

WHO TRACKING EG.5 VARIANT

The World Health Organization is currently tracking several coronavirus variants, including the EG.5 variant that is spreading in the US and UK, Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Wednesday. “The risk remains of a more dangerous variant emerging that could cause a sudden increase in cases and deaths,” Tedros said, adding that the agency is publishing a risk evaluation report on it today. — Reuters



P11

DUBAI'S SUMMER SOJOURN: A FLOURISHING HUB FOR GLOBAL TOURISM



P9

INDIA-PAKISTAN CLASH AMONG NINE WORLD CUP FIXTURE CHANGES



P16

185,000 WASTE BINS IN OMAN TO BE EQUIPPED WITH AI SENSORS



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO ECUADOR PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Guillermo Lasso Mendoza of the Republic of Ecuador on the occasion of his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his best wishes to President Mendoza and the people of Ecuador. — ONA

MOU TO BOOST AIR COOPERATION

Oman Air and SalamAir concluded a memorandum of understanding (MoU) to enhance various aspects of cooperation, develop and implement a joint commercial strategy in the field of air transport. The MoU was signed by Captain Nasser al Salmi, Acting CEO of Oman Air, and Captain Mohammed Ahmed, CEO of SalamAir. The MoU provides for cooperation between the two airlines' networks to enhance operational efficiency and improve passenger service, besides consolidating ties in the areas of destination planning, flight schedules, inventory management, air fleet management, revenue and sales management. **DETAILS ON P5**

ISLAMABAD

FRESH ELECTIONS IN PAKISTAN

Pakistan's government is set to dissolve to pave the way for new national elections, as the future of former prime minister Imran Khan remained mired in legal challenges. Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif, in his farewell address to the parliament, said he would send a request to the president's office to dissolve the National Assembly on Wednesday evening. The government would step down days ahead of the completion of its term, which means the new elections will be held within 90 days, according to the country's electoral laws. **DETAILS ON P6**



AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR FESTIVAL DRAWS LARGE TURNOUT

The second edition of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Festival continues in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. The festival drew more than 10,000 visitors over the past six days since its launch last Thursday. The festival concludes on August 19. The festival aims to attract local and international tourists and introduce the cultural heritage and the natural beauty of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in particular and the Sultanate of Oman in general. Besides, it seeks to encourage entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium enterprises to take part in the festival and avail of the tourism promotion opportunities. **DETAILS ON P5**

STEPS TO REGULATE TOURIST SERVICES IN SALALAH

ESCALATING PRICE TRENDS A CONCERN

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 9

The authorities in the Sultanate of Oman are putting up substantial efforts to regulate tourist prices for hotels, apartments, and goods during the Khareef Salalah. However, as the governorate sees a huge surge in tourist arrivals during the summer months, the effectiveness of these endeavours appears to be limited.

Citizens in the country have expressed apprehension about the persistent issue of escalating rentals for residential properties and certain commodities in Salalah during the period. This concern has recently gained significance across various social media platforms. The task of effectively managing this situation is proving to be complex, given the high number of incoming

visitors and the scarcity of available housing and hotel apartments for rent. The situation is further exacerbated by the annual Salalah Festival commencing every June.

Yousuf al Abri, a visitor to Salalah during this period, told the *Observer*: “The issue of soaring rental prices, whether for residential or hotel accommodations, continues to present a recurring challenge during the Salalah Tourism Festival. Unfortunately, due to the actions of some investors, this festival has become a season for maximising profits, often disregarding the diverse financial backgrounds of the visitors who seek to indulge in the city's captivating and picturesque ambience.”

Al Abri has drawn attention to the escalating price trends witnessed in certain establishments.

 **The issue of soaring rental prices, whether for residential or hotel accommodations, continues to present a recurring challenge during the Salalah Tourism Festival. Unfortunately, due to the actions of some investors, this festival has become a season for maximising profits**

YOUSUF AL ABRI
A visitor to Salalah

Notably, Al Abri's experience while visiting places offering entertainment, such as electric games, has highlighted this phenomenon.

HIGH PRICES

Recounting his observations, citing examples where the cost of engagement in electric games, which traditionally valued at a mere RO 1, now varies up to three and a half riyals. He also shed light on the diverse commercial stalls that have sprung up in conjunction with the fall season. These stalls have become subject of scrutiny due to the high prices attributed to their offerings.

Al Abri pointed out that items he had previously purchased for modest sums outside Salalah have seen their prices almost doubled when purchased in Salalah. **TURN TO P5**

Private consortium to run Port of Shinas

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has signed a framework agreement with QSS Maritime, representing a consortium of investors, for the development, management and operation of the Port of Shinas on the Sultanate of Oman's Al Batinah North coast.

The agreement was co-signed by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Abdulbaqi bin Ahmed al Kindi, CEO of QSS Maritime.

The agreement will be operationalised in three phases: The first involves the creation of a handover and takeover committee of the port's operations; this will be followed by the operation of the port in November this year. Also during this phase, the company will prepare a commercial and marketing plan and the new master plan for the port within a period of eight months.

In the final phase, the two sides will enter into negotiations leading to the signing a long-term agreement. The ministry described the deal as fully aligned with its strategy “to attract foreign investments and foster world partnerships. **DETAILS ON P13**

Iraq's 50°C heat shows 'era of global boiling' has begun: UN

BAGHDAD: UN human rights chief Volker Turk said said that the extreme summer heat and pollution of southern Iraq where he has been visiting had made it clear “that the era of global boiling” has begun.

Turk's comments came at the end of a four-day visit to Iraq during which he met with leaders and travelled across the country, sometimes in 50°C heat, to discuss human rights, with a focus on climate change.

“Standing in searing heat in that scarred landscape, breathing air polluted by the many gas flares dotting the region, it was clear to me that the era of global boiling has indeed begun,” he said at a news conference in Baghdad, referring to his time in southern Iraq's oil-producing Basra region.



A worker cools himself while he works at a construction site during sweltering summer heat in Baghdad. — Reuters

The UN says Iraq is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change in the world.

A reduction in rainfall combined with mismanagement of water resources has led to years of persistent drought.

Iraq's two main rivers, the Tigris and Euphrates, bisect the country and gave birth to some of the world's first civilisations thousands of years ago but are now too weak to sustain the agriculture that once flourished on their banks. Drought has led thousands of families to emigrate from the country's waterways and Unesco-recognised marshlands, threatening a way of life, and worsening heat is leading to increasingly risky conditions for those who work outdoors.

“What is happening here is a window into a future that is now coming for other parts of the world if we continue to fail in our responsibility to take preventive and mitigating action against climate change,” Turk said. — Reuters

Perseids meteor shower peaks on Sunday

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's skies will be witnessing a Perseids meteor shower that will last until August 24, peaking from the night of Saturday (August 12) till early hours of Sunday (August 13).

Ashwaq bint Nasser al Siyabiyah, member of the Executive Committee of the Oman Astronomical Society, told Omani News Agency (ONA), that an ideal way to observe the phenomenon is to see the meteor shower from a dark location, away from sources of light, pollution or any obstacles like tall trees.

Ashwaq pointed out that a stargazer may watch out for the showers on the northeast close to Perseus tower, which is the apparent source of the midnight Saturday-Sunday meteors.

Stargazers and astrophotography amateurs will have an opportunity to capture the dazzling view that can be clearly observed with bare eyes. — ONA





Oman takes part in G20 anti-corruption meet

NEW DELHI: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the State Audit Institution (SAI) and several authorities concerned, takes part in the 3rd G20 Anti-Corruption Working Group Meeting. The three-day event is held in the Republic of India.

The agenda of the meeting include a discussion of high-level principles on strengthening law enforcement-related international cooperation, information sharing for combatting corruption and strengthening asset recovery mechanisms for combatting corruption. The delegation will deliver a presentation reviewing the efforts exerted by the Sultanate of Oman in promoting integrity and combating corruption. — ONA



WORK CONTRACTS MUST HAVE DETAILS REGARDING VALIDITY PERIOD, WAGES, PROBATION AND NOTICE PERIODS

New Labour Law underlines the importance of work contracts

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The new Labour Law issued in July by the Royal Decree No 53/2023 clearly underlines the importance of the work contract to maintain a healthy working relationship between employers and their employees. Chapter 3, Article (33) states that the work contract must be established in writing and written in Arabic in two copies, with copies for each party. The contract must be approved by a competent authority.

As for the validity of a contract, Article (34) states that the employment contract may be concluded for a specified period or an indefinite period. If the duration is specified, it must not exceed five years, renewable by agreement of the two parties.

In the event of renewal of the contract, the new period shall be considered an extension of the original period and shall be added to it in calculating the total period of service of the worker.

As per Article (35) of the law, an employment contract is considered indefinite if it is concluded without specifying duration, if concluded for a period of more than five years, and if the duration of the original and renewed contract exceeds five years.

The contract will also be considered indefinite if the contract is not written, or if it



was a written contract with a fixed term, and its term expired, and despite that, the two parties continued to implement it without a written agreement between them.

If the contract is terminated without observing the notice period, the party terminating the contract shall pay to the other party equal compensation for the notice period

Article (36) states that the employment contract must be comprehensive and all-inclusive with details such as the name of the employer, the establishment, the address of the place of work, the worker's name, date of birth, qualification, occupation, place of residence, nationality, type

of work, its conditions, and the duration of the contract if it is for a definite period.

Details such as the basic wage and any bonuses, allowances, or rewards that the worker is entitled to under the applicable conditions of service and the date of payment of the agreed wage must be mentioned in the contract.

The contract states that the appropriate period of notice must be given to any of the parties who wish not to renew it, provided that the notice period granted by the employer to the worker is not less than one month.

Article (37) states that the worker's probationary period, if any, shall be specified in the employment contract if it does not exceed three months for those who are paid monthly, and for a period not exceeding two months for those who are paid otherwise.

The worker may not be placed under probation more than once with the same employer, and the probationary period, if the

worker successfully passes it, shall be included in his service period.

Either party to the contract may terminate it during the probationary period if it is proven inappropriate to continue working, after notifying the other party of at least seven days.

Article (38) states that the two parties may terminate the contract at any time after the conclusion of the contract based on a legitimate reason by virtue of a notification addressed to the other party in writing 30 days prior to the date of termination regarding workers appointed for a monthly wage, and 15 days for others unless agreed upon in the contract for a longer period.

If the contract is terminated without observing the notice period, the party terminating the contract shall pay to the other party equal compensation for the notice period or the remaining part thereof, calculated based on the last comprehensive wage that the worker was receiving.

Article (39) states that the notice issued by the employer to the worker to terminate the contract if he is on leave shall only take effect from the day following the end of the leave.

In all cases, the employer is obligated to allow the worker, during the notice period, to be absent from work at the rate of ten paid hours per week to search for a new job.

Recall

Chevrolet Captiva

Recall Date: 10th August 2023

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
Chevrolet Captiva	2021- 2024	449

Recall consequence

Description of defect: In a small number of vehicles, exposed to high ambient temperatures, smoke or fire has occurred in the engine compartment while or after driving, which may affect the safe operation of the vehicle or its occupants. Drivers may experience insufficient or no AC cooling or reduced engine power. They may also notice smoke or fire coming from under the hood.

Recall Action

Procedure: Dealers will replace the low & high-speed cooling fan fuses (30A/40A) and A/C blower fuse(30A/40A) with new 30A fuses. Also install new fuse labels in the Engine fuse box cover and new Engine compartment covers on certain vehicles.

To check the serial Numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website for Recalls & Warnings: <http://recall.pacp.gov.om>

Toll free No 80050002 on all working days between 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM & 2:00 PM to 5:30 PM

www.pacp.gov.om

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Oman Trading Establishment LLC

OQGN launches its Awareness Campaign “Keep Safe” in Dhofar Governorate for the third Year



Following the success of the last year, OQGN has launched the third edition of its awareness campaign, “Keep Safe”, in the Dhofar Governorate. The campaign aims to raise individual awareness about maintaining safety by avoiding the risks associated with gatherings and meetings around gas pipelines during the Khareef season. It was launched in the Wilayat of Salalah under the patronage of H.E. Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen Al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, alongside the presence of several officials.

Kicking off on the eighth of August, “Keep Safe” includes a series of awareness programs in three main locations: Attin, Al Mughsayl Beach and Al Hafa Souq. The campaign will showcase insight into and information about OQGN, the exclusive operator of the gas transportation network in Oman, in addition to enhancing individual awareness to ensure their health and safety within gas pipeline areas. Moreover, it will

also highlight key existing gas pipeline projects. The campaign commenced by presenting awareness films about OQGN's vision and its pioneering efforts in developing and managing gas transportation infrastructure in the Sultanate of Oman. This was followed by guidelines regarding security and safety, which included instructions to refrain from camping or setting up temporary sheds for barbeques and grills, in and around gas pipeline areas. Further awareness to prevent people from organizing unauthorized activities and family gatherings within these areas was touched upon as well.

The group carrying out the campaign also shed light on key existing gas pipeline projects in progress which will add 176.7km to Oman's infrastructure, in addition to 32.2km of 32-inch pipelines to the South Grid Project. OQGN hosts over 4,030km of pipeline network across the country.

Highlighting the significance of the campaign, Eng. Mansoor Ali Al-Abdali, Managing Director of OQGN, said, “The campaign aims to raise individuals' awareness about the importance of protecting their safety and well-being. The campaign targets all visitors and tourists of the Dhofar Governorate, both from within the Sultanate of Oman and abroad.”

“We are implementing the gas pipelines network awareness campaign, entitled “Keep Safe”, to ensure the safety of all visitors to the Dhofar Governorate during the Khareef Season. Alongside which, we also aim to safeguard the pipelines from any potential risks during camping, cooking or any other activities that may take place close to these areas,” he added.

