of our DNA,” he said. “It is a ridiculous and tragic time in so many ways,” he added. “But we all want to see arts and culture when we come out of this... What kind of country do we want to be?”

Tim Etchells, directing a play in French at Avignon, said the desire to move funding to less-supported areas of northern England — where he is based — should not lead to a situation where “regions are played off against each other”. — AFP

Prigozhin’s public support remains significant, polls show



ANATOLY KURMANAEV

The writer is a foreign correspondent for NYT

Yevgeny Prigozhin’s failed rebellion sharply dented his domestic support, but nearly 30 per cent of Russians continue to view the Wagner mercenary leader positively, according to opinion polls whose results were released on Monday.

Results from two surveys conducted in June by Russian Field, a nonpartisan Moscow-based research company, found that Prigozhin’s decision to march his Wagner mercenaries on Moscow on June 24 reversed a steady rise in opinion polls that had made him one of Russia’s most popular wartime leaders.

Prigozhin’s short lived-rebellion, which he called off within hours, had posed the most dramatic challenge to President Vladimir Putin’s leadership in his two decades in power.

Prigozhin’s residual support is particularly striking in light of a concerted effort by the Russian government to discredit him; the lack of public support for the mutiny from Russian political and military leaders; and the deaths of several Russian military pilots who confronted Wagner’s rebels. The polls also took place amid an increasingly draconian crackdown on free speech, which has seen Russians jailed for expressing anti-government views.

Experts are divided over the accuracy of polling in Russia, where criticising the war in Ukraine is illegal.

Some claim that repression prevents respondents from expressing their real views. Polling firms defend their work by saying that well designed surveys can still produce reliable results.

Between 70 per cent and 80 per cent of people reached by telephone by Russian Fields refused to participate, highlighting the difficulties of capturing public opinion in the country.

Russian Field surveyed two separate groups of about 1,600 people across Russia by phone, one shortly before and the other shortly after Wagner’s mutiny. The polls had a margin of error of 2.5 per cent.

Overall, Prigozhin’s support fell by



The word Wagner carved on a wall of a school that was previously occupied by Russian soldiers in the town of Velyka Oleksandrivka in eastern Ukraine.

THE POLLS ALSO TOOK PLACE AMID AN INCREASINGLY DRACONIAN CRACKDOWN ON FREE SPEECH, WHICH HAS SEEN RUSSIANS JAILED FOR EXPRESSING ANTI-GOVERNMENT VIEWS

26 percentage points following the mutiny, according to the poll. Twenty-nine per cent of those surveyed said they still viewed Prigozhin in a positive light, while nearly 40 per cent said they viewed the mercenary leader negatively. One-third of respondents said they were not familiar with his activities or declined to answer.

The findings appeared to align with an analysis conducted in June by FilterLabs.AI, a public opinion firm that monitors social media and Internet forums to track popular sentiment in Russia.

That analysis found a sharp reduction in Prigozhin’s support after the rebellion.

As Prigozhin lodged increasingly caustic attacks against the Russian ruling class, his support steadily rose until he staged his high-stakes gambit against the government, the polls by Russian Field found. The share of

Russians who supported him rose by 14 percentage points, to 55 per cent, from February to early June, according to the research company, despite a lack of media coverage from state-dominated television networks, which continue to be an influential source of news for Russians.

“Prigozhin’s rating was based on two pillars: the support of Vladimir Putin and honest rhetoric. He called things by their name and talked about problems that others were afraid to speak of,” Artemiy Vvedenskiy, the founder of Russian Field, said in written responses to questions.

The polls show that state propaganda has been partly successful in changing these perceptions.

Following the rebellion, Prigozhin’s support fell most sharply among Russians older than 60 and those who primarily obtain information from television, according to the polls.

By contrast, Russians between 18 and 44 years old were nearly evenly split among supporters and opponents of Prigozhin, the polls found.

The mercenary leader and tycoon also maintained strong support among Russians who obtain their information primarily from the popular messaging app Telegram and Internet news sites, suggesting that his online media network has considerable reach.

— *The New York Times*

A world without the use of many plastics!

Like many other hazards, single-use plastic bags have reached the proportions of a widely scorned and discouraged vice. Also known as disposable plastics, they are omnipresent – from grocery stores, and retail businesses to our homes. Ultimately we find them buried in landfills and in the sand on the beaches, flying on the streets, hanging from tree branches, and blowing around bushes.

This man-made catastrophe poses a serious environmental danger to human and animal health. This needs to be treated like a drug habit and kicked as a lifestyle pledge!

In 2008, Zero Waste Europe launched a global movement against single-use plastic bags. It gained significant momentum in the years that followed. Consequently, July 3 every year was declared as International Plastic Bag Free Day to foster shared awareness and actions to get rid of the notorious environmental menace from our planet.

Reports show that some 160,000 bags are used every second. That's five trillion bags a year. And fewer than three per cent are recycled. Sadly, a plastic bag takes 1,000 years to disintegrate in a landfill!

"Globally, people consume the equivalent of a credit card of plastic every week, and it's expected that there will be more plastic than fish in the sea by 2050," a report by US Centre for Biological Diversity points out.

These toxic chemicals are now being found in our bloodstream and the latest research has found they cause cancer, infertility, birth defects, impaired immunity, and many other ailments.

They're dangerous to wildlife as well. They're dangerous to fish, birds, and other animals. If animals eat plastic carrier bags they can die. And when they die and their bodies decompose, the plastic bag is released into the environment again, ready to kill something else.

Unfortunately, only a small



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp

The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

percentage of these bags are recycled each year, and most float about the landscape and create a tremendous expense in clean-up costs. Several countries, regions and cities have enacted legislation to ban or severely reduce the use of disposable plastic shopping bags.

Many municipalities in the Gulf region are targeting shopping malls and grocery stores to reduce dependence on single-use plastic bags.

The Sultanate of Oman is one of the many countries in the region that is working towards reducing its dependency on plastic bags which are responsible for thousands of marine animals getting killed each year by ingesting plastic or getting tangled in it.

The government has banned the use and distribution of single-use plastic bags for shopping and other activities since January 2021.

It's not too late yet. There are still many changes in your lifestyle that you can incorporate to reduce your plastic footprint in the environment. The hazards of single-use plastic bags can be mitigated by raising environmental awareness among communities.

Each of us can contribute to the cause by adopting simple yet impactful habits. In this context, environmentalists advise carrying a reusable bag when shopping, refusing plastic bags when unnecessary, and embracing reusable alternatives for storage and transportation are practical steps that can make a significant difference.

By making sensible choices and urging friends, family and our local communities, we can collectively work towards a cleaner and healthier environment. We need to modify our everyday habits by not using plastic bags. When there is a good alternative and only use plastic when it is strictly necessary. Plastic bags can be reused or used for different purposes.

It is necessary to think about how they can be reused before disposing of them. A world without the use of so much plastic is definitely possible!

ENVIRONMENTALISTS ADVISE CARRYING A REUSABLE BAG WHEN SHOPPING, REFUSING PLASTIC BAGS WHEN UNNECESSARY, AND EMBRACING REUSABLE ALTERNATIVES FOR STORAGE AND TRANSPORTATION

VIBRANT DANCERS CELEBRATE



Performers dance at Leal Senado Square during celebrations marking the Feast of Na Tcha in Macau. – AFP

Rethinking climate finance for the developing world

Speaking to the *Financial Times* at the June 22-23 Summit for a New Global Financing Pact in Paris, Kenyan President William Ruto called for the establishment of a "global green bank" that would assist developing countries in mitigating the effects of climate change without further exacerbating their already-unsustainable debt levels.

This thoughtful and important proposal is one that rich countries must consider if they are serious about tackling climate change, fostering peace, and promoting prosperity in Africa and the rest of the developing world.

Until recently, developing economies' only bargaining chips were their abundant natural resources and cheap labour. But climate change has enhanced low-income countries' bargaining power and altered the dynamics of North-South relations.

Developing countries are no longer willing to be bullied into taking on massive debt to finance green development, especially when cheaper alternatives are available.

Affluent countries' ongoing efforts to persuade low-income countries to assign a higher value to the global commons than they themselves



Kenneth Rogoff

RICH COUNTRIES HAVE LONG URGED DEVELOPING COUNTRIES TO SHIFT AWAY FROM FOSSIL FUELS WHILE FAILING TO HEED THEIR OWN ADVICE OR OFFER MEANINGFUL FUNDING. KENYAN PRESIDENT RUTO'S CALL TO ESTABLISH A NEW 'GLOBAL GREEN BANK' IS THE SORT OF THOUGHTFUL PROPOSAL THAT DEVELOPED COUNTRIES MUST SERIOUSLY CONSIDER

have done are doomed to fail. Although incentives have aligned in some cases, aided by the falling costs of solar and wind energy, developing economies often find it far more cost-effective to follow in the footsteps of advanced economies and rely on fossil-fuel technologies.

The war in Ukraine has laid bare the developed world's hypocrisy. For years, developed countries have advised developing economies against using fossil fuels, routinely denying them development loans for gas and oil projects, particularly when intended for domestic consumption. But since the Russian war, European leaders have been pressing African countries to ramp up gas production so that it could be converted to liquefied natural gas and shipped to Europe. Germany has even reopened its coal-fired power plants. Moreover, European households and businesses have been granted the same kind of massive energy-consumption subsidies for which African countries were lambasted in, for example, the International Energy Agency's 2022 annual report.

While European governments view these actions as a justified response to extraordinary circumstances, developing countries where electricity rationing is the norm – even during peacetime – find this hard to swallow. The United States, for its part, is not doing much better. When gasoline prices soared following the outbreak of the Ukraine war, US President Joe Biden similarly assured American consumers that he would do everything in his power to bring prices back down.

Biden even pleaded with Saudi Arabia to pump more oil, despite his administration's previously

adversarial approach towards the country and its leader, Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman.

Besides Ruto's proposal for a green bank, other observers have suggested alternative approaches to providing developing countries with the financing they need to complete the clean-energy transition. For example, one proposal advocated by several prominent commentators calls for reducing foreign investors' exposure to exchange-rate risk in developing economies.

But this proposal is misguided.

Given that a large part of exchange-rate risk is rooted

in sovereign risk, it cannot be eliminated through financial engineering alone. The main threat to exchange rates, after all, is the strong incentive for cash-strapped governments to inflate away debt.

Subsidising a huge increase in debt in developing countries is not a solution to global warming but a recipe for another debt crisis. Climate financing for low-income countries must prioritise grants over loans.

While the Bretton Woods institutions serve an important purpose, their financial and governance structures, as well as their existing resources, are inadequate. The International Monetary Fund and the World Bank primarily provide loans, not the outright grants that developing countries need.

Moreover, these institutions' governance mechanisms are designed to favour the interests of wealthy lender countries. To persuade developing economies to join the fight against climate change, they must be given a greater role in formulating global policy. The proposed funding must also be massive.

@Project Syndicate, 2022



sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



MUSCAT: The Oman Equestrian Federation (OEF) is to hold the Khareef Season events for the year 2023, the events will organise from July 28 to August 1, in cooperating with the Governor of Dhofar, the Dhofar Municipality and the Dhofar Equestrian Committee.

