

HM, Shaikh Mishal review fraternal ties

HIS MAJESTY AND EMIR OF KUWAIT HOLD OFFICIAL TALKS



EMIR OF KUWAIT LEADS THE WELCOMING PARTY FOR HIS MAJESTY

HM, EMIR OF KUWAIT REVIEW DEEP-ROOTED RELATIONS

EXPLORE MEANS OF PROMOTING AREAS OF COOPERATION

REVIEW OF PARTNERSHIPS TO SERVE BOTH THE PEOPLES

LEADERS EXCHANGE VIEWS ON REGIONAL, WORLD ISSUES

KUWAIT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, held an official session of talks at Bayan Palace in the capital, Kuwait City on Monday. At the outset of the session, the Emir of Kuwait reiterated his welcome to His Majesty the Sultan, being an eminent guest of the State of Kuwait, wishing His Majesty and his accompanying delegation a pleasant stay.

On his turn, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his utmost thanks and appreciation to the Emir for the warm welcome and hospitality.

The session reviewed the deep-rooted and fraternal relations binding the two countries and their peoples, as these relations enjoy constant support and attention of the two wise leaderships.

The two leaders explored means of promoting areas of the existing cooperation and partnership in a

manner that serves the Omani and Kuwaiti peoples.

The two sides also exchanged views on a set of regional and international issues.

The official session of talks was attended from the Omani side by HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Dr Hamad bin Said al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, Abdussalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and Dr Saleh bin Amir al Kharousi, Ambassador of the Sultanate

of Oman to the State of Kuwait.

Meanwhile, it was attended from the Kuwaiti side by Shaikh Sabah Khalid Al Hammad al Sabah (Head of the Mission of Honour), Shaikh Ahmed Abdullah Al Ahmad al Sabah, Prime Minister in charge of forming the government, Shaikh Dr Mohammad Sabah Al Salem al Sabah, Prime Minister in charge of handling urgent matters, and Dr Mohammed bin Nassir al Hajri, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the Sultanate of Oman.

Earlier in the day, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik arrived in the State of Kuwait on a two-day state visit.

Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, led the welcoming party for His Majesty the Sultan at the Amiri Airport in Kuwait, as he wished His Majesty and the accompanying delegation a pleasant stay in Kuwait.

Alongside the Emir of Kuwait, His Majesty was also received by Shaikh Ahmed Abdullah Al Ahmad al Sabah, Prime Minister, Shaikh Sabah Khalid Hamad al Sabah (Head of the Mission of Honour), Shaikh Fahad Yousef Saud al Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Defence and Minister of Interior, Shaikh Mohammed Abdullah Al Mubarak Al Sabah, Minister of Amiri Diwan Affairs, Sherida Abdullah Saad al Maousherji, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Council of Ministers Affairs, Imad Mohammad al Atiqi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Oil, Abdullah Ali al Yahya, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Ahmad Fahad al Fahad, Under-Secretary of the Amiri Diwan, Dr Mohammed Nassir al Hajri, Ambassador of the State of Kuwait to the Sultanate of Oman, senior Kuwaiti officials and members of the Omani Embassy in Kuwait. [TURN TO P2](#)

**KUWAIT
EMIR HOSTS
DINNER**

In honour of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, hosted an official dinner at Bayan Palace, marking His Majesty's visit to Kuwait. The dinner was attended by members of the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan, as well as some Kuwaiti shaikhs and senior officials.



Oman, Kuwait sign 4 MoUs

KUWAIT: The Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait signed at the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry four memorandums of understanding (MoUs) in the fields of direct investment, metrology activities, diplomatic studies and training, as well as another MoU between the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and the Kuwait Investment Authority.

Signing the MoUs comes within the framework of the current state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the State of Kuwait.

These MoUs represented in the MoU between the Foreign Ministry and its Kuwaiti counterpart in the fields of diplomatic studies and training. This MoU

aims at cooperation, development and proposing modern methods for training specialists in the fields of foreign policy, international relations, political science and other related fields, in addition to exchanging documents, studies and experiences on topics of mutual interest.

In the areas of direct investment and standardisation, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion signed two MoUs; the first with the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, and related to establishing a framework for cooperation in the field of direct investment and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experiences between them. **DETAILS ON P4**



HIS MAJESTY, SHAIKH MISHAL REVIEW FRATERNAL TIES



Kuwait Emir hosts dinner in honour of His Majesty



In honour of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, hosted an official dinner at Bayan Palace, marking His Majesty's visit to Kuwait. – ONA

HM gives audience to Kuwaiti PM

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq gave an audience at his residency in the capital, Kuwait City, on Monday to Shaikh Ahmed Abdullah Al Ahmad al Sabah, Prime Minister of the State of Kuwait. During the audience,

the two sides exchanged cordial conversations and stressed the fraternal and historical relations binding Oman and Kuwait in various areas. The audience was attended from the Omani side by HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham

al Said. Meanwhile, it was attended from the Kuwaiti side by Shaikh Sabah Khalid Hamad al Sabah (Head of the Mission of Honour) and Dr Mohammed bin Nassir al Hajri, Ambassador of Kuwait to Oman. — ONA



FROM P1

Official reception protocols were conducted for His Majesty the Sultan upon his arrival. When the Royal airplane (Nizwa) entered the airspace of the State of Kuwait, it was escorted by a fleet of Kuwaiti Air Force until its landing at the Amiri Airport.

There, the Emir of Kuwait received His Majesty the Sultan. Passing between rows of guard of honour, the two leaders headed to the Dais of Honour at the Amiri Hall, where the Omani Royal Anthem was played, followed by the Kuwaiti National Anthem.

After that, His Majesty the Sultan inspected the Guard of Honour, which gave the salute to His Majesty. Then, His Majesty the Sultan shook hands with senior members of the Kuwaiti welcoming party, while the Emir of the State of Kuwait shook hands with the members of the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan, welcoming them and wishing them a pleasant stay.

Then, His Majesty the Sultan, accompanied by the Emir of Kuwait, boarded the motorcade that took His Majesty over to his residence at Bayan Palace in the capital, Kuwait City.

As the motorcade of the two leaders left the Amiri Airport's gate, it was flanked by a group of motorcycles. A group of children lined the sides of the road, waving the Omani and Kuwaiti flags in an emotional manifestation of amity and fraternity, while helicopters carrying the flags of the two countries hovered over the sky of the ceremony.

Upon the arrival of the motorcade carrying the two leaders at Bayan Palace, the artillery fired a 21-gun salute to His Majesty the Sultan, while a group of cavalymen surrounded the parade.

After that, a group of Kuwaiti folklore bands performed the art of the Ardha, chanted songs and poetic verses and rejoiced over the auspicious arrival of His Majesty the Sultan.

During the visit, His Majesty the Sultan is accompanied by a high-ranking official delegation comprising HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tariq al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Nuamani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal al Busaidy, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Dr Hamad bin Said al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, Abdussalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and Dr Saleh bin Amir al Kharousi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the State of Kuwait.

— ONA



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HIS MAJESTY ARRIVES IN KUWAIT



KUWAIT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq arrived in the State of Kuwait on Monday on a two-day state visit. Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait led the welcoming party for His Majesty the Sultan at the Amiri Airport in Kuwait, wishing His Majesty and his accompanying delegation a pleasant stay in Kuwait. – **ONA**





OMAN, KUWAIT SIGN 4 MOUS IN VARIOUS FIELDS

KUWAIT: The Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait signed at the Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Monday 4 memorandums of understanding (MoUs) in the fields of direct investment, metrology activities, diplomatic studies and training, as well as another MoU between the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and the Kuwait Investment Authority.

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These MoUs represented in the MoU between the Foreign Ministry and its Kuwaiti counterpart in the fields of diplomatic studies and training. This MoU aims at cooperation, development and proposing modern methods for training specialists in the fields of foreign policy, international relations, political science and other related fields, in addition to exchanging documents, studies and experiences on topics of mutual interest.

In the areas of direct investment and standardisation, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion signed



Signing the MoUs comes within the framework of the current state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the State of Kuwait. – ONA



two MoUs; the first with the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, and related to establishing a framework for cooperation in the field of direct investment and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and experiences between them. The second MoU inked with the Kuwait

Public Authority for Industry in the field of standardisation. It aims to strengthen cooperation relations between them in the fields of standardisation, quality, laboratories and conformity assessment activities, and to contribute to raising the quality of non-food industrial products and



services exchanged between the two countries. Oman Investment Authority (OIA) also signed a MoU with the Kuwait Investment Authority. This MoU aims to establish a common framework for cooperation and coordination in joint investments between the two parties and to

enter into discussions about future investment opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait, as well as studying investment opportunities in existing investment funds affiliated to the Oman Investment Authority, which are concerned with various fields, such as energy, utilities,

infrastructure, communications, transportation and logistics services, in addition to the possibility establishing a joint investment fund.

The MoUs were signed from the Omani side by Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of the Oman Investment Authority, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Ibtisam bint Ahmed al Faroojiyah, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion, and Dr Saleh bin Amer al Kharousi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the State of Kuwait.

The MoUs were signed from the Kuwaiti side by Dr Mishal Jaber Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Director General of the Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority, Ziad Abdullah al Najem, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, Nasser Subaih al Sabeeh, Assistant Minister of Foreign Affairs for Saud Al Nasser Institute Affairs and Ghanem Suleiman al Ghenaiman, Managing Director of the General Investment Authority in the State of Kuwait.

— ONA

Oman-Kuwait Business Forum explores ways to enhance bilateral cooperation

KUWAIT: The Oman-Kuwait Business and Investment Forum, held at Kuwait Chamber of Commerce and Industry on Monday, discussed ways to enhance existing cooperation between the two countries in various fields. The forum was held on the sidelines of the current “State Visit” made by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the State of Kuwait.

Qais Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said in a speech at the forum that Oman and Kuwait have shared commercial partnerships since old times. He added that the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will help consolidate joint action, expand elements of economic integration to develop a vibrant economy that is capable of interacting with global economies and maintaining sustainability.

Al Yousef added that the two countries’ trade and investment cooperation in priority sectors would contribute to generating employment opportunities and promoting sustainable development in both countries.

“We hope that this forum will open up new vistas of cooperation



The forum will open up new vistas of cooperation and investment in the sectors of logistics, tourism, industry, food security and converting industries. – ONA



Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef



Omar Saud al Omar

and investment in the sectors of logistics, tourism, industry, food security and converting industries,” said Al Yousef, who stressed the importance of joining hands to achieve the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and

Kuwait Plan 2035, notably in the sectors of trade, industry and investment. He pointed out that the agreements and memorandums of understanding signed by the two countries would enable the private sector to realise

further growth and sustainable development.

For his part, Eng Omar Saud al Omar, Kuwaiti Minister of Commerce and Industry, said that the forum would help activate strategic cooperation in the fields of trade and investment. He referred to what he described as “remarkable development in economic relations between the two countries over the past few years”.

Al Omar added that “the forum constitutes an important platform for exchanging visions, ideas and investment opportunities, as well as means to develop joint recommendations and build a better framework for exchanging trade and investments and overcoming challenges that might face Omani firms wishing to enter the Kuwaiti market”.

During the forum, Oman presented two visual displays: the first by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (represented by “Invest Oman” lounge) and the second by Oman Investment Authority. Another presentation was made by Kuwait Direct Investment Promotion Authority (KDIPA). — ONA

MUTUAL VISITS BOLSTER TIES

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Oman and Kuwait share strong ties in all the areas of bilateral relations be it trade, cultural, diplomatic or knowledge exchange, the strong bonds that these two brotherly countries share are historic and trace back to decades ago.

The various high-level visits carried out by both sides have only enhanced and further deepened the relations and the present Royal visit marks another milestone in the historic relations as this takes place after the historic visit by His Highness the Amir Shaikh Meshal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah to Oman in February 2024.

To mark the His Majesty’s visit, two roads have been dedicated to Oman -- Sultan Qaboos street and Muscat Street.

The Seventh Ring Road, one of the main roads in Kuwait was named after the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, according to a Royal decision of His Highness Emir Shaikh Sabah Al Ahmad al Sabah.

“This road was named after Oman’s Sultan Qaboos bin Said in recognition of the efforts made by him in backing the GCC, and the issues of both Arab and Muslim nations,”

said Abdulrahim KP, Kuwaiti resident.

It was renamed after His Majesty as per the decision of the cabinet which advised the Kuwait Municipality to name one of the country’s main roads after the late Sultan Qaboos.

As for Muscat Street, it is located in Farwaniya, on the way to Khaitan and is a prolific road that houses both commercial and residential buildings and day long activities. The street is in honour of Oman’s capital city and is still attracting both residents and visitors to Kuwait.

The bilateral relations between the brotherly nations have gone beyond decades, and the relations between the peoples of both Kuwait and Oman have always been intertwined in familial and commercial relations for several centuries and are marching ahead successfully.



Muscat Street is in honour of Oman’s capital city and is still attracting both residents and visitors to Kuwait

Kuwait media highlights His Majesty’s visit

KUWAIT: The Kuwaiti News Agency, media outlets and newspapers published today devoted large spaces in their editorials and headlines to editorialise the great extent of the welcome to the ongoing state visit by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the brotherly State of Kuwait. The newspaper headlines

and editorials emphasised the historical place the Sultanate of Oman achieved over the past three decades and the bilateral fraternal relations between the governments and peoples of the two brotherly countries which are based on solid foundations of mutual respect, shared destiny and common strategic goals under

the leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his brother Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah.

A news report prepared by the Kuwait News Agency, said that “After the historic visit of Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait to the Sultanate of Oman on

February 6, comes the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the State of Kuwait which confirms the keenness of the leaderships of the two brotherly countries to strengthen their historical relations and consolidate their bonds.

The visit of His Highness the Emir of the State of

Kuwait to Muscat launched a new phase of close relations between the two brotherly countries. During the visit the Emir of Kuwait held talks with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik in a friendly atmosphere that reflected the spirit of brotherhood and the shared desire for more cooperation

and coordination at all levels, it said.

The report touched on the talks between the two brotherly countries, the process of the close fraternal relations binding them as well as the many aspects of bilateral cooperation that support and strengthen these relations. — ONA



‘Leader’s Order’ conferred on HM for serving Arab cause

MUSCAT: At the behest of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received the ‘Leader’s Order’ conferred on His Majesty the Sultan by the Arab Parliament.

The medal is the loftiest honour award conferred on Arab leaders by the Parliament.

The medal was conferred on His Majesty the Sultan in appreciation and gratitude for his outstanding efforts in serving issues of concern to the Arab nation and his continuous endeavours in support for the joint Arab action.

The conferment of the Arab medal took place when HH Sayyid Asaad received Adel Abdulrahman Al Asoomi, Speaker of the Arab Parliament, and his accompanying delegation in Muscat on Monday.

