

689 jobs in public sector

The Ministry of Labour announced 689 job vacancies in various public sector units. Of the announced jobs, 443 are for holders of Bachelor's degree. Another 65 vacancies are for post-GED (General Education Diploma) holders and 181 vacancies for GED holders and below. The ministry announced that applying to compete for these job opportunities will be open for a duration of two weeks from the announcement.

SUNRISE - 05:23 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR - 03:58 AM

DHUHR - 12:08 PM

ASR - 03:30 PM

MAGHRIB - 06:49 PM

ISHA - 08:09 PM



Established 1981. Editor-in-chief: Abdullah

OMAN OBSERVER

www.omanobserver.om editor@omanobserver.om



HM BEGINS STATE-VISIT TO JORDAN ON WEDNESDAY

TO EXPLORE AREAS OF COOPERATION

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will go on a state-visit to the Kingdom of Jordan on Wednesday.

A statement was issued by the Diwan of Royal Court to this effect. It reads as follows: "In affirmation of the fraternal ties and the historical relations binding the Sultanate of Oman and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will go on a state-visit to Jordan with effect from Wednesday, (May 22), in response to an invitation by King Abdallah II Ibn Al Hussein.

"The visit reflects the two leaderships' keenness on promoting bilateral relations and pushing them forward to meet the desired objectives of the two countries.

"His Majesty the Sultan and the Jordanian Monarch will explore areas of cooperation and means of promoting them in various spheres to serve their interests and aspirations. The two leaders will also exchange views on a set of

regional and international issues and developments. They will further touch on topics of concern to the Arab joint action.

"During the visit, His Majesty the Sultan will be accompanied by a high-ranking official delegation comprising HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal al Busaidy, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen Sultan bin Mohammed al Numani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, Dr Hamad bin Said al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority, and Shaikh Fahd bin Abdulrahman al Ojaili, Ambassador of Oman to Jordan.

May the Almighty Allah protect His Majesty the Sultan in his journeys and guard him as a source of pride for his people!" — ONA

SEE ALSO P2

ICC PROSECUTOR SEEKS GAZA 'WAR CRIMES' ARREST WARRANT

THE HAGUE: The prosecutor of the International Criminal Court on Monday applied for arrest warrants against Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and top Hamas leaders on suspicion of war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The landmark request was greeted with outrage in Israel, whose Foreign Minister Israel Katz slammed the application as "a historical disgrace that will be remembered forever."

Prosecutor Karim Khan said he was seeking warrants against Netanyahu and Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant for crimes including "starvation", "wilful killing", and "extermination and/or murder".

"We submit that the crimes against humanity charged were committed as part of a widespread and systematic attack against the Palestinian civilian population pursuant to State policy."

"These crimes, in our assessment, continue to this day," said Khan in reference to Netanyahu and Gallant.

The charges laid against the Hamas leaders including Yahya Sinwar, the head of the movement in Gaza, and Ismail Haniyeh, the movement's political chief, include "extermination" and "taking hostages as a war crime".

"We submit that the crimes against humanity charged were part of a widespread and systematic attack against the civilian population of Israel by

Hamas and other armed groups pursuant to organisational policies," said the statement.

Hamas said it "strongly condemns" the ICC prosecutor's application for arrest warrants against it leaders, but said it supported the ICC's move against Netanyahu and Gallant.

"The Hamas movement strongly condemns the attempts of the prosecutor of the International Criminal Court to equate the victim with the executioner by issuing arrest warrants against a number of Palestinian resistance leaders," the group said in a statement.

The ICC prosecutor in 2021 opened a probe into Israel as well as Hamas and other Palestinian groups for possible war crimes in the Palestinian territories.

Khan has said this investigation now "extends to the escalation of hostilities and violence since the attacks that took place on October 7, 2023".

ICC judges will now decide whether the application meets the threshold for the warrants to be formally issued – a process that could take some weeks or even months.

"Today we once again underline that international law and the laws of armed conflict apply to all. No foot soldier, no commander, no civilian leader – no one – can act with impunity," said the prosecutor. Legal experts have said that Hamas and Israel could face war crimes charges over the conflict. — AFP

His Majesty mourns Iranian President

MUSCAT: With full faith in the Almighty Allah's divine destining, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received the news of death of Dr Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran.

A statement was issued by the Diwan of Royal Court to this effect. It reads as follows: "With full faith in the Almighty Allah's divine destining and judgment and, with profound sorrow and grief, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received the news of death of Dr Ebrahim Raisi, President of the Islamic Republic of Iran, and the delegation that accompanied him in a helicopter crash yesterday (Sunday).

"The late president was renowned for his benign contributions and sincere efforts to realise understanding, maintain peace and harmony during his presidential term.

"While sharing the Iranian leadership, government and people their sorrows and grief over this immense loss, the Sultanate of Oman prays to the Almighty Allah to rest their souls in peace in Paradise".

Meanwhile, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to Ali Khamenei, Supreme Leader of the Islamic Republic of Iran, on demise of President Dr Ibrahim Raisi and the delegation that accompanied him in a helicopter crash in East Azerbaijan Province, northwest of Iran. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt condolences and sympathy to the Supreme Leader and the deceased's families, praying to the Almighty Allah to rest their souls in peace in paradise, grant their families fortitude and protect Khamenei and the people of Iran against all harm. — ONA



Raisi's funeral on Wednesday

TEHRAN: Iranian authorities announced on Monday that the funeral procession for President Ebrahim Raisi would be held in Tehran on Wednesday, following his death in a helicopter crash. "On Wednesday morning, we will have the funeral procession in the city of Tehran" for Raisi and other

members of his entourage killed in the crash, Mohsen Mansouri, vice president for executive affairs told state television.

Meanwhile, Iranians mourned the death of President Ebrahim Raisi when his helicopter crashed into a fog-shrouded mountain.

Raisi, 63, his foreign minister and seven others died when the aircraft went down on Sunday in a remote area of northwestern Iran, where the wreckage was only

found on Monday morning.

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei declared five days of mourning and said vice president Mohammad Mokhber, 68, would assume interim presidential duties until elections are held. The presidential election will be held on June 28.

Thousands of mourners massed in central Tehran's Valiasr Square to pay their respects to Raisi as well as to Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian. **SEE P7**



Towards new promising horizons

THE Sultanate of Oman and the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan seek to maximise the benefits of their distinguished relations based on common historical and cultural strategic aspects.

Certainly, the upcoming state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and his meeting with King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein of Jordan will be an important step to augment the level of cooperation between the two countries in various spheres, especially in the economic, tourism, trade and investment areas.

The two leaders' talks in Amman are also expected to address regional and international issues of common interest based on their political consensus, most notably the Israeli aggression against the Gaza Strip, Palestine, and the Palestinians in general, as the two countries agree in their political positions on the issues.

On this context, Fahd bin Abdulrahman al Ojaili, Ambassador of Oman to Jordan affirmed that His Majesty's visit to Jordan has a great importance, as it is the first official visit of His Majesty to Jordan since assuming the reins of powers in the country.

He said that the visit will address a set of vital files, in addition to discussing the distinguished fraternal relations between the two countries, that extend over 53 years. He described the relations between Oman and Jordan as a vivid example of fraternity, cooperation and understanding.

He added that the visit has great objectives, in light of regional and international developments, as it increases the permanent joint coordination between the two countries on issues of common concern, especially the Palestinian cause. He affirmed that the relations between Oman and Jordan have been characterised by consensus on crucial stances of concern to the Arab nation and cooperation in all that would achieve security and stability for the two countries, and the region in general.

The two countries agree that peace is the only way to resolve differences in the region, and that working to stimulate this to maintain stability is a strategic goal and an opportunity for future generations in accordance with international resolutions, affirmed the Ambassador.

He noted that Oman and Jordan also believe that peace and development will lead to achieving security and stability in the entire region.

The ambassador also underlined the importance of His Majesty's visit in elevating the commercial, investment and industrial exchange and cooperation in all fields, in addition to boosting cooperation between the private sectors in the two countries.

He explained that the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Jordan works to highlight the available investment opportunities and promising sectors in Oman to all chambers of commerce in Jordan and to interested businessmen. It provides a guide that reviews the performance of the Omani economy as a



The upcoming state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and his meeting with King Abdullah II Ibn Al Hussein of Jordan will be an important step to augment the level of cooperation between the two countries. — ONA



The visit will address a set of vital files, in addition to discussing the distinguished fraternal relations between the two countries, that extend over 53 years

FAHD BIN ABDULRAHMAN AL OJAILI
Ambassador of Oman to Jordan

type of investment incentives in Oman and works to coordinate the visit of Jordanian businessmen and those who wish to explore the investment opportunities, he added.

The Ambassador added that the Embassy coordinates business meetings and creates communication channels between government officials and potential investors.

On his turn, Amjad Al Quhaiwi, Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the Sultanate of Oman pointed



Volume of trade exchange between Oman and Jordan during 2023

RO 74, 511,421



Total value of Oman's imports from Jordan in 2023

RO 27, 517,500



The value of direct investments from the Jordan in Oman amounted to about

RO 241,800,000



This visit has many dimensions and gains importance, as it is an opportunity for the two countries to participate in fundamental discussions on a variety of regional and international issues

AMJAD AL QUHAIWI
Ambassador of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan to the Sultanate of Oman

is an opportunity for the two countries to participate in fundamental discussions on a variety of regional and international issues. It comes at a very crucial time and embodies the common vision on many regional issues, the Ambassador noted.

He pointed out that the visit coincides with the Kingdom of Jordan's celebration of the silver jubilee of King Abdullah II assuming the reins of power.

He stressed that the two countries have historically identical views on various Arab, regional and international

issues, with continuous consultation and coordination between them that are clearly evident in international events such as the United Nations and the Security Council.

The Jordanian ambassador pointed out that this appears clearly when examining the developments of the Palestinian issue and the Arab-Israeli conflict, especially the efforts aimed at stopping the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip, and delivering humanitarian aid immediately and adequately to all parts of the Strip, as well as the need for continued coordination and consultation on ways to stop the catastrophic conditions in Gaza, and in efforts to reaching a permanent and immediate ceasefire.

He stated that there is continuous communication through a series of meetings aimed at strengthening trade and economic relations between the two countries and creating investment opportunities and partnerships, especially since these relations are now witnessing widespread activity and greater momentum after the meeting of the two leaders in 2022, after which a Jordanian-Omani working group was formed to explore investment opportunities and economic cooperation between the two countries.

He added that there is continuous communication between the chambers of commerce and industry, and investment departments in the two countries to determine the extent of progress in economic and trade cooperation between the two sides and to arrange meetings between businessmen in the two countries.

He explained that there are opportunities for cooperation between the two countries in the fields of information technology, food, agriculture, pharmaceuticals, mining and communications industries, stressing the joint keenness to promote the economic cooperation and impeding any obstacles facing businessmen and the private sector.

On the economic side, statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information indicate that the volume of trade exchange between Oman and Jordan witnessed remarkable growth during 2023, registering a 25 per cent increase to reach about RO 74, 511,421, compared to 2022, which amounted to RO 59,752,392.

Statistics show that Omani exports to Jordan during 2023 increased by 28.2 per cent, to exceed RO 43,850,000, compared to more than RO 34,208,000 in 2022, while the total value of Oman's imports from Jordan in 2023 amounted to about RO 27, 517,500, an increase of 41.5 per cent compared to 2022, which amounted to more than RO 19,441,300.

Preliminary statistics show that the value of direct investments from the Jordan in Oman amounted to about RO 241,800,000 at the end of last year.

The number of companies registered in Oman with Jordanian shareholding by the end of 2023 was about 988 companies, compared to 758 companies in 2022, with a total invested capital of more than RO 78,778,000. — ONA





SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES HUNGARIAN AMBASSADOR



MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Monday Barnabas Fodor, Ambassador of the Republic of Hungary to the Sultanate of Oman. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and exchanged viewpoints. They also discussed several matters of mutual interest. — ONA

Khoulā Hospital conducts rare scoliosis surgery

MUSCAT: A specialised medical team at Khoulā Hospital succeeded in performing the first scoliosis operation of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman.

The 4-hour surgery was aimed at correcting and stabilising the spine of an Omani girl suffering from scoliosis. It involved the use of extendable magnetic rods along the length of the spine.

Dr Sultan bin Saif al Kalbani, Head of the Spine Unit at Khoulā Hospital (consultant orthopaedic and spine surgeon, and head of the operating medical team), told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the operation constituted a step forward in the treatment of scoliosis in children.

The surgery assumes significance as a means of preventing the aggravation of scoliosis and its impact on vital organs like the lungs, said Al



The 4-hour surgery was aimed at correcting and stabilising the spine of an Omani girl suffering from scoliosis. — ONA

Kalbani, noting that the treatment also supports the growth of the spine and avoids repeated

operations. Al Kalbani pointed out that all patients with a similar type of scoliosis were previously going for treatment abroad because this type of complicated operation was not available in the Sultanate of Oman.

Dr Rashid bin Mohammed al Alawi, Director General of Khoulā Hospital, said, “conducting this advanced type of treatment in the Sultanate of Oman reflects the success of investment in medical infrastructure, thanks to the presence of qualified medical personnel in the hospital and their ability to perform such complex surgical operations”.

He affirmed that this success of the operation constitutes a starting point for making more achievements in the future and providing necessary support and health care to patients and society at large. — ONA

Sayyid Bilarab follows up on start-up business workshop

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham al Said, Honorary President of the Promising Omani Startups Programme, on Monday reviewed the progress made by the joint workshop between the Programme’s Supervisory Committee and the Technical Committee.

The workshop aims to achieve integration between government establishments regarding innovation-based startup sector, aligning global trends in the startup sector with local trends in the Sultanate of Oman as well adopting

the strategic orientations and executive plans of the Programme’s Supervisory Committee and the Technical Committee.

During the workshop, the committees discussed a number of topics including an analytical study of the Omani start-up system implemented by the Startup Genome Foundation and the study’s outcomes which include detailed cards and proposed initiatives in addition to a review of the heat map of the startup system prepared by the Ministry of Transport, Communications



The workshop aims to achieve integration between government establishments regarding innovation-based startup sector. — ONA

and Information Technology which monitors the challenges and needs for developing the system.

It includes seven axes within the establishment and growth stages in terms of programmes, skills and

capabilities development, activities and events, higher education and research, financing and investment, legislation and laws, supporting the private sector and developing the technical environment in addition to reviewing Programme’s plan and budget for the year 2024.

The Promising Omani Startups Programme overseen by the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, the

Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, the Ministry of Economy and Oman Information and Communication Technology Group, is the translation of the keenness of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, to build a vibrant, prosperous economy by providing a stimulating environment for entrepreneurs and emerging companies and supporting them throughout the stages of their projects and enable them to stand out regionally and internationally.

— ONA

Symposium looks at raising awareness about Humanitarian Law

MUSCAT: The Omani Committee for International Humanitarian Law on Monday organised a symposium titled “International Humanitarian Law: The Reality and the Aspirations”.

The two-day symposium is being held at the Diplomatic Club in cooperation with the Mission of the International Committee of the Red Cross in Muscat.

Shaikh Humaid bin Ali al Maani, Head of the Global Affairs Department at the Foreign Ministry, Chairman of the Omani Committee for International Humanitarian Law, said in a speech that the symposium aims “to achieve our common goals in humanitarian action, the need to spread knowledge of the concept of international humanitarian law, the challenges of its implementation and the classification of armed conflicts”.

The symposium also deals with the relationship between the International Humanitarian Law and humanitarian action and initiatives, he added.

For his part, Abdullah

Mohammed Said, Head of the Mission of International Committee of the Red Cross in Muscat, valued the Sultanate of Oman’s repeated calls on all warring parties to respect the provisions of international humanitarian law, notably in the ongoing conflict in Gaza.

He expressed his appreciation for Oman’s efforts to deliver relief aid to the stranded population in the Gaza Strip, as well as the country’s support for organisations operating in this field, including the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The official stressed that the symposium underlines the best ways to provide maximum protection for victims of armed conflicts and their property. “The best thing to do in this context is to comply with international humanitarian law and implement it effectively,” he explained.

The symposium deals with the principles of use of force and mechanisms for implementing international humanitarian law, including international jurisdictions, among other issues.

It is attended by representatives of government institutions entrusted with international humanitarian law.

The symposium coincides with the 75th anniversary of the 1949 four Geneva Conventions and stresses the importance of achieving better implementation and compliance with international humanitarian law. The abovementioned Geneva Conventions are the most ratified global pacts. As many as 196 countries are party to the international statutes, and this makes them concrete global agreements comprising a set of obligations aimed at alleviating the suffering of civilians and other victims of armed conflicts.