OEF effort to take advantage of the atmosphere and climate of Dhofar Khareef season to host such events and activities related to equestrian and horse riding. The equestrian activities include the qualifying race, the endurance race for a distance of 100 km, pony race (small horse) and tent pegging tournament. In addition to national tent pegging camp on August 2 to 15, in preparation to participate in world cup for tent pegging In South Africa.



OEF TO HOLD EQUESTRIAN EVENTS DURING KHAREEF SEASON 2023

Oman motor racing ranking second in GTE Am points standings

Ahmad al Harthy to resume FIA W Championship in Italy

History making Omani motor racing star Ahmad al Harthy is carrying rightful confidence into round five of the FIA World Endurance Championship, which takes place at Monza in Italy this Sunday, 9th July, after a monumental performance on his debut in last month's Le Mans 24 Hours. Finishing second in GTE Am after a sensational showing from the entire Oman Racing with TF Sport squad at the world's biggest and most prestigious endurance race, Al Harthy and team-mates Michael Dinan and Charlie Eastwood are determined to continue their podium momentum.

As a result of their heroics at the Circuit de la Sarthe in France, the Oman Racing trio head to ultra-fast Monza second in both the driver and team GTE Am standings. Remember too, this is their maiden season in the globe's biggest endurance championship.

With just three races remaining in the FIA WEC season, every point scored will be crucial as the No.25 Aston Martin Vantage squad strives to achieve the highest position in the championship it possibly can.

Monza, of course, is a track like so many in Europe which holds great memories for Al Harthy having been the scene of his maiden Pro-Am class victory in the Blancpain Endurance Series – now the GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup – back in 2017 as well as further podium success.

As always, consistency and reliability will be paramount at Monza, as will sufficient top speed at the 3.6-mile (5.8-kilometre) track which is famous for its flat-out straights. Just as notable, infamous in fact, is the first



chicane – the Variante del Rettifilo – which will almost certainly play a significant role as the huge FIA WEC grid barrels into the right-left turn at the first time of asking on race day.

Al Harthy, who is supported by a prestigious portfolio of partners including the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS, has been in outstanding form throughout his debut season in the World Endurance Championship to date.

Even with a negative Balance of Performance grading at the start of the year for the Aston Martin, the Omani and his team-mates picked up points for ninth place at Sebring in the USA during round one, and then eighth position during the subsequent race in Portimao, Portugal.

As soon as the playing field levelled for the Aston, in time for round three at Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium, Oman Racing delivered on its promise with a first ever podium for Al Harthy in WEC after a terrific top three finish – a day after he achieved his maiden WEC pole position in GTE Am. Taking that forward to Le Mans, the second place result in the 24 hour race was simply sensational.

Ahmad al Harthy: “We’re still pinching ourselves to be honest after the podium at Le Mans, it was an amazing week and what we achieved in qualifying and the race meant so much to everyone in Oman – all of our incredible partners and supporters. It was the best event of my career and proudest moment, the biggest endurance race in the

world, so the aim is to take all of that momentum forward to Monza.

“I love racing there, it’s a fantastic track but you do need the top speed to be able to compete. The guys at the team haven’t stopped working, we continually push to improve and try and be the best we can be, so hopefully we will have a competitive car and be able to challenge for the podium again. I really am looking forward to being back in Italy, and at such a great and historic circuit.”

The first two free practice sessions at Monza will take place on Friday, 7th July, with a third session and all-important qualifying – the latter beginning at 14.40 local time – on Saturday, 8th July. On Sunday, 9th July, the 6 Hours of Monza itself will get underway at 12.30 local time.



Karate, self-defence course conclude in Al Mudhaibi

SPORT REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 4

In cooperation with the Shotokan Karate Center, the Oman Women’s Association (OWA) in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, concluded the summer training course in karate and self-defence.

More than 30 Boys and Girls which under the age of ten took part, Asma bint Nasser al Habsiyah, Chairwoman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Women’s Association in Al Mudhaibi, said, “The summer training course, which lasted for three weeks, aimed to exploiting the spare time of school students and providing them with skills and knowledge in various fields”.

The course was implemented by the international Referee, Sensei Hilal bin Mohammed al Abdali from the Shotokan Karate Center in Muscat Governorate. Pointing out that karate and self-defence are important sports that children should learn at an early age because of their psychological and physical benefits that contribute to gaining strength, patience, dependance and

“
The summer training course, which lasted for three weeks, aimed to exploiting the spare time of school students and providing them with skills and knowledge in various fields

ASMA BINT NASSER AL HABSIYAH
Chairwoman of the Board of Directors of the Omani Women’s Association in Al Mudhaibi

self-defence, in addition to providing them with the skills of discipline, respect, boldness, courage and teamwork, and they compensate children from sitting.

On the other side the training course were attended by 32 male and female from the basic education stage, the participants learned about karate skills, the basics of the game and methods of self-defence, in addition to practical and theoretical skills.

Saudi champions Al Ittihad sign Jota from Celtic

AL RIYADH: Celtic winger Jota has joined Al Ittihad on a three-year contract, the Saudi Pro League champions announced on Monday.

Financial details were not disclosed but Scottish media reported the transfer fee was 25 million pounds (\$31.73 million).

Al Ittihad announced the deal by publishing an animated video of coach Nuno Espirito Santo watching Jota's goals.

"We want to conquer the world," the former Wolverhampton Wanderers coach said in the video with the FIFA Club World Cup in the background.

Al Ittihad will participate in the Club World Cup which will be held in Jeddah in December as champions of the host country's league.

Jota, 24, becomes Al Ittihad's third signing after Ballon d'Or winner Karim Benzema and former Chelsea midfielder N'Golo Kante. The former Benfica forward scored 28 goals and made 26 assists in 83 games after moving to the Scottish champions



in 2021. The Saudi Pro league has become an attractive destination for Europe-based players since Cristiano Ronaldo moved to Al Nassr last January.

Last month, the Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF) announced a Sports Clubs Investment and Privatisation Project involving Al Ittihad, Al Ahli, Al Nassr and Al Hilal.

PIF owns 75 per cent of each of the four clubs, while their respective non-profit foundations own 25 per cent of each.

— Reuters

England suffer Ashes blow as Pope sidelined for rest of series



England's Ollie Robinson celebrates after taking the wicket of Australia's Usman Khawaja. — Reuters

LEEDS, United Kingdom: England suffered a major Ashes setback on Tuesday as Ollie Pope was ruled out for the rest of the series against Australia after suffering a dislocated shoulder in the second Test.

Pope was injured while fielding on the first day at Lord's last week and aggravated the problem after England were told they were not permitted to use a substitute fielder in the second innings.

The 25-year-old underwent scans on his right shoulder that showed he needs surgery, forcing him to the sidelines for the remainder of the 2023 campaign.

England are likely to replace vice-captain Pope with Dan Lawrence for the third Test starting on Thursday at Headingley.

Lawrence won the last of his 11 Test caps last March and has not played since Brendon McCullum and Ben Stokes took

charge of the side.

England have decided not to call up any additional batting cover. "England and Surrey batter Ollie Pope has been ruled out of the rest of the Ashes series after dislocating his right shoulder during the second Ashes Test at Lord's last week," an England and Wales Cricket Board statement said.

"Scans in London on Monday revealed the full extent of the injury and he will miss the rest of the summer campaign and will require surgery.

"He will work closely with the England and Surrey medical teams in respect of his rehabilitation."

England are trailing 2-0 in the five-match series after losing at Lord's.

They are attempting to win the Ashes for the first time since 2015, while Australia have not won in England since 2001.

— AFP



Brazil ally old heads with fresh talent in quest for WC glory

BRAZIL: After winning a fourth consecutive Copa America, Brazil are hopeful they have found the right balance between experience, emerging talent and natural flair to deliver a first Women's World Cup trophy.

The Brazilians, eighth in the Fifa rankings, were dumped out of the 2019 tournament in the round of 16, which led to Swede Pia Sundhage taking over from Vadao to become the team's first foreign coach.

Sundhage, who led the US to Olympic gold in 2008 and 2012, and Sweden to silver in Rio de Janeiro, has instilled discipline and confidence, looking to get the right blend of technique and experience from veteran players and emerging talent.

"Experienced players will be important. It's a balance they make with the younger

ones," Sundhage said at a press conference last month. "I like this mix and it's just the beginning. That could be the winning formula."

That key element of experience prompted the long-awaited return to the squad of 37-year-old Marta, the team's record scorer, who will be playing in her sixth World Cup after spending just over a year on the sidelines due to injury.

"Marta is a queen. Being around her and having the chance to train her is great," added Sundhage. "Whether she will be in the starting line-up, I don't know. But she will have our support."

Defender Tamires and midfielders Andressa Alves and Debinha also bring strong leadership and technical excellence to the squad, which will be key in Sundhage's flexible strategy.

— Reuters

Alcaraz starts title bid in ruthless mood

LONDON: Carlos Alcaraz made a confident start to his bid for a first Wimbledon title as the world number one routed French veteran Jeremy Chardy on Tuesday.

Alcaraz's emphatic 6-0, 6-2, 7-5 first round victory underlined his status as the main challenger to reigning champion Novak Djokovic.

The 20-year-old, who has five titles to his name already this season, is in fine form after winning his maiden grass-court trophy at Queen's Club last month.

Although Alcaraz, who won the US Open last year, sits top of the world rankings, Djokovic is the man to beat as he chases an eighth Wimbledon title.

The Spaniard is seeded to meet world number two Djokovic in a blockbuster final at the All England Club.

Alcaraz, who made the last 16 at Wimbledon in 2022, was just five when Chardy played his first match at the tournament in 2008.

Chardy, a former Wimbledon junior champion, will retire from singles tournaments after this year's event.



Spain's Carlos Alcaraz celebrates winning his first round match against France's Jeremy Chardy. — Reuters

The 36-year-old was no match for Alcaraz, whose potent combination of power, speed and a deft drop-shot makes him a formidable force on all surfaces.

Under the Court One roof, Alcaraz refused to give London-

based Chardy a farewell party in front of his friends and family.

As rain thundered down on the roof, Alcaraz unleashed a barrage of booming forehands as he sped through the first set in just 22 minutes. Chardy finally got on the scoreboard in the third game

of the second set, but Alcaraz kept his foot on the gas to seal a resounding victory.

In the second round, Alcaraz faces the winner of the all-French clash between Alexandre Muller and Arthur Rinderknech.

— AFP

PHILIPSEN CLAIMS TOUR DOUBLE IN CRASH-MARRED FINALE



Alpecin-Deceuninck's Belgian rider Jasper Philipsen celebrates his victory on the podium after winning the 4th stage. – AFP



Alpecin-Deceuninck's Jasper Philipsen celebrates on the podium wearing the green jersey after winning stage 4. – Reuters



Second placed Lotto-Dstny's Caleb Ewan after stage 4. – Reuters

NOGARO, France: Belgian Jasper Philipsen won his second successive Tour de France stage amid scenes of chaos as several riders hit the ground on the final circuit on Tuesday.

Australian Caleb Ewan took second place and German Phil Bauhaus finished third in the fourth stage, a 182 km ride from Dax, with Briton Adam Yates retaining the overall leader's yellow jersey.

After the peloton rode at a snail's pace most of the day, things got hectic in the finale on the Paul Armagnac racing track, near the vineyards that once belonged to 1973 Tour champion Luis Ocana of Spain.

