

HM greets Crown Prince of Kuwait

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Shaikh Sabah Khalid Al Hamad Al Mubarak al Sabah on being appointed as Crown Prince of the State of Kuwait. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and wellbeing to Shaikh Sabah. His Majesty also prayed to Allah the Almighty to grant Shaikh Sabah success in achieving the Kuwaiti people's aspirations of further progress and prosperity.

SUNRISE - 05:20 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR - 03:53 AM

DHUHR - 12:10 PM

ASR - 03:29 PM

MAGHRIB - 06:55 PM

ISHA - 08:17 PM



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P10

OMAN CLAIM 10 MEDALS AS WEST ASIAN ATHLETICS CONCLUDE



P15

R&D COMPANY UNVEILS FIRST OMANI-MADE DRONE



P19

INSTITUTE OF CONTEMPORARY ART, LOS ANGELES PLANS AN UPGRADE



MUSCAT

953 VEHICLE FIRES LAST YEAR

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) handled 953 vehicle fire incidents in 2023 compared to 917 incidents a year earlier. Among the most important causes that lead to vehicle fires were fuel or oil leakage from the tank or pipes, over-inflated/under-inflated vehicle tyres, non-compliance by safety procedures while filling fuel such as smoking and using a mobile phone, installing fake spare parts, vehicle maintenance by unprofessional mechanic, high engine temperature due to low water level in the coolant, and installing additional electrical devices and connections in the vehicle. **DETAILS ON P3**

'BREAKING POINT' IF I AM JAILED: TRUMP



Former president Donald Trump

Donald Trump said he would accept home confinement or jail time after his historic conviction by a New York jury last week but that it would be tough for the public to accept. "I'm not sure the public would stand for it," the Republican presidential candidate told Fox News in an interview that aired on Sunday. "I think it'd be tough for the public to take. You know, at a certain point, there's a breaking point." Trump did not elaborate on what he thought might happen if that point is reached. He is scheduled to be sentenced July 11, four days before Republicans gather to formally choose their presidential nominee to face Democratic President Joe Biden in November's election. Asked what Trump supporters should do if he were jailed, Republican National Committee Co-Chair Lara Trump told CNN: "Well, they're gonna do what they've done from the beginning, which is remain calm and protest at the ballot box on November 5th. There's nothing to do other than make your voices heard loud and clear and speak out against this."

FOOD SECURITY INDEX IMPROVES



The food security index in the Sultanate of Oman for the year 2022 added an extra 7 points to the 'food availability indicator' and 8.4 points in the indicators of 'sustainability' and 'adaptation.' The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources accords special attention to the system regulating food safety and food quality. The ministry is keen to provide all resources that contribute to the development of this system with the prime objective of ensuring food safety and quality in accordance with standard specifications. **DETAILS ON P3**

Public revenue surges by 25% to hit RO 12.5 billion

MUSCAT: The data issued by the Ministry of Finance on the actual performance of the state's general budget indicates that actual public revenues increased by 25 per cent by the end of 2023, reaching RO 12.542 billion, compared to the approved budget estimates of RO 10.050 billion. This is due to increase in oil and non-oil revenues. The data shows that oil revenues increased by 34 per cent compared to the approved budget, constituting 72 per cent of total public revenues by the end of 2023. Net oil revenues stood at RO 7.150 billion, an increase of 34 per cent over the net oil revenues estimated in the 2023 budget of RO 5.320 billion. This is due to the rise in average oil prices in global markets, where the average achieved oil price reached about \$82 per barrel, compared to the approved price per barrel in the 2023 budget of \$55 per barrel. Net gas revenues by the end of 2023 recorded an increase of 33 per cent. **DETAILS ON P13**

Oman welcomes Biden's initiative on truce

D E N O U N C E S I S R A E L I A T T E M P T S T O E X C L U D E U N R W A

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman welcomed the initiative made by President Joe Biden of the United States of America (USA), to apply a ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. The initiative was concluded in cooperation and coordination with the State of Qatar and the Arab Republic of Egypt.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Sunday, Oman affirmed its support for all efforts to terminate the Israeli aggression and the suffering faced by the Palestinian people. Oman called on all parties to deal positively with such initiatives in a manner that preserves the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their aspirations and alleviates their suffering.

Oman hoped that this move would lead to an end to the Israel's aggression and full withdrawal of Israeli forces from the Gaza Strip, pave the way for the reconstruction of the Gaza Strip and the restoration of normalcy in the strip.

Oman also hoped that the initiative would be a step forward in enabling the Palestinian people to regain their legitimate rights and establish their independent state with Al Quds Al Sharqiyah (East Jerusalem) as its capital.

Earlier, the Sultanate of Oman has condemned Israel's persistent attempts to exclude the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA). Oman also rejected Israel's attempt to label the UNRWA as a terrorist organisation. Oman cautioned against the negative consequences of such attempts aimed at undermining the UNRWA and the international agency's role in supporting more than two million Palestinians whose livelihoods are seriously limited.



Turkish painter Kasim Tan depicts the suffering of Palestinians in the Gaza Strip to raise awareness about the attacks carried out by Israel on the enclave.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Sunday, Oman valued the efforts made by the UNRWA in providing relief to the Palestinian people. Oman reiterated its call on the importance of implementing the UN resolutions to supply urgent humanitarian relief aid to the Gaza Strip without obstacles.

Meanwhile, Qatari, Egyptian and US mediators called on Israel and Hamas to "finalise" the truce deal outlined by US President Joe Biden, as Israeli forces pounded Rafah in southern Gaza.

Fighting has raged in the besieged Gaza Strip since Biden said Israel was offering a new road-map towards a full ceasefire. But Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has since insisted that his country would pursue the war.

Hamas, meanwhile, said it "views positively" the Israeli plan laid out by Biden on Friday.

In a joint statement, Qatar, the United States and Egypt said that "as mediators in the ongoing discussions to secure a ceasefire in Gaza and the release of captives and detainees", they "call on both Hamas and Israel to finalise the agreement embodying the principles outlined by President Joe Biden".

The US president said Israel's three-stage offer would begin with a six-week phase that would see Israeli forces withdraw from all populated areas of Gaza.

It would see the "release of a number of captives" in exchange for "hundreds of Palestinian prisoners" held in Israeli jails. Israel and the Palestinians would then negotiate for a lasting ceasefire, with the truce to continue so long as talks are ongoing, Biden said.

"It's time for this war to end, for the day after to begin."

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called foreign ministers from Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Türkiye on Friday to press the deal, and on Saturday spoke with the Qatari, Egyptian and Emirati ministers.

UN chief Antonio Guterres "strongly hopes" the latest development "will lead to an agreement by the parties for lasting peace", a spokesman said. — **Agencies**

Reduced electricity rates for summer months

STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, JUNE 2

The Public Services Regulatory Authority approved reduced rates on electricity consumption bills during the summer months and announced the stabilisation of electricity consumption unit rates for the year.

The authority has approved the reduction rates on electricity bills for residential customers (basic accounts) during the summer months. It has also announced the stabilisation of the electricity consumption unit rates for 2024

at the same rates as in 2023, aiming to alleviate the impact of rising electricity bills during the coming months due to increased temperatures leading to higher energy consumption.

The authority has instructed companies operating in this sector to calculate the reduced rates starting from May of the previous year until August of the current year. It will monitor these companies to ensure the implementation of the reduced rates in electricity bills during these months.

The reduced rates on three consumption tiers during last May are varied. Consumers in the first tier, consuming from 0-4,000 kilowatt-hours, will

receive a 15 per cent reduction in their bill value. Consumers in the second tier, consuming from 4,001-6,000 kilowatt-hours, will receive a 10 per cent reduction in their bills, while consumers in the third tier, consuming over 6,001 kilowatt-hours, will receive a 5 per cent reduction.

During the months of June, July and August, the reduction on the first tier from 0-4,000 kilowatt-hours will be 20 per cent of the bill value. Consumers in the second tier, consuming from 4,001-6,000 kilowatt-hours, will receive a 15 per cent reduction in their bills, while the reduction in the third tier for consumption over 6,001 kilowatt-hours will be 10 per cent of the bill value.

BACK IN 'AMAZING OMAN'



Last April, my French friend Pierre Petit returned to Oman for the first time in seven years since attending the launch of my film 'Adventure has an Address, Oman'. **DETAILS ON P20**



# MANDARIN ORIENTAL MUSCAT OPENS ITS DOORS

QASIM ALMAASHANI  
MUSCAT, JUNE 2

The grand opening of Mandarin Oriental Muscat marks a significant milestone for Oman's burgeoning tourism industry. Held under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham bin Tarik al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, the ceremony underscored the nation's dedication to fostering luxurious travel experiences.

Situated on the scenic Shatti Al Qurum coast, this visionary project boasts a stunning 5-star hotel with 150 lavish rooms and 156 luxurious residences. The hotel's architecture seamlessly blends contemporary design with the timeless elegance of Omani heritage, all while offering breathtaking vistas of the Arabian Sea. Guests can indulge in a variety of opulent dining options, while a majestic ballroom with panoramic sea views and a suite of event facilities cater to grand occasions.

The hotel's prime location adds to its allure. It's a stone's throw away from the Royal Opera House Muscat, a short drive from the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque, and conveniently close to Muscat International Airport. This proximity to iconic landmarks and bustling commercial hubs allows for easy access and a well-rounded travel experience.

Muscat, shared his excitement about the hotel's impact on the city. "This hotel is a landmark addition to Muscat's luxury scene," Dubort said. "But what truly sets us apart is our deep respect for Omani heritage. Throughout the hotel, guests will find subtle touches that celebrate Oman's rich culture and history."

Beyond luxury experiences, Mandarin Oriental brings significant job opportunities. "We have one of the largest teams in Oman's hospitality industry," Dubort highlights. "This creates a unique learning environment for our Omani colleagues, from business practices to crafting

unforgettable guest experiences." He is proud of the hotel's diverse leadership team, including "fantastic women doing exceptional work." The message is clear: Mandarin Oriental welcomes everyone to join their team and contribute to making the hotel an even more special place for Muscat. Mandarin Oriental Muscat seamlessly blends world-class amenities with the charm of Omani culture, ushering in a new era of luxury living.

## Foreign Ministry under-secretary receives credentials copies of ambassadors



Razim Colic, Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina



Roberto Ebert Grob, Ambassador of the Republic of Chile



Dan Munyuza, Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda



Jacques Yacoub Nahayo, Ambassador of the Republic of Burundi

**MUSCAT:** Khalid bin Hashil al Muselhi, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs, on Sunday received copies of credentials of ambassadors of friendly countries appointed to the Sultanate of Oman.

This took place when the under-secretary received the following:

Razim Colic, Ambassador of Bosnia and Herzegovina appointed to the Sultanate of Oman.

Roberto Ebert Grob, Ambassador of the Republic of Chile appointed to the Sultanate of Oman.

Dan Munyuza, Ambassador of the Republic of Rwanda to the

Sultanate of Oman.

Jacques Yacoub Nahayo, Ambassador of the Republic of Burundi to the Sultanate of Oman.

Nikoloz Revazishvili, Ambassador of Georgia to the Sultanate of Oman.

Miroslav Sestovic, Ambassador of the Republic of Serbia to the Sultanate of Oman.

Uk Sarun, Ambassador of the Kingdom of Cambodia to the Sultanate of Oman.

The under-secretary welcomed the ambassadors and wished them success in carrying out their duties. He also wished the bilateral relations with their countries further progress and prosperity.

— ONA

## Is there a need for a third Oman-based airline?

VINOD NAIR  
@vinot\_nair



The CAA has been optimistic about the scope for growth in the aviation sector in the Sultanate of Oman

The Civil Aviation Authority (CAA)'s intention to licence a new low-cost airline has created a buzz in the country as the Sultanate of Oman already has a budget airline, which started in 2017, while the national airline, Oman Air, has been undergoing a restructuring programme, expected to continue until 2027.

While the CAA is yet to unveil details of the scope of the new airline, according to experts, the Middle East region, including Oman, has been the engine of growth in the travel and tourism sector in the post-pandemic period.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has acknowledged the fact that not enough has been done to promote Oman in several markets countries, and connectivity is still an issue. It may be noted that there are still no direct flights to several potential markets in China and Europe.

On the positive side, Middle Eastern airlines have been seeing continuous growth in demand, a 10.8 per cent year-on-year increase in demand. Capacity also increased 13.9 per cent year-on-year compared to March 2023.

In the post-pandemic, there has been an increase of 35 per cent in aircraft movement between 2022 and 2023 and a 47 per cent increase in passenger traffic at Muscat Airport.

The CAA has been optimistic about the scope for growth in the aviation sector in the Sultanate of Oman. The country is hoped to have six new airports, and most of them are expected to be operational by 2028-2029, according to Naif al Abri, Chairman of the Civil Aviation Authority.

In an interview, he said that as work is under way on the design of these new projects, the number of airports in the country will go up to 13, which will boost both domestic aviation for tourism purposes. The number of passengers using airports in the Sultanate of Oman will go up to 50 million passengers by 2040 from the current figures of 17 million.

Muscat Airport handled around 13 to 14 million passengers in 2023 and can handle up to 20 million

passengers a year. With the budget already allocated, the new airports will also help to get more international traffic besides giving a boost to the logistics and tourism sectors in places by linking them with industrial areas of Salalah, and Suhar.

According to Elena Sorlini, the CEO of Zayed International Airport, budget airlines like Air Arabia Abu Dhabi and Wizz, which operate from Abu Dhabi, have bridged a demand mostly underserved but have also been proven to stimulate it. The airline also renegotiated many code-share agreements and terminated several sales agreements with companies that did not provide a direct benefit. An extensive study was conducted regarding the process of joining the Oneworld Alliance.

This year, Oman Air will implement a series of changes to continue improving its financial and operational performance, starting with the restructuring of its route network and flight schedule as of April.

During the transformation phase, the airline has preserved most of the current route network, with only few destinations cancelled. However, the number of flights will be reduced, and the timing of flights will be optimised to suit the local market and inbound tourists.

SalamAir commenced its commercial operations in 2017 to meet the increasing demand for affordable travel options and generate opportunities for employment and business creation in various Oman sectors. It serves around 45 destinations, including seasonal, with A320neos, four A321neos, one A321 freighter, and more airlines are expected to join the fleet in the future. The airline transported 2.7 million passengers in 2023, an increase of 28 per cent from the previous year.

## Employers urged to comply as Mid-day break begins

STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, JUNE 2

The Ministry of Labour's decision to implement a mandatory mid-day break for outdoor workers came into effect from June 1.

The decision, aimed at protecting them from the extreme heat during the summer months, mandates that all work performed under direct sunlight must cease between 12:30pm and 3:30pm.

The ministry's directive is part of an ongoing effort to ensure the health and safety of workers, particularly those in construction

and other outdoor sectors. Employers are required to comply with this regulation and adjust their working hours accordingly.

Non-compliance will result in penalties and fines of no less than RO 500 and no more than RO 1,000 for violators. This annual initiative aligns with Oman's commitment to labour rights and worker welfare, recognising the dangers posed by high temperatures and aiming to reduce heat-related illnesses and incidents.

The ministry encourages workers to stay hydrated and take necessary precautions during the summer season.



## CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN JOINS GULF PAYMENTS SYSTEM 'AFAQ'

**MUSCAT:** The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has announced onboarding to the Gulf Payments System 'AFAQ' for cross-border payments in local GCC currencies, which is operated by Gulf Payments Company (GPC) and owned by GCC central banks.

The drive comes in line with the CBO efforts towards developing cross-border payment systems and adopting the latest technologies in the industry by improving efficiency and speed and contributing to cost reduction.

It is noteworthy that CBO

launched the 'New Local Real-Time Gross Settlement' system (RTGS) which operates 24/7 in June 2023, in line with its vision to enhance the operation of national payments systems around the clock, which facilitates better services to the banking and financial sector in

particular and to society in the Sultanate of Oman in general.

CBO will continue its efforts to enhance the operation of national payment systems and integrate them to regional payment systems in conformity with global developments and meeting market needs. — ONA



## OMANI HAJ MISSION LEAVES FOR HOLY LANDS OF MECCA

**MUSCAT:** The Omani Haj mission for Hijri year 1445 AH left the Sultanate of Oman on Sunday en route to the Holy Lands.