Oman’s signing of the four Geneva Conventions reflects its keenness in international humanitarian law. This interest led to the establishment of the Omani Committee for International Humanitarian Law and to the country’s positions calling for minimising human suffering and emphasising commitment to international humanitarian law. — ONA



The symposium deals with the relationship between the International Humanitarian Law and humanitarian action and initiatives. — ONA

Zen Development and Investment LLC Announces Partnership with Al Adrak Trading & Contracting Co LLC to Develop Zen Residences at Muscat Bay



Zen Development and Investment LLC announced a strategic partnership with Al Adrak Trading & Contracting Co LLC, a premier construction firm in Oman. The collaboration, formalized during a signing ceremony at the Muscat Bay sales centre, appoints Al Adrak as the main contractor for the highly anticipated Zen Residences project within the prestigious Muscat Bay. This agreement signifies the commencement of a development that promises to redefine living standards in the area.

This partnership underscores both companies’ commitment to excellence and their shared vision for delivering high-quality living spaces. The development will comprise of five buildings featuring a range of living options, including studios, 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom, and 3-bedroom apartments, as well as lofts, each designed to provide an optimal living experience.

“Collaborating with Al Adrak Trading & Contracting Co LLC allows us to tap into their vast experience and expert craftsmanship, enabling us to deliver a residential project that stands out in quality, innovation, and harmonious living,” stated Mohammad Assaf, Director of Operations at Zen Development and Investment LLC.

Zen Residences is designed to be a seamless blend of modern living and comfort, meeting the highest standards of construction and aesthetic appeal. Scheduled to commence in the third quarter of this year, the project aims to hand over the keys to new homeowners within three years from the start of construction.

“It is a privilege to partner with Zen Development and Investment LLC on Zen Residences project expressed Dr Aadil Thomas Alexander, Executive Director of Al Adrak Trading & Contracting Co LLC. “Our dedication to superior

quality and sustainable construction methods guarantees that Zen Residences will embody the ideal home for those seeking perfection in their living environment. We are looking forward to ensuring the highest standards of quality in every aspect of the project and on creating spaces that enhance the well-being and satisfaction of every resident.”

Zen Residences will boast a range of modern amenities and features designed to enhance the living experience for its residents. These include an infinity pool that offers serene relaxation, an outdoor BBQ area ideal for social gatherings, and an outdoor gym tailored for health enthusiasts. Additionally, the development features a dedicated kids’ play area, a scenic running track, and a tranquil Zen garden, all crafted to enrich resident lifestyles. Strategically located within Muscat Bay, the development not only provides comfortable living spaces but also gives residents exclusive access to the unique attractions of Muscat Bay.

About Zen Development and Investment :

Zen Development and Investment stands as a prominent figure in Oman’s real estate sector, renowned for its distinguished residential and commercial properties. Their approach is anchored in innovation, environmental responsibility, and a harmonious blend of modern living with natural landscapes. Committed to sustainability, cultural heritage, and transformative designs, they create spaces that not only inspire tranquility and well-being but also foster a sense of community and belonging.

For more information about Zen Development and Investment, please visit : <https://zenddevelopment.com>



OVER - HARVESTING REASON BEHIND

coconut shortage

IN SALALAH

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH
@patkaushal

HARDLY one month has been left for the Dhofar Khareef and the shops dealing in tender coconuts are facing a short supply of this Salalah signature fruit.

The shopkeepers cite some bugs as the reason behind it, while competent authorities disagree ‘totally’ with this and cite ‘over-harvesting’ as the main reason behind the short supply.

“We are facing the challenge of rhinoceros beetles (*Oryctes rhinoceros*), and coconut hispine beetles (*Brontispa longissima*) attacks, which lead to deaths of coconut palms in early growth stage and young or mature stages respectively. But the short supply in the market is not due to this problem,” said Dr Ahmed al Shanfari, Director of the Department of Agricultural and Livestock Research in Dhofar.

He called for awareness among the farmers to allow the fruits to mature and then pluck, because the bugs at the moment are only affecting the shape of the trees and leaves and not the fruits.

“For example, there may be tree leaves getting yellow or dry and fruit shells having some scars, but this has not yet affected the production,” he said.

It is due to the harvesting of premature coconuts that many buyers end up getting tender coconuts only with water and no flesh inside them, he says.

Dr Ahmed Shanfari, who is a specialist in Agrotechnology, Biotechnology and Plant Molecular Biology, said the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR) is well aware of the bug problem and has taken all possible measures to tackle it.

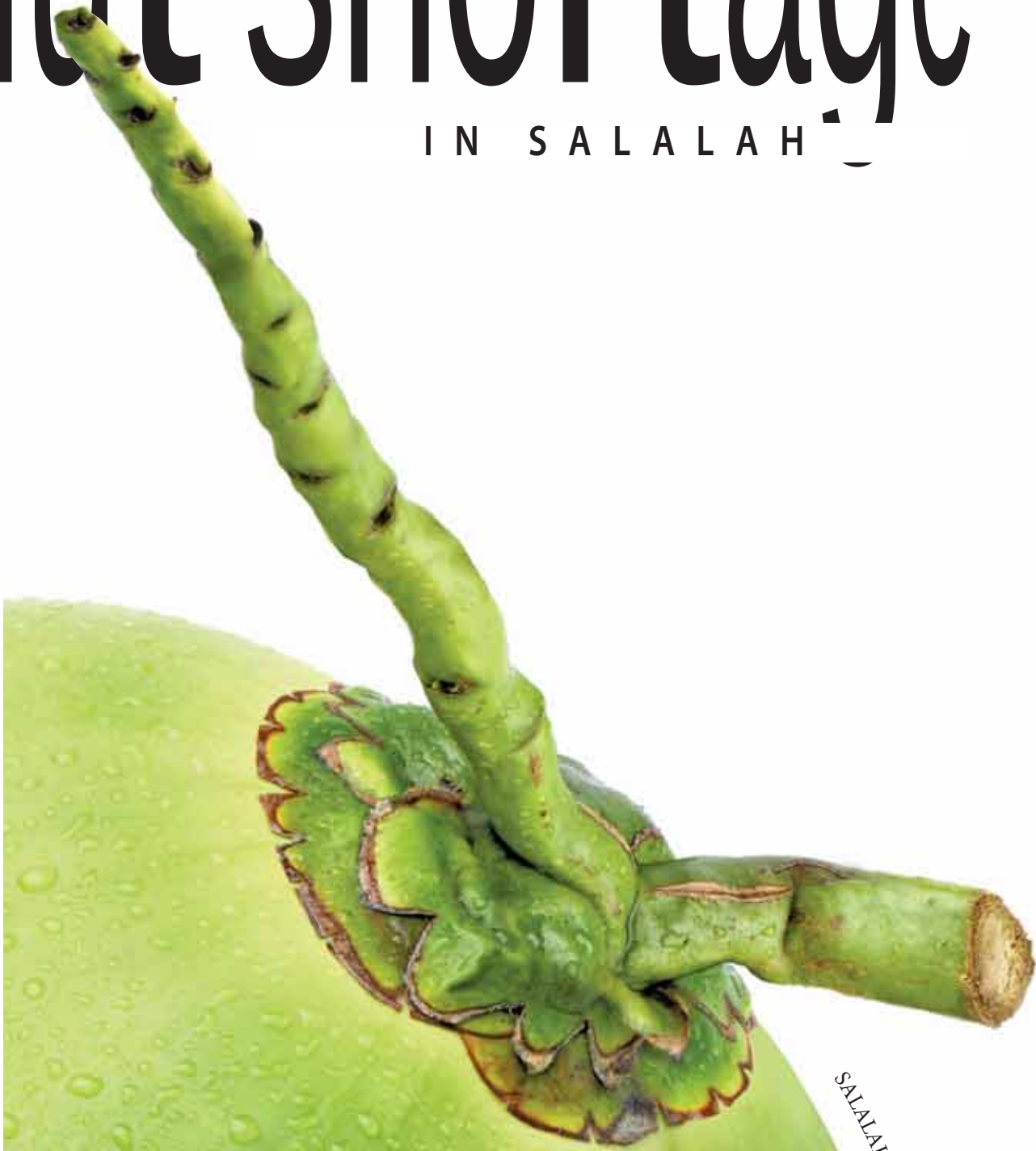
Salalah coconuts are all-time favourites among its visitors. Their visit to the city is not complete without tender coconut water and its flesh, the shops for which are spread all over, mainly on the roads adjoining the sea.

The huts selling local fruits and vegetables are one of the main attractions of the visitors as they serve as the most authentic selling points of Salalah’s green products.

The demand for coconuts is all-time high to the extent of short supply due to a large influx of visitors during the Dhofar Khareef. But it is too early to have a short supply when the season is yet to start in full force.



DR AHMED
AL SHANFARI



SALALAH COCONUTS ARE ALL-TIME FAVOURITES AMONG ITS VISITORS. THEIR VISIT IS NOT COMPLETE WITHOUT TENDER COCONUT WATER AND ITS FLESH



IRANIANS IN OMAN PAY HOMAGE TO DR EBRAHIM RAISI

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Iranians living in the Sultanate of Oman paid tributes to their Dr Ebrahim Raisi who passed away in a copter crash along with his foreign minister and other officials on Sunday in northwestern Iran. Mohammad Hossein Abdussamad, a merchant in Muttrah Souq said he felt so saddened learning the news of his favourite leader who was the contender to succeed supreme leader Khamenei. "Dr Ebrahim Raisi was not just

good but he was too good. He was a leader who attended to people's problems, mended relations with other countries and always worked hard for the well-being of the people," said Abdussamad. Sherif Abounajad, an oil and gas employee says he couldn't come into terms with the tragedy. "I am very saddened by what happened to our beloved president. Dr Ebrahim Raisi was one of the compassionate and tireless leaders of our beloved country, Iran. I'm still trying to accept the fact that he is no more," he said. Maryam Dilouh, who had a



short stint in Oman as a journalist, feels she had lost someone from her family. "Raisi was one of the leaders who was so popular among the people in Oman as well as outside the country who was behind many life-changing initiatives," she said. "As president, he cracked down on dissent at home as well as he pursued uncompromising stance in nuclear talks. I sincerely hope that the legacy will continue through his successors," she added. Meanwhile, Mohammed Rouhani, the Deputy Ambassador

of the Republic of Iran to the Sultanate of Oman said that the embassy would accept condolences at its premises on Tuesday and a book to register condolences will be available at the diplomatic mission on Tuesday and Wednesday. "We are immensely touched by the condolences that both citizens and expatriates in Oman send us. The ceremony for condolence book will be on Tuesday and the day after where people can attend at 10 am for Tuesday and from 9 am for Wednesday till 12 pm," he said.

State Council Chairman meets Russian Deputy Foreign Minister

MOSCOW: Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council on Monday had a meeting with Mikhail Bogdanov, Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs and Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for the Middle East and Africa. The meeting comes within the framework of the State Council Chairman's visit to the Russian Federation. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations between Oman and Russia. They also touched on areas of joint cooperation in various fields. The two sides explored matters of common interest and ways of enhancing them. This visit comes within the framework of enhancing bilateral cooperation between the two countries in all fields and consolidating relations between the State Council and the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly. — ONA



The two sides reviewed bilateral relations between Oman and Russia and also touched on areas of joint cooperation in various fields. — ONA

TRA launches project to measure quality of home Internet

MUSCAT: To ensure the quality of the service provided to subscribers, the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has launched a project to measure fixed broadband services (home Internet). The integrated system will measure fixed broadband services (home Internet), verify the quality of service provided to the beneficiary by measuring several indicators and compare them with the package announced by service operators, through a device designated for that purpose. TRA will provide the device to subscribers to fixed broadband services for free, which will enable them to evaluate various packages. The device will be connected to the user's home network to verify companies' commitment to the level of service provided



TRA aims to protect the interests of users, ensure transparency and consumer satisfaction

accurately for a specific time and to measure several indicators such as the download and upload speed, network response time, network outages, and other indicators. TRA aims to protect the interests of users, ensure transparency and consumer satisfaction, and enhance competition based on quality of service. The device can be requested by contacting TRA on its website, e-mail, call centre and WhatsApp service.

Oman Across Ages Museum marks International Museum Day



AMAL AL RIYAMI
MANAH, MAY 20

Museums are considered one of the most important tourist attractions in all countries in the world. Their functions vary between providing educational, cultural, and artistic messages. Their value in preserving cultural and historical heritage and protecting it from extinction and loss. Recognising the significant role museums play globally, International Museum Day was designated on May 18 each year. This tradition originated in 1977 through the General Committee of the International Council of Museums (ICOM), marking the beginning of the annual celebration. Since then, the day has garnered global attention, with hundreds of thousands of museums worldwide actively participating in its celebration. Among the countries actively engaged in celebrating International Museum Day, the Sultanate of Oman stands out for its profound interest in the event. This year, the theme 'Museums for Education and Research' resonated globally as countries worldwide joined in the celebration. The Oman Across Ages Museum was at the forefront of the museums that exerted most of their attention to leave their mark on this international day. The ceremony included many enriching workshops and working papers on Monday morning. The opening ceremony, under the auspices of Shaikh Dr Faisal bin Ali al Zeedi, Wali of Manah, symbolised the prestigious commencement of the event. During the ceremony, Engineer

Al Yaqdhan bin Abdullah al Harthy, the Director General of the Oman Across Ages Museum, delivered a speech highlighting the significance of celebrating International Museum Day. He also highlighted, in numbers, the efforts made by the museum to advance the role of the Oman Across Ages Museum in all fields that serve all segments of society. Al Yaqdhan al Harthy said: "In an effort by the Oman Across Ages Museum to support education and scientific research, this year the museum implemented more than 74 educational programmes and hosted more than 390 school visits, with approximately 16,800 students." Activities and events that support this year's slogan were also implemented, as the museum implemented specialised workshops with a number of experts and specialists. The first workshop was about an introduction to the restoration of wooden objects. While the second workshop was titled (with my brush, I will create in the museum) in cooperation with the Good Citizenship Department of the General Directorate for Curriculum Development at the Ministry of Education, the third episode was titled (Rock Engraving), and the fourth and final episode was titled (Scientific Researcher Competition) in cooperation with the Good Citizenship Department of the General Directorate for Curriculum Development at the Ministry of Education. The celebration of this day underscores the collective effort of museums globally to promote understanding, creativity, and exploration.





Israel vows to broaden Rafah sweep amid heavy fighting

GAZA: Israel made a new push in central Gaza on Monday, bombarded towns in the north of the Strip and said it intended to broaden its military operation in Rafah despite US warnings of the risk of mass casualties in the southern city.

Gaza medics said at least 23 people had been killed in the latest fighting, and residents said battles were intense in Jabalia in the north of the Palestinian enclave.

Israeli tanks also carried out a limited incursion into areas of Wadi Al-Salqa and Al-Karara near Deir Al-Balah, a central Gazan city which Israeli forces have not entered during more than seven months of war, local residents said.

Fighting raged as US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan held talks in Israel which the White House had said he would call for Israeli forces to go after Hamas militants in Gaza in a targeted way, not with a full-scale assault on Rafah.

But Israeli Defence Minister Yoav Gallant signalled there would be no let-up in its operation, intended to clear Rafah of Hamas militants and rescue captives seized in the raid on Israel on Oct. 7 that triggered the war.

Israel told civilians to evacuate parts of the city on May 6 and began troop and tank incursions. The UN agency for Palestinian refugees UNRWA estimates that



Displaced Palestinian children line up to receive food in Rafah. – AFP

Gaza medics said at least 23 people had been killed in the latest fighting, and residents said battles were intense in Jabalia in the north of the Palestinian enclave

810,000 people have fled since then, possibly over half Rafah's wartime population.

Israel's plan for an all-out assault on Rafah has ignited one of the biggest rifts in generations

with its main ally, and Washington held up a weapons shipment over fears of large civilian casualties.

At least 35,000 Palestinians have been killed in the war in Gaza, according to the enclave's health ministry, and aid agencies have also warned of widespread hunger and dire shortages of fuel and medical supplies.

Fighting has been heavy in Jabalia, the largest of Gaza's eight historic refugee camps, for about 10 days. Battles are under way in the heart of the camp and in narrow alleys that Israeli forces

had not previously entered, residents said.

Talks mediated by Egypt and Qatar have failed to secure an end to the war. Qatar's Minister of State at the Foreign Ministry, Mohammed Al-Khulaifi, said on Monday he saw no political will to reach a ceasefire agreement in Gaza while military operations continued on the ground.

Israel says it wants to reach a deal allowing for an exchange of captives held in Gaza for Palestinians held in Israel, but has not committed to ending its offensive in Gaza. — Reuters

Indians vote early to avoid blistering heat

MUMBAI: Indians voted on Monday in the fifth phase of mammoth general elections, with film actors and sports celebrities among the thousands who turned out early in a bid to avoid scorching afternoon heat in the financial hub of Mumbai.

Three hours before voting closed, about 48 per cent of voters had cast ballots in Monday's phase of the world's largest election, which began on April 19, as weather officials warned of more days of heatwaves than usual through the torrid summer.

Votes will be counted on June 4, with Prime Minister Narendra Modi expected to win a rare third consecutive term.

Voters at a polling station in a tiny lane in central Mumbai waited for hours in snaking queues that advanced slowly.