With just over 1.5 kilometre to go, European champion Fabio Jakobsen hit the deck on a right-hand bend, with his Quick Step-Alpha Vinyl team mate Julian Alaphilippe saying the riders were caught by surprise by the turns.

More riders crashed inside the final kilometre, but nothing could derail Philipsen, who again benefited from a perfect lead-out to become the first sprinter to secure back-to-back victories on the Tour since Dylan Groenewegen in 2018.

Philipsen took the green jersey for the points classification leader from France's Victor Lafay.

"Caleb was just next to me he was close to beating me in the end. It's very special to win twice in a row," said Philipsen, who again stayed in Mathieu van der Poel's slipstream until his final effort.

"It's my first time on a car racing track. It was odd. I hope the guys who crashed are OK."

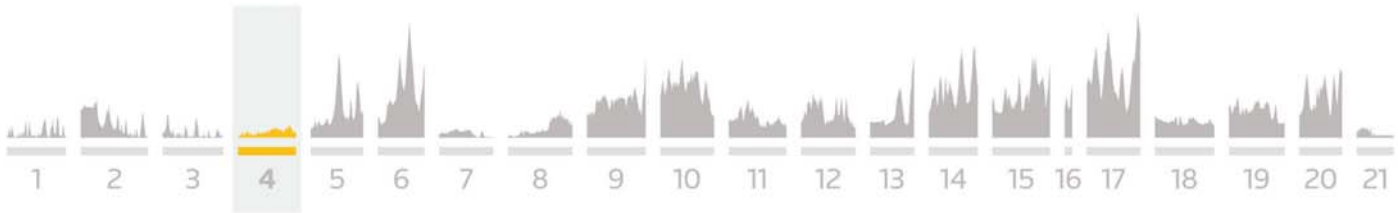
The Tour de France hits the mountains on Wednesday with a 162.5 km trek from Pau to Laruns, featuring the punishing Col de Soudet (15.2 km at 7.2 per cent) and Col de Marie Blanque (7.7 km at 8.6 per cent).

Yates leads Tadej Pogacar, the 2020 and 2021 Tour winner and his UAE Emirates team mate, in the overall standings by six seconds with his twin brother Simon in third place, also six seconds off the pace.

Defending champion Jonas Vingegaard is sixth, 11 seconds further back. — Reuters

Stage 4

DAX – NOGARO
JULY 4



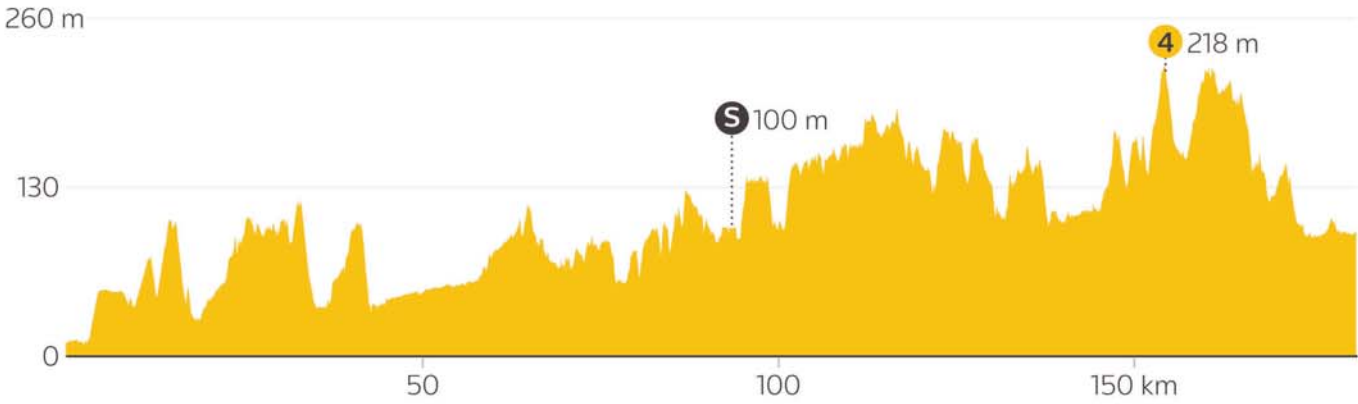
ROUTE



Length
181.8 km

Sprint
1 2 3 4 ← Easy
Climb categories

ELEVATION



Note: Maps and elevation profiles are based on existing roads. Some discrepancies may occur.
Sources: Maps4News; GPS Visualizer; Amaury Sport Organisation.
Aditi Bhandari, Prasanta Kumar Dutta, Sudev Kiyada and Jitesh Chowdhury | Reuters, June 30, 2023

Iconic Butte Montmartre and Alexandre III bridge to feature in 2024 cycling events

NOGARO: The road races at the Paris 2024 Olympics will go up the iconic Butte Montmartre and will have the longest routes in the Games' history, organisers revealed on Tuesday.

The women will ride 158 km on August 4 and the men 273 km on August 3 from the Place du Trocadero near the Eiffel Tower into the Vallee de Chevreuse, returning to the French capital into an 18.4- km circuit, where they will climb the Butte Montmartre (1 km at 6.5 per cent) three times before finishing at the Trocadero from the Pont d'Iena.

Only once did the Olympic athletes ride a longer course, when there was only an individual time trial, which was 315 km, at the 1912 Games in Stockholm.

In western Paris, where they will go through Boullay les Trous, a town well known by amateur riders in the Vallee de Chevreuse, the men's peloton will climb 10 short and fairly steep hills and the women six on a leg-sapping course.

"It will be incredible to see the winners raise their arms with the Eiffel Tower in the background," Paris 2024 executive sports director Aurelie Merle said.

The time trials will start from the Invalides and head east to the Bois de Vincennes before finishing on the Alexandre III bridge.

Both women and men will ride 32.4- km on a flat route on July 27, the day after the opening ceremony. — Reuters



The bank that understands you

Transfer your salary for more benefits

- Competitive rates on High-Yield Savings Account and deposits
- Fast loan approval
- Quick issuance of cards

24791111 | www.bankdhoofar.com

Ambitious plan for green transport sector unveiled

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, JULY 4

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology shared its plans to decarbonise the transport sector during the Green Mobility forum held yesterday. According to officials, the Ministry has divided its green mobility plan into short, medium and long-terms plans. The first phase will promote the use of electric vehicles in the country.

Speaking to the *Observer*, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, shared that the Ministry has implemented various initiatives to encourage the use of electric vehicles in Oman. One such initiative seeks to support the roll-out of electric charging stations in the country. According to Al Maawali, 145



charging stations will be available in the country by the end of the year and the figure is expected to increase to 250 by 2040.

“Today I can proudly say that we have enough chargers from the

North to the South of Oman for all electric vehicle users,” he shared.

Additionally, the Government has also introduced multiple tax incentives to encourage the use of electric vehicles, including an

exemption from value-added taxes, customs taxes, and registration fees at the Royal Oman Police.

The switch to electric vehicles has been identified as one of the major tools of decarbonising

the transport sector. Passenger vehicles account for about 60 per cent of emissions within the sector.

Additionally, the short-term plan will also include the utilisation of hydrogen cells for heavy long-distance trucks, the use of biofuels and establishing frameworks and legislation for future mobility. The second phase of the plan will emphasise the use of public transport. According to the, Under-Secretary of the Ministry for Transport, Eng Khamis bin Mohammed al Shamakhi, a lack of infrastructure one of the main reasons behind the poor use of public transport in Oman. The medium-term plan will focus on establishing the appropriate infrastructure to accommodate public transport in Oman. This will include increased bus routes, and bus and car pool lanes. Additionally, the plan will aim to link public transport routes to the

Muscat Metro scheme. According to Net-Zero Consultant at Ministry, Eng Abdullah al Busaidy, the metro will only be established after the creation of an efficient public transport system that can support the metro system.

The medium-term plan will also focus enabling the use of sustainable aviation fuel, establishing a regional green fuel maritime centre, reducing port emissions and upgrading gas stations to include hydrogen fuelling stations.

The long-term plan includes the transition to fully environmentally friendly and self-driving vehicles. The transport sector amounts to 18 per cent of total carbon dioxide emissions in Oman according to the Net-Zero Report . This figure is expected to rise to 41 per if nothing changes. It is worth noting that this figure excludes emissions from maritime and air travel.

OPAZ halves fees for SMEs, streamlines fees for 80 services

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 4

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) has shared details about applicable fees for more than 80 services provided by OPAZ in the various special economic zones and free zones affiliated with the Authority.

It includes a 50 per cent reduction in fees of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) as specified in schedule published in the Official Gazette.

This decision comes as an important step towards improving procedures, re-engineering operations and accelerating businesses.

It reflects OPAZ tireless efforts and continuous support to enhance the local investment and business environment, stimulate economic growth, attract foreign investments, support SMEs and support the business sector in general by unifying and reducing fees for the services and activities provided to investors and establishments in the zones supervised by OPAZ.

This moves aims to complement the national efforts aimed at economic diversification and maximising the role of SMEs in establishing projects that play a vital role to support local economy, providing job opportunities, promoting innovation, sustainable economic development and financial stability in SEZs and free zones in line with Oman Vision 2040.

This is done by reducing the



challenges facing the investors, maximising the participation of local and foreign private sector, and improving the competitiveness of the investment environment in the Sultanate of Oman.

Moreover, the decision aims to simplify and re-engineer some procedures and licenses that reduce operating costs and achieve credibility through transparency in determining fees for the services provided by OPAZ and unifying them in the zones, defining performance indicators, ensuring consistency of the policies and processes as well as ensuring investors’ accessibility to comprehensive and accurate information about policies, procedures, fees, the balance between fees, quality of services, harmonising similar services in the different zones.

Further, it serves creating a package of preferential packages that achieve integration between investments and government objectives towards employing the national workforce and developing SMEs.

The reduced fees in the

special economic zones and free zones included those related to the procedures for commercial register, registration of contracts, licenses and permits related to conducting some business and commercial, industrial and tourism activities, investor work permits, environmental permits, urban planning services, construction and engineering affairs permits, and the issuance of certificates and documents, permits for service suppliers, government fees related to operation and investment, and others.

In this regard, Dr Said bin Khalifa al Quraini, General Manager of the Investment Development Sector, said the new package reflects OPAZ continuous efforts to improve the business environment, achieve sustainable economic growth, and enhance economic competitiveness and the relative value of the zones.

He stressed OPAZ’s continuous endeavour to review and improve the fees for services and activities provided by the various zones, as well as to ensure providing speedy and efficient services.

Khazaen Economic City draws RO 300m in investments to date

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, JULY 4

Khazaen Economic City, which was established by Royal Decree 44/2023, is a strategic partner for development and a promising new engine of economic growth in the Sultanate of Oman, said Eng Salim bin Sulaiman al Thuhli, CEO.

Welcoming the Royal Decree, Al Thuhli said: “The issuance by His Majesty the Sultan — May God preserve and protect him — The Royal Decree establishing Khazaen Economic City and issuing its system, confirms the sublime support and patronage



for this project, and will have the greatest impact on its continued success. The City is an ambitious and promising Omani project with global aspirations, and aims

to supplement the economy and contribute to strengthening sources of income and advancing the Omani economy to broader horizons.”

