

HM condolences to Kuwait

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to Shaikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, on the death of Shaikh Salim Al Ali Al Salim al Sabah. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere condolences and sympathy to Shaikh Mishal and the bereaved's family, praying to the Almighty Allah to rest the deceased's soul in peace in paradise and grant his family patience.

SUNRISE - 05:42 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR - 04:22 AM
DHUHR - 12:17 PM
ASR - 03:43 PM
MAGHRIB - 06:47 PM
ISHA - 08:02 PM



P10

AL WEHDA CROWNED CHAMPIONS OF AMATEUR LEAGUE



P13

UK FIRM DRILLS AT NICKEL LATERITE PROJECT SITE IN OMAN



P20

AVOIDING DHOFAR'S KHAREEF TOURIST TRAPS BY VISITING AIN GHAIID



MUSCAT

SEARCH STILL ON FOR MISSING FISHERMEN

Search is still on for two fishermen missing at sea since last Tuesday. The fate of Salem al Hadi and Yaqoub al Busaidi from the Wilayat of Bausher is unknown since they set off on a fishing trip from Al Qurum last Tuesday. After intensive search by the authorities concerned and fellow fishermen, their fishing boat was found at sea off the Wilayat of Saham, while the fishing nets were found in Al Sawadi in the Wilayat of Barka. Ibrahim bin Khalfan al Hadi, a relative of one of the missing fishermen, said: "They left Al Qurum Beach on Tuesday evening. They usually spend the night at sea and return back the next morning. When they didn't come back until twelve o'clock noon, we began to be concerned about their safety and it was impossible to get in touch with them."

DETAILS ON P2

Blueprint for employment of nationals

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 12

The Dhofar branch of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) hosted Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, for a discussion on ongoing efforts to enhance the labour market in Dhofar Governorate.

Speaking on the occasion, Dr Mahad affirmed that the ministry's 'Social Dialogue Committee' has accelerated the pace of action, cooperation and partnership with the three parties to production (the government, employers and workers). In turn, this led to rise



Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, Minister of Labour, during a discussion.

in production that keeps pace with the global labour market. He said that the ministry is

engaged in efforts to develop market tools, consolidate backup to private sector institutions and

The ministry is engaged in efforts to develop market tools, consolidate backup to private sector institutions and raise incentives to establishments

DR MAHAD BIN SAID BAOWAIN

raise incentives to establishments. He added that the Labour Law and pertinent regulations are

envisaged to stabilise the labour market and respond to the progress made in global market.

The meeting was not merely a routine discussion but a convergence of expertise from both the public and private sectors. Experts and specialists, each with a deep understanding of the local economy and employment dynamics, engaged in a robust exchange of ideas. Their dialogue was shaped by a shared recognition of the challenges that the local labour market faces, as well as the opportunities that, if seized, could transform Dhofar's economic landscape.

TURN TO P2

Over 9,700 illegal workers deported

MUSCAT: The Inspection Unit of the Security and Safety Services has dealt with 12,000 illegal workers since the beginning of this year with more than 9,700 deported and the rest of them were referred to the competent authorities.

The CEO of the Security and Safety Services confirmed that the Inspection Unit has the power to close any company involved in repeated violations of the Omanisation quota.

He said that granting the power of judicial inspection to the Security and Safety

Services enables it to activate the labour inspection system to ensure abidance by government decisions related to the nationalised professions and Omanisation rates.

The Inspection Unit has prepared welfare facilities that accommodate more than 1,000 people and are equipped with the latest technological and communication systems completed with security, health and safety equipment.

The Inspection Unit currently operates in Muscat, Al Batinah North and Dhofar, with plans to

expand to other governorates. The unit has prepared labour care centres with advanced technology and adheres to safety, health and security standards.

The Security and Safety Institution provides training for new recruits, holding specialised courses with relevant authorities. The officials of the institution emphasised the importance of implementing management plans and programmes to achieve objectives outlined within the unit's duties and responsibilities.

DETAILS ON P5

UN chief, world leaders call for talks to reach Gaza truce deal

UNITED NATIONS: United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres on Monday condemned the continued loss of life from the war in the Gaza Strip and urged both sides to rejoin and conclude a deal on ceasefire and release of captives, deputy UN spokesperson Farhan Haq said.

"He also again underscores the need to ensure the protection of civilians and for unimpeded and safe humanitarian access into and across Gaza," said Haq.

Meanwhile, international pressure mounted for a ceasefire in Gaza as Britain, France and Germany made a joint plea for an end to fighting with "no further delay".

The call came a day after Hamas urged mediators to implement a truce plan presented by US President Joe Biden instead of holding more talks.

"The fighting must end now, and all captives must be released," French President Emmanuel



A woman reacts as people inspect the damage following Israeli bombardment in Gaza City's Sheikh Radwan neighbourhood on Monday. – AFP

Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in a joint statement.

"The people of Gaza need urgent and unfettered delivery and distribution of aid," it said.

"There can be no further delay." International mediators have invited Israel and Hamas to resume talks.

Israel has accepted the invitation from the United States, Qatar and Egypt to send negotiators for talks planned for Thursday.

"The reason we're doing that is to finalise the details of the implementation of the framework agreement," Israeli government spokesman David Mencer told a news conference. SEE P6



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Oman, Libya review means of promoting relations

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the State of Libya discussed means of promoting relations in various areas. During a meeting held in Muscat on Monday, Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Diplomatic Affairs, and Mohamed Khalil Issa, Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs of Libya, discussed the latest political developments in Libya. The two sides also touched on the most important issues at the regional level. The meeting was attended by Hajer Amr Al Nami, Ambassador of Libya to the Sultanate of Oman, Dr Zainab bint Said al Qasmiyah, Head of the Diplomatic Academy, and a number of officials from both sides. — ONA



The two sides also touched on the most important issues at the regional level. – ONA

SEARCH ON FOR TWO FISHERMEN MISSING AT SEA SINCE TUESDAY

YOUSEF AL HABSI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

Search is still ongoing for two fishermen missing at sea since Tuesday. The fate of Salem al Hadi and Yaqoub al Busaidi from the Wilayat of Bausher is unknown since they set off on a fishing trip from Al Qurum last Tuesday. After intensive searches by the concerned authorities and fellow fishermen, their fishing boat was found at sea off the Wilayat of Saham while the fishing nets were found in Al Sawadi in the Wilayat of Barka. Ibrahim bin Khalfan al Hadi,

a relative of one of the missing fishermen, said: “They left Al Qurum Beach on Tuesday evening. They usually spend the night at sea and return back the next morning. When they didn’t come back until twelve o’clock noon, we began to be concerned about their safety and it was impossible to get in touch with them. We informed the concerned authorities who immediately initiated a search and rescue operation alongside their fellow fishermen.” The search operation carried out by the military, security and civil authorities for the missing fishermen is still underway.



The fishing boat that carried two fishermen who went missing at sea was found 66 km off the coast of Saham

Perseid meteor showers till Aug 24

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The spectacular phenomenon of Perseid meteor shower, which is currently present on the Oman skies, will stay till August 24, after its culmination which was visible on Monday night and early hours of Tuesday, according to the Omani Astronomical Society (OAS). Speaking to the Observer, Abdulwahab bin Sulaiman al Busaidi, stargazer and member of the Board of Directors of the OAS, said that the Perseid meteor shower is one of the most well-known summer meteor showers and is best observed at its peak on Monday night and early on Tuesday at areas where light is minimal. “Hundreds of stargazers are gathering at places where the



Astronomers observe the northern skies during the Perseid meteor shower in Kozjak, North Macedonia, on Monday. – Reuters

light is minimal and where it is pitch dark away from sources of light pollution or any obstacle such as tall trees and looking towards the northeast near the Perseus constellation, which is the apparent source of these meteors from after midnight on to take a glance of the Perseid meteor showers,” Al Busaidi said. Meteor showers occur when

the earth passes near the orbit of a comet in its orbit around the sun and penetrates a crowd of meteors left behind by that comet. As for the Perseid meteor shower, the earth passes near meteors left behind by the comet, which results in dust particles entering the earth’s atmosphere and burning during their entry. He further added that

astronomical photographers have a heyday clicking away the rare pictures of the same and of some celestial bodies that appeared in the sky during this period such as the giant planet Jupiter and Saturn, which could be seen naked eye without the need to use special observation devices. The Perseids, characterised by their high frequency and bright, fast-moving meteors, which travel at speeds of about 72 kilometres per second at altitudes between 70 and 100 kilometres, are known for producing very bright meteors, or fireballs and no other meteor shower matches the intensity of the Perseids, which are caused by Comet Swift-Tuttle, a comet that orbits the sun every 130 years with a nucleus about 26 kilometres in diameter.

BLUEPRINT FOR EMPLOYMENT GROWTH IN DHOFAR

FROM PAGE 1

From this meeting emerged a strategic plan, defined by three core initiatives, each designed to address a critical aspect of the labour market. The first initiative focuses on developing the national workforce. Recognising that a dynamic and evolving labour market requires a workforce equipped with relevant skills, the parties agreed to establish specialised training programmes. These programmes are tailored

to meet the specific demands of today’s industries, ensuring that Omani workers are not only employable but also competitive. Additionally, the creation of an online employment platform was proposed. This platform will serve as a bridge between job-seekers and employers, streamlining the recruitment process and enhancing job placement rates. The second initiative targets supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs). SMEs are often regarded as the backbone of any

economy where they play a crucial role in job creation and economic diversification. The meeting underscored the importance of providing these businesses with both financial and technical support. Such support is expected to not only spur the creation of new jobs, but also to invigorate the local economy, enabling SMEs to flourish and expand sustainably. The final initiative is aimed at enhancing collaboration between the public and private

sectors. It was agreed that a joint committee would be established to monitor the implementation of the proposed initiatives. This committee will be tasked with ensuring that the strategies are executed efficiently and that any obstacles faced by investors are promptly addressed. The success of this initiative hinges on the recognition that sustainable development can only be achieved through a cooperative effort that leverages the strengths of both sectors.

MOE SIGNS AGREEMENT ON FINANCING HALL FOR THE DEAF

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education (MoE) and Mitsui E&P Middle East signed an agreement to support and finance the establishment of a sensory and visual interaction hall at Al Amal School for the Deaf in Al Khuwair. The agreement was signed by Majid bin Said al Bahri, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Administrative and Financial Affairs, and Nasser bin Ali al Kindi, General Manager of the company. The hall contributes to enhancing the development of sensory skills among students with special needs, and providing a stimulating educational environment for them through the tools and devices it contains. This in turn contributes to enhancing learning, evaluation and rehabilitation of people with special needs who suffer from functional disorders.



PREMARITAL TESTS CRUCIAL FOR FUTURE GENERATIONS

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

Premarital medical examinations are essential for anyone planning to get married. In a society where genetic and hereditary diseases are prevalent, these conditions often remain undetected without proper screening. Such diseases can lead to severe health and psychological challenges for children and their families, causing lifelong suffering and the need for specialised care. Many hereditary diseases are silently carried by parents who do not exhibit any symptoms or complications. However, these conditions can be passed on to their offspring, leading to chronic, debilitating illnesses and disabilities that severely impact the quality of life and may even shorten life expectancy. Genetic disorders result from mutations or defects in genetic inheritance. When these conditions are inherited,



Premarital medical screening is an essential part of marital preparation, as vital as arranging housing or wedding plans

they are classified as hereditary diseases. The Ministry of Health has implemented a premarital screening programme as a preventive measure to reduce the spread of infectious diseases, birth defects, and to decrease child and maternal mortality. The programme places particular emphasis on hereditary blood diseases, which are notably prevalent in Oman. According to the Ministry of

Health, hereditary blood diseases such as sickle cell anaemia and thalassaemia are widespread in Oman. Approximately 6 per cent of the population carries the gene for sickle cell anaemia, while 2 per cent are carriers of thalassaemia. These statistics, particularly among children under five years old, highlight the urgency of preventive measures like premarital medical examinations and genetic counselling, as

recommended by the World Health Organization. In Oman, premarital screening services are available to all citizens who wish to undergo the examination. Although optional, these services are provided free of charge to Omanis over 18 years of age through various health institutions across the country. The examination process includes confidential counselling by trained doctors who interpret the results

In Oman, premarital screening services are available to all citizens who wish to undergo the examination. Although optional, these services are provided free of charge to Omanis over 18 years of age through various health institutions across the country

and ensure privacy. Dr Muslim bin Said al Araimi, a genetic medicine consultant at the National Centre for Genetic Health at the Royal Hospital, emphasised the importance of educating parents about premarital screening. He encourages parents to guide their children to undergo this

examination before marriage to prevent the transmission of genetic diseases and protect the health of future generations. Studies consistently show that the spread of genetic blood diseases poses a significant health and social challenge, placing a heavy burden on both families and the healthcare system. Premarital medical screening is crucial for maintaining family and social stability, as these diseases are transmitted from parents to children. While marriage between relatives increases the risk, even non-relative marriages are not exempt from the potential of passing on genetic disorders. Premarital medical screening is an essential part of marital preparation, as vital as arranging housing or wedding plans. Despite some reluctance or preconceived notions against it, this examination is fundamental to ensuring a healthy and happy life for both partners and their future families.



Information Ministry hosts international media professionals in Dhofar



The visit, which coincides with different events like the Khareef Dhofar Season 2024, will provide an opportunity to showcase Omani culture and countryside lifestyles. — ONA

SALALAH: As part of its keenness on highlighting the Sultanate of Oman's economic and tourism projects, investment opportunities and rich cultural heritage, the Ministry of Information hosted a number of international media personnel currently visiting the Governorate of Dhofar.

The programme, which lasts from August 2 to 20, 2024, seeks to attract larger numbers of tourists from Europe, North America, Africa and East Asia.

Sheikha bint Ahmed al Mahrouqiyah, Acting Director-General of External Media, said

that the programme to host international media professionals in the khareef season consolidates Oman's presence in the global cultural and tourism arena.

The gathering was attended by representatives from prestigious international media institutions, including Reuters, the Foreign Journalist Association, National Geographic magazine, Chinese TV, Turkish TV, and other media institutions in Italy, Spain, Belgium and Australia, Sheikha said.

She added that the media personnel will visit tourist areas, cultural, historical and

archaeological sites in Dhofar Governorate, including the ancient city of Samharam, Khor Rori, the Land of Frankincense Museum and Wadi Dokah. The tours will also cover economic areas like Salalah Port and Salalah Free Zone.

The visit, which coincides with different events like the Khareef Dhofar Season 2024, will provide an opportunity to showcase Omani culture and countryside lifestyles.

National Geographic photographer David Rolle said, "Dhofar Governorate, which welcomed us with drizzle and fog,

boasts a wide range of natural diversity features, right from dense formations of frankincense trees in Wadi Dokah to the magnificent Al Mughsail Beach." Rolle, who described his visit as "wonderful", toured Al Fazayah Beach in the Wilayat of Rakhayout (famous for its pristine beaches and crystal clear seawater), Wadi Darbat (with its breath-taking waterfalls and velvet green landscape) and Al Hafa Market (which exudes the fragrance of frankincense).

Then, Rolle went all the way to the memorial of the Chinese navigator Zheng He and later

toured the archaeological sites in Samharam and Al Baleed (which depict the ancient history of Dhofar Governorate and its people).

For his part, Max Stanton, an e-content creator, said, "This is my first visit to Dhofar Governorate in the khareef season where natural scenery comes to life amid wet weather and moderate temperatures. This encourages tourists to engage in different activities like adventure tourism, treks to centuries-old heritage sites and trips to cultural landmarks and traditional industries' houses." — ONA

Omani Song Festival underway in Salalah

SALALAH: The 12th Omani Song Festival, organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth in collaboration with the Office of the Governor of Dhofar, commenced at Al Murooj Theatre in Salalah.