"It is claustrophobic and people are falling sick," said housewife Shalini Pawar, 42, who queued for three hours. One woman nearly fainted in the heat, she added, calling for authorities

to provide drinking water to those waiting.

Nearly a billion people are eligible to vote in India's election, but after poor initial turnout in early phases, more exercised the franchise to take the average of the first four rounds to 66.95 per cent, with 69 per cent voting in the fourth phase on May 13.

Monday's phase has the fewest constituencies going to the polls, with 89.5 million voters in 49 seats. High-profile candidates in the fray included trade minister Piyush Goyal, standing from one of six seats in Mumbai, and defence minister Rajnath Singh from Lucknow, both cities where there has been poor voter turnout in the past.

On Sunday, the Election Commission specifically urged residents of both cities "to erase the stigma" of urban apathy.

Mumbai is also home to the Hindi film industry, popularly called Bollywood, where the voters included film stars.

— Reuters



People wait in lines to cast their votes in Howrah district in the eastern state of West Bengal, India. – Reuters

Protesters block New Caledonia roads as French police pour in

PARIS: A thousand police arrived in New Caledonia from France and the streets were relatively calm after a week of unrest, the French High Commission said on Monday, but roads were blocked by protesters and the airport remained shut, stranding tourists.

Blockades of roads would continue, Field Action Co-ordination Cell, the activist group organising the protests in the French-ruled Pacific island, said in a statement, urging a peaceful approach.

Roadblocks were making it a challenge to get food supplies to stores in several areas or to provide secure travel for medical staff, New Caledonia government officials said, adding, however, that there were no shortages of supplies or staff.

French Prime Minister Gabriel Attal said on Monday that "we are still a way off a return to normal".

Protests erupted last week, sparked by anger among indigenous Kanak people over a constitutional amendment approved in France that would change who is allowed to participate in elections, which local leaders fear will dilute the Kanak vote.

Six people have been killed and the unrest has left a trail of burnt businesses and cars and looted shops, with road barricades restricting access to medicine and food. The business chamber said 150 companies had been looted and burnt.

Australia's Prime Minister Anthony Albanese said the situation, in the French territory,



A burnt vehicle is seen in the Normandy industrial zone in Noumea, France's Pacific territory of New Caledonia. – AFP

which lies in the southwest Pacific, some 1,500 km (930 miles) east of Australia, is "deeply concerning".

France's top official in the territory, Louis Le Franc, said on Sunday a police operation to regain control of the road from capital Noumea to the international airport would take several days.

Pro-independence political parties say they want the French government to withdraw the electoral reform before they restart talks.

"We need strong actions (from the government) to calm the situation ... this is a political, not a security issue," said Dominique Fochi, Secretary-General of the pro-independence Caledonian Union. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

NEW YORK

Cohen acknowledges stealing from Trump at trial

Donald Trump's former fixer Michael Cohen testified on Monday that he stole money from Trump's company, an admission that could chip away at his credibility as a star witness at the former US president's hush money trial.

Cohen said he paid roughly \$20,000 of the \$50,000 that Trump's company owed to the tech company in cash. He was reimbursed \$100,000 total.

Cohen is the final and most important witness for New York



prosecutors as they seek to convince a jury that Trump broke the law by covering up a \$130,000 payment that bought the silence of Stormy Daniels shortly before the 2016 election. — Reuters

MOSCOW

Russia claims control of Ukrainian stronghold

Russia said on Monday its forces had captured the Ukrainian village of Bilogorivka, one of the few remaining settlements in the eastern Lugansk region under Kyiv's control.

"As a result of active combat operations, units of the Southern grouping of troops completely liberated the settlement of Bilogorivka," the Russian defence ministry said.

Bilogorivka was a symbol of Ukrainian resistance in Lugansk region. The Ukrainian army has



come under intense pressure in the past two weeks, fighting off a fresh Russian offensive in the Kharkiv region while facing critical shortages of ammunition across the front lines. — AFP

JOHANNESBURG

South Africa's top court strikes Zuma from ballot

South Africa's top court ruled on Monday that graft-tainted former president turned firebrand opposition challenger Jacob Zuma is ineligible to stand for parliament in next week's general election.

The top court backed an electoral commission decision that Zuma's previous conviction for contempt of court prevents him from becoming an MP, ruling that the constitution bars anyone sentenced to more than 12 months in jail.



Zuma was convicted of contempt in 2021 and sentenced to 15 months. The court ruled that this was irrelevant as the constitution refers to the sentence imposed, not served. — AFP



omanobserver.om/podcast

world

OMANDAILYOBSERVER
TUESDAY | MAY 21 | 2024

7

IRAN MOURNS PRESIDENT RAISI'S DEATH IN HELICOPTER CRASH

Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi was confirmed dead on Monday after search and rescue teams found his crashed helicopter in a fog-shrouded mountain region while travelling back from East Azerbaijan province where he had inaugurated a dam project, sparking mourning in the Islamic republic.

Supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, who has ultimate authority in Iran, declared five days of mourning and assigned vice president Mohammad Mokhber, 68.

"In accordance with Article 131 of the constitution, Mokhber is in charge of leading the executive branch," said Khamenei in a statement, adding that Mokhber will be required to work with the heads of legislative and judicial to prepare for presidential elections "within a maximum period of 50 days".

Mokhber, 68, was appointed vice president as Raisi took office in August 2021. The vice president was born in Dezful city in the southwestern province of Khuzestan, where he held several official positions.

For years since 2007, Mokhber chaired the Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order, a governmental organisation tasked with managing properties confiscated following the 1979 revolution.

Earlier on Monday, state TV announced that "the servant of the Iranian nation, Ayatollah Ebrahim Raisi, has achieved the highest level of martyrdom" and broadcast pictures from Raisi's life as a voice recited the Holy Quran.

Khamenei had urged Iranians to "not worry" about the leadership of the Islamic republic, saying "there will be no disruption in the country's work".

Killed alongside Raisi were Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and seven others, including the crew, bodyguards and political and religious officials.

Iran's President Ebrahim Raisi took office during a tumultuous period of confrontation abroad and mass protest at home.

The Iranian president — whose career started in the years after the 1979 Islamic revolution and who is close to supreme leader Ayatollah Ali Khamenei

— took power in a 2021 election that was followed by turbulent years of protests and tensions.

Raisi took power after an election in which more than half the electorate stayed away.

He succeeded Hassan Rouhani, whose signature achievement was a 2015 nuclear deal with world powers.

Iran's veteran nuclear negotiator Ali Bagheri, a harsh critic of the West, was on Monday named acting foreign minister to replace the top diplomat killed in a helicopter crash along with the president. Bagheri, 56, had served as deputy to the foreign minister of the Islamic republic, Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, who perished along with the Iranian president Ebrahim Raisi and seven others in the accident.

Condolences flooded in from

countries and organisations worldwide. Iran's Gulf neighbours on Monday mourned the deaths of President Ebrahim Raisi and foreign minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian.

Russian President Vladimir Putin on Monday held a telephone call with Mohammad Mokhber, Iran's interim head-of-state.

China's President Xi Jinping said "his tragic death is a great loss to the Iranian people, and the Chinese people have lost a good friend."

The European Union expressed its "sincere condolences". "Our thoughts go to the families," EU Council President Charles Michel said in a statement.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said he was "deeply saddened and shocked by the tragic demise" of Raisi, adding that "India stands with Iran in this time of sorrow."

France sent its Condolences "to the Islamic Republic of Iran... (and) to the families of the victims of this accident," in a statement from the foreign ministry.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan sent his "sincere Condolences to the friendly and fraternal people and government," in a message on X.

A black flag was hoisted in city of Qom, south of Tehran, as a sign of mourning for Raisi, whom many had considered a favourite to one day succeed the supreme leader. — AFP



Late Iranian Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian



Oman-Iran ties have passed tests of time under Raisi



Oman has expressed its sympathy with the Islamic Republic of Iran, which lost its leader Dr Ebrahim Raisi who was killed in a helicopter crash in mountainous terrain near the Azerbaijan border.

The wreckage of the helicopter which crashed on Sunday also had Iran's Foreign Minister Hossein Amir-Abdollahian and six other passengers and crew. The loss of both Dr Raisi and Hossein Amir-Abdollahian is sad news for Oman.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and the people of Oman received the news of the death of Dr Ebrahim Raisi and the delegation that accompanied him in a helicopter crash with grief over the immense loss.

In Oman's perspective, the late president was renowned for his benign contributions and sincere efforts to realise understanding and maintain peace and harmony during his presidential term.

Building on the long-standing and robust relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Islamic Republic of Iran and their friendly peoples, and emphasising mutual respect between the leaders of the two countries and the solid bilateral relations founded on good neighbourliness, fraternity,

and religious and cultural ties, His Majesty paid an official visit to Iran in response to a gracious invitation from Dr Ebrahim Raisi.

His Majesty the Sultan values what Dr Raisi and his government have been doing in adopting a constructive, effective and broad policy based on the principles of Iranian policy and openness with all countries, especially neighbouring countries.

Dr Raisi has been at the forefront of leading the country to positive and constructive Oman-Iran relations based on mutual respect, cooperation and good neighbourliness. The development of common economic, commercial and cultural interests under Dr Raisi contributed to strengthening regional security and stability.

Another big loss for Oman is the death of Hossein Amir-Abdollahian who has visited Oman several times for consultations at the highest level regarding important positions on the region and the world.

His recent meeting with Sayyid Badr Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, underscored the two countries' keenness to enhance cooperation based on the principles of good neighbourliness, while reiterating their continuing efforts to address and find peaceful solutions to issues and developments in the region.

IN OMAN'S PERSPECTIVE, THE LATE PRESIDENT WAS RENOWNED FOR HIS BENIGN CONTRIBUTIONS AND SINCERE EFFORTS TO REALISE UNDERSTANDING AND MAINTAIN PEACE AND HARMONY DURING HIS PRESIDENTIAL TERM

Their meetings have been representing an opportunity to exchange views, consult and coordinate regarding various developments taking place in the region with the recent one also representing a chance to know how to work together in the tireless attempts to find successful solutions to various issues and conflicts.

In one of his visits to Oman, late Hossein Amir-Abdollahian expressed his appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for the initiative that was launched to lift the sanctions imposed by the United States of America and the efforts of Oman to support stability in the region.

He noted that the bilateral relations between Oman and Iran have been witnessing development in all fields and that Iran holds consultations with Oman at the highest level regarding taking important positions on the region and the world.

As one of the ways to solidify relations between the two brotherly countries and establish foundations for maintaining them, the leaders of the two countries earlier directed their governments to work towards reaching a strategic cooperation document between the countries and to sign it in various fields that enhance common cooperation and mutual benefits.

Attack on tourists rocks Afghan tourism sector

PASCALE TROUILLAUD

An attack claimed by the IS group which killed foreign tourists visiting a market in central Afghanistan has also dealt a blow to the country's nascent tourism sector.

"If there is another attack in the next few weeks or months, Afghanistan's tourism industry will be over," said Joe Sheffer, founder of the Safarat tourism agency, which specialises in tours to the country. He spoke after the attack by one or more gunmen last Friday that killed six people in central Bamiyan province, including three Spanish tourists. Another four foreigners in the tourist group were wounded.

The IS group on Sunday claimed the assault on the group of 13 travellers with a Spanish tour agency, believed to be the first against foreign tourists since the Taliban's return to power in 2021. The Taliban authorities have touted improved security in Afghanistan ever since their takeover in 2021 ended their insurgency against foreign-backed government forces.

Bamiyan province, with its giant Buddhas dynamited in 2001 under the Taliban's first rule and turquoise lakes at Band-e Amir, is the country's leading tourist destination.

Sheffer said a couple of customers had already cancelled their trip and the company was reviewing its operations in Afghanistan.

"We will reduce group sizes... We are cancelling itineraries in remote locations... We are reducing walking in public places," he said.

Founder of the Untamed Border tour agency, James Willcox, said, "Of course, any violent attack on tourists will have a negative impact on future tourist interest."

However, he added: "We have been working in Afghanistan for over 15 years and there has never been a time when there has not been anti-government groups operating in the country. Sadly it is something that everyone that visits Afghanistan has to consider when they travel."

In Bangkok, Phakhaporn Thantadakul, manager of the Away Vacation tour agency, wants to cancel a trip set for June/July. The group from majority Buddhist Thailand wanted to visit Bamiyan, once a major centre of Buddhist influence. "I will check with my group first because the security is coming first," she said.

The founder of travel agency Let's be Friends Afghanistan (LBFA) Noor Mohammad Ramazan said, "Questions flooded towards me from clients worried about safety" after the attack. — AFP

Smart cities and sustainable development



Dr Muamar bin Ali Al Tobi

The writer is Omani academic and researcher

Recent news reveals more about the Sultan Haitham City project and its stages that have started. This ambitious national project is tied to the term "smart city," which represents a new phase in human civilisation adopting what is known as the "digital society".

The Sultanate of Oman's ambition to keep up with digital and technological advancements is based on the vision of the country's leader, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

His Majesty has given special attention to digital projects and their role in sustainable development, and the Sultan Haitham City project reflects this noble vision.

Many interesting things arise about Sultan Haitham City and its link to smart cities. Readers can refer to numerous details published on this project and its stages, scheduled for completion between 2024 and 2045.

This article focuses on the general concept of smart cities, with Sultan Haitham City being part of the sustainable system.

Smart cities are among the key technological advancements aiming to improve life quality in human societies, transforming them from traditional industrial societies to advanced digital ones, and enhancing sustainable economic development.

The main goal of smart cities is to provide a sustainable and resilient living environment using advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI), the Internet of Things (IoT), cloud computing, and other related technologies.

These technologies improve all aspects of daily life, including transportation, energy, water, communication, and government services. The importance of smart cities lies in their contribution to sustainable development and their ability to sustainably enhance and automate infrastructure. Smart cities help update and control infrastructure, reducing resource waste such as energy and water consumption and improving efficiency. They also help reduce congestion and traffic jams.

Smart systems improve traffic flow and guide drivers to less crowded



Sultan Haitham City is part of the sustainable system.

routes, reducing carbon dioxide emissions and improving air quality through smart sensors operating via the IoT system connected to analytical systems linked to AI algorithms. This digital advancement is supported by the proliferation of smart cars,

SMART CITIES ARE AMONG THE KEY TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS AIMING TO IMPROVE LIFE QUALITY IN HUMAN SOCIETIES, TRANSFORMING THEM FROM TRADITIONAL INDUSTRIAL SOCIETIES TO ADVANCED DIGITAL ONES

expected to increase in the coming years, which can exchange data with smart sensors in the streets, enhancing traffic flow quality.

Smart cities also aim to achieve high levels of natural resource management by using smart applications in cities to manage the supply and demand of resources such as water and electricity more effectively, contributing to environmental conservation and resource availability for consumers and future generations. Smart cities also support the local economy and provide the required sustainability by creating new jobs in digital development and advanced technological innovation fields. They enhance trade and tourism with advanced digital systems that analyse data with high quality and speed, offering the best solutions and recommendations.

Generally, smart cities contribute

to improving life quality by providing a high-quality living environment through innovative services such as healthcare, education, and entertainment.

These services, key elements of smart cities, reflect what one can expect in the future from the Sultan Haitham City project, embodying the desired digital transformation through smart homes, streets, facilities, integrated digital systems in healthcare institutions, and educational institutions focused on advanced technical and digital education.

In smart cities, many smart applications stand out, such as intelligent transportation systems that include smart buses and trains enabling easy and efficient movement within and between cities, and taxis relying on advanced digital means.

Waste management is also managed through smart applications providing an accurate waste collection schedule and guiding residents to proper disposal locations or advanced transportation channels, some using smart underground pipe systems supported by suction systems with smart waste sorting capabilities.

This contributes to sustainability in the waste recycling industry and reduces environmental pollution.

Another important smart application in smart cities is techniques for improving agriculture and its outputs through smart irrigation systems and pest monitoring and resistance using ground monitoring means with smart sensors and smart imaging devices.

Aerial monitoring by drones collects and analyses data using AI algorithms to double agricultural quality and production at lower costs, providing local food sources free of pests. Other applications in smart cities include smart government technologies, which use AI in big data analysis to improve government services such as urban planning and public security.

Some government institutions currently rely on such technologies, like the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, which seeks to highlight the digital footprint in its modern projects like Sultan Haitham City and other upcoming smart cities.

Biden faces silent Gaza ‘protest’

US President Joe Biden said on Sunday he heard the voice of Gaza war protesters as some students turned their backs on his graduation ceremony speech at the former university of civil rights icon Martin Luther King Jr.

A small number of graduates carried out the silent protest, with some holding Palestinian flags and one holding up a fist as Biden spoke at Morehouse College, a historically Black university in Atlanta, Georgia.

Others wore keffiyeh scarves over their gowns in a sign of solidarity with the protests that have roiled campuses across the United States over Israel’s offensive on the Gaza Strip after the October 7 attacks.

