

HM greets Mexican President

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Andrés Manuel López Obrador of the United Mexican States, on the occasion of his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere greetings to the President wishing him good health and long life and more progress and prosperity for the friendly Mexican people.

SUNRISE - 05:54 AM

PRAYER TIMINGS

FAJR - 04:38 AM

DHUHR - 12:07 PM

ASR - 03:33 PM

MAGHRIB - 06:15 PM

ISHA - 07:25 PM



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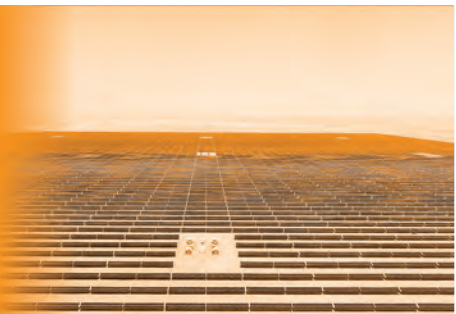
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P13

OMAN BOOSTS RENEWABLE ENERGY WITH SALE OF IRECS



P12

MESSI SCORES TWICE IN TRIUMPHANT INJURY RETURN FOR MIAMI



P20

HARVEST OF PROSPERITY AND THE INVESTMENT POTENTIAL OF JABAL AKHDHAR



MUSCAT

DEDICATED ZONE FOR STREET VENDORS

In cooperation with the Muscat Municipality, the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development has invited street vendors to register for opportunities to operate at a dedicated zone in Wadi Kabir in the Wilayat of Muttrah. According to Muscat Municipality, priority will be given to owners residing in Muttrah. The operator must have a license to practice the activity, must be an Omani national, and must be at least 18 years old. The project owner can practice the activity as stated in the license. **SEE P5**

650 DOCTORS SET TO JOIN OMSB

The Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) conducted an admission exam for more than 650 doctors to join the OMSB's specialised training programmes for the 2025/2026 academic year. The admission test is conducted annually by local experts and competencies at the OMSB in cooperation with teaching staff in various specialisation. The exam includes 100 multiple-choice questions covering all medical specialisation on a predetermined curriculum. Doctors who pass the exam and personal interviews can apply for final acceptance to join the OMSB.

AMMAN

JORDAN'S KING APPOINTS NEW PM



Jordan's King Abdullah II on Sunday nominated his chief of staff to be the new prime minister, the royal palace said, charging him with forming a government after parliamentary elections. The outgoing premier, Bisher Khawneh, submitted his resignation to the king earlier on Sunday. Under the kingdom's constitution, the government usually resigns after legislative elections. "King Abdullah on Sunday tasked Jafar Hassan with forming a new government," a palace statement said. As well as being chief of staff, the 56-year-old Hassan was previously planning minister.

ON BEHALF OF HIS MAJESTY, SAYYID SHIHAB ATTENDS

Prophet's birthday celebration at Al Alam Palace

MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, presided over the reading of the Prophet's Biography (Sira) to mark the birthday of Prophet Muhammad (PBUH), at the Mawlid Hall in Al Alam

Palace, on Sunday evening.

The event was attended by a number of Their Highnesses, ministers, senior military leaders, heads of diplomatic missions of Islamic countries in the Sultanate of Oman and a number of dignitaries.

May Allah the Almighty return this

auspicious occasion and similar ones while His Majesty enjoys goodness, well-being and blessings and to the Omani people further progress and prosperity under His Majesty's wise leadership and to the entire Islamic nation with peace and prosperity.

— ONA

Israeli strikes kill 4 Palestinians

GAZA CITY: Four Palestinians have been killed in Israeli attacks in the Gaza Strip, hospitals in the coastal territory said on Sunday.

According to Al Awda hospital, three of them died in the shelling of a house in the Nuseirat refugee camp in the central Gaza Strip. A fourth Palestinian was killed in an attack in the Jabaliya refugee camp, the Kamal Adwan hospital in northern Gaza said. An Israeli military spokesman said they were investigating the reports. According to the Ministry of Health, 24 people were killed in the Mediterranean coastal strip within a day.

More than 41,200 Palestinians have been killed in the Gaza Strip since the beginning of the war, the ministry says. Israel has come under severe international criticism due to the high number of civilian casualties, the catastrophic health situation in the Gaza Strip and the heavy destruction of the territory.

Meanwhile, an investigation found on Sunday that the three Israeli captives whose bodies were recovered in Gaza last year were likely killed by an Israeli airstrike,

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) said in a statement that the three captives - two soldiers and a young woman with French citizenship who was captured at the Nova music festival - probably died as a result of an airstrike on November 10, 2023.

The findings, based on detailed analysis of the strike and pathological reports, were



Family and friends comfort Palestinian physician as bodies of five members of the Alborno family were brought to Al Ahli Arab hospital after they were killed in Israeli bombardment of Zeitoun neighbourhood. — AFP

a "high-probability assessment," the statement said, although the IDF stated that it could not "definitively determine the circumstances of their deaths."

A missile launched by Yemen's Ansar Allah fighters hit central Israel on Sunday, a rare incident

that caused no casualties but added to regional tensions nearly a year into the Gaza war.

Palestinian group Hamas praised the missile launch, vowing that Israel "will not enjoy security unless it ceases its brutal aggression against our people in

the Gaza Strip".

Israeli medics said several people were slightly injured while "on their way to shelters" as sirens sounded, and police said a fragment of an air-defence interceptor had come down east of Tel Aviv. — **Agencies**

‘Marhaba Dhofar’ to showcase governorate’s diverse attractions

SALALAH: The first activities of ‘Marhaba Dhofar’, organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, will kick off on Monday, with wide participation of tourism sector partners in the Sultanate of Oman and their counterparts from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

The multi-day event will see participation of 40 Saudi tourism companies and 13 media professionals from the most prominent media institutions in the Kingdom. The activities include field trips to main tourist attractions, including the picturesque beaches

of Salalah, the green mountains of Dhofar Governorate, and heritage and archaeological sites that reflect the depth of Omani civilisation and the roots of Omani history.

‘Marhaba Dhofar’ is a goal to boost tourism collaboration between Oman and Saudi Arabia, while promoting the region's distinct seasonal highlights, such as the Sarb season, which draws visitors with its cool climate and natural beauty. The event also seeks to position Dhofar Governorate as a prime destination for winter tourism in the Gulf. The event will include discussion



The event seeks to position Dhofar as a prime destination for winter tourism in the Gulf.

sessions and bilateral business meetings between Omani and Saudi tourism companies, to exchange experiences and explore opportunities for cooperation in developing the tourism sector.

With its focus on fostering tourism cooperation and showcasing Dhofar Governorate’s diverse attractions, the ‘Marhaba Dhofar’ event promises to be a key step in enhancing Oman's profile as a premier destination for Gulf tourists, while strengthening bonds between Oman and Saudi Arabia in the process. **SEE ALSO P2**

WEATHER

MUSCAT: Max 36°C Min 29°C

SALALAH: Max 29°C Min 24°C

NIZWA: Max 38°C Min 25°C



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Saudi tourism contingent arrives for ‘Marhaba Dhofar’

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 15

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT) is set to launch the highly anticipated ‘Marhaba Dhofar’ event today, welcoming key players from the tourism industry in Oman and Saudi Arabia.

The multi-day event aims to strengthen ties between the two nations’ tourism sectors, with the participation of 40 Saudi tourism companies and 13 leading media figures from prominent Saudi institutions.

The itinerary for the Saudi delegation includes immersive field trips to Dhofar’s top tourist destinations, such as the serene beaches of Salalah, the lush green mountains, and the governorate’s rich heritage and archaeological sites.

These visits are designed to showcase Oman’s deep historical and cultural roots, offering participants a first-hand experience of Oman’s unique tourism appeal.

‘Marhaba Dhofar’ is a goal to boost tourism collaboration between Oman and Saudi Arabia,



‘Marhaba Dhofar’ is a goal to boost tourism collaboration between Oman and Saudi Arabia

while promoting the region’s distinct seasonal highlights, such as the “Sarḅ” season, which draws visitors with its cool climate and natural beauty.

The event also seeks to position Dhofar as a prime destination for winter tourism in the Gulf.

The programme will not only involve sightseeing but will also feature discussion panels and business-to-business meetings. These sessions will provide an opportunity for Omani and Saudi tourism companies to engage in

dialogue, exchange expertise, and explore potential partnerships aimed at enhancing the tourism sector in both nations.

Haitham Tabook, Head of Public Relations and Media at the Directorate General of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar, highlighted the significance of this event.

“Marhaba Dhofar serves as a pivotal platform to solidify tourism cooperation between Oman and Saudi Arabia. It is a unique opportunity to highlight Dhofar’s tourism

appeal, particularly during the ‘Sarḅ’ season, known for its breathtaking landscapes and moderate weather,” Tabook remarked. He also underscored the event’s role in stimulating the tourism economy and building stronger business ties between the two countries.

Ahmed bin Salim al Mahri, CEO of Gloria Tours, expressed his pride in hosting the Saudi delegation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. “Our aim is to give our Saudi guests a comprehensive insight into the tourism landscape of Dhofar,” Al Mahri said. “We have carefully curated an itinerary that will allow them to experience not just the natural beauty of the region, but also its rich cultural heritage and unique traditions.”

With its focus on fostering tourism cooperation and showcasing Dhofar’s diverse attractions, the ‘Marhaba Dhofar’ event promises to be a key step in enhancing Oman’s profile as a premier destination for Gulf tourists, while strengthening bonds between Oman and Saudi Arabia in the process.



VEHICLE REPAIR SHOP GUTTED IN AL RUSTAQ

AI RUSTAQ: The firefighting teams of the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority in Al Batinah South Governorate dealt with a fire incident that broke out in a vehicle repair shop in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq. The situation was brought under control and no injuries were reported.

Daymaniyat Islands receive over 50,000 visitors

MUSCAT: A total of 55,436 visitors visited the Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve in the eight months of this year. The reserve includes an archipelago of nine islands off the coast of the Wilayats of Seeb in the Governorate of Muscat and Barka in the Al Batinah South Governorate.

It is distinguished by its nature and beautiful scenery as a natural museum due to the islands with physical features between limestone rocks and ancient coral reefs.

Salim bin Said al Maskari, Director of the Environment Department in Al Batinah South Governorate, said the Al Daymaniyat Islands Nature Reserve includes 9 main islands.

He said that the Environment Authority allocated the islands of Jabal Al Kabir and Lagoon for overnight and camping for visitors during the period between the beginning of November to the end of April, while during the

period from the beginning of May to the end of October, landing is not permitted on any of the beaches of the islands of the reserve, to protect migratory birds whose nests are spread on the beaches and flats of the islands, stressing that the reserve is an incubator for these birds and their young during the nesting season.

He said that in May, an underwater museum was opened near the reserve, the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman. It aims to rehabilitate and increase the areas of coral reefs compensate for those lost due to natural and human impacts, and create a new ecosystem that matches natural coral reefs.

It is expected that this museum will contribute to attracting many marine creatures of various sizes.

He pointed out that the museum is an innovative idea to establish an underwater military equipment museum and support eco-tourism.

Resorts World Cruises to operate trips to Oman during upcoming winter

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has signed an agreement with Resorts World Cruises of Singapore to operate trips and itineraries to the Sultanate of Oman during the upcoming winter season in cooperation with partners in the public and private sectors.

The agreement includes 46 visits to Port Sultan Qaboos and 23 visits to the Khasab Port. The first visit will be to Khasab on November 4 and Muscat on November 5.

The ship will have around 2,000 passengers on board. The ministry made this



The first visit will be to Khasab on November 4 and Muscat on November 5. – **Picture for illustration**

announcement during the recent Seatrade Cruise Med Exhibition in Malaga, Spain, where it took part in promotional efforts and interactions with 200 global cruise ship operating companies and decision-makers from over 70 countries.

The ministry has appointed a consulting company to prepare a plan to attract cruise ships and yachts of various sizes to the Sultanate of Oman. Resorts World Cruises is a global brand with over 46 properties in eight countries and four continents. Resorts World Cruises made its debut on June 15, 2022, with luxurious voyages aboard the 3,352-passenger, 150,695-gross-tonne Genting Dream, operating from Singapore and Kuala Lumpur (Port Klang).

On March 10, 2023, the 1,856-passenger, 75,338-gross-tonne Resorts World One began its sailings from Hong Kong. Resorts World Cruises aims to explore new and exotic

destinations in Asia, expanding to additional homeports such as Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Hong Kong, Taiwan and the GCC.

The cruise ship season in the Sultanate of Oman is generally between October to the end of April, during which cruises visit Port Sultan Qaboos, Salalah Port and Khasab Port among others.

It may be noted that 321,012 tourists from 202 ship visits arrived at the ports of Muscat, Salalah and Khasab in 2023, which is expected to cross 380,000 this year. In the first phase of cruise season this year (between January and May), three ports received 102 ships and 206,544 passengers.

Ain Al Kasfah — vibrant destination for medical tourism

TEXT AND PHOTOS BY
YAHYA AL SALMANI

Ain Al Kasfah, located in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq, is considered a tourist attraction that draws visitors from around the world. Natural waters reach temperatures of over 45 degrees Celsius, with hot water flowing out in several streams to irrigate surrounding orchards.

In addition to its agricultural significance, the water from this spring is renowned for its natural treatment of rheumatism and various skin diseases due to the

sulphurous substance it contains.

The Sultanate of Oman’s government, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MoHT), has shown interest in developing this unique tourist site. Bathing and recreational facilities have been constructed next to the sulphur spring, and the ancient tower a few metres away is currently undergoing restoration.

The development project for Ain Al Kasfah includes bus stops, new toilets, restaurants, cafes and shops, making it a vital project aimed at enhancing tourism and commercial investments, as well as



The development project for Ain Al Kasfah aimed at enhancing tourism and commercial investments, as well as fostering community partnerships and developing the Oman’s natural resources

fostering community partnerships and developing the Oman’s natural resources. The treatment of certain skin diseases involves gradually



using the sulphur spring water so that the body can acclimate to the hot sulphur water’s temperature. Individuals are advised to spend

5-10 minutes in the water until the desired effects are achieved, preferably bathing in the sulphur water in the early morning or

evening.

About 40 km from Ain Al Kasfah, another site containing sulphurous water can be found. ‘Al Khandiq’ in the village of Al Houqain features sulphurous water flowing between a four-metre-high rock fault. The water temperature at this site is moderate, allowing visitors to swim and relax for extended periods. This site attracts hundreds of visitors, particularly during official holidays, as it is equipped for recreation, camping, and various water sports such as diving and swimming.



OMANI CYCLIST SHABIB TAKES TOP SPOT IN FOURTH EDITION

SALALAH: Omani cyclist Shabib al Balushi triumphed in the Salalah Mountain Bike Race, a highlight of the Salalah Tour's fourth edition this year. The event was organised by Dhofar Municipality in collaboration with the Oman Cycling Federation and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

In the general category,

Shabib al Balushi secured first place, with Shihab al Qamshoui and Hilal al Shahoumi finishing in second and third place, respectively.

In the youth category (under 23), Mundhir al Hasani claimed first place, followed by Yahya al Qasimi in second and Kuwaiti cyclist Mohammed Hassan in third. Mary Grace from the Philippines won the women's



category, with Britain's Emma Fonton and Oman's Amira al Obaidani coming in second and third, respectively.

In the 40 years and above category, British cyclist Tim Fontaine took first place, Omani Labib al Lawati was second, and Omani cyclist Mansour al Mahrouqi finished in third.