The conferment ceremony was attended by Khalid bin Hilal al Maawali, Chairman of the Majlis AshShura, the Secretary-General and Adviser at HH Sayyid Asaad’s Office and some members of the Arab Parliament. — ONA



The medal is the loftiest honour award conferred on Arab leaders. — ONA

HM GREETES PARAGUAY PRESIDENT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Santiago Peña of the Republic of Paraguay on his country’s National Day.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Peña and the people of Paraguay. — ONA

FOREIGN MINISTER RECEIVES SPEAKER OF ARAB PARLIAMENT



MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidi, Foreign Minister received on Monday Adel Abdulrahman Al Asoomi, Speaker of the Arab Parliament, within the framework of his current visit to the Sultanate of Oman. The guest commended stances of the Sultanate of Oman towards various regional issues, the foremost of which is the Palestinian cause. He also hailed Oman’s efforts in supporting the joint Arab action. The meeting touched on means to develop the Arab parliamentary role in a manner that contributes to backing efforts of solidarity and integrity and achieving the joint Arab goals to serve the supreme interests and confront the challenges facing the region and the world at large. The meeting was attended by members of the Arab Parliament and officials from both sides. — ONA

MOVIE BY OMANI DIRECTOR WINS INTERNATIONAL ACCOLADES

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

After Dr Talib al Balushi made critical acclaim for his role in *The Goat Life*, an Indian movie which swept away the box office in the past fifty days after it’s global launch, an avid film maker, Yousef al Hosni, who acted in Hollywood as well, is

hitting the headlines after his short film *Empty*, fetched several international accolades to Oman. *Empty*, a five-minutes-long movie made by Yousef, is a phylogenetic movie that has in-depth messages in different aspects of life. Yousef has made an attempt to show what’s in his mind and share the world his opinions.



Yousef al Hosni

“*Empty* movie is my directorial debut and it is the way to express myself to the world,” said Al Hosni, adding that *Empty* is all about a person who wants to show his innocence to the society and claims that he was a victim of social anomalies and seeks justice.

Made in Arabic language, the making of the movie took him

more than a month to prepare it and more than 7 hours raw footage to edit. Following, it took another 2 to 3 weeks for post production thus completing it’s edit, re-recording, VFX, and the like before it hit the public screen.

“It doesn’t matter if my main message wasn’t received by the audience, because at the end we all have our own fights and

struggles in life and a movie can demonstrate few things that can be reflected in their lives,” Yousef said.

Empty is produced by Ursula under Medulla Productions. Movie buffs can get a glimpse of the film at the festivals. Currently, *Empty* is on a march winning both regional as well as critical global acclaims.

‘Mubadara’ recognises women projects

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

In a ceremony marked by innovation and community spirit, the Ministry of Social Development and Omantel joined hands to honour the contributions and dedication of Omani women’s associations.

The event marking the conclusion of the fourth edition of the “Mubadara” awards opened under the auspices of Sayyidah Maani bint Abdullah al Busaidiyah, General Director of Family Development at the Ministry of Social Development. It also marked the opening of the fifth edition of the “Mubadara” awards.

This event not only recognised exemplary projects but also set the stage for future endeavours, underscoring the transformative power of partnership and innovation in shaping a brighter tomorrow for Oman.

Initiated by Omantel in 2017, the “Mubadara” project is a collaborative effort between Omantel and the Ministry of Social Development aimed at fostering innovation and initiative among Omani women’s associations. It seeks to spotlight successful endeavours, encourage the utilisation of modern technologies, and enhance performance across various sectors including technical, social, economic, professional and environmental.

Twenty-one Omani women’s associations from across the country participated in the fourth edition, presenting projects that underwent rigorous evaluation by a specialised technical committee. These projects not only met Omantel’s stringent criteria but also aligned with the Ministry



The event not only recognised exemplary projects but also set the stage for future endeavours, underscoring the transformative power of partnership and innovation

of Social Development’s objectives in promoting community welfare.

“We at the Ministry of Social Development are pleased with the partnership with Omantel, and the achievements and purposeful projects we see today emerged as a result of these initiatives. We also stress the importance of the winning projects using modern technologies in community initiatives, as that is greater dimension to its positive impact on various members of society, and we look forward to seeing more innovative projects in the fifth edition of the award,” said Sayyidah Maani al Busaidiyah, General Director of Family Development at the Ministry of Social Development.

Lujaina al Kharousiyah, Executive Vice-President for Governance, Regulatory Affairs and Compliance at Omantel, highlighted the award’s role in supporting and empowering women in civil society institutions. She underscored the importance of equipping women with technological skills to drive purposeful projects and initiatives.

In the category of Initiative Associations, the Omani Women’s Association in Adam secured the top spot for its “Hemm” initiative, dedicated to empowering individuals with disabilities through rehabilitation and skills training.

Similarly, the Omani Women’s Association in Nakhal earned recognition for its “Innovative Strange Women” project, empowering women artisans with modern marketing techniques and ensuring sustainable income.

At the Individual Level, Mayabint Hamad al Hajriyah from the Omani Women’s Association in Bidiyah was honoured for her project aimed at equipping women and students with essential computer skills, fostering employment opportunities and technical expertise.

Meanwhile, Ghaitha bint Khamis al Kaabiyah from the Omani Women’s Association in Qurayat received accolades for her “The Little Innovator” project, designed to nurture technological proficiency and creativity among school students.



oman education & training investments

TENDER NOTICE No. 001 - 2024 - OETI

Oman Education & Training Investment Co. S.A.O.G is inviting a sealed tender for the Construction of Innovation Centre Phase I at Sohar University Campus from contractors having sufficient experience in relevant field with excellent or first grade.

Tender	Description	Fees OMR	Submission Date
OETI 01- 2024	Construction of Innovation Centre Phase I with Area around 17, 457 M2 at Sohar University Campus	500/-	30/06/2024

Description	Deadline
Tender Release Date	21/05/ 2024
Last Date for collection of tenders after paying tender fee	23/05/ 2024
Receiving clarifications, if any, from bidders	08/06/2024
Respond to bidder clarifications	13/06/2024
Receiving bids	30/06/2024

The tender document will be ready for collection by the company after paying non-refundable amount of RO. 500,000/- via depositing the money in bank or by cash on or before 23/05/2024. Cash will be collected by Mr. Saud Al Jarwani, OETI, Building 20, Sohar University, Sohar. Provide the email id to be sent along with the copy of the receipt. For Bank Transfers our account details as below:

Beneficiary : Oman Education & Training Investment Company SAOG
Account No : 002020004442
Bank : Bank Sohar
Branch : Sohar Branch, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman
Swift Code : BSHROMRU

Please send the transfer receipt to sjarwani@oeti.om to receive the tender documents in CD or USB.

Tenders offers must be submitted online (softcopy with password protected) or in closed envelopes sealed, delivered at the OETI premises, tender number shall be written only on the envelope, no indication shall be made, and deadline for submission of offers is 30/06/2024 14:00 hours.

Tender should be addressed to CEO, OETI Office submitted to Mr. Saud Al Jarwani as given below during office hours 08:00 to 15:30 Sunday to Thursday.

CEO OETI Office
Building 20, Sohar University Campus
P.O Box 44, P.C. 311, Sohar, Sultanate of Oman.
Telephone: 26850100 Ext.: 450 / 612



Scheduled for three days, the workshop underscores the significance of data and information in assessing progress, as emphasised by Dr Khalifa bin Abdullah al Barwani, CEO of the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), who patronised the event

OHRC WORKSHOP UNDERScores SIGNIFICANCE OF DATA, INFORMATION IN ASSESSING PROGRESS

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, MAY 13

The international workshop on data collection and indicators, aimed at gauging advancements in human rights according to global standards, organised by the Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) in collaboration with the United Nations Centre for Training and Documentation in Human Rights for Southwest Asia and the Arab Region, commenced in Muscat.

Scheduled for three days, the workshop underscores the significance of data and information in assessing progress, as emphasised by Dr Khalifa bin Abdullah al Barwani, CEO of the National Centre for Statistics

and Information (NCSI), who patronised the event.

Dr Al Barwani highlighted the workshop's objective of enhancing Omani capacities in data completion processes through training and skill development.

NCSI serves as the primary entity for gathering diverse data and information, supplying governmental, private, and international institutions to facilitate progress evaluation across various sectors.

Dr Rashid bin Hamad al Balushi, Chairman of the Oman Human Rights Commission, emphasised the significance in fulfilling the commission's mandates outlined in Royal Decree No 57/2022.

These mandates include



collaborating with international human rights mechanisms, generating reports, participating in human rights forums regionally and internationally, organising relevant events,

and providing counsel to local authorities on human rights matters.

He noted that the event builds upon the committee's ongoing efforts in awareness and educational initiatives, aiming to reach various segments of society and align with the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

The participants include civil society representatives alongside governmental bodies and institutions. The workshop aims to enhance participants' comprehension of human rights-based data methodologies, including the use of indicators to measure progress in human rights, application of guidelines, and data collection methodologies.

The focus lies on effectively utilising indicators to assess human rights at the national level.

Ishraq Bin Al Zein, Deputy Director of the United Nations Centre for Training and Documentation in Human Rights for Southwest Asia and the Arab Region, said that this workshop comes within the United Nations Training Centre's commitment to bolstering the capacities of countries and stakeholders, including national human rights institutions in the Arab region.

This initiative aims to fulfil obligations in human rights by submitting timely reports to various UN mechanisms, adhering to relevant guidelines.

She elaborated on the framework developed by the

Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, designed to advance human rights promotion, policy formulation, impact evaluation and transparency.

Utilising indicators and adopting a human rights-based approach to data collection are essential for assessing progress in the human rights field.

These indicators are crucial for implementing international standards and obligations in human rights.

Employing indicators and embracing a human rights-centric methodology in data collection allows both countries and national human rights institutions to appraise the advancement of individuals' enjoyment of human rights in practical terms.

Workshop looks at advancing telecom safety, connectivity in the Arab region

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 13

The Regional Workshop titled 'Electromagnetic Compatibility: Achieving Balancing Connectivity, Safety, and Tower Locations Selection in the Arab Region' commenced with a diverse audience of telecommunications regulators, ICT policymakers, health and safety experts, and judicial authorities concerned with electromagnetic fields from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

The 4-day workshop aims to raise awareness of the impact of electromagnetic fields on humans by international recommendations and standards,



The 4-day workshop aims to raise awareness of the impact of electromagnetic fields on humans

as well as to discuss the regulatory and legal requirements for the establishment of communication towers and present proposed solutions to the challenges they face. The workshop aims to exchange experiences and formulate recommendations

to strengthen cooperation and develop the telecommunications sector in the Arab region.

Omar al Qatabi, Vice president, Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA), welcomed the participants to the workshop in the Sultanate of Oman. He pointed

out that the event highlights the importance of understanding the impact of technology on society and the need to apply controls to mitigate potential health risks.

He added that preventive measures must be taken to ensure the safety of citizens and raise awareness.

The workshop addresses the efforts of Arab countries and presents awareness initiatives for electromagnetic field measurement operations. It includes several sessions that discuss the importance of evaluating and measuring electromagnetic field levels and health effects, as well as international guidelines for their measurement.

ELT symposium focuses on promoting academic excellence

MUSCAT: The 11th International ELT Symposium hosted by the University of Technology and Applied Sciences-Shinas has once again proven to be a beacon of academic excellence, drawing in scholars, researchers, students and educators from across the globe.



A key highlight of the symposium was the diverse representation of participants

With a theme focusing on promoting academic excellence, teaching innovation, research, integrity and the latest trends and developments in English Language Teaching (ELT), the symposium has set new standards in participation and engagement.

This year's event received an overwhelming response, with more than 35 papers submitted from various corners of the world. From this pool, 21 exceptional papers were selected for presentation, showcasing cutting-

edge research and innovative practices in the field of ELT.

A key highlight of the symposium was the diverse representation of participants, with over 300 attendees hailing from different countries and nationalities. Notably, the majority of participants were from branches of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences (UTAS), underlining the widespread interest and importance of the event within the academic community.

Oman's non-oil growth expected to accelerate to 2.6 pc in 2024

MUSCAT: The International Monetary Fund (IMF) mission concluded its preliminary meetings with the government of the Sultanate of Oman during the period from 30 April to 8 May 2024 within the framework of Article IV consultations for the year 2024.

The Fund's team and the Omani side discussed the most prominent recent economic and financial developments, the economic prospects in the near and medium term in light of regional and international developments, and public policy priorities in the Sultanate of Oman.

At the conclusion of the

mission, the team issued a statement in which it indicated the continued positive growth of economic activity in the Sultanate of Oman, as the real GDP grew by 1.3 per cent in 2023, supported mainly by the expansion in non-oil activities.

Economic growth is to remain moderate at 0.9 per cent in 2024, as a result of extending the OPEC+ agreement on oil production cuts until the first half of this year (2024), however it is expected to accelerate to 4.1 per cent in 2025 as a result of the recovery of oil activities, in addition to the expected relaxation of restrictions imposed on OPEC+ quotas.

Furthermore, the mission



The Fund's team and the Omani side discussed the most prominent recent economic and financial developments, the economic prospects in the near and medium term in light of developments. — ONA

statement also indicated that the growth of non-oil activities is expected to accelerate to 2.6 per cent in 2024 and 3.2 per cent in 2025 as a result of the government's commitment to the reform plan and investment projects, compared to the growth recorded in 2023, which was 2.1 per cent.

The mission affirmed that the ongoing reform efforts and the continued favourable oil prices enhanced the public finance balance and the external account balance, as the fiscal balance recorded a surplus of 6.6 per cent of the GDP in 2023. The surplus balance is expected to continue in the medium term, supported by

favourable oil revenues, growing non-oil revenues and continuing financial control efforts.

In addition, the mission indicated that the level of public sector debt as a percentage of GDP decreased significantly to 36.5 per cent in 2023, compared to 40.9 per cent in 2022, as the government continued to use part of the financial surplus to repay public debt.

The level of State-owned enterprises (SOEs) debt stabilised at around 31 per cent of GDP.

The mission also praised the continued efforts in implementing the plan to reform SOEs affiliated with Oman Investment Authority (OIA) as planned. — ONA



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In brief

NEW YORK



TRUMP'S FORMER FIXER MICHAEL COHEN TESTIFIES AT TRIAL

Donald Trump's one-time fixer and the star prosecution witness in the former president's historic criminal trial testified Monday in a dramatic courtroom face-off with his former boss. Trump, 77, is accused of falsifying business records to reimburse his lawyer Cohen for a hush-money payment to Daniels on the eve of the 2016 presidential election, when the story could have proved politically fatal.

Cohen spent just over 13 months in prison and a year and a half under house arrest after he was sentenced to three years imprisonment for lying to Congress and financial crimes. A source said that "everything he says is documented". — AFP

BRUSSELS



EU DRAWS UP LONG-TERM COMMITMENTS TO UKRAINE

The European Union has drawn up pledges of long-term security support for Ukraine, assuring Kyiv of more weapons, military training and other aid for years to come, according to a draft document. The draft sets out EU security commitments to Ukraine. In the event of "future aggression", the document says the EU and Ukraine intend to consult within 24 hours on Kyiv's needs and "swiftly determine" next steps in line with the commitments.