TURN TO P15

GROWTH THROUGH TOURISM

Expression of Interest (EoI) Provision of Irfan East Master Planning Consultancy Services

OMRAN Group announces that it is now open to receiving Expression of Interest (EoI) applications for participation in Tender No. 32/2023, for Provision of Al Irfan East Master Planning Consultancy Services.

Tender Submission Closing Date	12.7.2023
Tender Process Details	Please visit: www.omran.om/tenders/



omran.om/tenders/

Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group)
Tel: +968 24 39 11 11
info@omran.om
@omrangroupom



Al Maha celebrates 30 years in business

MUSCAT: This year sees Al Maha Petroleum Marketing Company SAOG celebrating 30 years of its excellence in business. Established back in 1993, Al Maha is Oman’s pioneering distributor of petroleum products and has since been a strategic partner in developing and supporting Oman’s infrastructure sector.

The company maintains a network of service stations throughout Oman. Through capital investment and growth, they have developed services that reach the most inaccessible parts of the Sultanate of Oman.

Chief Executive Officer, Eng Hamed bin Salim al Maghdri expressed, “This is an incredible milestone for any company, and I am extremely proud to be celebrating our 30th anniversary. We have dedicated ourselves to 30 years of product innovation and improving our business processes, to ensure that we provide our customers and partners with the most effective solutions and services we can.

Over the years Al Maha has gone from strength to strength



and we have had several key milestones, which have helped build Al Maha into what it is today.

With over 242 filling stations, the company not only has an edge over its competitors in Retail sales but also captures Commercial sales and other allied sales including aviation fuel and lubricants.

In addition, the company also provides services such as convenience stores, auto services, smart card services and aircraft refuelling. They are committed to the environment and maintain international safety standards for sustainable operation.

“Despite the ever-changing times, our company has adapted itself to successfully steer its way through any challenges that may arise. We’ve come a long way and are proud of our achievements.

Our continued dedication drive and passion will strengthen the foundations for our future. We are looking to the future with plans to increase our market share of business customers. This is especially true of those with the potential to expand into overseas markets,” the CEO concluded.

ahlibank offers 10% cash reward on salary transfers



MUSCAT: Committed to enhance customer experiences, while underscoring its intent to inculcate a savings culture, ahlibank continues its attractive 10 per cent cash reward on salary transfers.

As part of this rewarding promotion, customers who transfer their salary to ahlibank will receive an immediate one-time cash reward of 10 per cent of their monthly salary, with a maximum cash reward amount capped at RO 500.

The offer, open to both Omanis and expatriates until end of July 2023, is structured to infuse a note of positivity while transferring salaries for the first time to ahlibank. All customers who transfer their monthly salary to the Bank with an amount of RO 1,000 or above are eligible for this reward offer.

Muneer al Balushi, AGM – Head of Retail Distribution, said, “This cash reward promotion is an extension of our gratitude to our customers who value our services and trust our products. We want our new salary transfer customers to experience the sense of gratification that is embedded in our scheme; we want each one of our customers to feel inspired to save and grow their money with our Bank. We are ready and excited to welcome all new salary transfer customers with this irresistible offer.”

He added that the Bank intends to forge positive relations with new customers, while strengthening its ties with the existing ones.

“It is important to note here that this scheme is an example of our leadership in implementing innovative products and services that are designed to enhance our customers banking experiences. We have our fingers on the pulse of our customers and are open to their feedback, which is how we devise our new campaigns and offers. We will continue to initiate more such rewarding schemes throughout this year,” he stated.

As the number of new entrants to the labour market increases, ahlibank, looks to provide the best services that enhance its preferred status. This scheme is an effective step that reflects the Bank’s contribution to supporting the financial stability efforts of beneficiaries, thereby enhancing the economic and social level for individuals and society at large.

Ahlibank is keen to invest in high-efficiency banking solutions using the latest innovations to support its customers’ goals and elevate its position in the market.

NBO launches salary transfer campaign with 10% cashback

MUSCAT: Continuing to unlock opportunities for its customers, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has launched a salary transfer campaign. Running until August 30, 2023, the salary transfer campaign is available to eligible customers who open new accounts with a salary transfer or have existing accounts with no salary transfer for more than 12 months.

These customers have the chance to receive a cashback of up to 10 per cent on their new salary credit, with a maximum cashback limit of RO 500. As an additional benefit, eligible customers participating in the campaign will also receive a first year free credit card and first year free automated safe deposit locker at NBO’s head office.

Maha al Raisi, Assistant General Manager and Head of Retail Products, said, “We are excited to offer this opportunity to our customers, demonstrating our commitment to delivering exceptional banking solutions tailored to their needs. The Salary Transfer Campaign further



enhances their banking experience with NBO, offering added benefits and convenience. We will continue to unlock opportunities and create value for our customers.”

To be eligible for this exciting campaign, customers must have a minimum salary transfer of RO 750. The cashback calculation will be based on the first salary amount credited to the customer’s NBO account. It is important to note that the first salary transfer must occur before October 31, 2023, to qualify for the cashback.

OAB recognised as ACCA approved employer

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has achieved the status of Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA) Approved Employer, a global benchmark for training and support.

OAB was certified at Trainee Development, Gold level, which denotes that the organisation is committed to ensuring ACCA students, affiliates and members have the right skills, ethics and competences to add value and drive forward the business.

Essam al Busaidy, Head of the Human Resources Division at of Oman Arab Bank, said: “This recognition is an important achievement for us at the Bank. It will greatly benefit our training, support, recruitment,



learning and development, helping us to attract and retain the most talented employees.

Being an ACCA Approved Employer further enhances the bank’s status as an organisation where current and future employees can be sure they can progress with their training as part of their job and become life-long learners.”

Being recognised as

an ACCA Approved Employer reflects the bank’s commitment and dedication to support and foster the growth of their ACCA trainees working towards the ACCA Qualification or Certified Accounting Technician (CAT) holder.

ACCA is the global body for professional accountants, with 527,000 students and 219,000 qualified members across 179 countries.

BankDhofar inaugurates 92nd branch in Nakhal

MUSCAT: Under the auspices of Shaikh Eng Oday bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of the Medical City for Military and Security Units, the BankDhofar and Maisarah network proudly announced the grand opening of its 92nd branch in Nakhal.

This new branch is set to serve the financial needs of the community, offering a wide range of banking services and innovative solutions.

Located in the heart of the Wilayat of Nakhal, the new branch aims to provide convenient, modern banking facilities with personalised services available to every customer. With the inauguration of this branch, BankDhofar reinforces its commitment to supporting the growth and development of the local economy, while catering to



the evolving needs of customers across the nation.

The opening ceremony was attended by esteemed dignitaries, officials, and members of the community and BankDhofar’s executive managements. Sheikh Eng Oday bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of the Medical City

for Military and Security Units, graciously presided over the event as the patron, highlighting the significance of this new branch in enhancing financial accessibility in Nakhal. Commenting on the occasion, Amjad bin Iqbal al Lawati, Chief Retail Banking Officer of BankDhofar, said, “We

are delighted to inaugurate our new branch in Nakhal under the auspices of Shaikh Eng Oday bin Hilal al Maawali.

This branch will play a crucial role in our mission to offer convenient banking solutions and outstanding customer service to the people of Nakhal. As a customer-centric bank, we constantly strive to bring our services closer to communities and contribute to their prosperity.”

The new Nakhal branch provides a comprehensive range of banking services, including personal banking, corporate banking, trade finance, investments, and more. With a team of qualified professionals, the branch will assist customers with their financial needs, offering tailored solutions to meet their requirements effectively.

BankDhofar’s expansion

strategy continues to focus on identifying locations where it can provide accessible banking services to communities across Oman.

The opening of the Nakhal branch is part of the bank’s ongoing efforts to expand its network and reach more customers, empowering them with modern financial tools and solutions. BankDhofar, one of the leading banks in Oman, is renowned for its comprehensive range of products and services that cater to retail, corporate, and investment banking segments. With a strong commitment to innovation, customer satisfaction, and sustainable growth, BankDhofar continues to play a pivotal role in driving the economic development of Oman in line with Oman Vision 2040.



UK-based strategic metals firm eyes presence in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT, JULY 3

Power Metal Resources, a well-known UK based strategic metals exploration firm, says plans to establish a presence in mineral-rich Sultanate of Oman, as part of a wider foray into the Gulf region.

London-based Power Metal, which has a portfolio of project and investment interests in Africa, Australia and North America, announced in a statement on Monday that it has entered into a pact with Jasper Consult, a leading consultancy firm, for strategic advisory support as it seeks to build a new exploration asset base in the region, notably Oman and Saudi Arabia.

The AIM-listed company's current project portfolio cover



a commodity suite that include strategic and precious metals, such

as Nickel, Lithium, Tungsten, Rare Earths, Platinum Group Elements,

Graphite, Copper, Uranium, Gold and Silver.

Many of these projects, distributed globally, are in the early green-field exploration stage. The announcement comes against a strong upturn in investment interest in Oman's strategic minerals sector.

In March this year, UK-based miner Knights Bay secured concession rights to a massive 1,444 square kilometre site in the Wilayat of Ibra, representing a new potentially world-class nickel laterite deposit with cobalt, chrome, and iron-ore credits.

More recently, the Ministry of Energy and Minerals tapped local mining firm ARA Natural Resources to unlock the lithium resources of a concession (51-C) in Al Dhahirah Governorate.

"I am very pleased to announce this new relationship with Jasper

Consult, and very excited about the opportunity we have to establish a presence in both Saudi Arabia and Oman," said Sean Wade, Chief Executive Officer of Power Metal Resources plc, in a statement.

"By utilising the regional expertise of Jasper Consult, we hope to secure exploration licences and further crystallise value for shareholders."

As part of its brief, Jasper Consult, which has offices in Dubai and London, will help identify relevant exploration and development opportunities, provide support in the negotiation of the award of exploration licences, and help secure strategic partners as Power Metal builds its presence in the region, the UK mining firm added.

Khazaen Economic City draws RO 300 million in investments to date

FROM PAGE 13

In a statement to Oman News Agency, he explained that Khazaen Economic City, which is being developed in the Wilayat of Barka in the Governorate of South Al Batinah, is a qualitative and strategic project in the Sultanate of Oman as an integrated economic zone and free zone in partnership with the private sector.

It includes logistical, industrial, commercial, and residential projects, in addition to strategic projects that serve integration in services and business.

Covering an area of 52m sqm, the City includes many logistical and industrial projects, the most prominent of which is the Khazaen Dry Port, which is the first inland port in Oman that connects Khazaen with the rest of the destinations and international markets.

Also key is the Khazaen Central Market for vegetables and fruits, which will capitalise on its strategic location alongside the Al Batinah Expressway and connected to the border crossings, Khazaen Economic City comes as the major partnership between the public and private sectors in the field of financing, establishing and managing economic zones in Oman.

Al Thuhli said the Royal Decree grants many powers and facilities, such as: activating the one-stop shop under the management of Khazaen Economic City, the power to sell residential and commercial lands, opening two free zones, the first for light and medium industries and logistical activities, and the other for business and trade, with the granting of facilities for customs and tax exemptions.

The decree also ratified the development and usufruct agreement for the city, granting it the right to develop and manage the city and the two free zones.