The race, featuring

participants from Oman and abroad, covered a distance of 18 kilometres, divided into three 6-kilometre laps. At the conclusion of the event, Khalifa bin Khamis al Jabri, Vice-President of the Oman Cycling Federation, awarded the winners and acknowledged the supporting entities and contributors to the race's success. — **ONA**

Jabjat's serene settings blossom during Sarb season

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 15

The 'Jabjat' area in the Wilayat of Taqah is one of the most prominent tourist destinations in Dhofar Governorate during the annual Sarb season, which attracts a significant influx of visitors and tourists from across the country.

Well-known for its stunning natural beauty, this area is characterised by its mild climate and expansive green plains, making it an ideal destination for families and nature enthusiasts seeking relaxation in a peaceful environment.

One of Jabjat's most famous natural features is the Acacia trees, locally known as 'Talh,' which provide ample shade for visitors during the day. These trees lend the area a unique charm, offering an exceptional experience, especially after the khareef season when the fog that blankets the Dhofar mountains lifts, revealing clear and breathtaking landscape views.

In addition to its natural beauty, Jabjat boasts a relatively well-developed tourism infrastructure, offering various essential facilities. These include well-equipped tents that appeal to camping and outdoor enthusiasts, as well as scattered kiosks serving traditional food and beverages. Mobile toilets have been strategically placed throughout the area to meet visitors' needs, reflecting a growing focus on enhancing the tourist experience.

Significant developments in Jabjat have been driven by the efforts of the wali in Taqah,



Jabjat is well-known for its stunning natural beauty and mild climate

along with local shaikhs and elders. An agreement has been reached to allocate temporary tourism projects and heritage camps primarily to residents, to empower them economically and provide new job opportunities.

Strict regulatory measures have also been implemented to organise the operation of mobile camps, aiming to curb the disorganised activities that have previously harmed the environment and vegetation. The operation of temporary restaurants and kiosks has also been regulated, with priority given to residents, ensuring that the local community benefits from the growing tourist activity.

As the Sarb season approaches

soon, many visitors have already started to flock to Jabjat to enjoy its natural beauty and spend quality time with family and friends. Residents are hopeful that the new measures will contribute to environmental sustainability and provide a distinctive tourist experience.

Ahmed al Maashani, a member of the Nature Conservation Association (currently in the process of being established), voiced his concern about preserving Jabjat's environment. He urged visitors to respect the green areas and pastures and to avoid driving their vehicles in these spaces to protect the vegetation. He also called for refraining from lighting

Residents hope that the new measures will contribute to environmental sustainability and provide a distinctive tourist experience

fires near the shade trees and urged visitors to avoid discarding cigarette butts on the ground.

Al Maashani emphasised the importance of using designated rubbish bins to maintain cleanliness and highlighted the need for a continuous water supply to meet visitors' needs, thus preserving the area's natural beauty.

Mohammed al Mashikhi, a resident of Jabjat, noted that the area still requires more essential service projects to meet the growing demands of visitors during the Sarb season.

Among the key projects are the need to expand health centre services and upgrade it to a fully equipped hospital. He also called for the construction of a large mosque to accommodate the increasing number of worshippers, especially for Friday prayers. Additionally, Al Mashikhi stressed the importance of improving road infrastructure leading to Jabjat to ensure easier and safer access to the area.

Jabjat stands as a prime example of balancing tourism development with environmental conservation, with a focus on improving the quality of services for both residents and visitors.

Winners crowned at Dhofar International Film Festival



The Dhofar International Film Festival saw 41 films qualifying for the final competition.

SALALAH: The inaugural Dhofar International Film Festival concluded last week at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah, with the crowning of the best feature and documentary films from a pool of 200 international and Omani submissions. Forty-one films qualified for the final competition.

The festival was held under the auspices of Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, and witnessed international participation with numerous officials and film enthusiasts in attendance.

The Iranian film 'Human' by Mohammad Bostandouz took home the award for Best International Feature Film, while 'Water Religion' was recognised as the best Omani Feature Film.

The jury also awarded Omani directors Moosa al Kindi and Amr Ali for their contributions. Saudi director Rima al Majid's film 'The Pool' claimed the audience choice award.

In the documentary category, Jordanian director Rahma al Shamas's 'The Rose' was

crowned Best International Documentary, and 'Sarqaf' by Omani film-maker Jaber al Jabri won Best Omani Documentary. The Jury Award went to Saudi director Mohammed Moosa for 'Jaafar Tea' and Omani director Abdullah al Raisi for 'Wetlands.'

Mohammed bin Abdullah al Ajmi, Chairman of the Oman Film Society, emphasised the Society's commitment to nurturing young talent in filmmaking through various initiatives and promoting collaboration between cinematic cultures. The Society also seeks to spotlight Oman's rich heritage through global cinema.

The closing ceremony featured a visual presentation titled 'Festival Harvest,' showcasing film screenings and educational workshops. It also included an awards presentation for the festival's winners.

A total of 22 feature films and 19 documentaries from 18 countries qualified for the final competition.

The judging panel included experts in feature and documentary films from both within Oman and abroad.

— **ONA**

Salalah entrepreneur transforms interior design

SALALAH: In Salalah, interior design is more than just arranging furniture and colours; it is an art form that captures the identity and culture of a place, influencing daily lives. This philosophy drives entrepreneur and engineer Samou bint Amer Tabuk, who has turned her passion for interior design and architecture into a thriving business.

In an interview with ONA, Eng Samou shared, "My passion for design led me to study the field academically, building a strong foundation for a professional career grounded in scientific principles. This dream, nurtured since my school days, culminated in the establishment of 'Sumou

Design Studio' in 2019 under the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA).

The inspiration for the studio arose from the growing demand for innovative and sustainable design solutions that cater to both individuals and institutions.

Eng Samou aims to positively influence the field and contribute to the evolution of the architectural landscape in Oman.

The studio began by working on smaller projects to gain experience and build a customer base. Over time, guided by a clear vision and specific objectives, the team expanded to include experienced designers and



Eng Samou has turned her passion for interior design and architecture into a thriving business

architects. Their efforts led to notable successes, including large-scale commercial projects and residential designs, alongside garden landscaping.

Since its inception, Sumou Design Studio has experienced significant growth, with the client

Eng Samou aims to positively influence and contribute to the evolution of the architectural landscape in Oman

base expanding by 30 per cent annually over the past two years. Positive client feedback further reflects the studio's success and the rising demand for its services.

Eng Samou acknowledges the vital support from various government agencies in Oman,

to form strategic partnerships with leading companies and institutions in the field.

Despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, which delayed many projects, Samou's persistence enabled her to adapt and continue operations remotely.

She emphasises that the fields of interior design and architecture offer vast opportunities for creativity and professional growth, particularly for Omani youth, who are encouraged to develop their skills, embrace educational and training opportunities, and think innovatively. For those with creativity and vision, the potential in this field is boundless. — **ONA**



HEALTH EXPERTS EMPHASISE THE IMPORTANCE OF ANNUAL FLU SHOTS, ESPECIALLY FOR STUDENTS



SCHOOLS ACTIVELY SUPPORT FLU PREVENTION THROUGH HYGIENE EDUCATION, WORKSHOPS



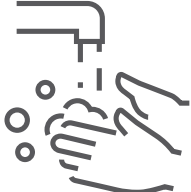
FLU-RELATED ABSENCES DISRUPT LEARNING, PUTTING ADDITIONAL PRESSURE ON STUDENTS



MoH AND MoE WORK TOGETHER TO RUN AWARENESS CAMPAIGNS



PARENTS PLAY A VITAL ROLE IN ENSURING CHILDREN PRACTICE GOOD HYGIENE, MAINTAIN A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE



HANDWASHING, COVERING THE MOUTH WHEN SNEEZING, AND STAYING HOME CAN REDUCE THE FLU'S SPREAD



BALQIS AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, SEPTEMBER 15

WITH students returning to schools in Oman for the fall semester, the start of the academic year coincides with the onset of flu season, creating a pressing health challenge.

The large gatherings in schools and educational facilities increase the risk of spreading respiratory viruses, particularly influenza, necessitating proactive steps to safeguard students and the broader community.

Health experts note that flu season typically begins in late September and extends into early spring. The close contact among students during school hours, on buses, and during extracurricular activities creates an environment conducive to the spread of infectious diseases.

Dr Abdullah al Hadrami, a respiratory disease specialist, highlights the transmissibility of seasonal flu, which spreads through airborne particles and contact with contaminated surfaces.

“With the start of the school year, we often observe an uptick in flu cases among students,

necessitating preventive actions to curb the virus’s spread within schools,” he states.

The symptoms of the flu range from mild to severe, including fever, coughing, sore throat, headaches, and fatigue.

In severe cases, influenza can lead to complications such as pneumonia, particularly among younger children or those with pre-existing health conditions. The illness not only affects students’ health but also their academic performance, as flu-related absences disrupt learning and place additional pressure on both students and educators to catch up on missed lessons.

Sheikha al Ghailani, a first-year teacher, notes, “Each year, we see a spike in flu-related absences

TACKLING FLU SEASON IN SCHOOLS

at the beginning of the term. Students with the flu struggle to focus in class, and some are forced to stay home, disrupting their education. As educators, we stress the importance of hygiene and work closely with parents to maintain a healthy learning environment.”

In response, the Ministry of Health has launched initiatives aimed at raising awareness about flu prevention, collaborating with the Ministry of Education to inform students and families about hygiene practices and the importance of flu vaccination.

These vaccination campaigns are particularly targeted at high-risk groups, including students and children with chronic

conditions, and are provided free of charge.

Schools support these efforts through workshops and educational programmes, ensuring that both students and staff are informed.

Families are encouraged to play an active role in flu prevention by ensuring their children practice good hygiene, eat balanced meals, and receive the flu vaccine.

Parents like Suad al Hashmi emphasise prevention at home, saying, “I teach my children to wash their hands frequently, especially after school, and ensure they receive the flu vaccine annually. Prevention starts at home, and working with schools and health officials is key to protecting our kids.”

Through concerted efforts from health authorities, educational institutions, and families, the spread of the flu can be minimised. Simple preventive measures, combined with timely vaccinations, will be essential in protecting students and the wider community during this flu season.



Scholar from Oman shines at Living Abroad Forum



Dr Saida Khalilova from Oman at the Azerbaijani Scholars Living Abroad Forum

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

The Azerbaijani Scholars Living Abroad Forum recently convened distinguished Azerbaijani academics and scholars from leading universities worldwide. Organised by the State Committee for Work with the Azerbaijani Diaspora under the leadership of Chairman Fuad Muradov, the forum served as a platform for discussing advancements in education and cultural initiatives.

Dr Saida Khalilova, an Associate Professor with a PhD in Music and Pedagogy, represented the Sultanate of Oman at the forum.

She was one of only three scholars from the Middle East and the sole representative from

the Sultanate of Oman. Joining her were Riza Moridi and İlham Axundov from Canada, and Boxtiyar Siracov from Austria.

Reflecting on her participation, Dr Saida who is part of the Muscat-based Royal Conservatory of Music and Arts, expressed, “It was a great honour and a tremendous experience to engage in discussions about actively contributing to the development of the new Omani generation and advancing the cultural and arts sphere in Oman.”

Selected from over 400 applicants, Dr Saida was among the 80 scholars chosen to attend the forum. The primary objective was to bring together top academics to explore potential initiatives for enhancing Azerbaijan’s education sector. The forum also

aimed to strengthen connections among scholars, academics, and Azerbaijani students studying abroad.

A significant goal was to forge collaborations with the newly established University of Karabakh in Khanken. The forum sought to connect scholars with this institution, facilitating future seminars and educational conferences led by Azerbaijani academics residing abroad.

The forum spanned three days, from September 9, culminating in a visit to the newly liberated region of Karabakh. Participants had the opportunity to tour several cities and explore the University of Karabakh, gaining valuable insights into its future role in Azerbaijan’s educational landscape.

Student innovation wins startup competitions

SALALAH: The Student Projects Camp, organised by the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development in collaboration with the University of Technology and Applied Sciences, honoured the best emerging technology projects in Dhofar Governorate.

Among the winners was the

cybersecurity startup Spear, which specialises in security consulting and drone penetration testing.

The Linear project, which uses AI for content creation and data management, and Space 404, an electronic platform for booking sports facilities and virtual training, were also recognised.

The event attracted 78 students from various universities, and 11 innovative startup ideas were highlighted.

The Oman Future Investment Fund has allocated 10 per cent of its resources to support such ventures, aiding their growth on regional and global stages.

— ONA



Winners of the Student Projects Camp honoured in Dhofar.

Dedicated zone for street vendors in Wadi Kabir

MUSCAT: In cooperation with Muscat Municipality, the Public Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development has invited street vendors to register for opportunities to operate in a dedicated zone in Wadi Kabir in the Wilayat of Muttrah.

According to Muscat Municipality, priorities will be given to owners residing in the Wilayat of Muttrah. The operator must have a license to



practice the activity, must be of Omani nationality, and must be

at least 18 years old.

The project owner can practice the activity as stated in the license. The applicant must not have another license to practice any other commercial, professional, or craft activity.

The site has been prepared to cater to around 12 street vendors, with facilities such as electricity and water connections and designated parking spaces for customers’ vehicles.



هيئة البيئة
ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY

Announcement for request for expression of interest

The Environment Authority would like to offer unique investment opportunities for relevant companies, institutions and investors wishing to invest and manage some ecotourism projects in Khor Al Qurm Kabeer Reserve in Dhofar Governorat, and invites them to submit a request for “expression of interest” according to the investment and management model that will be agreed upon later.

Applying conditions:

- A letter requesting expression of interest to prepare and implement an investment plan for eco-tourism in the aforementioned reserve addressed to His Excellency the Chairman of the Environment Authority - Chairman of the Internal Tenders Committee of the Authority.
- A copy of the valid commercial register.
- Submitting an action plan for how to develop the site, including the components of the project, its construction and management plan, and providing preliminary and initial designs (Concept Design). This must comply with the policies of the Environment Authority, Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and other relevant authorities, Omani law and the principles of sustainable tourism development, including but not limited to preserving natural and cultural heritage and prohibiting any activities that may adversely affect the environmental and cultural values of the site.
- Submitting a plan to manage the impact of the project and visitors on natural resources.
- Providing an aerial projection of the site and its components with maps and coordinates.
- Presenting the company's data, structure, and expertise in the field of eco-tourism and its management.
- Any documents supporting the investor in the project.

The investment plan document can be obtained by submitting a request via the following e-mail: FAD@ea.gov.om or by calling 24404883.

The documents shall be delivered in sealed envelopes (in two copies), a paper copy and a digital copy (CD), and they shall be placed in the tender box on the second floor of the Authority's head office in Al Khuwair, no later than 1:00 p.m. on Tuesday, 10/10/ 2024.

Ministry opens Wadi Dayqah dam shutters

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) started releasing 15 million cubic metres of water from the Wadi Dayqah Dam on Sunday.

This move aims to replenish underground reservoirs crucial for irrigation in the nearby villages of Daghamr and Hail Al Ghaf.

Wadi Dayqah, located 75 km from Muscat in the Wilayat of Qurayat, boasts one of the largest dams in the Arabian Peninsula, with a storage capacity of 100 million cubic metres and standing 75m tall.

In its official statement, MoAFWR emphasised the importance of the discharge to support local agriculture by ensuring a sustainable water supply for farmers in the wilayat.

The release will help maintain water levels in the aquifers, directly benefiting the area’s farming communities.