"Building on existing support, the European Union's security commitments include predictable, long-term and sustainable support for Ukraine's defence," it says. — Reuters

ANKARA



ERDOGAN, GREEK PM MEET TO MAINTAIN POSITIVE MOMENTUM

Turkish President Tayyip Erdogan and Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis began talks in Ankara on Monday aimed at maintaining the positive momentum achieved in bilateral ties in recent months despite lingering problems.

Erdogan and Mitsotakis would discuss issues from technology, tourism and economic ties, adding that a "Joint Business Council" would also be formed.

Erdogan visited Athens last December and the two countries signed the "Declaration of Athens" aimed at rebooting relations. — Reuters



Palestinians ride on a vehicle as they flee Rafah after Israeli forces launched a ground and air operation. — Reuters

ISRAELI FORCES PUSH INTO GAZA FROM NORTH AND SOUTH

GAZA: Israeli forces pushed deep into the ruins of Gaza's northern edge on Monday to recapture an area where they claimed to have dismantled Palestinian groups months ago, while in the south tanks and troops pushed across a highway into Rafah.

Some of the most intense fighting for weeks is raging in both the north and south. Israeli operations in Rafah, which borders Egypt, have closed a main crossing point for aid, which humanitarian groups say is worsening an already dire situation.

Hundreds of thousands of people are being forced to flee

again after around half of Gaza's population took sanctuary there after being pushed south by fighting elsewhere.

Gaza's health authority on Monday appealed for international pressure to reopen access via the southern border to allow in aid and medical supplies.

"The wounded and sick suffer a slow death because there is no treatment and supplies and they cannot travel," it said.

In northern Gaza's Jabalia, a sprawling refugee camp built 75 years ago to house Palestinian refugees from what is now Israel, tanks pushed towards the heart of the district.

Hundreds of thousands of people are being forced to flee from Rafah again after around half of Gaza's population took sanctuary there after being pushed south

Residents fled along rubble-strewn streets carrying bags of belongings. Tank shells landed in the centre of the camp and airstrikes destroyed clusters of houses, they said. Health officials said they had recovered 20 bodies of Palestinians killed in overnight airstrikes.

"We don't know where to go.

We have been displaced from one place to the next... We are running in the streets. I saw it with my own eyes. I saw the tank and the bulldozer. It is on that street," said one woman, who did not give her name.

Palestinians say the need to return to earlier battlegrounds is proof Israel's military objectives are unattainable.

The Palestinian death toll in the war has now surpassed 35,000, with 57 killed in the past 24 hours, according to Gaza health officials, whose figures do not differentiate between civilians and fighters.

The fighting has laid waste to

the enclave and caused a deep humanitarian crisis, with the Gaza health ministry warning on Monday that the medical system is on the verge of collapse due to a shortage of fuel to power generators and ambulances.

In Rafah, Israel stepped up aerial and ground bombardments on the eastern areas of the city, killing people in an airstrike on a house in the Brazil neighbourhood.

Residents said Israeli air and ground bombardments were intensifying and tanks had cut off the main north-south Salahuddin Road dividing east of the city from the central area. — Reuters

Russia rains attacks on Ukraine's Kharkiv region

KYIV: Russia on Monday pummeled more than 30 towns and villages in Ukraine's northeastern Kharkiv region after launching a surprise ground offensive over the border last week, the local governor said.

The Ukrainian army acknowledged Russia was "achieving tactical success" after the ground assault, which sparked the evacuation of almost 6,000 people.

Russia's defence ministry said its troops had "improved the tactical position and dealt a blow to (Ukrainian) manpower" around border villages, including Lyptsi, and the town of Vovchansk.

Russia began an offensive across the border into the Kharkiv region on Friday and later claimed to have taken several villages.

The situation in Kharkiv is "complex and dynamically changing", with Russian troops mounting assaults in various areas, Ukraine's army said.

Kharkiv regional governor Oleg Synegubov wrote on social



Workers remove debris of a damaged multi-storey apartment block, in the city of Belgorod. — Reuters

media that over the last day, "more than 30" towns and villages "were struck by enemy artillery and mortar attacks", wounding at least nine people.

Some areas were also bombed by Russian aircraft, Synegubov said, adding that 5,762 people had been evacuated from their homes since the start of the offensive.

Russia "carried out 22 assaults" in five border areas on Sunday, 14 of which were still ongoing, the

Ukrainian army said.

Vovchansk, which previously had a population of 2,500 but now has only 200-300 residents, suffered "massive shelling" on Sunday, said Synegubov.

Ukraine separately launched drone strikes on western Russia, a security source in Kyiv said, hitting an oil terminal in the Belgorod border region and an electrical substation in the Lipetsk region. — AFP

King Charles appoints William army's Colonel-in-Chief

LONDON: Britain's King Charles III officially handed over the role of Colonel-in-Chief of the Army Air Corps to Prince William on Monday, in a rare joint engagement with his elder son and heir.

The head of state joined William at the Army Aviation Centre in Middle Wallop, southern England, appointing him colonel-in-chief of his younger son Prince Harry's old regiment.

The 75-year-old monarch's decision to hand the role, which he held for 32 years, to William, 41, was seen as a snub to Harry

when it was announced last year.

Harry, 39, is a former army captain and served as an Apache helicopter pilot with the Army Air Corps in Afghanistan.

But he has become estranged from his father and brother since leaving the royal family in early 2020 and moving to the United States with his American wife, Meghan.

The king, who announced he had cancer in February and is receiving treatment, said the event was bittersweet, as it was a "great joy" to attend but sad to hand over the baton after 32 years. — AFP



Britain's King Charles III (C-L) officially hands over the role of Colonel-in-Chief of the Army Air Corps to Britain's Prince William, Prince of Wales (C-R) in front of an Apache helicopter at the Army Aviation Centre in Middle Wallop. — AFP

HM’s visit to Kuwait a milestone in strengthening unity



Driven by the collective determination of the Gulf leaders to pursue a shared vision for the security and prosperity of their peoples, the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the State of Kuwait reflects mutual commitment to expanding cooperation not only for the two nations but rather for all the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) nations.

The visit serves as a step to broaden strategic partnership reflecting the mutual commitment to expanding cooperation and the exchanges between Oman and Kuwait not only strengthen diplomatic ties but also pave the way for enhanced economic cooperation among GCC countries.

After the historic visit of Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, to the Sultanate of Oman on February 6, the visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the State of Kuwait has confirmed the keenness of the leaderships of the two brotherly countries to strengthen their historical relations and

consolidate their bonds.

The meeting between the two leaders is seen as a pivotal moment in strengthening the unity and this visit would boost the historical relations between Oman and Kuwait, serving as a step to broaden strategic partnership.

It reflects the mutual commitment to expanding cooperation and integration and marks a significant milestone to further explore areas of the existing cooperation between the two countries in various spheres and means of promoting them.

As part of His Majesty’s visit to Kuwait, the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait signed four memorandums of understanding (MoUs) in the fields of direct investment, metrology activities, diplomatic studies and training, as well as another MoU between the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) and the Kuwait Investment Authority.

These MoUs represent the keenness of both countries to work together in various fields

THE VISIT SERVES AS A STEP TO BROADEN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP REFLECTING THE MUTUAL COMMITMENT TO EXPANDING COOPERATION AND THE EXCHANGES BETWEEN OMAN AND KUWAIT

including foreign policy, international relations, political science in addition to exchanging documents, studies and experiences on topics of mutual interest.

In the areas of direct investment, the two MoUs related to establishing a framework for cooperation in the field of direct investment and facilitating the exchange of knowledge and in the field of standardisation, aim to strengthen cooperation in the fields of standardisation, quality, laboratories and conformity assessment activities, and to contribute to raising the quality of non-food industrial products and services exchanged between the two countries.

In regards to attracting foreign investment, the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) also signed a MoU with the Kuwait Investment Authority, which aims to establish a common framework for cooperation and coordination in joint investments between the two parties and to enter into discussions about future investment opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Kuwait.

Internet use among us linked to higher well-being: study

NINA MASSEY

Using the Internet may be good for your well-being, an international study has found. The findings suggest that despite popular concerns to the contrary, the association between Internet use and well-being is likely to be positive.

Researchers at the Oxford Internet Institute, part of the University of Oxford, analysed data from two million people aged 15 to 99 in 168 countries, including Latin America, Asia and Africa. They found that life satisfaction across all countries was 8.5 per cent higher for those who had access to the Internet and their positive experiences were 8.3 per cent higher.

Across more than 33,000 different statistical models and subsets of data, the researchers found that 84.9 per cent of associations between Internet connectivity and well-being were positive. Andrew Przybylski, professor of human behaviour and technology at the Oxford Internet Institute, said: “It’s a bit cliché, but extraordinary claims require extraordinary evidence.

“And if we’re to make the online world safer for young people, we just can’t go in guns blazing with strong prior beliefs and one-size-fits-all solutions. “We really need to make sure that we’re sensitive to having our minds changed by data, and I really hope that message comes through instead of just another volley, in another silly debate.”

He added that he believed a time would come when people would no longer be worried about social media and Internet use in young people because they would be concerned about the next thing that comes along. Assistant Professor Matti Vuorre from Tilburg University, and previous research associate at Oxford Internet Institute, said: “We were surprised to find a positive correlation between well-being and Internet use across the majority of the thousands of models we used for our analysis.” In the study, well-being was measured according to eight indicators — life satisfaction, daily negative and positive experiences, two measures of social well-being (well-being attached to liking where you live and feeling safe there), physical well-being, community well-being and experiences of purpose. Factors like education, income and health were also taken into consideration, however, the study did not look at social media use. Prof Przybylski said: “Overall we found that average associations were consistent across Internet adoption predictors and well-being outcomes, with those who had access to or actively used the Internet reporting meaningfully greater well-being than those who did not.

“We hope our findings bring some greater context to the screen time debate.” — dpa

Data... The modern digital fuel



Dr Muamar bin Ali Al Tob

The writer is Omani academic and researcher

Entering the modern digital era, which is accompanied by changes in our cognitive tools, takes us to a knowledge revolution that forms a developed economic system. With the comprehensive spread of this digital revolution, fossil fuel (oil) is no longer the main standard for measuring the wealth and economy of nations. Instead, data will replace fossil fuels to become the new oil, which countries compete for in the economic race.

Big Data is now the focal point of the economic and investment giants due to its importance in the modern economic phase. Data fuels the economic system across all sectors, including industrial, health, and military.

In its general content, data represents information extracted from various sources. There is data related to the industrial sector, such as machine operation data and breakdowns, which can be monitored, recorded, stored, and utilised to determine optimal methods of operation and maintenance. Health sector data also comes in various forms, including patient records, illnesses, treatments, drug reactions, X-rays, and medical analyses, which, when analysed, help improve the healthcare system and enhance its performance.

There is also general data that can be collected from the streets, such as traffic data and violations (offenses and accidents).

When analysed, this data helps identify traffic impediments like congestion and violations, increasing the chances of addressing and reducing these issues.

Personal consumer data can also be collected from real-world and online markets in various ways to determine consumer preferences and attract them to products that suit their choices.

These are just simple examples of the types of data available in our world today. The importance of data lies in its ability to reflect the real world. Data can be used to measure current levels and determine the best future directions.

Data or the modern fuel of the economy has become a separate field that almost integrates with all other sciences without exception, including humanities and natural sciences.

It also includes artificial intelligence



Data will replace fossil fuels to become the new oil.

(AI), which would not exist in our lives without data, as data is its fuel and source of superiority.

BIG DATA IS NOW THE FOCAL POINT OF THE ECONOMIC AND INVESTMENT GIANTS DUE TO ITS IMPORTANCE IN THE MODERN ECONOMIC PHASE

Data drives AI to the maximum levels of development, and the more data there is (in quantity and quality) to reach what we know as Big Data, the greater AI’s abilities and speed of development. As data increases and its sources diversify, our ability to obtain useful information also increases. For instance, data provides an accurate analysis of the economic future based on previous and current economic and financial practices. Analysing this data using AI helps solve the problem of long-term analytical processes and data complexity, contributing to achieving the required accuracy.

There are three main elements by which data levels can be measured: Volume, which expresses the size of the data; Velocity, which represents the speed of data flow and analysis; and Variety, which refers to the types, formats, and sources of data.

Data comes in three branches according to its usefulness and use: Structured Data, which is organised in a way consistent with the type of required data, making it easy to use and process with traditional analysis tools; Semi-Structured Data, which is less organised and coordinated in

type than the first type and requires more professional methods to process; and Unstructured Data, which is unorganised and has randomness and non-selectivity of data by type.

The best ways to deal with this type of data are through AI models, and the closest example of this type of data is that which feeds generative AI models like Chat GPT and its counterparts.

Big Data is usually attributed to high-capacity computer memory units like ‘Zettabyte’ which means the storage capacity is enormous, making these storage capabilities expensive.

They need precise processing and refinement to reach the highest levels of utilisation. Therefore, one of the challenges that hinder the ability of countries and their institutions to acquire modern oil (Big Data) is the enormous storage capabilities and providing the highest levels of cybersecurity to prevent any attempts to steal this data for harmful interests.

There are many ways to collect data, such as sensors and electronic devices mostly connected to the Internet of Things (IoT), where these electronic and sensor systems are interconnected through the Internet to increase data transfer speed and quality.

These systems (sensors) and their uses are many, including in the industrial and health sectors and on the streets, as mentioned in previous paragraphs. Data can also be collected through the information users (consumers) share on social media, e-mails, and website visits.

This data can come in various formats, including texts, images, videos, browsing locations, and views. Major tech companies that own and operate these digital platforms can access this personal data, raising many security and ethical issues.

Weaving in and out of dreams

Remember when you were a student and sitting in the examination hall writing the answers, searching your brain for correct answers? And then from nowhere comes a second thought, filled with doubts wondering whether the other option could be the right one. Do you still wake up from dreams where you were writing an exam?

The latest dream was about the exam on a subject that was quite theoretical, and was trying to breakthrough the mental block to be able to write down the answer.

In this dream, the thoughts were about how well prepared I was for the previous exam with this particular topic and for the current examination I had skipped it while studying. Here it was in the exam. The strange factor is that the question paper was clearly visible in the dream.

So can you imagine how active the brain was during that time?

The brain was going through a dream state, reading and analysing the question, trying to recollect, regretting for not studying well, and wishing there could also be another question as an option.

That's a lot of thoughts to deal with when you are supposed to be sleeping.

So the theme of the dream was about being unprepared. In a way exams symbolise life's challenges. And why does these dreams recur?

I would like to think the subconscious mind must be prompting us to look at life differently and be prepared for the unexpected. So many times we avoid certain issues just because they do not interest us. The result is we do not gain knowledge in the area, which makes us depend on others. But is it possible to learn about everything? The experts say that dreams of unprepared exams also indicate a sense of anxiety that is on the mind. And does our body react to all this stress just as it would to the real stress?

I had to wake up and remind myself that I was in a dream and in reality I was not in a classroom or answering questions. So where did the information on the question paper that was in the dream come from? Just a memory?