The festival aims to attract and nurture Omani singing talents, highlighting their creativity and artistic potential, organisers said. It also seeks to strengthen partnerships between government agencies and the private sector to enrich the cultural and artistic landscape across Oman.

Ibrahim bin Saif Bani Araba, the festival director, noted that since its inception in 1994 in Muscat, the Omani Song Festival has been a platform for Omani poets, composers, and artists to achieve recognition in the cultural and artistic fields.

This year, 33 contestants participated, with six qualifying to compete for the top three places.

The finalists are Omar al Hasani, Abdul Aziz bin Ajeeb bin Arfa Bait Kalib, Hamed Suhail, Nahla al Mukhainiyya, Aisha bint Hafez and Saif al Gharabi. — ONA

SYMPOSIUM MOOTS MEANS OF DEVELOPING OMANI, ARABIC MUSIC USING AI



SALALAH: A cultural symposium titled "Music, Artificial Intelligence and Modern Technologies" was held on Monday at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah.

The symposium was organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth as part of the Omani Song Festival. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman

of Dhofar Municipality.

The symposium aimed at debating ways to benefit from technological developments in achieving a balance between preserving cultural heritage and promoting innovative artistic experiences.

It laid emphasis on envisaged impacts of artificial intelligence on traditional music, as well as the role of modern technology in preserving and developing cultural heritage. — ONA

Saudi media delegation on tour of khareef destinations

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 12

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has taken the bold step of inviting a Saudi media delegation for a week in an effort to increase awareness of the khareef season. This programme is the cornerstone of a larger marketing campaign designed to highlight Dhofar as a top travel destination.

Representatives from a wide range of Saudi media sources make up the visiting delegation. The group will be able to investigate the most important events and activities taking place in Dhofar during this busy travel season thanks to the programme's extensive field trip.

The delegation's schedule includes a visit to historical and cultural sites in Dhofar, providing an immersive immersion into the governorate's rich legacy. The journey will also include important tourist attractions and historical landmarks, including



Members of the Saudi media delegation touring a historical attraction in Salalah

seven UNESCO World Heritage Sites. This exposure seeks to provide the delegation with a comprehensive grasp of Dhofar's historical significance and cultural vibrancy.

Notable success has been seen in the khareef season this year.

From 396,108 visitors at the end of July 2023 to 413,122 by the end of July 2024, visitor numbers had increased by 4.3 per cent. These numbers, which come from the National Centre for Statistics and Information, demonstrate how successful continuous marketing

campaigns are and show how interest in the khareef season is rising. Breaking down these facts, Omani tourists increased by 3 per cent, reaching 305,070. Visitors from Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries also increased, with 66,998 arrivals compared to 59,555 in 2023. In addition, overseas tourists climbed from 40,418 to 41,054.

An important trend can be seen in the mode of arrival: by the end of July 2024, 316,434 tourists had crossed the border by land, while 96,688 had done so by air. Air arrivals have increased by 7 per cent from the previous year.

The vast majority of visitors (95 per cent) arrived between July 1 and July 31, with the remaining 5 per cent arriving between June 21 and June 30.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is coordinating a number of promotional events, including this media engagement, to raise Oman's status as a premier travel destination.

Al Baleed Mosque — a rare glimpse into Oman's Islamic heritage

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUGUST 12

Al Baleed Mosque, a prominent attraction within Al Baleed Archaeological Park in Al Haffa, on the coast of Salalah, is a fascinating historical site that illuminates Oman's architectural and cultural history. The mosque was constructed in the third century AH, corresponding to the ninth century AD. Archaeological findings suggest it was built on top of older structures, potentially dating back to the Iron Age.

A total of 1,732 square metres, spanning three separate construction periods, have been uncovered during site excavations. The mosque's walls are made of massive stone blocks, still partially intact despite the passage of time. Situated on a raised area about three metres high, the walls were once covered in plaster. The mosque, with its seven entrances and surrounding terrace, plays a significant role in the community.

One of the mosque's most distinctive features is the 144



The earliest antiquity of Al Baleed Mosque is thought to date back to the Iron Age

columns facing the qibla wall in parallel rows. These columns, with square bases and floral-decorated crowns, are mainly octagonal or cylindrical in shape and were crucial in supporting the mosque's ceiling.

The 'shamasiya', or skylight, at the centre of the building is an open rectangular courtyard. This spacious area would have been essential for gatherings and introspection. A five-metre-tall square minaret to the northeast serves as a spiritual and visual focal point. Adjacent to the minaret are the ablution

areas, necessary for ceremonial purification before prayers.

A small area on the mosque's southeastern side may have functioned as a women's prayer hall or a school, emphasising the mosque's dual role as a place of worship and a community centre.

Beyond being an ancient structure, Al Baleed Mosque provides a window into Oman's rich Islamic history. It offers visitors a tangible connection to the past, serving as a silent witness to the social, religious and educational activities of people who lived centuries ago.



ARE TRADITIONAL OMANI GAMES ON THE VERGE OF EXTINCTION?



KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

How many children actually play the traditional Omani games that were once popular among their ancestors? These games used to be the glue that held societies together kept relationships alive and maintained connections between people day and night. Traditional games in the Sultanate of Oman are a vital part of the authentic Omani heritage and were once enjoyed by a large segment of the Omani population, although sadly, less so now. “We miss the evenings when we would play ‘Hawalees’ under the huge tree in the village, with Hawalees boards visible everywhere. Now, it’s a thing of the past,” says Ibtisam

al Maamari, Director of the World Heritage Department at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT). “This decline is mainly due to the younger generations spending more time on gadgets. The Ministry of Culture, Sport and Youth needs to invest more in bringing these games back to life for our kids and future generations,” she adds. Hasan al Lawati, Founder of Arab Board Games, believes that traditional games are not disappearing but are instead being preserved among families. Many young Omanis are embracing board games, reintroducing traditional games in more accessible formats and designs. “In my opinion, if these games are not given attention by the authorities, they will gradually become extinct due to the competition from electronic and modern games like football and basketball,” said Ali al Hattali, the official at the Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs. Haider al Lawati, an author, writer and columnist, attributes this decline to modern lifestyles negatively impacting the playing of traditional games. “These games have not become extinct, but their practice has declined as people turn to other games. In the past, many traditional games were played on beaches, like Muttrah Beach, from evenings until night. However, the construction of the Marine Corniche in Muttrah has reduced these games, as some require soft sand, such as the ‘Hawalees’ game,” Al Lawati recalled. There are many other games involving long sticks, small pieces of wood, and small balls played by two teams, each with six or more players. Shedding light on these games and encouraging people to play them can help reduce the time spent on electronic devices and playing electronic games. Maryam Khalfan, a journalist and entrepreneur, believes that due to advancements in digital gaming, artificial intelligence, and changes in living standards towards modern lifestyles, traditional Omani games are indeed at risk of extinction. “In the worst-case scenario, due to communication gaps and lack of social interaction between Gen Z and previous generations, traditional Omani games in many Omani communities are rapidly disappearing,” she adds. Meeran Sheikh, MD of Awthar Dhofar International Projects LLC, suggests that incorporating these games into local Omani shops, exhibitions, or hotels could help preserve them and connect people to the culture of their surroundings. Maryam bint Rashid bin Ahmed al Fazariyah, an academic, feels that traditional Omani games are at risk of extinction due to technological advancements and the popularity of modern electronic games. Efforts to document and educate people about these games, as well as integrating them into school activities and cultural festivals, could help prevent their extinction, according to Maryam. Dr Manar Nasser, a Colorectal and General Consultant Surgeon, also believes that preserving these games requires conscious efforts to bridge generational gaps and revive interest in Omani heritage.





Inspection Unit at the forefront to regulate labour market



Directives mandate that the Inspection Unit of the Security and Safety Institution conduct supervisory inspections to ensure compliance with government decisions regarding Omanisation percentages and prohibited professions for non – Omani workers

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

The Inspection Unit, affiliated with Security and Safety Services, which was inaugurated in 2024 under an agreement signed with the Ministry of Labour, plays a crucial role in conducting inspection tasks, providing security support services, and managing and operating labour care centres associated with the Ministry of Labour.

Directives mandate that the Inspection Unit of the Security and Safety Institution conduct supervisory inspections to ensure compliance with government decisions regarding Omanisation percentages and prohibited professions for non-Omani workers.

Statistics show that the

unit dealt with approximately 12,000 violating workers within eight months. More than 9,700 workers were deported to their home countries, while the remaining individuals were referred to the appropriate authorities.

Retired Brigadier General Said bin Sulaiman al Asmi, CEO of the Security and Safety Institution, confirmed that the Inspection Unit has the authority to close sites that repeatedly violate Omanisation regulations. He encouraged job-seeking youth to take advantage of Omanised professions and showcase their abilities in the labour market. He emphasised that Omanisation includes professions with high standards, contrary to common beliefs, and that the unit will continue



Said bin Sulaiman al Asmi

to conduct inspections to ensure compliance with Omanisation policies.

Al Asmi stated that the Inspection Unit has judicial authority for some workers, granted by Royal Decree No 18/2024, enhancing the institution's ability to enforce the Labour Law and Omanisation regulations.

The unit provides security

support during inspection campaigns, apprehending non-Omani workers violating the Labour Law, and managing labour care centres.

The Inspection Unit currently operates in Muscat, Al Batinah North and Dhofar, with plans to expand to other governorates. The unit has prepared labour care centres with advanced technology and adheres to safety, health and security standards.

The Security and Safety Institution provides training for new recruits, holding specialised courses with relevant authorities.

Brigadier General Al Asmi emphasised the importance of implementing management plans and programmes to achieve objectives outlined within the unit's duties and responsibilities.

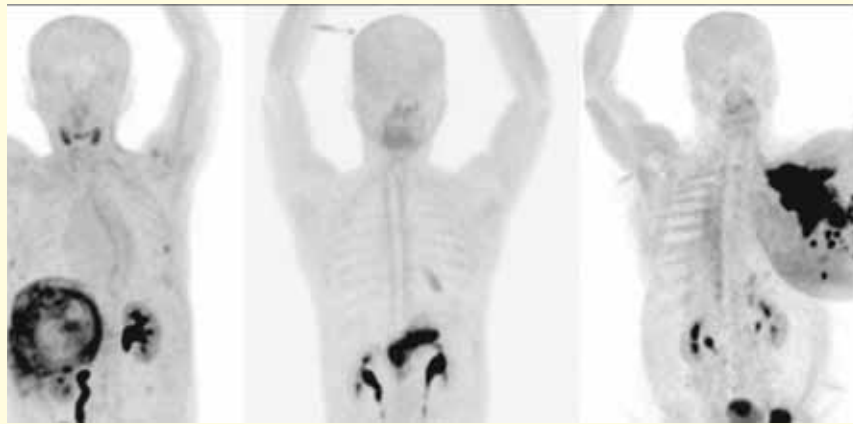


MODERATE EARTHQUAKE REPORTED IN OMAN

MUSCAT: The Earthquake Monitoring Committee (EMC) at the Sultan Qaboos University on Sunday recorded a moderate earthquake in the Sea of Oman with a magnitude of 3.3 on the Richter scale at 08.51 pm. The epicentre of the earthquake was about 51 km northeast of the Wilayat of Sur and at a depth of two kilometres.



Fibroblast Activation Protein Inhibitor studies completed



MUSCAT: The University Medical City, represented by Radiology and Nuclear Medicine Department at Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre (SQCCCRC), has announced the successful completion of the first Fibroblast Activation Protein Inhibitor (FAPI) PET/CT studies, marking a significant milestone as the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman.

The technique is based on injecting the patient with the radiopharmaceutical FAPI intravenously, which targets fibroblast activation protein, prevalent in cancer-associated fibroblasts, after which the patient is imaged in the PET/CT. This allows for more precise imaging of various tumours. In addition, FAPI PET/CT has promising applications in identifying fibrotic diseases, such as cardiac fibrosis and chronic inflammatory conditions, which expands its diagnostic applications.

"We have successfully completed the first studies of Fibroblast Activation Protein Inhibitor (FAPI) using positron tomography (PET/CT), which demonstrated high quality, starting from radiopharmaceutical preparation to accurate biodistribution during imaging," stated Dr Khulood al Riyami, Nuclear Medicine Consultant and Section Head at

SQCCCRC.

"In oncology, FAPI PET/CT has the potential to offer detailed insights into tumour biology, enhancing the accuracy of cancer diagnosis and staging. It improves the detection of cancerous tissues and plays a crucial role in treatment planning and opening the gate for future theranostics applications," Dr Khulood explained.

"We look forward to offering this cutting-edge service to our patients in the near future, further enhancing our capabilities in providing comprehensive and state-of-the-art healthcare and reducing the need for patients to travel abroad for advanced diagnostics, ensuring they receive top-tier care locally," Dr Rashid al Sukaiti, Senior Consultant Radiologist and Head of Radiology and Nuclear Medicine Department at SQCCCRC, said.

On his turn, Dr Khalid al Bimani, In-charge of SQCCCRC, remarked: "This pioneering study highlights the commitment of the University Medical City and SQCCCRC to innovation and keeping pace with the latest global advancements in medical services, under the UMC's visionary leadership that supports our continuous pursuit of excellence."

— ONA



The technique is based on injecting the patient with the radiopharmaceutical FAPI intravenously. – ONA

SALE OF VEHICLE / EQUIPMENT

Leading Construction Co. in Oman intends to dispose of their used vehicles and equipment, in 'as is where is' condition. The items identified are presently located at their Barka Khazaen and will be offered for inspection to the public on 14/8/2024, 15/8/2024 and 18/8/2024 between 08:00 am to 12:00 pm and 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.

Last date for submission of closed tender is 18/8/2024 at 05:00 pm at our Khazaen office In Barka state.

Interested parties may contact at
Tel: (+968) 26983767 / 26983777 / 26983703
Mobile: (+968) 91354151



GLOBAL CALLS FOR GAZA TRUCE GROW

GAZA: International pressure mounted on Monday for a ceasefire in Gaza, with Britain, France and Germany issuing a joint plea for an end to fighting between Israel and Palestinians with “no further delay”.

The call came a day after Palestinian group Hamas urged mediators to implement a truce plan presented by US President Joe Biden instead of holding more talks.

“The fighting must end now, and all captives still detained by Hamas must be released,” French President Emmanuel Macron, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said in a joint statement. “The people of Gaza need urgent and unfettered delivery and distribution of aid,” it said. “There can be no further delay.”

International mediators have invited Israel and Hamas to resume talks towards a long-sought truce and captives-release deal, after fighting in Gaza and the killings of groups’ leaders sparked fears of a wider conflict. Israel has accepted the invitation from

the United States, Qatar and Egypt for a round of talks planned for Thursday. Hamas said on Sunday it wanted the implementation of a truce plan laid out by Biden on May 31 and later endorsed by the UN Security Council, “rather than going through more negotiation rounds or new proposals”.

Hamas “demands that the mediators present a plan to implement what they proposed to the movement... based on Biden’s vision and the UN Security Council resolution, and compel the Israeli occupation to comply”, it said.

Unveiling the plan, Biden had called it a three-phase “roadmap to an enduring ceasefire and the release of all captives”, describing it was an Israeli proposal. Mediation efforts since then have failed to produce an agreement.

Hamas movement named its Gaza chief Yahya Sinwar to succeed slain political leader and truce negotiator Ismail Haniyeh, killed on July 31 in Tehran in an attack blamed on Israel.

Pressure for a ceasefire grew after civil defence rescuers in

The call came a day after Palestinian group Hamas urged mediators to implement a truce plan presented by US President Joe Biden

the territory said an Israeli air strike on Saturday killed 93 people at a school housing displaced Palestinians. Gaza officials said on Monday that they had identified 75 bodies of Palestinians killed in the strike.