The mission was seen off upon its departure at Muscat International Airport by Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs, and officials from the ministry.

The mission is headed by Sultan



The mission was seen off by Dr Mohammed bin Said al Maamari, Minister of Awqaf and Religious Affairs



bin Said al Hinai. As soon as it arrives at King Abdulaziz International Airport in Jeddah, the mission was scheduled to immediately head to its headquarters in Mecca.

During its presence in Mecca and Medina, the Omani Haj mission will serve Omani pilgrims. The mission comprises 8 delegations, namely "Iftha and Religious Guidance Delegation",

"Financial and Administrative Affairs Delegation", "Delegation for Supervising Haj Companies", "Medical Delegation", "Royal Oman Police Delegation", "State Audit Institution Delegation", "Media Delegation" and "Scout Delegation".

The number of pilgrims from Oman this year stands at 14,000.

— ONA

## Salalah's pre-monsoon rains to delight Eid holidaymakers

**KAUSHALENDRA SINGH**  
@patkaushal

Going by the current weather conditions in Salalah, the city may turn out to be the right choice for holidaymakers during the upcoming Eid Al Adha holidays. There are chances of pre-monsoon rain in Salalah and adjoining areas before Eid, making the weather conducive during much much-awaited extended weekend along with the Eid holidays.

The current temperature in Salalah is between 32 -34 degrees Celsius with high humidity that ranges between 72 and 90 per cent and even more in some areas. Sporadic rains are already being reported from the mountain villages and people from the plains are visiting them just to have a feel of the ensuing khareef season.

There is no official confirmation about the pre-monsoon rain from the met office, as it is "too early" for them to predict at this point in time, but for the conventional weather watchers, who go by their intuitions, "the weather condition



The current temperature in Salalah is between 32 -34 degrees Celsius with high humidity that ranges between 72 and 90 per cent

now is quite conducive to pre-monsoon scattered rains in coming days which will make the weather pleasant for the residents and visitors alike."

Ahmed al Maashani, who has his house on one of the

mountains in Salalah, said, he had been witnessing high temperatures with very high humidity for so many years and as per his intuition, there should be pre-monsoon rain any time making the weather cooler and

pleasant.

Commenting on the current hot and humid conditions in Salalah, he said, "Today's pain is tomorrow's gain. It happens every year. Hot and humid weather is good for a better monsoon... we are expecting a better khareef season this year." "It certainly would be better for the visitors if it rains, because most parts of Oman and other GCC countries have temperatures ranging between 44 and 48 degrees Celsius," he said.

Weather reports from the Oman Met office are closer to Al Maashani's assumptions. They are suggesting "Chances of advection clouds and isolated rain over parts of Dhofar Governorate coast and there are also chances of low-level cloud or fog patches over parts Dhofar Governorate."

Officially, the Dhofar khareef season starts on June 21, and most likely the Eid holidays would fall just a week before.

This gives the visitors an opportunity to plan Eid holidays and book necessary itineraries well in advance to avoid rush and price hikes in travel and accommodation facilities.

## Khazaen market to be operational from June 29

**KABEER YOUSUF**  
@kabeeryousef

**MUSCAT:** The Central Fruits and Vegetables Market in Al Mawaleh will now be a story of the past as the new Fruit and Vegetable Central Market (SILAL) in the new Khazaen Economic City becomes operational from June 29, according to the Muscat Municipality.

According to the Joint Circular by Fruit and Vegetable Central Market SIL No: (1/2024), the wholesale trading activities will commence at SILAL Market on June 29, and the wholesale shed and wholesale shops at Al Mawaleh Market will be permanently shut.

Additionally, those lessees of the cold stores including the wholesale market building and the central cold storage who signed the contract before May 20, will receive an additional reduction in rental value for the first contract year, along with an extended exemption period from rent.

"In the context of mutual collaboration between the Muscat Municipality and the Fruit and Vegetable Central Market (SILAL), and as part of the ongoing preparations for the transfer of central storage and wholesale activities to the New Central Market in Khazaen Economic City, we are pleased to announce the the operation of the One-Stop Inspection Platform will commence on June 22, where all customs inspection and agricultural quarantine activities will be transferred from Al Mawaleh Market to the SILAL Market," the statement said.

All restaurants, cafes, sorting warehouses, dry stores, and commercial shops were handed over to the tenants on May



Al Mawaleh Market to be permanently closed

5 to allow them to complete the necessary technical preparations for operations. The wholesale market cold store, central cold storage, onion shed, potato shed, administrative offices will be handed over to the tenants on June 9.

Going forward, the Muscat Municipality authorities said that all companies leasing various commercial units at the SILAL "The aforementioned documents can be submitted to the Marketing and Leasing Office of SILAL Market, located in the Central Fruits and Vegetables Market in Al Mawaleh, Building No 2, First Floor, near Gate No 2, Nizwa Road, no later than 07/05/2024."

The current lease contracts in Al Mawaleh Central Market will be extended until June 29 for a period of two months (May and June), and the lessees are required to fulfil all associated obligations no later than two weeks from the date of issuing this circular.

"We are happy to abide by the new rules and regulations of SILAL and we hope that the new market would be a milestone in the Sultanate of Oman's march from prosperity to further advancement," said Abdul Wahid, MD of Suhul al Fayha, a leading Omani brand in fruits and vegetables.

## OMAN'S FOOD SECURITY INDEX IMPROVES

**MUSCAT:** The food security index in the Sultanate of Oman for 2022 improved with an increase in food availability indicators by 7 points, and in sustainability and adaptation indicators by 8.4 points.

The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources pays special attention to the food safety and quality system, as it was keen to provide all the capabilities that contribute to its development, through the strategic goal of ensuring the safety and quality of food in accordance with controls



The improvement underscores efforts to enhance food security.

and legislation and following up on their implementation.

This interest was represented

by issuing regulations, legislation and laws regulating the safety and quality of food and supervising their implementation in partnership with the relevant authorities, most notably the Oman Food Safety Law.

The Food Safety and Quality Centre also prepares, updates and adopts regulations and technical specifications for food products, as 7 draft specifications and regulations have been prepared. Gulf technical, and reviewing 120 draft technical regulations and

national and Gulf specifications between 2022 and 2023 AD.

The Ministry, represented by the Food Safety and Quality Centre, is keen to follow developments and changes related to food safety and quality at the local and international levels through official channels and sources, such as following up on food production sources (food establishments), monitoring and inspecting food products, matching laboratory reports and explanatory data, and following up on products in local markets.

## Increase in vehicle fires during summer raises concerns

**QASIM AL MAASHANI**  
MUSCAT, JUNE 2

The Sultanate of Oman is witnessing a noticeable increase in vehicle fires during the summer season, leading to significant human and material losses.

According to the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, these incidents can be prevented by following regular maintenance procedures and adhering to safety guidelines.

Fuel and oil leaks from the tank or pipes are among the primary causes of vehicle fires. These leaks can be extremely dangerous as friction or sparks from electrical wires can easily ignite the leaked fuel, leading to a fire. Increased pressure on internal engine

parts also poses a significant risk.

Excessive loads and a lack of engine maintenance can cause high temperatures, which can result in fires.

Additionally, installing parts that do not meet safety specifications further increases the risk of vehicle fires. Non-compliant parts may not function properly under stress, leading to hazardous conditions.

High summer temperatures exacerbate the situation by affecting plastic components inside the vehicle. The intense heat can cause these components to deteriorate, increasing the likelihood of fires. Another critical factor is smoking inside the vehicle. Handling flammable materials or

### 953 vehicle fire incidents last year

**MUSCAT:** The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) handled 953 vehicle fire incidents in 2023 compared to 917 incidents a year earlier.

At such a situation a motorist is required to reduce speed, turn on the warning signals, parking the vehicle in a safe place, turn off the engine and get out of the vehicle, call the emergency number (9999) or the CDAA operations centre on 24343666, attempt to put out the fire using the extinguisher



Excessive loads and a lack of engine maintenance can cause high temperatures, which can result in fires

without exposing oneself or others to danger and staying away from the vehicle if the fire persists until the fire brigades arrive.

smoking can easily lead to fires, especially if proper precautions are not taken.

Moreover, traffic accidents contribute significantly to the increased risk of vehicle fires, as collisions can cause fuel leaks or electrical malfunctions.

To mitigate these risks, it is essential to follow specific safety measures. Regular vehicle inspections are crucial. Inspecting the vehicle daily and ensuring the safety of its parts before operating it can prevent many potential issues. Engine maintenance and the replacement of damaged parts with new, high-quality ones are also vital. Regular maintenance ensures that the engine functions correctly

and reduces the risk of fires.

Avoiding smoking inside the vehicle is another important precaution. Cigarette butts should be extinguished safely to prevent any chance of ignition. Parking the vehicle in safe places, particularly away from high-temperature areas, is also essential. High temperatures can exacerbate existing issues and increase the risk of fires. Additionally, never leaving children alone inside the vehicle is critical to prevent accidents and ensure their safety.

It is important not only to have a fire extinguisher but also to know how to use it effectively in case of an emergency.



IDENTIFY WEAKNESSES

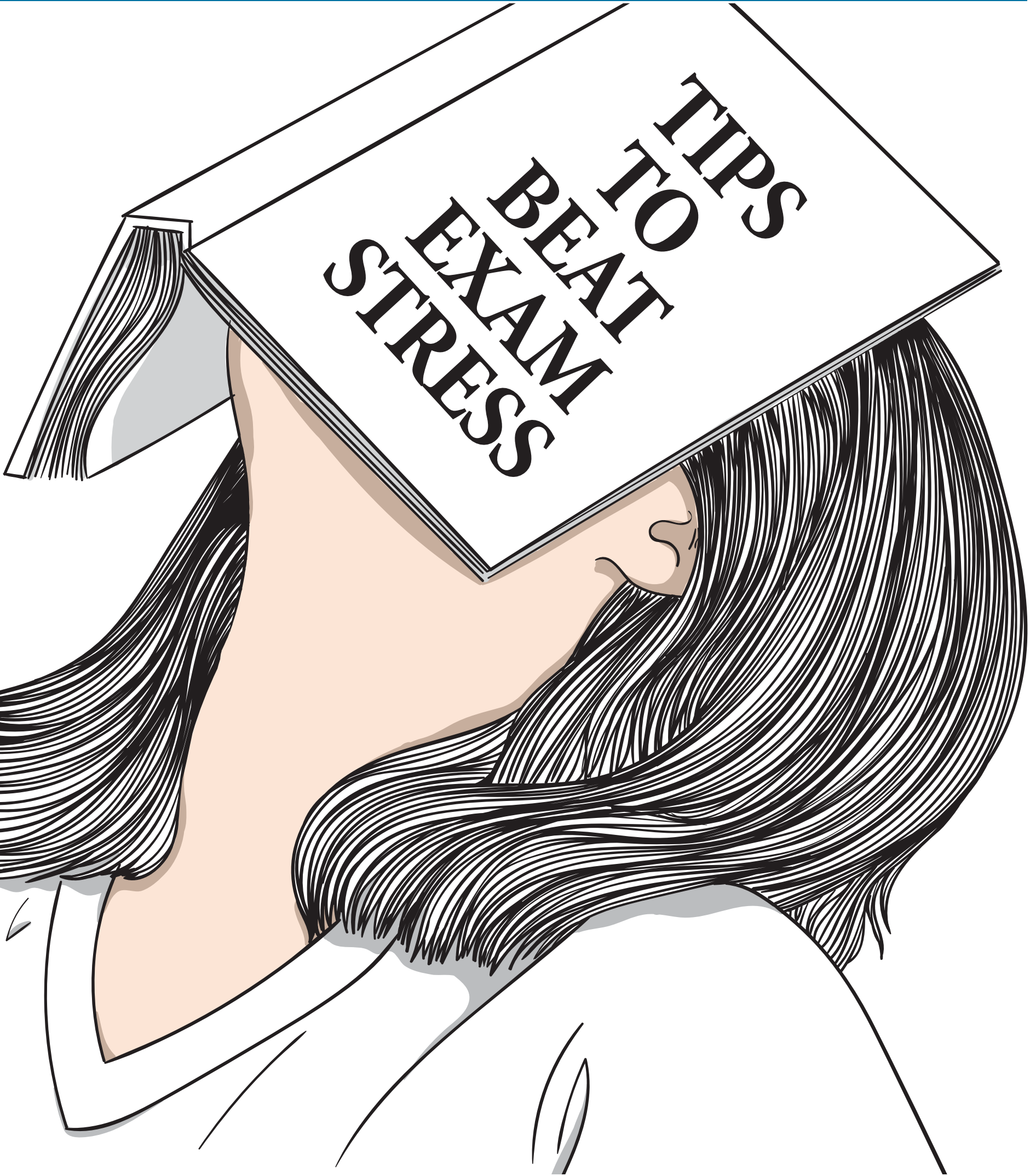
TAKE BREAKS

GROUP STUDY

STAY POSITIVE

SLEEP WELL

STRATEGISE DURING EXAM



**DURING THE EXAM:**  
Read questions carefully and note key points for your answers. Present your knowledge in an organised and logical sequence. In practical exams, gather essential information before drawing conclusions to avoid incorrect diagnoses.

BALQEES AL ORAIMI

**S**TUDENTS from across Oman will appear for their diploma exams during this month. This is a critical phase that influences their future college choices and career path. This period understandably brings significant stress for students and their parents, who wish the best for their children's future. While mild anxiety can motivate students to study and prepare, for some, anxiety reaches levels that can severely impact performance.

Symptoms such as excessive sweating, voice trembling, difficulty thinking and prolonged zoning out under stress can dominate and hinder even well-prepared students.

Dr Hamad al Sinawi, a senior consultant psychiatrist, recommends certain tips to combat exam anxiety and to help students manage this crucial period.

“If you struggle with prioritising, managing time, or understanding the material, acknowledge the issue as the first step towards finding a solution. Seek advice from those close to you on how to handle it effectively,” Dr Al Sinawi advises.

“Remember, studying is an art you need to master for success, and exams are merely one method

of assessing knowledge. Ensure you take adequate breaks to relax. Over-studying can lead to exhaustion and boredom. Group study offers many benefits. It helps you gauge your level among peers and allows practice with someone who can highlight areas for improvement,” he said.

On the exam day, have a light breakfast and avoid excessive water intake to minimise restroom breaks during the exam. If you're heading to the exam centre with peers, steer clear of negative emotions and last-minute cramming, as these can increase anxiety.

“Remember that exams are designed to assess capabilities, not to overwhelm you. Reviewing previous exams can boost your confidence,” he suggests. He also suggests to take proper rest, avoid staying up late before the exam. Good sleep is crucial for your brain to retain what you've studied.



**POST-EXAM STRATEGY:**  
Avoid discussing questions immediately after the exam to prevent unnecessary stress and to stay focused on upcoming exams or to enjoy your break.

By following these steps, students can manage their diploma exams with confidence and ease, ensuring their performance reflects their true capabilities.



**MINISTRY OF INFORMATION**

**TENDERS ANNOUNCEMENT**

The Internal Tender Committee at Ministry of Information announces its Tenders for the following works:

| Tender No.                                | Tender Name                                                                                                                    | Class & Grade                 | Last Date For Collection | Submission Date | Purchase Fees (R.O.) |
|-------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------|--------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| 4/2024<br>(207/2024)<br>at<br>E-Tendering | Development and Implementation of the Electronic Portal and Mobile Application for the Government Communication Center         | Excellent Frist               | 15/6/2024                | 30/7/2024       | 25/-                 |
| 5/2024<br>(212/2024)<br>at<br>E-Tendering | Supply, Delivery and Commissioning of Two Identical Outside Broadcasting Vans each with Five 4K UHD IP Cameras and Accessories | International Excellent Frist | 15/6/2024                | 30/7/2024       | 80/-                 |

1. All specialized companies in the field of the tender shown above and are registered with the Tender Board to the degree indicated above, may obtain tender documents, against non-refundable fees, from the website through the following link: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>

2. Companies and institutions are exempted from providing a temporary insurance of 1% when submitting their bid, provided that they sign a document committing themselves to the submitted bid for a period determined when the bidding strategy is approved in accordance with the document attached to the Isnad platform. As for international companies that do not have a headquarters in the Sultanate of Oman, they are required to provide temporary insurance of 1%.