“I support peaceful, non-violent protest. Your voices should be heard, and I promise you I hear them,” said Biden, who wore a maroon and black gown in the colours of the all-male university.

The speech was Biden’s most direct encounter with American students since the Gaza protests engulfed campuses nationwide, causing him political troubles with an election rematch against Donald Trump just over six months away. “This is one of the hardest, most complicated problems in the world. There’s nothing easy about it,” added Biden about Gaza.

“I know it angers and frustrates many of you, including my family, but most of all, I know it breaks your heart. It breaks mine as well.”

He did not elaborate, but First Lady Jill Biden reportedly urged the president in April to “stop it now” as the toll of Palestinian civilians mounted from Israel’s offensive. A number of Morehouse students had called for Biden’s speech to be cancelled over the Gaza war but the ceremony went ahead without disruption.

Biden told the students that Gaza was enduring a “humanitarian crisis” and that he was working for an “immediate ceasefire to stop the fighting, bring the captives home.”

The 81-year-old Democrat added he was pushing for a “lasting, durable



Danny Kemp

The writer is White House Correspondent for AFP

BIDEN TOLD THE STUDENTS THAT GAZA WAS ENDURING A ‘HUMANITARIAN CRISIS’ AND THAT HE WAS WORKING FOR AN IMMEDIATE CEASEFIRE TO STOP THE FIGHTING, BRING THE CAPTIVES HOME

peace” in the wider Middle East that would lead to an independent Palestinian state, which he called the “only solution.”

The president’s National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan is in Saudi Arabia and Israel this week trying to push for a ceasefire.

Biden had earlier applauded as Morehouse College’s valedictorian, DeAngelo Jeremiah Fletcher, also called for an immediate ceasefire in his own speech.

“It is important to recognise both sides have suffered heavy casualties since October 7,” said Fletcher.

Morehouse president David Thomas — who had last week threatened to shut down the ceremony if it was disrupted — told Biden after the speech that “you’ve been listening.”

“You spoke to the hard issues confronting our nation and the world at this moment,” said Thomas.

The speech at the alma mater of slain rights hero King was part of a series of Biden events this week aimed at winning over Black voters, amid polls showing that their support for him is flagging.

Biden did not specifically mention his rival Trump but leaned heavily into themes of democracy and racism that he has previously invoked while talking about the twice-impeached Republican former president.

“This is what we’re up against -- extremist forces aligned against the meaning and message of Morehouse,” said Biden. His outreach efforts to Black voters and Gaza protesters were two sides of the same coin as Biden tries to shore up support among the coalition that helped him beat Trump in 2020.

Later Biden travelled to Detroit in the key swing state of Michigan where he visited a cafe owned by two former NBA players, brothers Joe and Jordan Crawford, before attending a major civil rights group gathering.

Addressing thousands of people at the NAACP event, Biden said strong support from African-American voters in the close 2020 election meant they are “the only reason I’m standing here as the president.”

A FLOWERY HEADGEAR!



A visitor with floral-themed headwear attends Chelsea Flower Show, in London, Britain on Monday. – Reuters

In a boiling world, chief heat officers battle ‘silent killer’

As the era of “global boiling” spawns ever deadlier heatwaves, a handful of heat tsars are working with officials in cities from Miami to Melbourne in a race against time to cool urban heat traps and prevent tens of thousands of deaths.

Seven chief heat officers - who all happen to be women - are working in Miami, Melbourne, Dhaka, Freetown and Athens to plant trees, create “pocket parks”, install water fountains and teach people about the effects of extreme heat on the human body.

The role of chief heat officer was created three years ago by a US-based think tank, but even in that short time the task has become more urgent as planet-heating emissions - largely from the use of coal, oil and gas - are pushing temperatures into “uncharted territory”, according to scientists.

Already, last year was the hottest on record, and new research suggests that the intense northern hemisphere summer heat made it the warmest summer in some 2,000 years - more evidence of what UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres called “the era of global boiling”.

This year, heatwaves have already ravaged several countries in Asia, costing lives, disrupting education



Anastasia Moloney

The writer is the Latin America and Caribbean correspondent based in Bogotá, Colombia for Thomson Reuters Foundation

BY 2050, HEATWAVES WILL AFFECT MORE THAN 3.5 BILLION PEOPLE GLOBALLY - HALF OF THEM IN URBAN CENTRES

and damaging livelihoods. In Europe, where as many as 61,000 people may have died in the 2022 heatwaves, people are bracing for more record temperatures in the coming summer months.

Despite this increased frequency, many people do not fully comprehend how dangerous extreme heat can be, said Krista Milne, co-chief heat officer for Melbourne.

“In Australia, as around the world, it (heat) kills more people than any other natural hazard yet people don’t understand that it’s an issue and therefore don’t prepare for it.”

Extreme heat can cause heat stroke or kidney failure and exacerbate heart or respiratory diseases. Children, older people, pregnant women, farmers and gig workers are among the most vulnerable, especially in poorer countries.

An April report by the UN’s International Labour Organization said nearly 19,000 people die every year due to workplace injuries attributed to excessive heat.

“The simple fact is that there is a point where the body can’t cool down,” said Milne.

The chief heat officer posts

were created through an initiative by the US-based Adrienne Arsht-Rockefeller Foundation Resilience Center (Arsht-Rock), which says that by 2050, heatwaves will affect more than 3.5 billion people globally - half of them in urban centres.

“Heat is the most deadly climate danger. It’s a silent killer,” said Elissavet Bargianni, who was appointed chief heat officer for Athens in May 2023.

The city was the first in Europe to rank heatwaves from Category 1 to Category 3, helping residents to decide whether to stay indoors or cancel outdoor sports events. The ranking also helps officials assess whether they need to temporarily

shut tourist sites, like the ancient Acropolis, Bargianni said.

Cities are often several degrees warmer than nearby rural areas because heat trapped by dense clusters of concrete and dark-coloured roads and buildings creates a “heat island” effect, meaning nighttime temperatures also remain high. Nearly half of schools and hospitals in European cities are located in urban “heat islands” - areas that are at least 2 degrees Celsius warmer than the regional average, according to the European Union’s environment agency.

The chief heat officers aim to raise awareness of the risks of this extreme heat and coordinate

actions to mitigate it.

In Freetown, Sierra Leone, chief heat officer Eugenia Kargbo and Arsht-Rock have built shade covers for three of the largest open-air street markets, providing shelter for around 2,300 women traders and ensuring their produce lasts longer.

These low-cost covers also have solar panels, which provide light at night, enabling people to shop for longer.

In Melbourne, where a heatwave sent temperatures soaring to around 39C in March, the City Council aims to plant 3,000 trees a year to boost the resilience of its forest areas and to cool the city by 4 degrees Celsius.

The Council has also proposed a new planning rule that requires future buildings to have a certain amount of greenery depending on their size.

Milne, who shares the chief heat officer job with Tiffany Crawford, said their aim is to ensure all decisions about the city are viewed through a “heat lens”.

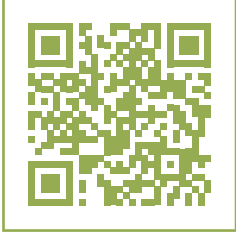
Along with Melbourne and Athens, many cities in the United States and an increasing number in Asia have set up cooling centres to help residents find relief during heatwaves.



In April, temperatures in Bangladesh - ranked the seventh most vulnerable country to climate change - soared to over 40C.

sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



OMAN TAKE ON MALAYSIA IN ASIA CUP INDOOR HOCKEY



Friendly match between Oman and Singapore.

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, MAY 20

Oman national hockey team all set to take part in in the Men's Indoor Asia Cup hockey championship on Tuesday, the tournament hosted by Kazakhstan in Taldykorgan city during May 21 to 26, with participation of eight teams.

Oman are in first group along with Indonesia, Kazakhstan and Malaysia, while the second group included Iran, Singapore, Tajikistan and Thailand. Four teams will qualify to the

semifinals, and two teams will qualify for the Indoor World Cup finals.

Oman team will open their journey with Malaysian team on Tuesday, while Oman will play the second match on Wednesday against Indonesian team, then will conclude the group stage by taking on Kazakhstan team.

The Oman team is taking part in this qualifier for the second time in history, seeking for one of the two qualification tickets to the Indoor World Cup finals in October.

Omani players showed

excellent performance in their last participation in the Men's Hockey 5s World Cup in Muscat in January, during which the team claimed the bronze medal.

The Oman squad consists 12 players, including goalkeepers Fahd al Noufali and Amjad al Hassani, Rashad al Fazari, Khaled al Shuaibi, Amir al Mashari, Amin Faraj, Shafi al Shatri, Shehab Naheth, Talal Mohammed Beit Hazim, Abdullah al Alawi, Mohammed al Noufali and Osama Ramadan Nassib. The technical staff is led by Dutch coach Seigfried



Oman technical team led by Dutch coach Seigfried Aikman (C).

Aikman, assisted by Salah al Saadi and Khaled al Raisi.

INTEGRATED TRAINING

The Oman team went through an integrated preparation programme immediately after the Muscat World Cup, divided into three stages. The first stage began with 28 players for two weeks and ended by selecting 22 players to the third stage, where the coach reduced the squad to 12 players. The final stage witnessed friendly matches with the Iran team who are ranked second and chose Oman as their camp. Oman won

two friendly matches while losing two and one draw.

Salah bin Nasser al Saadi, Oman assistant coach, said: "The team needs friendly matches in order to prepare greatly for this participation, as the team succeeded in playing five friendly matches with the Iranian team, during which our players presented a good technical level."

"This participation is somewhat new for the team since 2017. On Tuesday, we will return start with new jersey and systems in managing matches. And our great ambition is to grab a

qualification ticket to the Indoor World Cup," he added.

Abdullah bin Mohammed al Obaidani, head of Oman delegation, explained: "We hope the team will perform at the level required for this participation and show presence in the Asian Cup finals, after an absence of more than seven years."

Al Obaidani added, "the Oman Hockey Association has provided an integrated programme for this important participation, today the team is ready to compete, we hope our players will provide the best."

Ben Sulayem reaffirms FIA support for Oman motorsports

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, MAY 20

Motorsports world chief Mohammed Ben Sulayem held series of discussions with senior government officials in Oman and the officials of Oman Automobile Association (OAA) during a visit on Monday aimed at boosting the growth of the sport in the country.

Ben Sulayem reaffirmed FIA's support for Oman's development projects.

The talks centred on enhancing Oman's motorsports infrastructure such as constructing more racetracks, training facilities, and boosting motorsport tourism.

"I was delighted to learn more about the growth of motorsport in Oman during the various meetings. The government is supporting grassroots development plans in place to ensure that motor sport will thrive in the years to come," the former Emirati race driver said.

He added: "I applaud the excellent work that is being undertaken by the Oman Automobile Association under the direction of Chairman Brigadier (ret'd) Salem al Maskiry in the areas of both sport and mobility."

Some of the main topics covered during the visit centred



FIA President Mohammed Ben Sulayem with the OAA officials in Muscat.

on the growth of motorsport and efforts to bring sustainable mobility initiatives to the country.

During his stay, Ben Sulayem met with HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, Nasr bin Hamoud al Kindi, Secretary-General of the Royal Court Affairs and Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning.

In addition to enjoying a visit to the Royal Opera House, Ben Sulayem shared a convivial dinner with Shaikh Khalid bin Mohammed al Zubair, Chairman of Oman Olympic Committee.

Earlier, upon arrival, the FIA President was warmly welcomed by OAA chief Salim al Maskari, Vice-Chairman Brigadier Jamal al Tai and Suleiman al Rawahi, Managing Director of OAA.

The FIA chief concluded his visit by meeting OOC Chairman Shaikh Khalid al Zubair. They discussed ways to enhance cooperation between the FIA and the OOC. Oman, viewed as a promising market for motorsport, has ambitious vision for the future.

Salim al Maskari emphasised that this visit presents a golden opportunity to strengthen international partnerships and

exchange ideas and experiences. He noted that the OAA will work to implement the discussed plans and initiatives to promote motorsport in Oman.

ESPORTS TOURNEY

Later this year, the OAA will be hosting the Iracing FIA F4 Esports tournament, which will feature the Mena International Karting Trophy. Drifting and remote control racing are also thriving sports. The country has benefited from funding from the FIA Grants Programme in recent years including safety training for baja and cross-country competition.

FIA president praises young racers of Oman

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 20

Mohammed Ben Sulayem, President of the International motorsports body FIA, elaborated on future strategies to enhance cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman Automobile Association (OAA), and the FIA, the world governing body of motorsport, during his visit to Oman at the OAA headquarters on Monday.

Sulayem affirmed that his visit to Oman is part of a series of visits he is making in the region aimed at meeting and discussing key mobility development programmes and future events.

During the meeting between the FIA chief and officials at the OAA, both parties highlighted various aspects contributing to enhancing motorsports in Oman. "I have great and special memories in the Sultanate of Oman as a former racer during past years. The Oman International Rally was one of the most demanding rallies in the region, a crucial event with high technical standards. The rally was especially challenging due to its high precision and difficulty in the track. All racers

required precise technical specifications to overcome the rally's challenges," the FIA president said.

"Oman hosted the Mena Cup for Karting Championship in recent years at the 'Muscat Speedway,' which featured the participation of more than 200 drivers. It was one of the successful international events in Oman, with many young competitors from various countries in the region taking part," he said.

"Oman's Abdullah al Rawahi is a great example of Omani youth racers after his historic and remarkable 2023 FIA Middle East Rally Championship title. He selected the right car and team to achieve the proper speed and time to win the title. It is not an easy task, and I would like to congratulate Abdullah for this great triumph. It is important to continue supporting all drivers and competitors to ensure achieving international accomplishments and titles," he pointed out.

The FIA president also praised the efforts of HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports, and Youth, in advancing the youth sector, creating a growing and integrated sports environment for motorsports in Oman.

Champions Seeb beat Al Nahdha to stamp authority in OL

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, MAY 20

Seeb defeated Al Nahdha 2-1 in the 21st round of Omantel League at the Seeb Sports Stadium on Sunday.

Seeb dominated the game from the very first minutes, controlling the ball and maintaining a good spread of players on the field. Seeb had several dangerous opportunities but failed to capitalise on them initially. Seeb finally opened the scoring in the 37th minute through Abdulrahman al Mushaifri.

Seeb doubled their lead in the 43rd minute when a cross from Al Mushaifri deflected off Al Nahdha's Ahmed al Matrooshi and went into the net. The first half ended with Seeb leading 2-0.

Al Nahdha entered the second half to equalise and managed to reduce the deficit in the 89th minute through Al Mundhir al Alawi. Al Nahdha pressed hard in an attempt to draw level, but Seeb's defence held firm against all attempts. The match ended with a 2-1 victory for Seeb.

With this win, Seeb, who had already been crowned league champions before the match, increased their points tally to 54, while Al Nahdha remained at 40 points.

BAHLA RELEGATED

Bahla were officially relegated to the First Division after a 1-1 draw with Al Shabab at Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex.

Marcelo Gomez scored for Al Shabab in the 28th minute, while Junior equalised for Bahla in the 48th minute.

Al Shabab raised their points tally to 24, placing them ninth, tied on points but behind Ibri and Sur on goal difference. Bahla, with



Seeb and Al Nahdha players in action during the Omantel League 21st round.

15 points, were unable to secure their place in the league.

At Ibri Sports Complex, Sohar continued their resurgence with an important 2-1 victory over Ibri.

Sohar scored in the third minute with a brilliant header from foreign player Alexander De Stefano. Ibri struggled to break through Sohar's organised defence and ended the first half trailing 1-0.

Ibri applied strong pressure to equalise, but Sohar's defence

remained resolute. Sohar sealed the victory in the 65th minute with a successful penalty by Mohsen Johar.

Ibri pulled one back through Abdulaziz al Mandhari in the 80th minute.

The match ended with Sohar winning 2-1, raising their points tally to 36 to reach fourth, three points behind third-placed Oman Club. Ibri remained at 24 points, in eighth place, behind Sur on goal difference.

OMAN CLUB CLOSE IN ON SECOND SPOT

Oman Club continued their impressive form with a 5-2 thrashing of Al Wahda at Sur Sports Complex.

Oman Club started aggressively, scoring early in the third minute through Mohammed al Ghafri. Oman Club kept up the pressure and added a second goal in the 40th minute through Nasser al Rawahi. Oman Club maintained their dominance in the second half, with Nasser al Rawahi scoring two more goals in the 53rd and 67th minutes.

Yazid al Rawahi scored Oman Club's fifth goal in the 70th minute. Al Wahda reduced the deficit late in the game with goals from Al Asim al Harthi in the 74th minute and Aysar al Alawi in the 91st minute.

Oman Club raised their points tally to 39, closing the gap to just one point behind second-placed Al Nahdha, while Al Wahda remained at 13 points, at the bottom of the table.

At Al Saada Sports Complex, Al Nasr defeated Sur 2-0.

Waleed al Musallami scored both goals for Al Nasr in the 62nd and 90th minutes, raising their points tally to 31, placing them fifth, while Sur remained at 24 points, in seventh place.