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

DREAMS CAN REVEAL A LOT. BUT YOU ALSO HAVE TO LEARN TO POP OUT OF THEM BECAUSE SOME DREAMS CAN LEAVE LASTING IMPRESSIONS

There are few lessons learnt - dreams can reveal a lot. But you also have to learn to pop out of them because some dreams can leave lasting impressions almost attaining the intensity of real incidents. And as for studying for exams, I think one of the best techniques would be to talk the matter out.

We can do that by talking about it to others. We see new stories on news everyday. Why is it fresh in the mind? Because maybe the visual impact on the learning process.

But what interests us captures our attention. And when we repeat the story to others, we reinforce it. Explain the subject to someone and you begin to be the narrator and source soon.

The more you think and talk about it, further you begin to master the topic.

So now the dreams throw at you riddles to solve. All one has to do is pick the cues. Then there are dreams that you just cannot remember.

During other times, we have no clue who are the people in our dreams.

Dream analysts also say that these individuals could represent our own aspects. When we fine tune our dreams it can be quite interesting but like everything else in life we cannot go overboard.

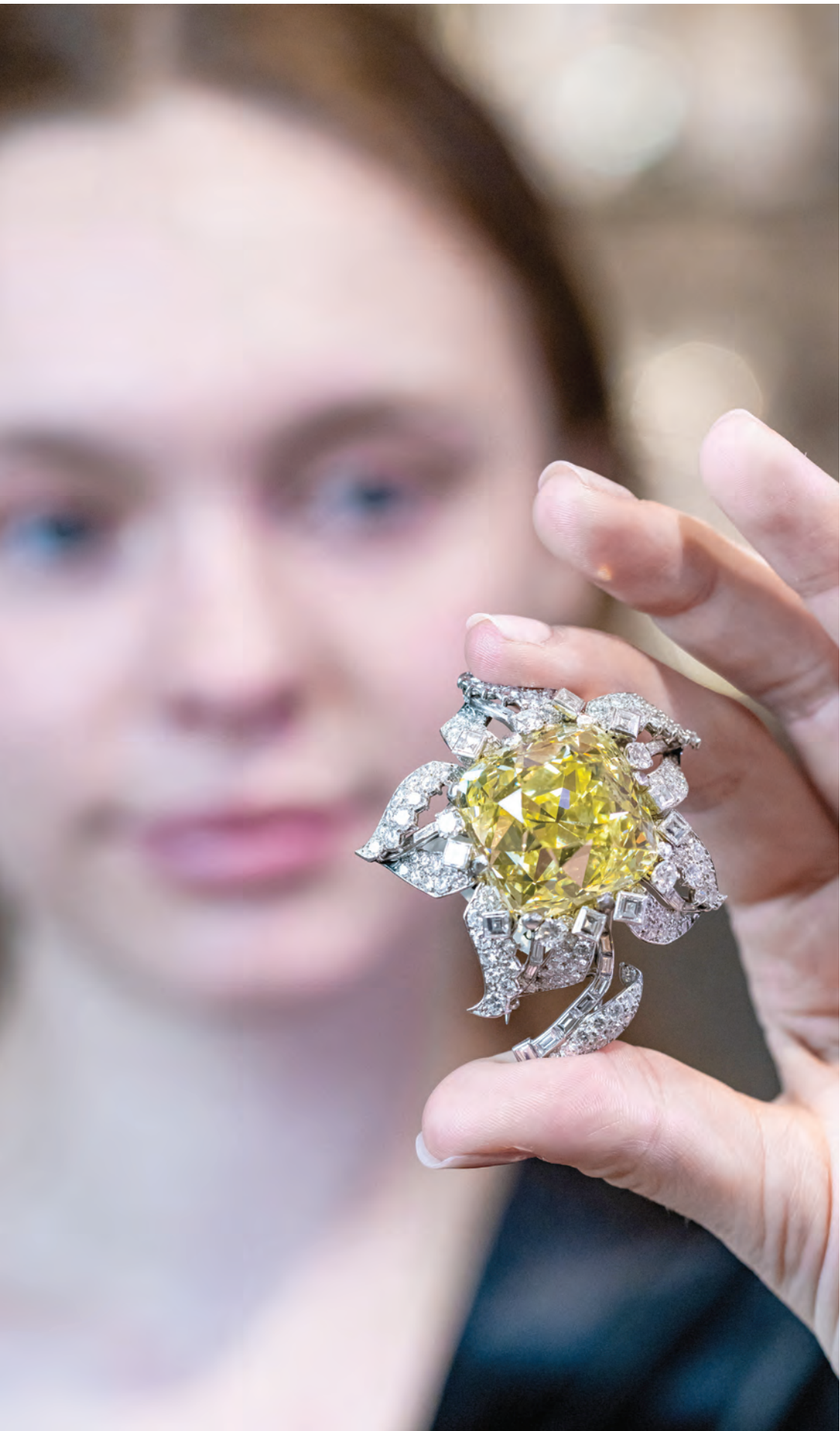
Spend a day without sleep and you will realise how different the world looks — our responses differ and we are impatient with everything.

So can you imagine what could be happening to us when we try to sit up and study late nights.

There is a reason why sun sets in the evening. Before we discovered electricity, our body used to know to turn off too, but now we can make use of electricity to brighten our evenings to push further with the information. So there is no time even to reflect on what has been read, leaned, heard or seen.

Retention of information is what we are looking for activity and it need not be just for scoring marks in examinations. It is for a person to have an authority over a subject, and that means to show your expertise. This is especially needed in public speaking. The more you know about a subject, more convincing is your presentation.

A 101.29-CARAT YELLOW DIAMOND



The Allnatt, a 101.29-carat yellow diamond, one of the largest and most important yellow diamonds ever discovered, mounted as a brooch by Cartier, is displayed ahead of auction, during a Sotheby's media preview in Geneva, Switzerland, on Monday. – Reuters

No business as usual for European industry

A month before the European Parliament elections, many of Europe's industries are fighting to survive. But rather than make the difficult decisions needed to reverse the European Union's industrial decline, leaders have often settled for the status quo. Some populist leaders even oppose plans to modernise Europe's industrial base – effectively deceiving the public in the process.

Europe's manufacturing sector has faced a series of unprecedented challenges in recent years. The Covid-19 pandemic and the Ukraine war laid bare Europe's reliance on others for critical goods and dealt serious blows to manufacturing by disrupting supply chains and triggering energy and cost-of-living crises.

The embrace of short-termism by corporations — reflected in their preference for dividends and share buybacks over reinvestment of profits — has further undermined the EU manufacturing sector's dynamism and resilience. Compounding all these challenges is the biggest crisis of them all — climate change — which is generating rapidly increasing financial and human costs.

The impact on European industry is already apparent. In 2022, the EU's trade deficit reached a staggering €432 billion (\$465 billion), driven by both higher spending on energy imports and manufacturing losses linked to the energy crisis. In February 2024, industrial production fell by 6.4 per cent in the euro area and by 5.4 per cent in



Judith Kirton-Darling

The writer is General Secretary of the European trade union IndustriAll

THE CHOICES EU LEADERS MAKE IN THE COMING YEARS WILL DETERMINE WHETHER EUROPEAN INDUSTRY HAS A LONG-TERM FUTURE

the EU year on year.

Unless the EU reverses its industrial decline, Europeans could end up without industries that have, for decades, provided quality jobs to countless workers, who gained not only economic security, but also a sense of purpose, community, and identity. And it is not at all clear how that void would be filled.

The world's other major economic powers are already committed to industrial modernisation. Two decades of aggressive industrial strategy have given China a dominant position in most of the clean-technology supply chains. Recently, the United States has responded with an industrial policy of its own, the CHIPS and Science Act and the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA). If European industries are to remain competitive in this environment — and if Europe is to achieve its goal of “strategic autonomy” — the EU will have to follow suit.

The good news is that we already have a road-map for sustainable industrial modernisation: the European Green Deal, a wide-ranging set of policies aimed at transforming the EU into a modern, resource-efficient, and competitive economy. Unfortunately, it hardly represents an easy fix, and we are a long way from delivering on it. To get there, European policymakers will have to deliver unprecedented levels of investment fast and ensure

that industries and workers in all member states are included.

The Green Deal's investment demands are considerable. With electricity consumption projected to rise by around 60 per cent by 2030, the European Commission estimates that €584 billion will be needed this decade to modernise our grid alone. This calls for a comprehensive EU-wide investment strategy that both sustains existing heavy industry and incentivises clean-tech innovation. For nearly 20 years, the EU has favoured the emissions-trading “stick” over carrots, or positive incentives for decarbonisation. To be sure, the European Emissions Trading System — which effectively establishes a carbon price by forcing companies to acquire enough permits, or “allowances,” to cover their carbon dioxide emissions — has helped to curb emissions from electricity generation. But it has also



Europe's manufacturing sector has faced a series of unprecedented challenges in recent years.

increased pressure on European industry's competitiveness – pressure that the IRA is now compounding.

Europe has attempted to ease that pressure through carbon border taxes and foreign subsidy regulation. But these are partial measures. EU leaders must go much further, devising a broader industrial strategy that both addresses investment shortfalls and mitigates the risks associated with the production of more expensive Net-Zero goods in a fiercely competitive global market.

Unfortunately, the EU's new fiscal rules – agreed by the European Parliament and Council in February – will undermine the bloc's ability to invest in green technology and industrial upgrading, and deepen disparities among member states. According to research by the European Trade Union Confederation,

only three countries (Denmark, Ireland, and Sweden) can meet their social- and green-investment needs under the EU's new fiscal rules. To bridge the gap across the rest of the EU, an additional €300-420 billion annually will be needed. If that funding is not delivered, the EU's internal market risks fragmentation, which would accelerate deindustrialisation.

Moreover, support for working communities — provided through strong social conditionalities on all public-funding, public-procurement, and lead-market initiatives — is needed to boost economic growth, create jobs, and protect the environment, all of which is essential to win public trust. Exceptional times demand innovative solutions, not more of the same failed policies. Approaches like austerity, labour-market flexibilisation, and privatisation will only exacerbate the problems we face.

Similarly, short-sighted populism is no substitute for the holistic industrial strategy Europe needs to match those of its competitors — an approach that accounts for all dimensions of the challenges ahead. For example, a one-dimensional focus on strict environmental criteria risks producing unaffordable green products, which would stall progress in electric vehicles and other critical industries.

Sport

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SEEB DEFEAT BAHLA TO RETAIN OFA CUP

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 13

Seeb club retained the title of 2023-2024 OFA Cup after they defeated Bahla 5-4 on penalties after the regulation time ended in a goalless draw in the final clash at Seeb Stadium late on Tuesday. It was a similar scenario of the last season as Seeb had won the title by 6-5 on penalties after a goalless draw against the same opponents Bahla.

The triumph marked another title for Muscat-based team in this season as they managed to earn second title within a week's time after Seeb were crowned champions of the 2023-2024 Omantel League officially last Tuesday. Seeb edged Bahla 1-0 in the 20th week as they reached to 51 points with 11 points difference than Al Nahdha who are in second



Seeb players celebrate with the OFA Cup. – Abdulwahid al Hamadani

position.

Later, chief guest HH Sayyid Nadir bin Al Julanda bin Majid

al Said, Secretary-General at the Diwan of Royal Court, presented the trophy to Seeb captain Eid al

Farsi in the presence of officials from Oman Football Association (OFA) and representatives from

both clubs.

In the final, both halves ended in a goalless draw after the teams'

strikers failed to score from some of the opportunities. There were various scoring attempts missed by both the teams. Seeb were the better side in the match while Bahla pressed hard in the last part of the second half through movement of young player Nasser al Saqri but without scoring any goals.

In the penalty shoot-out, Seeb players including Abulaziz al Maqbali, Mohammed al Musallami, Mohammed Ramadhan, Omar al Fazari and Mohsin al Ghassani converted their penalties to goals. Bahla's Nasser al Saqri's penalty was saved by Seeb goalkeeper Ahmed al Rawahi while Olivera, Mazin, Mohammed and Locki Fezmi managed to score their penalty kicks. The penalties ended in favour of Seeb at 5-4 to the joy of the home fans.

Al Rawahi, Al Hmoud resume Merc title defence in Jordan

AMMAN, JORDAN: Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi and his Jordanian co-driver Ata al Hmoud resume the bid to retain their FIA Middle East Rally Championship (Merc) titles at this weekend's Jordan Rally (May 16-18).

The second round of the regional series has attracted 29 entries across the various categories but the Oman Rally Team duo will be focused on the seven-strong Rally2 section and what promises to be a thrilling tussle with title rival and joint defending champion Nasser Saleh al Attiyah, his fellow Qataris Abdulaziz al Kuwari, Khalid al Suwaidi and Nasser Khalifa al Atya, local driver Bader al Fayez and Merc debutant Denis Krotov.

Al Rawahi and Al Hmoud finished third overall at the opening round in Qatar behind

two stars from the FIA World Rally Championship, Pierre-Louis Loubet and Mads Ostberg. Although the Frenchman and the Norwegian scored points in Qatar, neither are tackling the full regional rally series and that has left Al Rawahi and Al Hmoud in a strong position at this early point in the season. They will again use a Skoda Fabia prepared and run by Autotek Motorsport.

A puncture and suspension issues cost Al Attiyah and his new co-driver Giovanni Bernacchini a finish in Qatar and the multiple winner of the event and the championship is pointless after round one, with Al Rawahi and Al Hmoud already sitting in third place in their respective championships with 25 points apiece.

The Oman Rally Team



Abdullah al Rawahi

was forced to miss the second round of the Junior World Rally Championship in Croatia because of a nagging back issue for Al Rawahi, but he has been undergoing treatment and is keen to bounce back strongly in Jordan

- an event that he won for the first time last year.

Al Rawahi said: "We are looking forward to the second round of the Middle East Rally Championship. I've had a few issues with my back and we've been making sure that I'm back into shape. We are still working on that. Hopefully I will be fit to race.

It's going to be a great challenge, the same as last year. I am hoping to push again and win for the second time and extend the lead in the championship, since the two drivers ahead of me are not participating in the whole championship."

Al Hmoud added: "Jordan Rally, of course, I am very excited, especially as Abdullah and I won last year. We are looking to win again. For sure, it will not be an easy

job especially now Nasser got a new car, which is a bit more advanced than our car. Both are Skoda but he has the latest version (RS). That does not mean we will not fight.

We have the points from Qatar and he has zero points. We have the experience in Jordan. This is my country event and we need to win. We also have another five R5 cars to contend with. It will be a big battle between those cars, but hopefully we can do it."

Based at the Dead Sea, the Jordan Rally will be fought out over 15 gravel special stages and 223.96 km in a two-day route of 532.39 km.

After the ceremonial start and pre-event press conference on Thursday afternoon, Friday's action features two passes through the Panorama, Bahath and Baptism

Site stages and a single run through a short stage at the Dead Sea.

Saturday's action consists of two runs through the Shuna, Rawda, Turki and Suwayma specials in the Jordan Valley and Dead Sea areas before the ceremonial finish at the lowest place on earth later in the afternoon.