(For more information, please see the original circular issued by the Tender Board on the Isnaad platform.)

Note that the last date for accepting bids as mentioned above is before 10:00 am . Any bid received after the time and date mentioned in the submission date will be rejected automatically. You are requested to provide 2 hard copies for your offer after the submission in Projects Department at Ministry of Information.

3. The Ministry has the right to:

1) Add or Cancell some works in the tender if necessary.

2) Cancellation of the tender without giving reasons.

For clarifications you may contact via:

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# OCA launches year-round cancer awareness campaign

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Oman Cancer Association (OCA) relaunched the Survivor's Programme on June 1, Saturday, as it is observed as the month of Cancer Survivors.

On the occasion, the Association appreciated the cancer warriors and launched the campaign of 365 days of cancer awareness.

Yuthar al Rawahi, OCA founder, said the non-government organisation, that has been recognised internationally, has been successful through screenings and early detection, leading to early diagnosis because of which many patients have been cured and has also resulted in reducing number of cases linked with pathology.

"How did we do it? We worked together through every challenge, in creating awareness and community advocacy. The tools used were education and human resources development. The development of Oman Cancer



OCA relaunched the Survivor's Programme as it observed the month of cancer survivors

Survivors Group in 2004, which we are relaunching today, was achieved by training survivors who wholeheartedly working together to become volunteers to serve the community as one unit to continue our success story. This is the requirement at the moment," said Yuthar.

OCA will continue to conduct further training explained the

Chairman of Oman Cancer Association, Dr Waheed al Kharousi.

The core of training for the Omanis and residents in the Cancer Survivors Group will focus on advocacy, leadership, fundraising, nutrition, healthy lifestyle, nutrition, counselling, spirituality and patient care to offer empowerment.

**The development of Oman Cancer Survivors Group in 2004, which we are relaunching today, was achieved by training survivors who wholeheartedly working together to become volunteers to serve the community as one unit to continue our success story**

**YUTHAR AL RAWAHI**  
OCA founder

"Because if our cancer survivors are not empowered we cannot move forward," he said adding,

"We want them to be empowered so they can serve the community. This is the only way to solidify the power of survivorship programme. This programme is our top priority. Together we are strong and only together we can make a difference for our patients, their families and the community. We cannot afford to increase the number of cancer cases in Oman," pointed out Dr Waheed.

OCA has been the main organisation that has constantly been involved in spreading awareness in the community through various programmes including having the Mammogram Units available in various parts of Oman, the annual walkathon, training and other various activities for awareness especially on regular screening for early detection.

On the occasion, the launching of the 365 Days Cancer Awareness Campaign was held, which is an initiative to spread awareness

throughout the year bringing focus to all the types of cancer.

The logo was launched by Dr Rashid bin Mohammed al Gailani, guest of honour, who appreciated the role of cancer survivors as cancer warriors to spread awareness and provide support.

Speaking on the logo and the campaign titled, '365 days of Cancer Awareness,' Dr Rajyashree N Kutty said, "The goal is to be achieved not only by the doctors and healthcare professionals, but with motivation by the people, every individual and their family members, educational institutions including schools and colleges, organisations, companies all over to spread cancer awareness."

She said it is important to remove the fear of cancer and instill hope and confidence by going for regular check ups as early detection is the key to cure that can save lives.

The survivors, according to OCA team are the warriors and so are the most important ambassadors who can motivate, generate hope and alleviate fear.

# AL KHAMIS TOWER ATTRACTS OVER 9,000 VISITORS IN 4 MONTHS

**AL MUSANNAH:** Since its opening in January, the Al Khamis Wall and Tower has drawn approximately 9,866 visitors from various nationalities by the end of April. This surge in tourism follows the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism's initiative to assign the landmark to the private sector, emphasising cultural heritage sustainability and local economic empowerment.

Badriya bint Mubarak al Busaidiyah, Director of the Department of Castles, Forts, and Historical Monuments at the General Directorate of Antiquities, highlighted the



The Al Khamis Wall and Tower in Al Musannah

ministry's strategy to enhance cultural sites. This includes creating job opportunities, fostering small and medium enterprises, and providing

platforms for local craftsmen. The ministry's collaboration with private sector companies aims to diversify tourism products and emphasise Omani cultural

heritage.

Engineer Saif bin Said al Khamisi, Chairman of Hisn Al Khairat Trading Company, described the landmark's features, which include an outdoor mosque, a modern museum representing Al Musannah's marine, agricultural, and Bedouin environments, and a tower symbolising Omani identity with traditional elements like swords, daggers, and embroidered carpets. The site also offers a coffee corner, visitor seating, and a stage for cultural events, enhancing the visitor experience and celebrating Al Musannah's heritage. — ONA

# Student leaders inducted at ISG



Student leaders Inducted at ISG

**MUSCAT:** The Investiture Ceremony of Indian School Al Ghubra for 2024-2025 was held on May 30. It marked the induction of its newly elected members of the Prefectorial Body, where the young students were all prepared to discharge the functions entrusted to them by the school.

The ceremony was graced by the presence of renowned motivational speaker, Ali Al Farai, the chief guest. Papri Ghosh, Principal, accorded a warm welcome to the chief guest and administered the oath to the newly elected council members. Students pledged to bring glory to their school and ensure that all duties towards the school shall be done sincerely. The elected leaders were conferred with badges by Ali Al Farai and Sunil K, Convenor of the

School Management Committee assisted by the Vice-Principal G Sreekumar and the Vice Principal of the Primary Section — Dr Hussaina Asgar.

The Head Girl — Sanjana Kuzhivayalil Praveen and the Head Boy — Sabyasachi Choudhury were the first to be invested.

The Vice Head Girl Geetika Manoj Nambiar, Vice Head Boy Mithun Manikandan, President of the Student Council Madhav Manish Saki, Vice President of the Student Council Vedica Chhabra, Speaker of the Student Council Archita Amit Deshpande, President of Round Square International Services Roshni Ramananda Prabhu were also inducted. Hanisha Manish Chawla and Rabeu Al Zaman took charge as the Sports Captain for girls and boys respectively.

# RELIEF EXPECTED AMID OMAN'S SCORCHING HEATWAVE

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As mercury levels hit a peak recording about 49.4 degrees C, few places in the Sultanate of Oman touched 49 degrees Celsius on Sunday.

Some of the places are Al Hamra and Duru with 49.4 and Sunaina recording 48.9 degrees



Celsius.

Oman Met Office meteorologist, Mohammed al Madhani from National Multi Hazard Early Warning Centre said in the next few days there might be a slight relief from the high temperatures as other places had also recorded mid forties and above.

"This is mainly because of

the thermal low over the Empty Quarters and parts of Oman that generate dry wind coming from the west of the most of the governorates because of this we experience high temperature, dry air and bright sunny days," said Al Madhani.

Some of the schools have opted for online classes looking during the current situation.

# 'Everest Day' celebrated by Nepal Embassy in Muscat

**MUSCAT:** The Embassy of Nepal, Muscat organised a tourism, investment and export promotion event on May 29 during the occasion of International Sagarmatha Day (Everest Day) at Nepal House.

The programme was organised to seek the opportunities of tourism, export, trade and investment in both Nepal and Oman. Over 30 high profile guests including eminent businesspersons, CEOs, media persons, social media campaigners, airlines and bank officials attended.

Ambassador Dornath Aryal who spoke outlined the policies of the Government

of Nepal to promote export of Nepali products, attract foreign investment in various ongoing mega investment projects and diversify the trade partners of Nepal in goods and services.

Ambassador Aryal highlighted the multi-faceted tourism activities in Nepal that caters to the need of all age-group individuals, ranging from cultural and religious tourism to high adrenaline adventure activities to natural and serene experiences. He also requested all the guests to visit Nepal and experience the breathtaking nature and also look for the opportunities in trade and investment while considering



Ambassador Dornath Aryal with guests, dignitaries during the Everest Day celebrations by Nepal Embassy

the strategic location of Nepal and lucrative policies.

The Ambassador also informed the guests of the successful completion of Nepal

Investment Summit (NIS) 2024 and its achievements. Nepal showcased 152 ready-to-go projects and more than 2,400 participants including 800

international participants from 50 countries took part in the Summit.

Oman's maiden female Everest climber, Nadira al Harthy briefed about her journey on scaling the mighty Sagarmatha on the occasion. Pictures and attractive videos related to the expedition of the Omani climbers were also displayed.

Another Everest climber, Sulaiman bin Hamoud bin Mahfoodh al Naabi, shared breathtaking video and photos of his expedition which were also displayed.

Ambassador Aryal and spouse Swodesh Aryal

honoured Everest climbers by offering metal plaque and Pashmina shawl.

A tourism promotional video of Nepal was also showcased for the guests to take a glimpse of the beauty of Nepal.

Fathiya al Jadzali shared how visiting Nepal transformed her life, and she urged everyone to take the opportunity to visit Nepal and love the purest form of nature.

Highlighting her experiences of seven basecamps trekking of different Himalayas of Nepal, she advised everyone to go to trekking to Nepal. Bishesh Kumar Sah, Second Secretary of the Embassy conducted the programme.



Palestinians transport some salvaged belongings as they leave the Jabalia refugee camp. — AFP

# Mediators urge both sides to accept Gaza truce plan

**RAFAH:** Israel battled and bombarded Palestinians in the Gaza Strip on Sunday as mediators called on both sides to agree to a truce and captives release deal outlined by US President Joe Biden.

Since Biden spoke at the White House on Friday, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has insisted Israel will pursue the war raging since October 7 until it has destroyed the Palestinian groups and freed the captives. Netanyahu is under intense domestic pressure from two sides.

**Fighting again rocked Gaza overnight and on Sunday, with the military reporting more air strikes and ground combat, and Palestinian officials reporting yet more deaths**

Protesters supporting the captives, who rallied again in their tens of thousands in Tel Aviv on Saturday, are urging him to strike a truce deal — but right-wing extremist allies are

threatening to bring down the government if he does. For now, fighting again rocked Gaza overnight and on Sunday, with the military reporting more air strikes and ground combat, and Palestinian officials reporting yet more deaths.

Mediators the United States, Qatar and Egypt on Saturday said they “call on both Hamas and Israel to finalise the agreement embodying the principles outlined by President Joe Biden”.

Biden said that Israel’s three-stage offer would begin with a six-

week initial phase that would see Israeli forces withdraw from all populated areas of the Gaza Strip.

It would see the “release of a number of captives” in exchange for “hundreds of Palestinian prisoners” held in Israeli jails.

Israel and the Palestinians would then negotiate for a lasting ceasefire, with the truce to continue so long as talks are ongoing, Biden said. “It’s time for this war to end, for the day after to begin,” he said.

Israel’s retaliatory bombardments and ground

offensive have killed at least 36,379 people in Gaza, mostly civilians, according to the territory’s health ministry.

Heavy fighting has flared in far-southern Rafah, where Israel sent tanks and troops in early May, ignoring concerns for displaced civilians sheltering in the city.

Israeli Apache attack helicopters on Sunday opened fire on targets in central Rafah, a jet fired a missile at a house in the western Tel al-Sultan district and artillery shelling targeted the

southern Brazil neighbourhood.

Elsewhere in Gaza, Israeli helicopters fired at targets in Gaza City’s Zeitun and Sabra areas, and an air strike hit a house in the city’s east, reporters said.

Three people were killed including a woman and a child, when an air strike hit a family apartment in Gaza City’s Daraj neighbourhood, a hospital medic said.

Artillery shelling also targeted areas of Deir al-Balah and the Bureij and Nuseirat camps.

— AFP



A member of the Palestinian Civil Defence sits inside a damaged ambulance, where he has been living for months. — AFP



Relatives and supporters of Israelis held captives demonstrate to call for their release in Tel Aviv. — AFP

## Lebanon state media says two civilians killed in Israeli strike

**BEIRUT:** Lebanon’s state media on Sunday reported that two civilians were killed in an Israeli strike in the south of the country, as fighting between Israel and the powerful movement Hezbollah intensified.

Hezbollah, has traded regular cross-border fire with Israel since the Palestinian group’s October 7 attack on southern Israel which triggered the war in the Gaza Strip.

“Two civilians were killed in an Israeli strike that targeted their home in the village of Houla,” near the border, the National News Agency reported.

A local official said that those killed were “two brothers, shepherds whose house was destroyed.”

The powerful group said in the morning it launched several attack drones toward an Israeli military position in the occupied Golan Heights, just hours after Israel targeted their fighters in a remote area of eastern Lebanon far from the border.

The Israeli military said on Sunday that in response to Hezbollah firing a missile at one of its drones “operating in Lebanese airspace” the day before, its “fighter jets struck a military compound



Smoke billows during an Israeli strike on the southern Lebanese border village of Khiam. — AFP

used by the Hezbollah in the area of Beqaa in Lebanon”.

Since Friday, Israel has been intensely shelling a series of villages in southern Lebanon, where a woman, a rescuer and two fighters from the group were killed.

In response, Hezbollah said it launched several attacks on Israeli military targets and shot down an Israeli Hermes 900 drone.

Nearly eight months of violence on the Israel-Lebanon border has left at least 451 people dead in Lebanon, mostly fighters but including more than 80 civilians, according to a tally. On the Israeli side, at least 14 soldiers

and 11 civilians have been killed, according to the army.

Meanwhile, Israeli forces shot dead a Palestinian teenager in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian news agency Wafa reported, as the army confirmed it had opened fire on two suspects.

Ashraf Hmedat, 15, was killed during an Israeli raid on the Aqabat Jabr refugee camp near Jericho, Wafa said.

The Israeli army said two suspects had hurled petrol bombs towards the nearby settlement of Vered Yeriho, endangering civilians and property. The condition of the second person was unclear, Wafa said. — AFP



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7

## In brief

■ JAKARTA



### INDONESIA VOLCANO ERUPTS, SPEWS ASH 7 KM INTO THE SKY

A volcano in eastern Indonesia erupted on Sunday, spewing an ash cloud seven kilometres into the sky as authorities warned residents to shelter indoors. It is the latest of around 100 eruptions from the volcano since early this year.

Mount Ibu, located on Halmahera island in North Maluku province, erupted at 12.45 pm, sending thick clouds of ash into the air.

Authorities began evacuating residents, with more than 2,500 people moved to shelters, according to local disaster mitigation agency data. Ibu is one of Indonesia's most active volcanoes, erupting more than 21,000 times last year. — AFP

■ COLOMBO



### SRI LANKA MONSOON FLOODS KILL 14, SCHOOLS SHUT

Flash floods, mudslides and falling trees have killed at least 14 people in Sri Lanka as the island nation is battered by monsoon storms, the country's disaster centre said on Sunday.

Some drowned, including three members of the same family swept away. Others were buried alive in mudslides.

The DMC said 20 out of the country's 25 districts were affected by heavy rain and issued warnings to people living on the banks of main rivers to move to higher ground. Flights arriving at Colombo's main international airport were diverted to a smaller airport. The government also ordered all schools to remain shut on Monday. — AFP

■ TEHRAN



### IRANIAN EX-PRESIDENT AHMADINEJAD REGISTERS NEW BID FOR POST

Iran's former president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad on Sunday registered his candidacy for a presidential election this month, state media reported. The Islamic republic goes to the polls on June 28 to replace president Ebrahim Raisi.

Ahmadinejad, 67, held the post for two straight terms from 2005 to 2013. Like all presidential hopefuls, his bid is pending the approval of the Guardian Council.

"I am confident that all the country's problems can be solved by making maximum use of national capacities," he said after submitting his bid at the interior ministry. — AFP

# Russia claims capture of village in Ukraine's Donetsk



A member of a drone unit of Ukraine's 58th Motorized Brigade unpacks equipment near the front line in the Donetsk region, Ukraine. — Reuters file photo

**MOSCOW:** Russia's defence ministry claimed on Sunday to have captured a tiny village in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine, where it has been on the offensive making territorial gains.

Russian troops "have managed to liberate the village of Umanskoye in the popular republic of Donetsk", the ministry said in reference to the Ukrainian village of Umanske.