سلطنة عُمان
وزارة النقل والاتصالات وتقنية المعلومات
Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

إعلان مناقصة
Tender Notice

The Internal Tenders Committee at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology invites for the Following Tenders:

TENDER NUMBER	TENDER NAME	DATE OF PUBLISHING	LAST DATE TO PURCHASE TENDER DOCUMENT	SUBMISSION DATE	COMPANIES WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE IN THIS TENDER	DOCUMENT PRICE
MTCIT 219/2024	CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR DESIGN AND SUPERVISION OF BOAT REPAIR WORKSHOPS INFASRTURURE CONSTRUCTION IN KHOR AL FAWARES - BARKA	12-09-2024	26-09-2024	23-10-2024	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (FIRST CALSS)	(150/-) ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY OMANI RIAL FOR LOCAL COMPANIES (12/-) TWELVE OMANI RIAL (FOR SME) NON-REFUNDABLE
Recall-1 MTCIT 103/2024	CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR DESIGN AND SUPERVISION OF RA'S AL HADD LIGHTHOUSE (SOUTH AL SHARQIYYA GOVERNORATE)	12-09-2024	30-09-2024	23-10-2024	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (EXCELLENT & FIRST CALSS)	(300/-) THREE HUNDRED OMANI RIAL FOR LOCAL COMPANIES (300/-) THREE HUNDRED OMANI RIAL FOR INTERNATIONAL COMPANIES (10/-) TEN OMANI RIAL (FOR SME) NON-REFUNDABLE
Recall-1 MTCIT 182/2024	DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION OF SERVICE ROADS AND ASSOCIATED WORKS NEAR TO AL MAHA PETROL STATION AT HAYIMA - (WILAYAT IBRA)	12-09-2024	22-09-2024	9-10-2024	EXPERIENCED COMPANIES AND REGISTERED WITH THE SECRETARIAT GENERAL OF TENDER BOARD (FIRST CALSS)	(32/500) THIRTY TWO OMANI RIALS AND FIVE HUNDRED BAISA FOR LOCAL COMPANIES (10/-) TEN OMANI RIAL (FOR SME) NON-REFUNDABLE

Interested Companies registered with the Secretariat General of Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of documents. Tenders should be submitted online on given website

CORRESPONDANCE:

1. Tender Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at e-Tendering System. (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>).
2. E-Tendering System Inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-Tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:
Tel: +968 24402200, e-mail : etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

INTERNAL TENDERS COMMITTEE

 @mtcitoman

www.mtcit.gov.om



Yemeni missile hits central Israel in rare attack

TEL AVIV: A Yemeni missile triggered a rush to shelters in central Israel on Sunday, a rare incident that caused no casualties but again added to regional tensions nearly a year into the Gaza war.

Photographers saw firefighters putting out a brush fire near Lod and broken glass at a train station in Modin, about 20 kilometres southeast of Tel Aviv, Israel's commercial hub, after the attack.

Yemen's group claimed the strike. They are among groups in the Middle East that have been drawn into the conflict after war began in October between Israel and Palestinian groups in Gaza.

The Yemenis launched a surface-to-surface missile into our territory. "They should have known by now that we charge a heavy price for any attempt to harm us," Netanyahu said.

Palestinian group Hamas praised the attack, vowing that Israel "will not enjoy security unless it ceases its brutal aggression against our people in the Gaza Strip".

The Yemeni group had targeted an Israeli "military position" in the Jaffa area, around Tel Aviv, using a "ballistic missile that succeeded in reaching its target", spokesman Yahya Saree said in a video statement. He added that "the enemy's defences failed to intercept it". In July, they claimed a drone strike that penetrated Israel's intricate air defences and killed a civilian in Tel Aviv, at least 1,800 kilometres



Displaced Palestinians gather near tents that were flooded with sea water, along the shore of Khan Yunis in the southern Gaza Strip. — AFP

The Yemeni group had targeted an Israeli "military position" in the Jaffa area, around Tel Aviv, using a ballistic missile that succeeded in reaching its target

from Yemen.

In an initial statement on Sunday, Israel's military said the latest missile "fell in an open

area" in the country's centre. Israeli police said they were at the scene near Shfela, east of Tel Aviv, where a fragment of an air-defence interceptor had come down. Yemen's groups are targeting Israel and its perceived interests in what they say is solidarity with Palestinians during the war in Gaza.

Israel's retaliatory military campaign has killed at least 41,206 people in Gaza, according to the Palestinian territory's health ministry. Gaza's civil defence agency on Sunday

reported Israeli air strikes killed at least three people in central Gaza and another around Gaza City.

Months of efforts by Qatari, Egyptian and US mediators have failed to secure a truce and hostage release deal. Netanyahu's government is facing rising anger from critics who accuse him of not doing enough to get the captives home.

On Saturday, thousands again took to the streets of Israel's main cities to push the government for a deal. — AFP

Volunteers rush to help as Myanmar flood toll surges

BAGO: Volunteers rushed to areas inundated by floods in Myanmar on Sunday as the country's death toll from the Typhoon Yagi deluge more than doubled and remote areas reported increasing numbers of dead and missing.

Floods and landslides have killed almost 350 people in Myanmar, Vietnam, Laos and Thailand in the wake of Typhoon Yagi, which hit the region last weekend, according to official figures.

One man said that he had tried to rescue people with ropes as floodwaters four metres high surged through the hill town of Kalaw in Shan state on September 10. A businesswoman in Yangon who runs a company in Kalaw said that her staff there had reported nearly 60 people had been killed in the town.

Myanmar's junta has not specified whether any of the 74 people it says have died from the floods were in Kalaw. Its previous death toll, released on

Friday, was 33. At Inle Lake, a tourist hotspot about 30 kilometres away, flood levels had risen on Saturday to the second storey of houses built on stilts above the water.

Cars and trucks carrying volunteers were streaming north from the commercial hub Yangon to reach affected areas in Taungoo in the Bago region and around the capital Naypyidaw, reporters said. The vehicles were loaded with pallets of bottled water, bundles of clothes and dried food. Some had boats strapped to their roofs.

Residents of the Yado displacement camp in eastern Karen state were forced to flee their temporary homes after torrents of water ripped through the camp.

The deluge had left 74 dead and 89 people missing by Friday evening and more than 235,000 displaced. However, with roads and bridges damaged as well as phone and Internet lines down, information has been limited.

— AFP



Volunteers and rescue workers stand beside vehicles transporting relief supplies to flood-affected areas in Myanmar Bago region. — AFP

Flights grounded in Shanghai as China prepares for typhoon

SHANGHAI: All flights at Shanghai's two main airports were cancelled on Sunday as authorities in the Chinese megacity prepared for a strong typhoon bringing high winds and heavy rain.

Typhoon Bebinca is expected to make landfall along a swath of China's densely populated eastern seaboard, according to Beijing's emergency management ministry.

State broadcaster CCTV reported that all flights at Shanghai's two main airports would be cancelled from 8 pm on Sunday because of the storm. "Affected by Typhoon Bebinca, the traffic capacity of Shanghai's Pudong and Hongqiao airports

has decreased today," CCTV said. "Flight adjustments at the two main airports will be promptly released to the public in accordance with the impact of the typhoon," it said.

The emergency management ministry said in a statement on Saturday that Bebinca would cause "heavy to torrential" downpours with "local heavy or extremely heavy rainstorms" between Sunday and Tuesday.

Officials held a meeting on Saturday to "research and deploy flood and typhoon control work in key areas", it said.

Bebinca's expected landfall will come during the Mid-Autumn Festival public holiday.



Fishing boats shelter in the port in Zhoushan, in Zhejiang province, China, ahead of the arrival of Typhoon Bebinca. — AFP

China's railway operator is expecting passengers to take 74 million trips during the holiday, state news agency Xinhua reported on Saturday.

The emergency management ministry said officials must "pay close attention to the development of the typhoon", adding that "many people will be travelling, mobility will be high and safety risks will be prominent". The water resources ministry launched on Saturday a level-four emergency response — the lowest in a tiered system — for flooding in Shanghai and the provinces of Jiangsu, Zhejiang and Anhui, according to Xinhua.

The weather office issued orange typhoon warnings — the second-highest in a four-tier

system — for several districts in Shanghai and areas of nearby provinces on Sunday. It advised that people refrain from gathering in large numbers, boats return to port and rickety structures be strengthened against high winds.

Shanghai municipal authorities urged residents on Sunday to "strengthen efforts to guard against harmful effects of the typhoon on high-altitude work, transportation, infrastructure and agriculture".

Passenger shipping lines were also scheduled to be suspended in Shanghai from Sunday, according to an official statement on the social media account of the municipal port and shipping development centre. — AFP

AMMAN

Jordan's King Abdullah appoints new PM

Jordan's King Abdullah has designated key palace aide Jafar Hassan as prime minister after the government resigned on Sunday, the royal court said, days after a parliamentary election. Hassan, now head of King Abdullah's office and a former planning minister, replaces Bisher Khasawneh, a veteran diplomat and former palace adviser who was appointed nearly four years ago, a royal court statement said.

Jordan's King Abdullah on



Sunday accepted the resignation of Prime Minister Bisher Khasawneh's government, ordering it to stay in a caretaker capacity until the formation of a new cabinet, a statement said. — Reuters

CAIRO

Egypt rail crash kills three, 49 injured

Two children were among three people killed when two trains collided in northern Egypt, the health ministry and state media said. It was the latest in a series of deadly accidents to hit Egypt's rail network.

Another 49 people were injured in the crash, which happened in Zagazig, 80 kilometres north of Cairo, the ministry said. State-owned newspaper *Al Ahram* said two children were among the dead.

Transport Minister Kamel el



Wazir said that the cause of the collision was "the human element, but what exactly we leave to the security services to determine", adding there had been no technical issues. — AFP

DUBAI

Iran's President to attend BRICS summit

Iran's President Masoud Pezeshkian will attend the upcoming BRICS summit in Russia, state media cited Tehran's ambassador in Moscow as saying on Sunday, amid tensions with the West over military cooperation between the two countries.

Iran's ambassador in Russia Kazem Jalali confirmed on Sunday that Pezeshkian will attend the summit of the BRICS group of major emerging economies, scheduled to be held in Kazan, Russia from October 22 to 24,



according to state media. Pezeshkian will meet his Russian Vladimir Putin there. Iran and Russia are set to sign a bilateral comprehensive cooperation agreement. — Reuters



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MONDAY | SEPTEMBER 16 | 2024

7

In brief

■ AMBLETEUSE



EIGHT MIGRANTS DIE IN CHANNEL CROSSING ATTEMPT

Eight migrants died on Sunday when their overcrowded vessel capsized while trying to cross the Channel from France to England, authorities said, less than two weeks after the deadliest such disaster this year.

Regional prefect Jacques Billant said the incident happened at around 1:00 am off the coast of the northern town of Ambleteuse.

“The toll was terrible, with eight people reported dead,” he told the press near the site of the accident.

The boat had set off from the Slack river that flows into the sea between the towns of Wimereux and Ambleteuse. It had 59 people on board. — AFP

■ MADRID



EU'S TOP DIPLOMAT CALLS VENEZUELAN GOVT 'DICTATORIAL'

The European Union's top diplomat, Josep Borrell, called Venezuelan President Nicolas Maduro's government “dictatorial” during an interview on Sunday in Spain. Venezuela recalled its ambassador to Madrid for consultations and summoned Spain's envoy to Caracas for talks after Spanish Defence Minister Margarita Robles referred to Maduro's administration as a “dictatorship” and saluted “the Venezuelans”

“What do you call all this? Of course, this is a dictatorial, authoritarian, dictatorial regime. Saying so doesn't solve anything. What we need to do is to try to solve it,” said Borrell. — AFP

■ CULICAN



SEVERAL KILLED IN NEW VIOLENCE IN NORTHWEST MEXICO

Several people were killed in northwest Mexico, authorities said, after fighting between rival factions of the Sinaloa Cartel left at least 15 dead in the area this week. Three civilians were killed during a clash between the army and “armed civilians,” the Sinaloa state public security department said in a statement.

The department also reported “two homicides” without specifying whether they were linked to the cartel infighting.

Five people died in the town of Concordia which has seen “violent events” between organised crime gangs. The state prosecutor's office had reported 15 deaths since Monday. — AFP

Rough storm lashes central, eastern Europe

GLUCHOLAZY: One person has drowned in Poland and an Austrian fireman has died responding to floods, authorities said on Sunday, as Storm Boris lashed central and eastern Europe with torrential rains.

Since Thursday, swathes of Austria, the Czech Republic, Hungary, Romania and Slovakia have been hit by high winds and unusually heavy rainfall.

The rains have flooded streets and submerged entire neighbourhoods in some places, while shutting down public transport and electricity in others.

Romanians waded through armpit-high water to safety, Poles sought shelter in schools, and Czechs hurriedly put up sand dykes in an effort to keep the water at bay.

Sunday's deaths bring the overall toll from the storm to seven, with thousands evacuated across the continent.

In Romania, a body was found on Sunday, after four people were reported killed earlier. Four more people were reported missing in the Czech Republic.

“The water came into the house, it destroyed the walls, everything,” Sofia Basalic, 60, a resident of Romania's village of Pechea said, in the hard-hit region of Galati. “It took the chickens, the rabbits, everything.



Rescuers work at a flooded area, following heavy rainfall in Jeseník, Czech Republic. — Reuters

It took the oven, the washing machine, the refrigerator. I have nothing left,” she said.

Polish Prime Minister Donald Tusk said on Sunday morning that “we have the first confirmed death by drowning, in the

Klodzko region” on the Polish-Czech border in the southwest of the country, which has been hit hardest by the floods. Around 1,600 people have been evacuated in Klodzko, and Polish authorities have called in the army to

support firefighters.

Separately, a fireman in northeastern Austria died in floods in the Lower Austria region, which has been classified as a natural disaster zone.

Emergency services had

The rains have flooded streets and submerged entire neighbourhoods in some places, while shutting down public transport and electricity in others

made nearly 5,000 interventions overnight in the state of Lower Austria, where flooding had trapped many residents in their homes.

Polish authorities shut the Golkowice border crossing with the Czech Republic after a river flooded its banks on Saturday, as well as closing several roads and halting trains on the line linking the towns of Prudnik and Nysa. In the Czech Republic, police reported four people were missing on Sunday.

Three were in a car that was swept into a river in the northeastern town of Lipova-Lazne, and another man was missing after being swept away by floods in the southeast. A dam in the south of the country burst its banks, flooding towns and villages downstream. In the village of Velke Hostice, residents put up a wall of sandbags 500 metres long in an effort to hold back the rising waters of the River Opava. — AFP

Deadly shelling in Pokrovsk as Russia inches closer

KYIV: Russian shelling killed one person in the eastern Ukrainian city of Pokrovsk on Sunday, local authorities said, as Moscow's troops inched closer to the key logistics hub.

More than 20,000 people have fled the city since August, while Russian strikes over the past two weeks have cut off water and electricity to many of its remaining residents.

“Around 11:00 am, the enemy shelled the western part of the city... Unfortunately, one person died,” Pokrovsk's military administration said on Telegram.

Separately, a Russian air strike sparked a fire at a multi-storey residential building in the northeastern city of Kharkiv on Sunday, officials said. “At the moment, there are almost 30 wounded, including children,” Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said on Telegram.

Russia has been advancing towards Pokrovsk for months, getting to within 10 kilometres of its eastern outskirts, according to the local administration.