Biden said the first phase of the proposed roadmap includes a “full and complete ceasefire” lasting six weeks, with Israeli forces withdrawing from “all populated areas of Gaza” and some captives freed in exchange for Palestinian prisoners held by Israel.

The second phase would see the remaining living captives released as the warring sides negotiate “a permanent end to hostilities”, followed by “a major reconstruction plan for Gaza” and the return of dead hostages’ remains. — AFP



Children sit in front of a house targeted in overnight Israeli strikes on Nusseirat in the Central Gaza Strip. — AFP

Police back on Bangladesh capital’s streets

DHAKA: Bangladeshi police resumed patrols of the capital Dhaka on Monday, ending a week-long strike that left a law and order vacuum following the abrupt ouster of autocratic ex-premier Sheikh Hasina.

Officers vanished from the streets of the sprawling megacity of 20 million people last week after Hasina’s resignation and flight abroad ended her 15-year rule. Police were loathed for spearheading a lethal crackdown on the weeks of protests that forced her departure, with 42 officers among the more than 450 people killed.

Police had vowed not to resume work until their safety on duty was guaranteed, but they agreed to return after late-night talks with the new interim government, helmed by Nobel laureate Muhammad Yunus.

“It’s good to be back,” assistant commissioner Snehashish Das said while standing at a busy intersection directing traffic. “As we feel secure now, we are back on duty.”

Student-led protests against Hasina’s government had been largely peaceful until police attempted to violently disperse them.



A Bangladeshi police officer holds an umbrella while controlling the traffic in a junction, in Dhaka. — AFP

Around 450 of the country’s 600 police stations were targeted in arson and vandalism attacks over the past month, according to the national police union.

Some began reopening late last week under guard by the army, an institution held in higher

esteem for largely refusing to participate in the crackdown.

In the police’s absence, the students who led the protests that toppled Hasina volunteered to restore law and order after looting and reprisal attacks in the hours after her departure.

Police had vowed not to resume work until their safety on duty was guaranteed, but they agreed to return after late-night talks with the new interim government

They acted as traffic wardens, formed overnight neighbourhood watch patrols and quickly settling the unrest. Das said there was “no tension” between police and the students who had been performing their duties.

“Students have done a tremendous job in the past few days,” he added. “Our thanks to them.”

The volunteers, for their part, said they were relieved to yield back their responsibilities. “It’s too difficult for us to manage the vehicles,” Chanu Abdullah, 27, said.

Yunus’s de facto cabinet now administering the country said it had noted with “grave concern” some attacks on minorities. In its first official statement on Sunday night, the cabinet said it would work to “find ways to resolve such heinous attacks”. — AFP

Sudan at ‘cataclysmic breaking point’, says UN agency

GENEVA: Sudan is at a catastrophic “breaking point”, with tens of thousands of preventable deaths looming due to multiple crises, the United Nations’ migration agency warned on Monday.

The International Organization for Migration said famine and floods were adding to a catalogue of challenges facing millions of people in the war-torn country, amid the world’s largest displacement crisis.

“Make no mistake: these conditions will persist and worsen if the conflict and restrictions on humanitarian access continue,” Othman Belbeisi, IOM Middle East and North Africa director, said in a statement. “Without an immediate, massive and coordinated global response, we risk witnessing tens of thousands of preventable deaths in the coming months. We are at breaking point – a

catastrophic, cataclysmic breaking point”

War has raged since April 2023 between the Sudanese army under Abdel Fattah al Burhan and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces, led by his former deputy Mohamed Hamdan Daglo.

The conflict has left tens of thousands dead, according to the UN.

The IOM said new figures showed more than 10.7 million people are internally displaced within Sudan, with many uprooted several times over. Meanwhile 2.3 million have fled across the borders into neighbouring countries.

Flooding has displaced more than 20,000 people since June across 11 of Sudan’s 18 states, the IOM said, adding that critical infrastructure had been washed away, disrupting the delivery of vital supplies. — AFP



A Sudanese man sits amid the destruction in his village near the northern Sudanese town of Dongola. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

BANGKOK

Thai PM faces possible ouster in court case

Thai Prime Minister Srettha Thavisin could leave his office when the country’s Constitutional Court rules on his appointment of a cabinet minister with a criminal conviction. Srettha is accused of violating ethics rules by appointing Pichit Chuenban, a lawyer associated with the former prime minister Thaksin Shinawatra, as a minister. Pichit was sentenced to six months in prison in 2008 for a corruption-related offence. Pichit resigned from his role



in a bid to protect Srettha, but the Constitutional Court still agreed to hear the case.

The PM has suggested the possibility of a cabinet reshuffle if he remains in office. — AFP

TOKYO

Storm Maria hits Japan with record rain

Tropical Storm Maria made landfall in northern Japan on Monday, having dumped the most rain in some areas since records began and forced the cancellation of dozens of flights.

Maria came ashore around 8:30 am near Ofunato city in Iwate prefecture. The municipalities issued evacuation warnings to some 315,000 residents overnight, and around 2,000 people spent the night at local shelters.

The storm dumped 368 millimetres of rain in the 24 hours



to Monday morning in Kuji city, the most since the meteorological agency began keeping records there in 1978. The area’s average monthly rainfall for August is 177.9 mm. — AFP

JAKARTA

Indonesia president holds first cabinet meeting

Indonesian President Joko Widodo on Monday held his first cabinet meeting in the country’s future capital. The \$32-billion megaproject Nusantara was widely expected to be inaugurated on August 17, Indonesia’s Independence Day, but building delays and funding woes have cast doubt on the schedule.

Widodo hailed the city-in-progress, which is expected to be fully ready in 2045. “Not all countries have the opportunity,



have the ability to build their capital starting from zero,” he said. The city is “being built with the concept of a forest city, a jungle city, a city full of green” in eastern Borneo island. — AFP



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In brief

WASHINGTON



US OFFICIALS TO TRAVEL TO CHINA FOR ECONOMIC MEETINGS

Senior American officials are due to visit China this week, the US government said on Monday, seeking to keep ties between the world's two biggest economies steady. The trip to Shanghai will be for talks under a financial working group (FWG) formed last year, with both sides due to discuss financial stability, issues relating to cross-border data.

The working group's meetings will take place on Thursday and Friday, with the US delegation being led by Brent Neiman, Treasury's deputy under secretary for international finance. Officials will be joined by representatives from the Federal Reserve, Securities and Exchange Commission. — AFP

BARCELONA



CATALONIA SWEARS IN NEW GOVT ENDING SEPARATIST RULE

Spain's ruling Socialists regained control of Catalonia's regional government as a new cabinet was sworn in on Monday, ending over a decade of separatist rule in the region.

The 16-member cabinet is led by Salvador Illa, who was Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez's health minister during the Covid-19 pandemic. "I want to assure you that the government will govern for all, this is a real obsession," Illa said during the swearing-in ceremony.

Illa secured the support of the tiny far-left Comuns party and moderate separatist ERC party to become regional leader in a vote on Thursday in Catalonia's regional assembly. — AFP

THE HAGUE



ICC PROSECUTOR SAYS 'MONITORING' VENEZUELA TENSIONS

The International Criminal Court chief prosecutor said on Monday he is "actively monitoring" tensions in Venezuela over the result of the country's presidential election.

Karim Khan also said his office had received "multiple reports of instances of violence and other allegations" following the July 28 presidential election.

Khan's office said that it was "independently evaluating all these reports. ICC said it had "engaged" with the Venezuelan government "at the highest-level to underline the importance of ensuring that the rule of law is adhered to in the present moment. — AFP

Putin orders army to 'dislodge' Ukraine

MOSCOW: President Vladimir Putin ordered the army on Monday to "dislodge" Ukrainian troops who have entered Russian territory as authorities said over 120,000 people had been evacuated away from the fighting. Kyiv launched a surprise offensive into Russia's western Kursk region last Tuesday, capturing over two dozen settlements in the most significant cross-border attack on Russian soil since World War II.

"One of the obvious goals of the enemy is to sow discord, strife, intimidate people, destroy the unity and cohesion of Russian society," Putin told a televised meeting with government officials. "The main task is, of course, for the defence ministry to dislodge the enemy from our territories," he said.

Some 121,000 people have fled the Kursk region since the start of the fighting, which has killed at least 12 civilians and injured 121 more, regional governor Alexei Smirnov told the meeting with Putin.

Authorities in Kursk announced on Monday they were widening their evacuation area to include Belovsky district, home to some 14,000 residents. The neighbouring Belgorod region also said it was evacuating its border district of Krasnoyarskiy.

Ukraine has pierced into the region by at least 12 kilometres and has captured 28 towns and



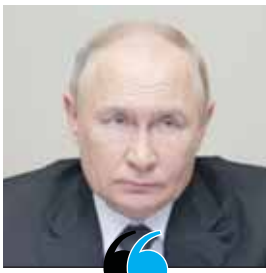
Ukrainian servicemen operate artillery in an undisclosed area, in Pokrovsk, Donetsk region. — AFP

villages, with the new front 40 kilometres long, Smirnov said. A top Ukrainian official said over the weekend that the operation was aimed at stretching Russian troops and destabilising the country after months of slow Russian advances across the frontline.

Putin said Russia would respond by showing "unanimous support for all those in distress" and claimed there had been an increase in men signing up to fight. "The enemy will receive a worthy riposte," he said.

The assault appeared to catch the Kremlin off guard. Russia's

army rushed in reserve troops, tanks, aviation, artillery and drones in a bid to quash it. But it conceded on Sunday that Ukraine had penetrated up to 30 kilometres into Russian territory in places. It said some forces were near the villages of Tolpino and Obschchy Kolodez, around



One of the obvious goals of the enemy is to destroy the unity and cohesion of Russian society. The main task is to dislodge the enemy from our territories

VLADIMIR PUTIN
Russian President

25 kilometres and 30 kilometres from the Russia-Ukraine border.

The Ukrainian official said thousands of Ukrainian troops were involved in the operation. Russia's defence ministry said on Monday that its air defence systems had destroyed 18 Ukrainian drones — including 11 over the Kursk region.

Russia's emergency situations ministry said on Sunday that over 44,000 residents in the Kursk region have applied for financial assistance. Russia's rail operator has meanwhile organised emergency trains from Kursk to Moscow, around 450 kilometres away, for those fleeing. — AFP

Greece calls for EU help to fight Athens wildfires

ATHENS: The European Union on Monday said four countries would send firefighters to Greece after it requested assistance to combat a massive wildfire burning through Athens suburbs.

"The EU civil protection mechanism was activated upon request of the Greek authorities," EU spokesman Balazs Ujvari said in a statement, adding that Italy, France, the Czech Republic and Romania were sending units to help.

On Monday, France is sending 180 firefighters, 55 trucks and a helicopter to help Greece cope with raging wildfires, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said.

Thousands of people fled their homes around Athens, including in the historic town of Marathon, as strong winds fanned a wall of wildfire flames closer to the Greek capital. A 30-kilometre long frontline of fires, more than 25 metres high in places, was moving towards Athens, the ERT public broadcaster reported.

Nearly 700 firefighters and over 30 aircraft battled the blazes that had advanced into the city's outer suburbs near Mount Pentelikon.

Authorities opened the Olympic stadium in northern Athens and other stadiums to house those fleeing. Three major hospitals have been placed on standby.

One firefighter suffered serious burns, another was hospitalised with breathing trouble and 13 other people were treated for milder respiratory problems, fire brigade spokesman Vassilis



Flames rise as firefighters and volunteers try to extinguish a wildfire burning in Nea Penteli, Greece. — Reuters

Thousands of people fled their homes around Athens, including in the historic town of Marathon, as strong winds fanned a wall of wildfire flames

Vathrakogiannis said.

Television footage showed flames burning among homes in Nea Penteli, a leafy Athens suburb which also told residents to relocate.

Several smaller communities and towns, including Marathon, which gave the Olympic long distance race its name, started to evacuate on Sunday.

Smoke drifted through central Athens as thick grey clouds

engulfed Mount Pentelikon, which looms above the capital and is known for producing the marble used in the Acropolis and other ancient buildings. The wind had rekindled the fire in 40 different locations on Monday.

Civil Protection Minister Vassilis Kikilias issued a warning on Saturday that half the country faced a high-risk of fires due to high temperatures, strong winds and drought conditions.

On Monday, he said that a fire that broke out on Sunday near the town of Varnavas spread even though a water-bombing aircraft reached the area in just five minutes. Rising temperatures are leading to longer wildfire seasons and increasing the area burnt in the flames, according to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change. — AFP

UK welcomes 'de-escalation' of far-right violence

LONDON: The UK government welcomed on Monday the "de-escalation" of far-right inspired disorder and rioting following a knife attack that killed three children, but insisted officials remain on "high alert".

Prime Minister Keir Starmer's spokeswoman was speaking a day after hundreds of people gathered for the funeral of nine-year-old victim Alice da Silva Aguiar. Mourners wore white, a tradition for some in Portugal, where Alice's parents hail from.

The violence in English towns and cities, blamed on the far right, came after misinformation spread about the alleged perpetrator of the mass stabbing on July 29 at a Taylor Swift-themed dance class in Southport, northwestern England.

"We welcome that there has been a de-escalation this weekend. But we're certainly not complacent and remain on high alert," the prime minister's spokeswoman said.

The stabbings sparked a riot in Southport the following evening, on July 30, and violence in more than a dozen English towns and cities as well as in

Northern Ireland over the ensuing week.

Starmer's spokeswoman added that authorities had acted decisively to quell the unrest but that there was no room for complacency.

"We also recognise that the job is not done until people feel safe in their communities, but thanks to the work of our police officers, prosecutor and judiciary, we have seen a swift response from the justice system," she said. "Within a matter of days, we've seen criminals involved arrested, charged, sentenced and behind bars."

Officials pointed the finger at far-right agitators and opportunist "thugs" accused of using the Southport tragedy to further their anti-immigration agenda.

Misinformation spread online in the immediate aftermath of the stabbing spree, claiming that the perpetrator was an immigrant.

One of those rioting was a 12-year-old boy who on Monday admitted throwing a missile at a police van in Manchester, also in the northwest. — AFP



Police officers stand by a cordoned off area in Leicester square, London. — AFP

Better preparations can yield good results



Hopefully, we are coming to the end of peak summer months and back to school in the Sultanate of Oman.

As most governorates of the country were sweltering with highly unbearable temperatures, the entire region travelled down south to Dhofar Governorate, and going by the latest statistics, preparations to promote this unique khareef tourism seem to have gone well.

There have been fewer complaints this year, including about those annoying mosquitoes. The only area of contention has been the traffic chaos on some narrow roads of the Wilayat of Salalah, which is understandable due to the unprecedented inflow of tourists from the rest of the region.

Khareef will be over soon and we must prepare for winter tourism season in the rest of the country, including here in the capital Muscat.

What we can learn from Salalah is that even some good short-term projects are important, instead of focusing on big ticket projects and they take some years to implement.

Despite the regular bad news coming out of

the troubled places around us, Oman continues to be one of the safest places for tourists and we should be ready to welcome guests with lots of new offerings.

Muscat Municipality has recently indicated that the annual Muscat Festival is on the cards this year without specifying the actual dates.

It will be a good idea to have Muscat Festival at the time when tourist inflow is at its peak, which seems to be December and January, instead of January-February.

Let us hope that the festival in the capital will be a healthy competition to Salalah Khareef by giving tourists to come under one roof and celebrate the cultural and social diversity of this country.

The Minister of Heritage and Tourism rightly said that the Sultanate of Oman is the best place for tourists to get a local experience by interacting with citizens.

“The Sultanate of Oman can offer tourists a slice of history, geography, natural landscape, adventure, culture and heritage, and more. The best time to be in Oman is winter, while the

KHAREEF WILL BE OVER SOON IN DHOFAR AND WE MUST PREPARE FOR WINTER TOURISM SEASON IN THE REST OF THE COUNTRY, INCLUDING IN MUSCAT

southern part of the country is a destination throughout the year.”