Umanske is a tiny village that had fewer than 180 inhabitants before Russia launched its military offensive in Ukraine in February 2022.

It lies about 25 kilometres to the northwest of Donetsk, which is the main city of the region and is under Russian control.

Russian Defence Minister Andrei Belousov said on Friday Russia had made advances "in all tactical directions".

**Ukraine's outnumbered and outgunned forces have been under pressure for several months, particularly since Russia launched a new push in early May around the eastern city of Kharkiv**

Moscow's forces had seized 880 square kilometres of territory this year alone, he said.

Ukraine's outnumbered and outgunned forces have been under pressure for several months, particularly since Russia launched a new push in early May around the eastern city of Kharkiv, the second largest in Ukraine. Russian soldiers have also been pushing hard in the east towards Pokrovsk, a city around 30 kilometres northwest of Umanske.

Kyiv hopes the imminent

delivery of Western munitions it has long been waiting for will allow its troops to regain the upper hand on the battlefield.

Likewise, US President Joe Biden's decision to allow Kyiv to use American-supplied weapons to strike certain targets inside Russia has provided Ukraine with a significant boost.

Meanwhile, Nine people were wounded in Ukrainian strikes on the Russian border regions of Belgorod and Kursk, the respective regional governors said on Sunday.

"Six civilians were wounded as a result of the bombardment of Shebekino town," Belgorod governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said on Telegram, adding that they had been taken to hospital.

All six, five of whom were in two buses and the sixth who was on the street, were wounded by shrapnel. — AFP

## Trump warns jail time could be 'breaking point' for supporters

**WASHINGTON:** Donald Trump has warned that it could prove to be a "breaking point" for his supporters if he is sentenced to prison or house arrest following his historic criminal conviction.

In an interview aired Sunday on Fox News, the former president and current Republican White House hopeful acknowledged the possibility that he could be handed jail time or a period of home detention at his sentencing on July 11.

"I'm ok with it," Trump said, but added he was "not sure the public would stand for it." "I think it would be tough for the public to take. You know at a certain point there's a breaking point," he added.

The warning will resonate in a country already concerned about the prospect of political violence in the increasingly heated run-up to the November 5 presidential election.

Trump will now be running as a convicted felon, and he has repeatedly made it clear he will not accept the result should he lose to President Joe Biden.

A New York jury on Thursday convicted Trump on all 34 felony charges of falsifying business records in the final stages of the 2016 presidential campaign to

cover up a scandal involving actor Stormy Daniels. It was the first criminal conviction of a former president in US history.

Although each charge carries a possible four-year jail term, experts say it is extremely unlikely that the judge will actually hand down a custodial sentence.

Trump faces three other criminal trials, including one related to efforts to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election he lost to Biden.

Trump's supporters stormed the US Capitol on January 6, 2021 after he delivered a fiery speech urging the crowd to "fight like hell."

Breaking her silence following Trump's conviction, Stormy Daniels said the former president should be put in prison.

After years of exchanging insults with Trump on social media, Daniels now says she finally has been "vindicated," although she admitted she was "shocked" at how quickly the jury rendered its verdict. In his interview with Fox News, Trump said the criminal trial had taken a toll on his wife, who was notably absent as other close family members attended the court proceedings in support. — AFP



Supporters raise Trump-themed flags across the street from Trump Tower, in New York City, on May 31. — AFP

# S Korea vows 'unendurable' response to N Korea

**SEOUL:** South Korea said on Sunday it would take "unendurable" measures against North Korea for sending trash balloons over the border, which could include blaring propaganda from loudspeakers back at the North.

The announcement from President Yoon Suk Yeol's office followed a meeting by his National Security Council on a response to what Seoul said were more than 700 balloons carrying trash that Pyongyang sent over the heavily fortified border to rile its rival neighbour. The council condemned the balloons and GPS jamming as an "irrational act of provocation".

Seoul did not rule out resuming the loudspeaker blasts, which it stopped in 2018 after a rare summit with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un, a senior official at Yoon's office told reporters.

The democratic South and



S Korean soldiers examine various objects including what appeared to be trash from a balloon believed to have been sent by N Korea, in Incheon, South Korea. — Reuters

the communist North remain technically at war since the 1950-1953 Korean War ended in an armistice rather than a peace treaty. Seoul is a firm US ally whose sophisticated military regularly holds drills with the US, while Pyongyang is developing missile and nuclear technology that Seoul and Washington say violates UN resolutions.

North Korea has said its balloons were in retaliation for a propaganda campaign by North Korean defectors and activists in South Korea, who regularly send inflatables containing anti-Pyongyang leaflets, food, medicine, money and USB sticks loaded with K-pop music videos and dramas across the border.

The North Korean balloons carrying garbage such as cigarette butts, cloth, paper waste and plastic were found across the capital Seoul from 8 pm on Saturday. — Reuters

# Students must leverage mobile technology to learn skills



Sandhya Rao Mehta

The writer is Associate Professor, Dept of English Language and Literature Sultan Qaboos University

As educational institutions are beginning to close for the summer, relieved students are looking forward to finally put up their feet and enjoy an uninterrupted holiday.

While earlier these holidays consisted of meeting extended family, playing outside and discovering a new hobby, it's safe to say that today, most of the time is going to be spent in front of a screen.

According to a Forbes survey, children spend 4.5 – 7 hours on social media.

By the time a child turns 17, this rises to 8 hours. Whether this can be reduced is a question for another time.

As of now, these trends are not changing. The most one can do is train youngsters to use some of those hours productively, either by learning a new skill, honing one's interests, or finding a new passion.

Mobile technology, or m-learning brings together the power of knowledge and the comfort of an online community to achieve short term or long

term goals. It is specifically useful for those who are not comfortable with a structured school system because it offers individual pace, focus on specific interests and can correct individual problems.

As we all well know, schools today can only offer a standardised set of knowledge and soft skills. Mobile technology, which is within the reach of most of a community, fills the gap between what a school can do and what an individual needs, or wants.

The world of mobile technology today seems limitless — whatever one's interests may be, there are lessons, tutorials, feedback and even tips to start such a platform. From chess to gardening, coding to language learning, there is something for everyone. All it needs is patience and commitment — much like everything else. And in that sense, nothing has really changed.

The challenge of using mobile technology to learn a new skill is that it needs focus and dedication. This can be done in a couple of easy steps: identifying a new skill to be developed, have an action plan,

THE BEST COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE TO TEACH AND GUIDE YOUNG USERS ON HOW TO HARNESS THE POWER OF MOBILE TECHNOLOGY IN A WAY THAT IS MORE THAN JUST SCROLLING FOR ITS OWN SAKE

dedicate a few hours a day and write down outcomes and achievements at specific intervals — it could be the end of a week, or a month, but shorter time gaps are more useful initially.

Apart from specific challenges like good connectivity, finding a culturally appropriate platform to learn a specific skill or pursue an interest, there is also the issue of excessive engagement with social media. This is an issue that has been discussed often and youngsters need guidance in the judicious use of mobile technology. However much we may deride the technology that is available to us now, it is not going anywhere. The best course of action would then be to teach and guide young users how to harness the power of mobile technology in a way that is more than just scrolling for its own sake.

The Internet is a vast place to find a passion and nurture it. Teachers and parents must be trained to guide younger members of the community to leverage mobile technology in a way that interests them.

## Germany pushes jobs for Ukraine refugees

CELINE LE PRIOUX

Like a million of her compatriots, hairdresser Valentyna Vysotska fled Ukraine for Germany when Russia invaded. After a 10-month crash course to learn German, she found work, at a hair salon in Berlin.

“My German isn't great but my boss, my colleagues and the clients are all very understanding,” Vysotska, 54, said.

As far as Chancellor Olaf Scholz is concerned, Vysotska is an example he wished he could see more of.

Among the Ukrainians who have arrived over the last two years, only 170,000 have since found work.

Scholz recently himself pressed the newcomers to stand on their own feet rather than rely on social handouts.

“We have offered them integration and German classes. Now they must find work,” said the German leader.

The urgency is prompted not only by financial reasons.

The cost of welcoming newcomers is certainly heavy — between €5.5-6 billion (\$5.4-\$6.1 billion) have been earmarked this year alone for Ukrainians.

But Germany is also suffering from a serious manpower shortage and can do with more hands on deck.

And there is a political imperative for Scholz's government to achieve more integration success stories.

Immigration and integration are hot button topics in upcoming European elections, with the far right driving the argument that Europe's biggest economy, currently ailing, needs to take care of its own first.

Mindful of the fact that the far-right AfD party had entered parliament in 2017 on the back of popular anger over the influx of a million Syrians and Iraqis in the two preceding years, Scholz's government is wary about what a repeat of that fury could spell for the EU polls.

To take the sting off the far right's arguments, the government recently moved to toughen rules for asylum seekers.

Among them is the introduction of a new payment card that provides social handouts to refugees as credits that can only be used locally — essentially scrapping the possibility for migrants to send cash back to their home countries.

But for Ukrainian refugees in particular, key in the government's strategy is to inject them into the job market, which is sorely lacking workers.

Vysotska's boss Civan Ucar recalled the relief to have found the Ukrainian, who had worked 35 years as a hairdresser back in her home country, at a job fair. — AFP

## Speaking with one voice



Karim Easterbrook

is a Former School Principal Cambridge, UK

As I write this I have uppermost in my mind the plight of the people of Palestine.

We have all watched with dismay and deep sadness the deaths of tens of thousands of mostly women and children in Gaza. I know that I am not alone in Oman and throughout the Arab world in feeling powerless to stop further deaths. It is difficult for me to get through the day knowing that the people of Palestine, who have suffered in so many ways since 1948, are now experiencing what is perhaps their greatest tragedy.

I am British but I spend most of my time with Arabs having married an Omani wife and now living in Oman. I am also a practising Muslim. My children have many Omani cousins.

Over the last 35 years I have come to love the Arab people for their kind ways and for their perpetual generosity. For their intelligence and humour. For their honesty and integrity.

Whilst I remain British with many British traits, both good and bad, I feel blessed to be able to live with my Arab Omani brothers and sisters.

It is perhaps for this reason that like most Arabs I feel so deeply for our brothers and sisters in Palestine at this time. Palestine could have been so very different if it had not become the plaything of the great powers.

Before 1948 Palestine more than any other country in the world was a testament to the peaceful coexistence of Muslims, Jews, and Christians.

For many centuries these people all called this land home, living side by side in relative peace and harmony.

Before 1948 Palestine was a melting pot for different cultures and faiths where people of different backgrounds showed each other mutual respect.

In the 19th century Palestine under Ottoman rule was a centre of commerce where agriculture also thrived.

Owing to its fertile land and advanced irrigation techniques anyone visiting Palestine would have seen an endless number of orchards producing grapes, olives, citrus fruits and grains.

As Palestine entered the 20th century it was poised to evolve into an independent Arab State alongside other countries such as Syria and Lebanon. For me, knowing its history, the tragedy for Palestinians is even more poignant.



A demonstrator holds a Palestinian flag during a protest outside the US Embassy in support of Palestinians in Gaza and to condemn the Israeli airstrikes in the southern Gaza Strip city of Rafah, in Mexico City, Mexico. – Reuters

Arab nations, no less so Oman, have had to face many challenges from colonialism to today's conflicts. Arabs speak a common language but the need to speak with a common voice has never been so important as at the present time.

THE PALESTINIAN PEOPLE'S RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION, DIGNITY, AND SOVEREIGNTY OVER THEIR LAND CAN ONLY BE ACHIEVED IF ARAB NATIONS SHOW SOLIDARITY IN CONDEMNING THE GENOCIDE AND DEMANDING AN END TO IT

There is that expression “every cloud has a silver lining” and without wishing to trivialise the suffering of the Palestinian people, I pray that the silver lining in the clouds that rest heavily over the innocent civilians in Gaza will be a more united Arab world.

By standing united Arab nations can face common threats and promote a peaceful resolution to the current

conflict in Palestine. This is not simply a strategic choice but an imperative.

Arab nations have many shared interests and aspirations. They often have to grapple with the same issues including climate change, resource management, terrorism and extremism.

The Gulf region above all other Arab regions has vast natural resources ranging from oil and gas to fertile lands.

These resources offer immense potential for development and there have been huge developments to benefit the people of Oman and others in the GCC.

In spite of the many benefits unity offers the Arab people history has shown us that this will not be easy to achieve. Geopolitical rivalries and divergent interests have often posed formidable obstacles. But unity amongst Arab nations cannot be overstated if they are to influence events now taking place.

The Palestinian people's right to self-determination, dignity, and sovereignty over their land can only be achieved if Arab nations show solidarity in condemning the genocide and demanding an end to it.

It is only by Arab nations agreeing on a peaceful concerted plan of action that they can pave a way for peace in Palestine and the wider region.

# Never risk it for a fatal taste

Life is more precious to be sacrificed for useless stuff that can bring harm. Life is very valuable not to be carelessly lost or wasted for harmful substances. Life is lived only once, thus, it should be well-invested and carefully breathed and preserved. Once you inhale air, you cannot guarantee that you can exhale it later; this could be the last moment of your lifetime!

One's life might come to an end any time; it is just a matter how serious you are about protecting your life and making it more fruitful and worthy. There is no doubt that nobody would love to have a tough time or experience a miserable life. Everyone wishes to have a happy, prosperous and successful lifespan. Hence, one must avoid things that destroy the body, mind and spirit during a lifetime. Instead, one has to live the moment and enjoy it as much as possible.

The past days are over and now it is the present life! It is you who will make it or break it. The choice is always yours! As your day-to-day life is being impacted nowadays with modern technology and various changes, lot of people are getting trapped in extremely bad things that bring psychological, social and monetary loss. They become victims of their own desires, slip-ups and ignorance of life values.

Among the most common issues badly affecting the lives of many people are addiction to drugs. These psychotropic substances are widely available and unfortunately could be easily reached. Many people, especially youth, have surrendered their lives to drugs as they are getting addicted to them. They regard them as a relief from stress of life; however, drugs are the reason behind their failure and misery. It is all because they got addicted to drugs while some are misled by their peers.

Addiction to drugs is becoming really a big issue in the society. These poisonous substances have severe impact on individuals and society alike as many parents have



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An author, columnist, creative writer, translator and a communications professional

ADDICTION TO DRUGS IS BECOMING REALLY A BIG ISSUE IN THE SOCIETY. THESE POISONOUS SUBSTANCES HAVE SEVERE IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETY ALIKE AS MANY PARENTS HAVE LOST THEIR LOVED ONES

lost their loved ones. Likewise, couples are getting divorced and families are being separated because of this serious crisis. However, tremendous efforts and attempts are being made by many public and private organisations to combat drug addiction and drug trade.

The number of addicted people is increasing every year. Many other addicts are even scared to get registered and offered professional treatment by rehabilitation centres. It is really serious if those addicts are rejecting treatment as their condition might get worse. Even though, tremendous efforts are made to combat drugs, treat all those who got addicted and provide relevant essential health services, the problem still persists.

All the endeavours and initiatives have been offered in collective cooperation between all the parties concerned including ROP, Ministry of Education, Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Health and others. Great efforts by government, individuals and public institutions can fight this issue in the society and save youth.

Special state-of-the-art healthcare facilities, social, psychological and awareness programmes, comfortable homes and dedicated clinics are available all over the country to treat drug addicts. As well, devoted counsellors and consultants are available to support the addicted who undergo treatment or those interested to give up drugs forever. Besides, psychological clinics are in place in different governorates to provide initial consultation and diagnoses for the addicted or suspected ones.

Drugs will aggressively attack youth who are the backbone of the nation and future heroes. Public associations, sports clubs, mosques and youth camps call for common comprehensive drugs combat campaigns all over the country.

All these institutions definitely play a vital role towards youth guidance and inspiration. All should join hands together to have a country free of drugs.

## BEATING THE HEAT!



A worker is silhouetted against the setting sun as he bathes on a hot summer day in Jammu, India, on Sunday. – AFP

# The right way to regulate AI

The arrival of new technologies tends to stoke widespread anxiety, most commonly about automation and displacement of human workers. The Luddites at the beginning of the industrial age are perhaps the most frequently cited example of this technophobia, but such worries have emerged periodically ever since.