He further stated that the launch of the awareness campaign reinforces OQGN's commitment to enhancing safety and well-being in the neighborhoods and villages that host its 4,030 km-long gas pipeline system. This

vast network supplies gas to power plants, water desalination plants, cement and aluminium factories, aluminium smelters, fertilizer and methanol plants, refineries, steel and cement factories, oil companies and more.

OQGN has delivered 99.99+% gas availability over the last 10 years.

In line with OQGN's commitment to enhancing community awareness about health and safety, the “Keep Safe” Awareness Campaign saw the implementation of other activities, including the distribution of first aid boxes to visitors to Dhofar Governorate from land ports and the airport.

OQGN has also participated in the Traffic Safety Exhibition, organized by the Royal Oman Police (ROP) during the Khareef Season in Dhofar. This is aimed at raising awareness by carrying out workshops for targeted segments in the field of public safety and first aid.



Forum on work environment kicks off

SALALAH: A forum titled ‘Promoting the culture of an institutional work environment’ kicked off on Wednesday in the Wilayat of Salalah, Governorate of Dhofar.

The two-day event is organised by the Omani Society for Human Resources Management in cooperation with the Ministry of Labour. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

Faisal bin Hamoud al Siyabi, CEO of the Omani Society for Human Resources Management, said in a speech that the forum focuses on enhancing work culture in institutions, encouraging employees to develop a trend of positiveness in the workplace and defining a common vision that promotes creativity and innovation at work.

Eight working papers were presented upon the outset of the forum. The first one elaborated on the National Strategy for Human Resources. The second focused on how to motivate employees to develop a positive work culture. The third working paper laid emphasis on promoting a positive



work culture by using technology and Artificial Intelligence (AI). The fourth paper envisaged models of “leadership through culture”.

The fifth working paper demonstrated the significance of consolidating work culture in government and private establishments. The sixth paper underscored the importance of defining goals and a joint vision on developing work culture. The seventh paper dealt with proper methods of managing the human capital.

The eighth working paper introduced the model of an employee’s digital practice and its role in fostering the culture of institutional performance.

The forum’s opening programme also included a dialogue session on enhancing institutional work culture. It was attended by government officials and specialists in the field. — ONA



Omani youth: Religion, language define identity

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 9

Omani youth say their religion and language are most important to their personal identity, with an overwhelming majority (95 per cent) also saying preserving their religious and cultural identity is more important to them than creating a more tolerant, liberal and globalised society.

This is one of the key findings under the theme ‘My Identity’ of the 15th annual ASDAA BCW Arab Youth Survey, the most comprehensive study of its kind of the Arab world’s largest demographic, its over 200 million youth, conducted by ASDAA BCW, the Middle East and North Africa’s leading communications consultancy.

When asked what defines their personal identity, 52 per cent of Omani respondents said, ‘my religion followed by ‘my language’ (40 per cent). Across all respondents in the survey, ‘my religion’ and ‘my family/tribe’ were each named by 27 per cent of respondents, followed by ‘my nationality’ (15 per cent), ‘my language’ (11 per cent), ‘my Arabic heritage’ (8 per cent), ‘my gender’ (7 per cent) and ‘my political beliefs’ (4 per cent).

Religion was named as most important to personal identity by 30 per cent of the respondents in Levant, 27 per cent in North Africa, and 25 per cent in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC)



states, while family/tribe was deemed most important by 37 per cent of youth in North Africa, 21 per cent in Levant and 20 per cent in the GCC.

Over three-quarters (76 per cent) of Arab youth said they are concerned about the loss of traditional values and culture, the highest percentage saying so in five years, while nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) said preserving their religious and cultural identity is more important to them than creating a more tolerant, liberal and globalised society. This sentiment rises to nearly 74 per cent in Levant, 72 per cent in the GCC states and 68 per cent in North Africa.

Interestingly, while 11 per cent said language is most important to their identity, over half (54 per cent) of the respondents said the Arabic language is less important to them than it is to their parents. This trend is seen across the three regions surveyed, with 59 per cent of GCC youth, 51 per cent in North Africa and 52 per cent in Levant all saying it is less important to them.

Interestingly, in Oman, nearly two-thirds (64 per cent) of youth said the Arabic language is more important to them than it is to their parents.

Reflecting the importance they place on their faith, a majority (73 per cent) disagreed that religious values are holding the Arab world back, but nearly two-thirds (65 per cent) said religion plays too big a role in the Middle East. Fewer Arab youth than in previous years feel the region needs to reform its religious institutions – down to 58 per cent this year from 77 per cent last year. This year, the face-to-face interviews with Arab youth were conducted from March 27 to April 12, coinciding with the holy month of Ramadhan.

This sense of young Arabs embracing their religious identity is further reinforced by the finding that nearly two-thirds (62 per cent) say the laws of their country should be based on Sharia standards and not civil or common law. This sentiment is consistent across the three regions covered, with 68 per cent in GCC, 53 per cent in North

Africa and 68 per cent in Levant saying they prefer Sharia laws to govern their nations.

Sunil John, President, MENA, BCW and Founder of ASDAA BCW, said: “These findings reveal that Generation Z remain guided by faith, with their affinity towards their religion stronger than ever and many being concerned about what they see as the loss of traditional values and culture. What is evident is that Arab youth increasingly view their personal identity through the lens of religion, family and nationality.” “Another compelling finding is that the Arabic language is not as integral to their sense of tradition or their cultural values as one might have thought, with a majority of young people across the Arab world agreeing that the Arabic language is less important to them than it is to their parents,” John added.

The survey covered 53 cities across 18 Arab states, including for the first time South Sudan. The interviews were conducted in person rather than online to maximise accuracy and to reflect the nuances of Arab youth opinion across the region as much as possible.

‘My Identity’ is the fourth sub-theme of the 2023 ASDAA BCW Arab Youth Survey, whose overarching theme is ‘Living a New Reality’. Findings on ‘Global Citizenship’ were announced in June, followed by ‘My Politics’ and ‘My Livelihood’ in July.



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Chairman’s Report For the six months period ended 30 June 2023

Dear Shareholders,

After greetings,

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I am pleased to present parent and consolidated unaudited results for the six months period ended 30 June 2023.

The summarized operating result for the above period is as below.

Details	Parent			Consolidated		
	30th June 2023	30th June 2022	Variance % YOY	30th June 2023	30th June 2022	Variance % YOY
	RO’000	RO’000		RO’000	RO’000	
Revenue	6,417	6,694	(4.14%)	16,140	15,445	4.5%
EBITDA	1,916	2,367	(19.1%)	5,129	4,919	4.3%
Net Profit After Tax for the period	1,086	1,575	(31.1%)	1,678	1,850	(9.3%)
Profit After Tax attributable to parent co. shareholders	1,086	1,575	(31.1%)	1,426	1,762	(19.1%)
Share of profit/(loss) After Tax attributable to minority shareholders	-	-		252	88	186.4%

1. Performance Overview of Parent Company

The enhanced capacity of the Plant coupled with maintaining the capacity utilization at high level at 100% has enabled the parent company to maintain its performance. During the current year the selling prices were lower for Caustic and its value-added products whilst Acid and its value-added products’ selling prices were higher as compared to a similar period of last year. The company has continued to focus on fixed costs management and financial discipline while leveraging on caustic prices.

2. Performance overview of Subsidiaries – Union Chlorine LLC (UAE), Gulf Chlorine WLL (Qatar) and Oman Industrial Development Company SAOC

Union Chlorine (UAE) was operating at higher capacity utilization of 103%, the subsidiary by capitalizing on the international demand and securing more contracts at higher realizations the company achieved higher price realization on its products.

Gulf Chlorine, Qatar has further strengthened its long-term agreements and its position with the major players in Qatar and GCC whilst targeting all major customer both locally and in the region including government entities for a sustainable products supply. The company has further expanded its export market in the region and will strive to improve its presence over various geographies for better price realization.

Oman Industrial Development Company is fully owned by Oman Chlorine and the company holds an 11.1% economic interest in Union Chlorine LLC – Abu Dhabi.

3. Outlook

The Group continues to monitor the Oil price fluctuations and chemical commodities prices globally. The Group is optimistic about meeting the targets for the year 2023 provided the oil and gas activities continue to remain at this level and global chemical commodities prices remain stable.

4. Acknowledgement

On behalf of the Board of Directors and Management, we wish to express our loyalty and thanks to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tarik May God protect Him and guide him for the benefit of Oman and its People in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The Board records its sincere appreciation to Government Authorities for their support and encouragement in particular the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion, the Capital Market Authority as well as all the employees of the company and management for their sincere efforts, leading to the continued success of the company.

Sheikh. Said Mohamed Ahmed Al Harthy
Chairman of Board of Directors

Unaudited condensed interim Separate and consolidated statement of financial position as at 30 June 2023

	Parent		Consolidated	
	30/06/2023 RO’000	31/12/2022 RO’000	30/06/2023 RO’000	31/12/2022 RO’000
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	16,089	16,417	75,151	76,434
Investment in subsidiaries	14,353	14,353	-	-
Subordinated Loan	2,302	2,302	-	-
Investment in Joint Venture	-	-	1,345	1,157
Right of use assets	767	788	2,423	2,467
Total non-current assets	33,511	33,860	78,919	80,058
Current assets				
Inventories and consumables	1,686	1,528	3,958	3,675
Trade and other receivables	3,677	2,902	7,318	6,056
Cash and bank balances	966	2,560	1,520	4,013
Total current assets	6,329	6,990	12,796	13,744
Total assets	39,840	40,850	91,715	93,802
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Capital and reserves				
Share capital	7,151	6,810	7,151	6,810
Statutory reserve	2,848	2,848	3,012	3,012
General reserve	900	900	900	900
Cashflow hedge reserve	-	-	(222)	(243)
Retained earnings	18,156	19,113	12,835	13,451
Equity attributable to the Parent Company’s shareholders	29,055	29,671	23,676	23,930
Non-controlling interest	-	-	7,452	7,187
Total equity	29,055	29,671	31,128	31,117
Non-current liabilities				
Term loan	4,652	5,117	43,233	43,534
Liability on land lease non-current	806	816	2,550	2,544
End of service benefits	148	162	364	354
Cashflow hedge reserve	-	-	370	301
Deferred tax liability	894	865	894	865
Total non-current liabilities	6,500	6,960	47,411	47,598
Current liabilities				
Trade and other payables	3,065	2,808	7,977	7,845
Liability on land lease current	73	73	118	118
Current portion – Term Loan	939	939	3,532	5,316
Short term borrowings	-	-	1,341	1,304
Cashflow hedge reserve	-	-	-	105
Provision for income tax	208	399	208	399
Total current liabilities	4,285	4,219	13,176	15,087
Total liabilities	10,785	11,179	60,587	62,685
Total equity and liabilities	39,840	40,850	91,715	93,802
Net asset per share	0.406	0.436	0.331	0.351

Unaudited condensed interim Separate and consolidated statement of profit or loss and other comprehensive income for the 6 months period ended 30 June 2023

	Parent		Consolidated	
	30/06/2023 RO’000	30/06/2022 RO’000	30/06/2023 RO’000	30/06/2022 RO’000
Revenue	6,417	6,694	16,140	15,445
Cost of sales	(4,098)	(3,846)	(10,392)	(9,658)
Gross profit	2,319	2,848	5,748	5,787
Selling and distribution expenses	(605)	(544)	(1,317)	(1,408)
General and administrative expenses	(495)	(507)	(951)	(969)
Operating profit	1,219	1,797	3,480	3,410
Finance charges	(165)	(81)	(1,886)	(1,231)
Other income	227	149	91	113
Share of loss of Joint Venture	-	-	188	(152)
Profit before taxation	1,281	1,865	1,873	2,140
Current tax	(166)	(261)	(166)	(261)
Deferred tax	(29)	(29)	(29)	(29)
Profit for the period	1,086	1,575	1,678	1,850
Attributable to:				
Owners of the Parent Company	1,086	1,575	1,426	1,762
Non-Controlling Interest	-	-	252	88
	1,086	1,575	1,678	1,850
Other comprehensive income:				
Items that are or may be reclassified to profit or loss:				
Net changes in cash flow hedge reserve	-	-	34	88
Total comprehensive income	1,086	1,575	1,712	1,938
Total comprehensive income attributable to:				
Parent Company shareholders	1,086	1,575	1,448	1,815
Non-controlling interest	-	-	264	123
	1,086	1,575	1,712	1,938
Earnings per share on profit attributable to the Parent Company shareholders – Basic and diluted	0.0152	0.0231	0.0199	0.0259

The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder who request them, in either Arabic or English, within 7 days of receipt of a written request.



OMAN SAIL CELEBRATES 15 YEARS OF REKINDLING MARITIME EMINENCE



MUSCAT: Oman Sail marked its 15th anniversary on Wednesday, August 9 with a celebration of all of the achievements so far as well as a look at the future. Since 2008, Oman Sail has pioneered the re-emergence of sailing across the nation by engaging Omani boys and girls, professional sailors and people with disabilities in the sport, encouraging a healthy and active lifestyle and providing training to create new career opportunities.

Oman Sail has also organised

and hosted an impressive roster of major international and regional events, as well as uniting the nation and honing Omani talent in several sports, generating significant global exposure for Oman, securing foreign direct investment, boosting inbound tourism through its extensive range of events and SeaOman, which has served more than 24,000 customers in the last decade, and making an important contribution to the national economy across all areas of the organisation.

Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, said, “Over the past 15 years, Omani sailors have won 85 medals between youth and senior sailors, we have set two speed records and hold another Guinness World Record for our commitment to the environment. Our success and our growth are testament to the multi-faceted approach we have always taken, and the impact we have had on so many lives across Oman and around the world. It has been our honour to represent Oman at home

and abroad and fly the Omani flag proudly wherever we go. We are ambassadors for the sport and for the nation, playing an important role in driving the national economy, connecting our people with our heritage and making the world aware of Oman’s potential as a partner, a tourism destination, and a world-class host venue.” During this time, Oman Sail has supported Mohsin al Busaidy to become the first Arab to sail non-stop around the world, recreated the Jewel of Muscat’s

historic voyage from Muscat to Singapore, launched Sailing Arabia – The Tour to showcase regional talent and the natural beauty of Oman, introduced the region’s first women’s sailing team and first Para Sailing initiative, and became the first nation in the Middle East to host an America’s Cup event, among many other achievements.

Oman has become a regular host venue for events such as the 44Cup, and for major international events including the 50th edition

of the Youth World Sailing Championships, and the 2022 RS Venture World Championships – the first sailing event exclusively for PRESS RELEASE people with disabilities to be held in Oman which welcomed 72 sailors from 18 nations and was the largest Para Sailing event in the world that year. In the same year, Oman Sail won Gold for Best Sport Event Organiser of the year and Silver for Best Sport Event of The Year in the Middle East’s Sport Industry Awards.



One arrested for tyre theft

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 9

The Al Dakhiliyah Governorate Police Command on Wednesday arrested a citizen on charges of vandalism and theft of tyres from several vehicles in different locations.

The thefts occurred in the wilayats

of Nizwa, Izki, Samayil and Bidbid and completed the legal procedures against him.

In another incident, the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate Police Command arrested a citizen on charges of theft from several shops in the Wilayat of Sur and completed the legal procedures against him.

Gulf forum for youth looks at volunteering

SALALAH: The Gulf Forum for Youth Volunteering began in Salalah on August 6 with the participation of many youths who are inclined to work as volunteers.

The six-day event will continue until August 11 at Sultan Qaboos Complex in Salalah, having many training courses and dialogue sessions related to the project, which aims to create awareness for volunteering among youth.

The programme has four sessions.

The first session deals with youth volunteer work, the second with managing volunteer projects, the third with designing volunteer projects, and the last session for discussion and evaluation of the projects.

The forum will choose four projects which will be supported by the Cooperation Council for the Arab states.

The programme audience is youths in the age group of 22 - 35 years, with focus on the promotion of education and tourism. — ONA



Discover the wonders of pomegranate in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar



MUSCAT: Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort presents a special getaway this season to introduce guests to the superfruit that grows in abundance nearby. The Pomegranate Journey offers a soothing escape that is ideal for couples in the scenic mountains of Oman.

From August 15 to September 15, guests can choose the Pomegranate Journey in the fertile area of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, also called the Green Mountain, where pomegranates have bloomed alongside roses and apricots for many centuries.

Pomegranates are known as a superfruit due to their high nutritional value and health benefits.

They are a great source of fibre and boost the immune system. The fruit not only tastes delicious but provides around 16 per cent of the daily requirement for Vitamin C, as well as being a good source of Vitamin B and potassium. Packed full of antioxidants, pomegranates are a good aid for weight loss, anti-aging and reducing the risk of heart disease and cancer.

The Pomegranate Journey at Anantara

Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort includes overnight accommodation in luxurious rooms or villas overlooking the dramatic



views of the canyon. Guests will embark on a tour with our local Mountain Guru who will demonstrate the pomegranates in bloom and guests can pick their own.

Then a Revitalising Pomegranate Journey awaits at Anantara Spa, which is performed as a couples’ treatment. As dusk falls across the mountain, step into Bella Vista for a sumptuous set menu that showcases the delectable flavours of pomegranate blended with flair by the talented chefs at the resort.

Before departing, breakfast is served at

Al Maisan, where guests can admire the striking views while enjoying an appetising spread and as much pomegranate as they desire.

“We invite guests to experience unique local encounters that highlight what is so special at Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar. We welcome guests on this Pomegranate Journey to celebrate our local superfruit, which I’m sure they will find delicious, fulfilling and health-boosting,” remarks Maren Kuehl, General Manager of Anantara Al Jabal Al Akhdar Resort.



Heavy rains lash some parts of Oman

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 9

Heavy rains associated with active wind were reported in some wilayats of the governorates of Al Dakhiliyah, Al Dhahirah, Al Buraimi, Al Batinah South and Al Sharqiyah North on Wednesday. Al Batinah South Governorate saw heavy rains in the villages of Wadi Bani Kharous in the Wilayat of Al Awabi.

As a result of heavy downpour, Wadi Al Ad in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar

overflowed blocking some roads and causing traffic jams.

Heavy rain also fell in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar due to the formation of local cumulonimbus clouds. The Wilayat of Samayil witnessed heavy thundershowers that caused overflowing of wadis.

The Met Office warned the travellers to and from Dhofar via Adam-Thamrait road to be cautious as cumulonimbus clouds activities continued to bring heavy rain, active wind and dust with high possibility of low visibility.



Jabal Akhdhar Festival draws large turnout



AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR

The second edition of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Festival continues in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. The festival drew more than 10,000 visitors over the past six days since its launch last Thursday. The festival will conclude on August 19.

The festival aims to attract local and international tourists and introduce the cultural heritage and the natural beauty of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in particular and the Sultanate of Oman in general. Besides, it seeks to encourage entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium enterprises to take part in the festival and avail of the tourism promotion opportunities.

Ahmed bin Salim al Toobi, Director-General of

Administrative and Financial Affairs in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, said: "All the entertaining, tourism, social, sports and marketing events and activities of the festival are witnessing a huge visitor turnout from inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman. This 2023 edition of the festival is part of a series of events and activities implemented by the governorate which seeks to place the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar as a distinctive tourist destination for both local and international tourists by enriching and highlighting the tourist and heritage destinations abound in the wilayat. The Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar boasts unique tourism potentials and fine weather with low temperatures throughout the

year." In comments to ONA, Al Toobi stated that new activities and events will be launched gradually over the coming days according to the schedule. He noted that the festival's venues at Hail Al Yemen and Saih Qatna witnessed a big turnout of families and individuals both citizens and residents from inside and outside the governorate to enjoy the festival's varied activities. The events include Aladdin shows, chemical science shows, music performance by the Royal Guard of Oman, paragliding shows, children's competitions in addition to many other corners such as the youth corner, the children corner, the food corner as well as corners dedicated to the productive families and farmers. — ONA

Oman Air and SalamAir sign MoU to enhance cooperation

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

In pursuance of the measures of restructuring of Oman Air, the national carrier of the Sultanate of Oman, the carrier and SalamAir signed a memorandum of understanding to enhance cooperation and integration in the field of air transport on Wednesday.

The MoU, signed by Nasser al Salmi, Acting CEO of Oman Air, and Captain Mohammed Ahmed, CEO of SalamAir, aims to enhancing aspects of cooperation and integration between the two airlines to develop and implement a joint commercial strategy and plan in the field of air transport resulting in helping the rebound of the national carrier.

Speaking to the Observer, Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of



transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), said that a multitude of cooperation is sought between the two carriers in terms of carrying passenger to different destinations of both carriers.

The MoU further provides for cooperation between the

two airlines' networks to enhance operational efficiency and improve passenger service, as well as understanding between the two sides in the areas of destination planning, flight schedules, inventory management, air fleet management, and revenue and sales management.

Workshop on media skills concludes

SALALAH: A workshop on media skills concluded recently at Sultan Qaboos Complex in Salalah. The workshop focused on topics like the basics of photography; basics of videography; introduction to light and sound; accessories and main media equipment; common photographers' mistakes; introduction to directing and montage; and practical side of direction skills.

The workshop targeted participants in the age group of

18 to 34 years.

Musallam Tabook introduced the workshop to the participants in the presence of media experts Mohammed al Farsi (photographer), Ahmed Tabook (TV cameraman), Salim Jabooob and the aerial photographer Abdullah al Mashani. Thirty participants took part in the workshop, which had a theory and practical sessions. At the end of the workshop, the participants were honoured by the general manager Moosa al Qassabi.



Steps to regulate tourist services in Salalah

FROM PAGE 1

Abdulaziz Mohammed, another visitor to Salalah, candidly shared his observation on the subject, highlighting an element of exaggeration in pricing within certain locales and for specific goods, along with associated accommodation costs.

Recent days have witnessed an upswing in grievances from Salalah visitors regarding the escalating cost of rentals. Many visitors find it increasingly difficult to accept these prices, with some individuals compelled to reluctantly accommodate these expenses in their pursuit of a hassle-free dwelling at a reasonable cost following

arduous journey to Salalah. The pricing trend is fluctuating throughout the khareef season, commencing with lower rates at the season's outset and progressively increasing as time unfolds. Abdulaziz also underscored the significant price disparities he encountered upon arriving in Salalah, remarking on the considerably higher costs than those beyond Salalah's boundaries. This trend effectively transforms Salalah into a destination tailored for individuals with higher disposable incomes.

In acknowledging the complex landscape, Abdulaziz emphasised a balanced perspective, indicating that

not all accountability lies solely with landlords. He noted that every tourist-centric city has unique attributes, particularly during peak tourist seasons. Nevertheless, a marked propensity towards excessive pricing has the potential to cast an adverse spotlight on the city, ultimately resulting in far-reaching consequences for its reputation.

Furthermore, Abdulaziz praised the commendable initiatives undertaken by the Dhofar Municipality and Consumer Protection Authority. Recent endeavours have led to the establishment of standardised pricing at the kiosks selling products such as coconuts and fruits.

SULTANATE OF OMAN

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Directorate General of Khoula Hospital invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders:-

Tender Ref.	Description	Last Date for Collection of Tenders Document	Bid Submission Closing Date on/before 09:00 am Thursday	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
MOH/ DGKH-28/ 2952/2023	Replacement of Package Unit at Wattayah Obstetrics and Gynecology Clinic & PHASE 3 of Polyclinic Building at Khoula Hospital	20/Aug/2023	14/Sept/2023	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in Excellent Grade	R.O 25.000

- Tenders should be submitted online on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.
- For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200, Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om



A street thermometer reads 45 degrees Celsius during a heatwave in Cordoba, southern Spain on Wednesday. – AFP

Spain roasts as summer’s third heatwave peaks

MADRID: Spain’s third heatwave of the summer reached its peak on Wednesday, with temperatures reaching as high as 44 degrees Celsius in central and southern Spain and authorities warning of the risk of wildfires. The mercury could also rise to 40°C in the Basque Country in northeastern Spain, an area less accustomed to such high temperatures, the state weather agency AEMET said. It warned of so-called dry storms — thunder and lightning without rainfall — in many parts of the country. Southern European countries have been grappling with record-breaking temperatures this summer, prompting authorities to warn of health risks, particularly for the elderly and those with medical conditions. Temperatures in some areas in the southern half of Spain remained above 27°C on Tuesday night and Wednesday morning, AEMET spokesperson Ruben del Campo said. “Wednesday will be the most intense day in terms of extension and temperatures,” Del Campo

said, adding that the heatwave will continue until the weekend. With the tourist season also hitting its peak, sightseers in Madrid were getting more sun than they bargained for. Visitors waiting in line at the Prado museum were sprayed with water by employees. Tourists said they were keeping to the shade, drinking lots of water and eating ice cream to stay cool. The heatwaves recorded in Spain and wider Europe this summer have worsened a prolonged drought, lowering reservoir levels as water evaporation and consumption increase and prompting authorities in Catalonia to impose new water usage restrictions. As Spain suffocates under high temperatures, ice on its mountains is melting. The Cryosphere, a scientific journal focused on frozen water and ground, published a peer-reviewed paper on Tuesday showing how the Aneto Glacier, the largest in the Pyrenees, is melting and could disappear altogether. — Reuters

COURT REJECTS JAILED IMRAN’S PLEA TO SUSPEND CONVICTION

Pakistan parliament to dissolve to set stage for election

ISLAMABAD: Pakistan’s parliament was due to be dissolved, with an interim government to be appointed to oversee an election that will not include the country’s most popular politician, Imran Khan. The country has been in political turmoil since the former international cricket star was booted from power in April last year, culminating in his being jailed for graft at the weekend following a months-long crackdown on his party. “In the past 16 months, our government tried its best to improve the situation and served the nation with full conviction,” outgoing Prime Minister Shehbaz Sharif said in his last address to the cabinet. “This country can’t progress until we have national unity,” he said. The new interim prime minister must be announced within three days of parliament being dissolved, according to the constitution. Elections by law should be held within 90 days of parliament’s dissolution, but the outgoing government has already warned they are likely to be delayed. The unlikely coalition between Pakistan’s usually feuding dynastic parties — which came together to kick out Khan — has won little popular support while at the helm of the world’s fifth-most populous country. The economy is still in the doldrums despite a new International Monetary Fund bailout, with crippling foreign debt, soaring inflation and widespread



Gohar Khan, lawyer and legal team member of Imran Khan, talks to the media as he arrives to attend a hearing at the High Court in Islamabad on Wednesday. – AFP

unemployment from factories idled because they lack foreign currency to buy raw materials. “Economic decisions are invariably tough and often unpopular, requiring a government with a longer tenure to effectively implement them,” said Ahmed Bilal Mehboob, president of the Pakistan Institute of Legislative Development and Transparency think tank. “This election holds significance as it will result in a five-year term for a new government, which ideally should be empowered to make essential decisions vital for economic recovery.” There has been speculation for months that there could be a delay to elections as the establishment grapples to stabilise the country,

which is facing overlapping security, economic and political crises. Data from the latest census carried out in May was finally published at the weekend and the government says the election commission needs time to redraw constituency boundaries — a sore point for several political parties. Michael Kugelman, director of the South Asia Institute at the Wilson Center, said that any delay could give time to the main coalition partners, the Pakistan Muslim League-Nawaz (PML-N) and Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP), to figure out how to address the challenge of Khan’s Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) party. “But in reality, delaying the election could simply anger the public more and galvanise

an opposition that has already suffered through months of crackdowns,” he said. Behind any election in Pakistan lurks the military, which has staged at least three successful coups since the country was forged from the partition of India in 1947. Khan enjoyed genuine widespread support when he came to power in 2018 but analysts say it was only with the blessing of Pakistan’s powerful generals — with whom he reportedly fell out in the months before his ousting. He later waged a risky campaign of defiance, accusing the military of meddling in politics and even naming an intelligence officer as being behind a November assassination attempt in which Khan was shot in the leg. — Reuters