Lot of ambitious projects announced earlier are unlikely to be completed during this season, but they hold good for the future of tourism in Oman.

Going by numbers, Oman received over two million visitors this year and going by the trends, we should beat the expectations by the year-end.

The launch of the Unified GCC visa will be an added advantage if implemented this year as mentioned by the authorities at the highest level.

The unified visa will be a game-changer for regional tourism and Middle East airlines.

It simplifies the travel process, making it easier for tourists to explore multiple destinations within the GCC region.

For airlines, this translates into increased passenger traffic. The unified visa is expected to boost demand for regional travel, enhance connectivity, and support economic growth through tourism.

It also fosters greater collaboration among GCC countries, positioning the region as a cohesive and attractive tourism destination.

Ugandans recount deadly garbage landslide

GRACE MATSIKO

Esther Nalukwago, a 42-year-old mother of twins, fled half-dressed in panic when a torrent of rotting garbage engulfed her home in the Ugandan capital Kampala, in a disaster that has claimed the lives of at least 23 people including children.

“I saw one side of my room collapsing. I dashed out,” she recounted on Monday, surrounded by the remains of her home in the city’s northern district of Kiteezi.

“When I was out of the house, shaking out of fear and panic, the surrounding houses were covered by an avalanche of black soil and shortly after people were wailing,” she said.

Scores of rescuers clad in scant protective gear shivered in the morning drizzle as they searched through the fetid landslide, believed to have been caused by recent heavy rainfall. The death toll rose to 23 on Monday, with the authorities saying previously that the victims included five children.

Unfazed by the stench and oblivious to a clutch of huge Marabou storks scavenging a sack being eaten by maggots, scrap-metal collector Nalukwago gave thanks her twins were at school when the incident occurred. Others were not so fortunate.

“What happened on Saturday is something that will not be erased from my memory for years to come,” said Isma Mwogezi, who lost his wife and two children.

The 61-year-old said that he had lived in the area for almost four decades, raising 11 children, before the incident cut two of their lives short.

Mwogezi lashed out at President Yoweri Museveni’s promise of five million Ugandan shillings (about \$1,300) to bereaved families for each fatality. “No amount of money can compensate a life lost,” he said.

Museveni, who also offered \$270 for each of those injured in the landslide, clarified that the money was to help the families rather than compensate for the loss.

Standing near where his two-bedroom home once was, an angry Mwogezi still blamed authorities. “Why wait to compensate people instead of preventing deaths?”

“The government should own up and accept the mistake,” said local community leader Abubaker Semuwemba Lwanyaga, echoing Mwogezi. The 36-acre landfill was established in 1996, according to local media, and takes in almost all garbage collected across Kampala, about 1,500 tonnes a day. But from its creation, residents had worried about the site, Lwanyaga said, with many living there since childhood. — AFP

Saving the faltering energy SDG



Woochong Um

The writer is CEO of the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet

A NEW ANALYSIS BY MAJOR INTERNATIONAL INSTITUTIONS FINDS THAT THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITHOUT ACCESS TO ELECTRICITY HAS INCREASED FOR THE FIRST TIME IN 10 YEARS, INDICATING A SETBACK IN THE WORLD’S PURSUIT OF UNIVERSAL ENERGY ACCESS BY 2030

Although we are fast approaching five years until the deadline for the Sustainable Development Goals, we are still far from achieving SDG7, which calls for universal access to clean, affordable energy. Worse, we are in the middle of yet another year that will shatter heat records. Each month since June 2023 – 13 months in a row – has ranked as the planet’s hottest average on record for that month, and June marked the third month in a row that Earth had exceeded the 1.5°C limit set by the Paris agreement.

Extreme heat brings extreme weather: longer droughts, record rainfall, more intense storms and changes in seasonality. Unelectrified communities, who are the least at fault for our warming planet, have the most to lose from these trends. A recent analysis by the International Energy Agency, the International Renewable Energy Agency, the United Nations Statistics Division, the World Bank, and the World Health Organization reached a worrying conclusion: we are falling short in our pursuit of SDG7, and current efforts do not look like they are enough to get us back on track.

Since the turn of the century, the share of the global population with access to electricity has grown from just over 75-91 per cent. But the pace of progress has fallen behind the rate of population growth. Disruptions in energy markets caused by the Covid-19 pandemic, Russia’s war in Ukraine, and instability in the Middle East have caused the number of people lacking access to electricity to increase for the first time in over ten years, to 685 million people in 2022 – ten million more than in 2021. If this continues, more than 660 million people will still be without electricity in 2030, and our pursuit of SDG7 will have failed.

While there have been significant strides toward connecting populations across Asia, Latin America, and other parts of the world, Sub-Saharan Africa continues to lag behind and is home to 80 per cent of all people without access to energy globally. With hundreds of millions of people at risk of being left behind, urgent action is needed to avert more setbacks on the path to SDG7. The current pace of renewable-



Since the turn of the century, the share of the global population with access to electricity has grown from just over 75-91 per cent.

energy adoption still falls short of what it will take to hit the Paris agreement’s mid-century Net-Zero targets and to meet the immediate development needs of those living in energy poverty.

There are still reasons for hope. They are the same reasons that guided my tenure at the Asian Development Bank, and which attracted me to join the Global Energy Alliance for People and Planet. Achieving SDG7 and solving climate change is possible only if we work together to tackle this race against time.

We are already seeing Alliance partners mobilise. This spring, the World Bank and the African Development Bank announced a new, first-of-its-kind partnership to bring electricity to 300 million people in Africa by 2030. This is precisely the level of international collaboration that emerging economies desperately need.

To close the gap, we must strengthen existing policies and mobilise greater investment, especially for programmes targeting remote and low-income areas where most of the unelectrified population lives. Too much focus and investment in the global energy transition are given to greening the grid and reducing fossil-fuel consumption in wealthy countries. Yet, there seems to be less understanding that consuming more energy is essential to improving the economic prospects of the 685 million people living without electricity, and the hundreds of millions more with unreliable or unaffordable access.

Ending energy poverty – by providing the “modern energy minimum” of 1,000 kilowatt-hours per person per year – implies enormous additional annual energy demand.

Today, per capita energy consumption in Sub-Saharan Africa, excluding South Africa, is only 180 kWh, whereas most citizens of rich countries consume 6,000-13,000 kWh every year. If energy-poor countries do not receive the support needed to deliver electricity at scale from renewables, the majority of global emissions by 2050 could derive from them.

In 2024, the share of global clean-energy investment in emerging markets and developing economies outside China is expected to remain at around 15 per cent of the total. That is far below what is required to ensure full access to modern energy and meet rising energy demand in a sustainable way. With Nigeria and emerging economies across Africa facing economic crises, international cooperation to unlock climate finance for energy access has never been more urgent.

Energy creates opportunity. When investments in electricity are matched with investments in the tools to use that energy productively – solar-powered water pumps, refrigerators, agro-processing machinery, equipment for microenterprises, and essential services like schools and hospitals – incomes grow, productivity rises, new businesses emerge, jobs are created, and people thrive. Making these investments a reality will require unprecedented levels of international collaboration. No organisation can do it alone.

The world can’t afford another year of backsliding on SDG7, and the only way to reach Net-Zero is through an energy transition that leaves no one behind. This is the moment for bold action. © Project Syndicate, 2024

Transient moments of life

Fancy were the photo albums of yesteryears. In the 60s, black and white pictures were smaller in size and were placed in albums, with tracing paper-like sheets between them to prevent the pictures from sticking to the opposite page. Looking through them can transport you into a session of daydreaming. Even if you weren't from that decade, it doesn't matter, as you could easily drift away, imagining what those days must have been like. The beauty of black and white photography was that it left much to the imagination. Sightseeing pictures offer a perspective on how simple places were. Roads and beaches were not as crowded. The backgrounds of the pictures were always clear. The charm of black and white pictures is breathtaking and nostalgic. Life was simple. From the 70s onwards, there was a shift towards colour, and albums became larger. The 80s and 90s saw the rise of quick film development, which meant instant photo albums. They became smaller and easier to hold and carry. Perhaps the term "negatives" is no longer used, and developing film may not hold the same significance today, but experts say that if stored properly, negatives will continue to be in good condition, allowing pictures to be developed many years later. They suggest that negatives can outlast digital files. The new millennium saw the transformation to digital photography, which became unstoppable once everyone started owning a smartphone. Photography became a daily art, and selfies turned into an obsession. Street photography became so easy. The urge for self-expression became a necessity, and now no one has to wait for someone else to take a picture. We live in an era of timelines



Lakshmi Kothaneth
@lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

LOOKING THROUGH PHOTOS CAN TRANSPORT YOU INTO A DAYDREAM. EVEN IF YOU WEREN'T FROM THE ERA OF BLACK AND WHITE PHOTOGRAPHS, IT DOESN'T MATTER—YOU COULD STILL DRIFT AWAY, IMAGINING WHAT THOSE DAYS MIGHT HAVE BEEN LIKE

and status updates. Photography today, aided by mobile phones, has become a sentiment more than an artistic expression. We no longer need to visit studios to develop pictures. We store them and can view them whenever we wish. But how do we pass them on to the next generation? Simply hand over the storage. As years go by, they can look at the images and recall childhood memories. Looking through my collection of inherited photo albums is a treat—a walk down memory lane. Family photo collections are chapters of life. The images portray the person, but we can only wonder about their thoughts and what they were going through. Who took the picture? How did they travel to that place? What was the occasion? Why were they all so serious? Of course, now we take pictures from all angles and capture hundreds on each occasion. We have social media platforms and apps with filters to enhance appearance and mood. But when you have a collection, the images collectively describe the journey of life—birth, first steps, childhood, picnics, school days, college, marriage. Parents collect these special moments, and children eagerly pose, but they only realise the true value of the pictures later. Photographers are truly special people. They capture moments forever. Many people featured in older albums may no longer be here, or some may no longer be in touch. There are stories of happy endings, bitter break-ups, sad goodbyes, and glorious moments. These are life stories that we hold in our hands. That's why they say a picture is worth a thousand words. Transient moments of life captured forever. You may not have been there, but you can still be part of it in your own way.

REHEARSAL FOR THE DAY!



Indian National Cadet Corps (NCC) cadets take part in rehearsals for the upcoming India's Independence Day celebrations, in Amritsar, on Monday. — AFP

The best climate policy puts carrots before sticks

It is widely recognised that the transition to a zero-carbon economy requires both carrots and sticks—incentives and penalties. Less appreciated is the importance of the sequence: carrots before sticks. True, economists have long insisted that the only way to cut emissions of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases rapidly and at scale is to put a price on them. In a world where burning fossil fuels causes more damage than it adds in value to GDP, each tonne of coal or barrel of oil consumed ultimately destroys collective prosperity. Calculations of these emissions' social costs provide a guide to pricing them. Accounting for the full damages caused by each tonne of CO2 emitted, an appropriate price is well over \$200. But that translates to almost \$2 per gallon (or \$0.50 per litre) of petrol at the pump, which helps to explain why, for example, neither Europe's well-functioning carbon market (with prices of around \$75 per tonne) nor Germany's own carbon tax covers petrol to the extent needed. In Germany, where 80 million people own 40 million petrol- and diesel-powered cars, an adequately high tax would appear too punitive to pass political muster. These calculations also explain why electric vehicles (EVs) are such an important solution. The technology's advantage lies in basic physics: EVs convert 90 per cent of their power into distance, compared to just 20 per cent for internal combustion engines.



Monika Schnit—er

The writer is Chair of Comparative Economics at the Ludwig-Maximilians-University of Munich and Chair of the German Council of Economic Experts



Gernot Wagner

The writer is a climate economist at Columbia Business School, is the author, most recently, of Geoengineering: The Gamble (Polity, 2021)

Similar efficiency ratios apply when comparing heat pumps to gas furnaces, induction hobs to gas stoves, and LEDs to the incandescent lightbulbs of yore. That last example is particularly instructive, as the transition to LEDs is already mostly complete. Given that incandescent bulbs were notoriously inefficient—converting 90 per cent of power to heat instead of light—switching to LEDs has paid for itself many times over. But even this common-sense change required coordination to achieve scale and to overcome barriers like high upfront costs and landlords' unwillingness to provide more efficient bulbs to tenants. In the United States, it started with the Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007, signed into law by President George W. Bush, which set new efficiency standards for household lightbulbs. That triggered a typical culture-war response, with Republican Congresswoman Michele Bachmann introducing the Light Bulb Freedom of Choice Act in 2008. Fortunately, her bill went nowhere, and neither did President Donald Trump's attempts to abolish efficiency standards a decade later. By then, LEDs had already taken over as the better, more efficient, and ultimately cheaper technology. Physics and economics trumped culture wars, and both consumers and the planet benefited as a result.

The transitions to EVs, heat pumps, induction hobs, and many other newer, better technologies are now following similar—and similarly rapid—trajectories. While the cost of coal power in inflation-adjusted terms has stayed roughly the same for more than 200 years, the costs of solar power and batteries have declined by more than 99 per cent in the past 30 years alone. In fact, solar is now the cheapest source of electricity ever—even accounting for the fact that the sun doesn't shine at night—and it is bound to become even cheaper. Sun, sand, and human innovation are all plentiful, leading to further economies of scale. But, like LED adoption, rapid solar deployment



The costs of solar power and batteries have declined by more than 99 per cent in the past 30 years.

requires coordination among households, utilities, regulators, industry, and those developing new technologies. After all, the goal is to have plug-in EVs charging when the sun shines, and powering the dishwasher or helping to stabilise the local grid when it doesn't. Coordination is also needed to encourage purchases of solar panels and other technologies in the first place. When Germany launched its ambitious Energiewende (energy transition) in 2011, feed-in tariffs and other subsidies helped solar-panel manufacturers climb the learning curve and drive down costs. However, solar manufacturers then decamped to China, which drove costs down further but hurt German

employment. And now, massive new US subsidies under the Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) may lead more European clean-tech businesses to look to greener shores, this time across the Atlantic. The proper response to these developments is not to give up on newer, more efficient technologies. It is to find other ways to manufacture and deploy them at home. The European Union's ban on sales of cars powered by internal combustion engines beginning in 2035 would help, as would a coordinated push to support the adoption of heat pumps. Backpedalling on these policies would be a big mistake. Europeans will need to devise creative solutions to subsidise the production and adoption of clean technologies. Electricity-market reforms that reward low-carbon power generation, thereby passing lower solar-power prices on to consumers, are a good start. On EVs, heat pumps, and other more efficient products, targeted transition schedules ought to be part of the package. They provide investment certainty and balance carrots and sticks. New York State, for example, has banned gas connections to most new buildings (a measure that Germany has yet to pass), thus gradually reducing its reliance on a fossil-fuel source while stopping short of taxing it.

sport



Al Wehda team members and officials celebrate with the league shield.

Al Wehda crowned champions of Amateur League

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

Al Wehda team, representing Sohar Club in Al Batinah North Governorate, was crowned champion of the 2024 ‘Support Your Team’ Amateur League for the first time in its history, after winning the final match against Al Muladdah team, representing Al Musannah Club in Al Batinah South Governorate, with a score of 1-0 in the match held at Seeb Stadium.

The final match was sponsored by Basil bin Ahmed al Rawas, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports

and Youth for Sports and Youth, and in the presence of Salim al Wahaibi, Chairman of the Oman Football Association.

The match started with attacks by Al Wehda Club, while Al Muladdah relied on a defensive style and quick counterattacks. The first 20 minutes of the match passed without any significant threats to the goal of the two teams. Al Wehda team players tried to advance through the flanks and had several opportunities, one of which almost announced the first goal in the 30th minute, had Al Muladdah club's defence not been able to keep it away.