The perceived threat of artificial intelligence, however, seems greater compared to past technological breakthroughs. People are worried not simply about human replacement, but about the possibility of human extinction.

Lately, technologists have been asking each other, “What’s your p(doom)?” (one’s estimate of the probability that AI destroys humanity). The answer can vary depending on the day. But the exact number selected on the scale of zero to 100 matters less than the underlying question: How pessimistic are you about AI?

In March 2023, more than 1,000 tech researchers and executives signed what came to be known as the “pause” letter. They called on all AI labs to pause for at least six months “the training of AI systems more powerful than GPT-4.” The signatories ranged from AI pioneer Yoshua Bengio to economist Daron Acemoglu and tech billionaire Elon Musk. It’s a group that ought not to be ignored, but, as far as I can tell, they were. There was no discernible pause,



**Joshua Gans**  
The writer is Professor of Strategic Management at the University of Toronto’s Rotman School of Management

RATHER THAN PAUSING AI DEVELOPMENT, WE SHOULD ENGAGE IN MORE SMALL-SCALE EXPERIMENTS TO IDENTIFY POTENTIAL HARMS WHEN IT IS STILL POSSIBLE TO LIMIT THEIR DAMAGE

although it is worth noting that, at the time of writing, no AI system significantly more powerful than ChatGPT-4 has been released.

The experts who signed the pause letter were adhering to the precautionary principle, which calls for slowing down and learning more if an activity could cause irreparable harm. But for every expert who emphasises caution, there are others who advocate the rapid development of AI technology.

After all, for more than a decade, many economists, including me, have watched as startups brought incredible AI advances to market. There were breakthroughs in cancer detection, safety systems, tools to help the disabled, tutors to expand educational opportunities, and self-driving vehicles to increase mobility and independence for the elderly.

A pause would only delay such benefits. So, while a pause may indeed be advisable, we should ensure that our fears about potential harms are based on more than speculation. To help determine the validity of concerns about AI, it is worth understanding their provenance. The first is historical experience. Most new technologies have both benefits and costs, and sometimes the latter outweigh the former. Thomas Midgley, Jr, invented tetraethyl lead,

a gasoline additive that reduces engine knocking and dramatically improves vehicle reliability, and Freon, a chemical that is key to refrigeration. But his creations caused lead poisoning and released chlorofluorocarbons that depleted the ozone layer, and both were eventually banned. In their 2023 book *Power and Progress*, Acemoglu and Simon Johnson argued that this outcome, more often than not, was the norm. So, while economists generally believe that the benefits of most new technologies end up outweighing the costs, others see AI as the latest in a long line of potentially dangerous technologies that were

adopted before fully understanding what these costs could be.

The second source of concern about AI is that it does have various identifiable harms. There are conflicts over how such systems are trained, exemplified by *The New York Times’* lawsuit against OpenAI and Microsoft for alleged copyright infringement. Some innovators have made it clear that their goal is to replace workers with AI, while students are already using large language models to complete exams and assignments.

In addition to disrupting education and the workplace, AI has been used to surveil citizens, to imitate individuals through

deepfakes, and to enhance military weapons. There are also legitimate concerns that incumbent firms that already possess vast quantities of data will enhance their market power. These identifiable harms can be weighed against the technology’s benefits and, if necessary, addressed by regulation or, as with leaded petroleum and chlorofluorocarbons, outright prohibition.

This brings us back to the third source of concern: many of the consequences of new technologies are unintended and unforeseeable, and this will likely be true of AI as well. For example, there is now widespread concern that social media is damaging children’s mental health. But, crucially, there is no simple regulatory solution, given the ubiquity of these platforms. The fact that unintended consequences are often difficult to reverse poses its own problems, and appears to force a binary choice between AI or no AI. But this is a false dilemma. In fact, it means that we should engage in more small-scale experiments with AI to identify potential harms when it is still possible to limit their damage.

**This commentary has been adapted from a lecture to be delivered at the Turin International Festival of Economics.**

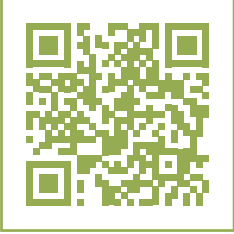
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To help determine the validity of concerns about AI, it is worth understanding their provenance.

# sport

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Men relay team



Azza al Yaarubi (L) with her coach

## Oman claim 10 medals in W Asian Athletics meet

ADIL AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, JUNE 2

The Sultanate of Oman athletes captured a total of ten medals including three gold, three silver and four bronze at the West Asian Athletics Championship that concluded in Basra city in Iraq on Saturday.

Oman's Men and Women's relay team impressed as both teams managed to earn gold medal in the 4x100m relay event. The women team clinched the gold after they cleared the distance in a timing of 48.27 seconds while Iraq team finished second after they clocked 48.63 seconds and Iran team in third place with a timing of 49.36 seconds.

Oman team sprinters emerged as the fastest sprinters at the Men's 4x100m relay event as they won the gold medal in the race in a time of 39.78 seconds while Iraq team came in second place with a timing of 40.32 seconds, while Saudi Arabia team finished third.

The other silver medal was won by Azza al Yaarubi, who managed to win silver medal earlier in the women's 100 metres event, claimed another silver in the Women's 200 m event in 24.77 seconds.



Oman's athlete Moahmmed al Saadi, who was among the Men's relay team, captured another bronze medal in the 200 metres event in 21.01 seconds.

The gold medal went to Saudi Arabia sprinter Abdulaziz Abdu Atfi with a timing of 20.62 seconds and Benyamin Yusef came in second as he clocked

20.89 seconds. The jumper Salim al Rawahi won another bronze medal in triple jump event when he cleared 15.40 metres

while Saudi Arabia athlete Sami Mousa claimed the gold medal with a remark of 15.48 metres and Zain al Deen Sabeh from Iraq with 15.43 metres.

Commenting after the podium ceremony, Oman's women relay team member Mazoon al Alawi, expressed her happiness with the achievement and she said: "We did not expect to win gold medal in this event. It is great accomplishment despite the short period of the technical preparations for this championship. This triumph will give us more encouragement for the forthcoming events," she ended.

Earlier in the championship, Salim bin Abdullah al Rawahi claimed bronze medal in the men's long jump with a distance of 6.91 metres while Sprinter Mazoon al Alawi got the bronze medal in the women's 100 metres hurdles after clocking the race in 15.61 seconds. Hibaa al Asmi won silver for Oman in the javelin competitions after she registered a mark of 40.67 metres. Young sprinter Al Mulham bin Darwish al Balushi won the first gold medal for Oman in the men's 100 metres sprint in 10.25 seconds. Azza al Yaarubi won the silver medal in the women's 100 metres after she clocked 12.01 seconds.

## Oman Football Association presents season 2023-24 awards

ADIL AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, JUNE 2

The Oman Football Association (OFA) celebrated with the most outstanding players, coaches and admin members for the 2023-2024 season of Omantel league during the season award event on Sunday.

The celebration took place at the Novotel Muscat Airport hotel under the auspices of Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in the presence of Salim bin Said al Wahaihi, OFA Chairman, and officials. Seeb's defender Mohammed al Musallami was named as the best player of the season, while Seeb head coach Jorvan Vieira claimed the best coach award. Seeb's goalie Ahmed al Rawahi grabbed the best goalkeeper prize while Oman's club Nasser al Rawahi won the best youth player. Waleed al Musallami from Al Nasr Club received the award of top league scorer. Ahmed al Khusaibi named as the best match official while Ayman al Suwaisi as the best admin team member.

During the event, Mohammed al Yahmadi, Executive Director of OFA, presented some statistics about the 2023/2024 domestic league during his speech in the event. He said that the league featured 132 matches as 102 matches ended with victory and 30 games on draw note. "Seeb Club registered 18 victories as the top team having triumphs while Al Wahda Club as the top team suffering defeats by 17 losses. 320 goals registered in the season and 26 national head coaches supervised the teams as head coaches," he ended.





Tsitsipas celebrates winning his fourth round match against Italy's Matteo Arnaldi. — REUTERS

# Tsitsipas beats Arnaldi to reach quarterfinals

**PARIS:** Greek ninth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas lost the opening set but went on to defeat Italian Matteo Arnaldi 3-6 7-6(4) 6-2 6-2 in the fourth round of the French Open on Sunday.

Tsitsipas keeps alive his bid to win his first Grand Slam title, but the 2021 Roland Garros finalist was put to the test early on by Arnaldi who had ousted sixth seed Andrey Rublev in the previous round.

"It was one of the craziest comebacks I've had, the momentum seemed to be going his way the entire match," Tsitsipas said.

"It was very frustrating on my end, because I felt like I was trying my best, trying to make

him move, nothing really seemed like it was working."

Arnaldi began strongly, despite needing to save three break points in the opening game. He made the decisive break to lead 3-1 and comfortably saw out the first set, as Tsitsipas was unable to handle the Italian's energy.

Tsitsipas looked in even more trouble in the second set when the Italian broke to lead 3-2, but Arnaldi then failed to take advantage when serving for the set at 5-4 up. Tsitsipas broke and came out on top in the tiebreak to level the match.

"I think experience was the reason I managed to come back today, even at 5-3 in the second set I felt like I can come back,"

Tsitsipas said.

"I felt like there was power within me to turn this match around and I think that game at 5-4 when I broke him was the biggest pleasure I've experienced in tennis in a long time because I felt there is a chance."

The Greek took his renewed confidence into the third set and broke in the first game. Arnaldi began to struggle and Tsitsipas broke once more, and two further breaks in the fourth set put an end to the Italian's challenge.

"He's one of the biggest fighters I have played in tennis and he deserves a lot of credit because he was pushing me to the limits and one of the strongest opponents I have had

on the clay court season so far," the relieved winner said.

"I really think we are going to see a lot of things from him in the future because there are players at certain moments that are a little more fragile but he seemed very composed and very strong in those crucial moments."

Tsitsipas will face Spanish third seed Carlos Alcaraz next, a repeat of last year's quarterfinal which the Greek lost.

Alcaraz has won all five of their previous meetings.

"He said in the past that he likes playing against me, so I hope he gets to like it a little bit less the next time," Tsitsipas said with a smile. — Reuters

## OOA organises sports management course

### AL BADRI COMPLETES INTERNATIONAL COACHING COURSE IN HUNGARY

**MUSCAT:** The Sports Management Course (Level 1) organised by Oman Olympic Committee (OOC), represented by Oman Olympic Academy (OOA) in collaboration with International Olympic Solidarity, commenced on Sunday. The course, held at OOC headquarters, will run continuously for five days.

The course aims to introduce participants to Olympic history and events, understand Olympic values and issues, and their importance and role in the sports community. It also focuses on teaching management skills, problem-solving, leadership principles, decision-making, and time management. Additionally, it aims to develop elite athletes, select talents, understand risk management in sports events, and organise them, as well as financial strategic planning, budgeting, and promoting sports



volunteering.

The course lead by Jaber bin Mohammed al Shubaibi, Director of the Sports Management Course, with participation from various administrative personnel and employees of sports institutions and bodies.

It is noteworthy that OOA continuously strives to organise such programmes and training courses, believing in the importance of continuous education and training in developing sports and advancing

the sports sector at the local level.

Mayar completes international coaching course

On the other hand, Mayar al Badri, a national coach with Oman Handball Association, has successfully completed the international coaching course organised by the Hungarian University of Sports Science in collaboration with the International Olympic Solidarity in Budapest, Hungary. The course took place from April 1 to



May 30, 2024.

This course is part of the programmes supported by International Olympic Solidarity to support technical staff. The programme witnesses wide participation from technical experts in international training programmes from various countries around the world in different sports disciplines.

## AL RAWAHI FRUSTRATED BY TECHNICAL ISSUES IN SARDINIA

**ALGHERO (SARDINIA):** The Oman Rally team's Abdullah al Rawahi gained his first taste of gravel rallying in the FIA Junior World Rally Championship (JWRC) at the Rally Italia Sardegna but his progress after the opening six stages had been hampered by brake problems, overheating and an engine sensor issue.

After four speed tests on Friday afternoon and two specials on Saturday morning,



Abdullah al Rawahi in Sardinia

the Omani had been continually frustrated in his M-Sport Poland-prepared Ford Fiesta Rally3, although he was gaining experience of the demanding Sardinian gravel stages and the pace needed to be competitive in this year's JWRC.

He and British co-driver Ross Whittock opened their account on Friday afternoon with two passes through a pair of gravel stages between Osilo and Tergu and Sedini and Castelsardo to

the north of Alghero on the northwest of the island.

Al Rawahi safely negotiated the opening stage in a time of 19min 42.1sec on a special where Estonian Romet Jürgenson clocked the quickest time and moved into the lead. After setting the 11th quickest time on the first stage, Al Rawahi was ninth on the second one, as he quickly adapted to the demanding gravel terrain, despite brake issues and a concern about overheating.

## Oman favourites against Namibia: Skipper Ilyas

**SPORT REPORTER**

MUSCAT, JUNE 2

It seemed that even the rain gods wanted the Oman players to complete their training session at the Kensington Oval in Bridgetown, Barbados, on Saturday afternoon. Minutes after Duleep Mendis, Oman's head coach, concluded the team's final training session, rain poured in for an hour before it halted.

Oman would hope the same [rains stay away] on Sunday night (Monday morning, 4.30am, Oman time) at the same venue when they launch their campaign in the 2024 ICC Men's T20 World Cup against Namibia in a Group B match.

Oman were the first team among the participating nations to arrive in the West Indies for the World Cup, which for the first time will feature an expanded version with 20 teams.

Oman's newly appointed skipper Aqib Ilyas exuded confidence in the team's preparations and said: "We have had excellent preparations, and the boys are raring to go. It is a big stage, but we are prepared to give our best."

Ilyas, the team's star all-rounder, said: "The team benefited from the early arrival as the players got a good idea of the wicket and weather conditions. What is also in our favour in Bridgetown is that the wickets are on the slower side and resemble what we play in Muscat."

Oman's T20I head-to-head record against Namibia in the six games played is two wins and four defeats.

Asked who would be the key players in the squad, Ilyas was clear. He said: "The success will depend on how the whole team performs but admitted that seniors like Bilal Khan, the pace spearhead, and all-rounder Zeeshan Maqsood, along with himself, will have a larger role to shoulder in West Indies."

Oman squad: Aqib Ilyas (c), Zeeshan Maqsood, Kashyap Prajapati, Pratik Athavale, Ayaan Khan, Shoaib Khan, Mohammad Nadeem, Naseem Khushi, Mehran Khan, Bilal Khan, Rafiullah, Kaleemullah, Fayyaz Butt, Shakeel Ahmad, Khalid Kail.



Oman captain Aqib Ilyas (right) with skippers of other Group B teams at Kensington Oval

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# Real Madrid strike late to beat Dortmund and lift 15th European Cup



**LONDON:** Real Madrid were crowned kings of Europe for a record-extending 15th time with a trademark 2-0 win over Borussia Dortmund in the Champions League final at a raucous Wembley on Saturday as they were outplayed for an hour but then showed their clinical edge.

After Dortmund had made, but spurned, several good chances, particularly in a one-sided first half, Real took control as Dani Carvajal headed in from a corner after 74 minutes and Vinicius Jr fired home the second nine minutes later.

Victory secured the trophy for the sixth time in 11 seasons, matching the run of the team that started Real's love affair with the European Cup, having won the first five editions of the continent's elite competition from 1956 and another in 1966.

Amazingly it was Real's 11th straight triumph in a European final - their last defeat coming against Aberdeen in the Cup Winners' Cup showpiece 41 years ago - and they have now won the biggest one more than twice as often as the next best team.

It was also a record-extending fifth success as a coach for Carlo Ancelotti, who also won the trophy twice as a player with AC Milan.

"I never get used to it, because it was difficult, very difficult, more than expected," the Italian said. "In the second half we were better - this is a dream that continues."

Carvajal summed up the match perfectly after the latest in a seemingly endless run of late turnarounds for his side, who completed a LaLiga-Champions League double.



"After the first half we didn't even deserve to go to the changing room with a level score," he said. "But we came out of the first half alive, knowing that we would have our moment ... and here it is".

The Germans had a dream first half in every aspect other than scoring.

Their first good chance came after 21 minutes when Karim Adeyemi went too wide when rounding goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois.