The city lies on the intersection of rail and road routes that supply Ukrainian troops and towns across the eastern frontline and has long been a target for Moscow's army. Russian strikes damaged two overpasses in the city earlier this week, including one that connected Pokrovsk to the neighbouring town of Myrnohrad.

Meanwhile, UK Foreign Secretary David Lammy accused Russian President Vladimir Putin of “bluster” on Sunday over his warning that letting Ukraine use long-range weapons to strike inside Russia would



A view shows a site of a Russian air strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Kharkiv, Ukraine. — Reuters

More than 20,000 people have fled the city since August, while Russian strikes over the past two weeks have cut off water and electricity

put Nato “at war” with Moscow. Tensions between Russia and the West over the conflict reached dire levels this week as US President Joe Biden and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer met at the White House to discuss whether to ease rules on Kyiv's use of western-supplied weaponry.

“I think that what Putin's doing is throwing dust up into the air,” Lammy said. “There's a

lot of bluster. That's his modus operandi. He threatens about tanks, he threatens about missiles, he threatens about nuclear weapons.”

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky has been asking for permission to use British Storm Shadow missiles and US-made ATACMS missiles to hit targets deeper inside Russia for months. Biden and Starmer delayed a decision on the move during their meeting on Friday.

Lammy said that talks between Starmer, Biden and Zelensky over the use of the missiles would continue at the United Nations General Assembly gathering in New York later this month. — AFP

Historic astronaut mission ends with splashdown off Florida

WASHINGTON: The SpaceX Polaris Dawn mission, which made history when its crew conducted the first spacewalk by non-government astronauts, concluded early on Sunday with a splashdown off the coast of Florida.

The Dragon spacecraft plunged into the ocean at 3:37 am, a webcast of the arrival showed, with a recovery team deploying in the pre-dawn darkness to retrieve the capsule and crew. The capsule was lifted from the water and onto the recovery vessel half a hour later.

After brief medical checks, a smiling and waving SpaceX engineer Anna Menon was the first of the crew to exit, followed by engineer Sarah Gillis, pilot Scott Poteet and commander Jared Isaacman.

A helicopter was due to transport them to land. “Happy, healthy, home,” the Polaris Program wrote on X.

The four-member team led by fintech billionaire Isaacman launched on Tuesday from the Kennedy Space Center, quickly journeying deeper into the cosmos than any humans in

the past half century as they ventured into the dangerous Van Allen radiation belt.

They hit a peak altitude of 1,400 kilometres — more than three times higher than the International Space Station and the furthest humans had ever travelled from Earth since the Apollo missions to the Moon.

“SpaceX, back at home we all have a lot of work to do, but from here, Earth sure looks like a perfect world,” he told mission control in Hawthorne, California, where teams erupted in applause.

He went back inside after a few minutes and was replaced by a second astronaut, SpaceX engineer Gillis, who, like Isaacman, performed a series of mobility tests on SpaceX's sleek, next-generation suits.

Mission pilot Poteet and SpaceX engineer Menon remained strapped in throughout as they monitored vital support systems.

It marked a “giant leap forward” for the commercial space industry as well as another triumphant achievement for SpaceX. — AFP



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket lifts off with Polaris Dawn, a private human spaceflight mission, at the Kennedy Space Center, Florida. — Reuters file photo

Breaking stigma: A path to suicide prevention



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
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The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

A client who attended my clinic last week informed me that his cousin shot himself and died. The family noticed that he was becoming more withdrawn, neglecting himself, and refusing to go to work.

He was once observed trying to strangle himself with a scarf and when someone suggested they take him to the psychiatric hospital the elders in the family protested saying it would bring shame to the family and “what would people say about us”.

The family then took the young man to a traditional healer who gave him some herbal liquid to drink and advised him to pray. The following night the family woke up to the sound of a gunshot and found the young man dead.

Tragically, stories like this are not unique to one family. The ripple effects of suicide can be felt worldwide.

The September 10 was designated by the WHO as World Suicide Prevention Day, which is dedicated to addressing this serious phenomenon, raising public awareness, and encouraging government to develop national strategies for suicide prevention.

Suicide is a devastating act that leaves loved ones grappling with mixed emotions and unanswered questions such as, “Why did they do it?” “Why didn’t they ask for help?” and “Could we have done something to stop them?”

Some family members experience complicated grief, sadness, and anger. They may struggle with feelings of abandonment, believing that the deceased chose to ‘leave them behind.’

This highlights the critical need for targeted support and interventions for survivors to help them cope with the immense burden of grief and prevent further tragedy.

So, what can be done to prevent suicide in Oman?

In my opinion, the first step is to combat the stigma surrounding mental health, which is the main reason why people are reluctant to seek help. In Oman and other Islamic societies, many people believe that mental illness, including suicide, stems from ‘not being spiritual enough.’

This perception can make individuals contemplating suicide feel even more hopeless, as they may blame themselves for their condition rather than seeking support.

Another key step is to ensure timely and effective access to mental health care.

Many people in crisis, especially those contemplating suicide, cannot wait for a routine clinic appointment. Therefore, it is essential to develop crisis response services and mental health facilities that are readily available and equipped to handle urgent situations. This includes helplines, crisis intervention teams, and walk-in mental health clinics.

While mental illness is one of the leading causes of suicide, we must also address other significant social and economic factors, such as unemployment, bullying, social isolation, and the lack of social cohesion.

These issues often exacerbate feelings of despair and hopelessness.

National strategies should incorporate comprehensive social policies that support those facing these challenges, fostering a sense of community and belonging.

By addressing mental health openly and ensuring timely support, we can save lives. Each of us has a role to play in preventing suicide — whether through raising awareness, offering support to those in need, or pushing for improved mental health services.

SUICIDE IS A DEVASTATING ACT THAT LEAVES LOVED ONES GRAPPLING WITH MIXED EMOTIONS AND UNANSWERED QUESTIONS SUCH AS, ‘WHY DID THEY DO IT?’, ‘WHY DIDN’T THEY ASK FOR HELP?’

Sudan museums’ precious antiquities looted in war

Sudan’s priceless archaeological heritage is being stripped from museums, with looters loading statuettes and fragments of ancient palaces onto lorries, smuggling them out of the war-torn country, and selling them online.

More than a year of war between generals has killed tens of thousands of people, forced millions more to flee their homes, and left the country’s prized antiquities at the mercy of pillagers.

Last Thursday, Unesco, the United Nations’s cultural body, said the “threat to culture appears to have reached an unprecedented level, with reports of looting of museums, heritage and archaeological sites and private collections”.

In the capital Khartoum, where fighting broke out in April 2023 between the army and paramilitary forces, the recently renovated Sudan National Museum has had prized artefacts stolen, archaeologists and officials say.

The museum houses prehistoric artefacts from the Palaeolithic era and items from the famed site of Kerma in northern Sudan, as well as Pharaonic and Nubian pieces. First opened in 1971, the museum was founded in part to house objects rescued from an area due to be flooded by the construction of Egypt’s massive Aswan dam.

Now, its artefacts are under threat from war.

“The Sudan National Museum has been the subject of major looting,” said Ikhlas Abdel Latif, head of museums at the national antiquities authority. “Archaeological objects stored there have been taken in big lorries and transferred to the west and to border areas, particularly near South Sudan,” she said. The extent of the looting is hard to determine because the museum is located in an area controlled by the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). Officials and experts have accused the RSF of looting the site. A spokesman for the force did not comment.

In May, the RSF said it was being “vigilant” in “protecting and preserving the antiquities of the Sudanese people”. Throughout history, fighters have used plunder to fund their war efforts.

Unesco said it was calling on “the public and the art market... in the region and worldwide to refrain” from trading in Sudanese items.

The agency also said it was planning training in the Egyptian capital Cairo for law enforcement and the judiciary from Sudan’s neighbours.

“Because of the war, the museum and the artefacts are not being monitored,” said Hassan Hussein, a researcher and former director of the national antiquities authority.

The Island of Meroe, a Unesco World Heritage site that is home to the capital of the ancient Kingdom of Kush and dozens of its pyramids, is also under threat. — AFP

Who are the English?



Karim Easterbrook
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The writer is Former School Principal Cambridge UK

MANY books and articles attempt to define what it means to be English, but the best I have read is Jeremy Paxman’s “The English: A Portrait of a People.”

Even Paxman, however, struggles with the task. As an English person, I recognise certain traits in myself and my fellow countrymen. Despite my frequent criticisms of the English, I like them — or at least, most of them.

This, too, is a distinctly English trait: we criticise everything — our government, the cost of food, foreigners, the health service, and, of course, the weather.

The list is endless. We joke about everything, finding those who take themselves too seriously, especially foreigners, particularly amusing. Above all, we laugh at ourselves and much of the best English comedy is self-directed.

We don’t take ourselves seriously and often cringe when we hear American politicians call their country “great” or when figures like Donald Trump or Kamala Harris are met with cheers and shouts.

For the English, this is embarrassing; the most our own politicians might receive, if they’re lucky, is a polite clap.

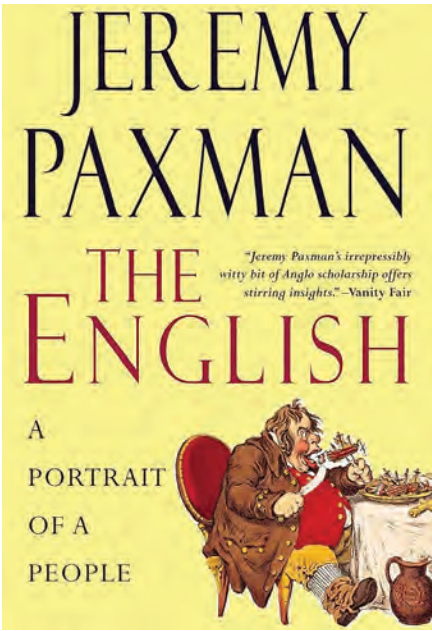
This brief article cannot fully answer the question of who the English are, but it might help illustrate that there is no simple answer and that the English are complex.

Even I find it difficult to define them.

We differ from our European neighbours in many ways, and being an island nation is at least partly responsible for this. When I asked other English people what it means to be English, few, if any, could answer.

I wasn’t looking for a definition of who qualifies as English — many would say you have to be born in England with two English parents — but rather how the English perceive themselves.

Since even we English don’t know what makes us English, it’s no wonder that foreigners struggle to understand us. Our closest European neighbours, the French, fought alongside us to defeat Germany in 1945, yet a recent survey revealed that the Germans like us more than the French do.



The French gave various reasons for finding the English difficult. They take pride in their language and literature and are annoyed that English tourists speak only English.

THE WRITER IN THIS ARTICLE CANNOT FULLY ANSWER THE QUESTION OF WHO THE ENGLISH ARE, BUT HELP ILLUSTRATE THAT THERE IS NO SIMPLE ANSWER AND THAT THE ENGLISH ARE COMPLEX

As someone who speaks French and has studied French literature, I understand this. Most English people think they’ve achieved something if they can say “bonjour” or “merci.”

The French see us as hypocritical, condemning them for force-feeding geese for foie gras while we kill badgers and foxes if they become a nuisance.

They also criticise the way English women dress, being overweight and wearing ill-fitting clothes, while English men drink too much, have large bellies, and wear jeans and trainers for almost any occasion.

Most English people would agree with these criticisms, but what the French fail to understand is that we don’t particularly care how we appear

to others and will often be the first to laugh at ourselves.

SO MUCH TEA

One question foreigners also ask is why we English drink so much tea. The simple answer is that we like the taste, it warms us in cold weather, and it’s a mild stimulant when we’re tired.

But tea drinking is more than that — it’s a sign of friendliness. We English aren’t always good at showing emotion, so offering tea to someone upset shows you care. If there’s an argument, offering tea can help calm things down. Tea, for the English, is not just a drink; it’s part of our culture.

Foreigners are bemused by our obsession with the weather.

Samuel Johnson once observed that when two Englishmen meet, they’re quick to talk about the weather, stating what is already obvious. What foreigners fail to understand is that talking about the weather isn’t because we are amateur meteorologists; it’s our way of being friendly and starting a conversation.

Saying, “It’s freezing out there” is stating the obvious, but it’s a way of breaking the ice.

GENERALLY HONEST

The English can be arrogant and often think they’re the best, but we are generally honest, sometimes humble, and willing to admit when we’re not excelling, especially in football.

Football is another English obsession. We are modest about our achievements, usually polite, and strangely often say “sorry” even when we’re not at fault.

We are easy to please and rarely complain in restaurants. However, while we happily laugh at ourselves, we don’t accept criticism from foreigners gracefully.

English football fans wave the English flag at international matches and when they lose they can react in ways that others rightly find aggressive. I have not even touched upon the delicate question of whether the English see themselves as British or both English and British.

The Irish and Scots increasingly view themselves as distinct nations and often object to being called British as a result the United Kingdom is increasingly less united.

Conveying mercy throughout his lifetime

The noble message of the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) can be encapsulated in a single word: Mercy. The Almighty Allah, who sent the message and chose the Messenger, describes this quality in the Holy Quran. As stated in the verse, “And We have not sent you, O Muhammad, except as a mercy to the worlds.” Mercy, as a key concept here, embodies the spirit of Islam and the essence of the Prophet’s message. This attribute is also reflected in the name of Allah, the Creator of the universe, as He describes Himself: “In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful.” In another verse, Allah says, “My mercy encompasses all things.” The Prophet Muhammad was chosen by Allah to deliver the message of mercy to humanity. His life exemplified this moral principle, evident in his sayings, actions, and interactions. The Prophet’s compassion towards believers was unparalleled. The Quran describes it in this verse: “There has certainly come to you a Messenger from among yourselves. Grievous to him is what you suffer; (he is) concerned over you (i.e., your guidance) and to the believers is kind and merciful.” Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) was renowned for his love, kindness, and compassion, considered the most loving and compassionate among his people. The Holy Quran reflects on his gentle behaviour, “O Messenger of Allah! It is a great Mercy of God that you are gentle and kind towards them; for, had you been harsh and hard-hearted, they would all have broken away from you.” The Prophet taught people to show mercy and respect to one another, stating, “He who does not show mercy to others will not be shown mercy.” In another instance, when some people requested him to ask Allah to punish the disbelievers, the Prophet responded, “I have not been sent to curse, but as a mercy.” Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) exemplified the highest level of mercy achievable by a human being. Numerous sayings, testimonies,



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NUMEROUS SAYINGS, TESTIMONIES, STORIES, AND INCIDENTS HIGHLIGHT THE SIGNIFICANCE AND APPLICATION OF THIS VALUE IN THE PROPHET’S LIFE

stories, and incidents highlight the significance and application of this value in the Prophet’s life. His personal interactions were characterised by kindness and patience. He treated people with dignity, listened to them attentively, and showed a genuine concern for their welfare. Whether dealing with the poor, the orphaned, or those who had wronged him, his approach was always marked by gentleness and forgiveness. One of the Prophet’s companions reflected on his kindness and gentleness, particularly towards the weak and poor: “I served Allah’s Messenger for ten years, and he never said to me, ‘Shame’ or ‘Why did you do such-and-such a thing?’ or ‘Why did you not do such-and-such a thing?’ He was always kind and gentle to everyone around him.” Likewise, the Prophet Muhammad once told his wife, “O ‘Aisha! Never turn away any needy man from your door empty-handed. O ‘Aisha! Love the poor; bring them near to you, and Allah will bring you near to Him on the Day of Resurrection.” He emphasised interdependence among humans, saying, “All creatures are Allah’s dependents, and those dearest to Allah are those who treat His dependents kindly.” Reflecting his commitment to spreading mercy to all living beings, the Prophet Muhammad (PBUH) stated, “There is a reward for kindness to every living thing.” Addressing his companions, the Prophet said, “Allah has revealed to me that you must be humble. No one should boast over one another, and no one should oppress another.” His love, compassion, and mercy were genuine and profound, unlike the superficial claims of modern humanism. The Prophet Muhammad’s sincere and balanced kindness stemmed from being raised by Allah, the Creator and Sustainer of all. He lived not for himself, but for others. The Prophet stands as an exemplary figure in the history of humanity, not only for his role as a religious leader, but also for his profound model of mercy and compassion.