Elsewhere, Al Rustaq defeated Dhofar 2-1 at Al Rustaq Sports Complex.

Al Rustaq's goals were scored by Mohammed al Ghafri from a penalty kick in the 14th minute and Douglas Da Silva in the 94th minute, while Dhofar's goal was scored by Ali Salem from a penalty kick in the 49th minute.

With this, Rustaq raised their total to 29 points, securing sixth place, while Dhofar remained at 20 points, holding the tenth place.

Verstappen wins two races in one day — real and the virtual

IMOLA, Italy: Max Verstappen celebrated a double win on Sunday, taking the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix for Red Bull after earlier being on the triumphant team for a virtual endurance race.

The triple Formula One world champion said the time spent gaming in between real world duties had not affected his performance.

Verstappen said he had done some evening stints but not night ones, although he did stay up to watch the Oleksandr Usyk-Tyson Fury world heavyweight title fight which was broadcast at around midnight local time.

"He's had a very busy weekend because he's also competed in the 24 Hours of Nuerburging in between being in the car," team boss Christian Horner told reporters.

"He's won two races today. One in a BMW M3 and one in a Formula One car.

"He's basically a racing machine," added Horner when asked whether there were any concerns about his star driver's activities.

"He's quite often testing different setups in the evening and that kind of thing so it's not unusual for him to be doing that," Horner added.

Verstappen has now won five of seven races this season and is cruising towards his fourth title, even if the competition appears to be hotting up.

Last year the Dutch driver won a record 19 of 22 races in the most dominant campaign yet.

McLaren's Lando Norris, who pushed Verstappen hard at the finish on Sunday and took the chequered flag only 0.7 of a second behind, has competed virtually with Verstappen in the past in the 24 Hours of Spa but on a weekend off.

Asked about the physical toll and whether he would consider doing stints in a virtual endurance race on a Grand Prix weekend, Norris suggested he would be up for it but his focus now was more on having fun in the real world.

"I've just never tried. I stayed up and watched the fight last night. So, I never sleep much anyway," the Briton told reporters,



Red Bull's Max Verstappen celebrates with the trophy on the podium after winning the Emilia Romagna Grand Prix in Imola, Italy. — Reuters

adding that he had also been keeping tabs on the golf and had gone to bed around 2 am.

"I don't think it would have had the biggest toll. Otherwise, he probably wouldn't have done it. Yeah, so he didn't drive too late. He did a couple of stints. And he prepared for it and that kind of thing.

"But at least it's not a physical thing. It's more just mentally it can hurt you a bit. But I probably stayed up later than he did."

Verstappen indicated Imola's bumpy track had caused him more trouble in the end.

"I'm just broken from the bumps, to be honest. My back, everything is hurting. It's not so much from the physical side of things, but just it was so bumpy out there. Already after like 20 laps, I could really feel my back," he said.

"So I'm just looking forward to laying in bed. Maybe take some painkillers. And a massage." — Reuters

Gunners win, agonise missing out on title

ANDY JALIL
LONDON, MAY 20

So close yet so far for Arsenal as they missed out on the Premier League crown for the second consecutive year. A loss or even a draw against West Ham for Manchester City in their final match of the season would have handed the Gunners their first Premier League title in 20 years. Instead, as City celebrate their record fourth successive Premier League title, Arsenal live to fight another day.

After their 2-1 victory over Everton, an emotional Arsenal manager, Mikel Arteta spoke to the crowd about losing the race to the title: "All this is happening as you started believing, you started to be patient and started to understand what we tried to do. Please keep pushing, keep inspiring this team. Don't be satisfied. We want much more than that and we're going to get it."

Speaking later, when he was asked how many points it would take to end City's monopoly of the crown, Arteta said: "I was there when we did 100 points in 2017-18, so I know what it takes. I know what happened and this is the level required. But we're on the right path, the right trajectory.

"When you look at the last



Arsenal's Leandro Trossard, Takehiro Tomiyasu and Martin Odegaard react after the match against Everton. — Reuters

15 or 20 years of this league, the competition wasn't like it is today and for sure 89 points you are champions. But now it is not enough. We are getting better and faster because someone is so good that you have to chase it. That is what makes you good as well."

He added: "We cannot feel sorry for ourselves. We tried, we are improving. It was an unbelievable season again but we are not

champions and that is the reality."

Arsenal's margin of victory against Everton would have been bigger but for chances missed. Takehiro Tomiyasu missed two early chances and Leandro Trossard and Gabriel Martinelli also squandered opportunities.

Everton too had chances. Dominic Calvert-Lewin hit the post and then drove the rebound into the side-netting. But it was

Everton who took the lead in the 40th minute when a free-kick by Idrissa Gueye was deflected off Declan Rice's head leaving David Raya, in the Arsenal goal, helpless.

Within three minutes of that, the Gunners were on level terms. Martin Odegaard neatly cut-back to Tomiyasu in the penalty area for him to drill his shot into the net. While the teams were on level terms at half-time, Arsenal knew that a win was paramount while fervently hoping West Ham would be able to prevent a City win, with both matches being played simultaneously.

Despite the pressure exerted upon Everton in the second half, they were proving to be a strong defensive side. They were disciplined and well-organised with Arsenal struggling to beat the defence until the 89th minute when Kai Havertz finally found the winner. It was, however, controversial as the ball went off Gabriel Jesus' hand and despite checking the VAR the goal was not ruled out.

Everton manager, Sean Dyche fumed: "It was a really obvious one (handball). Funnily, in a title race, it goes the other way. But I'm really pleased how our mentality has got stronger as the season has gone on."

Partnership deal signed for Socca World Cup 2024



MUSCAT: In preparation for the Sultanate of Oman's hosting of Socca World Cup 2024, a partnership signing ceremony was held at the Oman International Hospital headquarters between the Cristiano Ronaldo Group, represented by the Isparia Clinic, and Oman International Hospital, with Sports Makers, the organising body for the Socca World Cup 2024, Six-Six Football Championship, scheduled for the period from November 29 to December 7, 2024 in Madinat Al Irfan.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Chairman of Board of Directors of Eastern Airlines.

The agreement was signed on behalf of Oman International Hospital by Marcelo Pereira, CEO of Oman International Hospital, and on behalf of Isparia Clinic, Ruben Porto Alonso, General Manager of Isparia Clinics in the Middle East, while Walid bin Juma al Obaidani, President of International Socca Federation in Middle East, signed on behalf of Sports Makers.



Germany's Alexander Zverev kisses the trophy after beating Chile's Nicolas Jarry in the final of Rome Open. – AFP

Zverev beats Jarry to claim second Rome Open title

ROME: Alexander Zverev won his second Rome Open on Sunday by beating Nicolas Jarry 6-4, 7-5 and claiming his biggest title since his horror injury at the French Open two years ago.

World number five Zverev, also Foro Italico champion in 2017, comfortably won his sixth Masters 1000 title in the last major tournament before Roland Garros, which gets underway next weekend.

The 27-year-old succeeded in his 11th Masters final which equalled Boris Becker's record for the most by a German since the series began in 1990.

Zverev's title in the Italian capital seven years ago was the first at this level of his career and Sunday's was his first since coming back from a horrendous ankle injury suffered in the 2022 French Open semifinals.

"Rome is a very special place for me," said Zverev on court.

"I said at the beginning of the week that if Rome is the place of firsts for me then I'm extremely

happy about it. Obviously a very, very special week.

"The focus is on Paris right, that's for sure, but let me enjoy this one for a day or so and then I'll focus on Paris."

Zverev comfortably beat Chile's Jarry, who could not repeat his quarter-final and semi-final heroics against Stefanos Tsitsipas and Tommy Paul in reaching his first Masters final, in one hour and 41 minutes.

The German dropped just five points on his serve in a performance which showed a clear gap in class and gave him his first 1000-level title since triumphing in Cincinnati in August 2021.

"My feeling right now is I want to go to Roland Garros and play better because I know I can play better and do good there," Jarry told reporters.

"I'm very motivated. That's how I am right now."

Zverev claimed his first title of the year and first since winning at Chengdu in September at the end of an unusual men's tournament

in which a host of top names were either eliminated early or dropped out before the start of the event.

Six-time Rome champion Novak Djokovic was dumped out in the third round by Zverev's semi-final opponent, journeyman Alejandro Tabilo.

Last year's winner Daniil Medvedev was stopped at the last-16 stage while Italian world number two Jannik Sinner and third-ranked Carlos Alcaraz both missed the tournament with injury.

Earlier, Sara Errani and Jasmine Paolini gave Italian fans something to cheer after beating Coco Gauff and Erin Routliffe to the women's doubles title.

Unseeded Errani and Paolini made the Foro Italico crown roar by beating reigning US Open singles champion Gauff and Routliffe 6-3, 4-6, 10-8.

Home supporters had been denied the chance to see Sinner and Matteo Berrettini play, with the former Wimbledon finalist also not fit enough to take part in his home city. — AFP



Alexander Zverev and Nicolas Jarry (L) pose with their winner and runner-up trophies. – Reuters



Terms And Condition Applies



Scan to learn more



6 shortlisted for Oman Business Gateway project

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, MAY 20

Six local and international companies have been shortlisted to compete for the Omani government's competitive contract to develop the prestigious Oman Business Gateway project on a Public Private Partnership (PPP) basis in Muscat Governorate.

The Oman Business Gateway project is essentially a mixed-use real estate development planned at Airport Heights in the proximity of the upscale Madinat Al Irfan destination.

At its centrepiece is the new headquarters of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion(MoCIIP), supplemented by commercial, hospitality, residential and retail elements to create an exclusive business precinct in the area.



The Oman Business Gateway is envisioned as a world-class business hub.

On Monday, the Ministry of Finance — tasked with overseeing the procurement of all PPP projects in Oman — named the following six companies as helping their respective consortiums qualified to participate in the next stage of the competitive bid: Alghanim International General Trading & Contracting, Galfar Engineering & Contracting, Plenary Middle East Group, Amjaad Group, Bouygues Batiment International, and Muscat National

Development & Investment.

They were shortlisted from a total of eight bidding groups that submitted their qualifications in response to the tender. Earlier, a total of 68 companies signalled their interest in the project by registering to participate in the tender.

The new precinct is set to come up on 215,000 m2 of prime real estate that once housed the erstwhile Oman International Exhibition Centre alongside the Golden Tulip Hotel Muscat.

The competitive process will lead to the award of a mandate to the successful proponent for the design, financing, development and operation of a world-class precinct.

The developer will also own and operate the entire hub for the duration of the usufruct agreement expected to span a 50 – 99 year timeframe.

The Oman Business Gateway is envisioned as a world-class urban hub, according to the Ministry of Finance: “With the MoCIIP HQ at its foundation complemented by a mix of retail, commercial and accommodation, this flagship project is poised to significantly enhance the economic landscape of the region.

Serving as a community beacon, the sustainable design will seek to incorporate expansive integrated spaces, creating an iconic and immersive hub that will attract a diverse range of established and emerging enterprise.

Project outcomes will be meticulously assessed, with emphasis placed on innovation, elegance, and community engagement, ensuring the development achieves a world-class status upon its completion,” it explained.

CBO issues RO 39.03 million worth of treasury bills



MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) said in a statement that the total government treasury bills allocated for this week amounted to RO 39.03 million.

The bank said that the value of treasury bills allocated for a maturity period of 91 days amounted to RO 10.03 million, with an average accepted price of RO 98.750, and the lowest accepted price reached RO 98.730 for every RO 100. The average discount rate was 5.01368%, and the average yield was 5.07714%.

Meanwhile, the value of the treasury bills allocated for a maturity period of 182 days amounted to RO 29 million, with an average accepted price of RO 97.446, and the lowest accepted price reached RO 97.440 for every RO 100. The average discount rate was 5.12127%, and the average yield was 5.25548%.

The statement indicated that the interest rate on repurchase operations (repo) with the CBO for these bills is 6.00%, while the discount rate with the central bank on treasury bill facilities is 6.50%.

Treasury bills are a short-term guaranteed financial instrument issued by the Ministry of Finance to provide investment outlets for licensed commercial banks, with the Central Bank of Oman acting as the issuance manager for these bills.

Treasury bills have the feature of quick liquidity through discounting with the Central Bank of Oman and through conducting repurchase agreements (repo) with the central bank as well. — **ONA**

Omantel outlines drive to empower Oman’s digital future

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, MAY 20

At a media briefing on Monday, Omantel CEO Talal bin Said al Maamari underscored the profound transformation under way in the telecommunications sector in Oman, while also highlighting the company's pivotal role in connecting the economy and essential services, and providing comprehensive, high-quality solutions encompassing artificial intelligence, education, healthcare, and a wide range of other services.

Al Maamari said Omantel's allocation of around RO 12 million towards the empowerment of Omani tech entrepreneurs, demonstrated its belief in the significance of innovation and the growth of the digital economy.

Further, in a bid to bolster its capacity to meet surging demand for Internet services, the company plans to lay four to six new submarine cables linking Salalah with other



Omantel CEO Talal bin Said al Maamari

destinations over the next two years.

Omantel already boasts a substantial market share in the regional telecommunications landscape, with its submarine cables accounting for nearly 15% of total regional connectivity.

Underscoring the expansive growth of its Internet and digital services, individual data consumption over its network has

quadrupled over the past decade and tripled in the last three years, the CEO said.

The company also intends to establish a specialised academy to foster artificial intelligence skills, collaborating with international partners to ensure alignment with the latest advancements in this critical field.

Earlier, Al Maamari highlighted Omantel's success in forging partnerships with a number of global players with the goal of enhancing national capabilities in cloud computing, artificial intelligence, and machine learning.

These collaborations aim to boost commercial value and drive innovation in the information and communication technology sector, he stressed.

Notable agreements include a partnership with Amazon Web Services to develop cloud sovereignty, enhancing Oman's cloud capabilities, and another to launch a marketplace that will create

new opportunities for Omani companies, facilitating their regional and global expansion.

Omantel also signed a significant agreement with Google to develop Cloud Edge using AI and machine learning capabilities. Additionally, agreements with Microsoft to accelerate ICT innovations and with Huawei to establish Oman's national cloud platform were secured.

The CEO noted that these partnerships, along with solutions from Omantel subsidiaries and the company's international connectivity, support Omantel's transition into an integrated technology solutions provider to meet the growing needs of its enterprise and consumer customers.

On the nationalisation front, Omantel's Omanisation level has now reached an impressive 93%, reflecting its commitment to developing national competencies and enhancing citizen participation in the development journey, he added.

Oman-Russia ties progressing well: Al Saqri

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, MAY 20

Bilateral and multilateral ties involving Oman and Russia are progressing well, according to a statement made by the Omani Minister of Economy, Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri, during the 15th Russia-Islamic World Forum held in Kazan, Russia.

Taking part in a panel discussion addressing financial and logistics infrastructure of Russia and OIC countries, the minister shared that there is a strong emphasis on enhancing investment ties between the two nations.

A report on the Russia-Islamic World Forum, which



Minister of Economy, Dr Said bin Mohammed al Saqri.

concluded on May 19, 2024, quoted Dr Al Saqri as saying that established frameworks, including agreements promoting and safeguarding investments,

boosting cooperation and enhancing investment, notably the International North-South Corridor — a multi-modal network launched in 2000 connecting India, Iran, Russia and other countries in Central Asia and Europe.

According to Dr Al Saqri, Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) member countries are already well endowed with strong logistics infrastructure.

“For the past 50 years, OIC member countries have significantly invested in infrastructure, including ports and seaports within the logistics sector,” he noted.

However, he argued that nations must now align their legislations with future plans to capitalise on future partnerships.

“The necessary foundations for this cooperation have already been laid. We must continue to act and align our legislation with these plans to fully realise the potential of our partnerships.”

The Omani delegation to the six-day forum also included the Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources for Agriculture and the Deputy CEO of the Oman Investment Authority for Investment Affairs, in addition to other government officials and industry experts.

Oman-Mauritius business forum highlights prospects for trade and investment exchange

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, MAY 20

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) recently hosted the Omani-Mauritius Business Forum to enhance cooperation, trade and investment exchanges between the two countries.

Key areas of focus included financial and banking services, real estate development, information technology, renewable energy, engineering services, contracting, and tourism. This forum aimed to strengthen cooperation, consolidate trade relations, exchange experiences and explore joint opportunities.

Eng Hamoud bin Salim al Saadi, Second Deputy Chairman of the Board of Directors of OCCI, highlighted the historical ties between Oman and Mauritius.

“The forum seeks to write a new page in the deep-rooted relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Mauritius, entitled economic cooperation,” he stated.

He referenced historical agreements from the 1800s and the Treaty of Friendship and Trade in 1844, which laid the groundwork for commercial exchanges.

Sheikha al Alawi from the Department of International Relations Organisations noted that the forum aims to improve trade exchange and increase Omani exports to Mauritius. “During the two-sided meetings, Omani businessmen will get to



The forum aims to strengthen cooperation, consolidate trade relations, exchange experiences, and explore joint opportunities between the two countries.

know the businessmen of the Republic of Mauritius in various sectors,” she added.