Then came a flurry of further opportunities as Niclas

Fuellkrug hit the post and low shots by Julian Brandt and Marcel Sabitzer were saved by Courtois, making only his fifth appearance of an injury-hit season.

**YELLOW WALL**

Dortmund had been attacking towards their own fans who, revelling in their team's first Champions League final since 2013 and only their third ever, did their best to reproduce the yellow wall atmosphere of their Westfalenstadion with noise and unified bouncing that

shook the stadium to its foundations.

Madrid looked livelier from the start in the second half, with Dortmund keeper Gregor Kobel saving a Toni Kroos free kick and Carvajal glancing a header just over.

Courtois then saved a diving header from Fuellkrug and, to the surprise of nobody in the stadium, Dortmund were soon ruing the misses as 5ft 8 ins (172cm) full back Carvajal rose to meet a Kroos corner and steer in a glancing header.

The assist was a fitting way for Germany international midfielder Kroos to mark his final game for the club while he Carvajal, Nacho and Luka Modric all equalled Real's Francisco Gento's record of six titles from their first era of dominance.

Madrid took charge from then on and got the second goal when Dortmund's Ian Maatsen gave the ball away on the edge of their own box, midfielder Jude Bellingham fed Vinicius Jr in acres of space and the Brazilian fired home.

Dortmund's incredible fans continued to sing in defeat, though they and their players will know this was a missed opportunity that will hurt for a long time.

"Today we saw a Dortmund team that we want to see," said coach Edin Terzic, whose side finished fifth in the Bundesliga. "We played a fantastic game and maybe deserved a bit more than to lose 2-0."

"In the first half we felt we had them. From the first second we showed the world we believed in it. Not just to play the final but also win it.

"We did a lot of things right but they had this killer instinct. They were ice cold and they are deserved champions." — **Reuters**



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OMAN’S PUBLIC REVENUE SURGES BY 25% TO REACH RO 12.542 BILLION



DATA from the bulletin on the actual performance of the state's general budget issued by the Ministry of Finance indicated that actual public revenues increased by 25 per cent by the end of 2023, reaching RO 12.542 billion, compared to the approved budget estimates of RO 10.050 billion.

This is due to the increase in oil and non-oil revenues.

The data showed that oil revenues increased by 34 per cent compared to the approved budget, constituting 72 per cent of total public revenues by the end of 2023.

Net oil revenues amounted to RO 7.150 billion, an increase of 34 per cent over the net oil revenues estimated in the 2023 budget of RO 5.320 billion. This is due to the rise in average oil prices in global markets, where the average achieved oil price reached about \$82 per barrel, compared to the approved price per barrel in the 2023 budget of \$55 per barrel.

Net gas revenues by the end of 2023 amounted to RO 1.868 billion, recording an increase of 33 per cent compared to the approved budget estimates of RO 1.400 billion.

The total non-oil revenues by the end of 2023 amounted to RO 3.524 billion, an increase of RO 194 million, or 6 per cent compared to the approved budget, as it represents 28 per cent of the total public revenues by the end of 2023. This is due to higher corporate income tax and value-added tax revenues.

The total current revenues at the end of last year amounted to RO 3.500 billion, an increase of 7 per cent over the total current revenues in the 2023 budget, which amounted to RO 3.280 billion.

The total tax and fee revenues by the end of 2023 recorded an increase of 10 per cent to reach RO 2.054 billion, compared to the tax and fee revenues approved in the 2023 budget of RO 1.869 billion. This is due to an increase in corporate income tax revenues by 36 per cent and value-added tax revenues by 12 per cent, as a result of the recovery in economic activity.

**NON-TAX REVENUES**  
Total non-tax revenues increased by the end of 2023 by 3 per cent to reach RO 1.446 billion, compared to the approved budget of RO 1.401 billion.

This is a result of the increase in dividends from government investments, airport and port revenues, and miscellaneous revenues.

The volume of actual public spending by the end of 2023 witnessed a slight increase of 2 per cent, recording RO 11.606 billion compared to the approved spending volume of RO 11.350 billion.

This is a result of increased social spending and support for stimulating economic activity, to include increased expenses for subsidising petroleum products and increased spending on development projects.

Current expenses decreased by the end of 2023 by 1 per cent, recording RO 8.554 billion, compared to what was approved in the 2023 budget of RO 8.620 billion.

The actual expenditure of the defence and security units amounted to RO 2.894 billion, a decrease of RO 106 million compared to what was approved in the 2023 budget.

The actual expenditures of the civil ministries increased by the end of 2023 by 4 per cent, recording RO 4.616 billion, compared to what was approved in the 2023 budget amounting to RO 4.420 billion. This increase is due to increased spending in some sectors. Total expenditures for development projects of ministries and civil government units increased by 24 per cent, recording RO 1.363 billion compared to what was approved in the 2023 budget.

This is due to the increase in financial liquidity allocated to the development budgets of government units and governorates for the year 2023, in addition to the payment of dues to private sector companies implementing development projects.

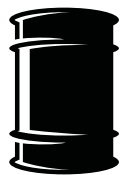
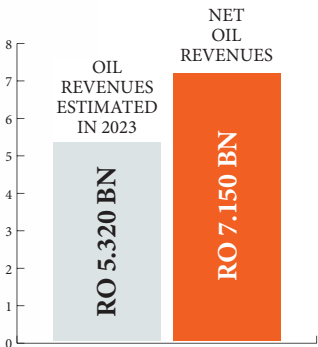
Spending on the infrastructure sector represented about 41 per cent of the total actual development spending for the year 2023, and spending on the social structures sector represented 37 per cent of the total actual development spending for the year 2023.

The total contributions and other expenditures amounted to RO 1.689 billion, an increase of 4 per cent compared to the approved budget of RO 1.630 billion. This is due to the increase in expenses for subsidising petroleum products, which amounted to RO 370 million compared to the budget approved amount of RO 39 million. This comes in implementation of the royal orders to fix fuel selling prices.

During the year 2023, the Ministry of Finance paid more than RO 1.4 billion in dues paid to the private sector received through the financial system, completing the documentary cycle. The government directed additional financial revenues amounting to RO 936 million during the past year towards enhancing social spending, stimulating economic growth, reducing public debt, and managing financial obligations, which contributed to improving financial and economic indicators, the credit rating, and the financial position of the Sultanate of Oman. The total public debt until the end of 2023 amounted to RO 15.3 billion, a decrease of RO 2.3 billion compared to 2022, as a result of the Ministry of Finance managing government obligations and repaying part of the loans. — **ONA**



**OIL REVENUES INCREASED BY 34% COMPARED TO THE APPROVED BUDGET BY THE END OF 2023**



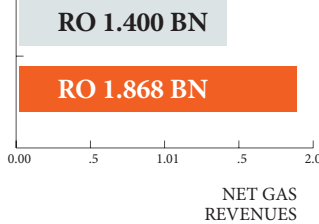
AVERAGE ACHIEVED OIL PRICE REACHED ABOUT \$82 PER BARREL



**GAS REVENUES INCREASED BY 33% BY THE END OF 2023**



GAS REVENUES ESTIMATED IN THE 2023



**NON-OIL REVENUES BY THE END OF 2023 AMOUNTED TO RO 3.524 BILLION, AN INCREASE OF RO 194 MILLION**

Benefits of fiscal consolidation channelled towards social sectors

NASRULAH AL AJMI  
MUSCAT, JUNE 2

Oman's 2023 budget showcased a commitment to fiscal responsibility and strategic investment. While initially projected to face a deficit, the year ended with a surplus of RO 936 million (approximately \$2.4 billion). This positive outcome stemmed from exceeding revenue expectations in both hydrocarbon (oil and gas) and non-hydrocarbon sectors, according to the Ministry of Finance.

Sharing details about performance of the 2023 State Budget, the Ministry noted that the higher revenues allowed the government to pursue a multi-pronged approach. A significant portion (RO 2.3 billion) was directed towards debt reduction, a move that strengthens Oman's long-term financial stability. Social spending also received a boost with an additional RO 331 million allocated to ease the burden on citizens. Increased subsidies for essential goods like oil products, cooking gas, and utilities ensured affordability.

Economic growth was not neglected either. The government strategically invested an additional RO 71 million in crucial areas like health and education to build a skilled workforce for the future. Additionally, subsidising development and housing loan interest rates (RO 52 million aimed to stimulate economic activity.

The effective management of the 2023 budget extends beyond the surplus itself. Analysing spending patterns reveals a focus on efficient use of resources. Civil ministries saw increased spending (RO 196 million).

Furthermore, development expenditure exceeded its allocation by RO 263 million, primarily directed towards infrastructure (roads, airports) and social infrastructure (education, healthcare) - crucial sectors for long-term development. The breakdown by sector (infrastructure, social infrastructure, services, and goods) highlights a diversified approach aimed at strengthening various aspects of the Omani economy and society.

# First-ever Kia K3 coming soon to Oman

MUSCAT: The first-ever Kia K3 will soon be making its mark at your nearest Kia showroom, here in Oman.

The K3 embodies Kia's new design philosophy "Opposites United" and one of its five pillars, "Power to progress". The K3 has given it a high-tech character with its aggressive and powerful design. By combining a Unique and high-tech type of lamp with a powerful body, K3 to feel the innovation and boldness of "Opposite United".

The high-tech Star-map Graphics Lamp is one of the biggest characters in the K3. The lamp each have a powerful movement.

In addition, the side body shape and black-cladding were applied to make the car's profile look sleek and feel tough, maximising the boldness.

With the K3, Kia has tapped into the demands of buyers within the sedan C segment and fleet companies seeking all-rounded functional vehicles that deliver on tech, design and safety.

The car's interiors ensure advanced connectivity and utmost passenger comfort with



its central resolution touchscreen, Audio cum climate one-touch control, rear air vents, among other features.

Its exteriors play on a bold and futuristic appearance that maintains a high-tech character for adopting bold lines and shapes, while maintaining the traditional tiger nose grille.

The K3 is also equipped with safety features, providing front and rear end protection, demonstrating Kia's commitment

to safety across all its vehicles by increasing driver awareness.

The all-new Kia K3 boasts sporty exteriors, preserving the traditional tiger nose grille with a futuristic twist, and interiors that seamlessly blend advanced connectivity with maximum passenger comfort.

Positioned to be the preferred choice for the ultimate driving experience in emerging markets, the all-new Kia K3 emerges as a new-age sedan.

Sharing his thoughts on the all-new K3, a representative from Reliable International Automotive, the dealers for Kia in Oman said, "The all-new K3 is sure to appeal to the young generation of car enthusiasts. Designed to offer exciting driving experiences, the K3 with its sheer size and impressive performance is sure to become a popular choice for many."

The K3 offers exciting driving experiences with its 1.6L 120 hp

engine that is paired to a 6-speed automatic transmission. The all-new K3 is available in 1.6 base and 1.6 top version at your nearest Kia showroom in Oman.

The K3 Top grade has a sleek and stylish exterior underlined by New futuristic lighting proposal with LED 'Star-map' DRL emphasising tiger face, LED daytime running lights, LED rear combination lamps, alloy wheels and more.

The K3's interior design focused on innovatively reinterpreting Kia's new design philosophy, Opposite United's "Technology for Life" filler.

The K3 visually realised harmonious and bold synergy effects and exquisitely embodied stable materials and future-oriented operating system designs. Combined to emphasise innovative and comfortable interior space.

Kia reinterpreted the selection and concentration of all design elements that can be felt in a formative and functional way and designed the entire space in detail and robustness so that it can exquisitely embed from small to large elements.

## Dhofar Islamic launches MasterCard world credit card

MUSCAT: Dhofar Islamic is pleased to announce the launch of MasterCard World credit card a premium card tailored to meet the unique needs of Al Riadah Priority Bank customers. Designed to provide unparalleled benefits and rewards, the Al Riadah MasterCard World offers an array of exclusive features.

Unlimited rewards: Customers can earn 1.87% value back on every international purchase and 1.25% on domestic purchases, ensuring maximum rewards on spends.

Airport lounge: Unlimited, complimentary access to over 1,000 Airport lounges worldwide in more than 450 cities in over 135 countries worldwide.

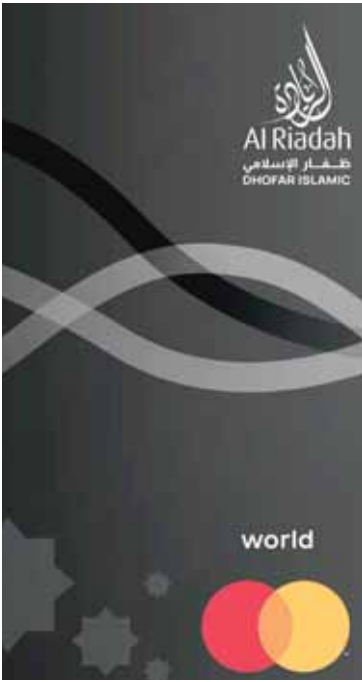
Hotel and car rentals: 15% discount on IHG Hotels & Resorts and 10% discount on worldwide staycations and up to 35% off your next car rental with Avis.

Fee-free membership: Customers can enjoy fee-free membership based on their annual spends.

Lifestyle benefits: 20% discount on grocery or food orders twice per month on the Talabat app and a 25% off on your first subscription payment for Fiit.

Free membership with Bank Dhofar 'INTERTAINER' (by one and get one free).

This unique power packed card is designed exclusively for Al Riadah Priority Banking customers with a minimum salary of RO 3,000 and comes with a competitive Membership Fees of RO 50 for primary cards, with a supplementary fee of RO 25. Bilal bin Faiz al Raisi, AGM and Head of Cards "We are excited to introduce the Al Riadah MasterCard



World as part of our ongoing commitment to provide innovative Sharia compliant banking solutions that cater to the evolving needs of our customers."

Al Riadah Priority Banking provides a unique range of banking products and services that are tailored to suit the unique lifestyle of priority customers, ranging from dedicated relationship manager, priority processing of transactions, preferential rates for deposits and finance products.

Dhofar Islamic is the Islamic bank arm of BankDhofar and has rebranded itself earlier this year to mark its 10th year.

The new logo represents Dhofar Islamic's evolution from a single star to a galaxy of enhanced capabilities.

Each star in the constellation symbolises its core values, emphasising ethical banking, transparency, and customer-centricity.

It reflects the bank's commitment to our customers to offer the best in service and products.

## NBO Muzn Islamic banking introduces digital onboarding service

MUSCAT: As part of its commitment to advancing the digital banking landscape, National Bank of Oman's (NBO) Muzn Islamic Banking is introducing a digital onboarding journey to provide unparalleled convenience for its customers.

Its seamless three-step service enables prospective customers to open an account at their convenience, anytime and anywhere, using just the Muzn App. Through this innovation, Muzn is simplifying the account opening process making it faster,



easier, and more accessible. Salima al Marzooqi, Assistant General Manager & Chief Islamic

Banking Officer at NBO, said: "We are thrilled to offer our customers not just simplicity and efficiency, but also excitement through our enhanced digital onboarding journey.

This new service underscores our dedication to customer convenience, enabling them to open accounts effortlessly, anywhere and at any time.

We combine advanced technology with excellent customer service to ensure our clients have a smooth banking experience."

## EMEA Finance recognises Bank Muscat's leadership in private banking in Oman

MUSCAT: As a culmination of its excellence in providing the best private banking services, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, won the Best Private Bank in Oman from EMEA Finance, in recognition of the bank's innovative banking solutions in wealth management and achieving the aspirations of high-net-worth customers.

Being one of the most important awards in the banking sector in the Middle East, the EMEA Finance Awards honour banking institutions based on their financial performance, service quality standards, and excellence in the sector.

They are based on key criteria in the selection process for the best banks, encompassing the growth of the bank's products in the market, innovation in products and services, as well as the quality of business strategy.

On the occasion, Abdulnasir Nal Raisi, General Manager — Personal Banking, Bank Muscat,



said: "We are delighted to receive this award from EMEA Finance, affirming Bank Muscat's leadership in offering exceptional banking services to private banking customers. We focus on delivering innovative digital solutions and effective wealth management options from investment solutions to wealth structuring and consulting.

We extend our gratitude to all our customers for their trust in our products and services, and we remain committed to continually enhancing our offerings to serve them better."