Railways, roads threaten pledges to save Amazon rainforest

BELÉM, Brazil: Plans for new railways, roads, dams and oil drilling in the Amazon are raising fears about further damage to the rainforest even as regional leaders hold a summit in Brazil seeking to end deforestation. The eight Amazon nations agreed a list of joint policies and measures on Tuesday to boost regional cooperation to protect the forest at the two-day summit in the Brazilian city of Belem ending on Wednesday. But they failed to agree a common target for ending

deforestation, despite a push by Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva for an Amazon-wide deadline of 2030. Indigenous peoples and environmental activists say a raft of major infrastructure projects is at odds with any timetable for ending deforestation in the world’s largest tropical rainforest. “It is a bomb of environmental destruction in Indigenous territories,” Telma Monteiro, from the Association of Threatened Peoples, said of a planned railway in the Amazon to help grain



Indigenous people take part in a march as the Amazon Summit kicks off in Belem, Para state, Brazil. – Reuters

exports. In June, Brazil’s Supreme Court allowed the government to proceed with studies and administrative processes for the R\$ 25 billion (\$5.1 billion) 933-km Ferrograo railway. Researchers say the railway, due to transport grains from Brazil’s midwest agriculture powerhouses to an Amazon river port for export, could impact an area bigger than Denmark. The government says the railway would help protect the region overall by reducing heavy traffic on a road on a similar route, and cut use of fossil fuels in trucks.

Tarcisio Feitosa, a prominent environmental activist, said the railway crosses a region marked by “land tenure chaos”, making it especially vulnerable to land-grabbing, closely connected to deforestation in Brazil’s Amazon. Sexual violence and exploitation, commonly associated with large infrastructure projects in Brazil’s Amazon, have not been addressed by the project’s studies, he added during the Amazon Dialogues, a civil society gathering before the summit. — Thomson Reuters Foundation

JAKARTA

Jakarta named world’s most polluted city

Indonesia’s capital Jakarta topped the list as the world’s most polluted city on Wednesday, having consistently ranked among the 10 most polluted cities globally since May, according to data by Swiss air quality technology company IQAir. Jakarta, which has a population of over 10 million, registers unhealthy air pollution levels nearly everyday, according to IQAir. Resident Rizky Putra lamented that the worsening air



quality was putting his children’s health at risk. “I think the situation is very worrying,” Rizky, 35, said by the side of a road in downtown Jakarta.

NAIROBI

Kenya political rivals launch fresh talks

Kenya’s government and the opposition launched fresh talks on Wednesday aimed at resolving a bitter political feud following a spate of violent protests over the high cost of living and calls for electoral reforms. But even as the formal dialogue kicked off in Nairobi, both sides insisted there would no form of power-sharing to resolve the crisis in the East African powerhouse. Veteran opposition leader Raila Odinga has organised 10



days of demonstrations against the government of President William Ruto since March — blighted by sometimes deadly confrontations with the police.

MOSCOW

Explosion at Russian factory injures 52

An explosion at a Russian factory outside the capital Moscow on Wednesday has injured at least 52 people, the region’s governor said. Officials in the city of Sergiyev Posad, some 56 km north-east of the capital, said the blast occurred at a plant that produced optical equipment. “Now 52 people have sought medical help,” Moscow region governor Andrey Vorobyov said on state television. “Some have slight contusions from the blast wave, some just



have burns.” Video shared by state media showed a bright ball of flames burst on the horizon, followed by a shockwave that blew out windows from some buildings.

Clampdown on ‘clandestine’ trade

People have suffered for decades from clandestine trade at the economic, social, financial and security levels. The Omani circles particularly those involved in business have been severely affected by this and are still suffering from clandestine trade.

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion issued a Ministerial Resolution No 54/2023 to combat clandestine trade and to impose deterrent penalties on both sides of this tainted equation.

This comes within the scope of attempts to put an end to this phenomenon and its negative effects on individuals and society after finalising the legislative and economic system that permits foreigners to participate in commercial activities other than the forbidden ones. As a result, international investors have no choice but to invest in line with economic systems that motivate and encourage all the serious and committed individuals.

This necessitates everyone’s cooperation in order to put an end to this phenomenon and the ensuring economic distortions and imbalances in the labour market, as well as unequal competition among entrepreneurs by means of enormous cash transfers worth billions of rials per year, in addition to tax evasion and other problems.

The decision to battle clandestine trade has undoubtedly arose from a desire to rid the national economy and society of a thorny economic quandary that has been causing bitter controversy for many years, as well as extensive demands from all walks of society to restrict, abolish and uproot these practices.

Nevertheless, the ministerial order was issued to revive the hopes and convert them into a visible reality on the ground. The decision was made to reaffirm that there are alternatives that may improve the country’s economic environment in a positive way when all parties, citizens and residents work together to avoid the damage that this troubling issue does to the state and society alike.

The decision, as well as the precise and obvious treatments therein, will have far-reaching echoes on the society, particularly the business, financial and economic communities. This decision is also a positive step towards treating the scourges and woes caused by this intractable plague.

The effects of clandestine trade on the national economy are severe and



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THE ACTION COMES WITHIN THE SCOPE OF ATTEMPTS TO PUT AN END TO THIS PHENOMENON AND ITS NEGATIVE EFFECTS ON INDIVIDUALS AND SOCIETY

complex, including commercial fraud and foreign transfers of funds worth RO 5 billion per year, the majority of which are the result of clandestine trade practices and excess profits, as well as capital migration abroad, monopoly of expatriate workers in some economic sectors, and the formation of illegal associations and unfair competition with entrepreneurs and small and medium enterprises.

Clandestine trade also causes problems such as tax evasion to the government, in addition to the negative effects it has on monetary policies and pressures to deplete foreign currencies, not to mention the social effects and negative impacts that every job-seeker suffers from.

The decision empowers the ministry to impose one of the penalties, including striking off the activity from the commercial register, an administrative fine of RO 5,000, or an administrative fine of RO 10,000 if the violation is committed for a second time, with the activity suspended for three months, or an administrative fine of RO 15,000 if the violation is committed for the third time.

If the violation is committed for the third time, the activity shall be struck off from the commercial register and cannot be re-registered until one year.

The decision emphasised that the legal person is jointly liable for the penalty imposed if the infringement was committed by one of his workers in the legal person’s name or on his behalf.

Nonetheless, if the party involved in the clandestine trade or the party covering up for it rushed to inform about the facts of its occurrence, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion may reduce or overturn the penalties set for the violation.

This means the purpose of the decision is not to impose fines as much as it aims to halt the clandestine trade in any manner because of the catastrophes it caused, which had many repercussions.

These deterrent penalties is the last resort after all the attempts to treat this plague at the educational, legal and security levels have been exhausted.

Of course, efforts to combat clandestine trade shall continue with cooperation from all elements, perhaps the most important of which is the citizen himself.

The citizen must change the conditions at his institution to his own benefit and the benefit of the homeland as a whole. Also, he should engage in the economic activities himself.

‘RED LIONS’ IN THE AIR



A member of ‘Red Lions’ Singapore Armed Forces Parachute Team takes part in the 58th National Day celebrations in Singapore on Wednesday. – AFP

Feed people, not factory farms

After Russia’s full-scale war in February 2022, ships used to export grain from Ukraine’s Black Sea ports stopped travelling there because they were liable to be attacked by Russian forces, which suspected them of carrying military supplies. That caused grain prices to soar to record levels and sparked fears of famine in countries in the Middle East and Africa that had previously imported Ukrainian grain, especially wheat.

Eventually, in July 2022, Russia agreed to give ships travelling to and from Ukraine safe passage, on the condition that Russian officials could inspect them.

During the 11 months that the Black Sea Grain Initiative was in effect, Ukraine exported 33 million tonnes of grain, and world food prices declined by approximately 20 per cent. According to the United Nations, 57 per cent of the exported foodstuffs went to developing countries. But now Russia has withdrawn from



Peter Singer

The writer is Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University, is Founder of the nonprofit organisation The Life You Can Save

THERE CAN BE NO EXCUSE FOR RUSSIA, IN PURSUIT OF ITS WAR ON UKRAINE

the arrangement.

When Russia announced that it would let the agreement expire on July 17, the price of grain rose by 8 per cent.

UN Secretary-General António Guterres warned that millions of people would now be facing hunger, and US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said that “Russia is responsible for denying food to people who are desperately needy around the world.”

In Kenya, the government described Russia’s conduct as a “stab in the back” for people in drought-stricken countries (a group that currently includes Kenya).

In addition to ending the agreement and declaring that it will regard any cargo ships heading for Ukrainian ports as potentially carrying military goods, Russia has targeted Ukrainian ports on the Danube River, which could offer an alternative export route, and

has also attacked grain storage facilities in Odesa, destroying an estimated 60,000 tonnes of grain. At a recent Russia-Africa Summit in St Petersburg, President Vladimir Putin attempted to show concern about possible grain shortages in Africa by promising 25,000-50,000 tonnes of Russian grain to six African countries (in four of which Russia’s Wagner Group mercenaries operate).

Kenya was not among them. In any case, the total quantity

of grain pledged is less than 1 per cent of the grain shipped by Ukraine while the agreement was in effect.

There can be no justification or excuse for Russia, in furtherance of its war on Ukraine, to target that country’s grain exports, knowing that this will drive up grain prices and increase hunger among people in countries far from the conflict.

Nevertheless, comments from leaders like Guterres and Blinken



Around 57 per cent of the exported foodstuffs went to developing countries.

risk creating the false impression that the world relies on Ukraine to produce enough grain to feed its people.

Each year, the world produces about 750 million tonnes of wheat and 1.1 billion tonnes of maize.

Of this, 20 per cent of the wheat (150 million tonnes) and 61 per cent of the maize (671 million tonnes) is fed to animals confined in what the industry calls “Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations” or CAFOs.

(That’s in addition to 77 per cent of the world’s soybean crop.) When we feed animals crops that we could eat, we end up with fewer calories and less protein than the crops themselves contain.

That’s because the animals use the majority of the nutritional value of their food to keep their bodies warm and functioning, and to develop bones and other body parts that we do not eat.

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INDIA-PAKISTAN CLASH AMONG NINE WORLD CUP FIXTURE CHANGES



(LEFT) The ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 trophy is displayed at the Sher-e-Bangla National Cricket Stadium in Dhaka. The trophy arrived in Bangladesh as part of a three-day official trophy tour. (ABOVE) Bangladesh's women national team members pose with the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 trophy. – AFP

NEW DELHI: India's clash with archrivals Pakistan in this year's ODI World Cup has been brought forward a day to October 14 among eight other fixture changes, the International Cricket Council (ICC) said on Wednesday.

The world's biggest cricket stadium in Ahmedabad will host the hotly anticipated match, originally set for October 15 at the same venue.

Fixtures for the 50-over World Cup were originally published in June after weeks of delays arising from Pakistan's reluctance to travel to India.

Wednesday's overhaul of the schedule, less than two months before the tournament begins, came after the Board of Control

for Cricket in India said foreign teams had requested changes.

Indian media reports said Ahmedabad officials had raised concerns about their ability to provide adequate security because the match was originally scheduled at the start of a nine-day Hindu religious festival.

Ahmedabad is where Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi's political career began and the showdown will take place at the stadium bearing his name.

India and Pakistan are bitter adversaries and only play cricket against each other in international tournaments due to longstanding political tensions.

Pakistan had agreed to visit India after they agreed to jointly

host September's Asia Cup, allowing India to play its matches in Sri Lanka.

But it was only this week that the Pakistan Cricket Board got approval from their government to make the India trip for the 50-over World Cup.

Any match between the South Asian neighbours therefore becomes one of the most-watched events on the global sporting calendar. When they do play, cricket fans around the world are glued to their TV screens in a multi-billion-dollar bonanza for broadcasters.

Among the other changes, Pakistan's match against Sri Lanka has been brought forward by two days and will now be played on

October 10.

Australia's match against South Africa in Lucknow will be played on October 12 instead of the following day.

England will take on Afghanistan in Delhi on October 15, a day after the original date.

New Zealand's game against Bangladesh, originally scheduled as a day match for October 14 in Chennai, will now be held on October 13 as a day-night contest.

England's match-up against Bangladesh in Dharamsala has now become a day match after it was originally scheduled to be played under lights.

Tickets for the World Cup will go on sale on August 25, the ICC said. — AFP



Andy Murray (GBR) serves against Taylor Fritz (USA) (not pictured) on day seven of the Mubadala Citi DC Open at Fitzgerald Tennis Stadium. – USA Today Sports

Murray, Zverev master Toronto wind to advance

TORONTO, Canada: Former Toronto Masters winners Andy Murray and Alexander Zverev dispatched first-round opponents in windy conditions on Tuesday to power into the second round of the Canadian hardcourt event.

Britain's Murray worked through a marathon opening set before dominating the second for a 7-6 (7/3), 6-0 victory over Italy's Lorenzo Sonego.