Trade between the two countries has significantly increased in recent years.

Data from the National Centre for Statistics and Information shows a rise from about RO 5.6 million (\$14.58 million) in 2021 to approximately RO 189 million (\$492 million) in 2022, and RO 101.5 million (\$264.2 million) in 2023.

The forum underscored the strategic importance of Oman and Mauritius in global trade, given their prime locations along the Indian Ocean.

This geographical advantage opens up vast opportunities for

trade and investment exchange, supported by the economic visions of both countries aimed at growth and diversification.

The strategic locations of Oman and Mauritius not only enhance trade flows but also pave the way for new avenues of strategic investment and cooperation between the private sectors, particularly in supporting small and medium-sized enterprises.

Showkutally Soodhun GCSK, Ambassador of the Republic of Mauritius to the Sultanate of Oman and GCC, expressed optimism that the forum would pave the way for broader cooperation and the development of trade and investment relations.

“There are many sectors full

of opportunities to create a sustainable partnership between the private sector on both sides,” he said.

Hemraj Ramnial CSK, Chairman of the Economic Development Board of the Republic of Mauritius, emphasised the importance of diversifying sectors and strengthening the role of the private sector.

“Strengthening the role of the private sector and diversifying sectors will have an effective impact in promoting and stimulating joint investment,” he noted, highlighting numerous opportunities for cooperation across various sectors.

A visual presentation at the forum showcased the

investment, tourism, and economic environment in Oman, highlighting incentives and facilities for investors in different sectors. Special economic zones, free zones, and industrial zones were particularly noted for their comparative advantages.

Eng Saleh al Shanfari, Chairman of the Food Security Committee, stressed the opportunities provided by Mauritius to businessmen.

“This meeting helps in understanding mechanisms of work in the financial sector and how we can benefit from their experience in developing our financial sector,” he said, pointing out the strategic advantages and safety of Mauritius as an investment destination.

The Mauritius delegation also presented investment opportunities in their country, emphasising its status as a reliable international financial centre.

Mauritius ranks first on the African continent for economic business and thirteenth globally, making it an attractive destination for investment and business.

The forum included a discussion session on opportunities in the real estate sector, tourism, ICT, and the free ports sector in Mauritius. It was accompanied by two-sided meetings between Omani business owners and their Mauritian counterparts, aimed at enhancing cooperation, consolidating trade relations, exchanging experiences, and exploring joint cooperation opportunities.

ahlibank
bags
corporate
bank of the
year award
2024



MUSCAT: Revered for its exceptional performance and forward-thinking approach, ahlibank has recently received recognition at the MENA Banking Excellence Awards 2024, winning the Corporate Bank of the Year Award.

The prestigious award was received by Zaliya al Balushi, GM – Head of Corporate Banking at ahlibank, at a ceremony held in Dubai. Organised by MEED, the awards celebrate the best-in-class banking and financial services institutions and individuals for their innovative offerings and commitment to customer excellence.

Expect fierce competition with over 200 award entries from over 50 leading bank organisations eager to showcase their innovations in the banking sector, the event carries a global impact on participants who have showcased transformative solutions as exceptional industry icons.

In turn, ahlibank was recognised for its outstanding contributions to corporate banking, receiving the award as a testament to its innovative role in Oman.

Zaliya al Balushi said, “We are honoured to have received such a prestigious award; an award that underscores our dedication to serving our corporate customers with excellence. At ahlibank, our innate zeal drives us to go beyond the norm, as we display our portfolio of innovative and personalised solutions.

This is one of the many accolades we have received that stand as a testament to the diligent efforts and commitment of our dutiful corporate banking team at ahlibank.

Rest assured we will remain committed to driving growth and success for our corporate customers, empowering them to thrive in the dynamic business landscape.”

“As we move forward, we pride ourselves in remaining committed to our mission to be the best and preferred choice for our financial partners in the corporate sphere, enabling them to achieve their strategic objectives and maintaining success in the long run,” she added.

Ooredoo supports ‘Jareed’ project for women making eco-friendly paper

MUSCAT: Always aiming to support women-led startups in Oman to improve their livelihoods and enable them to contribute to the national economy, Ooredoo recently celebrated adding the ‘Jareed’ project to its growing list of women-dedicated incubators.

Jareed is an innovative project where members of the Omani Women’s Association in the Wilayat of Nakhal make eco-friendly paper from palm tree leaves. The women are all trained by the Small and Medium Enterprises (SME) Development

Authority (SMEDA).

The launch of the ‘Jareed’ project as an Ooredoo women-dedicated incubator was held under the auspices of Maymouna bint Salim al Mandhariyah, the Director-General of Social Development in Al Batinah South, Governorate Professor Bushra bint Yousef al Kindiyah, Assistant Director of the Department of Associations and Community Clubs at the Ministry of Social Development, and coach Aisha bint Salim al Shailiyah, Department Head of CSR at



Ooredoo.

SMEDA was represented by Maryam bint Khalfan al Hamrashidiyah, Head of Craft Industries Department in Al Batinah South Governorate, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority, along with several calligraphers, painters, and Omani Women’s Associations.

An innovative hub for creating various types of natural paper, ‘Jareed’ offers a strong value proposition and aims to become a well-established brand.

OABC and Dentons host session on personal data protection law in Oman



MUSCAT: The Oman American Business Council (OABC), Oman’s largest and most active business networking group and the official affiliate of the US Chamber of Commerce in Oman, in

partnership with OABC premium member Dentons, the region’s leading law firm, was delighted to host a successful morning session on the new regulations personal data protection law in Oman.

The event took place on May 15 at the Intercontinental Hotel Muscat and brought together over 100 esteemed legal professionals, executives, and business leaders to discuss the significant changes introduced by the new data protection law. After networking and coffee, Dentons’ team delivered a comprehensive presentation that left no stone unturned, addressing all aspects of the law and ensuring clarity for attendees. Their expert panel adeptly fielded questions, clarifying doubts and providing additional insights to the audience.

Highlights of the event included: Presentation by Dentons, providing a comprehensive overview of the new personal data protection law and its implications for businesses

and employees in Oman.

This was followed by Q&A session providing participants with the opportunity to seek clarification on specific aspects of the law.

Lastly, networking breaks, allowing attendees to connect with like-minded business people and expand their professional network.

Jamie Gibson, Managing Partner and Head of Corporate at Dentons Oman, commented, “The Dentons team of data protection experts were very pleased to present this session on the Oman Data Protection Law to a room full of very engaged OABC members.

Thank you to the OABC team for this opportunity and support in making this such a successful

event”.

“Some companies do not realise that they need to quickly comply within the next year with these new regulations, for example, the requirement to appoint a data protection officer (DPO), whether your company is large or small,” says Rebecca Olson, CEO of the OABC.

“We were astonished at the amount of questions raised to the Dentons’ team and of course, not surprised by their skills in answering each one.

We would like to once more thank Dentons for sponsoring the event and giving their valuable time to support the community.” The event was free for OABC members, as are all OABC events, which number between 30-40 per year.

‘Hadatha’ award launched to celebrate cybersecurity accomplishments



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, represented by the National Centre for Information Safety (Oman National CERT), has launched the ‘Hadatha Cybersecurity Award’ in Oman.

The award targets local competencies including individuals, innovators, initiatives, government, and private institutions in the Sultanate of Oman by evaluating the performance and achievements in the field of cybersecurity.

The award aims to achieve the goals of the Oman National CERT, celebrate local achievements and contributions in the field of cybersecurity, as well as raise awareness of the achievements of innovators, institutions, and cybersecurity initiatives in the Sultanate of Oman.

It also aims to contribute to enhancing the Sultanate of Oman’s global indicators in the areas of innovation and cybersecurity.

The objectives of the Innovation in Cybersecurity

award include engaging relevant entities and the community in celebrating local capabilities in this field, stimulating the building of a comprehensive cybersecurity ecosystem that includes experts, specialists and relevant entities by connecting efforts and showcasing success stories.

The award includes three main categories: the first is the ‘Individuals Category’ which focuses on innovative initiatives with economic and social returns, including awareness in the field of cybersecurity, academic research, specialised scholarly papers and self-employment projects.

The ‘Establishments’ category highlights the readiness of institutions that upgrade their social responsibility in serving a given axis of the cybersecurity industry programme.

The third category of the award celebrates the accomplishments of startups and SMEs that play a role in the cybersecurity industry by undertaking projects that have an economic return to the Sultanate of Oman. — **ONA**

Oman Business Forum focuses on energy, industrial developments

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, MAY 20

The Business Year (TBY), a renowned media company, in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), organised on Monday, the ‘Oman Business Forum’ with a focus on the latest developments in the future of energy and industries in all sectors.

The forum, held at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, opened under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed al Yusef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, with the attendance of a number of officials and business figures.

Al Yusef emphasised in his speech at the forum the increasing importance of renewable energy and sustainability and their role in the well-being of life on Earth and in the future of business in Oman and the economy in parallel.

He added that with the targeted annual production of no less than one million tonnes of green hydrogen annually, it is expected that Oman will become the largest source of green hydrogen in the Middle East and the sixth largest source globally by 2030.

He further noted during his speech that Oman is witnessing investments in the final stages from major manufacturing companies eager to capitalise on opportunities related to the production and export of green hydrogen.

In a partnership programme



The Business Year hosts a panel discussion featuring CEOs.



Qais bin Mohammed al Yusef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, delivers his keynote speech at the Oman Business Forum.

announced at the forum, the Ministry will support TBY in the issuance of the 10th edition of the annual book under the title ‘Oman 2024,’ focusing on Oman Vision 2040.

Eng Ammar al Kharusi, CEO of Invest Oman, gave a visual presentation in which he reviewed the strategic role played by Invest Oman in attracting

major quality investments to the Sultanate of Oman in targeted priority sectors and contribute to promoting investment to raise foreign investment rates.

Al Kharusi also reviewed initiatives to facilitate the investor’s journey and improve the business environment, in addition to efforts aimed at attracting and implementing quality projects in cooperation with various government entities.

The forum also included two working sessions, the first of which discussed empowering technology-based businesses in Oman and the key empowerment factors for digital transformation in the Omani business environment, while the second session focused on sustainable mobility and highlighted initiatives focusing on environmental preservation, social care, and business practices.

The forum brought together a number of Omani businessmen from various sectors of trade and the local economy to review the investment environment, digital transformation, energy transition and the role of new technologies in banking services and logistics.

The MoCIIP seeks to enhance cooperation with international media institutions to market the Sultanate of Oman as an attractive investment destination.

These reports are used as a marketing tool to define the business environment and investment climate in Oman, as well as to market the “Invest in Oman” platform, which presents investment opportunities to investors from within and outside Oman, and convey local developments to the world.

These reports are distributed at many events organised by the ministry worldwide.

Oman participates in meeting of Under-Secretaries of Ministries of Finance of GCC countries

DOHA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Finance, participated in the 71st meeting of the Committee of Undersecretaries of Ministries of Finance of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which was held in Doha, Qatar.

This meeting was in preparation for the 121st meeting of the Financial and Economic Cooperation Committee, scheduled to be held at the end of May.

The Sultanate of Oman was represented in the meeting by Abdullah bin Salim al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Finance.

The meeting discussed several



topics, including the outcomes of the meetings of the Committee of Governors of Central Banks of the GCC countries, the management of the GCC Customs Union Authority, and the Joint Gulf Market Committee.

Additionally, it reviewed the outcomes of the meetings of the task force researching the initiatives of the G20 in the financial track.

The meeting also reviewed the latest updates on the status of the agreement on the payment

linkage system between the GCC countries, the programme for achieving economic unity among the GCC countries by 2025, and the follow-up on the latest studies and projects of the Office of Economic and Development Affairs. — **ONA**

Omani, Qatari firms sign cooperation pact

DOHA: Izkaa Group, an Omani communications and IT firm, signed a cooperation programme with Qatari firm ‘Meeza’ that focuses on enhancing technological capabilities and access to innovative technologies in line with the ongoing efforts made by the Sultanate of Oman and the State of Qatar.

The programme aims to open new horizons to unify visions and work side by side in this vital field, in addition to focusing on several main areas of cooperation, including: the possibility of increasing opportunities for knowledge exchange and professional development, facilitating access to advanced technologies and research initiatives, maximising benefit from them, and formulating many Of joint projects and initiatives.

Eng Said bin Abdullah al Mandhari, CEO of Izkaa Group, explained that this partnership opens the way for the exchange of experiences, knowledge and strategic initiatives between

the two sides, the expansion of foreign investments in the field of information and communications technology, and moving forward according to a common vision to find the best advanced solutions in this field and implement them according to the highest standards.

International standards, which supports our future goals and is in line with the rapidly changing market needs.

Mohsen bin Nasser al Ghaithani, Acting CEO of Meeza, said: The cooperation programme that the company concluded with Izkaa Group represents an important step in the company’s endeavours to enhance the information and communications technology landscape throughout the region, especially as it allows exploring greater opportunities for growth and expanding the scope of innovation by unifying the company’s efforts and expertise to those of the Iszkaa Group.” — **ONA**

SHORT TAKES

LONDON

UK to have slower inflation than Euro zone and US

The United Kingdom (UK) is set to have slower inflation than both the Euro zone and the US for the first time in over two years as falling energy prices for consumers cut Britain’s rate of headline price growth.

The Financial Times said that the annual growth in consumer prices for April is predicted to drop to 2.1 per cent, which is close to the Bank of England’s target of 2 per cent.

This would be sharply below March’s 3.2 per cent figure.



The newspaper added that the decline is largely the result of a 12 per cent fall in the regulatory cap on household energy bills last month, following a decline in wholesale gas prices. — **Reuters**

MUSCAT

Oman oil price rises to reach \$85.20 per barrel

Oman oil price (July delivery 2024) yesterday reached \$85.20 per barrel, comprising a rise by 67 cents from the price of last Friday which stood at \$84.53.

The average price of Oman oil (May delivery 2024) has stabilised at \$78.49 per barrel, thus \$3.74 per barrel lower than April delivery 2024.

Meanwhile, global physical crude oil markets are weakening because of soft refinery demand and ample supply, traders and analysts said, in a move that



could spell further weakness for benchmark crude futures.

The weakness indicates high interest rates and inflation are depressing consumer and industrial demand. — **Agencies**

SEATTLE

Microsoft to unveil AI devices and features

Microsoft plans to announce several pieces of hardware and software related to consumer devices at an event at its Redmond, Washington, campus.

The Windows maker is expected to reveal a new version of its Surface Pro tablet and Surface Laptop that feature Qualcomm chips based on Arm Holdings’ architecture.

Qualcomm and other makers of lower-power Arm components have tried to compete in the Windows-PC market.



The Qualcomm Snapdragon X Elite chips include a neural processing unit that is designed to accelerate AI-focused applications, such as Microsoft’s Copilot software. — **Reuters**

COMEX 2024 is just a week away!



TARIQ AL BARWANI

The author is founder of Knowledge Oman knowledgeoman.com

Oman’s leading annual technology exhibition is just a week away. COMEX

2024, the global technology show, organised by The Arabian Research Bureau in cooperation with the government’s Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, is

all set to open its door for the public to attend, learn, explore, network and be part of the latest happening and advancement in the world of information and communications technology (from both Oman and the GCC countries as well).

The event will run for 4 days consecutively, i.e. from May 27 to 30, next week, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

Over 70,000 people comprising of tech enthusiasts, startups, innovators, industry experts, investors, and visionaries are expected to attend this most anticipated locally supported yet with global reach technology event.

Like every year, the exhibition aims for Oman to be a technology investment destination that also showcases indicators of development in the National Programme for Digital Economy.

More than 100 Omani startups with technology products, digital solutions and services will be participating at this annual coveted event.

What’s new this year though includes but is not limited to showcasing, demonstrating and highlighting the latest advancement in 5G Technology, Artificial Intelligence (AI), Smart City Technologies, Blockchain and Cybersecurity, Startup Ecosystem , Virtual and Augmented Reality, Green Technologies, E-Government Services – definitely a one-stop-shop and venue for any individual or business that wish to explore the latest tech trends and networking with industry leaders in the region.

What more? I understand more-than 24 different elements. Intriguing activities and zones will be featured at the event. This again includes but is not limited

to Banking, Fintech (financial technology) and InsureTechZone (insurance powered by technology).

Innovative solutions and advancement of digital banking, cryptocurrency, digital wallets and more will be discussed and presented by various solution providers in Oman, and around the region as well.

Furthermore, workshops will be organised to help attendees and participants expand their knowledge and skills via interactive experts and professionals from the region.

There will also be special zone at the event for companies to promote the latest technology in renewable and sustainable energy.

Highlight will be on Drones, Future Mobility, EV, Renewable and Sustainable Energy Zone.

Additionally, like last year yet with enhanced value, the exhibition will also feature

Hackathons, Gaming and Esports on the sidelines to name a few.