In the 30th minute, Al Wehda nearly opened the scoring after a series of attacks from the wings, creating several dangerous opportunities. However, Al Muladdah's defence shone, successfully clearing the ball before it could reach the net, resulting in a goalless draw at the end of the first half.

The two teams started the second half with a clear determination to achieve victory, as their insistence appeared through high pressure and repeated attempts to reach the net and score the first goal. During the first five minutes of this half, the two

teams exchanged attacks and opportunities, which ignited the atmosphere of the match and increased the enthusiasm of the fans.

But as time passed, Al Wehda succeeded in imposing their control over the course of the game, as their players took possession of the ball and showed a strong desire to score the first goal. After a series of offensive attempts, the team got a corner kick in the 56th minute. Ibrahim al Balushi executed the kick brilliantly, as he rose above all the opposing players and headed the ball powerfully into the net, announcing his team's

lead in the result.

Immediately, the coach of Al Muladdah Club responded by making a quick substitution, as he pushed Ahmed al Saadi instead of Mu'ayyad al Garbi in an attempt to strengthen the attack and adjust the result. Indeed, Al Muladdah players advanced forward and put pressure on Al Wehda's defence, and got several dangerous opportunities, most notably a header by Naseeb, but Al Wehda's goalkeeper and defence excelled in stopping it.

Despite the continuous pressure from Al Muladdah, Al Wehda managed to maintain

their lead and successfully defend their goal, and eventually came out victorious 1-0, to be crowned with the title and gold medals.

Al Muladdah team came in second place and won the silver medals. The Al Qadisiyah team (Ibri) came third to win the bronze medals.

In the individual awards, Al Khadhra team's Ibrahim al Rasbi became the tournament's top scorer with six goals, while Al Muladdah's Al Hussein al Kazerouni was the player of the tournament and Dawood al Kahali from Al Wehda's was the best goalkeeper.

Omantel League 2024-25 to start on August 15

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

The top-tier Oman football league, the ‘Omantel League’, for the 2024-2025 season will kick off with the first-round matches on August 15. The action starts at Al Saada Complex, where Dhofar will host Sur in an exciting opener. On the same day, Al Buraimi Complex will host the match between Al Nasr and last season's runners-up, Al Nahda.

Thursday's matches will conclude with the title-holders, Seeb, taking on Ibri at Seeb Stadium in a game anticipated to be intense, given the aspirations of both teams this season.

The first-round matches continue on Friday, with Seeb Stadium witnessing the clash between Oman Club and Saham Club, in a match where both teams seek to start strongly. Sohar Complex will also host the match between Al Rustaq and Sohar, an exciting confrontation between two teams with large fan bases.

The round concludes with a match between Al Shabab and Al Khaboura at Al Rustaq Complex, with both teams aiming for a positive start to the season.

This round comes amid



great anticipation from Omani fans, who are eager to see their favourite teams perform at their best in this new season.

The first round is expected to feature strong competition and impressive football performances, as the teams seek to prove their capabilities and readiness to achieve their goals.

VAR DELAYED

In other news, the Oman Football Association (OFA) has confirmed the postponement of the implementation of Video Assistant Referee (VAR) technology until further notice. This decision followed a meeting between Salim bin Saeed al Wahaibi, Chairman of the Oman



Football Association, and the heads of the Omantel League clubs to discuss the application of VAR technology.

During the meeting, details of the technology's application in televised matches were explained. However, the clubs insisted on the principle of fairness in broadcasting all

matches and applying the technology in accordance with Fifa regulations.

In this context, it was agreed that the OFA would coordinate with the relevant authorities in the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and the Ministry of Information to find a suitable solution for television

broadcasting, whether live or recorded, with the installation of VAR devices in all sports complexes to ensure fairness. The clubs were also given the opportunity to discuss their demands with officials from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and the Ministry of Information.

FRANCE BIDS RELUCTANT FAREWELL TO DAZZLING GAMES

PARIS: France bid a reluctant farewell on Monday to an ‘enchanted’ fortnight of Olympic sport as athletes headed home from Paris, praising a dazzling edition of the Games that has breathed new life into the biggest show on earth.

Hollywood star Tom Cruise added stardust at the closing ceremony on Sunday evening — and provided a link to the next Games in Los Angeles — by abseiling into the national stadium.

The ‘Mission Impossible’ star descended on a wire in front of 71,500 spectators, grabbed the Olympic flag, and jumped onto a motorbike, to the delight of thousands of dancing athletes and awe-struck fans.

The final act of the Paris Olympics brought relief that an event foreshadowed by worries about terror attacks, strikes, or protests had passed off with barely a hitch. But there was also sadness that two weeks of high-spirited celebration had come to an end.

“Keep the flame alive,” urged the front-page headline of France’s biggest sports newspaper, *L’Equipe*, which featured new national swimming hero Leon Marchand and urged the French people to maintain the spirit “of this enchanted fortnight”.

At the Athletes’ Village in northern Paris, bleary-eyed athletes were packing their bags after a late night, with the French capital’s two main airports braced for a huge influx of travellers and sports equipment.

Magda Skarbonkiewicz, a Team USA fencer, said she would return home filled with memories of competing inside the Grand Palais, one of the historic venues used around the French capital.

“It’s such an iconic venue and just nothing like I’ve ever seen before,” she said. “It’s amazing to see so many people care about fencing the way the French people do.”

‘SEINE-SATIONAL’

During Sunday night’s closing ceremony, which stressed the Olympics’ core message of peace and cooperation, International Olympic Committee (IOC) President Thomas Bach praised the Paris Games for being “sport at its best”.

“These were sensational Olympic Games from start to finish,” Bach said. “Or dare I say: Seine-sational Games,” the IOC chief quipped in a pun about the river flowing through Paris, which was a sometimes fickle star of the event.

Observers had seen Paris 2024 as essential for the Olympics brand as a whole, coming after a Covid-affected edition in Tokyo and a corruption-tainted version in Rio de Janeiro in 2016.

Around 9,000 athletes flooded into the Stade de

France on Sunday night for a show that featured music from French electro act Air, guitar band Phoenix, Belgian singer Angèle, and the Cambodian rapper VannDa.

“We knew you would be brilliant, but you were magic,” Paris 2024 organising chief Tony Estanguet told the crowd during a triumphalist speech. He said the Games had transformed “a nation of implacable complainers” into “unbridled supporters who don’t want to stop singing”.

Much of the media commentary has focused on the uplifting impact of the Games on the generally morose national mood.

Just weeks before the Olympics, snap elections called by President Emmanuel Macron delivered a hung parliament and a historic number of seats for the far-right National Rally party. “The Paris Games offered the capital and the entire country more than two weeks of fervour and happiness that were so unexpected and appreciated, given that they came after a political period dominated by the sad passions of decline and xenophobia,” said an editorial in *Le Monde* newspaper.

“For 17 days, the stereotype of the indifferent, grumpy Frenchman went missing,” wrote sports writer Owen Slot in *The Times* newspaper, adding that Paris had “made the Olympic Games look more beautiful than ever before.”

NEXT STOP: LA

The closing spectacle marked the beginning of the four-year countdown to the LA Games, and American gymnastics icon Simone Biles joined Los Angeles Mayor Karen Bass as the Olympic flag was formally handed over.

The ceremony followed 17 days of drama-filled sporting action lit up by Biles, American sprinter Noah Lyles, Pakistan’s javelin king Arshad Nadeem, and casual Turkish shooter Yusuf Dikeç, who has become an Internet sensation.

They also featured a damaging gender row about two female boxers, Imane Khelif of Algeria and Taiwan’s Lin Yu-ting, who both went on to win gold.

The last day of sporting action saw the United States pip China for the top spot in the battle for medals after the US women’s basketball team squeezed past France 67-66 to clinch the last gold of the Games. The win — the eighth consecutive Olympic women’s basketball title won by the USA — ensured the Americans finished level with China on 40 golds each. The USA, however, finished on top of the overall medal table with a total of 126 medals, with China in second place on 91. — AFP

PARIS 24

Top 15 Olympic medal earners compared

Rank*	Gold medals won	Total medals won	Medals per million population
1	United States 40	United States 126	New Zealand 3.83
2	China 40	China 91	Australia 1.99
3	Japan 20	Great Britain 65	Hungary 1.98
4	Australia 18	France 64	Netherlands 1.90
5	France 16	Australia 53	Great Britain 0.95
6	Netherlands 15	Japan 45	France 0.94
7	Great Britain 14	Italy 40	Italy 0.68
8	South Korea 13	Netherlands 34	Canada 0.67
9	Italy 12	Germany 33	South Korea 0.62
10	Germany 12	South Korea 32	Germany 0.39
11	New Zealand 10	Canada 27	United States 0.38
12	Canada 9	New Zealand 20	Spain 0.37
13	Uzbekistan 8	Hungary 19	Japan 0.36
14	Hungary 6	Spain 18	Uzbekistan 0.36
15	Spain 5	Uzbekistan 13	China 0.06

*Ranking sorted by gold medals, and then silver

Sources: Olympics.com, World Bank

AFP



A general view of fireworks during the grand finale of the closing ceremony of Paris 2024 Olympics at Stade de France, Saint-Denis, France. — Reuters



RUBLEV TO FACE POPYRIN FOR ATP MONTREAL TITLE

MONTREAL: Andrey Rublev powered into his second ATP Masters 1000 final of the season on Sunday as he lined up a title match against Alexei Popyrin in Montreal.

Fifth seed Rublev, who won the Madrid Masters title in May, overcame a two-hour rain interruption as he beat Italy's Matteo Arnaldi 6-4, 6-2 in their semifinal.

He faces off on Monday evening for the trophy against Australian Popyrin, who put out last week's ATP Washington winner Sebastian Korda 7-6 (7/0), 6-3 in 92 minutes.

Rublev has had a patchy 2024, melting down several times on court in frustration with his play and being disqualified last February in Dubai for blowing up at a linesman.

But the Russian, who skipped the Paris Olympics to be prepared for the North American hardcourts that continue next week in Cincinnati, said he made the right scheduling choice.

"That was the plan, to be set for the US Open," he said. "I guess if I'm in the finals of Montreal, it must be working."

Rublev will be competing in the sixth Masters final of his career and tuned up for the title bid by knocking out top-seeded world number one Jannik Sinner in a Saturday quarter-final.



Andrey Rublev plays a return to Matteo Arnaldi (ITA) in the Montreal ATP Masters semifinal at IGA Stadium. – USA Today Sports

He said it was not easy facing Arnaldi, whose ranking will move to around 30th, putting him in the frame for a US Open seeding.

"He can hit hard out of nowhere and doesn't give you any rhythm. The wind did not help," Rublev said.

"After the rain delay I played much better. I was focused and could dictate and play more

aggressive."

Popyrin twice traded first-set breaks with Korda, but totally dominated the tiebreaker to love.

The Aussie broke to start the second set and held the margin all the way to victory as he reached his first Masters final.

"It means the world to reach this final, it's amazing," he said. "It's an amazing feeling and achievement. I have to pat

myself on the back.
"But tomorrow will be all hands on deck and back to work.
"The first set was topsy-turvy, a few breaks here and there. But I stayed mentally strong and took momentum into the tiebreaker.
"I really needed to win in two sets — I don't know if my legs would have made it into a third."

HE'S REALLY QUICK
Popyrin beat Rublev on clay last spring in Monte Carlo but knows the seed is also a huge hardcourt danger.

"He plays a tough game on hardcourt," Rublev said. "He's really quick."

Rublev came out after the rain interruption in his win over Arnaldi and produced a double break after less than 30 minutes to reach the final.

"It was worth it, all this week was worth it," Rublev said of the rain delays that have plagued the event.

"I'm happy to be in my first Canadian final. Now I just want to recover, rest and be ready for tomorrow."

In a pair of quarterfinals held over by rain, Alexander Zverev missed a chance to collect his 50th victory of the season in a 7-6 (7/5), 1-6, 6-4 loss to American Korda and Popyrin accounted for Hubert Hurkacz 3-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-5. — AFP



US players Amanda Anisimova (left) and Jessica Pegula will meet in the title showdown of the WTA Toronto Masters. – USA Today Sports

Defending champion Pegula to face Anisimova in final

TORONTO: Defending champion Jessica Pegula advanced to the WTA Toronto Masters final on Sunday by defeating Diana Shnaider 6-4, 6-3, giving her a chance to be the event's first back-to-back winner since 2000.

Sixth-ranked Pegula eliminated the 24th-ranked Russian in 83 minutes to book an all-American final on Monday against Amanda Anisimova, who ousted US eighth seed Emma Navarro 6-3, 2-6, 6-2.

Pegula, trying for the first Canadian repeat since Martina Hingis in 1999-2000, is 2-0 against Anisimova, most recently winning in April at Charleston.

"She's probably one of the biggest, cleanest ball strikers I've ever played against, so when she's on it can be really tough," Pegula said of Anisimova.

"Tomorrow definitely is going to be a battle and I'm going to have to do my best to just make

her play a lot of extra balls and try to be aggressive when I can, because when she's on she can hit a lot of winners and take the racquet out of your hand sometimes, so I'm going to have to be smart tomorrow."

Shnaider, a 20-year-old left-hander, had a break point in the eighth game but netted a forehand and Pegula held for a 5-3 lead.

She then broke on the longest rally of the match, 21 shots, when Shnaider netted a backhand to end matters.

Anisimova reached her fourth career WTA final by dispatching her fourth top-20 foe of the week, a career first. She also ousted third-ranked Aryna Sabalenka in a quarter-final.

"This is a huge accomplishment for me and something I've been working really hard towards," Anisimova said. "I'm just super happy with my week here and I'm pretty surprised with how well I've been able to do so far." — AFP

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UK firm drills at nickel laterite project site in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

UK-based strategic mining firm Knights Bay Oryx Ltd (KBO) has announced that its wholly-owned subsidiary Knights Bay Mining and Trading LLC (KBM) has successfully completed the drilling of an initial batch of drill holes in its nickel laterite project within Mineral Block 21 in the Wilayat of Ibra in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate.

The announcement marks a key milestone in the company's efforts to unlock the concession's potentially promising nickel potential, a strategically vital mineral at the heart of the global energy transition.

Under an agreement signed with Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals in March last year, Knights Bay received concession rights to a 1,400 sq km block in



Knights Bay 1,400 sq km mineral block in Ibra is described as hosting "a new potentially world-class nickel laterite deposit with cobalt, chrome, and iron-ore credits." Picture for illustration only.

Ibra, described as hosting "a new potentially world-class nickel laterite deposit with cobalt, chrome, and iron-ore credits".

In a statement, Knights Bay said the initial drill holes

have "confirmed the observed geological formations and the historic geological data" compiled by the Company detailing the nickel laterite sequence within Mineral Block 21.

"This is the first hole of an initial 27-hole programme to test three target areas to confirm mineral continuity, historical data

and test geological interpretation. This will provide the basis for the targeted, staged resource definition drilling programme," the company stated.

Covering an area of around 280 km2, the Ibra nickel laterite project area has been the target of small-scale mining of its iron-rich material to supply the cement industry as an additive to cement. Knights Bay says it is focused on proving the presence of nickel laterites in this target 280 km2 project area within Mineral Block 21.

"The project has a high potential for positive economic growth in the area and will play a vital role in the much-needed worldwide environmental programme," it stated.

While definitive lab results of the drilled cores are still awaited,

samples of crushed ore found around existing small mines in the area determined an average grade of 1 per cent nickel and 477 ppm (parts per million) of cobalt, the company noted.

Significantly, as part of an academic collaborative arrangement with Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), the core recovered from the initial holes has been field-logged and moved to SQU's Earth Science Ophiolite Research Centre for cutting and sampling in line with international best practices. The underlying goal is to support the development of expertise and knowledge within Oman's mining industry, said Knights Bay.

Separately, a large sample of the laterite ore has been shipped to South Africa for metallurgical testing, the company added.