ACROBATIC FLYING!



French Air Force Elite acrobatic flying team 'Patrouille de France' perform a fly-over during a parade of French athletes who competed in the Paris 2024 Olympic and Paralympic Games in Paris. – AFP

Asia’s consumer tipping point

With market turmoil recently capturing headlines, it is easy to lose sight of the long-term forces which have been shaping Asia’s development. While Asian markets, especially the Nikkei, experienced sharp losses in recent weeks, a positive tipping point has been reached as well: for the first time ever, over half of Asia’s 4.8 billion people are part of the global consumer class, defined by the World Data Lab as those spending more than \$12 per day in purchasing power parity prices. The importance of this milestone can hardly be overstated. It marks the transition from poverty to a more typical middle-class lifestyle, where individuals start engaging in discretionary spending on items like motorcycles, gas stoves, and beauty products. The dominance of Asians in the global consumer class is a relatively recent development. Until 2000, the global consumer class was predominantly Western, totalling 1.7 billion people. In 1980, over 70 per cent of the consumer class was in wealthy OECD countries. World Data Lab estimates that today, almost 60 per cent of the global consumer class is Asian. Asia currently has 2.4 billion consumers and will add one billion more in the next decade, implying that it will account for 65 per cent of the global consumer class.



Juan Caballero

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Wolfgang Fengler

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But the Asian consumer is mostly an entry-level consumer, spending on average \$20 per day. This means that Asia’s total spending power is currently \$19 trillion, roughly 30 per cent of global consumer spending. The dichotomy of rapid growth in Asia’s consumer class and only moderately strong growth in consumer spending will continue. In our latest World Consumer Outlook, we project that Asia will continue to lead global consumer class growth, contributing 110 million of the 134 million new consumers expected next year. Additionally, one-third of every additional dollar spent globally will come from Asia. World Data Lab projects that India will surpass China in adding people to the consumer class next year, with India contributing 47 million new consumers compared to China’s 33 million (Chart 2). Following them are five often overlooked Asian economies: Indonesia (+6 million), Bangladesh (+4 million), Vietnam (+4 million), the Philippines (+3 million), and Pakistan (+2.5 million). In Olympic terms, Asia will dominate the top seven positions among the global consumer class leaders for 2024, followed by the United States, Brazil, and Egypt, respectively.

There are still 2.4 billion people in Asia who have yet to enter the consumer class, along with an additional 330 million newborns by 2034. This represents more than half of the world’s future consumers. World Data Lab projects that Asia will add one billion new consumers and \$15 trillion in additional consumer spending by 2034. Most countries in emerging Asia, however, have yet to reach the tipping point. China and Vietnam did in the last decade, and World Data Lab

projects that India, Indonesia, and the Philippines will soon (in 2027, 2028, and 2029, respectively). Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Nepal will become majority consumer markets only in the 2030s (Chart 3). While the growth momentum of Asia’s consumer class is strong, the current economic environment is volatile. Recent market turbulence in Asia has raised concerns about investor confidence and the stability of financial markets in the region. But these risks are likely

only to delay, rather than derail, the expansion of Asia’s consumer base. Like the Covid-19 pandemic, which similarly interrupted the growth of Asia’s consumer class, these challenges will not stop Asia’s long-term rise in consumer power. The underlying factors driving this growth – longer life expectancy, better education, urbanisation – have been put in place over the last decades, and these long-term shifts will influence Asia’s trajectory more than any short-term shock could undo. © Project Syndicate, 2024



The dominance of Asians in the global consumer class is a relatively recent development.

sport

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Qualifying session ends with Al Harthy at Fuji Speedway

FUJI: Fuji Speedway in Japan delivered a very close qualifying session on Saturday ahead of the penultimate race of the FIA World Endurance Championships season – Oman’s Ahmad Al Harthy concluding the run 12th fastest. Taking a sixth row start for tomorrow’s 6 Hours of Fuji, the Team WRT squad opted to utilise two sets of tyres during the session in order to maximise the performance available to them – Fuji not the most favourable of circuits for the BMW M4 LMGT3. Following the mid-session pit-stop, Al Harthy emerged to produce his quickest lap as the clock counted down but unfortunately missed out on the cut-off for progression into the top 10 Hyperpole shoot-off by little more than two tenths of a second. Preparations for the race weekend with team-mates Maxime Martin and Valentino Rossi got underway on Friday, 13h September, with two free practice sessions and after a further practice period today Al Harthy headed into qualifying.

The OQ, Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, Omantel, Experience Oman and BMW Oman supported driver was among the first to join the track as soon as the green light came on for the 12-minute session to begin. Setting a time of 1m44.981 seconds on his first lap as he started to build up speed and tyre temperature, on his first true flyer the Omani improved to 1m42.141 seconds. With five minutes of the short-sharp



session to run, the Team WRT driver was on the bubble of the top 10 cut-off for progression into Hyperpole with just a couple of tenths of a second making the difference. He then made a swift pit-stop to fit a fresh set of Goodyear tyres and re-emerged with just enough time for two

more laps. Sitting 16th on the times and with the pressure building, Ahmad climbed back into the top 12 with his best lap of the session – 1m41.866 seconds. With just over 0.2 seconds to find to break into Hyperpole, a further improvement wasn’t possible and so he concluded

qualifying in 12th position. Ahmad al Harthy: “Qualifying was the best we could do, Fuji is one of the toughest tracks for us. In terms of our strategy, we always we decided we wanted to do two flyers with two sets of tyres. Our strategy did work for us, and we’re happy with that decision as we moved up to P12 in the end. We know we can have a better race than qualifying, so hopefully we can do that.

“It’s going to be a long six hour race, and there will be tyre degradation, so it’s going to be interesting for us. There are a lot of positives we’ve taken from quali, it’s the fastest I’ve been all weekend – so that’s a good sign. We know our competitors have an edge here, for many different reasons, so our job is to reduce that and climb as many places as we can in the race.”

Round seven of the FIA WEC season, the 6 Hours of Fuji, is scheduled to begin at 11.00 local time tomorrow, Sunday, 15th September. Follow everything live at www.fiawec.com

Provisional FIA World Endurance Championship LMGT3 Driver Standings (after Rd6)
1st Aliaksandr Malykhin / Joel Sturm / Klaus Bachler, 118pts
2nd Morris Schuring / Richard Lietz / Yasser Shahin, 90pts
3rd Augusto Farfus / Darren Leung / Sean Gelael, 84pts
4th Alex Riberas / Daniel Mancinelli / Ian James, 81pts
5th Alessio Rovera / Francois Heriau / Simon Mann, 50pts
6th Ahmad Al Harthy / Maxime Martin / Valentino Rossi, 46pts

OC Team emerge Champions of Under-23 3x3 Basketball Tournament



AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

The OC team lifted the Under-23 3x3 Basketball Tournament’s title following their victory over Al Amerat 14-11 in a thrilling final held at the Strike Sports Center at OAA. The tournament, organised in collaboration with the Oman Basketball Association 3x3 Committee, Strike Sports Center and Al Helm Company saw participation of 10 teams comprising club players and residents of Oman.

The tournament was marked by intense competition with teams divided into two groups and playing a round-robin format in the preliminary rounds. The top two teams from each group advanced to the semi-finals, which were played in a knockout format. The winners of the semi-finals faced off in the final for the championship while the losers competed for third place.

In the final, the OC and Al

Amerat teams delivered an evenly matched performance trading leads throughout the game. However, in the final minutes, OC managed to score a crucial three-pointer to secure a 14-11 victory.

At the tournament’s conclusion, Alaa al Hadhrami, a member of the OBA and Chairman of the 3x3 Committee, presented the awards to the winners. The OC team, consisting of Wahid Tasbaji, Zakaria Ajun and Shimin Adikio claimed the gold medals and a cash prize. Al Amerat, comprising Qasi al Amri, Al Hawari al Hasheli, Mazin al Awaisi and Ibrahim al Balushi secured the silver medals. Super Science clinched the bronze medal after defeating Breakly United 14-8.

Al Hadhrami commended the high level of play displayed throughout the tournament, noting that the matches featured diverse styles and intense competition among the participating teams.

Oman Club outclass Ibri, Saham edge Al Khabourah

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

Oman Club earned a thrilling 2-0 victory over Ibri in a match held on Saturday at the Ibri Sports Complex, as part of the fourth round of the Omani Football League.

The match started at a fast pace from Ibri, who sought to score an early goal. In the third minute, player Branly Augustin fired a powerful shot from outside the penalty area, but it passed near the left post of Oman Club. Minutes later, Augustin sent a cross into the penalty area of Oman Club to his teammate Ismail Ruti, who shot it quickly but it passed the right post.

The pressure and wasted opportunities continued from both teams, as Oman goalkeeper Abdulaziz al Hasani stopped a powerful shot from Augustin in the twentieth minute. Before the end of the first half, Oman had a dangerous opportunity through Ismail Ruti, but he couldn’t capitalise, leaving the first half to end in a goalless draw.

At the beginning of the second half, Oman Club imposed its control and succeeded in scoring the first goal in the 47th minute through Daniel Aitor Essien,



who shot a low ball from outside the penalty area. Ibri tried to return to the match after the goal, but goalkeeper al Hasani was alert and blocked a powerful shot from Augustin in the 63rd minute. Ibri’s attempts to equalise continued, but Yazid al Rawahi missed a valuable opportunity in the 80th minute after the

goalkeeper blocked it. In the 92nd minute, Oman striker Kiatalwa Imus took advantage of a defensive mistake to penetrate Ibri’s defence and score the second goal, confirming his team’s victory with a score of 2-0. With this victory, Oman Club raised its score to 10 points, while



Ibri’s score froze at 3 points, remaining in eighth place, behind Al Rustaq and Sohar on goal difference.

SAHAM CLUB WINS AL BATINAH NORTH DERBY
Saham Club managed to secure a hard-fought 1-0 victory over their rival Al Khabourah in a

match held at the Sohar Sports Complex. Saham Club started the half with pressure and possession of the ball, while Al Khabourah’s performance declined slightly. Despite this decline, Al Khabourah returned to form an advantage in terms of opportunities and building attacks, as it tried to reach

Saham’s goal several times. In the sixth minute, Ahmed al Riyami shot a ball from deep, but it was easy for Saham’s goalkeeper. On the other hand, Saham Club tried to exploit some opportunities at the beginning of the first half, as Ali al Hashemi shot a powerful ball in the 18th minute, which was blocked by Al Khabourah’s goalkeeper. The first half ended in a goalless draw.

In the second half, the excitement increased with the opening of the game from both teams. Saham succeeded in exploiting this openness, as Ali al Hashemi scored the only goal of the match in the 53rd minute.

Saham tried to strengthen the result and relied on counterattacks, and in the 75th minute, Emmanuel missed a sure opportunity after being alone with Al Khabourah’s goalkeeper.

As for Al Khabourah, they appeared to be in a state of decline after receiving the early goal in the second half. The match ended with Saham Club winning 1-0.

With this win, Saham earned their first 3 points in the Omani League while Al Khabourah’s winning streak came to an end leaving them with 6 points from 3 matches.

ORSC UNVEILS NEW LOGO, VISUAL IDENTITY

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

The Oman Racket Sports Committee (ORSC) recently unveiled its new visual identity, including a new logo. Established in July 2023, the committee also launched the official logo for the upcoming West Asian Junior Badminton Championship, which will be hosted in Muscat from October 2 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. Both logos were unveiled on the committee's social media channels across various platforms.

"ORSC worked closely with an experienced team to find a logo that reflects its goals and interests in both sports. The logo needed to be simple yet effective in communicating the committee's identity to the sporting community. The final design was selected from five options, all representing the committee's clear vision," said Khalid al Sulaimani, board member of ORSC and head of marketing and identity.

"The logo of the West Asia Junior Badminton Championship highlights the broader role sports play in fostering unity. This is a message especially important for Oman given its emphasis on peace, cultural harmony, and sportsmanship. The upcoming



championship, which is the first of its kind in Oman, is set to be the largest in West Asia's badminton history," he added. The new identity of ORSC will mark a significant milestone and a strong start for the committee, reflecting the remarkable growth in badminton and squash since its establishment in July 2023.

The committee's logo was designed to represent both sports, integrating visual elements that embody the essence of both sports in a harmonious and unique design.

As the committee gears up to host the West Asia Junior Badminton Championship, the logo was launched. The published logo symbolises unity and sportsmanship across the

region, combining the colours of the participating nations with imagery from badminton, illustrating how the sport fosters cultural unity and connection among countries in the region.

UNIQUE HARMONY

Abdulmajeed al Abri, the designer of the committee's logo, said that the design integrates elements of both squash and badminton, featuring a combination of visual cues from each sport.

"The upper part of the logo is shaped by components from a badminton shuttlecock, while the lower part incorporates the distinct shape of a squash racket, focusing on its unique angles," he explained.



CULTURAL UNITY

Ruqaya bint Khalaf al Maamariyah, the designer of the championship logo, said that the logo offers a unique glimpse into the spirit of the event. "The logo reinforces cultural unity in

the region. The design captures the essence of the tournament with elements from badminton while also reflecting the cultural diversity of West Asia through its colours," she said.

"The design not only

represents the sport but also underscores the values of unity and cooperation among the participating nations, fostering a sense of connection and camaraderie during the event," she added.

Brook to replace injured Buttler as England captain for Australia ODIs



LONDON: Harry Brook is set to captain England for the first time in the upcoming one-day international (ODI) series against Australia after Jos Buttler's persistent calf injury ruled him out, team management announced on Sunday.

Buttler has not played a competitive match since defending champions England lost a T20 World Cup semi-final against India in Guyana in June. Buttler, 34, suffered a setback and has been forced to miss both the three-match T20 series, which concludes on Sunday, and the five-game ODI contest with Australia.

The 25-year-old Brook has only 15 caps in ODI cricket and said during last year's chastening World Cup campaign in India, where England endured a woeful defence of their 50-over title, he was still "trying to figure out the format".

But England already regard the Yorkshire batsman as a future long-term leader and his appointment means they will

have deployed a new skipper in all three international formats this season.

Ollie Pope took over as Test captain from Ben Stokes when the all-rounder's hamstring injury meant he missed the three-match series against Sri Lanka, with Phil Salt leading the T20 side after Buttler was sidelined.

Josh Hull, the 20-year-old left-arm fast bowler who made his Test debut in the Sri Lanka series finale at the Oval earlier this month, had been due to be a member of the 50-over squad but has suffered a quad injury and will rest ahead of next month's trip to Pakistan.

Liam Livingstone, initially dropped from the ODI squad, has been recalled after two notable performances in a T20 campaign against Australia level at 1-1 ahead of Sunday's decider in Manchester.

The ODI series against Australia, the reigning 50-over world champions, begins at Nottingham's Trent Bridge ground on Thursday. — AFP

Italy, Argentina qualify for Davis Cup final eight after tough battle

PARIS: Defending champions Italy qualified for the Davis Cup final eight on Saturday without playing as Argentina advanced with a dominant 3-0 win over Finland.