The 36-year-old Scotsman, with three Canadian titles on his resume, earned his first victory in the country since his 2015 trophy as he defeated the Italian in two hours, eight minutes in a challenging wind.

Germany's Zverev, who defeated Roger Federer for the 2017 Canadian title, reached the second round by defeating Dutchman Tallon Griekspoor 6-4, 7-6 (7/3).

Third seed Casper Ruud began his US Open run-up after a bye, struggling at the start but wrapping up a 7-6 (8/6), 6-4 defeat of Jiri Lehecka for a 199th career ATP match win.



Alexander Zverev (GER) celebrates after winning the first set against Tallon Griekspoor (NED) in second round play at Sobey's Stadium. – USA Today Sports

The Norwegian trailed 4-0 in the first-set tiebreaker but found form in his first hardcourt match of the summer to reach the third round.

"I told myself not to give up, just keep holding onto the score," he said. "I saved a couple of set points.

Murray's opening set lasted 90 minutes, with the two-time Wimbledon winner saving set points in the 10th game.

He profitted from Sonego's 44 unforced errors to sweep into the second round. — AFP

Wozniacki makes triumphant return to tennis

MONTREAL: Caroline Wozniacki, in her first competitive match after more than three years away to start a family, cruised by Australian qualifier Kimberly Birrell 6-2 6-2 in Montreal on Tuesday to reach the second round of the Canadian Open.

The Danish wildcard, who announced in June that she was coming out of retirement, showed great anticipation, movement and shot selection throughout the 97-minute match that made it look as though she had never left the sport.

Wozniacki received a warm welcome when she walked on to the Montreal court, with the Neil Diamond song 'Sweet Caroline' blaring through the speakers and a 'Welcome Back Caro' sign in French lining part of the upper seating level.

"I felt the love," Wozniacki told reporters.

"The fans as well really were for me, and I had a blast out there, and

it was really nice to be back out on a court where I have amazing memories."

The 33-year-old Wozniacki dropped the opening game on her serve but then built up a 3-1 lead and wrapped up the frame in 42 minutes when world number 115 Birrell committed three double faults while serving to extend the set.

Birrell stepped up the pressure in the second set, which was on serve until Wozniacki took advantage of some untimely double faults by the Australian to pull ahead 4-2.

From there, Wozniacki



WTA MONTREAL RESULTS
SECOND ROUND: Marie Bouzkova (CZE) bt Caroline Garcia (FRA x5) 6-4, 4-6, 6-2; Sloane Stephens (USA) bt Victoria Azarenka (x16) by walkover; Jasmine Paolini (ITA) bt Madison Keys (USA x13) by walkover
FIRST ROUND: Karolina Muchova (CZE x14) bt Anastasia Potapova 7-6 (7/4), 6-2; Beatriz Haddad Maia (BRA x11) bt Magdalena Frech (POL) 6-4, 6-2; Leylah Fernandez (CAN) bt Peyton Stearns (USA) 6-3, 6-2; Danielle Collins (USA) bt Elina Svitolina (UKR) 6-2, 6-2; Yulia Putintseva (KAZ) bt Bernarda Pera (USA) 6-3, 6-4; Marketa Vondrousova (CZE x9) bt Mayar Sherif (EGY) 6-4, 6-2; Caroline Wozniacki (DEN) bt Kimberly Birrell (AUS) 6-2, 6-2; Anna Blinkova bt Zhang Shuai (CHN) 4-6, 6-2, 6-3; Daria Kasatkina (x10) bt Elise Mertens (BEL) 6-4, 6-2; Camila Giorgi (ITA) bt Bianca Andreescu (CAN) 6-3, 6-2; Alycia Parks (USA) bt Lauren Davis (USA) 7-5, 4-6, 6-2; Liudmila Samsonova (x15) bt Katerina Siniakova (CZE) 4-6, 6-2, 6-3; Zheng Qinwen (CHN) bt Marta Kostyuk (UKR) 6-2, 1-6, 6-3; Petra Martic (CRO) bt Cristina Bucsa (ESP) 6-0, 6-4

never looked back, ultimately sealing the win on her first match point when she sent a backhand to the open court.

Up next for Wozniacki will be a clash with ninth-seeded Czech Marketa Vondrousova, the Wimbledon champion, who eased past Mayar Sherif of Egypt 6-4, 6-2.

Wozniacki, citing her desire to start a family with her husband, former NBA player David Lee, retired from tennis after the 2020 Australian Open. She has since given birth to two children, Olivia and James.

The Dane is the latest Grand Slam champion to return to competitive tennis after becoming a mother, a list that includes Serena Williams, Kim Clijsters — who won three Grand Slams after starting a family — and Victoria Azarenka.

Wozniacki, the 2018 Australian Open champion, has also been given wild cards to compete in next week's Cincinnati Open and the August 28-September 10 US Open.

— Reuters

ATP MASTERS CANADA RESULTS

SECOND ROUND: Casper Ruud (NOR x3) bt Jiri Lehecka (CZE) 7-6 (8/6), 6-4
FIRST ROUND: Ben Shelton (USA) bt Bernabe Zapata Miralles (ESP) 7-6 (7/1), 6-4; Marcos Giron (USA) bt Emil Ruusuvuori (FIN) 7-6 (7/4), 7-6 (8/6); Sebastian Korda (USA) bt Tomás Etcheverry (ARG) 6-3, 6-2; Aleksandar Vukic (AUS) bt Borna Coric (CRO x14) 6-2, 6-3; Max Purcell (AUS) bt Felix Auger-Aliassime (CAN x10) 6-4, 6-4; Andy Murray (SCO) bt Lorenzo Sonego (ITA) 7-6 (7/3), 6-0; Mackenzie McDonald (USA) bt Aslan Karatsev 6-3, 6-4; Alexander Zverev (GER x13) bt Tallon Griekspoor (NED) 6-4, 7-6 (7/3); Ugo Humbert (FRA) bt Nicolas Jarry (CHI) 4-6, 6-3, 6-4; Gabriel Diallo (CAN) bt Daniel Evans (GBR) 7-6 (7/4), 7-5; Alex De Minaur (AUS) bt Cameron Norrie (GBR x11) 7-5, 6-4

Suryakumar keeps series alive against Windies

PROVIDENCE, Guyana: Suryakumar Yadav smashed 83 off 44 balls as India beat West Indies by seven wickets in the third T20 international in Guyana on Tuesday to keep the series alive.

After India lost T20 debutant Yashasvi Jaiswal and Shubman Gill cheaply in pursuit of 160, Suryakumar took charge in a dazzling innings comprising 10 fours and four sixes.

He eventually fell clipping an Alzarri Joseph full toss to deep backward square leg, but Tilak Varma finished unbeaten on 49 and captain Hardik Pandya hit the winning six with 13 balls to spare.

“It was really important to be myself in the powerplay. The team wanted me to bat as much as possible,” said Suryakumar.

“I practised these (scoops) strokes a lot. I have loved to do that. I just like to express myself.”

West Indies skipper Rovman Powell had earlier dragged his side to 159-5 with a quick-fire 40 not out after winning the toss in Providence and choosing to bat.

Brandon King made a run-a-ball 42 while fellow opener

Kyle Mayers (25) and Nicholas Pooran (20) also made decent contributions for the hosts.

Left-arm wrist spinner Kuldeep Yadav, recalled in place of Ravi Bishnoi, claimed 3-28 to lead the Indian bowling attack. Axar Patel and Mukesh Kumar picked up a wicket apiece.

“We were 10-15 runs short,” said Powell. “It was a pretty good wicket. The start we got (with the bat), it was something we asked for. We lost our way in the middle.”

India cut West Indies’ lead to 2-1 in the five-match series after they lost the opener by four runs followed by Sunday’s dramatic two-wicket defeat.

“We had to back ourselves. Two losses or two wins do not change things. We have a long-term plan and it was important we showed our character,” said Pandya.

West Indies are aiming to win their first series of two or more matches against India in any format since 2016.

India won the preceding two-Test series 1-0 before beating the West Indies 2-1 in the ODIs.

— AFP



Suryakumar Yadav of India hits 4 during the third T20I against West Indies at Guyana National Park in Georgetown, Guyana. — AFP

Sohar International backs OEF as diamond sponsor

MUSCAT: With the bank’s purpose of promoting the spirit of ‘winning’ and bringing positive socioeconomic change by promoting Oman as an international sporting destination, Sohar International sponsored the Oman Equestrian Federation (OEF) events in Dhofar as diamond sponsor.

The Oman Equestrian Federation organised a series of sports events as part of the khareef events for the year 2023. These events were held in cooperation with the Office of the Governor of Dhofar, Dhofar Municipality, and Dhofar Equestrian Committee.

Speaking about supporting Oman’s prospects as a sports destination, Mazin bin Mahmood al Raisi, Chief Marketing Officer at Sohar International, said, “At Sohar International we are committed to constantly engage with the communities we serve. These events, among other similar initiatives, offer good platforms to showcase Oman’s rich cultural heritage and diversity while contributing to the economic progress by attracting thousands of visitors from Oman and abroad and helping local businesses grow



in the process. We are proud to sponsor the OEF events, a testament to our strong belief in the transformative power of sports to inspire individuals and unite communities. We thank the organisers for their efforts and congratulate the winners in the racing.”

The OEF has strategically chosen to hold these events in the Dhofar Governorate, capitalising on its favourable monsoon season climate and suitability as a host for

such exciting activities. This year’s equestrian line-up saw a series of thrilling championships and competitions, featuring events like the ponies race, a challenging 100 km endurance race, a qualifying race, and the tent pegging championship.

Kahlan bin Said bin Mustahail al Maashani, Chairman of Dhofar Equestrian Committee said: “On behalf of the Oman Equestrian Federation, I am honoured to extend our heartfelt

gratitude to Sohar International for their unwavering support as the diamond sponsor of our prestigious event.

The bank’s commitment to promoting equestrian excellence in our nation not only enhances the quality of the event but also contributes significantly to the growth of equestrian sports in Oman. This will undoubtedly contribute to promoting Oman as an international sporting destination.”



Oman Air, Chelsea FC tie-up kicks off on Aug 13

MUSCAT: Oman Air’s groundbreaking partnership with Chelsea FC is kicking off on August 13, when the English Premier League (EPL) club will go head-to-head with Liverpool FC for their first match of the season.

Fans at the Stamford Bridge Stadium and those watching from home will be introduced to the beauty of Oman with a series of advertisements

highlighting some of the country’s most popular destinations. Oman Air’s eye-catching branding and members of the cabin crew will also be present around the pitch.

With over seven million people around the world

anticipated to watch the game, it’s a significant step for the airline as its first official event with the team since signing the deal last month.

As Chelsea’s official global airline partner, Oman Air will be engaged in a range of exciting promotional activities over the next three years, leveraging the club’s expansive global reach as one of the highest-ranking clubs in the EPL. Meanwhile, as part of its commitment to supporting Oman’s Vision 2040, the airline continues to harness opportunities to introduce Oman to new markets across the globe, highlighting its appeal as a premium tourist destination.

OHA releases U17 handball league programme

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 9

The Oman Handball Association (OHA) Competition Committee has officially released the comprehensive schedule, tournament structure, regulations, and prerequisites for the upcoming Under-17 Handball League for players born in 2006, 2007 and 2008. The league is set to take place during the sports season of 2023-24, promising an exciting showcase of emerging talent in handball.

This league will feature the participation of six dynamic

clubs: Nizwa, Seeb, Muscat, Saham, Ibri and Al Ittihad. The teams have been divided into two distinct groups to facilitate competitive matches and enhance the overall experience for both players and fans.

In Group A, Seeb, Muscat and Al Ittihad will compete. Group B, on the other hand, comprises the dedicated teams of Saham, Ibri and Nizwa.

The league is scheduled to kick off on August 25 at the Nizwa Sports Complex.

The opening game will see Nizwa and Saham go head-to-head.

The league will be in a round-

robin format within each group, with the top two teams from each group earning the advance to the second round.

The leader of Group A will engage in a thrilling match against the second-placed team of Group B.

Similarly, the victor of Group B will face the runner-up of Group A.

Additionally, the losers will compete for the third and fourth positions, while the winners will vie for the first and second positions.

The league points will be awarded as follows: the winning team will get two points, a draw

earns one point, and the losing team will not earn any points.

The Oman Handball Association has allocated a range of prizes and rewards for exceptional clubs securing top positions in the league. The championship title holder will be presented with a commemorative shield or trophy, a collection of 28 gold medals and a financial reward. The second-place team will receive 28 silver medals, a gift and a financial prize.

Likewise, the third-place achiever will be honoured with 28 bronze medals, a gift and a financial incentive.