Oman's SEZs, industrial clusters witness growth

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

The 36th issue of the Duqm Economist Magazine, released by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), highlights significant projects and investments within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) and other free zones in Salalah, Suhar and Al Mazyunah, along with industrial cities.

The magazine underscores the Authority's efforts to attract diverse investments, supporting Oman Vision 2040's economic diversification goals. It features an article on the importance of corporate commitment to health and safety, with Eng Ahmed bin Harib al Balushi, Director of Compliance and Environmental Affairs, emphasising the role of preventive measures in enhancing work environments and productivity.

Al Balushi emphasised that ensuring worker health and safety is a top priority in economic zones, free zones and industrial cities. He highlighted that preventive measures are crucial for reducing occupational accidents and injuries, improving the work environment, and boosting productivity.

These efforts are in line with national and international regulations, including the General Policy for Supervision, Control, and Compliance (Resolution No. 62/2024), which establishes unified standards for occupational health and safety.

OPAZ's approach includes aligning with Oman Vision 2040, implementing best practices, and maintaining a specialised inspection department to ensure compliance and foster a safe, competitive and attractive investment climate.

Additionally, the magazine covers the one-stop shop services for investors, noting their impact on improving the business environment and fostering innovation. It also discusses the Central Fruit and Vegetable Market (Sila) at Khazaen Economic City, which supports wholesale trade and serves as a platform for marketing and exporting agricultural products.

Spanning 116 pages, the issue includes various topics such as growth indicators, performance metrics, and investment opportunities in Oman's economic,



The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

free and industrial zones.

OPAZ plays a crucial role in achieving economic diversification, a core objective of Oman Vision 2040. OPAZ's efforts to attract diverse investments are fundamental to this goal.

With its stimulating infrastructure and supportive legislative framework, the economic and free zones, along with industrial cities, offer a favourable environment for investment.

The strategic geographic location provides easy access to regional and international markets, while flexible and efficient procedures ensure that investor needs are met. OPAZ's investment-friendly policies and comprehensive facilitation efforts create abundant opportunities across all economic sectors.

The edition also showcases notable achievements by OPAZ, including winning the Best Institutional Investor Award in 2024 and receiving the Best Service Outlet in Muscat for 2023.

Additionally, OPAZ recently inaugurated the Central Platform for Investor Services, further enhancing its commitment to providing exceptional service and support to investors.

According to the latest edition, Duqm is experiencing significant economic momentum and rapid growth, with SEZAD seeing positive indicators and ongoing transformations in the region.

Increased investment volume is attributed to a promising roadmap and the efficient management of human resources, along with the completion of essential infrastructure and service facilities.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C invites interested companies to participate in the following tender:

Tender No.	Description	Last Date of Buying	Date of Submission	Grade	Tender Price (OMR)
NESC/2024/004	Digital Media Content Management and Development Support Services	27/08/2024	10/09/2024	Specialist	26.250

The table below shows the instructions for participation: -					
Participation	- Companies registered with Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may obtain Tender documents. - The amount specified above is including 5% VAT. - The amount specified above is Non-Refundable payment (Terms and Condition apply) - To obtain the tender document and payment procedure, please visit www.supply.nama.om , under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender				
Enquiries	- Any inquiry can be sent to procurement@supply.nama.om , using the inquiry form found in the tender document (05) Five working days before bid submission date. - Any request for clarification received after the above-mentioned period will not be considered.				
Tender Submission	Please follow SUBMISSION OF TENDER and supplier guidelines available at NESC Website www.supply.nama.om , under NESC VENDOR / E-Tender.				
Guarantee	- The Tender should enclose a bank guarantee or a certified cheque issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman Unconditional and irrevocable and shall be disbursement as soon as it is submitted for the value of (1%) of the tender value valid for a period of at least ninety (90) days from the last date of tender submission and addressed to the CHAIRMAN OF PROCUREMENT COMMITTEE, Nama Electricity Supply Company S.A.O.C. - The hard copy of the bid bond should be deposited in the Tender Box at the Nama Electricity Supply Company Main Office at Wilayat Al Seeb, before 10:00 AM on the day specified for bid submission or any extended deadline. - Any tender not accompanied by a Tender Bond shall be rejected.				
Terms and Conditions	- The Tender shall be valid for a period of (90) days from the last date of tender submission including any extension thereof. - If the submission date extended, the bank guarantee or a certified cheque shall be extended in accordance with the bid extension date. - NESC is not bound to accept the lowest Tenderer. - Preference of awarding the tender will be given to those bidders who achieved a high percentage of purchasing from Local Products and have a High-level percentage of Omanization - NESC gives priority to award the projects to SMEs companies. - Failure to comply with the instructions in tender document may lead to disqualification.				



Nama Electricity Supply Company SAOC
PO Box 1239, PC 131, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: +968 24250800 | CR 1/71235/7
records@supply.nama.om | www.supply.nama.om



Saud Bahwan Group expands Chery’s presence with new showroom in Salalah

MUSCAT: Saud Bahwan Group recently celebrated the grand opening of Chery’s fourth showroom in Oman, in Salalah. The event was honoured by the presence of Shaikh Mohammed bin Saif al Busaidy, Wali of Salalah, along with distinguished guests from both public and private sectors.

At the occasion, a representative from Saud Bahwan Group remarked, “Chery’s presence in Oman is steadily growing, which is evident in the increasing number of Chery vehicles on the road today. Chery’s commitment to quality, engineering and performance provides our customers with true value for their money.”

Emphasising the Group’s dedication to Omanisation, the representative added, “Saud Bahwan Group has always been at the forefront of providing talented Omanis with numerous opportunities to excel.

We have invested significantly in facilities that support the Chery brand in Oman, many of which are operated by outstanding Omani employees. These employees are passionate about their roles and are achieving impressive milestones



Shaikh Mohammed bin Saif al Busaidy, Wali of Salalah, inaugurating the plaque.

in line with the Group’s objectives.” The event featured a showcase of Chery vehicles, giving customers the chance to get up close with their favourite models and learn more about their high-quality build, advanced features and cutting-edge technology. Chery’s range in Oman includes an impressive line-up of the TIGGO8 PRO MAX, TIGGO4 PRO, and ARRIZO6 PRO.

The TIGGO8 PRO MAX and TIGGO4 are powerful SUVs known for their subtle ambient lighting and unmatched fuel efficiency. The sedan-styled ARRIZO6 PRO boasts a sleek design, impressive interiors, and advanced safety and usability features, all contributing to an unparalleled driving experience. Customers are now welcome to visit the new Salalah showroom to experience Chery vehicles first-hand.



Exterior of the Chery showroom in Salalah.

The showroom is equipped with modern amenities, product displays and a dedicated sales and marketing team ready to meet customer needs. Kantar and Google jointly released the 2023 Chinese Global Brand Builders. Chery is ranked as the best Chinese global brand builder in cars and 14th in the overall list and its brand power has achieved strong growth. Chery Automobile secured the first spot among all Chinese

automotive brands in J.D. Power 2023 China Initial Quality StudySM (IQS). For more details please visit <https://china.jdpower.com/press-release/2023-IQS> In Oman, Chery vehicles are distributed by Saud Bahwan Group. For the latest Press Releases, Test Drive requests and more, please visit www.chery.om, www.youtube.com/@OmanChery, www.facebook.com/CheryAutoOman, and www.instagram.com/cheryoman.

Ooredoo and Tech Mahindra strengthen partnership to excel in digital customer experience



MUSCAT: Ooredoo has taken a successful leap forward in its multi-phased mega transformation programme, by advancing its Digital Transformation journey and upgrading its digital customer experience. By teaming up with Tech Mahindra, a leading global provider of technology consulting and digital solutions to enterprises across industries, Ooredoo has revamped and digitised their CRM stack. Together, with unification and digitisation of Charging, Rating and Billing systems the CSI revamp and transformation, Ooredoo is able to provide a unified and state-of-the-art digital experience across the nation.

The first two phases have been completed, which has seen unification of CRM, and charging and rating services for the company’s B2C customers. Now Ooredoo and Tech Mahindra are progressing to the last two phases of this digital transformation journey. Upcoming phases will focus on transformation and revamping of the Ooredoo CRM stack for B2C fixed line customers and ultimately the B2B segment. “We are thrilled to have partnered with Tech Mahindra for these transformation initiatives” said Dr Ahmed al Abri (pictured), CTIO at Ooredoo. “This successful implementation under stringent timelines has laid the foundation for the next stages of Ooredoo’s digital transformation; a programme which both simplifies and modernises the entire Ooredoo IT stack.

It also provides a solid and dynamic IT platform to cater to rapidly changing telecoms and IT innovations. Our focus is to excel in digital customer experience and provide Oman with an even greater value footprint.” “We are proud to have played a key role in Ooredoo’s digital transformation and data migration journey by leveraging new ways of working,” said, Ram Ramachandran, Senior Vice President – India, Middle East & Africa at Tech Mahindra. “Our deep telecom industry and expertise in digital transformation have enabled us to play a pivotal role with other Ooredoo partners resulting in achievement of tangible milestones for Ooredoo Oman and its customers. We look forward to continuing our partnership and supporting Ooredoo in its mission to provide cutting-edge digital services and enable them to scale at speed.”

NBO launches exclusive campaign in partnership with OOMCO

MUSCAT: In its ongoing endeavour to deliver greater value to its loyal customers, the National Bank of Oman (NBO) has launched an exclusive campaign in partnership with Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO), running from August 1 to 31, 2024. During this special one-month campaign, all NBO credit card customers will enjoy a remarkable 20 per cent cashback on their first transaction at Oman Oil along with a 20 per cent discount on hot and cold beverages at Café Amazon. This initiative underscores



NBO’s commitment to delivering exceptional value and rewards to its customers. Maha al Raisi, Assistant General Manager and Head of Retail Products at NBO, said: “At the National Bank of Oman, we are always looking for ways to provide added value and rewards to our customers. We are delighted to partner with OOMCO for this exclusive campaign. This campaign offers tangible benefits such as significant cashback rewards and attractive discounts, ensuring that our customers can enjoy complete value and savings

on their everyday expenses, thereby making their experience with NBO even more rewarding. Don’t miss out on this fantastic opportunity to earn rewards and enjoy great discounts!” The 20 per cent cashback, credited as equivalent reward points, is available to the first 3,000 customers who make a qualifying purchase, with a maximum cashback of RO 3 per customer. Additionally, as part of this limited-time promotion, NBO credit cardholders can enjoy a 20-per cent discount on hot and cold beverages at Café Amazon.

Hakkasan to bring world-renowned modern Cantonese dining experience in Oman

MUSCAT: Hakkasan, the award-winning Cantonese dining concept by Tao Group Hospitality, will be opening its 12th location worldwide in October at The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort. Bringing an alluring ambiance and innovative flavours to Oman, the restaurant will combine high-end design, modern techniques and Chinese influences to create a unique, unforgettable experience. The opening of Hakkasan at The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort will herald a new dimension of modern, yet timeless flavours to Oman’s flourishing gastronomy scene. Since its establishment in 2001 in London, Hakkasan has garnered a reputation for exceptional dining experiences, with recent Michelin accolades for Hakkasan in Dubai and Abu Dhabi.

The menu, an inventive interpretation of authentic Cantonese cuisine, will feature signature dishes like Grilled Chilean Seabass and Crispy Duck Salad, crafted with the finest ingredients and time-honored techniques. “We are delighted to bring to life Hakkasan’s philosophy of ancient gastronomy reimagined for the modern day at The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort. We promise to deliver an intriguing blend of contemporary Cantonese cuisine and an atmosphere shrouded in mystery that will truly captivate guests,” said Noah Tepperberg, Co-CEO of Tao Group Hospitality. “Hakkasan’s Cantonese heritage is at the heart of everything we do. We honour tradition but through worldly experience, look for ways to push the boundaries of luxury



and strive for excellence and quality which extends to every touch point.” Tarek Mourad, General Manager of The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, added, “It is with great excitement that we welcome Hakkasan and its exceptionally-talented team to our resort. This partnership further enriches and

expands our range of exquisite culinary offerings, reinforcing The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort as a must-visit dining destination for both locals and visitors from all corners of the world.” Hakkasan will offer artfully-crafted encounters that balance the best of the past with the breathtaking innovation of the

future. This vision of elegance is meticulously realised by Hakkasan’s dedicated team, who continually endeavour to conceive unforgettable memories and inspire new stories. The soon-to-be-opened Muscat location will epitomise this signature style, providing guests with immersive, multi-sensory dining experiences. The restaurant’s renowned interior design, originally conceptualised by Christian Liaigre, will combine fashionable aesthetics with classic Chinese elements, evoking a seductive sense of intimacy, glamour, and vibrant energy. Inside Hakkasan, exclusivity, darkness, and anticipation set the stage, where each guest feels like a star in a movie. These additive qualities will entice guests to keep escaping to Hakkasan time and time again.

Galfar Engineering secures contracts worth RO 53.5m

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

Galfar Engineering & Contracting SAOG, a publicly listed Omani contractor, has secured two significant contracts that collectively enhance its standing in Oman's infrastructure and energy sectors.

The first contract, awarded by Occidental Oman Inc (Oxy), is valued at approximately RO 18.5 million. It pertains to the provision

of civil works services for B53 and B72. The five-year call-off contract is set to commence on October 1, 2024 and includes an optional two-year extension that could add an estimated RO 6.5 million to the project's value. The total contract value could potentially increase if both parties agree to the extension.

In a separate development, Galfar has also been awarded a substantial tender by Nama Dhofar Services Company for the "Expansion of Raysut Water



The two contracts are set to enhance Galfar's standing in the oilfield sectors.

Reclamation Plants - Phase III (Stage 1)." This project, valued at approximately RO 35 million, marks a significant step forward in Oman's infrastructure and wastewater management sector.

The project is set to be executed over 36 months from the commencement date. This strategic award is expected to enhance Galfar's order book and sustain its market share in the wastewater services industry. The expansion project aligns with the company's long-term growth

and sustainability goals, focusing on improving water reclamation capabilities to meet the increasing demand for efficient and environmentally friendly water management solutions.

These two contracts, with a combined value of RO 53.5 million, underscore Galfar's ongoing commitment to delivering innovative and sustainable infrastructure solutions, reinforcing its role as a key player in Oman's economic development.

Philex Pharmaceuticals signs pact for solar photovoltaic project

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

Philex Pharmaceuticals, which operates a major pharma plant in Salalah Free Zone, has signed an agreement with Global Chemicals and Maintenance Systems LLC (a subsidiary of Al Barami Group of Companies), for the installation of a 1.3 MW capacity solar photovoltaic plant to support the pharma project's renewable energy requirements.

Fahd bin Salim al Barami, board member at Al Barami Group, signed the agreement on behalf of Global Chemicals and Maintenance Systems LLC.

Eng Muhammad Anabtawi, General Manager of Philex Pharmaceutical Industries, represented his company at the signing.

The solar PV plant, set to come



Representatives of Philex Pharmaceuticals and Global Chemicals and Maintenance Systems at the signing on Monday.

online in 2026, is expected to meet a significant portion of the pharma industry's energy needs in line with sustainability goals set out under Oman Vision 2040.

The renewable energy

initiative is one of several measures implemented by Philex as part of a broader effort to enhance the sustainability of its operations. sustainability of its operations.

OMAN REAL ESTATE TRADING VALUE REACHES RO 1.409 BILLION

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman saw a marginal increase in real estate trading during the first half of 2024, with the total value reaching RO 1.409 billion, up 0.5% from RO 1.402 billion in the same period of 2023.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information, fees collected for all legal transactions dropped by 3.5% to RO 32.3 million, compared to RO 33.4 million last year. The value of sale contracts traded reached RO 545.6 million for 32,596 contracts, marking a slight decrease of 0.9% in the number of contracts.