Investors, businessmen and entrepreneur will also have a special space for them next week at the VIP B2B Buyers and Meeting Zone.

This zone has been specifically created for businesses that looks to meet, network, discuss, invest, collaborate and ultimately grow together. The space indeed offers a unique opportunity to capture promising opportunities in technology sector.

The 2nd Digital Government Forum provides valuable insights from keynote speakers and panel discussions featuring top experts from around the GCC, sharing their vision for the future of technology.

The COMEX VIP Majlis, which connects industry leaders, potential partners, and like-minded individuals to foster collaboration and innovation in a

private zone.

The Tech Startup Zone, which promotes new tech companies, as well as provide a platform where emerging startups will pitch their groundbreaking ideas and solutions, and investors are able to scout for promising innovations.

Book your calendar to ensure you attend and stay abreast with the 33rd edition of the largest technology show next week; for you will definitely be wowed by the excitements of this technology show, in addition to announcements many other participating organisations, has in store for you.

I have been personally engaged with the exhibition since childhood, yet continue every year to await and witness where, what and how technology is paved in, for Oman. Until then, stay positive and continue winning.

China goes on a \$1 trillion apartment-buying spree



CHAN KA SING

The author is China columnist for Reuters Breakingviews.

China’s national team is going house hunting. State-owned enterprises and local governments are answering Beijing’s call to purchase the country’s vast swathe of unsold apartments. That should help put a floor on plunging property prices.

Local authorities in Hangzhou, home to corporate titans Alibaba and Geely Automobile kicked off the bold initiative by announcing they will buy up to 100,000 square feet of apartments in Linan district at market prices and rent them out at affordable rates.

Other regions are set to follow: the ruling Politburo in April called for a nationwide effort to reduce housing inventory. China’s cabinet, the State Council, is also considering a proposal that would see local governments and state-owned enterprises buying unsold homes from distressed developers using loans from state lenders,

Bloomberg reported. It’s an ambitious undertaking that represents a shift from earlier piecemeal efforts to prop up housing prices. Those included targeted financial support to a “whitelist” of property projects.

As of the end of last year, China had a combined floor area of unsold homes of up to 3.6 billion square feet, per official data. Analysts at Tianfeng Securities estimate it will cost 7 trillion yuan, or nearly \$1 trillion, to buy the entire stock.

Notable beneficiaries include the cash-strapped Country Garden, the country’s largest private developer which is facing a liquidation petition from creditors on Friday, as well as Agile Group, which earlier this week defaulted on its US dollar bond. Hong Kong’s Hang Seng Mainland Properties Index rallied nearly 6% on Thursday.

The risk is that local governments are already sitting on 110 trillion yuan of debt, estimates the IMF. SOEs like China Resources Land are also grappling with a slowing economy and will be pushed to take on less profitable public housing projects, straining balance sheets even more.

The central government, for its part, is set to issue 1 trillion yuan worth of long-term sovereign bonds.

That may not be enough. Rebuilding confidence in the property market will come at a huge cost. — Reuters



A man walks on a scaffolding at the construction site of the Beijing Xishan Palace apartment complex developed by Kaisa Group Holdings Ltd in Beijing. — Reuters

Black farmers in Brazil changing views on coffee production

LOUIS GENOT & DOUGLAS MAGNO

Raphael Brandao beams with pride as he describes the high-end Brazilian coffee he produces with beans sourced exclusively from Black farmers in a country where many still associate the product with slavery.

The 31-year-old buys his coffee beans solely from farms owned by Afro-descendants and says his goal is to “reverse this logic that Black people” like himself “are mere labourers.”

“In my own way, I am trying to make historical reparations,” Brandao said at his roastery in Nova Iguaçu, a poor suburb of Rio de Janeiro.

Four years ago, he launched his brand Cafe di Preto.

By 2022 he sold 800 kilogrammes, the following year 1.4 tonnes. This year he hopes to increase that to more than two tons following a 20 per cent sales increase in the first quarter alone.

The logo for Cafe di Preto is a raised Black fist clutching a coffee branch, and the different flavour lines are each named after important Black women of Brazilian history.

Brazil was the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery, in 1888, and racial inequalities remain high in a country where more than half of people identify as “preto” (Black) or mixed-race.

Through his endeavours, Brandao said he wants to remind the world that Brazil became a leading coffee producer on the back of slaves from Africa, where coffee originates from.

He is also seeking to “break the stigma that Black people do not produce quality.”

“So my work also gives light to this,” he said. “Today I have six coffees produced by Black people, all of them... of great quality.”

Many of his clients, he added, are looking for quality but also for a product that is “changing the world.”

Brandao is a leader in the so-called Black Business wave in Brazil that promotes commerce



Coffee producer Neide Peixoto selects coffee beans at the Santo Antonio farm in Santo Antonio do Amparo, Minas Gerais, Brazil. — AFP

among people of African descent as a tool for social progress.

At first, he had trouble finding Black suppliers given that the overwhelming majority of coffee plantations in Brazil still belong to white families.

“My black suppliers are the first generation to produce on their own land, often only a few hectares,” he said.

And Brandao has more than once had to defend his chosen crusade.

“I am sometimes asked: ‘What if it was the opposite, if roasteries owned by whites bought coffee from white farmers?’ But isn’t that what is happening already?”

About 500 kilometres from Nova Iguaçu is the 47-acre coffee plantation of Neide Peixoto, one of Brandao’s first suppliers.

“I have been in contact with

By 2022 he sold 800 kilogrammes, the following year 1.4 tonnes. This year he hopes to increase that to more than two tons following a 20 per cent sales increase in the first quarter alone

coffee since childhood. My parents worked in crops and I often accompanied them,” Peixoto, 49, said on her farm in the southeastern state of

Minas Gerais, a mecca for coffee production.

Unlike her parents, she grows coffee on land that belongs to her own family, bought by her husband and brothers who are also former labourers.

“It means a lot to me to be a Black producer of special coffee, because... we, Black people have a very difficult and painful history,” Peixoto said.

Most of the farm’s production is for export, but the beans reserved for Cafe di Preto have a special significance for Peixoto. “It’s exciting to know that the coffee I produce, which is coffee produced by Black people, is also roasted by Black people,” she said.

“I’m very happy to know that we are making this connection, from production here on the farm to the cup.” — AFP

WJ Towell Group Company

Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

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

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

أوربيت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds

URGENT HIRING

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

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

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

TUESDAY MAY 21, 2024 | DHUL QAADA 13, 1445 AH

Auditors & Accountants

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

Contact: 92182750 • Email: contact@umpauditors.com

ROYAL CARGO

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

SERVICES BY AIR & SEA

FOR MORE INFORMATION JUST DIAL
CUSTOMER CARE 93213207

PICK UP FREE ANYWHERE IN MUSCAT 93213206

Driving School

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

Contact No: 99074072

SIT. WANTED

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

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

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

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

PLANNING Engineer, PMP. Indian male 11 years experience in Construction Projects. Well versed with Primavera P6 Software, strong communication skills, Interpersonal skills, EDT Claims, Recovery schedules, project control. Having Omani Driving License. Contact: 78002582, email: engineer4planning@gmail.com

SIT. VACANCY

MECHANICAL/ TECHNICAL
REQUIRED service technician for air compressors with D/L. Send your CV to denny@pumpsoman.com. 79119341

SIT. VACANCY

SALES Executive required for building materials, hardware items and similar items. Driving licence necessary. E: sangita@dhayahilal.com. M: 93559800

Looking for a candidate having minimum 5 years of Oman experience in accounts and administration. Knowledge of Oracle/ Tally accounting & inventory package is must preferable experienced in Trading of Building Materials, Tools etc e-mail CV to jobvacancyoman2023@gmail.com

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

FOR RENT

400M RENTAL space Ghubra 18 Nov Street second line suitable for all commercial use. Tel: 92408308

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

3BKH- Ghubra 18 Nov Street. Tel: 92408308

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

SIT. WANTED

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

28 YEARS Experience in Oman in sales, marketing and management, Indian with DL and release.

Looking for a good job change. Contact: 78501743.

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

Job Vacancy

Candidates with at least 5-10 years of experience are urgently needed for the following positions in a multinational company in Oman

- Electrical Engineer** (O & M experience)
- DCS Engineer** (Honeywell DCS experience)
- Planning Engineer**
- Quantity Surveyor**
- Draftsman**

Interested candidates can send CVs to **recruitment2024n@gmail.com**

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

OSRAM, Milano, ELORA, VICTOR, DORMER, BOSCH, CRC, Werta, Clarke, RIDGID, Devcon, Beta, ALUMITE, MK, PCE

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

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: 99639264

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN female, completed Masters in Computer Application (MCA), having experience in teaching profession and looking for a prospective job. Also having knowledge in Programming languages. Currently available in Muscat. Email: induchandran01@gmail.com. GSM: 94117967 / 79090343.

ACCOUNTANT & sales Executive, Indian male, 31 years, BA English, specialised in Accounting. 2 years experience in India & 6 years experience in Oman. Seeking position in Accounts/Sales fields (has Oman licence). Mob: 78805951. Gmail: akhilgopinath2017@gmail.com

To advertise on our social media platforms and website

Please Contact our Team

95210257

OMAN OBSERVER
www.omanobserver.om

we shall overce

Observer

OMAN DAILY
Observer

FREE* CLASSIFIEDS

SITUATION WANTED

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

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

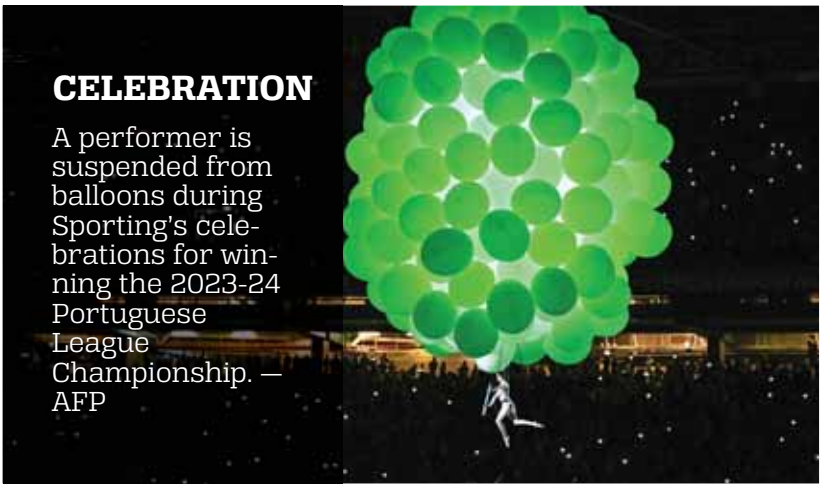
To advertise please contact:
Tel: 71455532/ 71455531/ 71455530
Email: adv@omaninfo.om

To advertise in Information Ministry channels

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

اردھار izdiyar

Observer



CELEBRATION

A performer is suspended from balloons during Sporting's celebrations for winning the 2023-24 Portuguese League Championship. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

Coffee producer Neide Peixoto selecting coffee beans at the Santo Antonio farm in Santo Antonio do Amparo, Minas Gerais. —AFP



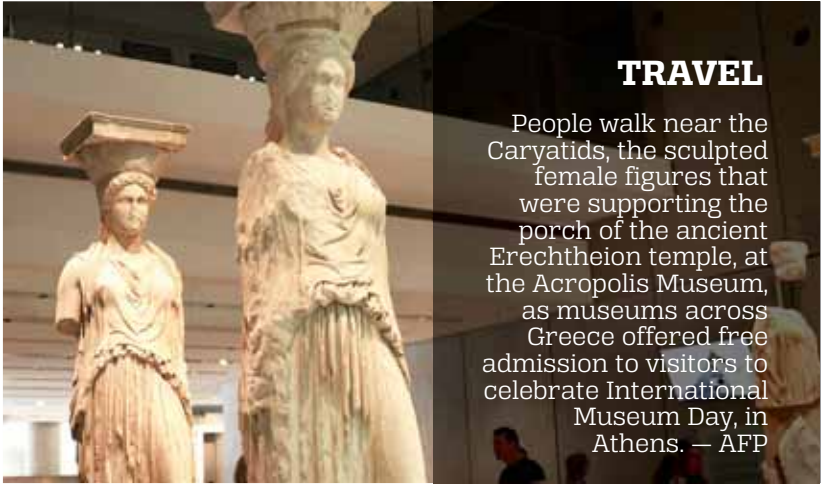
FILM FESTIVAL

US actress Demi Moore attends a press conference for the film "The Substance" during the 77th edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. — AFP



CULTURE

El Rocio pilgrimage, the largest in Spain, gathers hundreds of thousands of devotees in traditional outfits converging in a burst of colour as they make their way on horseback and on board decorated carriages across the Andalusian countryside. — AFP



TRAVEL

People walk near the Caryatids, the sculpted female figures that were supporting the porch of the ancient Erechtheion temple, at the Acropolis Museum, as museums across Greece offered free admission to visitors to celebrate International Museum Day, in Athens. — AFP

art & life

TUESDAY | MAY 21, 2024 | DHUL QA'ADA 13 , 1445 AH | OMAN OBSERVER | www.omanobserver.om | features@omanobserver.om



TRADITION MEETS MODERN COMMERCE AT DIMA W'ATTAYEEN'S AL NAGHAL SEASON

The date harvest season, known as Al Qaidh, in Dima W'attayeen has grown in popularity because of the prized Al Naghal date variety. Commanding high price at the early part of the season, here's why even other GCC countries are drawn into this market... P20

LIFESTYLE

Harvard conference explores GCC luxury trends

THE PRESTIGIOUS HARVARD Graduate School of Education recently witnessed a groundbreaking event – the inaugural Gulf Creatives Conference (GCC) – conceived and organised by Diwan, a student-run initiative. This first-of-its-kind conference brought together distinguished individuals from all six GCC countries, spanning diverse sectors like healthcare, education, and luxury. The aim? To foster cultural exchange, build meaningful connections between the

GCC and the United States, and ultimately, encourage foreign investment in the Gulf region.

One of the conference's most captivating panels, "Evolving Elegance and Arts: Navigating the Luxury Market in the Gulf Region," was moderated by Dr Esraa Al-Shatti, a prominent figure in the GCC luxury landscape. Dr Al-Shatti opened the discussion by highlighting the unique character of the region's luxury market, fuelled by its high concentration of affluent consumers. She emphasized the industry's consistent growth, driven not just by a desire for exquisite products, but also by the 'socio-psychological essence' associated with luxury brands.

Marco Parsiegla, CEO of the renowned Amouage Perfumes, offered valuable insights on adapting to global trends while catering to the specific preferences of GCC clientele. Amouage's success story, with its perfumes available in over 70 countries, serves as a testament to their approach. Parsiegla attributed part of their growth to a unique R&D strategy that actively involves regional creatives. This focus on local talent has not only made Amouage a pioneer, but has also doubled their retail sales in a mere three years.

The panel discussion then delved into



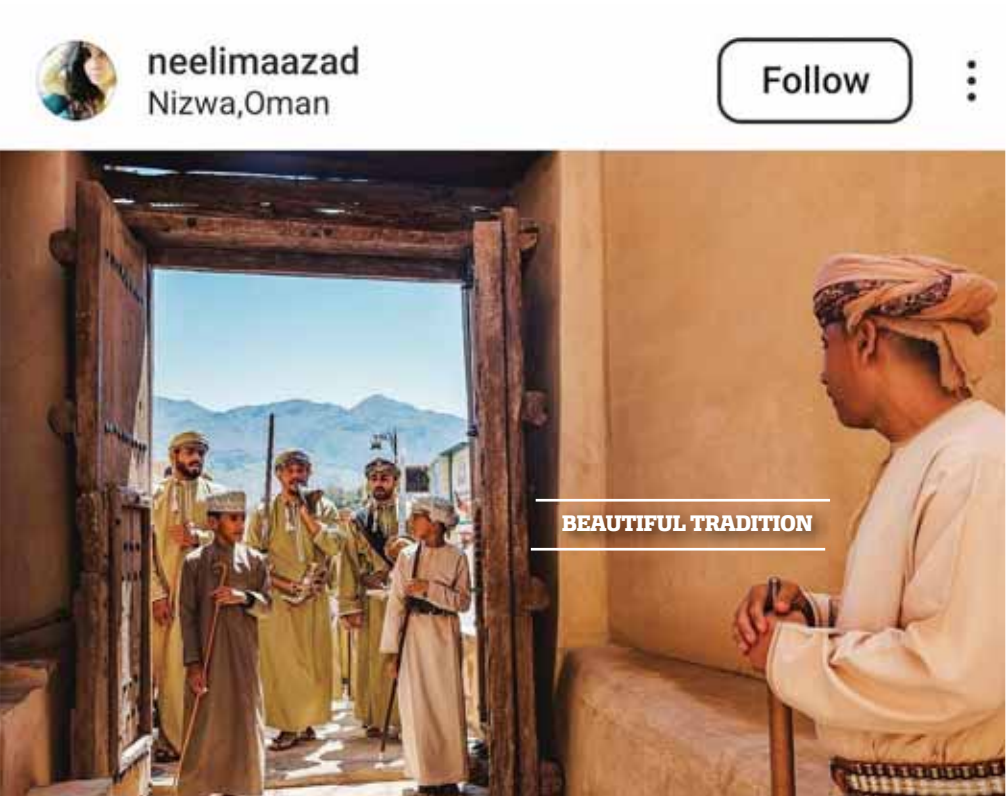
the power of emotional connection in the luxury market. Amirah Aulaqi, founding partner of The Advancement of Arab & Gulf women in America, shed light on the importance of understanding customer behaviour and the emotional triggers that drive purchasing decisions. Aulaqi's expertise has been instrumental in bridging the gap between American luxury brands and the GCC market. Her work with various high-end companies, particularly in the automotive sector, has helped them achieve significant revenue growth by fostering a deeper understanding of their GCC consumers.

education and innovation that are driving the growth of the luxury sector within the GCC.