Italy and Argentina join Spain, Australia, the United States and Germany, who are already through to the eight-team finals in Malaga, Spain from November 19-24.

On Sunday, the last two places are up for grabs with Britain needing to beat Canada 3-0 at home in Manchester to take the Group D berth ahead of the Canadians.

All is to play for in Group A between Brazil, Belgium and the Netherlands, depending on the result of the clash between the Dutch and Italy.

In Bologna, Italy advanced thanks to Brazil's 2-1 victory over Belgium. Brazil's Thiago Monteiro beat Belgian Zizou Bergs 4-6, 7-6 (7/5), 7-5 after Joao Fonseca defeated Raphael Collignon 6-3, 7-6 (7/3), 6-3.

Belgium kept their slim hopes alive thanks to their doubles victory.

In Group D, Guillermo Coria's Argentina powered back after 2-1 to Canada on Tuesday crushing last year's semi-finalists Finland.

Tomas Martin Etcheverry beat Eero Vasa 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 with Francisco Cerundolo battling past Otto Virtanen 6-7 (4/7), 6-1, 6-0.

Maximo Gonzalez and Andres Molteni survived dropping their opening set to take the doubles. Argentina return to the last eight for the first time since 2019.

"We knew we had to win 3-0," said Gonzalez.

Etcheverry added: "The Davis Cup was a tournament I always dreamed about as a child. It



Argentina's Andres Molteni and Maximo Gonzalez celebrate after winning their doubles match. — REUTERS

was so important to get the first point."

In China, Reilly Opelka saved two match points, with Brandon Nakashima also winning as the United States beat Germany 2-1 to take top spot in Group C.

Both 32-times tournament winners USA and Germany were already through to the final eight but were playing for top spot in the group which helps determine seeding.

Bob Bryan's US team made it three wins out of three having also defeated Slovakia and Chile.

Opelka beat Germany's Henri Squire 6-7 (4/7), 7-6 (11/9), 6-3

in Zhuhai with Nakashima easing past Maximilian Marterer 6-4, 6-2. Germany's Kevin Krawietz and Tim Puetz won the doubles rubber. In World Group 1, Novak Djokovic eased to a 6-0, 6-1 victory over Ioannis Xilas as Serbia took a 2-0 lead over Greece. The 37-year-old world number four, who won the Davis Cup with Serbia in 2010, wrapped up the match in just 45 minutes.

Earlier Miomir Kecmanovic gave Serbia a 1-0 lead with a 6-3, 6-3 win over Aristotelis Thanos.

Djokovic is playing his first match since losing in the third

round of the US Open. "It is always a great pleasure to play here," said Djokovic.

"This may be the last time I will play in front of this audience. The format is changing.

"It's been seven years since I last played the Davis Cup here. I don't know if I have seven more years of my career. We'll see, some young tennis players who will defend the colours of the national team need to take over the helm."

Casper Ruud secured a 3-1 win for Norway in their World Group I tie against Portugal.

— AFP

MESSI SCORES TWICE IN TRIUMPHANT INJURY RETURN FOR MIAMI

MIAMI: Lionel Messi dazzled in his return from injury on Saturday, scoring two goals in the space of four minutes and adding an assist in Inter Miami's 3-1 Major League Soccer victory over the Philadelphia Union.

The eight-time Ballon d'Or winner hadn't played since injuring his right ankle during the Copa America final on July 14, when he helped Argentina to victory over Colombia.

Since then he had missed eight MLS games for his club and this month's World Cup qualifiers for his country.

Messi hadn't played for Inter since June 1, but he didn't miss a beat as he was inserted into the starting lineup.

"The truth is that I'm a little tired," he said after the match. "The heat and humidity in Miami don't help much either, but I really wanted to come back, I had been off of the field for a long time.

"Little by little I was training with the group, feeling good and that's why we decided that I would start, and I'm very happy -- very happy."

Miami coach Gerardo Martino was delighted to see his star come out "feeling good" after 90 minutes.

Philadelphia seized the advantage in the second minute on Mikael Uhre's left-footed shot from outside the area.

Messi grabbed the equaliser in the 26th minute, collecting a pass from Luis Suarez and beating defender Kai Wagner before unleashing a right-footed shot to cap a sequence launched by Jordi Alba on the left.

Ecstatic fans were still celebrating when he fired Inter ahead in the 30th, connecting again with Alba and firing a left-footed shot from the center of the area into the bottom right corner.

Inter thought Suarez had made it 3-1 before halftime, but his goal was overturned on a VAR review.

But Suarez added a goal deep in second-half injury time with Messi -- who also picked up his first yellow card in MLS for lingering on a corner kick -- providing the assist.

Martino said the late goal vindicated his decision to leave both players in the game until the end, saying "both played the whole game because they were fine to finish the game".

The victory extended Inter Miami's lead at the top of the MLS standings to 62 points, 10 points clear of their closest Eastern Conference challengers FC Cincinnati with six games remaining in the regular season.

Messi is also pleased that despite his lengthy absence they lead the race for the Supporters' Shield awarded to the team that tops the overall standings.

- Deserved first place -

"During the year we were very unlucky with injuries, we were never at full strength," he said.



"For one reason or another we were always missing players and the group always came through.

"Today we are in first place with a big difference and deservedly so, and hopefully we can finish on top for what it means and what comes after that."

Messi's two goals, taking him to 14 in just 13 games, put him back in contention for the title of top scorer.

Suarez, meanwhile, has 17 goals and is two behind the current MLS scoring leader, DC United's Christian Benteke.

After 19,000 fans at Chase Stadium in Fort Lauderdale gave Messi a warm welcome the hosts got a quick scare when Uhre scored with just 58 seconds on the clock.

The Danish attacker controlled a headed clearance from Argentine defender Tomas Aviles and surprised goalkeeper Drake Callender with a blast against the post.

Minutes later, Martino got another shock when Paraguayan centre back David Martinez was injured when he intercepted a Philadelphia pass.

The Union continued to put Callender under pressure, but on the other end Messi was starting to take advantage of the spaces to team up with Alba and Suarez.

In the 26th minute, Alba ran the length of the pitch and delivered the ball to Suarez, who set up Messi to cut inside Wagner and score.

Four minutes later, Alba sent a cross from the left into the heart of the box that Suarez let through and Messi converted to make it 2-1.

Messi, 37 and in his second season in the United States, is the fastest player to notch his first 15 goals and 15 assists in MLS, in just 19 games. — AFP



Inter Miami's Argentine forward #10 Lionel Messi in action. – AFP

Virus-hit Ronaldo to miss Asian Champions League



TOKYO: Cristiano Ronaldo was diagnosed on Sunday with a viral infection and will miss Al Nassr's Asian Champions League opener this week at Iraq's Al Shorta.

The Portuguese veteran is targeting Asia's top club crown to add to his long list of achievements when the competition kicks off on Monday.

"Al Nassr captain Cristiano Ronaldo was not feeling well today and was diagnosed with a viral infection," said a club statement posted on social media platform X on Sunday.

"The team's doctor confirmed he needs to rest and stay at home. As a result, he will not be travelling with the team to Iraq today. We wish our captain a speedy recovery."

The former Real Madrid and Manchester United forward saw his first attempt with the Saudi side Al Nassr end in a quarter-final



penalty shootout defeat to eventual champions Al Ain earlier this year.

Now rebranded as the Asian Champions League Elite, Al Nassr and the other teams from Saudi Arabia will be a major threat after spending vast sums of money in the last two years on the likes of Ronaldo and Neymar.

England forward Ivan Toney was the latest big name to swap Europe

for Saudi when he left Brentford for Al Ahli last month for more than \$45 million.

As part of the new-look competition, Saudi Arabia — which is expected to host the 2034 World Cup -- will stage a mini knockout tournament from the quarter-finals onward to decide the champions, who will take home at least \$12 million.

Al Nassr, Al Ahli and Neymar's Al Hilal will all be involved when the Champions League Elite launches on Monday with a new format that splits 24 teams evenly into two groups of East and West.

Each team will play eight different opponents in the group stage. The top eight teams from each zone will play in the last 16 over two legs in March, before the action moves to the final stages in Saudi Arabia from April 25 to May 4. — AFP

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SANAD CENTRES COMPLETE OVER 900,000 TRANSACTIONS



MUSCAT: Sanad Service Centres, operated by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), completed 901,039 transactions and electronic services during the first eight months of 2024, highlighting the growing demand for their services. Of these, 608,907 were processed through the centres' electronic portal, and 292,132 were completed via the Oman Business Platform. By the end of August, the number of operational Sanad Centres reached 913, offering over 370 electronic services.

According to Mohammed bin Salem al Mashaykhi, Director of the Sanad Service Centres Department, the centres facilitated 2,433 job opportunities by the end of August. Muscat Governorate accounted for 48% of the total services, followed by Al Batinah North Governorate at 13%, and Dhofar Governorate at 7%. Currently, 23 government and private institutions provide their services through these centres, with demand steadily rising. The electronic portal has attracted around 6.7 million visitors to date, with the centres spread across Oman's governorates. Al Mashaykhi emphasised that the Sanad Centres are undergoing continuous development to enhance service delivery and maintain leadership in electronic services, with a focus on unified operations both internally and externally. — **ONA**

116% rise in applications for industrial licences

AL WUSTA Governorate saw a notable rise in investment and commercial activity during the first half of 2024, driven by its natural resources and improved infrastructure, which have attracted investment in key sectors like industry, logistics, and fish processing.

One of the governorates's highlights is the Special Economic Zone in Duqm, which offers significant incentives for industrial and commercial ventures.

Abdoun bin Mohammed al Harsosi, Director of the Department of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion in Al Wusta Governorate, confirmed that industrial licence applications grew by 116 per cent during the first half of 2024, with 534 applications compared to 247 in the same period last year.

Al Harsosi also noted that 53 foreign companies registered in Al Wusta Governorate during this period, with a combined capital of RO 8.056 million, similar to the 52 companies registered in the first half of 2023.

By mid-2024, the total number of foreign investment records reached 742, with a capital of RO 2.779 billion. Efforts to bolster Al Wusta



There are 53 foreign companies registered in Al Wusta Governorate, with a combined capital of RO 8.056m.

Governorate's economic sector continue in collaboration with various stakeholders, resulting in 230 new commercial records, bringing the total to 7,342. Additionally, 557 certificates of origin were issued in the first half of 2024, slightly down from 600 in the same period last year. — **ONA**

Oman boosts renewable energy with sale of IRECs

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

OMAN-BASED renewable energy firm Amin Renewable Energy Company SAOC has announced the availability of International Renewable Energy Certificates (IRECs) for sale.

This marks a significant milestone for the company and the region, as it continues to produce over 300,000 IRECs annually since its Commercial Operation Date on May 22, 2020.

The company's initiative is a substantial contribution to the renewable energy sector, providing businesses and organisations with the opportunity to purchase IRECs to offset their carbon footprint and meet sustainability goals.

These certificates represent a megawatt-hour of electricity generated from renewable sources, offering a tangible way to support clean energy production and consumption.

The announcement comes in the wake of a significant development in September 2022 when Amin's 105-MW solar



These certificates represent a megawatt-hour of electricity generated from renewable sources, offering a tangible way to support clean energy production and consumption.

PV plant was registered as the first solar energy project in Oman with a global renewable energy certificate.

This registration allows for the linkage of electricity ownership rights from the production site to the consumption site, facilitating the trading and reuse of these certificates towards decarbonisation goals.

The production and sale of IRECs by Amin Renewable Energy align with Oman Vision 2040, which includes goals for industrial decarbonisation

and increased renewable energy adoption.

The registration process of the energy units, which exceeded 206 MWh, was completed in coordination with the Department of Climate Affairs of the Civil Aviation Authority and Three Pillars Consulting, the local issuer of renewable energy certificates in Oman.

This collaboration underscores the commitment of Oman's government and private sector to advancing the country's renewable energy landscape.



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BUSINESS

QUICK TAKES

OMAN CLIMATE WEEK TO HIGHLIGHT CLIMATE FINANCE



HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

Climate finance is expected to be one of the key themes of the upcoming Oman Climate Week conference and exhibition, which will take place during February 24-27, 2025 in Muscat, under the auspices of

DR ABDULLAH BIN ALI AL AMRI
Chairman of the Environment Authority

Oman Environment Authority. In a statement, the Chairman of the Environment Authority, Dr Abdullah bin Ali al Amri, highlighted the significance of financing within climate action, “Scaling up investments in climate resilience is essential for survival. Urgent action is needed on financing, adapting to climate impacts, and cutting emissions. We must phase out coal, put a price on carbon, and ensure a just transition to renewables to safeguard our environment for future generations.” According to the event’s agenda, the topics under financing will include discussions surrounding investments and Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) in supporting climate projects, the access to blended financing, and financial assistance for communities affected by climate change amongst other key topics.

Other topics include climate adaption, climate mitigation, social inclusion, climate technologies, and carbon markets.

In 2022, the Sultanate of Oman under the directive of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik committed to achieving Net Zero neutrality by 2050. According to the 2023 Pathway to Net Zero Report, Oman produces an estimated 90 million tonnes of CO2 per year. Five main sectors contribute to this figure, including industry (32 per cent), oil and gas (26 per cent), power (19 per cent), transport (18 per cent) and waste and agriculture (6 per cent). The country aims through the programme to reduce emissions by 6 per cent by 2030, 54 per cent by 2040, and 92 per cent by 2050, through various methods such as the adoption of electric vehicles, biofuels, electrification, and the implementation of Carbon Capture, Utilisation, and Storage (CCUS) technologies.

NEARLY 30% OF US GULF OF MEXICO OIL OUTPUT OFFLINE AFTER STORM

HOUSTON: Nearly 30% of US Gulf of Mexico crude oil production and 41% of its natural gas production remained offline on Saturday following Hurricane Francine, the US offshore energy regulator said.

Francine churned through prime oil and gas producing areas in the US Gulf of Mexico and slammed into Louisiana with up to 100 miles per hour (161 kph) winds. The midweek storm toppled trees, flooded coastal areas and knocked out power across four states. There were some 37,000 customers in Louisiana without power on Saturday.

A survey of energy producers showed more than 522,000 barrels of oil production and 755 million cubic feet of natural gas remained offline on Saturday, the Bureau of Safety and Environmental Enforcement said. — **Reuters**

Advario explores role in Oman’s green energy storage infrastructure

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

LEADING GLOBAL liquid storage specialist Advario has pledged to support the establishment of storage and export infrastructure as an integral part of Oman’s vision to develop a large-scale green hydrogen-powered economy in the country.

Top executives from the company’s Netherlands’ head office, joined by their colleagues from Advario’s Oman operations, were in Muscat recently for talks with Eng Salim bin Nasser and Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, and other officials representing green hydrogen stakeholder entities.

Also present was Eng Abdulaziz al Shidhani, Managing Director – Hydrom, the state-owned green hydrogen industry master-planner.

“Building on our long-standing presence in the Port of Sohar, we reaffirmed our commitment to support the Sultanate of Oman in developing low-carbon molecules storage and export infrastructure,” said Advario in a post.

“This infrastructure forms a crucial component in supporting the Sultanate of Oman’s five strategic objectives: ensuring energy security, diversifying the local economy, decarbonising the country, creating a competitive Green Hydrogen sector for export, and supporting innovation and capability development.”