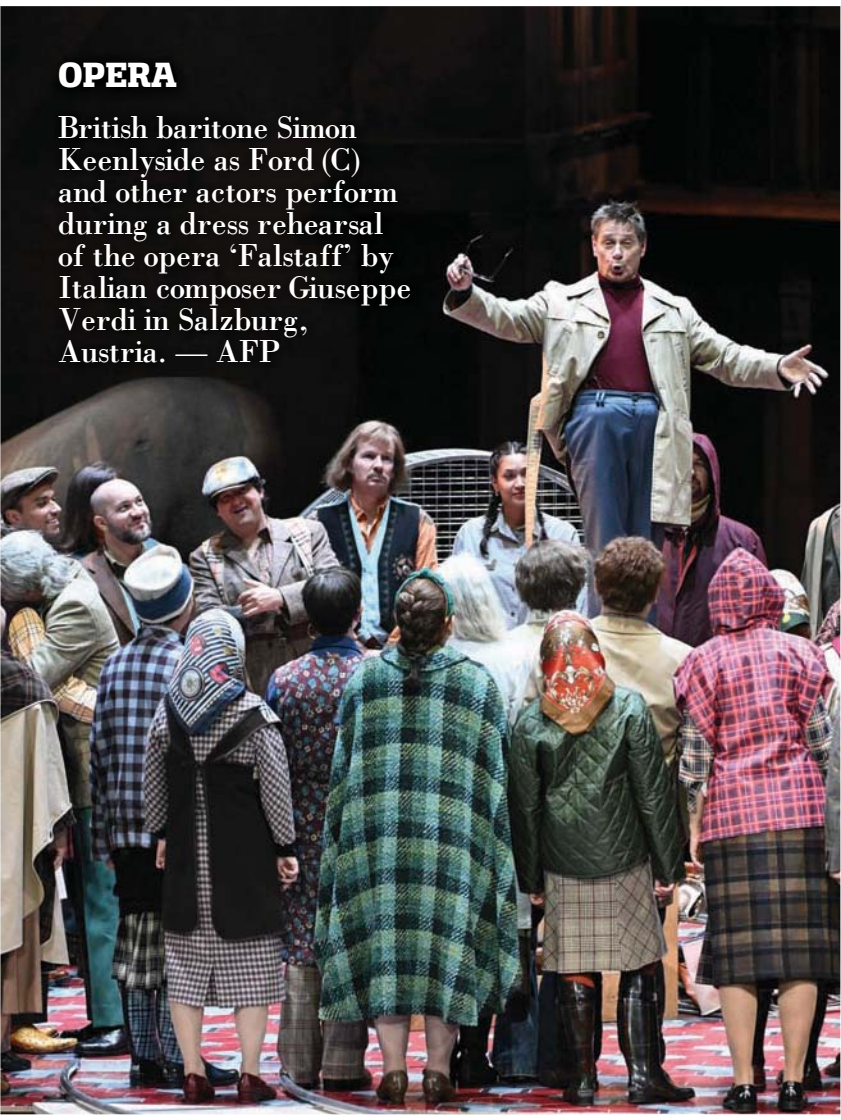




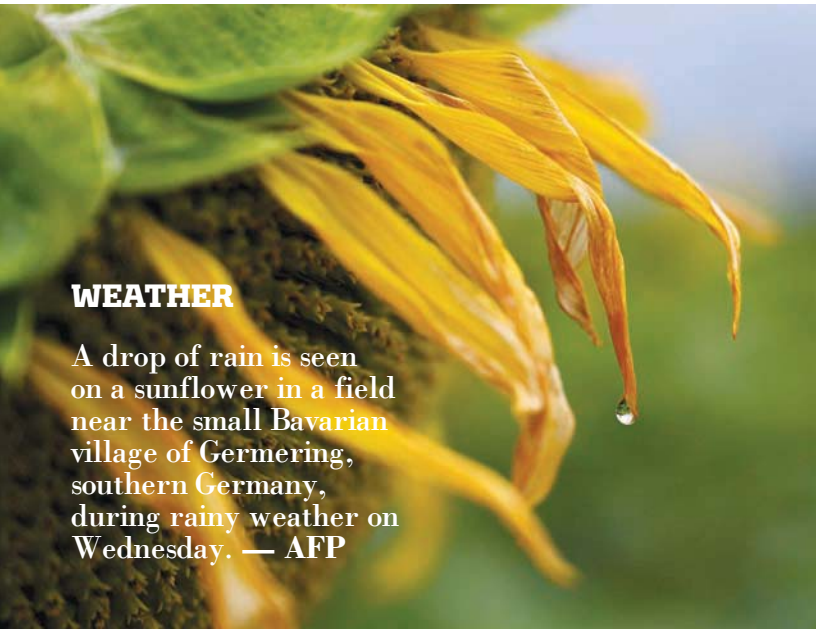
MUSIC
Members of Naya group, an all-female musical group, perform during Jerash Festival in Amman, Jordan. — REUTERS



FOOD
Afghan men eat grapes near a vineyard in Guzara district of Herat province. — AFP



OPERA
British baritone Simon Keenlyside as Ford (C) and other actors perform during a dress rehearsal of the opera 'Falstaff' by Italian composer Giuseppe Verdi in Salzburg, Austria. — AFP



WEATHER
A drop of rain is seen on a sunflower in a field near the small Bavarian village of Germering, southern Germany, during rainy weather on Wednesday. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT
A man waves a ribbon at a park for morning exercise in Shenyang, in China's northeastern Liaoning province. — AFP

art & life

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BY QASIM AL MAASHANI

Dubai renowned for its architectural marvels and opulent allure stands witness to a noteworthy upsurge in its summer tourism sector. As the first quarter of 2023 unfolds, a pronounced influx of visitors hailing from the Sultanate of Oman graces the streets of Dubai, culminating in Oman's ascendancy to the fifth rank among nations contributing significantly to the emirate's thriving tourist influx. This remarkable escalation of 40 per cent, in contrast to the analogous period in 2022, bears eloquent testimony to Dubai's undeniable magnetism, affirming an encouraging trajectory in Oman's tourism propensity towards Dubai, thereby augmenting the emirate's already robust tourism ecosystem.

Dubai's remarkable economic resilience takes centre stage as it orchestrates a resounding resurgence within its tourism domain during the initial trimester of 2023. An admirable reception of 4.67 million international visitors unfurls, indicative of a noteworthy 17 per cent augmentation vis-à-vis the commensurate period of the preceding year. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, of which Oman is an integral part, play an instrumental role in this revitalisation, collectively constituting 29 per cent of the cumulative visitor count. This substantiates, unequivocally, the pivotal standing of GCC nations as a cornerstone market for Dubai's burgeoning tourism industry.

Dubai's hospitality sector, an integral facet of its global recognition, perseveres in its illustrious trajectory. An auspicious average occupancy rate of 83 per cent resonates, while a conspicuous 26 per cent augmentation in capacity testifies to its resilient growth. Dubai's indisputable stature as an internationally acclaimed destination resonates convincingly, captivating discern-

ing travellers seeking a fusion of corporate engagements and leisurely pursuits. A strategic amalgamation of regional carriers and an eclectic spectrum of events further solidify Dubai's vantage as a quintessential global nexus, seamlessly interweaving economic dynamism and superlative tourism.

Dubai, perennially an enticing prospect for elite travellers, unfurls its hos-



pitality in a symphony tailored to satiate both the corporate and leisure sensibilities. The resplendent Raffles the Palm Dubai extends an exclusive overture, encapsulating the essence of summer through its "Raffles Summer Splendour" initiative. A sublime beach-front sojourn, accentuated by a generous 30 per cent concession on stays until September 30, coupled with a tantalising 25 per cent reduction on culinary experiences, beckons with unrestrained allure. From comprehensive wellness amenities to thoughtfully curated children's activities, Raffles ensures a holistic reprieve, meticulous-

ly calibrated to the diverse proclivities of its esteemed clientele.

The Waldorf Astoria Dubai Palm Jumeirah, a byword for opulence, extends an unfeigned sanctuary of unparalleled luxury. A paragon of sophistication, it presents expansive suites affording panoramic ocean vistas, complemented by rejuvenating spa interventions. Bespoke packages catering to familial and romantic inclina-



tions, in tandem with a repertoire of dining options including the distinguished Heritage Afternoon Tea and the alluring Southeast Asian gastronomic tapestry of LAO, promulgate a promise of a memorable retreat. The serene precincts of the Waldorf Astoria Spa, fortified by its coveted Elixir Clinic offerings, encapsulate holistic well-being.

The much-anticipated debut of Atlantis The Royal Dubai on Palm Jumeirah resounds with architectural grandeur and lavish interiors. The resort's inventory of 795 opulent rooms and suites, some adorned with private infinity pools, presents an ethos of exclusivity and indulgence. The resort's culinary landscape thrives, featuring celebrity chef-driven establishments such as Dinner by Heston Blumenthal



and Jaleo by José Andrés. A lavish assemblage of over 90 swimming pools, crowned by a rooftop infinity pool offering panoramic Gulf vistas, bestows an irresistible allure upon this epochal destination.

Dubai's vibrant entertainment continuum continues to captivate, proffering an array of attractions that beckon both business and leisure travellers to partake in curated experiences. Cucina, The Italian Kitchen, nestled within the Marriott Resort Palm Jumeirah, epitomises authentic Italian gastronomy. The restaurant's welcoming ambience sets the stage for an unforgettable culi-

nary odyssey, a symphony of handcrafted pasta, artisanal pizza, and an array of gelato flavours that titillate the discerning palate.

Madame Tussauds Dubai, ensconced on Bluewaters, captivates visitors with its uncannily lifelike wax figures, commemorating iconic moments of celebrated luminaries. Augmented Reality Darts and Beer Pong augment the experience, infusing



an interactive layer of engagement for patrons of all age cohorts. The perennial introduction of new figures ensures a perpetually immersive and engaging entertainment milieu that beguiles both the visiting and local contingents.

Boom Battle Bar, nestled within the DoubleTree by Hilton Dubai - Jumeirah Beach, caters to aficionados of adrenaline-laden pursuits, delivering an augmentative gamut of gaming experiences. Augmented Reality Darts, Augmented Reality Axe Throwing, and Beer Pong coalesce into an amalgamation of amusement, accompanied by bespoke cocktails, craft hops, and delectable street-style gastronomic offerings. Business travellers find a nuanced respite for relaxation and unwinding, a seamless culmination to a

day marked by professional pursuits.

Dubai's allure persists even amidst the ardent embrace of the desert climate, unravelling a plethora of winter-themed attractions that afford a distinctive refuge to both corporate travellers and leisure aficionados. Ski Dubai, ensconced within the iconic Mall of the Emirates, heralds a captivating winter landscape that whisks visitors into an ethereal snowy haven. Penguin encounters, exhilarating zip-lining, and snow-focused activities collectively forge an unparalleled sanctuary, offering solace to business travellers seeking respite from their arduous meetings and professional commitments.

RollDXB, situated within Mina Rashid, evokes a sense of nostalgic reverie, encapsulating a vibrant retro ambience that rekindles the joys of roller skating. Skate jams, roller hockey rendezvous, and professional skating tutorials form an integral facet of this establishment, fashioning an ideal recess for both business and leisure voyagers to decompress and partake in leisurely pursuits.

La Perle by Dragone, a veritable masterpiece situated in Al Habtoor City, unravels a tapestry of awe-inspiring theatrical acrobatics. Breathtaking aerial displays and immersive 3D projections unite to create an evocative visual panorama that celebrates Dubai's cultural heterogeneity.

In summation, Dubai's summer chronicle unravels as an exquisite symphony, inviting travellers to partake in a cornucopia of curated encounters. Oman's burgeoning contribution, coupled with Dubai's unwavering hospitality and the beguiling allure of its luxury offerings, harmoniously confluence to envelop visitors within an unparalleled narrative of captivating experiences. As Dubai perpetuates its narrative of opulence and entertainment, it resolutely endures as an abiding sanctuary for the discerning sojourner, promising an indelible imprint upon every visitation.



INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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OCEAN DEEP

SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

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Pioneering
documentarian
protects hip hop's
memory box

IN THE BASEMENT of a suburban home on Long Island lives thousands of tapes of footage documenting the origins of hip hop, the dominant music genre of our time.

Brooklyn native Ralph McDaniels was among the first figures to film the rap scene in New York, the city that gave birth to the genre, documenting its evolution on his show "Video Music Box," where soon-

to-be legends including Nas and Jay-Z made their early appearances.

"We were on this low-power TV station that everybody had, there was only 10 of them," McDaniels said of his show's early days in New York. "We were the last one — channel 31... Kids got out (of school) at 3:00 pm, they ran home and sat down and watched whatever the latest thing was — whatever was new, I played it."

"Diddy, Jay-Z, all these guys would come to me and be like, can you get it on today?" McDaniels also directed hundreds of music videos, including "C.R.E.A.M." from the Wu-Tang Clan and "It Ain't Hard to Tell" from Nas.

"The music video became super important for hip hop artists because very often, we didn't get radio airplay, especially in the '80s," McDaniels said. "It was late night mix shows, you only heard it there."

"When I came on in '83, people saw LL Cool J" speak on-camera for the first time, he explained — Video Music Box was the first to air an interview with the rapper, who was one of the earliest to achieve commercial success.

"MTV wasn't playing any Black artist at that particular time, other than like, Michael Jackson," he said. "Michael Jackson was cool, but he ain't the hood. He's not who represents everybody."

"But Run-DMC and LL Cool J, this is what New York looked like."

In his basement studio McDaniels, scrolls through footage of LL as well as DJ Grandmaster Flash, donning dark shades and a glittering, disco-esque outfit in 1985.

"We had Ralph McDaniels, that's the

only thing we had," Jay-Z summed up in the Nas-produced documentary "You're Watching Video Music Box," which came out on Showtime in 2021.

- 'TELLS THE CULTURE' -

McDaniels' also has some of the earliest footage of Missy Elliott, as well as Mary J. Blige, filmed at the moment when so many teen girls wanted to be just like her.

His dream?

"Forty years from now, 100 years from now, this stuff will be in some archives somewhere that somebody can go in and look at and say, 'Tell me about Mary J. Blige,' McDaniels said. 'And you'll be able to go in and look at Mary J. Blige in her time — and it was archived by the people that were there.'"

Today McDaniels' official title is Hip Hop Coordinator at the Queens Public Library, and the microphone box he used on his show is in the Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture.

He's also been working since 2017 to digitise some 20,000 hours of footage contained in his mammoth personal archive.

"We have to treat it like it's important," he said of the images. "It is important, because this is what is telling the story of our culture, and you can't just throw it away."