Despite the global economic challenges of the past period, Khazaen has succeeded in pulling in more than 100 investment projects totalling around RO 100 million in value during the past 30 months.

QASIM AL MAASHANI

MUSCAT, JULY 4

A total of around RO 80 million in outstanding payments to private sector contractors were settled by the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology during the first half of this year.

According to a key official, the payouts represent a 100 per cent increase over sums paid during the corresponding period of 2022.

Fahd bin Salim al Hinai, Director General of Administrative and Financial Affairs, said the payments reflect a commitment by the Ministry to settle all private sector dues expeditiously.

The payments were made for various projects, including road construction, maintenance, and repairs caused by heavy rains, as



The payouts represent a 100 per cent increase over sums paid during the corresponding period of 2022.

FAHD AL HINAI

well as digital transformation initiatives in the communications and information technology sector, he said. At the same time, the ministry also received RO 20

million in revenues during the same period.

Commenting on other initiatives during the first half of the year, the official said the Ministry conducted a total of 53 programmes and workshops benefiting over 520 employees in the specialised, general administrative, technical, and leadership fields.

Al Hinai also mentioned the ministry's commitment to community service. The Human Resources Development Department of the ministry's Directorate provided approximately 28 free seats for public sector employees.

These seats were dedicated to programmes related to the Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology's specialisations and the

requirements of the market. The department aimed to transfer knowledge and foster the exchange of experiences.

Also as part of the ministry's initiatives, the "Naqla" project was launched, alongside "MoTCIT Talks" workshops and the "Naqla Tours" programme.

The latter initiative allows ministry employees to visit important sites, such as Port Sultan Qaboos, mining labs, and Transom offices.

To motivate its employees, the ministry implemented various incentive programmes. Over 265 employees, both male and female, benefited from programmes such as the "Employee of the Month" and the "Thank You Cards" programme during the first half of 2023. The Human Resources Department introduced the

"Maward Plus" programme, which manages human resources within the ministry. This system facilitates administrative and financial transactions, as well as provides self-service options like leave requests, resignations, transfers, salary slips, official assignments, service terminations, and more.

By using technology and reducing paper usage, the system offers a unified electronic database, simplifying procedures, generating reports and statistics, and supporting strategic planning and cost reduction. Furthermore, the documentation building and the unified hall building (auditors' services hall) were completed and opened, and a multi-storey parking building with 900 parking spaces, including spaces for electric cars, is nearing completion, he added

MoUs signed to support green mobility and sustainable energy transition in Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JULY 4

Committed to play key role to support and realise the potential in Mobility's energy transition pathway in the years to come, Shell Oman Marketing Company (Shell Oman) sponsored the Green Mobility Event organised by Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology (MoTCIT).

This strategic partnership reflects Shell Oman's dedication to the Sultanate of Oman's energy transition journey and supporting key stakeholders in their decarbonisation efforts, thereby helping us to fulfil our ambition to become a net-zero emissions energy business by 2050 or sooner which is aligned with Shell's overarching Powering Progress strategy, the event was held under the auspices of Salim al Aufr — Minister of Energy & Minerals.

As a sponsor of the event, Shell Oman has solidified its commitment to creating In-Country-Value (ICV) in the energy transition journey by signing Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) with the Ministry of Transport, Communications,



and Information Technology (MTCIT), as well as two Omani small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

These MoUs underscore Shell Oman's dedication to supporting local SMEs as well as actively contributing to the decarbonisation and net-zero emissions target in line with Oman Vision 2040 whilst advancing the energy transition and expanding the electric vehicle (EV) network throughout Oman.

Dr Mohammed al Balushi, CEO

of Shell Oman, said, "Shell Oman is leveraging its global expertise to play a lead role in the Sultanate of Oman's progress towards a greener mobility future.

Electric mobility is on the way to mass adoption which is unlocking new opportunities to Shell to offer commercially viable solutions to EV drivers.

This requires a joint approach via strong collaboration with government and other stakeholders within a well-articulated framework and coherent structure

of governance to support the long-term EV transition roadmaps across the whole EV ecosystem.

We are glad to be partnering with MTCIT to develop a robust network development strategy for EV charging. Moreover, by capitalising on such strategic partnerships, we continue to focus on our ICV agenda to empower Omani SMEs and nurture their growth through knowledge transfer to strongly position them competitively in the local market."

Under the first MoU, Shell

Oman joins forces with Amlaak Energy LLC, for the supply and installation of EV chargers for Shell Oman. The second MoU between Shell Oman and HTC (Hussam Technology Company) to develop a fully integrated charging point operator (CPOs) capabilities for the first time in Oman.

Through this agreement, the SME will assume responsibilities such as software and application development, customer service, technical and non-technical maintenance, payment gateways, and facilities management for the EV charging infrastructure.

Additionally, HTC will collaborate with Shell Oman provide consultancy services Engineering, Procurement, Construction, and Management (EPCM) services for various energy transition related projects by Shell Oman, including solar.

By investing in the development of EV charging infrastructure and supporting local SMEs, Shell Oman is driving the growth of renewable energy and promoting a greener mobility future for the Sultanate of Oman through its Powering Progress strategy which is aligned with the country's orderly transition towards net-zero emissions by 2050.

UK regulators holding back the economy, MPs claim



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK.

Regulators are suffering from a “democratic deficit” that is holding back the UK growth, according to a new report from a high profile group of MPs.

The Regulatory Reform Group has said that “unaccountable regulators are directly hindering the UK’s growth prospects” and called for ‘City’ (financial district) watchdogs such as the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) to be more accountable to lawmakers after taking on more powers post-Brexit.

The comments mark the latest attack on the City’s regulators, which have been placed in the firing line since the UK left the EU. FCA rules have been blamed for issues including London’s recent listings drought, the lack of investment by pension funds

in UK equities, and weak growth in sectors such as financial technology and venture capital.

The report by the Regulatory Reform Group, which is chaired by former HSBC executive and Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer lawyer Bim Afolami, calls for a dedicated Office for Regulation in the Cabinet Office that would manage and improve regulatory performance.

“An era of increasingly anonymous and powerful quangos, often underperforming, has to end,” said former Competition and Markets Authority chair Lord Andrew Tyrie, who is also part of the group.

Richard Fuller, former economic secretary to the Treasury, said: “The UK regulatory system is being undermined by a democratic deficit that we have failed to address since Brexit. After

leaving the EU, we have handed our regulators huge powers over really significant parts of our economy, with little or no democratic oversight of how they are exercising these powers or way of measuring their performance.”

The FCA does not set its own remit. The framework under which it operates was decided by parliament, which gave the regulator three core objectives – to protect consumers from bad conduct, to protect the integrity of the UK financial system and to promote effective competition in the interests of consumers.

The City watchdog is set to face higher levels of accountability in the wake of the Financial Services and Markets Bill. The intention of the bill being that it gives the government power to order a review of FCA rules, or set the terms of the cost-benefit analyses

the FCA conducts and introduce a new secondary objective to promote growth.

The FCA is meant to be operationally independent of the government and use its own expertise to set rules that best meet the objectives set by politicians. Many in the Treasury view the regulator’s attitude as blocking the UK’s ability to cash in on post-Brexit freedoms.

City minister Andrew Griffith was critical of FCA’s plan to introduce a so-called consumer duty rules later this year. Senior staff at the FCA and the Bank of England pushed back against plans to introduce a so-called call-in power that would allow the government to veto decisions made by the regulators.

The Prudential Regulation Authority also cautioned against the government’s plans to put the

Solvency 11 rules that set capital requirements for insurers and pension providers. In response to the report, an FCA spokesperson noted that both operational independence and proper accountability are vital to a well-functioning regulator.

“Scrutiny allows us to show we are meeting the objectives set for us by parliament. We welcome this report and debate as we move towards a more outcomes-focused system of regulation. That is why we have also published metrics that will allow others to hold us to account.

“These metrics, for example, show that while the scrutiny we apply to authorisation applications has increased, pending authorisation casework has more than halved and we are now substantially meeting our targets.”

India’s push to democratise credit tests limits

BY SHRITAMA BOSE

India is shaping its digital payments system into a credit engine. It wants banks to offer small loans through the channel residents use to transfer money via their mobile phones. But while the latest official effort to accelerate financial inclusion is gaining traction and will finally allow banks to monetise the homegrown system, it will test the safe limits of growing lending fast.

The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is used by 300 million Indians and facilitates 9 billion consumer transactions worth \$180 billion per month. Instead of using cash or swiping a debit card to buy vegetables, a Starbucks coffee or an airline ticket, Indians use UPI apps powered by Alphabet’s Google and Walmart’s PhonePe at zero-cost.

UPI is an obvious rail to transmit credit. Its users are mostly smartphone owners, and therefore aspirational. Yet barely half of them have active loans and only up to 10 per cent have a credit card. That’s why the regulator is allowing the use of RuPay credit cards, the country’s low-cost answer to Mastercard and Visa, for UPI payments. Merchants don’t pay a fee on RuPay card transactions worth less than 2000 rupees (\$24.40), and fees are capped at 2 per cent, rather than up to 3 per cent global card operators charge.

The one-year-old initiative is now gaining traction. At least seven banks including HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Punjab National Bank have gone live with the feature. In April the regulator went further, enabling banks to offer pre-approved overdraft accounts via UPI.

It’s a fillip to RuPay, which accounts for a quarter of all new credit cards issued, though Visa and Mastercard will remain more popular with higher spenders who want plastic that works seamlessly overseas. One97 Communications’ Paytm will also benefit as its network of merchants means it is the largest recipient bank for UPI payments.

Pushing credit on UPI will allow merchants to save on the cost of owning a point of sales terminal. And it adheres to the Reserve Bank of India’s preference for consumer loans to sit within banks, rather than with third-party applications; the regulator’s crackdown last year on prepaid credit facilities issued by wallet providers hurt Tiger Global-backed Slice and Accel-backed Uni.

Yet, the blistering pace of growth in unsecured loans raises concerns. Credit card receivables and lending for purchases of appliances both grew around 30 per cent year on year in April – nearly twice the rate of overall bank loan growth. Delinquencies in unsecured loans were higher in December 2022 than before the pandemic, per TransUnion Cibil.

Fast growth in the financial industry may be a natural byproduct of deepening credit uptake in a quickly expanding economy, as analysts at Bernstein point out. But the regulator is both seeking to support official goals of democratising credit while also warning lenders against “over-aggressive growth”. It muddies both worthy messages. — Reuters

America’s economy on the edge



MICHAEL J BOSKIN

The writer is Professor of Economics at Stanford University and Senior Fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Most major economies are flirting with, or tipping into, recession. While Canada and Sweden appear to have just pulled themselves back from the brink, Germany, Europe’s largest economy, is already in a technical recession, following two consecutive quarters of negative growth.

In China – the world’s second-largest economy, and a major source of global growth in the years before the pandemic – the post-Covid rebound has already fizzled, leading the government to roll out a new stimulus plan.