FIA MIDDLE EAST RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP - POSITIONS AFTER ROUND 1:

1. Pierre-Louis Loubet (FRA) 33 pts
2. Mads Ostberg (NOR) 29 pts
3. Abdullah al Rawahi (OMN) 25 pts
4. Abdulaziz al Kuwari (QAT) 21 pts
5. Nasser Khalifa al Atya (QAT) 17 pts
6. Shaker Sijweihan (JOR) 15 pts
7. Shadi Shaban (JOR) 13 pts
8. Husam Salim (JOR) 11 pts
9. Rashid al Muhannadi (QAT) 9 pts
10. Ihab al Shorafa (JOR) 7 pts
11. Fabid Ahmer (IND) 5 pts
12. Saneem Payyakkal (IND) 4 pts
12. Khalid al Suwaidi (QAT) 4 pts



Madison Keys after beating Brazil's Beatriz Haddad Maia in Round 32 in Rome. — Reuters

Swiatek battles past Kerber to set up Keys quarters

ROME: Iga Swiatek saw off Angelique Kerber 7-5, 6-3 at the Rome Open on Monday to set up a quarterfinal clash with Madison Keys, who beat Sorana Cirstea despite her match being interrupted by climate activists.

World number one Swiatek is yet to drop a set and is favourite for a third Foro Italico crown before she begins her French Open title defence later this month.

Swiatek battled to the first set in just under an hour and was frequently put to the test by 36-year-old German Kerber, who fell behind after saving five set points in game 10 and then succumbing two games later.

Kerber went two ahead in the second set but Swiatek fought back and after the Pole broke serve in game eight she held steady to close out the match. "I'm a perfectionist but it's impossible to play perfect tennis, so you always have to be humble and not take anything for granted," said Swiatek. "The pressure is there for sure but this year has been pretty good for me. I started the season well so I don't feel like I have to chase anything."

Swiatek will face Keys whose 6-2, 6-1 win was suspended for half an hour by a court invasion from activists from Ultima Generazione (Last Generation).

Wearing orange vests, protesters threw a liquid and confetti onto the Pietrangeli court, where Keys was playing, and court 12 where a men's doubles match was taking place. — AFP

BENGALURU WIN FIVE IN ROW TO KEEP IPL PLAY-OFF HOPES ALIVE

BENGALURU: Rajat Patidar's attacking fifty and inspired bowling set up Royal Challengers Bengaluru's fifth straight win to improve their IPL play-off hopes with a 47-run thrashing of Delhi Capitals on Sunday.

Bengaluru posted 187-9 after Cameron Green hit an unbeaten 24-ball 32 and bowlers then combined to bowl out Delhi for 140 in 19.1 overs at their home M Chinnaswamy Stadium.

Bengaluru, who moved to fifth, have mounted a late charge to make the play-offs but will need to win their last league match and other results to go in their favour to be in the top four.

Delhi slipped to sixth and go into their final match with 12 points. Bengaluru have also 12 points from 13 matches, but boast a better run-rate.

"Brilliant, we put in some good performances and I'm really pleased. It's just confidence," Bengaluru skipper Faf du Plessis said. "First half of the season, things didn't quite come together and from that batting perspective and bowling perspective we have been able to put it together now."

In the first match of the day, skipper Ruturaj Gaikwad led holders Chennai Super Kings to a five-wicket win over Rajasthan Royals and boost their play-off hopes.

Chennai moved to 14 points and third place with seven wins in 13 matches.



Rajasthan remain second in the 10-team table led by Kolkata Knight Riders, who are the only team to have already qualified for the next stage.

The top four teams will make the play-offs with the final on May 26 in Chennai.

In match two, star batsman Virat Kohli took charge after he smashed 27 off 13 balls to lay the foundation of Bengaluru's total

in a match where Delhi missed skipper Rishabh Pant, who was suspended after a slow over-rate offence.

Kohli remains the leading batsman this season with 661 runs including one century and five half-tens.

JADEJA GIVEN OUT FOR 'OBSTRUCTING FIELD'

Patidar, who hit 52, soon took

control in a 88-run stand with England batsman Will Jacks, who smashed 41, before a late charge by Green.

Delhi faltered in their chase after they lost David Warner for one off left-arm spinner Swapnil Singh.

Left-arm quick Yash Dayal took down Abishek Porel and then ran out Jake Fraser-McGurk in successive balls and

soon Delhi slipped to 30-4.

Stand-in-skipper Axar Patel put up a fight with his 57 off 39 balls but fell to Dayal in the 16th over and the wheels came off the chase.

Australia's Green took a wicket and ran out Tristan Stubbs to add to his batting cameo and was named player of the match for the first time this season.

"When your main players are run out and you lose four in powerplay, you're chasing the game," said Patel. "Anything can happen (in the race to the play-offs), but we haven't thought that far ahead."

In the earlier match, five-time champions Chennai restricted Rajasthan to 141-5, a total they overhauled with 10 balls to spare in their last home game at MA Chidambaram Stadium.

Gaikwad anchored Chennai's tricky chase as they lost wickets at regular intervals including when Ravindra Jadeja was called out for "obstructing the field".

Jadeja was sent back by Gaikwad while attempting a second run and he changed direction on the pitch when the throw from wicketkeeper Sanju Samson hit his hand and the third umpire ruled him out after an appeal from the opposition.

Gaikwad kept his cool and put on an unbeaten 24-run stand with impact substitute Sameer Rizvi, who hit the winning boundary. — AFP

PAKISTAN DEFEAT IRELAND TO LEVEL T20 SERIES

LONDON: Pakistan beat Ireland by seven wickets in the second Twenty20 international in Dublin on Sunday to set up a deciding showdown in the three-match series.

Ireland made a dynamic start after being put into bat as the hosts blasted 29 runs in the first three overs.

But Shaheen Shah Afridi put the brakes on Ireland's assault, dismissing opening pair Paul Stirling and Andrew Balbirnie in the fourth over.

Lorcan Tucker and Harry Tector (32) put on 62 for the third wicket, with the former scoring 51 in 34

deliveries.

Curtis Campher (22) and George Dockrell (15) boosted the score before Gareth Delany's 28 off 10 balls helped the hosts post 193 for seven.

Pakistan spluttered at the start of their chase as Saim Ayub was caught in the first over and skipper Babar Azam nicked Graham Hume behind to depart for a duck in the second.

But Ireland's hopes of sealing a famous series win with a game to spare were dashed as Mohammad Rizwan (75 not out) and Fakhar Zaman (78) put on a stunning 140-run partnership.

Azam Khan added 30 from 10 balls to take Pakistan home with 3.1 overs unused.

"I'm relieved, credit to all batters," said Azam.

"We lost a few wickets early on but we kept the momentum going. It was a good decision to bowl first because it was overcast and there was a bit of rain."

Ireland had claimed their first ever T20 victory against Pakistan in the series opener on Friday, winning by five wickets with one ball to spare.

Pakistan will also face Ireland in the group stage of next month's T20 World Cup in the United States and the West Indies. — AFP



ORSC activates second phase of 'Shuttle Initiative'

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 13

Following the success of the first phase in last holy month of Ramadhan, the Oman Racket Sports Committee (ORSC) activated implementation of the shuttle initiative in parks, gardens, and beaches in its second phase. The purpose of this initiative is to spread the sport on a larger scale throughout the Sultanate of Oman and to expand the base of physical activity exercisers.

This initiative came as part of sports activities in universities, schools, and sports academies. The ORSC took part in the activities of the Sports Village organised by the Sports and Community Group at Sultan Qaboos University at the Al Sahwa Park, which witnessed the participation of various



communities.

The committee participated in the activities of the Starting Line Sports Academy on its open sports day, targeting players and their parents, and received great interaction from the participating children who

were given the opportunity to experience shuttlecock outdoors. As for schools, the committee added its shuttle experience corner to the Sports Hour programme, organised by the Qantab Basic Education School (1-9) on its sports day



held last Thursday.

The launch of this initiative was during Ramadhan within the interest of the ORSC in encouraging various ages of the community to practice shuttlecock as one of the easy sports that can be practiced in

various locations such as parks, gardens, open squares, and hard floors.

Amal al Mahrouqi, board member of ORSC, said that the remarkable success witnessed by the shuttle initiative in the air is the great acceptance

enjoyed by shuttlecock sport in the Sultanate of Oman as it is one of the sports that is easy to practice anywhere and at any age.

"We seek to continue this initiative and spread it on a larger scale throughout the Sultanate of Oman to expand the base of physical activity exercisers in general and shuttlecock sport in particular."

Nasser al Jabri, school sports teacher and volunteer as part of the initiative implementation team, said, "this initiative is considered one of important initiatives for the local community as it has attracted various ages of the community to practice sports, undoubtedly raising the awareness and understanding of the community about shuttlecock sport."

TOULOUSE SPOILS PSG TITLE PARTY

MONACO CLINCH CHAMPIONS LEAGUE SPOT



Paris Saint-Germain's players celebrate with the French Ligue 1 championship's trophy during a ceremony following the French L1 match between Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) and Toulouse (TFC). – Reuters

PARIS: Paris St Germain were left stunned after they were beaten 3-1 by Toulouse on Sunday, with the newly-crowned champions slumping to only their second Ligue 1 defeat this season.

Luis Enrique's side struggled for form after their midweek Champions League semifinal loss to Borussia Dortmund and remain on 70 points from 32 games, six clear of second-placed AS Monaco with two games remaining.

"This defeat spoils the party a bit. It's always frustrating, even if you're champion, to lose like that in front of your home crowd," PSG forward Ousmane Dembele told Canal+.

"We need to rethink things after a defeat and not lose like that at home, even if we are champions."

Kylian Mbappe, who confirmed on Friday that he will leave PSG at the end of

the season, opened the scoring after eight minutes with a fine finish into an open goal following a pinpoint clearance from goalkeeper Arnau Tenas.

"He gave so much to the club, he did so much," Dembele said referring to Mbappe.

"We're happy with everything he's done, he's grown up well at PSG, he's achieved so much, he's a PSG legend. We're proud of him."

Toulouse equalised five minutes later through Thijs Dalling, who coolly slotted home from close range before Yann Gbobo put the visitors ahead with a superb curling effort into the top right corner in the 68th minute. Frank Magri's stoppage-time strike sealed the win for Toulouse, who are 10th in the standings with 43 points.

PSG visit Nice on Wednesday before their



KYLIAN MBAPPE, WHO CONFIRMED ON FRIDAY THAT HE WILL LEAVE PSG AT THE END OF THE SEASON, OPENED THE SCORING AFTER EIGHT MINUTES WITH A FINE FINISH INTO AN OPEN GOAL FOLLOWING A PINPOINT CLEARANCE FROM GOALKEEPER ARNAU TENAS.

final league game against Metz and the French Cup final on May 25.

"There's still the Cup final, a big match against Nice. We have to give 100 per cent in every match and show a good image of Paris St Germain," Dembele added.

Elsewhere, second-half goals from Kassoum Ouattara and Youssouf Fofana earned Monaco a 2-0 away win over Montpellier to secure second place and a return to the Champions League. They will return to the group stage of the Europe's premier club competition for the first time since the 2018-19 season.

Ligue 1's second-top scorer Jonathan David scored a first-half brace to earn Lille a 2-1 win at Nantes to close in a Champions League spot as they climbed to third place, ahead of Brest on goal difference. They are level on 58 points with Brest, who drew 1-1 with Reims on Friday. — Reuters



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Oman oil price reaches \$83.88/barrel



Miniatures of oil barrels and a rising stock graph are seen in this illustration. — Reuters

MUSCAT: The official price of Omani oil yesterday, for next July delivery, reached \$83.88 per barrel. The price of Oman oil witnessed a decrease of 90 cents compared to last Friday's price of \$84.78.

The monthly average price of Omani crude oil for delivery in May reached \$78.49 per barrel, down \$3.74 to the price for delivery last April.

Meanwhile, oil prices were little changed on Monday after losing about \$1 a barrel in the previous session on signs that US policymakers are likely to keep interest rates higher for longer.

Brent crude futures were up 21 cents at \$82.83 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures were up 27 cents at \$77.99

Although prices were supported by a few factors last week, including a lack of progress in the latest round of negotiations to halt hostilities in Gaza, economic factors are back in the spotlight.

— ONA/Reuters

OMAN POSTS GAINS IN PARING PUBLIC DEBT DESPITE SLIDE IN Q1 REVENUE

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 13

Oman's overall public revenue for Q1 2024 witnessed a 12% decrease to RO 2.826 billion, down from RO 3.217 billion for the same period in 2023, the Ministry of Finance revealed in a report of Oman's fiscal performance for the first quarter of this year.

It attributed the decline primarily to a 38% reduction in net gas revenue to RO 444 million in Q1 2024, down from RO 720 million a year earlier.

Net oil revenue also dipped 1% to RO 1.688 billion, down from RO 1.707 billion in Q1 2023. Current revenue, encompassing income sources beyond oil and gas, also experienced a 12% decrease to RO 691 million, down from RO 787 million a year earlier.

Contributing factors include lower oil prices, which edged down 2% to \$83/barrel in Q1 2024, down from \$85/barrel a year ago. Average oil production also slid 5% to 1.014 million barrels/day, down from 1.063 million barrels/day in Q1 2023.

While overall public spending witnessed a 4% decrease compared to Q1 2023, there was a notable 71% increase in development expenditure.

At the end of Q1 2024, the current expenditure of civil ministries amounted to RO 1.978 billion, down by RO 49 million



Gas revenue slumped 38% in Q1 2024.

compared to RO 2.027 billion registered over the same period in 2023.

Development expenditure of ministries and government units amounted to RO 200 million, representing 22% of total development spending, i.e. RO 900 million, allocated for 2024.

Total contributions and other expenses for the quarter amounted to RO 486 million, up by 78% compared to RO 273 million registered over the same period in 2023.

"This is mainly due to the application of social protection system, alongside oil products subsidy which amounted to RO 140 million and RO 72 million, respectively, by the end of Q1

2024.

Furthermore, an amount of RO 100 million was transferred to future debt obligations budget-item," the ministry stated.

Despite the decline in revenue, Oman achieved a significant milestone by reducing its total public debt by RO 188 million compared to Q1 2023. This accomplishment reflects the government's commitment to effective financial management.

The Ministry of Finance outlined several strategies employed for debt reduction, such as repurchasing bonds at a discount and refinancing high-interest loans with lower-cost alternatives.

These measures are crucial for

Oman's long-term fiscal health, as they lessen the burden of interest payments and liberate resources for essential government services and investments.

This suggests a strategic shift in prioritisation, with a focus on investments that foster long-term economic growth and potentially benefit Oman's future economic diversification efforts.

The Ministry of Finance reports a positive development in Oman's credit rating outlook. S&P Global Ratings upgraded its outlook on Oman's creditworthiness from "stable" to "positive" in recognition of the government's progress in managing debt.

This improved rating could potentially lead to lower

OMAN'S OVERALL PUBLIC REVENUE FOR Q1 2024 WITNESSED A 12% DECREASE TO RO 2.826 BILLION

DEVELOPMENT EXPENDITURE OF MINISTRIES AND GOVERNMENT UNITS AMOUNTED TO RO 200 MILLION

CURRENT EXPENDITURES FOR CIVIL MINISTRIES DECREASED TO AROUND RO 1.978 BILLION

TOTAL CONTRIBUTIONS AND OTHER EXPENSES Q1 AMOUNTED TO RO 486 MILLION

borrowing costs for Oman in the future.