Bank Muscat offers Private Banking customers a complete suite of investment options in global asset classes through its wealth management platform and tie-ups with international counter parties. The solutions offered include stocks, bonds, exchange-traded funds (ETFs) and mutual funds across global markets.

Bank Muscat Private Banking also offers selective exposure to private equity funds, real estate funds and commodity ETFs; offshore Banking and portfolio management through globally reputed counterparties.

## Gree unveils revolutionary G-boost inverter compressor AC in Oman



MUSCAT: Gree Electric Appliances Inc, a global leader in air conditioning systems, with Genetco LLC, the distributor in Sultanate of Oman, is proud to announce the launch of its latest innovation, the G-boost inverter compressor split air conditioner.

This cutting-edge technology promises to deliver superior energy efficiency, uniform cooling, enhanced comfort, and environmental sustainability, marking a significant shift from traditional reciprocating compressor models.

Gree has long been synonymous with quality and reliability in the air conditioning industry, holding the number one market share in Oman with its robust reciprocating compressor split air conditioners. The new G-boost Inverter technology is set to revolutionise the market by offering numerous advantages over conventional systems.

Key features and benefits of the G-boost Inverter include its energy efficiency, which adjusts the compressor speed to maintain the desired temperature, significantly reducing energy consumption and lowering electricity bills for consumers.

It provides consistent comfort with precise temperature control, unlike traditional compressors that operate at fixed speeds, ensuring comfort without fluctuations.

The G-boost Inverter is also eco-friendly, with superior energy efficiency that reduces the carbon footprint, supporting our commitment to environmental sustainability.

Additionally, it offers smart control compatibility with smart home systems, allowing users to control their air conditioning remotely for added convenience.

During the launch of the G Boost series, Dr Muthanna, Acting CEO and Board Adviser, stated, "We are thrilled to introduce the G-boost inverter compressor split air conditioner to the Oman market.

This innovation reflects our commitment to providing advanced, eco-friendly solutions that meet the evolving needs of our customers."



# R&D company unveils first Omani-made drone

**JOMAR MENDOZA**

MUSCAT, JUNE 2

An Omani research and development company, Star Drones, has announced the launch of the nation's first locally-made drone, named "TARIQ" during the COMEX 2024.

This innovation is not only a testament to Omani engineering prowess but also a significant step towards achieving the goals outlined in Oman's Vision 2040. Saeed Abdul Ghafoor, CEO of Star Drones, shared his excitement in an interview with *Oman Observer*.

"Star Drones, at its core, is an R&D company. We do lots of scientific research and development. And the outer shell of that is the AI, or artificial intelligence," he stated.

"Today, we are presenting the first Omani drone that's been made in Oman by Omani hands, designed in Oman, using Omani materials."

The pride in local craftsmanship and resources was evident as he

highlighted the use of Omani algae to create the mold for the drone's outer shell, in collaboration with Plamore, an innovative startup focused on producing 3D printing filaments from algae.

The "TARIQ" drone stands out as a modular system that promises to revolutionise various industries with its versatility. From agriculture to industrial inspections, the potential applications are vast.

The modular design allows for easy customisation and upgrades, significantly reducing electronic waste by enabling the replacement of individual components rather than the entire drone.

This sustainable approach is aligned with Oman's Vision 2040, which emphasises economic diversification and job creation.

Abdul Ghafoor emphasised the role of strategic partnerships with local entities such as Sohar University and Intaj Sohar in enhancing the nation's industrial capabilities and fostering innovation.



Saeed Abdul Ghafoor, CEO of Star Drones, explains to HH Dr Kamil bin Fahd bin Mahmood al Said, the Secretary-General of the General Secretariat of the Council of Ministers, the features of "TARIQ" – Oman's first locally-made drone.

"The whole thing has been designed in Oman. It's been designed by Omani engineers, by Omani minds. And it's been programmed in Oman. And we have an amazing AI team that

kind of develops these kinds of technologies," he noted.

Star Drones has also secured pre-approval for manufacturing from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) and will rigorously test

STAR DRONES HAS ALSO SECURED PRE-APPROVAL FOR MANUFACTURING FROM THE CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY (CAA) AND WILL RIGOROUSLY TEST THE DRONE TO ENSURE IT MEETS ISO STANDARDS IN COOPERATION WITH THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE, INDUSTRY, AND INVESTMENT PROMOTION.

the drone to ensure it meets ISO standards in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion. This meticulous approach underscores the company's commitment to maintaining high standards of innovation and quality.

"The market potential for drones is robust, with strong demand in the Middle East in sectors like agriculture, logistics, and surveillance," Abdul Ghafoor said, outlining the financial projections which indicate expected profitability within three years.

This optimistic forecast is supported by competitive pricing and scalable production processes. Star Drones has ambitious plans to build a drone factory in Oman, focusing on the production of commercial drones.

This initiative aims to bolster the local economy and solidify Oman's position as a hub for advanced drone technology.

"Strategic partnerships and ongoing research collaborations will facilitate this expansion, ensuring that the drone meets diverse market needs while maintaining high standards of innovation and quality," Abdul Ghafoor added.

The "TARIQ" project is a clear embodiment of Oman's Vision 2040, driving economic diversification and creating high-tech job opportunities. By leveraging local resources and talent, Star Drones is not only pioneering in drone technology but also contributing to the national agenda of economic growth and sustainability.

## Sohar Port and Free Zone signs land lease pact for \$11 million investment projects



Representatives of Sohar Port and Freezone and MAK Sohar Chemical Industries (FZC) LLC sign the land lease agreement.

**BUSINESS REPORTER**

MUSCAT, JUNE 2

Sohar Port and Freezone has signed a land lease agreement with MAK Sohar Chemical Industries (FZC) LLC for two projects covering 5.8 hectares of land representing a substantial \$11 million investment in SOHAR Freezone. The first project involves establishing a production facility for engineering polymers, thermoplastic elastomers (TPE), thermoplastic olefins (TPO), special masterbatches, and compounds, with an advanced urea inhibition unit featuring specific coating and packaging capabilities.

The manufacturing facility will source raw materials locally from Oman (OQ Ladayn Park), regionally and Europe to produce TPE, TPS, and various compounds for domestical and international markets in North America, Europe, Africa and Asia, with an annual production capacity of 25,000 tonnes.

Additionally, the facility will produce advanced urea inhibition coatings tailored for European markets, packaged in 25, 50, and 1,000 kg bags. The project will utilise feedstock such as granular urea, Prilled urea, monoammonium phosphate (MAP), diammonium phosphate (DAP), and N-(n-butyl) thiophosphoric triamide (NBPT) from local and regional markets.

The finished products, including granular urea with inhibitor and MAP/DAP will target markets in Europe and Africa.

These projects are set to utilise modern technology and enhance innovation, leveraging German expertise to enhance supply chain efficiency and meet growing market demand, thereby creating substantial added value in the global chemicals market for home appliances, automotive industry, medical equipment and water supply infrastructure.

Commenting on this signing, Jens Frickel, Sales Manager at MAK Germany, said: "We are thrilled to embark on these projects with SOHAR Freezone.

MAK Sohar Chemical Industries has agreed with OQ- Ladayn Park for the feedstock to convert raw and pure olefins into advanced engineering compounds and polymers. As an Omani entity in SOHAR Freezone, our aim is to become one of the key players in the global market for TPO and TPE polymers and downstream olefins industries.

He added: "Establishing our modern plant in SOHAR Freezone, utilising German technology and cutting-edge know-how, marks a significant milestone for our company. These initiatives will enhance our operational capabilities and strengthen our position in the global chemicals market.

We look forward to leveraging SOHAR Freezone's strategic advantages to meet the increasing demand for high-quality chemical products in the Middle East, Europe, India, China and beyond."

From his side, Omar bin Mahmood al Mahrizi, CEO of SOHAR Freezone and Deputy CEO of SOHAR Port, said: "These projects mark a significant advancement in the chemicals sector at SOHAR Port and Freezone, enhancing our capabilities and contributing to the global market.

Leveraging advanced technology and expertise, we aim to meet market demands, and explore transformative projects for economic diversification. We are committed to fostering a supportive environment for business and innovation, enhancing international cooperation and sustainable investments to strengthen our competitive edge and achieve sustainable growth in advanced polymer and chemical industries."

**BUSINESS REPORTER**

MUSCAT, JUNE 2

The Muscat Chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), which operates under the sponsorship of the College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS), conducted its 16th Annual General Meeting last week.

The event featured a talk by well-known CA, Ram Krishnamani who spoke on 'Connecting the dots — Bharatanatyam in Auditing, Finance and Accounting'. The outgoing Chairperson, Jim Joseph, then presented the annual report and highlighted various activities of the Chapter over the past year. Notable achievements include: Oman-India investor meet, CFO programme, and the International Conference.

As part of the AGM, the following members were elected to the Management Committee



New office-members of ICAI Muscat.

for 2024 – 2027: Gaurav Kapoor, Unmesh Bhome, Sangeetha Sureshkumar, Badri Narayan Subudhi, Ashish Subhedar, Abhishek R Vaishya, Jay Duseja and Ajil James Kurian.

Elected as the new office bearers for 2024 – 2025 are: Gaurav Kapoor (Chairperson), Unmesh Bhome (Vice-Chairperson), Sangeetha Sureshkumar (Secretary) and Badri

Narayan Subudhi (Treasurer).

"The new team is fully committed to continue the rich legacy of past leaders of the Chapter and assure that the activities of the Chapter will be more dynamic, unique, vibrant, content driven and towards the professional development and well-being of the members and the wider community," said Gaurav Kapoor, the newly elected Chairman.

ICAI-Muscat Chapter was set up in 2008 under a MoU between the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI), New Delhi and The College of Banking and Financial Studies (CBFS), Sultanate of Oman. It has the primary objective of providing Continuing Professional Education (CPE) to the members of the ICAI and Omani finance professionals.

The chapter has over 400 members and in addition to Muscat, also coordinates its activities in Salalah and Sohar through its sub-committees.

## Manah 1 Solar Power project set to enter key construction phase

**CONRAD PRABHU**

MUSCAT, JUNE 2

Solar PV modules have begun arriving at the site of Oman's newest utility-scale renewable energy project – a 500 MW capacity scheme under construction in the Wilayat of Manah in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate.

More than 1 million PV modules are envisaged for installation over the next several months as part of the Manah I Solar project being developed by Wadi Noor Solar Power Company.

"These are bifacial modules capable of generating power from top and bottom faces of the modules," said Eng Yahya al Rawahi, CEO – Wadi Noor Solar Power Company SAOC.

"There are 2 bin class capacities for Manah-1 project: 585W and 590W modules. The PV modules will be mounted on single axis trackers to maximise power generation throughout the day," Eng Al Rawahi told the *Observer*.

Wadi Noor Solar Power Company SAOC represents the



**There are 2 bin class capacities for Manah-1 project: 585W and 590W modules. The PV modules will be mounted on single axis trackers to maximise power generation throughout the day**

**ENG YAHYA AL RAWAHI**

CEO, Wadi Noor Solar Power

consortium of leading French developer EDF Renewables and Korea Western Power Co Ltd (KOWEPO) which was awarded the Omani government's mandate to implement Manah-I Solar PV scheme as an Independent Power Project (IPP).

Chinese EPC contractor Shanghai Electric Company is undertaking the construction of Manah-I Solar IPP through its local subsidiary Shanghai Electric Muscat Ltd SPC.

The PV modules for the project are being supplied by JA Solar, a leading Chinese manufacturer of high-performance photovoltaic products. Featured among Fortune China's Top 500 companies, JA Solar has shipped PV modules to markets around the world aggregating over 166 GW in capacity as of Q3 2023.

According to Eng Al Rawahi, a 7.8 km2 site is currently being prepped for the installation of the PV modules.

Piles and supporting structures are being set into place in preparation for the start of installation of the modules, slated

to commence next month.

When eventually brought into operation, the movement of the PV modules will be guided by fully automated single axis trackers, he said, adding that module cleaning will be undertaken by automatic cleaning robots.

Renewable electricity generated by the plant will be despatched to the grid through 400kV HV cables to the local 400kV grid station of Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC).

While much of the hardware for the project has to be procured from overseas sources, Wadi Noor Solar is making every effort to patronise locally available goods and services where possible, said Eng Al Rawahi.

"The project is targeting a minimum of 20% in-country value (ICV) during the EPC phase by sourcing locally manufactured items, employing local workforce and deploying local subcontractors and service providers," he added. Manah I Solar Power is expected to start commercial operation in the first quarter of 2025.

# Rising global demand for cybersecurity professionals



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The author is a national-level award winning outstanding woman educator and scholar in strategic management. She is a member of Knowledge Oman, a leading knowledge-sharing voluntary organisation.

In the era of digitalisation, data is king. The interconnection of our personal and professional lives with digital spaces exposes us to numerous risks, creating exploitable vulnerabilities. Organisations, particularly those witnessing a significant surge in breaches, have found their ability to defend against escalating cyber threats hindered by the

cybersecurity talent shortage. This steep increase in successful cyberattacks, which can result in data breaches, financial losses and reputational damage, underscores the growing impact of the cybersecurity talent shortage on organisations' ability to operate securely. In this context, the digital warrior or defender, commonly known as the cybersecurity professional, emerges as the hero, playing a pivotal and irreplaceable role in safeguarding our digital spaces. There is a pressing global shortage of nearly 4 million cybersecurity professionals, with the Asia Pacific region accounting for most of the gap. Research states that the need for cybersecurity professionals will exponentially increase in the coming years. This escalating demand is fueled by increasing technological reliance and a dynamic cyber threat landscape. Asia Pacific needs 2.5 million cybersecurity professionals; North America faces a workforce skill gap of almost 522,000 people.

In Africa, with a population of 1.4 billion, the number of cybersecurity professionals is only 20,000. The ubiquity of cyber threats in 2022 has intensified cybersecurity challenges globally in all sectors, from manufacturing and financial services to energy, business services and healthcare. Regardless of their size or industry, all organisations are at risk of severe consequences due to the shortage of cybersecurity professionals. This alarming shortage should raise concern and awareness about the importance of cybersecurity. Cybersecurity professionals, often unsung heroes of our digital age, tirelessly protect our digital information and infrastructure from the relentless onslaught of cyberattacks. They are the guardians of our digital spaces, responsible for securing networks, devices and systems against unauthorised access, malware, and other threats. Their tasks include implementing firewalls and encryption to fortify systems

and data, preventing hackers and data breaches, and monitoring systems for suspicious activity or unauthorised access to sensitive information. While a deep understanding of programming is not a prerequisite, a technical background is beneficial. To excel in this profession, one must possess a keen eye for detail, critical thinking skills, curiosity, practical communication and collaboration abilities. A solid understanding of network security, data protection and risk management is also crucial. Certified Information Systems Security Professional (CISSP) or Certified Ethical Hacker (CEH) can enhance credibility and career prospects. There are millions of unfilled cybersecurity positions globally, leaving organisations vulnerable. The critical gap in cybersecurity professionals is due to the ever-evolving cyber threat landscape and a need for more awareness about cybersecurity careers. Despite a growing workforce,

the demand for skilled professionals outpace supply. Organisational leaders play a crucial role in addressing this issue. They must communicate that cybersecurity is a top priority for IT departments and the organisation. Create a comprehensive cybersecurity plan that outlines your organisation's risk profile, identifies critical assets and outlines prevention, detection and response strategies. Investment in training and reskilling programmes is required to develop a robust internal cybersecurity team, and organisations can consider partnering with educational institutions to promote cybersecurity education. The global shortage of trained cyber professionals is expected to escalate despite new professionals entering this field in the coming years. The cybercrime landscape constantly changes, demanding new skills and expertise. It presents a promising future, with the demand for certified skilled professionals steadily progressing.

Governments have a crucial role to play in addressing this issue. They must invest in cybersecurity education and training programmes, promote cybersecurity careers and create a supportive regulatory environment. Educational institutions are also responsible for equipping students with the skills and knowledge needed for a cybersecurity career through academic programmes and practical training opportunities. This field is ripe with career opportunities and the potential to impact the digital world significantly. By joining the ranks of cybersecurity professionals, individuals can be part of a global effort to secure the digital future. Cybersecurity skills and expertise are in high demand and have the potential to shape the future, making a real difference in the safety and security of digital spaces. This potential for growth and impact should inspire and motivate individuals to consider a career in cybersecurity.