The "Evolving Elegance and Arts" panel offered a wealth of knowledge not only for those within the luxury industry, but for anyone curious about the evolving dynamics of the GCC market. It underscored the critical role of cultural understanding and regional knowledge in navigating this high-potential sector. The success of the panel, and the conference as a whole, is a testament to the vision and dedication of Diwan, the student-run organisation that brought this groundbreaking event to life.

Lulwa Al-Wazzan, a passionate jeweller with a decade of experience across the GCC, brought a practical perspective to the discussion. She spoke about her successful strategy of seamlessly blending digital marketing channels with face-to-face interactions to effectively reach her customers. Al-Wazzan's story exemplified the dedi-

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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

Omani female artists shine at Empowerment through Art Forum in Egypt

THE MINISTRY OF Culture, Sports and Youth took part in the second edition of Empowerment through Art Forum, hosted by the National Museum of Egyptian Civilisation, which continues until May 22.

Five Omani female visual artists, Fakhriya al Yahyaiyah, Naila al Maamariyah, Hafsa al Tamimiyah, Nada al Ruwaishidiyah and Maryam al Wahaibiyah, are representing the Sultanate of Oman.

The forum focuses on women's artwork, with the participation of 144 female artists from 40 countries around the world. It includes an exhibition of female fine artists as well as seminars and lectures on modern art and its development, and artistic workshops for international female artists.

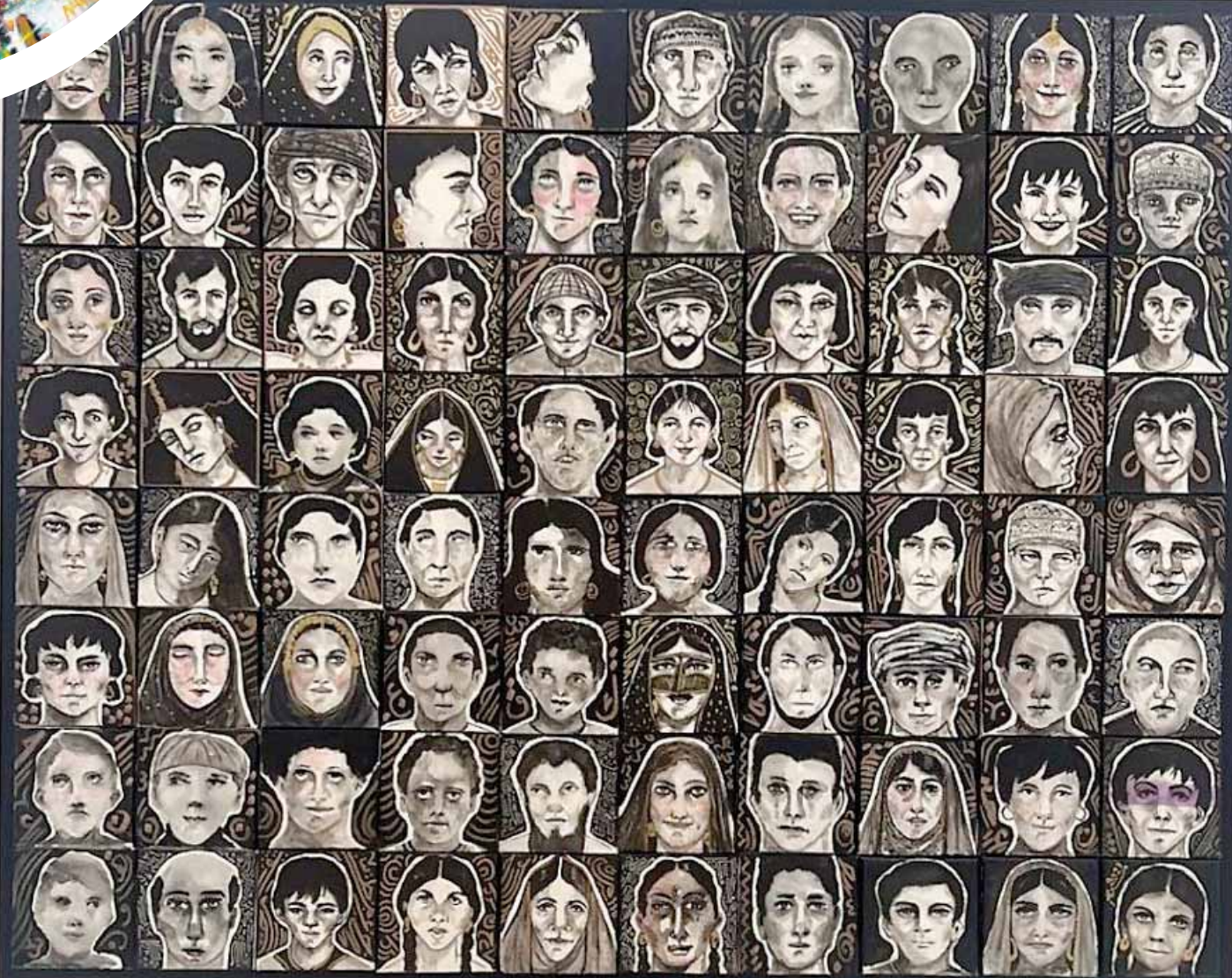
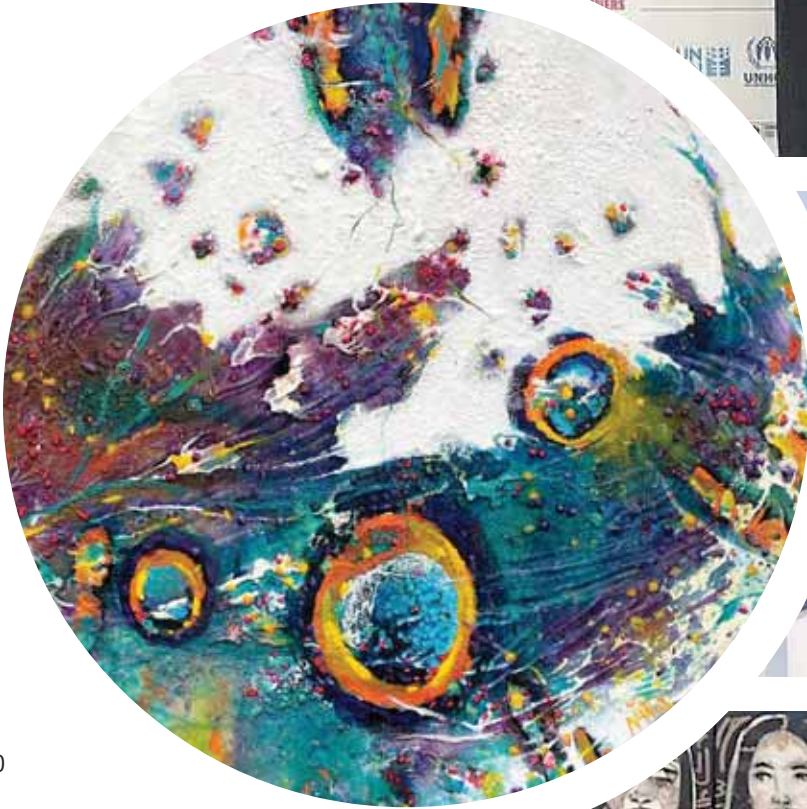
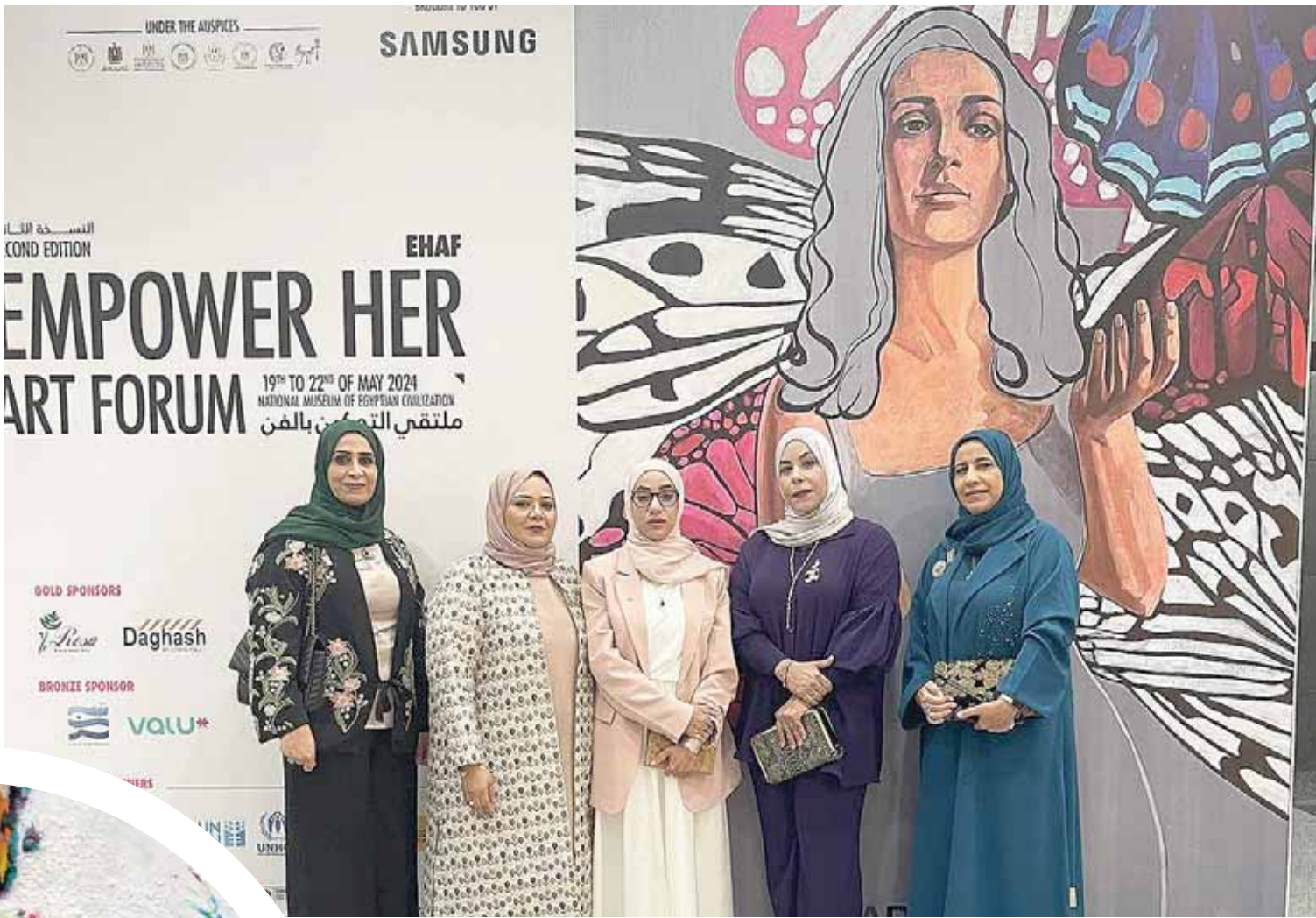
Naila al Maamariyah says: "This participation benefits artists as they can learn about different experiences in several artistic fields and from different countries. This has a direct impact on artists' work and provides an exchange of experiences amongst artists either by viewing and discussing the paintings displayed or through the workshops held at the forum. I took part in 5 abstract paintings and one painting of the installation art genre. My paintings are a study of the circle shape, be it in the form of a circle or a point or in the form of animals, insects, plants, stones and the like."

Artist Maryam al Wahaibiyah said: " This participation is a great gain for the Omani artist to gain first-hand experiences by mingling with other artists from all over the world and different artistic schools. In addition, the Omani female artists also belong to different schools of art."

Artist Nada al Ruwaishidiyah explained that participation in the forum is aimed at exchanging experiences and seeing what other artists have achieved. The forum brings together an elite group of female artists from different regions and environments. Through my participation in the forum, I intend to convey my experience in drawing and portraying in a modern realistic style to the participating artists.

Artist, Hafsa al Tamimiyah, pointed out that the presence of the Omani artist in an international art event that brings together international artists will allow them to learn about various experiences, and artworks and will lead to a cultural exchange between the artists.

Al Tamimiyah expresses her happiness over the international participation and the opportunity she had to display her artworks to a group of artists, adding that her paintings include portraits with a symbolic contemporary abstract style. — ONA





TRADITION MEETS MODERN COMMERCE AT DIMA W'ATTAYEEN'S AL NAGHAL SEASON



BY MOHAMMED
SAID AL BUSAFI

The cultivation of date palms and their fruits is a multifaceted endeavour marked by both challenges and rewards. Dates are esteemed for their delectable taste and nutritional benefits, thriving in regions with warm, arid climates across the Sultanate of Oman.

With over a hundred distinct varieties of date, cultivation encompasses a diverse array of flavours, textures and appearances.

The Sultanate of Oman, with its hot and arid climate, provides ideal conditions for date palm cultivation. The region has a rich history of date cultivation dating back thousands of years, with techniques passed down through generations.

The Wilayat of Dima W'attayeen in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate boasts a unique landscape. Its mountainous terrain and abundant water sources make the area ideal for growing some of the most prized date palms.

The date harvest season, known as Al Qaidh, has begun in Dima W'attayeen. This time is crucial for locals as it brings financial benefits. The farmers focus on caring for palm trees, especially the valuable Al Naghal variety, essential for local and global date markets. The first batch of dates usually sells at high prices, adding to the season's importance.

Mohammed bin Nasser al Busafi, a prominent date trader in the wilayat, explained, "In our region, the Al Naghal palm trees are typically pollinated in November due to the warm weather and mountainous terrain. This makes it the only palm tree to be pollinated earlier in the Al Qaidh season."

He explained, "Residents highly value the Al Naghal variety for its abundant and valuable fruit yield."

Al Busafi noted that it takes around three months for Al Naghal to yield its early dates, making its prized golden fruits ready for harvesting by early April.

Residents in the wilayat gather their dates from their farms and convene at designated assembly points within each village for selling. Groups of date sellers then disperse to various villages equipped with gram-weighting scales to purchase dates directly from farmers. Subsequently, these traders sell the dates in both local markets and those in the Gulf region.

Concerning the pricing dynamics of Al Naghal dates, Al Busafi shared that they command a high price at the onset of the harvest season. Initially, individual dates fetch as much as RO 5, gradually decreasing to RO 1 for a bundle of 2-3 dates within four days. Subsequently, traders adopt a pricing scheme of RO 150 per kilogramme for three days. As the season progresses and dates flood in from various villages across the wilayat, the price decreases, the 4 kilogrammes of dates reach approximately RO 40. Towards the conclusion of the Al Naghal season, the 4 kilogrammes are only worth RO 3 rials.

Dima W'attayeen has grown in popularity in the Gulf region for its early produc-



tion of Al Naghal dates. Traders venture across borders to market these prized dates, drawing interest from neighbouring countries like the UAE and Qatar, where demand for early summer dates remains strong annually. Despite the demanding nature of the trade, dealing in dates proves exceedingly lucrative.

AN IMMERSIVE CULTURAL EXPERIENCE

Date harvest season offers an immersive cultural experience for tourists due to its blend of tradition, community involvement and culinary delights.

As the season reaches its peak, typically in late summer or early fall depending on the region, the sight of lush date palm groves bustling with activity becomes a spectacle to behold.

At this time, locals and visitors alike gather to witness the meticulous process of harvesting these succulent fruits. From climbing the palm trees to skilfully picking the ripest dates, every step in the harvest is steeped in age-old techniques passed down through generations.

Moreover, the ambience is often infused with lively festivities, sometimes including traditional performances that showcase the rich cultural heritage surrounding date cultivation.

Experiencing the harvest at its peak ensures one encounters the fullest array of activities and flavours, with markets brimming with freshly harvested dates in various shapes, sizes and flavours. The sensory feast of tasting freshly plucked dates, indulging in date-based delicacies and soaking in the vibrant atmosphere makes the peak of the season an unforgettable experience, allowing visitors to immerse themselves fully in the cultural tapestry woven around this ancient fruit.