Mortgage contracts saw a modest increase of 0.5%, totalling RO 856.7 million for 10,028 contracts, up from RO 852.1 million in 2023. Swap contracts surged by 52%, with 671 contracts worth RO 7.3 million, compared to RO 4.8 million last year.

The number of issued properties fell by 7%, totalling 109,666 by the end of June 2024, down from 117,870 properties in the same period of 2023. However, properties issued to GCC citizens rose by 5.2%, reaching 666 compared to 633 in 2023. – ONA

Global Space and Technology Co receives CAA drone services licence



Eng Bahiya al Shuaibi, CEO of the Global Space and Technology Company, receiving the licence from a CAA representative.

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

The Global Space and Technology Company, Oman's first privately owned space startup, has announced that it has received a licence from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) permitting its Unmanned Technology Center to provide various services related to drone technologies and unmanned vehicles.

Among the most important services are training, equipment supply, maintenance, specialised assembly, and installation, and conducting experiments according to the customer needs.

The training programmes include comprehensive and specialised training in the use of drones and unmanned systems, as well as granting licences to operate them to be a drone pilot.

Additionally, the programmes focus on developing skills in aerial photography, software technologies, reconnaissance, geological surveying, GIS (Geographic Information Systems) analysis programmes, among others.

The centre also offers advanced workshops for specialists and experts, providing in-depth training in drone design and engineering, equipping participants with the necessary practical and scientific expertise.

The centre provides its services to the government,

security, and military sectors, as well as to the commercial private sector and hobbyists.

Eng Bahiya bint Hilal bin Sultan al Shuaibiyah, Founder and CEO of the Global Space and Technology Company, said: "We are pleased with this achievement, which represents a significant step towards realising our vision of enhancing Unmanned technology sector.

We extend our thanks to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) for their support and for granting us this licence."

She further added: "The Unmanned Technology Center is a crucial turning point in the development of the drone and unmanned Aerial system in the region, keeping pace with global developments and meeting the rapid growth locally and in the regional markets.

This centre also provides a scientific and practical environment in the field of Unmanned technology (aerial, land, and sea) and related systems and experiments, granting trainees the licences to operate them to a drone pilot.

The centre aims to have partnerships with specialised global institutions and attract investments in drone manufacturing, with the goal of transferring knowledge and technology to the region.

The company always works to push the boundaries of innovation by offering high-quality and distinctive products and services that support advanced technology."

Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel launches sustainable products in Oman

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, AUGUST 12

Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel (JSIS), the largest steel producer in Oman and a leading force in the GCC market, unveiled yesterday, three cutting-edge steel products at the Panthers' Meet in Muscat.

The event was a showcase of JSIS's unwavering commitment to innovation and sustainability, attended by senior dignitaries and officials from both the public and private sectors.

JSIS announced the launch of three innovative products: Grade 600 rebars, which set a new industry standard for durability and strength, highlighting JSIS's engineering excellence and dedication to delivering top-quality products;

50 mm diameter rebars, tailored for heavy structures and high-rise buildings, addressing the stringent demands of modern construction with exceptional stability and endurance; and rebars in coil form, which introduce unprecedented flexibility, overcoming the limitations of traditional rebar lengths and reducing wastage through customisation to specific project needs.

"Our products are not just steel; they represent our dedication to quality and precision. These new additions further reinforce our position as leaders in the



Harsha Shetty, Chief Executive Officer of JSIS, is pictured with JSIS officials and guests, during the launching event.

steel industry and reflect our commitment to innovation," stated Harsha Shetty, Chief Executive Officer of JSIS.

In addition to product innovation, JSIS remains resolute in its pledge to sustainability, aligning with Oman Vision 2040. The company has set a goal to achieve Net-Zero emissions by 2045, embodying its commitment to environmental stewardship and social responsibility.

"JS600 and 50 mm rebars are tailor made for large public and private projects which intend to be sustainable, given their lower carbon footprint and potential to reduce steel costs while increasing floor space for large projects," added the CEO.

"Our focus extends beyond

THE COMPANY HAS SET A GOAL TO ACHIEVE NET-ZERO EMISSIONS BY 2045, EMBODYING ITS COMMITMENT TO ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP AND SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

business success; we are deeply committed to sustainability and the communities we serve. By striving to be a good corporate citizen, we aim to contribute positively to a greener, more sustainable future."

Huseyin Ladin, Chief Technology and Sustainability Officer and Executive Board Member of CARES delivered a presentation titled "Unlocking True Credibility Through 3rd

Party Validation," highlighting the process of steel product assurance. CARES is a leading certification body specialising in auditing and certifying mills and steel products.

"Our state-of-the-art facilities stand as a testament to our unwavering commitment to excellence and innovation in the steel industry," stated Shetty. "The advanced processes we employ in making our steel set us apart from the rest, ensuring that our rebars are second to none in the market," he added.

The gathering also featured renowned Omani footballer and JSIS brand ambassador Ali al Habsi, symbolising the values of youth, health, and success that JSIS embodies.

Scammers are rampant; avoid being scammed!

Let me share three different yet related cases. I have lately come across that I trust many shy away to share or even raise as a concern or complaint to the appropriate authorities due to probably feeling embarrassed and/or not having the necessary knowledge to do so.

One of my relatives who just returned from a vacation reported to me that he had paid for a visa application while commuting from one country to another, only to arrive at the border of the destination country and realise that his visa was invalid (or precisely unknown by the immigration office).

What has actually happened? A friend of mine received a call from one of her social media account platform representatives asking her to share a four-digit message she received via an SMS (short messaging service).

A few minutes later, she was not able to access her social media account. What has actually happened?

Lastly, one of my associates received a link to download a video editing app directly (instead



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The author is the founder of Knowledge Oman

TECHNOLOGY CONTINUES TO EVOLVE, AS DO SCAMMERS, ON THE OTHER HAND. ONE NEEDS TO CONTINUE BEING VIGILANT AND ABREAST IN ORDER TO REMAIN SAFE.

of going through the official mobile Play Store).

Upon downloading, installing and opening the app from the link received, my associate found that the phone was running very slowly, the battery was getting very hot and the video editing app kept crashing. What has actually happened?

All three individuals were scammed! Yes, three different cases but with the same motive from the mischief actor (who can be the same person or a team per se), who use various tactics to lure the victims (such as the relative, friend, and associate I illustrated above).

The relative paid money for the visa but ended up not only not receiving the visa, but also a few more withdrawals from his bank account were done on his behalf.

The friend ended up losing her social media account and also respect for the messages the scammer sent to her network (again on her behalf).

Lastly, the associate started receiving calls from his address book confirming whether he had received funds that he requested (which he hasn't asked for, of

course).

This has happened to them, may happen to your close ones, and can happen to you unfortunately.

Scammers, for those who don't know, are individuals that make money using illegal methods by tricking people.

Some of these scammers do it physically (in person), while the majority use online mediums, be it websites, social media networks, and/or instant messaging platforms.

Nearly 2.4 million frauds have been reported in 2022 in the United States, with consumers losing a total of \$8.8 billion. In the United Kingdom, a total amount of £1.3 billion fraud was reported.

In Australia, over \$3.1 billion of scams were reported, and lastly, Canada reported about \$530 million of fraud in 2022 itself.

These figures are growing and highlight the significant financial impact of scams globally.

The case is no different to Oman as well (for scamming works anywhere, especially when there is no continuous awareness of the same).

So how can one avoid being

scammed?

There is no easy answer, to be honest, because scammers continue to learn new ways and methods to lure new victims on a periodic basis.

Technology continues to evolve, as do scammers, on the other hand. One needs to continue being vigilant and abreast in order to remain safe.

Nevertheless, I would like to share four of the most viral scams that you need to know, share with your loved ones and avoid in order to remain safe.

First and foremost, do not download applications sent directly via links and chats (e.g., apk files for Android phones).

Only download reliable applications via sources such as Apple's Playstore, Google's Play, or Huawei's app gallery.

Secondly, do not expose your personal details (e.g., username credentials) to messages and/or calls you receive, even if someone claims to be from an authorised or official body.

Authorities (e.g., a bank) will not call for such information.

Third, avoid opening links or

tapping on numbers sent via SMS.

Lastly, do not share the OTP (one-time password) you receive with anyone, not even friends or family.

By following these guidelines, you will avoid most of the viral scams in place today.

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) continues to issue warnings about fraudulent methods targeting individuals through social media applications, including WhatsApp, Snapchat and Instagram.

The ROP emphasises the importance of staying vigilant and safeguarding personal and financial information. They urge everyone to report any suspicious activity or messages to the authorities promptly.

The public can easily contact the Royal Oman Police hotline at 80077444 to report fraud or for any fraud-related queries.

Always remain cautious, verify sources and avoid sharing personal information or making payments without verifying the links you receive or access. Better be safe than sorry.

Until we catch up again next week, stay safe and be positive.

One giant leap...

On July 20, 1969, 500 million people around the world sat up and watched in awe a shadowy black and white TV picture as Neil Armstrong became the first person to walk on the moon.

The excitement that gripped the world was as enormous as the cost of getting him there.

Space exploration, digital communications and finance have moved on since then.

Fifty years ago, the space sector was the domain of governments and public sector agencies. They were responsible for exploratory missions and satellite launches for communications, national security and navigation.

National agencies mostly worked independently of each other, but later collaborated on, for example, the International Space Station.

The manufacturing of rockets, probes and satellites was carried out by just a few large aerospace contractors.

The search for revenues from space is not just about finding new markets, it is also about developing new products and services at affordable prices.

Today the private sector is increasingly involved in space and collaborates with the public sector space agencies.

Satellite operators now provide footage direct to home TV as well as supporting mobile communications and navigation. Billionaires are willing to take the commercial risk of operating in and exploring space, with projects such as Elon Musk's SpaceX, Jeff Bezos's Blue Origin and Richard Branson's Virgin Galactic.

Others are launching new, low-orbit 'small and cube satellite' services for Earth observation and communications. Europe alone boasts 850 space companies.

Everyone on the planet should



ANNA COAST

The author runs Teleconsulting UK, which advises on finance, regulation and accounting in the comms and space sectors.

THE SEARCH FOR REVENUES FROM SPACE IS NOT JUST ABOUT FINDING NEW MARKETS, IT IS ALSO ABOUT DEVELOPING NEW PRODUCTS AND SERVICES AT AFFORDABLE PRICES.



This image is a representation of a satellite in space.

benefit in some way from the exploration of space. As our understanding expands, the financial impact and benefits of the sector could be as big as that very first step onto the surface of the moon.

One 2017 estimate put the space sector's market revenue at \$348 billion, with the satellite business accounting for \$269 billion of that. The main segments of satellite include television, ground equipment and service applications, such as navigation and Earth observation. But what does it all mean for us, the ultimate consumers on Earth?

The search for revenues from space is not just about finding new markets, it is also about developing new products and services, and enhancing existing ones, at affordable prices for potential consumers.

We now exist in a world of digital technology, which is transforming services and has a

large financial impact.

Huge increases in data about the Earth and the environment, coupled with mobile telecommunications such as 5G, cloud systems and data analytics, all point to a new world of big data and massive transaction volumes, with lower unit costs and more customer choice.

Size matters

Accountants involved in forecasting space markets and technologies know that the sector's growth is uncertain.

But other markets offer us some clues. An analogy can be drawn here between the space sector and the maritime industry, both of which embrace exploration and transportation.

Five centuries ago, explorers would set out on occasional voyages of discovery in a handful of tiny ships; today, huge volumes of goods are being moved around the world at any given moment in thousands of ships that could each comfortably hold

Christopher Columbus's Santa Maria, Ferdinand Magellan's Vittoria or Francis Drake's Golden Hinde many times over.

The space industry has a growing need for 'big, yet small' solutions, such as miniaturised cube satellites, that could allow operations to scale up as they have done over the years in the maritime sector.

There is also a financial measurement and commercial challenge: how to provide ways to transport and deliver ever greater capacity at lower cost, while competing in global markets and improving profitability.

A massive debt is owed to the scientists and entrepreneurs who have already done so much for space exploration, but we also need to encourage the key players who are taking the sector forward, including business and the investment community.

Governments need to do their bit by developing innovative

policies for the space sector, supporting research programmes that will deliver societal, environmental and economic benefits for everyone, and deciding who will pay.

And accountants also have a key supporting contribution to make by improving the measurement and reporting of the financial impact of space exploration — Neil Armstrong's father, an auditor, would have approved.

Financial measurement and accounting in the space sector provide new challenges for policymakers, scientists, business managers and accountants.

These challenges include:

- Defining exactly what constitutes the space sector economy, how it should be measured, and how untried market opportunities and risks should be assessed.
- Achieving greater commercialisation of public space agencies and increased private sector investment will require changes to investment cycles.
- Lowering the high costs of market entry from significant upfront research and development expenditure while accounting for mega-size volumes of digital transactions is another hurdle.
- Additionally, there is a need to encourage SMEs and start-ups that require advanced technical skills while ensuring the proper evaluation and monitoring of funding.
- Other challenges include accounting for and valuing intangible assets, such as radio spectrum licenses, assessing risk, including the use of shared assets and considering the regulatory impact.
- Finally, developing new financial methods and integrated engineering cost models, along with investing in finance skills training to reflect new technologies, are crucial steps forward.

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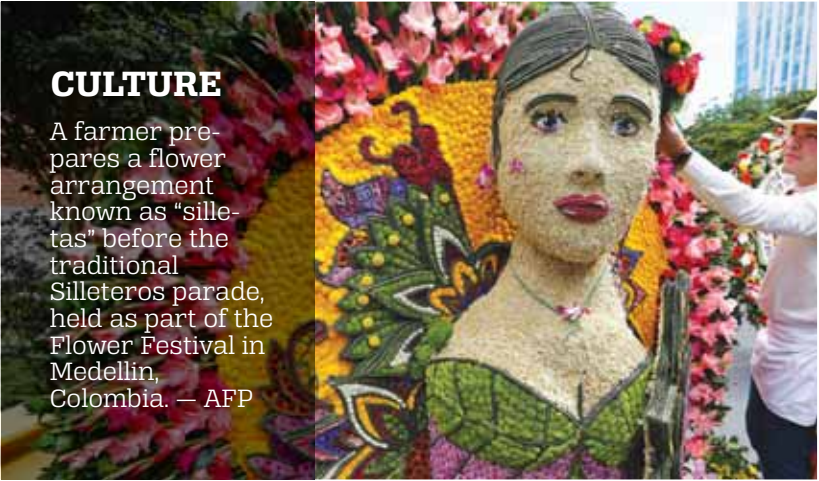
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CULTURE

A farmer prepares a flower arrangement known as “sille-tas” before the traditional Silleteros parade, held as part of the Flower Festival in Medellin, Colombia. — AFP



FOOD

Vendors prepare seafood for sale at Tsukiji Outer Market in Tokyo, Japan. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

A fan of the Star Wars saga fancy dressed as a character takes part in the so-called “Training Day” parade at Los Heroes Avenue in Leon, Guanajuato State, Mexico. — AFP



MUSIC

Brazilian musicians Maria Bethania (L) and Caetano Veloso perform in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. — AFP



FASHION

French singer Yseult presents a creation for L’Oreal Paris during a show as part of the Paris Fashion Week Womenswear Spring/Summer 2024. — AFP

art & life

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AVOIDING DHOFAR'S KHAREEF TOURIST TRAPS BY VISITING AIN GHaid

Often overlooked by tourists, Ain Ghaid provides a tranquil escape with lush landscapes, waterfalls and hiking adventures, making it a must-visit destination beyond the usual attractions. If you're visiting khareef this year, make sure to add this on your list for hiking... P20

DISCOVERY

Discovery of tiny bone sheds light on mysterious 'hobbit' humans

THE DISCOVERY OF a tiny arm bone suggests that an ancient human dubbed “hobbits” only shrank down to their diminutive size after they arrived on an Indonesian island a million years ago, scientists said on Tuesday.