Significantly, despite low oil prices and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy, Oman has managed to reduce public debt to 36.5% in 2023. The public debt stands at RO 15.1 billion by the end of Q1 2024 on account of ongoing efforts to reduce public debt by utilising surplus revenues.

Forum emphasises transparency in tendering process

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, MAY 13

The General Secretariat of Oman's Tender Board marked a significant step towards entrenching a more open and inclusive tendering system with the launch of the inaugural Development Projects Forum on May 13, 2024. Held under the patronage of Eng Badr bin Salem al Maamari, Secretary General — Oman Tender Board, the forum brought together over 300 companies and government officials in Muscat.

The forum centred on promoting fair competition and transparency in government tenders throughout 2024. Discussions highlighted the importance of accessible project data and clear tendering procedures. By providing this information upfront, companies of all sizes, both local and international, are empowered to prepare competitive bids.

This level playing field fosters a bidding process that ultimately



Delegates participating in a panel discussion.

awards contracts to the most qualified companies, ensuring efficient project execution and potentially lower costs.

Eng Badr al Maamari emphasised the forum's role in promoting transparency and equal opportunities.

He highlighted the significant increase in project tenders since 2021, attributing this partly to the increased visibility

provided by such forums. The forum aligns perfectly with Oman Vision 2040's goals for economic growth.

Equipping companies with project details in advance allows for better planning and resource allocation. This translates to efficient project execution, potentially leading to cost savings for the government and contributing to Oman's overall

economic development.

The forum served as a platform to showcase a wide range of upcoming projects across Oman's governorates.

These projects spanned various sectors, including infrastructure development (road construction, public facility upgrades), commercial ventures, and environmental initiatives.

Specific projects highlighted included the Nizwa Gate activation, the Al Dakhiliyah Square development, and hospital and park construction projects.

This focus on local participation extends beyond mere project announcements. The forum provided companies with ample time to prepare for tenders by offering insights into upcoming projects in Q3 and Q4 of 2024.

These projects included road works, public transportation services, and public facility maintenance.

All tenders will be accessible electronically

through the 'Esnad' system. The forum also addressed the needs of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).

Eng Abdullah bin Humaid al Habsi, Head of the Project Follow-up Office, underscored the forum's significance in creating a platform for SMEs to explore project opportunities and collaborate with established players.

The General Secretariat's initiatives to support SMEs include exempting them from registration fees and offering symbolic prices for tender documents, he said.

Following is the list of projects and initiatives slated for tendering this year for consultancy services:

- Q2 2024**
- Design of lighthouses for navigation along Oman's coast
 - Design of (Sih Al-Khayrāt / Shaar) road in Dhofar Governorate
 - Review of warehousing in logistics sector, along with status of all existing one-stop inspection and clearance stations
 - Design of the dual carriageway: Al-Taba - Saad - Al Mudhaibi - Sinaw
 - Consulting study on green

transportation in Oman

- Study of the contribution of the digital economy to the GDP
 - Initial design of the Oman Women's Association building in the Wilayat of Bidbid
 - Design and supervision work for the expansion of the Wafa Center Sohar building
- Q3 2024**
- Design of Nizwa - Bahla road, Daris - Jabreen ramp
 - Design and supervision of Wadi Al-Libda road in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate
 - Consultancy services for Sinaw - Mahout - Duqm road
 - Feasibility study into shipbreaking
 - Maritime safety system
 - Regulation of public transport services
 - Consulting study for the design of a multi-purpose hall at the office of the Wali of Al Buraimi
 - Redesign of Wadi Bani Omar West Dam
 - Consultancy services for the establishment of a hydrotherapy unit in Wilayat of Dima W'attayeen
- Q4 2024**
- Design of building of the Awqaf and Religious Affairs Department in the following governorates (Al Sharqiyah South, Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah, and Al Sharqiyah North)

Lulu expands retail footprint, opens 30th store in Oman

MUSCAT: To further expand its presence in the Sultanate of Oman, prominent retailer in the region Lulu Group has unveiled its latest retail destination in the country.

Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) officially inaugurated the store, which is also 30th in Oman at Al Ansab in the august presence of Amit Narang, Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, Brig Jamal Saeed al Taie, Director General of Financial Affairs, Royal Oman Police (ROP), other senior officials from the ROP, Yusuff Ali M A, Chairman of Lulu Group and other dignitaries.

During the inauguration ceremony, Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas emphasised Oman's commitment to being an attractive destination for investors and its favourable business environment.

The government's policies actively encourage and welcome large-scale projects, such as Lulu, to invest and thrive in the region. During the event, Al Rawas presented a copy of the latest edition of the *Al Ghorfa* magazine to Yousuff Ali M A.

Spanning over 150,000 square feet, the latest shopping destination offers enriching shopping experience to the citizens and residents of Al Ansab and its surrounding areas. Special features of Hypermarket include

an emphasis on healthy and diet food choices, an extensive range of 'Free From' foods, pet foods, a seafood section that also extends to freshly made sushi and grilled fish, premium meats and an expansive imported product range.

There will be a global spread of fresh fruit and vegetables along with a wide choice of freshly made items, from fresh-squeezed juices to fresh-baked breads and cakes.

Lulu Hypermarket offerings also include latest fashion, beauty products, electronics & IT Products, home appliances, sports, luggage, stationery and much more.

Lulu Al Ansab also hosts fine selection of brands that includes Banks, money exchanges, ATMs, coffee shops and restaurants, fitness centre, pharmacy, perfume shops, Funtazmo Children's Amusement centre, optical centre and other amenities making it a complete retail and entertainment destination in the neighbourhood. Speaking at the launch, Yusuff Ali, said "Lulu Group is delighted to add yet another landmark to the landscape of Oman and we extend our sincere gratitude to Royal Oman Police and the Government for entrusting us to manage this prestigious project.

Brand LuLu has always been known for catering to shoppers based not only in city centres, but as well as the outskirt areas and



Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry officially inaugurated the store, in the august presence of Amit Narang, Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, Brig Jamal Saeed al Taie, Director General of Financial Affairs, Royal Oman Police (ROP), other senior officials from the ROP, Yusuff Ali M A, Chairman of Lulu Group and other dignitaries.

suburbs, where people do not need to drive long distance.

We commit to provide world-class shopping and we shall continue meeting the lifestyle needs of our clientele base.

He further said that, "we have also focused on promoting and providing local employment opportunities which have been critical to our success through a structured recruitment process that aims to provide necessary training and skill enhancement

opportunities to local work force".

"At present, we employ over 3,000 Omani nationals in all the hypermarkets across the country in various positions out of which almost half of them are women and another 300 nationals have been given part time job opportunities.

Our aim is to encourage more youth in our workforce thereby ensuring greater economic participation". As part of our expansion plan in the Sultanate of Oman, "we will open another four

new hypermarkets in two years, which will add more employment to the local youth.

Apart from this, a state-of-art-facility for fruits and vegetables will also be set up in the upcoming Khazaen Economic City by next year" he said.

The progressive and dynamic policies under the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has given a fillip to development plan focused on diversification, industrialisation

and privatisation of the economy and cemented Oman's position as a rapidly growing economy. We are proud to be part of Oman's overall development and will continue to support sustainable development strategies. Thanks to the wise leadership" added Yusuff Ali.

Also present on the occasion were Ashraf Ali M A, Lulu Executive Director, Ananth A V, Lulu Oman Director, Shabeer K A, Lulu Oman Regional Director and other officials.

Oman delegation discovers Chery's automotive innovations in China

MIDHUN RAJ
MUSCAT, MAY 13

A delegation comprising journalists, social media influencers, and Chery Oman officials embarked on a journey to visit Chery Automobile's headquarters in China recently.

Chery Automobile, renowned as China's largest automaker by export volume, spanning across 58 countries globally, extended invitations to journalists and distributors worldwide to witness the company's cutting-edge production technologies and innovations in the automotive industry.

The primary objective of the visit was to gain firsthand insights into the transformative journey of the automotive industry in China, particularly Chery, which has evolved into a dominant force in the global manufacturing market. From humble beginnings to becoming the world's leading automobile producer, Chinese brands have surpassed expectations and established a significant presence on the international stage.

In recent years, Chinese automotive brands have experienced unprecedented growth both domestically and internationally. China's production scale is staggering, with 30.16 million vehicles manufactured in 2023 alone.

To delve deeper into the Chinese automotive sector and gain a better understanding, the Omani team participated in the Beijing Autoshow 2024 upon arrival in Beijing, the capital city of China.

The Autoshow showcased the latest trends in automotive



innovation, highlighting China's dominance in the electric vehicle (EV) market and its unwavering commitment to automotive excellence.

The visit to the Autoshow revealed that global sales of smart driving cars are poised for rapid growth, with investments in AI-driven smart driving and the expansion of unmanned driving applications emerging as significant market trends for the future.

During the Autoshow, Chery Automobiles unveiled the Tiggo 9 PHEV, positioned as the flagship model in the Tiggo family, showcasing a fusion of distinctive aesthetics and cutting-edge technology inspired by the concepts of "Conquer" and "Guard". Subsequently, the team travelled to Wuhu, the hometown of Chery Automobiles, via China's fastest 'Fuxing' bullet trains, covering a distance of 1000 km from Beijing.

Wuhu, an industrial and cultural hub situated in the middle and lower reaches of the Yangtze River, boasts a rich history spanning over

2,000 years and a population of 3.85 million.

The resemblance of Wuhu to Muscat, with its well-organised layout, uncrowded streets, and lush greenery adorned with vibrant flowers, left a lasting impression on the Omani team.

In Wuhu, the delegation visited the Chery headquarters to participate in the Eco Exhibition themed "New Energy, New Eco, New Era," which showcased Chery's remarkable achievements and strong commitment to new energy and ecology through engaging displays and interactive activities.

Additionally, the team had the opportunity to tour the Chery factory, witnessing firsthand the state-of-the-art production techniques and high-quality practices employed in the manufacturing of Chery and Exeed cars.

The team was impressed by the rigorous quality measures implemented by Chery to ensure unparalleled performance and customer satisfaction.

Furthermore, the delegation

test-drove various Chery models, including the newly launched Tiggo 9 PHEV, which left a lasting impression with its extended range, advanced intelligent features, and unique design philosophy, positioning it for the higher-end markets.

The experience revealed that Chery cars transcend the stereotype of typical Chinese automobiles, representing engineering and technological marvels leveraging artificial intelligence and the latest new energy platforms. The exceptional handling and driving confidence exhibited by all models, including the fully electric variants, underscored their reliability and performance.

Concluding the visit, the Omani delegation participated in the Chery International Business Conference, where Chery's CEO, Zhu Shaodong, highlighted the brand's remarkable achievements in 2023, with exports reaching 937,000 vehicles, solidifying its position as China's top automotive export brand and earning the trust of over 13 million customers worldwide.

TGR clinches first-place victory at 6 hours of Imola

MUSCAT: Toyota Gazoo Racing (TGR) clinched the first place in the 6 Hours of Imola, the second round of the 2024 FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC), after an incredible team effort. Mike Conway, Kamui Kobayashi and Nyck De Vries took victory in the No. 7 Toyota GR010 Hybrid Electric Hypercar despite turbulent conditions thanks to faultless driving and intelligent strategy on a day of twists and turns among a 19-strong vehicle line-up.

This round marks TGR's first outing at the 4.909 km Autodromo Internazionale Enzo e Dino Ferrari, located around 40 km south-east of Bologna in the Emilia-Romagna region.

It replaces Monza as Italy's representative on the 2024 schedule, the circuit boasting its own illustrious motorsports history since its opening in 1953 and hosting of three World Championship endurance races throughout the years.

Nobuyuki Takemura, Chief Representative of Middle East & Central Asia Representative Office, Toyota Motor Corporation, said: "Congratulations to Conway, Kobayashi and De Vries for battling it out to the top of

the podium in the team's first participation in 6 Hours of Imola! The Toyota GR010 Hybrid Electric Hypercar continues to prove itself across the world's most demanding racetracks and increasingly staunch competition.

Toyota's ongoing motorsports participation allows us to shape a more sustainable future fuelled by our passion for developing 'ever-better cars' to ensure that no one is left behind.

My most sincere thanks go to our teams who worked tirelessly behind the scenes to make this most recent win a reality, as well as every Toyota fan whose support fuels our ongoing success."

The TGR crew used smart strategy and pace around their perfectly executed pit stops to gain positions throughout the day. Conway, whose fighting spirit was on full display in the opening laps, expertly navigated the narrow Imola circuit to move into the top three before handing the No.7 Toyota GR010 Hybrid Electric Hypercar to De Vries at the first driver change.

He put intense pressure on the competition before rain and different strategies in the fourth hour.



Beban invites applications for Season 4



HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, MAY 13

GCC-based entrepreneurial reality television show Beban has announced in a recent post that it is accepting applications from entrepreneurs in the region, including the Sultanate of Oman.

The show — which is headed into its fourth season — allows entrepreneurs to pitch their businesses to a panel of investors in exchange for equity investments and potential business opportunities and has raised over \$6 million in investments over its first two seasons alone.

According to the show's website, the upcoming season is seeking revenue-generating businesses in their growth and expansion stage.

Applicants must have fully operational business models and demonstrate scalability potential, among other criteria.

Established in 2022, the show was founded by Hope Ventures, the investment subsidiary of the Hope Fund — a fund established under the directive of the Bahraini monarch in 2022 to support local businesses.

Last season, the show collaborated with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, to accept pitches from Omani entrepreneurs for the first time.

In a statement last year, Qais bin Rashid al Tobi, General Supervisor of the Promising Omani Startups Program at the Authority, underscored the significance of the collaboration.

"This collaboration expands the potential for Oman's startups, by utilising the programme's widespread success, promising opportunities and connections to investors in various industries," he stated at the time.

The Chairman of the Board of Directors of Hope Fund, Ayman bin Tawfeeq al Moayed, shared that the programme will equip Omani entrepreneurs with the necessary tools to develop their businesses.

"This collaboration with the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority will equip entrepreneurs and existing business owners in the Sultanate of Oman with the tools they need to develop their businesses while showcasing them regionally through the programme, thereby enhancing knowledge exchange among entrepreneurs."

Last season, Omani construction technology company Innotech won \$500,000.

Interested applicants can apply online before June 6, 2024.

Oman's first veterinary vaccine project enters construction phase

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 13

An Omani state-backed company behind the planned development of the country's first veterinary vaccine manufacturing project has launched a tender for the selection of a contractor to build the facility at Sohar Freezone.

National Veterinary Vaccine Co LLC (Hasanah), backed by Oman Food Investment Holding Company (Nitaj), is developing a state-of-the-art complex for the production of essential, commonly used vaccines for large animals and poultry, such as livestock foot-and-mouth disease, avian influenza and Newcastle disease, among others.

Set on an area of around 10,000 m2 at the Freezone, the project is proposed to be designed and construction in two phases.