He noted that a lot of soul music archives, for example, have been sacrificed to time: "As a teenager when I first got into the business, I realised that a lot of these things were lost. And I said, 'That can't happen to our stuff', at least the stuff that I shoot."

He's been a regular on 2023's event circuit that's celebrating half-a-century of hip hop throughout the city.

McDaniels laughs that by the time hip-hop's 51st birthday rolls around, "corporate will go away," but that it's still important to mark the genre's milestone anniversary and acknowledge the mammoth influence it's had.

"To be celebrating 50 years is amazing, because there was no value on this when we first started," he said.

"Nobody was interested in hiring a hip hop DJ, or getting an emcee to get on the mic, or getting some breakdancers to come out and perform on a stage or using graffiti on a library card like we did today," he added, referring to a special commemorative design that recently debuted on library cards in the New York borough of Queens.

"We're going to make sure that this is available to everybody," he said of his footage. "And it will play its role in libraries, museums and archives around the world."

"This tells the culture." — **AFP**

THE CHANGING
WORLD OF MEN



Shaddad al Musalmy

A blessing
in disguise

JUST RECENTLY, A DOUBLE trouble hit the woman of my house on a fine sunny Friday as she was driving from home to the nearby mall with the children.

While on the way, she was given a nasty surprise when she encountered a double scare when a lizard suddenly popped on her windscreen while pulling over for her overheating vehicle.

As a slightly new driver's licence holder, she was full of enthusiasm for her newfound achievement. She was driving her children around and the journey was smooth until the car suddenly broke down.

Smoke started to come, and she panicked. The car stopped and refused to move another drop of petrol.

Our seven-year-old boy, with all his instincts, tried to tackle her and balance the situation until I arrived on the spot. Upon reaching there, further horror struck her.

Unexpectedly, a shiny lizard showed up on her windscreen. It glimpsed at her, and she became hysterical. Her hands froze, and a chill ran down her frame.

The lizard, though well-mannered, kept looking at her with curiosity as its thick body slithered on the windscreen.

On seeing the lizard, her senses shook up, and she opened the door and rushed out of the car running. I became confused as I did not know whether to tackle the overheating car first or the lizard.

The intense heat from the sun added to her adrenaline rush. Droplets of sweat coupled with tears slipped down her face.

It was an experience of its own. Her throat dried, her blood chilled and her heart pumped extra sounds. The question lingered in my mind. 'How come a small lizard can come and threaten her like that?' I had no answer.

As a man, I maintained my peace and composure. I hugged her, put her in my arms and comforted her. I was patient and bore all her demands of those traumatic feelings. I patted her head and pretended to chase out the enemy though it had escaped long back.

It was hot and a passer-by offered to help us. Kind enough, we were offered his car and we drove back home. She gradually paced back to normalcy but she vowed never ever to drive the same car again.

I was left with no option but rather to incur huge investment in another car. She was happy she got a new car and she forgot about the lizard.

For me, the whole experience was 'a big damage to my bank account' while for her it was 'a blessing in disguise'.

CROWDFUNDING

Japan's sec-
ond-oldest
museum
seeks funds
to pay bills

JAPAN'S SECOND-OLDEST museum has raised \$3.4 million through crowdfunding after reportedly being denied additional financial support to cover soaring utility bills to preserve its collection of animal and plant specimens.

More than 30,000 people have donated a total of 480 million yen to the National Museum of Nature and Science in Tokyo, easily surpassing the 100-million-yen target, campaign platform READYFOR said on Wednesday.

The head of the 146-year-old museum, Kenichi Shinoda, said in a video announcing the crowdfunding on Monday that they wanted to save the museum's collections, which he called "gifts from the past



to the future".

He said that energy bills to keep some of its five million artefacts — ranging from dinosaur bones to stuffed bears — at constant temperatures and humidity levels were expected to almost double this fiscal year to more than \$2.6 million. The cash-strapped Japanese government turned down the museum's request for more funding, and is even reducing its subsi-

dies, according to media reports.

The museum in central Tokyo, which features a model of a blue whale outside, has previously turned to crowdfunding for three smaller projects, but the 100-million-yen goal was "the highest ever" for the institution, Shinoda said. They have prepared unique gifts for donors in return, such as acrylic resin plant specimens, a museum tour by the president and a study

session that allows participants to touch ancient human bones. Shinoda said in the video that some people had advised him to lower the target, but it was reached in a matter of hours.

"Researchers and staff are touched to have received a great deal of support," the museum said on the campaign website. The crowdfunding continues until November 5. — **AFP**



Private consortium wins contract to manage Port of Shinas

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, AUG 9

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information technology has signed a framework agreement with QSS Maritime, representing a consortium of investors, for the development, management and operation of the Port of Shinas on the Sultanate of Oman's Al Batinah North coast.

The agreement was co-signed by Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology, and Abdulbaqi bin Ahmed al Kindi, CEO of QSS Maritime.

The agreement will be operationalised in three phases: The first involves the creation of a handover and takeover committee of the port's operations; this will be followed by the operation of the port in November this year.

Also during this phase, the company will prepare a commercial and marketing plan and the new master plan for the port within a period of eight months.

In the final phase, the two sides will enter into negotiations



leading to the signing a long-term agreement to develop, manage and operate the port for a period of thirty years.

The Ministry described the agreement as fully aligned with its strategy "to attract foreign investments, foster international partnerships, and collaborate with local entities specialised in

the management and operation of ports and terminals."

QSS Maritime is a consortium of local and international companies comprising Quartet Solutions Company, Dunes Petroleum Company and SS Maritime Company.

Indian-based SS Maritime is the foreign partner in the grouping.

Established in 1990, the Indian partner currently operates and manages around seven terminals in various Indian ports.

Earlier in July, the Omani Ministry opened local and global bids for the construction of a multipurpose port in Masirah as part of a development strategy to boost investments in the country.

22 hectares allotted for new aquaculture project in Shinas

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, AUG 9

Bahwah Services and Trading LLC and Muscat Investment House, two prominent Omani companies, have joined forces with Singapore-based Blue Aqua International to embark on a groundbreaking aquaculture project.

The collaborative effort aims to construct a state-of-the-art facility spanning 22 hectares of land in Shinas, Oman.

The project is projected to yield substantial quantities of white shrimp, Rainbow Trout and aquafeed, contributing significantly to Oman's aquaculture production.

According to Blue Aqua's company overview for 2023-2024, the aquaculture project in Shinas holds immense promise, with an estimated production capacity of 1.32 million metric tonnes (MT) of white shrimp, 3,000 MT of Rainbow Trout, and 30,000 MT of aquafeed.

This ambitious venture will not only enhance Oman's self-sufficiency in seafood production but also position the nation as a

major player in the aquaculture sector.

The aquaculture project will leverage advanced technologies and sustainable practices to maximise productivity while minimising environmental impact.

The implementation of efficient water management systems, waste treatment protocols, and biosecurity measures will ensure the project meets the highest global standards for sustainability and quality assurance.

The establishment of the aquaculture project in Shinas is expected to generate employment opportunities and drive economic growth in the region.

The project will create jobs across various sectors, including farming, processing, logistics, and research and development. Moreover, the initiative will attract investments and foster collaboration within the aquaculture value chain, benefitting local communities and contributing to the overall socio-economic development of Oman.

TURN TO P16

Oman crude price rises by \$1.71/barrel



MUSCAT: The official price of Oman oil yesterday, for delivery next October, reached \$87.86 cents per barrel. The price of Oman oil rose by \$1. 71 cents, compared to Tuesday's price, which was \$86.15 cents per barrel

It should be noted that the monthly average price of Omani crude oil for delivery in August amounted to \$74. 78 cents per barrel, down by 16 cents compared to the price for delivery in July.

Meanwhile, oil hit new peaks on Wednesday with Brent crude touching the highest since April as tighter supply owing to Saudi and Russian output cuts offset concerns over slow demand from China and a report showing rising US crude inventories.

Top exporter Saudi Arabia last week extended its voluntary production cut of 1 million barrels per day for another month to include September, and Russia said it would cut oil exports by 300,000 bpd in September.

Brent crude was 54 cents, or 0.6%, higher at \$86.83 by 11:10 GMT having touched \$87.09, the highest since April 13. US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude gained 51 cents, or 0.6%, to \$83.62. — Reuters

Enhanced connectivity drives container throughput at Port of Salalah

Robust performance: Logistics gateway emerges as a thriving hub for regional business growth and sustainability

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 9

Major improvements in connectivity have spurred an uptrend in gateway container volumes handled at Port of Salalah in recent years, according to a top official of the port.

Keld M Christensen, Port of Salalah CEO, said in an interview to the *Observer* that significant improvements across a number of indicators have continued to drive the logistics hub's strong performance in recent years.

Citing a key study by QBIS Consultancy, Christensen pointed out that the Port of Salalah increased its connectivity, measured in Liner Shipping Connectivity Index (LSCI), from index value 22 to 55 over the 2006 – 2020 timeframe, which corresponds to an improvement of 151 per cent.

Furthermore, the improved connectivity contributed to increased containerised exports and imports of around 51.3 per cent (3.9 per cent per year) over the same timeframe. "When assessing the socioeconomic contribution of the Port of Salalah and its contribution to the manufacturing strategies of the Omani government, it is the



From 2015 to 2022, export container throughput grew 70 per cent, while import container throughput grew 88 per cent, which means that the Port of Salalah has had stronger growth in export and import containers than the overall container throughput in Oman during this period.

KELD M CHRISTENSEN
CEO, Port of Salalah

throughput of full export and import containers that is essential.

From 2015 to 2022, export container throughput grew 70 per cent, while import container throughput grew 88 per cent, which means that the Port of Salalah has had stronger growth in export and import containers than the overall container throughput in Oman during this period," the CEO added.



Significantly, the 70 per cent growth in export container throughput from 2015 to 2020 in the Port of Salalah corresponds to an annual growth of 11.6 per cent, Keld pointed out.

"To achieve Target B of the Omani strategy "Manufacturing for Wellbeing" of a manufactured export of RO 13.4 billion (\$35 billion) in 2040, the required annual growth rate in manufactured export is around 9 per cent," he explained.

Keld further added that the General Cargo Terminal (GCT) of Salalah handled around 18Mt of cargo in 2022, up from around 1.2Mt in 2000.

This corresponds to a year-to-year growth of around 15% in the period 2000-2022. Notably, this stellar growth is not limited to container and general

cargo throughput alone, says Keld.

On the contrary, the Port of Salalah has undergone significant expansion and modernisation in recent years in line with the developments in the port industry globally.

The upcoming enhancements encompass amongst others, gate and equipment automation, equipment upgrade, digitisation, sustainability, training and development and customer satisfaction, he stated.

Further, with the goal of supporting the Omani government's ambitions to diversify the national economy, the Port of Salalah — as one of the largest ports in the region — is set to play a major role in contributing to this goal.

"Our strategy is to become a supply chain hub for the African,

Indian Sub-Continent and Red Sea regions," said the CEO.

Another key initiative currently under implementation is dubbed the 'Salalah Value Proposition', which encompasses all the supply chain ecosystem stakeholders in Salalah, including Salalah Free Zone and Salalah Airport.

"We started our project in Q4 2021 and benchmarked us with the best in class and identified areas of improvements that is required to attract more investments into Oman.

While this is work in progress, we are also jointly working closely with the ecosystem partners on the business growth pipeline and are making positive progress. We are encouraged by progress and some of our success stories from these initiatives will be announced soon." TURN TO PAGE 16

Modern Exchange starts offering USD remittance for NRIs to facilitate FCNR deposits in India

MUSCAT: Modern Exchange, a leading financial services provider, announced the extension of its remittance services with the inclusion of USD remittance to India, specifically catering to FCNR deposits.

This new offering is set to further enhance the convenience and flexibility for customers, enabling them to seamlessly transfer funds to India while also exploring investment opportunities with FCNR deposits.

The service comes with the lowest charges and best exchange rate which makes it more attractive for the NRI's in Oman. Modern Exchange has always been at the forefront of providing efficient and reliable remittance solutions to its customers.

In line with this commitment, the addition of USD remittance for FCNR deposits presents a unique opportunity for Indian expatriates seeking better investment options.

In addition to the introduction of USD remittance for FCNR deposits, Modern Exchange continues to extend its remittance services for individuals, corporates, and for educational purposes to various destinations worldwide. Customers can now enjoy swift and hassle-free remittances to the United States, United Arab Emirates, Australia, United Kingdom, and various European countries.

What sets Modern Exchange apart is its dedication to harnessing technology to enhance customer experience. The company's state-



of-the-art Mobile App serves as a user-friendly platform through which customers can access and utilise all the remittance services offered by Modern Exchange.

The Mobile App enables customers to initiate remittances, track their transactions, and stay updated with the latest exchange rates, important notifications

making money transfers more accessible than ever before.

Currently, Modern Exchange boasts a strong presence with 40 branches located across Oman.

To further cater to the increasing demands of its clientele, the company plans to expand its branch network in the coming months, subject to the approval of the Central Bank of Oman.

These new branches will serve as additional touchpoints for customers to avail themselves of the comprehensive suite of financial services provided by Modern Exchange. Lijo John, General Manager of Modern Exchange, expressed his enthusiasm about the recent developments, stating, "We are thrilled to extend our remittance

services to include USD remittance for FCNR deposits to India.

"This expansion aligns with our commitment to offer innovative and customer-centric solutions. With the convenience of our Mobile App and our vast branch network, we continue to build a strong foundation that will allow us to serve our customers better and facilitate their financial needs."

Modern Exchange is a leading financial services provider, offering a wide range of remittance solutions to customers worldwide. With a commitment to excellence, a technology-driven approach, and a widespread branch network, Modern Exchange aims to redefine the remittance experience for its customers.