In Oman, Advario – previously known as Oiltanking Terminals Co LLC – operates a major terminal that provide bulk liquid logistics services to tenants at Sohar Port, as well as customers and traders from around the global energy sector.



Senior executives of Advario pictured with Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi Minister of Energy and Minerals and other officials of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, during their recent visit to Oman.

With a storage capacity of nearly

1.3M

cubic metres and a wide range of tank types and sizes, the terminal is equipped to offer liquid bulk handling, terminaling, storage, blending, and other such services to clients

With a storage capacity of nearly 1.3 million cubic metres and a wide range of tank types and sizes, the terminal is equipped to offer liquid bulk handling, terminaling, storage, blending, and other such services to clients.

Investments in storage infrastructure catering to all kinds of low-carbon and green molecule based commodities will become imperative in the coming years as a series of gigawatt-scale green hydrogen projects begin to materialise across the governorates of Al Wusta and Dhofar in the coming years.

Such commodities are expected to include green hydrogen, low-carbon methane, green ammonia, green methanol, and synthetic fuels (e-fuels), besides an array of derivatives in the form of hydrogen-based transportation fuels, hydrogen for industrial processes, synthetic plastics and fertilisers, and sustainable aviation fuels.

“This visit further reinforced Advario’s commitment to supporting Oman’s sustainable development and its broader energy transition,” the company noted in

its statement.

Represented on the Advario team were Bas Verkooijen, CEO, and Douglas Van Der Wiel, Chief Commercial Officer, who discussed a possible role for the company in supporting “Oman’s ambitious energy goals and its path to achieving carbon neutrality by 2050”, it said.

In its discussions with the Omani side, Advario officials also pledged to offer their expertise in the development of integrated cryogenic storage and logistics infrastructure to help Oman in the design, construction and safe operation of such infrastructure necessary to position the country as a leading exporter of low-carbon products.

“Advario values the strong relationship with Oman’s government and its private sector and looks forward to advancing green infrastructure projects that will drive long-term, sustainable progress,” it added. Advario Oman’s joint venture partners include OQ, the Omani state-owned integrated energy group, Star Energy (Abu Dhabi) and Seven Seas (Oman).

CHINA’S OIL AND GAS PRODUCTION SEES GROWTH

BEIJING: China recorded notable increases in oil and natural gas production between January and August 2024, with oil output rising by 2.1 per cent and natural gas production by 6.6 per cent compared to the same period last year.

Data from the State Bureau of Statistics revealed that the country produced 142.79 million tonnes of oil during the first eight months of the year. However, oil imports saw a



decline of 3.1 per cent year-on-year, amounting to 366.91 million tonnes. Oil refining activity also took a slight dip, with 472.53 million tonnes refined during the same period, a 1.2 per cent decrease compared to the previous year.

In August alone, China produced 17.83 million tonnes of oil, reflecting a 2.1 per cent increase from August 2023.

On the natural gas front, production surged to 163.7 billion

cubic meters over the first eight months of 2024, marking a 6.6 per cent increase year-on-year.

August saw a particularly sharp rise, with 20 billion cubic meters of natural gas produced, up 9.4 per cent from the same month in 2023. Gas imports also surged in August, climbing 9.1 per cent to reach 11.76 million tonnes. For the year-to-date period, gas imports rose 12.3 per cent, totaling 87.13 million tonnes. — **ONA**

Fisheries Development Oman to participate in seafood expo in Russia

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, SEPT 15

Fisheries Development Oman (FDO), the investment arm of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) in the fisheries sector, announced its participation in the upcoming Seventh Global Fishery Forum & Seafood Expo in St Petersburg, Russia, next week.

In a statement, Chairman of FDO, Muneer al Muneeri, highlighted the significance of FDO’s participation, “Our participation at the Global Fishery Forum & Seafood Expo Russia reinforces our mission to position Oman as a global leader in sustainable seafood, showcasing our vast marine resources and investment

Blue Waters, FDO’s aquaculture arm, which has a capacity exceeding

5,000

tonnes of marine finfish and the production of 21 million juveniles per year

opportunities.” Adding, “As a group leader in Oman’s fisheries and aquaculture sector, FDO proudly highlights Oman’s position as a major fish producer and net exporter within the GCC.

We are committed to expanding our seafood exports by adhering to global standards of sustainability, food safety, and environmental responsibility, supported by Oman’s attractive business incentives and improving infrastructure.”

Four subsidiaries of FDO will participate in the Expo, including SIMAK—the largest tuna and sardine canning factory in the MENA region—with an annual capacity of 100 million cans per year.

Blue Waters, FDO’s aquaculture arm, which has a capacity exceeding 5,000 tonnes of marine finfish and the production of 21 million juveniles per year.

In addition to Oman Pelagic, FDO’s commercial fishing arm specialises in pelagic and mesopelagic species, operating internationally with a focus on supplying premium tuna for global markets.

Also participating is Marsa al Duqm Investments Company, the lead developer behind the recently opened RO 63 million Multipurpose Fishing Port in Al Duqm, the largest in the country.

The port which is currently operated by a consortium of companies,

including Fisheries Development Oman (FDO), Oman Food Investment Company, and the French port of Lorient.

It includes a fishing harbour, cold storage facilities, processing and packaging units.

And according to earlier statements by CEO of Fisheries Development Oman (FDO), Nabil al Bimani, the project will also include a fish market, a research and design centre, a training centre, and a fishery village to support artisanal fishers in the future.

The expo, which will take place next week from September 17–19, 2024, will host 400 companies from 14 countries.

G O L D E N T R E N D S

NAVIGATING THE GLOBAL GOLD MARKET



GOLD, A SYMBOL of tradition and value across cultures, is not just a commodity but a cultural icon. Its significant increase in production and consumption over time culminated in an all-time high of 896 tonnes of gold production in Q1 2024.

The surge in over-the-counter (OTC) sales, jewellery consumption, and central bank buying indicates the rising global demand for gold.

Asia, particularly China and India, dominate the global gold consumption market. In China, there is a shift in consumer preference for lightweight designs with low labour costs.

Surprisingly, rural India accounts for 60 per cent of the country's gold consumption. The market's unique sensitivity to monsoon rains, agricultural produce, and harvest income adds a complex and fascinating dynamic to its consumption pattern.

The significant growth in the demand for gold in these regions is a promising sign for the global gold market.

The US remains a significant gold consumer in North America, though jewellery demand has declined in recent years due to consumer preference and economic conditions.

Canada continues to be a stable gold market. In South America, the spending on gold is lower than in Europe and Asia.

Brazil leads in gold consumption



DR MYTHILI KOLLURU

The author is an assistant professor at the marketing and management department of the College of Banking and Financial Studies in Muscat and a member of Knowledge Oman

for investment and jewellery, followed by Peru and Colombia, which have growing gold markets, often linked to their domestic mining industries.

In Europe, gold is purchased for investment purposes rather than jewellery.

Switzerland, in particular, stands out for its high per capita consumption of gold, with a preference for bars and coins over jewellery. Germans invest in gold as a safety net to weather challenging economic conditions.

The UK and other Western European countries follow a similar consumer pattern of purchasing gold for investment rather than jewellery.

The Middle East, with the United Arab Emirates as a critical player, reflects strong gold purchasing patterns. Dubai is particularly famous for its spectacular gold souks and robust jewellery market, showcasing the region's significant role in the global gold market.

Turkish people also have a strong affinity for gold and purchase it to protect against inflation. Other Gulf countries, like Saudi Arabia, Oman and Kuwait, have high gold consumption patterns for investment and jewellery.

The consumption of gold varies widely on the African continent. Though they are major producers of gold, they consume it modestly compared to their production levels.

Egypt is notable for being the most significant gold consumer in North

Africa and for having a deep cultural connection to gold jewellery.

Although gold consumption in West African nations like Ghana and Nigeria is usually lower than in Asia or the Middle East, these markets are expanding.

The trends of gold consumption in Australia and Oceania are unlike those in other areas. Australia, a significant gold producer, has comparatively low domestic gold consumption, preferring to invest in gold rather than jewellery.

Although certain Pacific Island cultures value gold highly, New Zealand and other Pacific Island countries use very little gold compared to different locations.

Gold's usage in electronics and other technical applications is growing, giving another dimension to world demand even though it is less than the demand for jewellery or investments.

Though the popularity of gold as an investment or jewellery varies worldwide, it's crucial to remember that gold investment should be limited to 10 per cent for a balanced and diversified investment portfolio.

Gold consumption is influenced by market pricing, cultural preferences, economic and geopolitical situations that affect the demand for gold. The value civilisations have placed on this precious metal will change with time and evolution. Gold will continue to play a significant role in the international economy for a long time.

OPINION

Oman’s crypto market: Steady growth or volatile future



STEFANO VIRGILLI
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The author is a member of the International Press Association

I ACROSS a recent research stating that the cryptocur-rency market in Oman is pro- jected to experience a steady annual growth rate of 5.60 per cent from 2024 to 2028, ultimately reaching a market value of \$39.85 million, being at around \$32 million currently.

While this forecast paints a positive picture, it’s worth considering whether a linear growth model truly captures the dynamic and often unpredictable nature of the cryptocurrency sector.

The years 2020 and 2021 will be etched in the annals of cryptocurrency history as a period of unprecedented growth and mainstream recognition.

It was a time when the convergence of technological innovation, macroeconomic factors, and a global pandemic ignited a crypto frenzy, culminating in a market capitalisation that soared to an astonishing near \$3 trillion.

The advent of Decentralised Finance (DeFi) in 2020 opened up a world of pos- sibilities, allowing users to lend, borrow, and trade directly on the blockchain without the need for traditional financial intermediaries. The explosive growth of DeFi platforms and the promise of high yields drew in a flood of new investors.

Simultaneously, the emergence of

Non-Fungible Tokens (NFTs) captured the world’s imagination.

These unique digital assets, represent- ing ownership of everything from art and music to virtual real estate, sparked a cultural phenomenon. Suddenly, everyone from seasoned crypto enthusiasts to curi- ous onlookers was eager to participate in this new digital gold rush.

More recently, the market experienced a resurgence in late 2023 and early 2024, reaching a peak capitalisation of \$2.8 tril- lion.

This upswing was fuelled by significant developments, including the approval of the first Bitcoin ETF in the US in October 2023, and a renewed interest in meme coins like Dogecoin and Shiba Inu, partly driven by endorsements from high-profile figures like Elon Musk.

Bitcoin itself saw a remarkable surge, climbing from a low of around \$16,500 in early 2023 to a peak of over \$72,000 at the end of Q1, 2024.

The current projection for Oman’s cryp- tocurrency market seems to overlook the potential for such volatility. While periods of steady growth are likely, the market could also experience sudden spikes trig- gered by technological advancements, regulatory changes, or shifts in investor sentiment.

Highlights

Bitcoin itself saw a remarkable surge, climbing from a low of around

\$16,500

in early 2023 to a peak of over \$72,000 at the end of Q1, 2024

Moreover, the UAE has adopted a proac- tive approach towards cryptocurrencies, establishing clear regulatory frameworks and fostering a welcoming environment for businesses and investors.

The Dubai Virtual Assets Regulatory Authority (VARA), for instance, provides a comprehensive regulatory framework for virtual assets, offering clarity and security to market participants. Additionally, the UAE’s strategic location, robust infrastruc- ture, and business-friendly policies have further solidified its position as a crypto haven.

While Oman’s cryptocurrency industry is still nascent, the country has shown a growing interest in blockchain technology and its potential applications.

The Omani government has expressed its support for exploring blockchain solu- tions across various sectors, including finance, logistics, and healthcare.

The proximity to the UAE’s thriving crypto ecosystem presents a unique op- portunity for Oman. The UAE’s experience in developing regulatory frameworks and attracting crypto businesses can serve as a valuable blueprint for Oman.

Furthermore, the cross-border flow of knowledge, talent, and investment can accelerate the growth of Oman’s crypto industry.

BOEING PAYS BELATED PRICE FOR SHAREHOLDER PRIMACY

BOEING keeps losing essential parts. About 33,000 of its unionised workers rejected a pro- posed 25% general increase in wages, with 96% of them voting to strike. The work stoppage adds to a long list of woes at the \$100 billion jet-maker. After squeezing labour for the last half century, the bill is coming due.

Machinists at Boeing are highly skilled and hard to replace. They tried to use their clout to down tools seven times between 1948 and 2008.

Despite applying such pressure on manage- ment, however, wages have stagnated.

Under the recently lapsed contract, workers in the highest Grade 11 group earned between \$26 and \$51.30 hourly.

The midpoint of the range is roughly the same inflation-adjusted \$40 as their peers were making in 1976.

Moreover, Boeing, like many other US com- panies, has replaced employer-provided retire- ment benefits with 401(k) plans largely funded with tax-deferred employee contribu- tions.

Other capital alloca- tion choices also have short-changed labour.

In the 1970s, Boeing boss Thornton Wilson generated headlines with his \$1 million payday.

Flash forward to 2023 when former Chief Executive David Calhoun’s package added up to more than \$30 million, a six-fold increase after adjusting for inflation.

Executives in between also were richly rewarded for slashing costs and returning the spoils to shareholders.

Between 2003 and 2019 alone, Boeing devot- ed \$80 billion to stock buybacks and dividends. Bigger forces also were at play. Healthcare costs have soared. As a percentage of US GDP, they tripled between 1960 and 2010.

As a result, the value of insurance provided to employees, and the related costs to Boeing, grew rapidly. And the development of manu- facturing in formerly rural states such as South Carolina and places like China encouraged companies to relocate plants.

All those decisions have come back to haunt Boeing, and new CEO Kelly Ortberg. Airlines angered by persistent delivery delays, govern- ment-capped production, market-share losses, and nearly \$60 billion of debt will make it hard to withstand any protracted idling at factories.

It took a while, but shareholders are now paying a price for their primacy. — Reuters

Highlights

Flash forward to 2023 when former Chief Executive David Calhoun’s package added up to more than

\$30 MILLION,

a six-fold increase after adjusting for inflation.



QASIM AL MAASHANI

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



The Dhofar mountains turn verdant during the khareef season.

THE Dhofar mountains, often hailed as one of Oman’s most scenic governo- rates, present a significant oppor- tunity for economic and environ- mental advancement through agricultural tourism. As global tourism increasingly prioritises sustainability, the Dhofar Moun- tains stand out as a prime candidate for this niche sector.

Agricultural tourism, which immerses visitors in the daily realities of rural life and farming practices, is more than just a farm visit; it offers an engaging exploration of nature, culture, and heritage.

This form of tourism can provide a substantial economic boost by creating job opportunities and stimulating local econo- mies, particularly in rural areas that have traditionally relied on agriculture.

Furthermore, it supports the preserva- tion of cultural and agricultural heritage by encouraging the continuation of traditional farming methods and protecting biodiver- sity.

Additionally, agricultural tourism can play a crucial role in raising environmental awareness, educating tourists on the impor- tance of sustainable farming practices and their impact on the environment.

The Dhofar mountains are particularly well-suited for agricultural tourism due to several key factors. The governorate’s

diverse ecological landscapes — encompass- ing mountains, valleys, and plains — create a visually stunning and varied agricultural setting.

The moderate climate of Dhofar sup- ports agricultural activities throughout the year, making it an attractive destination for tourists interested in farming.

Abundant water resources from nu- merous springs and wells ensure a steady supply for agricultural needs, which is essential for maintaining vibrant farming practices.

The governorate’s long-standing agricul- tural heritage provides depth to its tourism offerings, allowing visitors to engage with traditional practices and local knowledge.