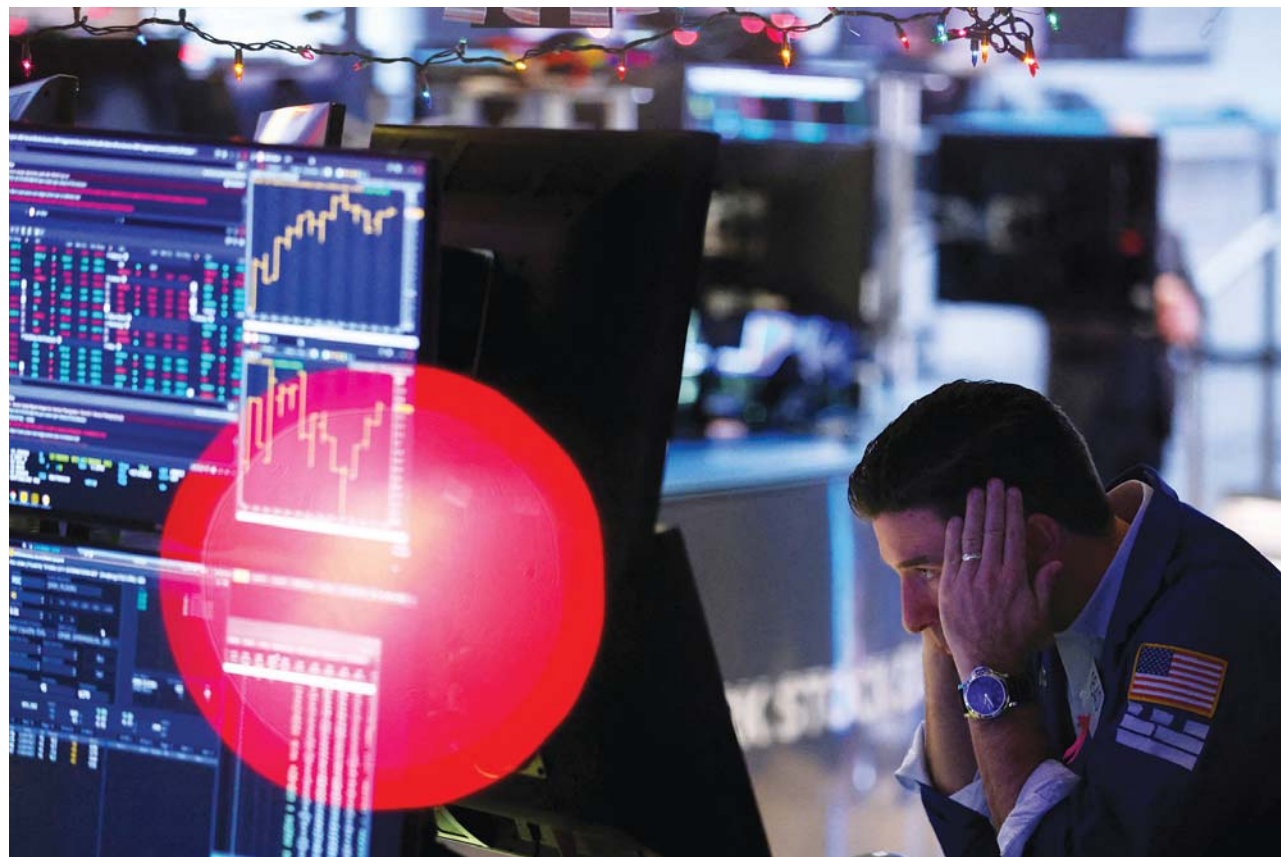
And while the US economy appears to have avoided a recession so far, many forecasters still expect a mild one in the coming months, with the Conference Board’s index of leading economic indicators continuing its 14-month decline.

Though labour is the largest cost for most firms, hiring in America has continued even amid growing concerns about declining orders.

How should we read these mixed signals? As I have suggested for some time, labour hoarding seems to be an underappreciated but increasingly important factor in today’s economy. Companies are reluctant to lose workers, owing to the growing difficulty of finding and retaining talent.

Layoffs, so far, have been concentrated in the technology sector, which over-hired during the pandemic. While the monthly establishment survey by the US Bureau of Labor Statistics suggests that the economy is still producing hundreds of thousands of net jobs per month, the agency’s separate household survey shows far less job growth.

Moreover, initial claims for unemployment insurance have ticked up, and the average workweek has ticked down – both



A trader works on the trading floor at the New York Stock Exchange (NYSE) in New York City. — Reuters

of which are sometimes early warning signs of a recession.

What about the stock market? On one hand, stock prices embody forecasts of future corporate profits, which are one of the economy’s most procyclical components. After plunging in 2022, US equities have rebounded strongly this year.

On the other hand, the recovery has been concentrated in Big Tech, and, as the Nobel laureate economist Paul Samuelson famously observed, the stock market is not always the best leading indicator (it “predicted nine of the last five recessions”).

Much will depend on monetary and fiscal policy. While the massive, highly stimulative responses to the Covid recession were justifiable (if far from perfect), their continuation even as the economy approached full employment helped cause the worst inflation in 40 years.

After a long period of near-zero-interest rates, the US Federal Reserve had to play catch-up with a series of rapid rate hikes. It paused in June, but Fed Chair Jerome Powell hinted that there could be two additional 25-basis-point increases beginning in July. That would bring the Fed’s policy rate up to 5.5-5.75 per cent, which is above the 12-month lagging core inflation rate and the Fed’s expectations of year-ahead inflation.

Generally speaking, central banks want their short-run target rate to exceed expected inflation for some time, owing to Milton Friedman’s concept of the long and

variable “lag in effect of monetary policy.”

It takes time for the economy to slow enough to reduce price pressures and wage demands. But in the current context, the Fed’s rapid rate hikes produced an inversion of the yield curve – another typical leading indicator of a recession – and contributed to the failure of several midsize US banks.

Should a recession now occur, it will be one of the most widely predicted in history. But if it does not, it will be one of the economic forecasting community’s biggest misses.

Still, the situation today is somewhat unprecedented for the United States. Never has government spending increased so massively at a time when the economy was already at full employment.

While the White House and Congress were able to reach an agreement to suspend the debt limit and place some modest constraints on spending, the big budget battles are yet to come.

Among other things, US President Joe Biden wants large corporate-tax increases and taxes on capital gains as they accrue, rather than when an asset is sold, and Secretary of the Treasury Janet L. Yellen is pushing a global minimum tax deal that would raise taxes on US multinational companies.

But the latter proposal is unlikely to pass muster in the US Senate,

as many treaty alterations would require a two-thirds majority.

For their part, Republican presidential candidates oppose higher taxes and may want to make permanent various expiring provisions of the 2017 tax cuts.

There is also likely to be a battle over defence spending, which currently is not on track to keep pace with inflation.

These issues will make for major policy fights, exacerbated by large cash shortfalls in Social Security and Medicare looming in a few years. Decades of experience across the OECD show that successful fiscal consolidation – both in strengthening the budget position and avoiding recession – has focused overwhelmingly on curtailing spending.

This is not surprising. Keeping marginal tax rates on savings, investment, and work at a modest level is crucial for the supply side of the economy.

While higher marginal tax rates are usually thought to affect growth only over the longer term, Casey Mulligan of the University of Chicago has shown that they were a major drag after the Great Recession – the slowest recovery of any since World War II.

Responding to America’s debt and entitlement-cost crises with higher taxes would be both risky in the short term and dangerous for America’s long-term economic prosperity.

© Project Syndicate, 2023

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

أوربت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds



To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER,

WhatsApp
 <your name> to
96473232

WEDNESDAY

JULY 5, 2023

DHUL HIJJAH 17, 1444 AH

OMAN DAILY
Observer Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
 m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
 ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
 95919344

94501166
 24649593
 24649595



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

DOOR TO DOOR CARGO



INDIA BANGLADESH NEPAL PHILIPPINES UAE INDONESIA EUROPE UK CANADA USA

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

Driving School

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

Contact No: 99074072

AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION

Contact: **97239696**
95355638

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

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

25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE FAST DELIVERY EXCELLENT SERVICES

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

SKT سماء الخضراء للتجارة
SAMA AL KHADRA TRADING

SERVICES:

PIPING SYSTEMS VALVES
 DRAINS INTERCEPTORS

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

SIT. WANTED

SENIOR Quantity Surveyor: Chamidu Fernando. BSc Quantity Surveying and Construction. Over 5 years experience. Visa and driving licence. +968 96295650

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: **99639264**

SIT. WANTED

27 YEARS experience in Oman looking for sales or admin job with valid driving licence. Email: msenizwa@gmail.com, contact: 99049651

MECHANICAL engineer with master degree having 9 years experience in Oman. Looking for a suitable job. Contact: 91162085

FOR RENT

Flat for rent

- 1) Darsait, near Indian School: Two bedroom flat, bath attached. Hall, kitchen and guest toilet. One bedroom flat, hall, kitchen and toilet.
- 2) Al Khuwair, near Rawasco: One bedroom, bath, kitchen, AC, curtains.
- 3) Al Ghubrah near Mars Hypermarket: Two bedroom flat with attached bath, hall, kitchen and guest toilet. One bedroom flat with attached bath, hall, kitchen and guest toilet.
- 4) Al Ghubrah near Indian School: Two bedroom flat with attached bath, hall, kitchen and guest toilet.

*All flats provided with airconditioners.
 Contact GSM: 91473374/97886085.

FLAT for rent.
 96379095,
 98403020

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

95210257

OMAN OBSERVER



LOST

RAJ Muhammad has lost Pakistani passport No QH 0153193. Finder please handover to ROP.

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. VACANT

REQUIRED indoor/ outdoor sales staff for building material and oilfield supply. Oman driving licence required. Email: sangita@dhiyahilal.com Contact: 93559800

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

SIT. VACANT

LOOKING for private nurse for wheelchair patient, Asian nationality. on call duty 24 hours in Salalah. Contact: 92800252/ 99779501.

Now get news on the go



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



OMAN DAILY
Observer

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
 m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
 bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
 wadialmeeh@yahoo.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
 nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suhar Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
 sohardaily@outlook.com

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

OMAN DAILY
Observer

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

Be Careful, Be Responsible!
 #LivingWithCOVID

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

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

MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Dr. Saad bin Khalifa al-Ruaidi, and Chairman of Administrative Judiciary Court Sheikh Al-Mubtar bin Hamoud bin Al-Hadi (pictured), Chairman of the Supreme Court Sayyid Khalifa bin Saad bin Khalifa al-Ruaidi took the oath of office at Al-Nasr Palace on Thursday. SEE ALSO P2

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

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

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

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

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS



@omanobserver
 www.omanobserver.om



DINING

A man prepares compote made of maad, from the Saba Senegalensis vine that grows wild and is common to the Sahel, in a street in Dakar. The soft maad shells hold grains inside the edible flesh.—AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

A Chopard representative displays the Palme d'Or, the highest prize awarded to competing films, during an interview on the day of the opening ceremony of the festival. — Reuters