Alpha Electric & Contracting bolsters operations with new Isuzu D-Max pick-up trucks

SALALAH: Well-known Omani electrical contracting firm Alpha Electric & Contracting Co recently took delivery of a sizable fleet of Isuzu's D-Max pick-up trucks, universally renowned for their durability, dependability and performance.

In all, 19 vehicles were handed over to the Salalah-based contracting firm at an informal ceremony hosted by the Dhofar branch of OTE Group, exclusive distributors of Isuzu trucks in the Sultanate of Oman.

Eng Fawzi al Shanfari, Managing Director of Alpha Electric & Contracting Co, received the vehicles from a senior representative of Isuzu – OTE Group at the event.

The D-Max pick-up truck from Isuzu boasts unparalleled toughness, brute strength and stamina, making it the ideal choice for businesses seeking a combination of power and efficiency.

Reengineered from the ground up, the all-new 2023 edition of the D-Max is muscular in design,



stylish and strong. With new Bi-LED headlamps, sporty alloys and enhanced aerodynamics, the latest generation of this globally popular pick-up truck offers practicality and purpose both on and off-road.

The D-Max features a robust, yet refined, 3.0L diesel engine, with a performance that reinforces Isuzu's reputation for durability. Highly regarded for its 4x4 performance, the D-Max comes with a substantially enhanced interior and driving

dynamics while staying true to its core attributes as a popular working vehicle.

Scores of businesses in Oman continue to benefit from the immense value that the Isuzu D-Max represents to their operational success. Supplementing this value is the superior after-sales service support provided by exclusive distributors OTE Group, which oversees a nationwide service network. For more details on Isuzu, please call 800-50004.

Get a chance to win with Kia's exclusive referral club programme

MUSCAT: Kia fans can now invite their near and dear ones to benefit with a brand new Kia and get a chance to win RO 35 worth shopping vouchers. (Conditions apply). To make the most of this rewarding programme, customers are encouraged to visit the Referral Club section on Kia Oman website and register their details.

The exclusive referral club is designed to encourage Kia customers to invite their friends and family to own a Kia and experience a rewarding ownership period with Kia.

With the referral club programme, customers can win shopping vouchers worth RO 35 for every successful referral.

In Oman, Kia range includes Rio, Pegas, Cerato, Sonet, Seltos, K5, Telluride, K8, Niro, Carnival, Carens, Sportage and Sorento.

According to a spokesperson from Reliable International Automotive, the distributors for Kia in Oman, "This unique initiative aims to reward Kia customers who refer their near



THE EXCLUSIVE REFERRAL CLUB IS DESIGNED TO ENCOURAGE KIA CUSTOMERS TO INVITE THEIR FRIENDS AND FAMILY TO OWN A KIA AND EXPERIENCE A REWARDING OWNERSHIP PERIOD WITH KIA.

and dear ones for owning a brand new Kia. It is our way of rewarding their loyalty and appreciating their efforts."

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman, provides a rewarding ownership

experience for customers.

Excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities easily ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way. No wonder then that Reliable International Automotive has been ranked amongst the top Kia distributors worldwide and has been honoured with prestigious accolades including the 'Good Partnership' award, 'Family Like Care' Service' award, and 'Kia 'Distributor of Distinction' award.

SEZAD announces opening of 3D printed coffee shop

MUSCAT: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) proudly announces the grand opening of the first-ever commercial coffee shop constructed using state-of-the-art 3D printing technology.

Spanning an impressive 101 square metres, this unique establishment has been entrusted to an ambitious Omani entrepreneur, marking a significant milestone in the region's pursuit of innovation and economic empowerment.

Sultan bin Said al Defaie, a distinguished Small and Medium Enterprises Specialist in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, expressed his enthusiasm by stating, "We are wholeheartedly committed to supporting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and fostering their growth within the thriving ecosystem of the

Special Economic Zone at Duqm.

"By collaborating with SMEs, we reaffirm our unwavering dedication to their success.

"We have carefully selected an Omani entrepreneur to manage this coffee shop, further reinforcing our initiatives to bolster In-Country Value (ICV), promote an entrepreneurial culture, and drive social and commercial development in SEZAD."

As part of SEZAD's overarching strategy to foster seamless integration and foster effective partnerships between public and private sector entities, comprehensive support and facilities are offered to SMEs.

This includes the provision of modern and innovative marketing outlets within SEZAD, enabling these enterprises to expand,



flourish and connect with diverse segments of society," added Al Defaie.

Ali bin Nasser al Qassabi, the esteemed operator of Cafia Café, proudly announces the opening

of their second branch, housed within the groundbreaking 3D café building in Duqm.

This architectural marvel holds the distinction of being the first licensed 3D building in the

Sultanate of Oman.

Situated in the heart of the region's vibrant tourist area, Cafia Café has meticulously focused on two key elements to create an exceptional experience for its patrons.

Firstly, unparalleled attention has been given to the quality of the coffee and beverages on offer, ensuring a delightful sensory journey for coffee enthusiasts.

Secondly, the café's interior design exhibits a unique character, making it an ideal destination for both local residents and visitors. The result has been an overwhelmingly positive response and high customer satisfaction.

At the core of Cafia Café is the commitment to providing specialised coffee and tea options.

The café's menu boasts a diverse range of cold and hot beverages,

meticulously prepared by skilled specialists.

In addition, a delectable assortment of sweets, cakes and croissants is available, sourced from a specialised instant coffee production unit to cater to the varied tastes of customers.

Furthermore, Cafia Café has joined forces with several esteemed Omani roasters, forming a collaborative environment that can serve as a role model for aspiring Omani entrepreneurs.

"Cafia Café boasts a strategically unique location, situated in close proximity to the Duqm Front Residential Complex, the road leading to Duqm Beach — an important tourist destination in the region — and a selection of hotels and residential complexes," Al Qassabi highlighted.

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ANNOUNCEMENT

Announcement of Capital Reduction

In accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company **Galaxi oilfield supplies & technical service LLC**, which is registered with the Commercial Registration No **1023962**, hereby announces that is going to reduce its capital from Omani Rials **150,000.000** to **58,000.000**. Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretariat of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within 30 days from the date hereof.

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HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

UN HAILS OMAN'S SUPPORT FOR PEACE IN YEMEN

NEW YORK: Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has commended the role of the Sultanate in supporting international efforts to establish security and peace in Yemen.

MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan, Imam bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Dr. Saad bin Hamoud bin Ahmed al-Haili, Chairman of the Supreme Court Sayyid Khalifa bin Saad bin Khalifa al-Rasuli, and Chairman of Administrative Judiciary Court Sheikh Al-Mukhtar bin Abdullah bin Issa al-Harthy, took the oath of office at Al-Barkah Palace on Thursday. SEE ALSO P2.

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

SAMUEL BUTLER

MUSCAT: The frequent orders and fervent appeals by the authorities to follow social distancing guidelines are failing on deaf ears.

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

MUSCAT: To mark the 50th anniversary of the Omani Renaissance and in commemoration of the centenary of its founder late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) issued a sixth series of new RO 50 banknotes, which will begin circulation this month.

CBO will also issue new banknotes for all other denominations during the last quarter of 2020. TURN TO P4

SOME PEOPLE ARE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

MUSCAT: In these critical moments of uncertainty with both physical and mental affairs, we should discipline ourselves, and it more than enough times that they pave the way for the spread of the infection. Even if we do not have the authority to lay charges on the offenders, at least we can spare them away," he told The Observer.

TURN TO P4



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A safety net that helps laid-off workers



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for the CBO and OCCI

The global economic recession, compounded by the recent coronavirus pandemic, had led to major layoffs impacting both the governmental and private sector companies, as well as institutions in the region.

The Sultanate of Oman was not immune to these impacts, with many Omani employees in private organisations also losing their jobs as the recession took its toll. Some of them are still waiting to find work commensurate with their capabilities and experience.

A job security system set in place in the Sultanate of Oman helps mitigate the socioeconomic conditions of such individuals. Omani workers whose services were terminated for reasons beyond their control get benefits

at the rate of 60 per cent of the average wage during the 24 months preceding their termination.

The compensation is not less than the minimum pension stipulated in the Social Insurance Law. With the issuance of the Social Protection Law, benefits accruing to laid-off workers will undoubtedly improve once it is implemented.

According to official data, 15,182 insured persons received job security payouts as of end-May. The social protection fund aims to continue extending job security payments to citizens whose services are terminated by their private sector employers.

The economic and health crises sparked by the pandemic and recession across the world have prompted many countries, including the Sultanate of Oman, to enact legislation and take new measures aimed at mitigating their effects on local societies.

Job security schemes provide a degree of protection to those who are subject to compulsory and voluntary layoffs. It reduces the psychological and social impacts on people and societies. It is implied that these benefits to an individual cease once they rejoin the workforce in order to allow other jobless individuals to benefit from this safety net.

185,000 waste bins in Oman to be equipped with AI sensors

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUG 9

Two Omani tech start-ups have joined hands with Oman Environment Services Holding Company (be'ah), which oversees the management of the country's solid waste sector, to support the deployment of Artificial Intelligence (AI) technologies covering tens of thousands of waste containers distributed across key parts of the Sultanate of Oman.

Well-known Omani innovative technology solutions provider Rihal has partnered with Onsor Technologies, a specialist in technologies based on Internet of Things (IoT) and AI, to help be'ah optimise waste collection services.

"Integrating environmental solutions with artificial intelligence technologies improves operational efficiency and provides effective monitoring and protection of the environment. At Rihal, we are proud of this partnership with Onsor Technologies and Oman Environmental Services Holding Co SAOC (be'ah)," said Rihal in a recent post.

As many as 185,000 waste containers are proposed to be upgraded into 'smart bins' by fitting them with AI sensors

According to Rihal, the initiative will enable waste collection staff to cover a larger area in record time, notably by harnessing accurate data from the AI-powered scheme.



BY REDUCING THE NUMBER OF WASTE COLLECTION TRIPS THROUGH THE DEPLOYMENT OF ROUTE OPTIMIZATION TECHNIQUES, SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS WILL ACCRUE BOTH IN FUEL CONSUMPTION AND CO2 EMISSIONS, IT WAS POINTED OUT.

This improvement in waste collection will not only reduce operational costs, but also result in fuel savings. The resultant benefits to environmental health and local communities are significant as well, the company noted.

Early this year, state-owned be'ah, part of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), announced its intention to leverage AI and (IoT), among other smart technology solutions, to optimise the waste collection operations of its large portfolio of service providers.

The goal, it said, was to reduce the solid waste sector's overall carbon footprint and support its sustainability objectives.

be'ah's service providers currently operate collectively a 1,200-strong fleet of waste collection trucks, which rack up a sizable fuel bill as well as contribute

to greenhouse gas emissions.

By reducing the number of waste collection trips through the deployment of route optimisation techniques, significant savings will accrue both in fuel consumption and CO2 emissions, it was pointed out.

By equipping the bins with sensors, the service provider can be notified that a particular is almost full and needs to be emptied — a technological innovation that can help reduce the frequency of collection trips and thereby save fuel, officials stressed.

Enhanced connectivity drives container throughput at Port of Salalah

FROM PAGE 13

A rising star in the port industry globally, Port of Salalah owes its success to a team of forward-thinking individuals who embody a problem-solving and continuous improvement mindset.

Partnering with APM Terminals, a leading global port operator, has proven instrumental, allowing for best practice sharing and benefiting from the expertise of renowned

global professionals utilising a standardised Way of Working approach.

With an eye on the future, Salalah Port remains committed to sustaining and advancing its success, investing in comprehensive training programmes and hands-on experience for its workforce, he stressed.

"We are recognised as the second most efficient port in the world by a study by the World Bank and IHS Markit for the years 2021

and 2022, accordingly one of the most efficient ports in the world situated in a very strategic location.

"Our position will help improve the supply chain competitiveness of your product and services, including cost reduction opportunities by a significant margin and ensure speed to market to and from the world's fast growing consumer market in the world," the CEO added in conclusion.

Oman chairs GCC Industrial Development Committee meeting

MUSCAT: The ninth meeting of the GCC Industrial Development Committee was held yesterday, in the presence of representatives of the GCC States and the GCC Secretariat-General. The Sultanate of Oman chaired the meeting.

The two-day meeting discussed a number of topics, including the completion of the revision of the GCC Uniform Industrial Regulation Act and the discussion of lists of goods subject to collective protection.

Member states' experiences



in the field of future factories were also discussed and the establishment of an electronic information platform on Gulf industrial projects was discussed.

The Industrial Development Committee promotes Gulf industries and products in order to support the Gulf economy and coordinate industrial activity among them, formulate policies and propose means to lead to the industrial transformation of member states on a complementary basis.

22 hectares allotted for new aquaculture project in Shinas



FROM PAGE 13

The partnership between Bahwah Services, Muscat Investment House, and Blue Aqua International represents a significant milestone in Oman's aquaculture industry.

By harnessing the expertise and resources of these companies, the aquaculture project in Shinas is poised to revolutionise the aquaculture sector in the country and establish Oman as a regional leader in sustainable seafood production.

The Shinas project marks the most recent endeavour undertaken by the three companies. Bahwah Services and Muscat Investment House have

announced their intention to invest in Blue Aqua's proposed recirculating aquaculture system (RAS) trout farm in Singapore, as per a recently signed agreement.

This investment aims to expedite the construction process of the farm, which is anticipated to commence operations in 2024, with an annual trout production capacity of 3,000 metric tonnes.

Furthermore, the Omani companies have expressed their support for Blue Aqua International's plans to establish a super-intensive indoor shrimp farm with a capacity of 1,000 metric tonnes, as well as a 30,000 metric tonnes aquafeed mill, both located in Singapore.