# Brighter future for Oman: Harnessing innovation in manufacturing

A country rich in natural resources and rich in heritage, the Sultanate of Oman is about to embark on a voyage that will change its course. A comprehensive plan aimed at guiding the country towards a future of innovation, diversity and economic resilience is the Industrial Strategy 2040, which is at the centre of this transition. This plan is more than just a technical document; it represents a progressive and hopeful vision, highlighting Oman's unwavering commitment to prosperity and sustainable development. Imagine a day when Omani creativity would be a major player in the international economy! Motivated by the vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, the Industrial Strategy 2040 acknowledges the enormous potential of a thriving manufacturing industry. Similar to how Oman's growth has been mostly dependent on the oil and gas sector, a strong manufacturing sector can be essential to building a stable and diverse economy.

**Oman's industrial rebirth is guided by five key aspirations that form the foundation of the strategy:**  
**Fanning the flame of innovation:** The goal of the plan is to foster a creative spirit in the industrial industry. This involves adopting cutting-edge technologies and encouraging an exploratory mindset, in addition to making small, gradual changes. By doing this, Oman may create goods that defy expectations and position the country as a centre for innovation.  
**Accepting what's to come:** The strategy highlights the significance of incorporating cutting-edge technologies into



QASIM AL MAASHANI

The author is the head of Oman Observer's Business section

**OVERARCHING GOAL:** THE INDUSTRIAL STRATEGY 2040 SETS A VISIONARY ROADMAP FOR OMAN'S TRANSITION TO A DIVERSE, RESILIENT ECONOMY DRIVEN BY CUTTING-EDGE TECHNOLOGIES AND A THRIVING MANUFACTURING SECTOR



Robotics engineer working on maintenance of modern robotic arm in factory warehouse. Image for illustration only.

every facet of production in an era where manufacturing is changing quickly. Omani manufacturers will be able to stay ahead of global trends and establish themselves as industry leaders by implementing automation, artificial intelligence, and other improvements from design to delivery. **Creating a healthier future:** The approach puts the needs of people before business interests, promoting the creation of goods that greatly improve the quality of life for Omani nationals. This covers concrete improvements in healthcare, connectedness-promoting infrastructure initiatives, and environmentally friendly, sustainable solutions. **Vibrant tapestry of sectors:** The manufacturing sector in Oman has always been specialised. By adding sophisticated, technologically advanced activities, the approach aims to diversify this environment. The economy will be more

flexible and less susceptible to changes in any one industry with a more diverse industrial base. Envision Omani enterprises leading the way not only in conventional products, but also in emerging industries like advanced medical technology and renewable energy. **Exploring uncharted territory:** The plan encourages Omani producers to aim for global markets, even as it promotes domestic prosperity. Omani exporters are able to compete and prosper globally by emphasising quality and innovation. Imagine seeing Omani-made goods on store shelves all across the world, serving as a testament to the creativity and skill of the country. In order to ensure efficient administration, it entails establishing clear norms and simplifying procedures. This approach will be implemented effectively and produce measurable results, much like a well-oiled machine. **Adapting the terrain to the times:** This programme encourages the employment of greener technologies and more productive production methods, with the goal of revolutionising current industries. Manufacturers in Oman can improve operating efficiency and strengthen their environmental credentials by modernising the industrial landscape. **Engaging the future generation:** This programme strives to establish a supportive environment for new Omani enterprises, especially those specialising in cutting-edge technology, in recognition of the fact that innovation feeds on a lively entrepreneurial spirit. This programme helps transform audacious ideas into commercial realities by giving them the tools and assistance they need. **Working together to achieve growth:** In an effort to promote cooperation in particular industries and draw in foreign investment, this programme emphasises the value of partnerships. It seeks to forge a potent interplay between global know-how and Omani inventiveness by positioning Oman as a regional centre for innovation. **An appeal for action:** The Industrial Strategy 2040 is an appeal to action for all Omani citizens, not merely a blueprint. It conceives of a team effort in which workers embrace new abilities, researchers push the frontiers of science, entrepreneurs bring ideas to life, and students are motivated by the vision. By working together, we can turn Oman's manufacturing industry into a global leader, enhancing lives, generating jobs and ensuring future generations have a better future.

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

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

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# art & life

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## Back in 'Amazing Oman'

Both canyons feature numerous waterfalls ideal for abseiling, with the highest in 'The Ogre Canyon' standing at around 60 metres... P20

## Scanning the Dark Universe, Euclid Finds Scenes of Cosmic Light

**EUCLID, A EUROPEAN** Space Agency telescope launched into space last summer, finally showed off what it's capable of with a batch of breathtaking images and early science results released on Thursday. The telescope will help astronomers make sense of two of the universe's greatest mysteries: dark matter, the invisible glue clumping galaxies together, and dark energy, the force pushing them apart. "Before trying to understand what it is, you have to understand how it behaves," said Jean-Charles Cuillandre, an astronomer at CEA Paris-Saclay, referring to dark matter. The mysterious substance bends and distorts light, an

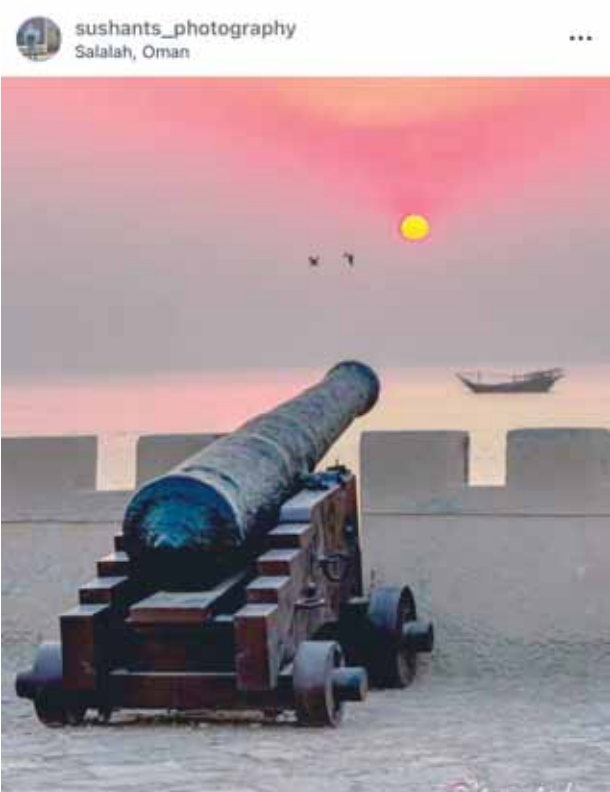
effect known as gravitational lensing. In extreme cases, lensing causes galaxies to seem warped, and can even produce mirror images of a single source. Euclid caught this effect while peering at Abell 2390, a cluster of galaxies located 2.7 billion light-years away. Ninety per cent of the mass in this cluster is dark matter. Gravity makes dark matter clump together, but dark energy counteracts this effect. Studying the density of dark matter across the cosmos will help astronomers learn how dark energy influences the structure of our universe. Euclid's specialty lies in being able to capture wide swaths of sky with impressive

detail. Galaxies that appear near bright stars like Beta Phoenixis might be impossible for some observatories on Earth to see, but Euclid's sharp eyes are able to resolve them. The telescope's sensors make it like a net for light, Cuillandre said. "It captures everything." In a series of papers, the Euclid team also shared discoveries of new dwarf galaxies, star clusters and free-floating planets. Astronomers say these show how the mission can reach beyond its core goals. "We call it legacy science, the things that Euclid can also do," said Michael Seiffert, a cosmologist working on the mission from Nasa's Jet Propulsion Laboratory. The telescope snapped two galaxies grazing each other 62 million light-years away, resulting in diffuse edges and tails. Interactions like it are common. "It's very rare to find an isolated galaxy," Cuillandre said. "That's what we're finding out." Euclid also took a picture of the spiral galaxy NGC 6744, 30

million light-years from Earth. Interstellar gas and dust coalesce in the rotation of a spiral galaxy, promoting star formation along its arms. Each blue grain in the image is a hot, massive baby star. A neighbouring dwarf galaxy ripped off one of NGC 6744's arms. Galaxies have scars too, according to Cuillandre. "They keep a trace of what has happened" over billion-year time frames, he said. Messier 78, a stellar nursery, was another object the telescope focused on. With its near-infrared vision, it can peer past clouds of gas and dust to reveal the bright blue infant stars hiding within. The stars spit up protons and neutrons, shaping surrounding dust and other material, not unlike how wind on Earth sculpts our clouds. Eventually, cavities form around these stars, freeing their light to shine across the universe. The latest images come from only a day's worth of observation. "We're really just getting started," Seiffert said. — NYT



## INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



# Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles Plans an Upgrade

**IN A STATEMENT** OF its commitment to artists and to downtown, the Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles is planning to buy the East Seventh Street building it occupies and improve it with a cafe, outdoor space and studios for a new artists-in-residence programme.

"I want to make sure that this institution is here for generations to come," Anne Ellegood, the museum's director, said in a recent interview, "making sure it's sustainable."

Since the institution moved from the west side — where it was called the Santa Monica Museum of Art — and rebranded itself with a new name in the downtown Arts District in 2017, Ellegood said, its location has become integral to its identity. "It's literally a neighbourhood named for artists, which is increasingly a neighbourhood where artists are not present and can't afford to be here," she said.

"How can we find ways to bring them back in?" she added. "In Los Angeles, studio spaces are becoming less affordable."

The building's \$5 million purchase price has been largely covered by a \$4.4 million naming gift from the Mohn Family Trust, to be announced on Saturday at the museum's spring benefit. (The building will be called the Mohn Family Building.)

Founded in 1988, the institute has established a loyal following as a place to see emerging and unrecognised artists. The museum was in the vanguard of presenting artists of colour; Pope.L had his first solo West Coast museum exhibition there and Mickalene Thomas' first solo exhibition in a US museum opened at the institute and subsequent-

ly travelled to the Brooklyn Museum.

In 2017, the museum moved to a former manufacturing building in downtown Los Angeles, and in 2019, Ellegood took over for longtime director Elsa Longhauser.

Given the scope of some museum building projects, this one is modest — \$5 million, with an overall fundraising campaign of about \$12 million (more than \$7 million has been raised so far). The Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles has an annual operating budget of \$3.5 million, no endowment and a full-time staff of 12.

But the effort is significant for an institution of its size. "We aren't doing a \$100 million expansion of our building," Ellegood said, referring to the nearby Broad museum's recent announcement. "But we're doing a campaign with certain kinds of growth for our institution that are just as meaningful."

Artists have come to appreciate this museum's role in the city's cultural ecosystem. The Institute is "often first on the ground in terms of trends or interests," said artist Charles Gaines, who serves on the board. "The big institutions can't be as nimble."

The institute is one of several notable smaller arts organisations centring artists in Los Angeles; others include Art+Practice, started by artist Mark Bradford, and LAXART, which is changing its name to the Brick and will open a new space in Melrose Hill on June 16.

"Buying the building is the most important thing you can do in terms of permanence," said artist Rebecca Morris, who had a survey show there in 2022. "You're building your house where artists live."



The new residency programme will initially focus on Los Angeles-based artists, and Ellegood said she hopes to eventually add more studios and include national and international artists.

At the back of the building, developer AvalonBay Communities created the artist studios; a landscaped pedestrian-only paseo (walkway) that can be used for outdoor programming, performances and events; and a plaza for the museum that will contain its new north entrance through a 450-square-foot pavilion.

"How do we make this more inviting and create a sense of access," said artist Andrea Fraser, a trustee, "so you're not just coming to see shows or go to a specific programme, but it's a community space."

Parking has always been a challenge for the museum, given that it has only eight spaces. Under the renovation plan, the museum is transforming its small parking lot into a gathering area with seating for the cafe and will encourage visitors to park at a nearby public garage on Industrial Street, which has about 160 spaces.

The cafe, which is planned for the Seventh Street side of the building, will feature a residency programme for emerging chefs that will allow them to try out menus and collaborate with artists.

Ellegood said the building project represents the museum's progress and its future goals. "It's a real signal that we are committed to this neighbourhood," she said, "and that we're not going anywhere." — **NYT**

## INSECT

# Rare Blue-eyed Cicada Insect Sighted in Chicago, USA

**A RARE BLUE-EYED** Cicada insect was sighted in the Morton Arboretum's

Children's Garden in Illinois, the United States of America.

Few saw the cicada at the arboretum before its release back into suburban Chicago to join its red-eyed relatives.

The common look of cicadas is having red eyes, which makes the insect observed in the arboretum a rare sighting.

Periodical cicadas emerge every 13 or 17 years. Only the 17-year brood is beginning to show so far in spots as far north in Illinois as Lisle, where three different species are digging out of the ground, attaching to trees, shedding their exoskeleton and putting on a show, the Associated Press reported. — **ONA**





TRAVEL

# Back in ‘Amazing Oman’

KHALED ABDUL MALAK

Last April, my French friend Pierre Petit returned to Oman for the first time in seven years since attending the launch of my film ‘Adventure has an Address, Oman’.

Between 2016 and 2017, Pierre made four trips from France to Muscat with his crew to complete the filming at all the chosen sites. This time, he brought his son Solal to share the beauty of amazing Oman.

We were fortunate to have beautiful weather following a couple of weeks of rain. The wadis were brimming with crystal-clear waters, and the waterfalls were flowing abundantly. For our first excursion, we decided to visit Wadi Bani Awf, cross Wadi Hat, and explore ‘The Ogre Canyon.’ Six years ago, along with a team of French canyoneers, we had pioneered these magnificent wadis.

Both canyons feature numerous waterfalls ideal for abseiling, with the highest in ‘The Ogre Canyon’ standing at around 60 metres. On the first day, we explored Wadi Hat, which begins at the village of Hat and ends in the village of Al Hajir. This was my seventh visit to Wadi Hat, and I had never seen it with so much water. All the waterfalls were flowing profusely, making the swimming in the crystal-clear waters and ponds a great joy. Our trip through the wadi took about three hours.

We then climbed back to our car and spent the night camping. The weather was superb, and a bright moon illuminated our campsite. For dinner, we enjoyed ‘Kefta’, a type of Lebanese burger prepared by my ‘cordon bleu chef’ Marta, my wife.

The next day, after an early breakfast, we packed up our tents and crossed ‘The Ogre Canyon,’ which features magnificent high waterfalls and superb tufa formations. It took us about three hours to complete our adventurous trip. We then drove through Jabal Hat back to Muscat, stopping briefly at Sharaf Aalamein for a short photo session overlooking the villages of Bilad Sayt and Hat.

After a comfortable night at home, we set off for Wadi Halhal, a tributary of Wadi Bani Kharus, aiming to cross Wadi al Jamal, another exceptional canyon. Starting from the village of Al Hajir, we followed a trail up the mountain to Al Suweib, a hamlet where I had met Salem bin Mohammed, whom I dubbed “my lonely old friend,” as he had been living alone for 35 years.

On our way, we stopped at Hosn al Furs, a majestic citadel built on a mountain overlooking two dramatic canyons. After a short break, we continued up the mountain to begin our canyoning journey by abseiling down several drops in a tributary of Wadi al Jamal.

Upon reaching the main canyon, we hiked



upstream to enjoy a snack at the base of a sublime 50-metre tufa waterfall with a crystal-clear pool. The water flow was more robust than I had ever seen, likely due to recent heavy rains. After our light lunch, we began our descent through the canyon. The strong water flow had even dislodged an anchor I had fixed 10 years ago, requiring me to use a natural anchor to progress.

We reached our car by mid-afternoon and drove home for the night.

For the next four days, I planned more adventure trips for my visitors in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate. “The landscapes of the mountains are as beautiful as those of the sea. I am very happy to have visited the wadis filled with so much water,” exclaimed Solal when asked about his first impression of the Sultanate.

“Khaled told me it was exceptional because of the heavy rains Oman received recently, which made the trip even more incredible,” he added. “Oman is truly the best place for canyoning. I have never seen such impressive wadis, so many of them, and the fact that they are all so different makes this place magical for this outdoor activity.”