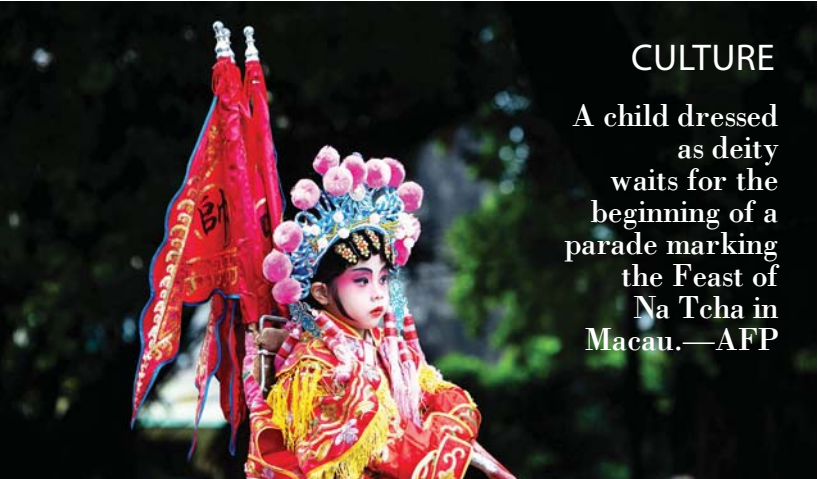
FASHION

A model presents a creation by Chanel during the Women's Haute-Couture Fall/Winter 2023/2024 Fashion Week in Paris.—AFP



OPERA

Visitors observe items from the Capitole theatre wig workshop, at the Couvent des Jacobins in Toulouse, southwestern France: The Couvent des Jacobins is offering an exhibition this summer on the theme of the making of opera, including costumes, wigs and sets. —AFP



CULTURE

A child dressed as deity waits for the beginning of a parade marking the Feast of Na Tcha in Macau.—AFP

art & life

WEDNESDAY | JULY 5, 2023 | DHUL HIJJAH 17, 1444 AH

OMAN OBSERVER [f](#) [t](#) [@](#) [www.omanobserver.om](#) [features@omanobserver.om](#)

Artificial Intelligence and Interior Design

In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has become an integral part of the interior design industry. AI-powered algorithms are changing the way designers approach their work, from personalised design to space planning and beyond

CULTURE

Türkiye seeks severed head of ancient statue from Danish museum

A BRONZE HEAD OF EMPEROR Septimius Severus on display at a Copenhagen museum has become a bone of contention between the Danish museum and Türkiye, which claims it was looted during an archaeological dig in the 1960s and wants it back.

After decades in the United States as part of a private collection that loaned it to New York's Metropolitan Museum, a statue of the Roman emperor, who lived from AD 145 to 211, was recently sent back to Türkiye — minus the head.

The statue was believed to have been stolen from a site in Türkiye. Turkish authorities say the missing head is in the Danish capital —

where it has been on display at the Ny Carlsberg Glyptotek in Copenhagen for over 50 years.

But many Danish experts say they are not so sure.

"We are not convinced that the two things belong together. The documentation is at the moment not very strong, we have to compare breaks of the torso and the head," Glyptotek's director of collections Rune Frederiksen said.

In 1979, a former museum curator estimated that the head — acquired in 1970 without any information about its exact origins — corresponded to a decapitated statue from a private American collection.



The two bronze parts were even reunited for an exhibition.

"The head was fitted to the torso in the sense that a pole was put into the neck of the head and fitted into the torso so that the two fragments approached each other," Frederiksen explained.

NOT CONCLUSIVE

But in his view, the assembly did not conclusively prove they were meant to

be together.

"I'm not saying that they don't belong together. I'm just saying that we are not as sure as we perhaps were 25-30 years ago, when we wrote the catalogues," he said.

The catalogues — covering Danish museum collections — state that "nothing, in terms of composition or structure, prevented the head and body from belonging to the same statue".

As for the origin of the bronze head, it is more categorical and places it at Bubon, a Roman site in Asia Minor, in the historic region of Lycia on what is now Türkiye's Mediterranean coast.

For archaeologist Guillaume Biard, a lecturer at the Aix-Marseille University, there is no documented evidence to definitely identify the origin of the head.

But he argues it is clear "the torso that was once exhibited at the Metropolitan Museum in New York and returned to Türkiye comes from the Sebasteion — the temple of the imperial cult — at Bubon."

For Turkish authorities on the other hand, the origin of the head is not in dispute, and in particular they quote the work of the late Turkish archaeologist, Jale Inan, who took measurements of the head and body.

"The bronze comes from Bubon in Türkiye. And like all objects from Türkiye, we are asking for it to be returned," said Mehmet Bulut, the Turkish charge d'affaires in Denmark.

Discussions with the Glyptotek have begun.

"The procedure has been initiated. We have expressed our request, but it will take time", Bulut added.

COMPLETE MODELS ARE RARE

While he is not opposed to a potential return, Frederiksen said he thinks it is necessary to thoroughly research

the parts.

Reuniting lost fragments is a vital and often difficult task for historians and museums.

"It is obviously important to be able to reconstruct ancient statues. Most of those that have come down to us are heads without bodies or bodies without heads," Emmanuelle Rosso, a professor of art history and archaeology at the Paris-Sorbonne University, said.

Heads have been worn down over time and statues may have been decapitated — sometimes during revolts or by looters looking to maximise profits by selling two objects rather than one.

"Complete statues are very rare, and this is even truer in the case of bronze statues," Rosso noted.

However, "the more complete a sculptured work is, the more archaeologists and art historians have at their disposal to place it in its original context of production and exhibition," Biard noted.

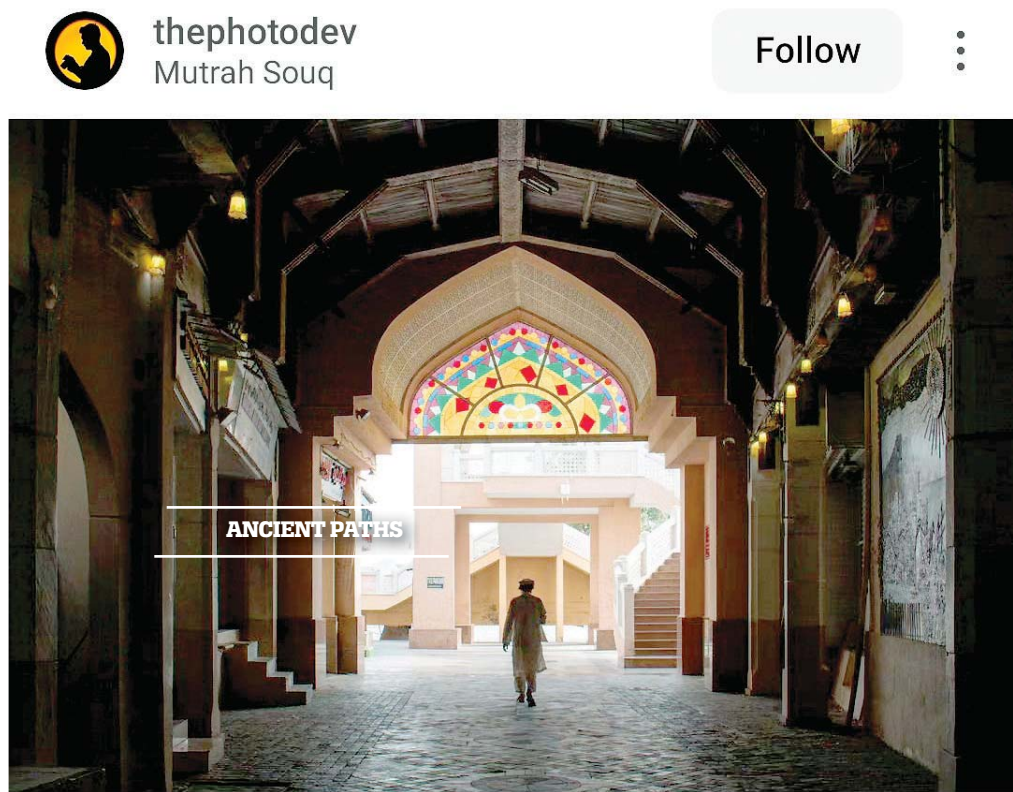
There have also been reunions with heads and bodies that weren't originally meant to be together.

"In the Roman period, the emperor used sculptures as part of political propaganda and when a new emperor came, instead of changing all the statues, sometimes it was just much more efficient and cheaper to change the head," Frederiksen explained. — AFP



find us on
TWITTER
Scan the QR Code or follow us on
www.twitter.com/omanobserver

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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.

Benefits to using AI-generated interior design concept images

By HH Sayyidah Meyyan al Said

In recent years, artificial intelligence (AI) has become an integral part of the interior design industry. AI-powered algorithms are changing the way designers approach their work, from personalised design to space planning and beyond. Artificial intelligence (AI) is revolutionising many industries, and interior design is no exception. AI technology is being used to generate interior design concept images that can help designers, architects, and homeowners visualise potential designs for their spaces.

Traditionally, interior designers would sketch out ideas and create 2D drawings or 3D models to present to their clients. However, this process may be time-consuming and may not always represent the designer's vision. With AI-generated images, we can now get faster, more accurate ways to convey design ideas and concepts like never before.

One example of AI-powered interior design software is the platform developed by the startup, Havenly. The company uses machine learning algorithms to analyse design trends and create customised design concepts for each of their clients. Users can input their preferences and upload photos of their space, and the software will generate a variety of design options, complete with furniture and decor suggestions.

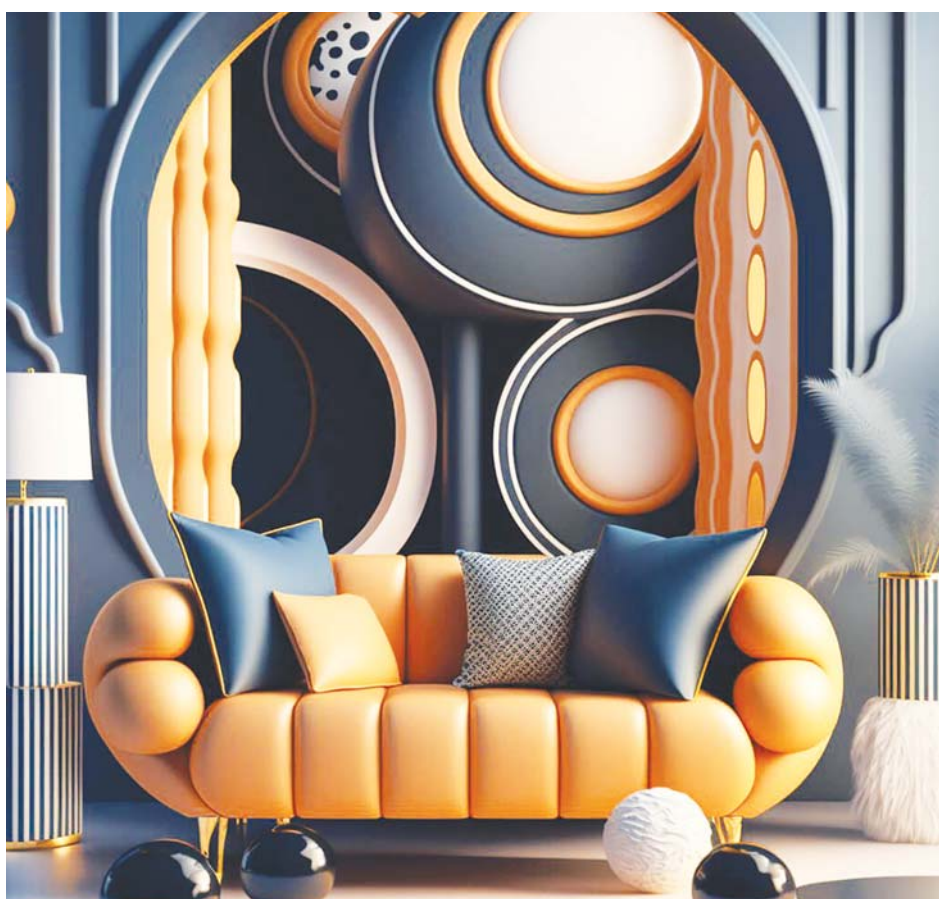
Another big example is Midjourney. It also uses machine learning algorithms to generate interior design concept images. It allows designers to quickly and easily create custom designs by inputting preferences and constraints such as budget, style, and room dimensions. Midjourney's software analyses this data and generates a variety of design options, complete with furniture and decor suggestions. The resulting images are photorealistic and allow designers and clients to see how different design elements will look in their space.