The Phase 1 facilities will support aseptic filling in pre-sterilised ready-to-use (RTU) settings, by getting vaccine-ready active pharmaceutical ingredients



Vaccine output from the Oman project is destined for markets in the Arab region.

(API) from the supplier.

Phase 2 facilities, on the other hand, will focus on the production and filling of vaccines (antigen).

Last week, Hasanah - which is jointly promoted by Nitaj (part of Oman Investment Authority) and the Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development (AAAID) - began the process of prequalifying contractors for the construction of the plant.

The deadline for submission of qualifications for the tender is

May 26, 2024.

As part of the Main Contractor's scope, the successful bidder will be required to undertake all enabling works, the engineering of all superstructures, and the implementation of substructure and superstructure works.

Leading consultancy firm STI Engineering has been roped in by Hasanah to design and oversee the construction of the state-of-the-art.

Under an MoU signed last year, Indovax Pvt Ltd, a leading Indian

animal vaccine manufacturer, will supply raw materials for the veterinary vaccines manufacturing in Oman.

According to joint venture partner AAAID, the veterinary vaccine project will be implemented in two phases: Phase I targets the aseptic filling and production of 114.5 million doses of different vaccines over an expansion plan period of five years; and Phase II - the production of 144 million doses of different vaccines from Year 5 onward.

Established in 2019, Hasanah is a 50:50 partnership of Nitaj and AAAID, a pan-Arab financial institution that contributes to the capital of agribusiness ventures in the Arab region.

The new project adds a biotechnology component to Nitaj's expanding portfolio with a focus on the development and production of innovative vaccines for livestock and poultry populations in the Middle East and the wider world.

Oman commands the global stage at the World Hydrogen Summit 2024 in Netherlands

BUSINESS REPORTER
ROTTERDAM, MAY 13

The Sultanate of Oman is marking its participation in the World Hydrogen Summit 2024 in Rotterdam, Netherlands on May 13-15, by showcasing its bold vision to become one of the largest exporters of low carbon hydrogen by 2030. The World Hydrogen Summit in Rotterdam is the largest and most senior global hydrogen event and Oman is participating in its biggest edition to date. The high-level Omani delegation includes senior officials of Oman's Ministry of Energy and minerals, Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, The Sultanate of Oman's Embassy in the Netherlands, alongside a consortium of Oman's biggest hydrogen-focused players including Hydrom and OQ Alternative Energy. In addition to an impressive pavilion steeped in true Omani hospitality, Oman's



Oman's booth at the World Hydrogen Summit 2024 in Rotterdam.

participation at the Summit includes a carefully planned roster of activities including speaking opportunities, high-level discussions and meetings as well as site-visits to green hydrogen projects in Amsterdam.

Throughout these engagements, the Omani delegation will focus on presenting the country's ongoing efforts to build a full-fledged

ecosystem that capitalises on its strategic position and unlimited potential to become a rising global hub on the green hydrogen map. A cornerstone of Oman's aggressive energy transition plan, Hydrom has secured over \$49 billion to produce 1.38 million tonnes of green hydrogen annually by 2030.

This significant milestone, achieved after the successful

second round of green hydrogen block auctions in Dhofar, marks the completion of Phase A of Oman's Hydrogen Strategy. In preparation, Oman is ramping up its infrastructure, planning to install 40 million solar panels, 2,000 wind turbines, and 650 electrolyzers by 2030 to power its green hydrogen ambitions. Speaking on Oman's successful participation in the World Hydrogen Summit, Mohsin bin Hamad al Hadhrami, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, said: "Oman's participation in one of the most prominent forums for the hydrogen sector globally reinforces our commitment to join world efforts to create a sustainable energy future and aligns with our national strategy for energy transformation and environmental preservation which aims to reduce emissions without affecting economic growth and global energy supply."

Tourism Malaysia showcases diverse tourism offerings



NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, MAY 13

Tourism Malaysia began a roadshow in Muscat on Sunday, May 12, 2024 as part of a wider Gulf drive to strengthen tourism ties and showcase its latest offerings in the West Asian market. This initiative comes on the heels of its successful participation in the recent Arabian Travel Market (ATM) 2024, held in Dubai.

The Malaysian delegation, comprising 23 members, including travel agents, hoteliers, product owners and representatives from the State government, showcased Malaysia's diverse tourism products during the mission.

These offerings were described as enchanting, entertaining, inspiring, alluring, relaxing and exhilarating. The mission facilitated targeted business-to-business (B2B) sessions and networking dinners in Oman and Qatar, fostering productive partnerships and knowledge exchange between Malaysian and local travel trade partners. Formal briefings and presentations provided insights into Malaysia's dynamic tourism industry.

West Asian travellers consistently ranked among the top five international spenders in Malaysia, with a high per capita expenditure and longer average stays. With a resurgence of West Asian tourists to Malaysia, this sales mission presented a strategic opportunity to enhance promotional efforts in Oman and Qatar.

In 2023, Malaysia welcomed 18,078 and 2,464 tourists from Oman and Qatar, respectively. While these figures reflected a positive trend, the mission aimed to surpass pre-pandemic arrivals recorded in 2019, which stood at 23,911 and 4,089, respectively.

The availability of convenient direct flights to Kuala Lumpur offered by Qatar Airways, Oman Air and Salam Air further supported this target.

Biodiesel from date seeds powers bus transport initiative

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, MAY 13

A groundbreaking initiative is revolutionising the way people think about energy production and waste management.

Dr Lamya al Haj, an Associate Professor at the College of Science at Sultan Qaboos University, has spearheaded a remarkable project that aims to transform waste date seeds into biodiesel, paving the way for a more sustainable future for the Middle East region.

Gaining traction, the World Economic Forum (WEF) recently featured a video Dr Al Haj's work. In the featured video, the journey towards biofuel production from date kernels began in 2015 when

Dr Al Haj and her team recognised the vast potential of utilising the oil content in date seeds to create biodiesel.

With Oman being a significant consumer of dates, there was an abundance of waste generated from the seeds, which were traditionally used for coffee.

This innovative idea sparked a seven-year-long research and development process, culminating in the successful production of biodiesel from date kernels.

"The date seeds were used for coffee as coffee beans. And we thought, can we actually utilise the oil content in the seeds to convert that into biodiesel, because it has about 9 to 15 per cent of oil in the seeds. And that's what sparked the



A Mwasalat bus in Oman is powered entirely by biodiesel derived from waste date kernels.

idea in the very beginning," Dr Al Haj explained.

The first tangible outcome of this groundbreaking research was the launch of a Mwasalat bus in Oman powered entirely by biodiesel derived from waste

date kernels. This achievement marked a significant milestone, showcasing the potential for renewable energy solutions to replace traditional fossil fuels in the transportation sector.

"For me, it was a personal

achievement because I wanted to drive home the point that research can go from the lab to the road, and it's a very strong message to send to our youth, to our students, to our society, that research should be focused on real problems in our countries and in the world," Dr Al Haj expressed.

Beyond the environmental benefits of reducing waste and carbon emissions, the biofuel production project in Oman carries wide-ranging social and economic implications.

By creating a demand for date kernels as a raw material for biodiesel production, the project has the potential to generate new sources of income for farmers and create job opportunities in the

agricultural sector.

"So this is going to create jobs for the farmers because instead of them throwing the seeds on in the farming industry, now they're going to actually be part of the solution for the collection," Dr Al Haj highlighted.

The biofuel revolution in Oman stands as a shining example of innovation, collaboration, and perseverance in the face of daunting challenges.

Dr Al Haj's pioneering work exemplifies the transformative power of research and development in addressing pressing environmental issues and shaping a more sustainable and prosperous future for generations to come.

China is raising bullet train fares as debts and costs balloon



KEITH BRADSHER

The author is the Beijing bureau chief for The New York Times.

China is taking the rare step of sharply increasing fares for riders on four major bullet train lines, in its broadest move to address rising costs and heavy debts since construction of the system began nearly two decades ago.

The higher prices for tickets are part of a push to raise prices for public services. Earlier this year, water and natural gas bills started going up in some cities.

Public services in China are heavily subsidised by local governments. But huge municipal debts mean that these governments have less money on hand to keep prices down.

Increasing prices can stem losses at some giant state-owned enterprises that provide these services.

And making consumers pay more helps offset the falling prices that are widespread in China's economy as growth slows.

China has already pushed up electricity charges considerably since 2021 for many factories, although residential customers continue to pay low, subsidised electricity rates.

"Large factories should all be paying a market rate now," said David Fishman, senior manager in Shanghai for the Lantau

Group, a Singapore-based power consulting firm.

Raising rail fares is a fraught political issue in China. The bullet trains are a symbol of the country's capacity to build infrastructure, often even before there is consumer demand for it.

But that infrastructure has been paid for with enormous borrowing, which has reached \$870 billion just for China State Railway Group, the state-owned enterprise that runs the rail network.

The finance ministry has ordered a dozen of China's most indebted provinces to reduce their infrastructure spending this year in exchange for debt relief. China's leadership is shifting the country's growth strategy from infrastructure and real estate investments toward high-tech manufacturing and exports. But that has antagonised the United States and Europe, which worry that additional Chinese exports could cause job losses and undermine their industrial base.

China has opened 28,000 miles of bullet train routes since 2008. Routes connect every major city and hundreds of smaller cities and towns. To put its size in perspective: The system is long enough to span the continental United States more than 10 times from New York to Los Angeles.

The first line opened right before the Beijing Summer Olympics.

China's bullet trains typically run at either 186 or 217 mph, depending on the route. Because the tracks are straight, the trains run for long distances without slowing down.

But the debt incurred to build that network is not limited to China State Railway Group

Many of its lines are owned by joint ventures with provincial and municipal governments



A high-speed train operating in January in Hangzhou, China. — The New York Times

that helped pay for construction and are becoming less able to subsidise transportation.

Some of the older lines are beginning to require more maintenance. They were built hurriedly during the global financial crisis to employ hundreds of thousands of workers who had lost their jobs when export factories closed temporarily.

The rail system explained the fare increases this month with a statement to the official Xinhua News Agency, saying that "operating costs such as line maintenance, vehicle purchase, equipment updates, and employment of labour have undergone major changes."

The fare increases have drawn considerable commentary on social media in China. Much of it has been negative, as salaries have stagnated in the last several years and real estate prices have plunged.

"Everything is going up, except wages," one person complained.

Fares are going up for peak travel along routes from Hangzhou to Shanghai, Changsha or Ningbo and Wuhan to Guangzhou. Many of the cities are fairly affluent communities near the Yangtze River and its tributaries in central China. But the price increases will also affect travellers in smaller, less prosperous towns in between.

The peak fares will rise almost 20% for first- and second-class tickets at peak times except for the route between Hangzhou and Changsha, where the increases will be smaller.

Fares will jump as much as 39% for the luxurious VIP business-class seats, which feature lie-flat seats resembling those in business class on intercontinental flights.

The rail system said in its statement to Xinhua that raising the peak fares would make deeper

discounts possible for some off-peak tickets and for slower trains that make more stops.

The fare increases may have caught the public's attention because of their steepness. The rail system increased second-class fares on the country's most travelled route, between Beijing and Shanghai, by 8% in late 2020 and then another 10% a year later. China's bullet trains are still less expensive than those in the West.

"At the end of the day, the Chinese railways still remain cheaper than those in Europe, Japan, and the US," said David Feng, an international rail consultant in Beijing. With the price increases, the peak fare of a second-class high-speed train ticket from Wuhan to Guangzhou, a nearly 600-mile trip that takes less than four hours, will soon be \$78.

A ticket in first class, which has two seats on either side of the aisle like economy class on

American trains but more leg room, will cost \$125. A lie-flat business class seat will cost \$273.

When the system opened, many in the West predicted its cavernous stations might never be filled. Today, lines serving some smaller cities, especially where economic growth has stalled or worse, are infrequently used. But in the largest Chinese cities, like Shanghai, the trains are popular.

Train stations in these cities have become crowded, particularly during holidays like the recent five-day May Day break.

Shanghai's Hongqiao station, with a departure hall as long as three football fields, was still mobbed two days after the holiday ended.

Platforms in Beijing and Shanghai that were built for 16-car trains are being served by 17- or 18-car trains. The trains run frequently — there are more than 80 a day between Beijing and Shanghai.

But hundreds of smaller cities and towns have built large stations, even if they have as few as one train a day. China State Railway invested another \$108 billion last year in further expansion, much of it to connect outlying areas.

Yet it reported operating profits of only \$470 million, leaving it with little money to pay down debt. New towns and cities have grown along high-speed rail lines.

High-rise zoning for many blocks around each station has meant that large numbers of people live nearby and use them. Many Chinese use the lines to travel weekly or even daily from low-cost towns, where apartments may rent for less than \$100 a month, to jobs in larger and much higher-cost cities.

— The New York Times

The rise of the Finternet



AGUSTÍN CARSTENS

The author is a former governor of the Bank of Mexico, is General Manager of the Bank for International Settlements.



NANDAN NILEKANI

The author is the Co-Founder and Chairman of Infosys, is Founding Chairman of UIDAI (Aadhaar).

The financial system is ready for a giant leap forward. It's time to explore new frontiers. We foresee a time when applying for a mortgage or a small business loan could be as easy as texting a friend or booking a hotel room online.

There has been some progress on technology to enable such a new reality, as evidenced by the proliferation of mobile-payment apps. But transforming financial services will require creating an entirely new system to match the advances made in communications since the advent of the Internet and smartphones.

Today's mobile phones are powerful computers, after all, so it would be a waste not to maximise their use.

To this end, we have drawn on our joint expertise in economics and technology to offer a blueprint for the future financial architecture.

What we call the "Finternet" is a vision of multiple financial ecosystems that connect with one another, much like the Internet, in order to give individuals and businesses full control over their financial lives.

We foresee a world in which people and companies can use any device to transfer



Important breakthroughs in recent years have paved the way for the Finternet.

any financial asset, no matter the amount, to anyone in the world. These transactions would be cheap, secure, near-instantaneous and available to all.

This new system would be particularly important for emerging and developing economies, where large gaps in access to financial services remain despite efforts to bolster inclusion.

Many services are simply unavailable or not widely available, particularly to people living in remote areas and with low incomes. And even when people are able to access financial products, using them is often expensive and slow.

Important breakthroughs in recent years have paved the way for the Finternet. One example is tokenisation, whereby tokens

representing digital assets can uniquely identify ownership as well as applicable rules.

Another is programmable ledgers, the digital platforms that combine the record-keeping functions of traditional databases with the governance arrangements required to update them.

To unlock the value of financial innovation and build a seamless, interconnected network, we must combine all these elements and break down the current financial system's barriers and silos.

Specifically, bringing together different tokenised assets on unified programmable ledgers would drastically reduce the need for lengthy messaging, clearing, and settlement systems that create extra costs, take more time, and limit access to credit

and other financial services.

Unified ledgers would also enable "smart contracts, which can trigger an action — transferring ownership of a house, for example — if prespecified conditions are met. They could even bundle together numerous automated transactions.

So, in the case of a property transfer, the payment of the purchase price and anti-money laundering checks could happen at the same time and take seconds rather than weeks.