Much about the pint-sized Homo flo-

resiensis has been shrouded in mystery since the first fossils suggesting their existence were found on the island of Flores in 2003.

These tool-using hominins are believed to have been living on the island as recently as 50,000 years ago, when our own species homo sapiens was already walking the Earth, including in nearby Australia.

From some 60,000-year-old teeth and a jawbone found in an island cave, scientists had previously estimated the hobbits were around 1.06 metres (3.5 feet) tall.

But the discovery of part of an upper arm bone as well as some teeth at an open-air island site on the island suggests some hobbits stood just one metre tall around 700,000 years ago, according to a study in the journal Nature Communications.

The bone was so small, that at first the international team of researchers thought it must have been from a child.

Study co-author Adam Brumm, an archaeologist at Australia's Griffith University, said that it was the smallest humerus fossil of an adult hominin ever found.

- 'TRULY EPIC' -

The discovery could tip the scales in a heated debate among scientists about how



H.floresiensis became so small. One side argues that the hobbits — nicknamed after the little heroes in JRR Tolkien's fantasy novels — descended from

an already small earlier hominin which arrived on Flores around a million years ago.

Others believe that it was our ancestor Homo erectus, which were roughly our size and had spread throughout Asia, that became trapped on the island, only to then evolve into the smaller H.floresiensis over the next 300,000 years.

The researchers behind the latest discovery believe it strongly supports the latter theory.

These ancient humans “reduced drastically in body size according to a well known evolutionary phenomenon known as island dwarfism,” Brumm said.

Under this process, larger animals tend to shrink over time to adapt to their limited surroundings.

The tropical island was home to other smaller-than-normal mammals, including

a cow-sized relative of the elephant.

The newly discovered teeth also look like smaller versions of those from Homo erectus, the researchers said.

“If we are correct, it seems that Homo erectus was somehow able to cross formidable deep-sea barriers to reach isolated islands like Flores,” Brumm said.

“We don't know how they were doing this,” he said, adding that “accidental ‘rafting’ on tsunami debris” was one possibility.

Once these ancient humans were trapped on the island, they managed to survive for hundreds of thousands of years, evolving into “strange new forms,” Brumm said.

Mark Moore, an archaeologist at Australia's University of New England not involved in the study, said the discovery means “we can now confidently say” that the Homo erectus theory is the more likely scenario.

Moore, who has studied the stone tools used by the hobbits, said that this “technology did not shield our cousin species from the forces of biological evolution”.

That the hobbits changed so much over just 300,000 years was “a reminder of the power of natural selection,” he added.

“The evolutionary story of this group of hominins is truly epic.” — AFP

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CHANGING WORLD



Barrier Reef threatened by unprecedented sea heat extremes: Study

RECENT HEAT EXTREMES in the seas around Australia's Great Barrier Reef are "unprecedented" in the past 400 years — and driven by climate change, scientists have said.

Researchers examining high sea temperatures in the Coral Sea where the reef lies, which have led to repeated and devastating coral "bleaching" events since 2016, said heat extremes seen in the past decade are the hottest in data going back four centuries.

And modelling which compared scenarios with and without human activity such as putting out greenhouse gas emissions from burning fossil fuels, showed the sea's warming trend in recent decades and the latest extremes are down to climate change.

The researchers warned that without rapid action to tackle climate change, this "generation will likely witness the demise of one of Earth's great natural wonders."

The Great Barrier Reef is the world's largest coral reef system and supports a huge diversity of life, from whales and dolphins to 1,500 fish species and threatened creatures including the large green turtle and the sea cow (dugong).

The reef, which was listed as a World Heritage Site in 1981, is a major tourism draw for Australia, and an important marine and cultural resource for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island peoples.

But it has been hit by recent high sea surface temperatures which have led to repeated mass coral bleaching events between 2016 and 2024, which kill coral and threaten the survival of the reef and the wildlife that relies on it.

In a study published in the journal Nature, a team led by scientists from Australia used records from 1900 and data from core samples from corals — some of which have lived for 400 years — to reconstruct the sea temperatures back to 1618.

They said that the January-to-March Coral Sea heat extremes in 2024, 2017 and 2020 were respectively the warmest in 400 years, with this year's heat an estimated 1.73C above the pre-

1900 average.

The 2016, 2004 and 2022 events were the next warmest, the research found.

The research also found that sea temperatures were variable but relatively stable over the centuries before 1900, but warming in the industrial era has been evident since then.

Modelling confirms humans were responsible for the rapid warming in recent decades, which with recent ocean temperature extremes, the post-1900 warming trend and the mass coral bleaching, shows the "existential threat" to the reef from human-driven climate change is being realised, they said.

Dr Benjamin Henley, from the University of Wollongong and University of Melbourne, said: "The Great Barrier Reef is one of the most globally ecologically significant places on Earth, and it is a vast and spectacular natural wonder.

"However, we've seen in recent years these mass coral bleaching events have driven some devastation on the reef."

He said the study looked to set the long term context for the recent extremes, by reconstructing 400 years of January-to-March sea surface temperatures in the Coral Sea, using coral records drilled in the region and slightly beyond.

"The findings of the study are that the recent events are extreme in nature, in terms of the last four centuries, unprecedented events," he said.

"We also found, using climate models, that climate change is responsible for the warming and for these extreme sea surface temperatures."

He warned that putting all the evidence together, the mass bleaching events, the record temperatures, the fact climate change was responsible, and the knowledge of future climate projections and that heat extremes were happening too often for the corals to adapt, showed "the reef is in danger".

"If we don't divert from our current course, our generation will likely witness the demise of one of Earth's great natural wonders, the Great Barrier Reef," he said. — PA Media/dpa

WASTE INTO GOLD: OYSTER SHELLS REPURPOSED AS MAGIC 'SEAWOOL'

GROWING UP ON Taiwan's west coast where mollusc farming is popular, Eddie Wang saw discarded oyster shells transformed from waste to function — a memory that inspired him to create a unique and environmentally friendly fabric called "Seawool".

Wang remembered that residents of his seaside hometown of Yunlin used discarded oyster shells that littered the streets during the harvest as insulation for their homes.

"They burned the shells and painted the residue on the walls. The houses then became warm in the winter and cool in the summer," the 42-year-old said at his factory in Tainan.

"So I was curious about why oyster shells have such a miraculous effect."

Wang's Creative Tech Textile company, established in 2010, was already producing an "eco-fabric" — a polyester material made out of recycled plastic bottles — but he felt its texture was a bit "ordinary".

So he started working with a research institute to experiment making fabric out of the oyster shell residue, in 2013 coming up with the right formula that produces a material similar to wool.

Today, his factory in Taiwan



uses around 100 tonnes of oyster shells a year to churn out around 900 tonnes of Seawool, a trademarked and patented fabric.

The fabric and clothing generate around NTS200 million (\$6.1 million) a year, with the bulk of it sourced by outdoor and sustainability clothing brands in Europe and the United States.

The Made-in-Taiwan fabric would not be possible without the island's unique oyster farming culture, Wang said.



combined with yarn made from recycled plastic bottles.

"It creates a magical yarn," he said. "Oyster shell is a material with low thermal conductivity — it does not absorb heat nor does it dissipate heat."

Turning the shells — which capture and store carbon dioxide from the atmosphere — into Seawool also does not require water, making it a "low-carbon product," said Wang.

A half-hour drive from his showroom where active wear jackets, sweaters and pants are

displayed, state enterprise Taiwan Sugar Corporation (TSC) also has a factory that grinds discarded shells into a powder that is used in manufacturing household items, like incense sticks.

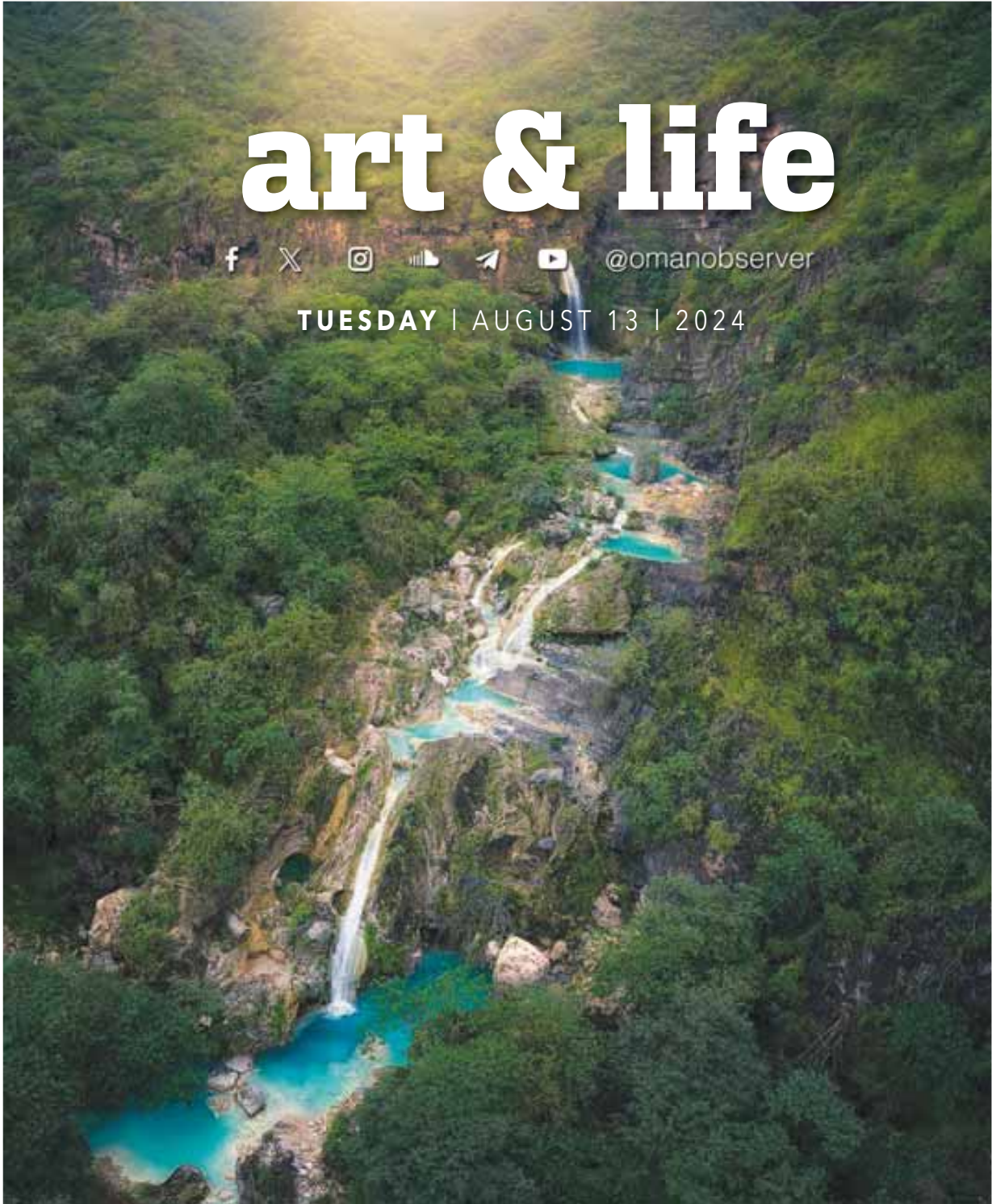
The crushed shells help to reduce smoke and the toxic chemicals emitted from burning incense, said Chen Wei-jen, deputy chief of TSC's biotech business division.

- FROM WASTE TO GOLD -

"We hope oyster shells can have multiple industrial applications and interested companies can use it as a raw material to make their products more environmentally friendly and add value to their products," Chen said.

Before the shells get to the factories, farmers in Chiayi — a county famed for producing oysters — collect the molluscs at dawn from racks installed along the coast.

They are sorted into baskets before being sent to plants such



AVOIDING DHO FAR'S KHAREEF TOURIST TRAPS BY VISITING AIN GH AID

BY ARWA AL HASHIMI
PHOTOS BY RIYADH AL HINAAI
AND ABDULHAKIM AL OJAILI

When travellers think of Dhofar during the khareef season, iconic spots like Salalah and Wadi Darbat often come to mind. These well-known destinations, heavily promoted by travel guides, attract throngs of visitors eager to experience the lush greenery, cascading waterfalls and cool climate that define this unique time of year in Oman. However, in the shadow of these popular sites lies Ain Ghaid, a tranquil haven that remains underappreciated and often overlooked by the masses. For those willing to venture off the main tourist routes, Ain Ghaid offers an unparalleled experience of natural beauty, cultural significance and serene solitude.

A NATURAL OASIS AMIDST THE GREEN HILLS

Nestled in the heart of Dhofar, Ain Ghaid is a hidden gem that truly comes alive during the khareef season. As the monsoon rains sweep over the governorate, the arid landscape is transformed into a lush, green paradise and Ain Ghaid becomes a verdant oasis surrounded by dense foliage and vibrant flora. The waterfalls, dormant for much of the year, spring to life during khareef, creating a mesmerising spectacle against the emerald hills. The cool, refreshing air and the soothing sound of rushing water make Ain Ghaid a serene escape from the hustle and bustle of daily life. For those seeking a more immersive experience, Ain Ghaid offers natural pools formed by these waterfalls, inviting visitors to take a dip in the cool, clear waters. This refreshing respite from the summer heat is a rare treat, and the tranquil setting provides the perfect backdrop for relaxation and contemplation.

A JOURNEY THROUGH CULTURE AND TRADITION

But Ain Ghaid is more than just a natural attraction; it holds deep cultural significance for the local communities. The area is steeped in tradition, offering visitors a glimpse into the rich heritage of Dhofar and the cen-



tral role that natural resources like water play in the lives of its people. Ain Ghaid is a popular spot for picnics and family gatherings, where locals and tourists alike come together to enjoy the tranquillity and beauty of this unique environment. Its proximity to Salalah, Dhofar's main city, makes it an accessible destination for day-trippers looking to experience the region's natural wonders without straying too far from urban conveniences. During the khareef season, Ain Ghaid also becomes a focal point for local festivities and celebrations, adding a layer of cultural vibrancy to its already stunning natural appeal. Visitors can witness the deep connection between the people of Dhofar and the land they inhabit, making Ain Ghaid not just a place of beauty, but a site of cultural significance.

THE ADVENTURE AWAITS: HIKING TO AIN GH AID

For the adventurous traveller, Ain Ghaid offers an exciting and rewarding hike that leads to its hidden treasures. Located approximately 45 kilometres from Salalah, reaching Ain Ghaid requires a trek through valleys, rocks, mountains and green trees. The journey is not for the faint-hearted, as the trail can be challenging, especially during the khareef season when the paths become slippery with mud and rocks. However, for those who are prepared, the hike is an unforgettable experience that rewards with breathtaking views and the satisfaction of discovering a truly hidden gem. Ain Ghaid is also a paradise for photography enthusiasts. The waterfall, which cascades from the top of the mountain to form a clear blue pool, is a sight to behold. The surrounding rocky cavities and



water-filled caves add to the area's allure, offering countless opportunities for capturing stunning images. For those seeking quiet and solitude, Ain Ghaid is a perfect escape, far from the noise and crowds of more popular tourist sites.

A HIDDEN PARADISE WORTH THE JOURNEY

While many tourists flock to Dhofar's well-known attractions during the khareef season, Ain Ghaid offers an alternative for those seeking to experience the natural beauty and cultural richness in a more intimate and serene setting. Its relative obscurity and location off the main tourist routes may deter some, but for those willing to explore beyond the usual destinations, Ain Ghaid is a hidden paradise that promises a truly unforgettable experience. Whether you're drawn by the stunning natural landscapes, the cultural significance, or the thrill of adventure, Ain Ghaid is a destination that should not be missed.