AI technology is being used to create



hyper-realistic renderings of interior design concepts. The company, Unreal Engine, has created a platform that uses real-time rendering technology to create photorealistic images of interior spaces. This technology allows designers to create immersive experiences for their clients, showing them how a room will look and feel before any construction begins.

There are many benefits to using AI-generated interior design concept images. For one, they allow designers to create and present ideas more efficiently. Instead of spending hours sketching and modelling designs, designers can use AI software to quickly generate multiple options. Additionally, these images can help clients better visualise the designer's vision and make more



informed decisions about their space.

However, there are also some limitations to consider. AI-generated images may lack the creativity and personal touch that a human designer can bring to a project. Additionally, these images may not always accurately represent the real-world constraints of a space, such as lighting or structural limitations.

In conclusion, AI technology is chang-

ing the interior design industry by offering new tools and techniques for designers and homeowners to visualise potential designs. While there are limitations to AI-generated images, they offer many benefits, including efficiency and accuracy. As AI technology continues to evolve, it will be interesting to see how it further impacts the world of interior design.

TRAVEL

Rome's Pantheon charges for tourist entry

ROME'S 2,000-YEAR-OLD PANTHEON started charging for entrance on Monday, with tourists paying five euros (\$5) to see Italy's most visited cultural site.

The building, one of the city's oldest and best loved, is currently a consecrated church and part of the proceeds from ticket sales will go towards the diocese of Rome, while the rest will go to the culture ministry.

Minors and Rome residents are exempt from paying.

The new charge "won't stop many people coming to visit", French visitor Camille Piallat predicted, as he queued to buy his ticket in the sunshine.



Engineer Tim Witte, visiting from America, said he thought five euros was a "very reasonable" price.

The other major churches in Rome, including St Peter's Basilica, are free to visit, but museums and monuments such as the Colosseum are ticketed.

One of the best-preserved relics of ancient Rome, the Pantheon is famed for its extraordinary dome, which

measures 43 metres (140 feet) in diameter and includes a circular opening through which light and occasionally rain fall.

It was built as a temple in the first century BC before being radically rebuilt under Emperor Hadrian at the start of the second century AD.

After falling into neglect, it was given a new life after being consecrated as a church in the seventh century under Pope Boniface IV. — **AFP**

FILM

Vietnam bans 'Barbie' for showing China's 'nine-dash line'

"BARBIE," THE NEW FANTASY comedy movie due for imminent release around the world will not be screened in Vietnam, as the so-called "nine-dash line" showing China's territorial claims is shown in it.

Vietnam's National Film Evaluation Council decided to ban the movie on the grounds that it shows the controversial nine-dash line which China has used for decades to lay claim to large parts of the South China Sea - known in Vietnam as the East Sea, the VN Express newsportal reported on Monday.

China's claims in the area have been internationally condemned, the portal noted.

The movie, starring Margot Robbie and Ryan Gosling, was set to be released in Vietnam on July 21.



It tells the story of Barbie and Ken shown happy in a colourful and apparently perfect world before they are shifted to the real world and come down with a bump. The film is the first Barbie film with real actors.

Vietnam has in the past banned

films showing the nine-dash line. Last year "Uncharted," starring Tom Holland, was removed from screens and in 2021, Netflix Vietnam also had to remove eight episodes of the "Pine Gap" series which also showed images of the line. — **dpa**



CULTURE

Iraq's prized modern art plagued by forgery

MANY MASTERPIECES OF IRAQI painting were looted or destroyed during the years of war, but now the country's artistic heritage faces another threat: rampant counterfeiting and illicit trafficking.

Adorning a wall of Baghdad's modern art museum, the painting "Death to Colonialism", with its sombre blues and greys, by pioneering Iraqi artist Shakir Hassan al-Said is one of the rare pieces from its era still on public display.

Painted in the 1970s, toward the end of the heyday of Iraq's modern art movement, it survived the chaos that followed the 2003 US-led invasion when the museum's 8,000-strong collection was decimated by looters.

"The works of Shakir Hassan al-Said are extremely valuable as far as Iraqi modern art goes as well as art from the Middle East," said Tamara Chalabi, co-founder and head of the Ruya Foundation for Contemporary Art.

Paintings by Said, who established the influential Baghdad Modern Art Group alongside painter and sculptor Jewad Salim, can fetch up to \$100,000 at auction.

The late artist's family says it has successfully prevented the sale of numerous counterfeits of his works, and is in regular contact with international auction houses and galleries about his oeuvre.

"Recently, we spotted a fake in Baghdad," said the artist's 50-year-old son, Mohammed Shakir Hassan al-Said.

He contacted the gallery through social media to demand the painting be taken down — but said the management refused, claiming it was authentic.

Said's family, in an effort to safeguard his legacy after his death in 2004, has meticulously documented his comprehensive works, comprising around 3,000 pieces.

Today, they are working on the publication of a catalogue to provide "immunity" against the fakes that have proliferated after 2003, his son said.

BETTER AND BETTER FORGERIES

The primary targets of forgers and traffickers with-



in and outside Iraq are the works of its modern pioneers from the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s.

Many of them were among the thousands of pieces looted from the country's museums and homes during the security vacuum after dictator Saddam Hussein fell.

"Iraqi art is today one of the most important sources of artistic production in the Arab world," said Sultan bin Sooud al Qassemi, the founder of the Barjeel Art Foundation, a museum in Sharjah in the United Arab Emirates.

Kadhim Hayder and Dia Azzawi are among some of the most sought-after artists. "Nowadays some Iraqi artworks are sold for hundreds of thousands of dollars," the Emirati art collector said. "Forgers are noticing the auction results... It's enticing them to create better and better forgeries."

The authentication prob-

lem arises across the region — notably in Egypt, Lebanon and Syria — but "with Iraq it is especially acute because of the multiple layers of challenges: the exile of artists, the successive wars," said Al Qassemi.

For Chalabi, "forgery is part of the overall problem of corruption in Iraq which has become embedded in the system and is accepted by people".

DAMAGED REPUTATION

One of the largest collections lost was at the National Museum of Modern Art in Baghdad, which housed some of the country's most treasured artworks from the 21st century.

"Before 2003, we had 8,000 works," said Ali al Doulaimi, the museum's former director. "Today, there are around 2,000."

In the years after the invasion, "we acquired new works, and lost pieces were

returned", said Al Doulaimi.

The museum and Ministry of Culture are fighting to return some of Iraq's stolen art. They have provided Interpol with information about 100 missing pieces, said Al Doulaimi, who recently retired.

However, it is difficult to determine the true extent of what is missing — with the unreliable inventory handwritten by the previous administration.

In 2017, British auction house Christie's announced it was withdrawing a painting by Iraqi artist Faeq Hassan after a "disagreement over ownership".

An Iraqi official explained at the time that the painting was likely smuggled out of the country after being on display at an officer's club affiliated with the Ministry of Defence.

The painting was never returned to Iraq.

At the Akkad gallery in Baghdad, owner Hayder Hachem Naji said the increase in counterfeits "damages the reputation of Iraqi art".

"Sometimes forgers will use an old painting to repaint on — the frame and the canvas will be old", said the 54-year-old gallery owner.

Recently, he was asked to exhibit a painting attributed to well-known Cubist-influenced painter Hafidh al Droubi.

Its owner hoped to sell it for \$40,000 — but Naji politely declined.

"Honestly, it was a very high-quality counterfeit," he said. — **AFP**

LIFESTYLE



Blur's Damon Albarn launches new album

BRITISH BAND BLUR are back with a new album and reunion tour — a chance to "time-travel" for band leader Damon Albarn, even if he admits the years are taking their toll.

"The Ballad of Darren", only their second album in 20 years, came as a surprise to everyone — members of Blur included.

"I didn't tell anyone I was writing it," Albarn said during a visit to Paris, saying it happened while touring with his other band, Gorillaz, in the United States last year.

"I came back in January and said: 'Come to the studio, I've got something to play you.'"

He presented the band with 20 songs and told them to pick their favourites for the album, which is out on July 21.

They are a typically strong set of tunes, but mostly the softer Blur of "Tender" than the perky pop of "Girls and Boys" or grungey rock of "Song 2".

"I'm a profoundly sadder person in my 50s," the singer offered as explanation, laughing as he said it.



"It's OK — I'm leaning into my sadness. It's not that far from happiness. I'm comfortable with melancholy."

Indeed, Albarn admits his cheeky-chappy persona in the 1990s was never a natural fit.

He thinks about that younger self as he considers the huge upcoming dates at Wembley — England's national stadium — which Blur never played at their peak.

"That would have terrified me beyond comprehension. Panic attacks, everything," he said.

"Yoga helped me massively. Firstly it was heroic, and obviously I knocked that on the head 100 years ago. And now yoga — if I do it pretty much every day, I'm calm. That it's not taught in every school is absurd."

He also takes heart from the surreal sight of all the young people coming to Blur concerts these days.

"It's like time-travelling. The audience is young again," he said. "It's weird — you forget where you are sometimes."

STRUGGLE INHUMANELY

Albarn was always the most restless of the Britpop stars, exploring new sounds and styles on each album. It brought global fame, but he said it cost him mainstream acceptance back home.

"It feels good at the moment of course — people have suddenly realised I exist again — but it's been a while since England is a place where I feel welcome," he said.

Albarn's desire for the spotlight is central to infectious recent single "The Narcissist", which sees him cast back to his teenage years "with my strobe light and mirror and synthesiser in my dark bedroom, playing along with my favourite records."

"That was the beginning of my narcissism," he said, though the song is also about "the fact we live in the most narcissistic age of man ever".

"I don't have a phone but I understand the principle. We all carry this machine that sends pictures of ourselves, we look at them, check them, we manufacture our own narcissism."

Not that he enjoys writing lyrics. At all. "I struggle hugely, almost inhumanely, with my lyrics. There's always a month when I'm trying to finish the lyrics of something... ugh, it's awful."

LOST OUR MINDS

Since Blur's first hiatus back in 2003, it has been France that has been more welcoming of Albarn's experimental projects, including a full opera he is planning at the Lido in Paris next year.

"Last time I tried something like that in England, it was at the National Theatre and I ended up being bullied into doing a Christmas show for 'commercial concerns'," he said, spitting the last words.

There are also happy memories from Blur's first visits to Paris: nights at the legendary Bains Douches club ("a fairly explicit place," Albarn deadpans), and the Refuge des Fondus in Montmartre, famous for serving its wine in baby bottles.

"Imagine being a 21-year-old English lad and being given red wine in baby bottles and melted cheese. We lost our minds!" — **AFP**