Moreover, Dhofar’s unique agricultural products, including exotic tropical fruits and aromatic spices, add to its appeal, highlighting the governorate’s distinctive agricultural identity.

However, while the potential for agricul- tural tourism in Dhofar is significant, sev- eral challenges must be addressed to realise this potential fully.

The development of agricultural tourism requires substantial investment in infra- structure, such as roads and utilities, to support tourism activities and enhance the visitor experience.

Additionally, there is a need to raise

awareness and provide training for local farmers and communities on the benefits and management of agricultural tourism.

Effective marketing strategies are also crucial to attract tourists and showcase Dho- far’s agricultural tourism potential.

Despite these challenges, the opportuni- ties for growth are considerable.

The rising global demand for sustain- able tourism presents a unique chance for Dhofar to establish itself as a leading desti- nation in this sector.

The governorate’s diverse environments and cultural heritage offer a rich tourist experience, and substantial government support for tourism initiatives provides a supportive framework for development.

To advance agricultural tourism in Dhofar, several strategies can be employed. Investing in infrastructure improvements will be essential for supporting tourism and enhancing the overall visitor experience.

Providing training for local farmers to engage with tourists and offer high-quality tourism services is also crucial. Launch- ing targeted marketing campaigns will help promote Dhofar’s agricultural tour- ism offerings and attract a diverse range of tourists.

Additionally, diversifying tourism ex- periences, such as organising agricultural tours, providing eco-friendly accommoda- tions, and hosting cultural events, can cater to various interests and increase the gover- norate’s appeal.

Strengthening partnerships between government bodies and private sector players will be vital for driving the develop- ment of agricultural tourism.

In conclusion, agricultural tourism in the Dhofar mountains offers a promising path towards sustainable development, combining the preservation of natural and cultural heritage with economic benefits for local farmers.

Realising this potential requires a con- certed effort from government authorities, the private sector, and local communities to adopt sustainable practices and inno- vate within the tourism sector.

By leveraging its unique attributes and addressing the associated challenges, Dhofar has the opportunity to establish itself as a leading destination for agricul- tural tourism, setting a benchmark for sustainable prosperity in the governorate.

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ART/LIFE

HARVEST OF PROSPERITY



THE INVESTMENT
POTENTIAL OF

Jabal Akhdhar > 20

INFASHION

HOW RALPH LAUREN GOT JILL BIDEN TO THE HAMPTONS



On the far southern fork of Long Island, past East Hampton and Sagaponack and somewhere in the shadow of Gatsby's West Egg, there is a place that could be termed Ralph Hampton: the Hamptons of the designer Ralph Lauren's mind.

Ralph Hampton is a place of verdant fields and blue skies, of horse farms and Aston Martins and old-fashionedes. In Ralph Hampton all sharp edges have been sanded, all teeth gleam, and even the distressed jeans come in silk and are embedded with sparkle. It is an awfully alluring place to spend an hour or two — if also one that is increasingly removed from reality.

Or so it seemed on the eve of New York Fashion Week, when Lauren conjured up his fantasy getaway at Khalily Stables (officially in Bridgehampton) and invited 250 guests to make the multihour journey eastward from New York City.

Jill Biden, the first lady, who had worn a Ralph Lauren dress at the Democratic National Convention, arrived wearing (of course) Ralph Lauren. So did Jude Law, Usher, Naomi Watts and Colman Domingo. Guests, including journalists, were ferried by helicopter, seaplane, black SUV and jitney. The excuse was a fashion show, but the point was the escape.

"They told me I'm the only one who drove myself," stylist Elizabeth Saltzman, who spent the summer up the road, chortled, as white-jacketed waiters passed mini pastrami sandwiches and lobster rolls, influencers took selfies with tooled leather saddles, and horses poked their noses out of their stalls.

What does one wear in such a world? At 84, Lauren has built an empire on the answer, and for the past few years he has been building his fashion shows to speak to different dimensions of the life that has afforded him, like a streaming series where every season is a new episode in a new location. He has held shows among his collection of classic cars in Connecticut and in his Madison Avenue office; reproduced his Colorado ranch and his Manhattan living room.

Ralph Hampton (Lauren has a home in Montauk) was merely the latest, most extreme iteration: more than 100 looks from his Purple Label and Polo lines; a sea of crochet and linen, denim, tuxedos and American flags. — **NYT**

SHOT TAKES



LIFESTYLE

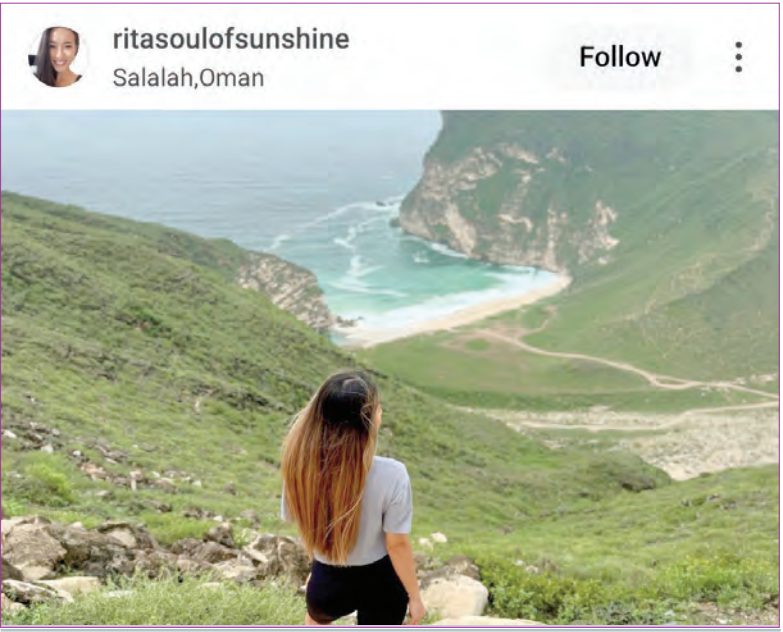
A villager dries paddy rice at a village in Congjiang County, in southwestern China's Guizhou province. — **AFP**



TRAVEL

Flamenco dancers perform during a flamenco flashmob as part of the XXIII Flamenco Biental at the "Museo de artes y Costumbres Populares de Sevilla", in Seville. — **AFP**

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



Enchanting nature



Desert trip

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After 30 years of leading the Museum of Modern Art, during which he moved one of the country's leading museums from the 20th century into the 21st, Glenn D. Lowry announced Tuesday that he would step down as its director in September 2025.

"It's the right moment to think about the future of the museum, and I just thought, carpe diem," Lowry said in an interview. "All the things I set out to do 30 years ago are either accomplished or in play in a very positive way."

Lowry's contract was up for renewal in June. He said he felt invited to continue but decided it was time to turn over the reins to the next generation of leadership.

"I didn't want to be the person who stayed too long," he said.

The board will start an international search for his successor, the New York museum said. Marie-Josée Kravis, the museum's chair, said that Lowry's decision to move on was "by mutual agreement" and that

LONGTIME MOMA DIRECTOR WILL STEP DOWN NEXT YEAR

his contract "could have been renewed."

Replacing Lowry — who turns 70 this month — will not be easy, given his long, successful tenure and because the job description of museum director has grown increasingly complicated in recent years amid economic straits, the coronavirus pandemic and social unrest.

Presiding over a major museum these days requires considerably more than a doctorate in art history and the ability to hire capable curators. Directors must be culturally sensitive diplomats — able to communicate effectively with artists, trustees and potential activists — as well as expert fundraisers, with cultural institutions depending more than ever on private donations.

Lowry also defined the role as closer to that of a corporate CEO — as comfortable talking to the real estate moguls on his board as to the artists who fill the museum's walls — and looked the part in elegant suits and ascots.

"He's broadened the whole discussion on the role of the arts and the role of a public institution like MoMA in the community at large," Kravis said, adding that Lowry had built "a much broader and deeper collection" and "made the museum more open and more of a place for the exchange of ideas." —**NYT**

The Tupinambas have demanded the government recognize the boundaries of more than

47,000 hectares (116,000 acres) where around

8,000 families live, making their living from fishing and farming

WITH THE beating of drums and pipes filled with medicinal herbs, the Tupinamba people of Brazil are counting down the final hours of a 335-year wait for the official return of a sacred cloak taken in colonial times.

The highly symbolic artifact, held at the National Museum of Denmark since 1689, will be presented in Rio de Janeiro in a ceremony to be attended by President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Thursday.

The return of the ceremonial cloak is part of diplomatic efforts by Brazil's government to recover other Indigenous objects from museums in France, Japan, and elsewhere.

Measuring just under 1.8 meters (6 feet) high and featuring red feathers of the scarlet ibis bird, the cloak arrived back in Rio in early July, where it is being stored at the national museum.

"I felt sadness and joy. A mixture between being born and dying," said Yakuy Tupinamba, who viewed the artifact after travelling more than 1,200 kilometers (745 miles) by bus from the eastern Olivenca municipality.

The 64-year-old, wearing a feather headdress, is among roughly 200 Tupinambas camped in grounds near the museum, where they held a traditional vigil with maracas-filled music.

Yakuy said Europeans "put (the cloak) in a museum, as if it were a zoo, for art scholars to observe... (But) only our people communicate and engage with such a symbol."

STOP TO THE DEVASTATION It is not known how the cloak left Brazil, though experts believe it was first made in the mid-16th century, when the country was under Portuguese colonization.

Its return is part of a push by President Lula's leftist government to better support Brazil's Indigenous people, who are also demanding territorial demarcation.

The mantle "is our father and our mother. Our ancestors say that when they (the Europeans) took it away, our village was left without a north," Sussu Arana Morubxada Tupinamba, one of those camping near the museum, told AFP.

"Now we have a direction again: the demarcation of our territory by the Brazilian state," added the Indigenous chief.

The Tupinambas have demanded the government recognize the boundaries of more than 47,000 hectares (116,000 acres) where around 8,000 families live, making their living from fishing and farming.

They say the mineral-rich territory is being devastated by large agriculture and mining businesses.

Despite being a government promise, only a handful of territories have been recognized since Lula began his third term in

BRAZIL'S INDIGENOUS PEOPLE HAIL RETURN OF SACRED CLOAK



January 2023.

"The return of the mantle means — not only for the Tupinamba people but also for the Brazilian people — a stop to the devastation of the Amazon, of the forests, of the man-groves," said Cacique Arana.

Thursday's ceremony in Rio will

likely take place under a cloud of smoke from wildfires that are impacting several parts of Brazil, as it faces a devastating drought.

Thousands of fires have been unleashed, including in the Amazon — a phenomenon that scientists say is linked to climate change. —**AFP**

FEATURE

The summer harvest in Jabal Akhdhar showcases the potential of Oman's agricultural industry. Beyond agriculture, the Green Mountain has also become one of the main destinations for tourists and has significantly contributed to local economic growth



FROM P18

Harvest of prosperity and the investment potential of Jabal Akhdhar



BY ARWA AL HASHIMI
PHOTOS BY WAFI AL FAHDI

A VISIT TO Al Jabal Al Akhdhar in summer offers more than just refreshing air and cool temperatures; it provides a unique opportunity to savor a variety of delectable, freshly harvested fruits.

The mountain's mild summer climate allows farmers to cultivate and gather crops that are not viable in other weather conditions. This temperate climate, coupled with diverse tourism attractions—including leisure, adventure, natural beauty, and cultural heritage—draws a substantial number of visitors each year.

The summer harvest season in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar is marked by an impressive variety of fruits. The process begins in March with the traditional distillation of rose water, a practice handed down through generations. By May and July, apricot production commences, featuring both local and imported varieties. From July to August, the harvest includes peaches, pears, plums, apples, grapes, and figs. The harvest of pomegranates and olive oil production starts in September and continues through December.

Pomegranates are a hallmark of Al Jabal, renowned for their numerous health benefits. Rich in vitamins and antioxidants, these fruits are known to reduce bad cholesterol and enhance heart health. Ongoing scientific research continues to uncover additional benefits from various parts of the pomegranate, including its fruit, juice, peel, and seeds.

To honour the pomegranate, a vital source of income for many residents, the annual Rumana Festival is held. This festival not only celebrates the fruit but also highlights an array of products derived from it, including pomegranate juices, ice creams, and skincare products. Additionally, it features unique items such as hand-crafted bags and decorative bookmarks, all inspired by the pomegranate's cultural significance.

The second edition of 'Rummana,' an agritourism event in Jabal Akhdar, has drawn over 15,000 visitors since July 4, with more than 500kg of fruits and products sold, supported by ten small and medium enterprises.

This event, a collaboration between Teepee Oman and Janaen (a joint venture of Omran Group and Nitaj), highlights environmentally friendly agricultural tourism and unique pomegranate experiences.

Khalid bin Hamad al Aghbari of Janaen emphasizes Rummana's role in enhancing Jabal Akhdar's tourism appeal and supporting local farmers. Running until September 28, Rummana offers restaurants, cafes, workshops, and activities for families at the Janaen farm in Sih Qitna.

The festival caters to both families and individuals, offering a range of activities and a café with a selection of refreshments. A notable feature is the "Mountain Trail Walk," a one-hour guided hike through lush pomegranate farms that provides insight into local agricultural practices and natural

beauty. The festival also includes a cultural tour of the Green Mountain, where visitors explore ancient mountain sites and learn about Oman's rich heritage. In the evening, guests can tour a pomegranate farm, enjoy a serene stroll through the orchards, and participate in a stargazing session using telescopes, all under the clear mountain skies.

Nizwa Souq is a prominent venue for selling agricultural products from Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. In addition to this traditional market, many farmers have embraced modern marketing strategies to reach a broader audience. This includes digital marketing, product displays in retail stores and nearby markets, and sales booths at popular tourist spots within the mountain region.

FULL OF POTENTIAL

The Wilayat of Jabal Al Akhdar in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah is emerging as a prime destination for tourism investment, owing to its exceptional climate and natural beauty. With comprehensive infrastructure already in place, the region is experiencing significant development and growth, making it an attractive opportunity for investors.

In recent news, Sheikh Sultan bin Mansour Al Ghufaili, Governor of Jabal Al Akhdar, emphasizes that the region represents a golden opportunity for tourism investments. The Wilayat has witnessed considerable progress, with numerous development projects underway, including new hotels and tourism facilities. This growth is supported by continuous government attention and investment, reinforcing Jabal Al Akhdar's potential as a premier tourist destination.

Ahmed bin Hamad Al Nabhani, a member of the Municipal Council, highlights a major upcoming tourism project in Hail Al Masbat, which will overlook Wadi Bani Kharous. This project is set to become one of the largest in the Governorate, further boosting the region's tourism sector. Additionally, plans for a new road from South Al Batinah to Jabal Al Akhdar are expected to enhance accessibility and attract more visitors.

Ali bin Said bin Mohammad Al-Adawi, Director of the Department of Heritage and Tourism, notes that Jabal Al Akhdar's diverse natural features—such as towering peaks, deep valleys, and water springs—make it ideal for a range of tourism activities. The region's unique climate and cultural heritage also open opportunities for cultural tourism, including museums and heritage villages.

The government's commitment to infrastructure development, including the Jabal Al Akhdar Interface Project and enhanced utility services, further supports investment prospects. Opportunities abound for establishing hotels, resorts, restaurants, and recreational activities, as well as ventures in organic agriculture and local handicrafts.

Tourism investment in Jabal Al Akhdar not only promises economic growth and job creation but also supports sustainable development and cultural preservation, enriching the local community and enhancing its appeal to global tourists.