Overall, these ledgers would meet, and perhaps surpass, today's regulatory and supervisory standards, while also being faster, cheaper and more reliable than current systems.

But technology is not enough. Central banks, as the guardians of public money, have a major role to play in the new financial architecture.

The money they issue is the vehicle through which all economic transactions are ultimately settled.

A digital form of this money is thus a necessary foundation for the Finternet. Commercial banks will also play a crucial role in interacting with consumers, not least by providing tokenised bank deposits that will form the lifeblood of the Finternet's monetary system. Moreover,

a robust regulatory and supervisory structure must underpin the Finternet.

Safeguards such as deposit insurance and public oversight of financial-services providers should be maintained to protect customers and ensure that money has the same value regardless of whether it is issued by a central bank or a commercial bank.

The radical use of new technology could streamline the layers of manual checks now required to comply with rules and regulations.

This would enable the creation of products that otherwise might not be developed due to compliance burdens, while also ensuring that the Finternet is not used by bad actors seeking to exploit loopholes.

Making the Finternet a reality will take years, but we must start now. The technology is mature enough, and, crucially, we are not yet locked into rigid institutional frameworks or trapped in "walled gardens" of services created by monopolies.

This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to redesign the architecture of the financial system, and we should be thinking big and imaginatively, instead of focusing narrowly on individual technologies.

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MOVIES

British actress Millie Gibson attends the premiere of the new season of "Doctor Who" at NeueHouse in Hollywood, California. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

A woman stands at the memorial and museum to the victims of the Atlantic slave trade on Goree Island in Dakar. — AFP



FASHION

A model wears a design by fashion label Rory William Docherty during a show at Australian Fashion Week in Sydney. — AFP



ART

An artist paints a mango during an event organised to promote the locally-grown fruits, in Sanaa. — AFP



TRAVEL

This photograph shows the Unesco World Heritage site Mont-Saint-Michel at sunset. — AFP

art & life

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AN OMANI ARTISAN'S JOURNEY OF CRAFTING ELEGANCE FROM WOOD AND METAL

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MUSIC

Swiss Eurovision winner Nemo returns to hero's welcome

NEMO WAS GIVEN a hero's welcome on returning to Switzerland after winning the Eurovision Song Contest on Sunday, being greeted by a whirlwind of cheers, hugs and clanging cowbells. Nemo Mettler flew into Zurich Airport to be welcomed by several

hundred fans, waving flags and banners and chanting the 24-year-old's name. Nemo won Eurovision 2024 in Malmo in Sweden in the early hours of Sunday, with the highly personal song "The Code", which encapsulated the performer's journey towards realising their identity. Fans gathered at Switzerland's biggest airport had to wait as the incoming Swiss International Air Lines flight from Copenhagen touched down 45 minutes late. People were lined several deep behind the barriers outside the exit doors, passing the time with renditions of "The Code" before Nemo's arrival. Cheers erupted as Nemo emerged, wearing a fluffy sweater featuring a rabbit holding a carrot. The artist gave a double thumbs-up before posing for selfie photos with fans and signing autographs. One bearded supporter approached the singer saying "Congratulations, honey pie!" while handing over a large colourful spray of flowers.



OFFICIAL RECEPTION

At a press conference afterwards, Nemo announced plans to spend some time relaxing in the garden. "I'm going to lie down and try to calm down a bit," they said. "It doesn't feel real at all." Referring to their song's lyrics —

and breaking the winner's prize — the performer said: "I broke the code; I broke the trophy." Nemo said the airport welcome was "extremely beautiful.. It showed me how nice it is to be part of a community." Nemo is well-known in Switzerland,

having swept the boards at the 2018 Swiss Music Awards. Now they are an international star. The European Broadcasting Union, Eurovision's organisers, said an estimated audience of more than 160 million people watched this year's final, broadcast live in the 37 participating countries and online on YouTube. Now living in Berlin, Nemo hails from Biel/Bienne in northwestern Switzerland, the largest bilingual city in the country and the heart of the Alpine nation's watchmaking industry. The city is planning to host an official public reception to pay tribute to their hometown hero, though no date has yet been set. "It will certainly be a big celebration in the city, with the public, with the fans," Biel Mayor Erich Fehr told Switzerland's Keystone-ATS news agency at the airport. "It's crazy, an incredible story that Nemo from Biel won this title. The most important music competition in the world. We are really proud and happy," he said. — AFP

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How to make the most of a 5-day visit to the holy land

BY KABEER YOUSUF
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Just as the world is preparing for the holy pilgrimage, as the host is preparing, and as a few more days are left for the stoppage of Umrah given the Haj, here's a quick set of tips to make the most of the short visit to Saudi Arabia.

Nusuk, launched by the Saudi Tourism

Authority affiliated with the Ministry of Tourism in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in cooperation with the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah in 2022, organised a five-day visit to the holy sites of Makkah and Madinah for select people who visited the two holy sites as well as the places of historic importance and shared their thoughts with the authorities.

Nusuk is the first-ever official planning,

booking and experience platform, and it acts as the gateway to Umrah, helping the pilgrims create their Umrah itinerary to Makkah, Madinah and beyond. Nusuk helps visitors coming from outside the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and has been the single platform for all religious visit purposes.

Oman Air has direct flights from Muscat to Jeddah, which takes nearly 3 hours plus (KSA is -1 to Oman), and the services on air are excellent. Services on Business Class outshine any other carrier, that flies between these two cities.

DAY 1
Jeddah to Makkah

Upon landing in Jeddah, take a cab to the holy city, Makkah for an hour's ride subject to traffic and mornings are usually free of traffic. Check-in at a nearby hotel overseeing the Haram and following, one can perform Umrah after fulfilling necessary religious obligations.

Take a stroll around the city, seek the help of a guide and in most cases, if it is a guided tour, one is safeguarded from the travel hiccups. Makkah, the holy city of Islamic believers across the world, is located in a desert valley in western Saudi Arabia. Makkah is also the birthplace of Prophet Muhammad and the faith itself. Several million arrive in the city every year

either for Umrah (almost around the year) or for the annual Hajj pilgrimage. Dating from the 7th century, the central Masjid Al Haram, the Sacred Mosque, surrounds the Kaaba, Islam's most sacred shrine and people go around the Kaaba as part of the pilgrimage.

After performing Umrah, one can visit Masjid Al Haram and the nearby Clock Towers followed by Masjid Aisha, which is also known as 'Umm Al Mumineen' or Masjid Al Taneem. A visit to the Al Muallaa Cemetery, Hira Cultural District and Hira Cave, Masjid Al Khaif, Mosque of the Jinn, Maqaam-e-Ibrahim, Thour Cave, Masjid Al Numra, Jabal Al Rahmah, and the Exhibition of The Two Holy Mosques and its Architecture.

DAY 2
Makkah to Jeddah for Haramain train to Madinah:

The Haramain High-Speed Railway, which directly connects the Islamic holy cities of Mecca and Medina, via Jeddah and the King Abdullah Economic City, is one service that a visitor should not let go and one can enjoy the arid land as well as the futuristic Saudi on either side of the 4492-kilometre-long main line.

Haramain High high-speed railway serves passengers through the Makkah and Madinah provinces in western Saudi Arabia.

DAY 3
Madinah

On the third day, one can have a rich time in the city of Madinah, which is home to the vast Al Masjid Al Nabawi (Prophet's Mosque), which is a major Islamic pilgrimage site. Its striking Green Dome rises above the tombs of the Prophet Muhammad and early Islamic leaders Abu Bakr and Umar. The Masjid Al Qiblatain (Mosque with two Qiblah), is known as the site where the Prophet Muhammad received the command to change the direction of prayer to Makkah.

The top sights sites in Madinah include Al Masjid Al Nabawi, Masjid Quba, Masjid Al Qiblatain, Dhul Hulaifah, Miqat Mosque, Dar Al Madinah Museum, The Green Dome, The Seven Mosques, Masjid Al Ghamamah, Al Baqi Cemetery, King Fahd Central Park, Uthman Ibn Affan's Farm and Well, Cave of Bani Haram, Uhud Mountain, and most importantly, The International Fair and Museum of the Prophet's Biography and Islamic Civilisation, which is a must-visit place for the presentations inside take the visitor on a voyage of time and will get acquainted with an unseen era.

DAY 4
From Madinah to Jeddah by Haramain Train

On the fourth day, you have ample time to stroll through the historic port city on the Red Sea, which is also a modern commercial hub and gateway for pilgrimages to the Islamic holy cities Makkah and

Medina. Resort hotels, beaches and outdoor sculptures line the Corniche, a sea-front promenade anchored by the iconic King Fahd's Fountain. The city's Al Balad historic district dates to the 7th century and retains traditional homes built from coral.

One must visit the King Fahad's Fountain, Al Shallal Recreational Park, Al Taybat International City Museum of Science and Information, Fakieh Aquarium, Masjid Shatie, Nassif House Museum, Local History Museum, Al Rahma Mosque, Waterfront Harbour, Jaffali



Mosque and the Balad Jeddah.

DAY 5
Back to Makkah, shopping and flying back

On the fifth day, one has ample time to do window shopping in Makkah, where you can grab souvenirs and other memories that mark the visit to the holy cities.

"Above all, one shouldn't forget to register on Nusuk, just as it is used by travellers from all over the world, so that one can easily organise their entire visit, from applying for an e-Visa to booking hotels and flights and the like," said Maha bint Mulf, from Saudi Tourism Authority (STA)

Nusuk was established based on the constant concern of the Ministry of Hajj and Umrah for the comfort and safety of visitors to the Holy cities, Makkah and Madinah, and its interest in the regular performance of Umrah, and making it available to the largest number of Muslims coming from outside of Saudi Arabia.

TRAVEL

Japan to introduce online booking for Mount Fuji trail

AN ONLINE BOOKING system for Mount Fuji's most popular trail was announced on Monday by Japanese authorities trying to fight overtourism on the active volcano.

Japan's highest mountain has become increasingly crowded during the summer hiking season, raising concerns over safety and environmental damage.

To ease congestion on the Yoshida Trail,



the preferred route for most hikers, the Yamanashi region is planning to cap daily entries to 4,000 people, who will be charged \$13 each.

But to address some climbers' fears that they will be rejected once the daily limit is reached, this year online bookings will also be introduced for the first time.



The system will guarantee people entry through a new gate, "allowing them to plan ahead," Katsuhiko Iwama, an official from the Yamanashi regional government, said.

Online bookings open on May 20 for the July-September hiking season. Each day at least 1,000 places will be kept free for on-the-spot entry.

Mount Fuji is covered in snow most of the year, but in the summer more than

220,000 visitors trudge up its steep, rocky slopes, many climbing through the night to see the sunrise.

Some attempt to reach the 3,776-metre (12,388-foot) summit without breaks and become sick or injured as a result.

Tourists are also flocking to surrounding areas to snap the majestic mountain, which is seen as a symbol of Japan but whose popularity is proving a burden to locals.

In one photo spot where Mount Fuji emerges behind a Lawson convenience store, exasperated officials are constructing a huge black mesh barrier to block the view.

People who work and live nearby had complained about mostly foreign tourists trespassing, littering and dangerously crossing the street to get the perfect Instagram post.

Record numbers of overseas tourists are travelling to Japan, where in March monthly visitors exceeded three million for the first time.

Residents of Kyoto's geisha district have also banned tourists from private alleys after complaints that some were rudely demanding selfies with the kimono-clad entertainers. — AFP

AN OMANI ARTISAN'S JOURNEY OF CRAFTING ELEGANCE FROM WOOD AND METAL

BY MOHAMMED AL DIGHAISHI

A skilled sculptor known for his expertise in wood carving and metal shaping, Mohammed bin Darwish al Balushi transforms natural materials into unique pieces of art, reflecting his passion and dedication to his profession.

Operating from a large workshop in the Wilayat of Barka, Mohammed creates large and elegant furniture pieces characterised by quality and creativity.

Mohammed's work reflects his passion and love for his profession. Other than exercising craftsmanship and profound skills, he also creates large and long-lasting furniture ensuring quality and elegance to pieces delivered to his clients. Mohammed aims that the pie artistic pieces he creates enrich the daily lives of individuals and institutions who interact with his work.

Mohammed's work had found its way to the hands of interior designers, collectors, luxury homeowners and cultural institutions. These clients value his unique wood and metal sculptures, appreciating the craftsmanship, intricate details and storytelling in each piece.

For Mohammed, whether it's custom furniture, decorative elements, or exhibition pieces, he said that he tends to go where his creativity takes him making sure that his clients acquire one-of-a-kind artworks that reflect their tastes and elevate their environments with elegance and artistry.

With almost a decade in the industry, Mohammed shared that his being a sculptor was motivated by the desire for additional income rather than relying solely on one source.

He has a deep passion for the field and he enjoys exploring various materials, with wood being particularly cherished for its inherent beauty and versatility. Appreciating its texture, natural hues and malleability, he finds joy in crafting diverse objects suitable for both indoor and outdoor settings, enhancing specific designs with pieces that serve multiple purposes.

He emphasised that selecting the appropriate wood for a project depends on the materials involved. Not all materials can be effectively shaped with any type of wood, as some are prone to cracking under certain temperatures, potentially leading to significant safety



hazards. Additionally, certain materials are susceptible to insect infestations and decay, while others possess toxic properties that deter pests but require special treatments for preservation.

Al Balushi highlighted the subjective nature of determining the ideal weight for furniture, noting the contemporary preference for lighter pieces. However, contrasting opinions exist, with some



advocating that heavier furniture indicates higher quality. Ultimately, the weight preference is dictated by individual client tastes.

Furthermore, Al Balushi underscored the significance of thorough planning and design in project execution. Various approaches, such as pre-prepared designs, collaboration with sketch designers, or allowing clients

creative freedom, offer distinct benefits. He emphasised the role of expansive imagination in swiftly realising designs, enabling those with vivid imaginations to quickly conceptualise projects. While some may utilise design software, Al Balushi personally favours involving clients directly in the creative process, encouraging them to sketch designs themselves.

Mohammed shared that for him, one's ability to achieve both the impossible and the possible hinges upon a person's determination and persistence in the pursuit of their goals.

He advised young sculptors and artists against dwelling on the challenges and pressures faced during a project, urging instead to focus solely on completing the task, as those difficult moments quickly fade from memory.

Additionally, Mohammed highlighted three detrimental words—"I do not know," "I cannot," and "impossible"—which he deemed as fatal blows to success, urging individuals to avoid their usage. He stressed the importance of transforming these words into personal challenges, to be tackled with unwavering determination and faith. Belief in one's capacity to overcome obstacles, he asserted, is the cornerstone of achievement and excellence in any endeavour.

Mohammed also reminded me that instead of focusing on competition, one should focus more on learning new skills and self-motivating to be more creative and promote personal growth. He also said an emerging young artist or sculptor can spend more quality time deepening one's knowledge and enriching his own experiences.

"Everyone has their unique voice and there are plenty of opportunities around for new, quality work. If artists invest in making themselves better so that nobody can do what they can do, for sure they will be able to create a niche for themselves," Mohammed reminded.

