

OMAN  DAILY

Observer



HM condolences to Malawi

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik sent a message of condolences to President Lazarus Chakwera on the death of Malawi's Vice-President Saulos Klaus Chilima and nine others in a plane crash. His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere condolences and sincere sympathy to the president of Malawi, people and the families of the victims.

SUNRISE - 05:20 AM
PRAYER TIMINGS
FAJR - 03:52 AM
DHUHR - 12:12 PM
ASR - 03:30 PM
MAGHRIB - 06:59 PM
ISHA - 08:21 PM



P12

UNDER-PRESSURE GERMANY 'PRIVILEGED' TO PLAY AT HOME

P13

OMAN'S PUBLIC REVENUES EXCEED RO 3.744 BILLION BY APRIL-END

P20

SAFFLOWER: OMAN'S HIDDEN GEM FOR HEALTH, BEAUTY

Biden’s son convicted on all charges in gun case



Hunter Biden, son of US President Joe Biden, leaves the J. Caleb Boggs Federal Building in Wilmington, Delaware, on Tuesday. — AFP

WILMINGTON: A jury found Hunter Biden guilty on Tuesday of federal gun charges in a historic first criminal prosecution of the child of a sitting US president.

The 54-year-old son of President Joe Biden was convicted on all three of the felony counts stemming from his 2018 purchase of a handgun while addicted to drugs. The verdict comes as his father is seeking reelection and on a day when the Democratic president is scheduled to give a speech in Washington about gun violence.

The president expressed his “love and support” for his son in a statement released by the White House following the conclusion of the trial held in the Biden hometown of Wilmington, Delaware.

“I am the President, but I am also a Dad,” Biden said. “Jill and I love our son, and we are so proud of the man he is today.” “So many families who have had loved ones battle addiction understand the feeling of pride seeing someone you love come out the other side and be so strong and resilient in recovery,” he said. — AFP

Ministers, State Council discuss coordination

FAHD HAILS THE COUNCIL’S ROLE IN IMPLEMENTING GENERAL POLICIES

MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, and several members of the Council of Ministers on Tuesday received Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, and members of the State Council’s Office. The meeting was held within the context of coordination between the Council of Ministers and the Council of Oman.

They held an expanded meeting at the Council of Ministers building in the presence of ministers. The meeting, held



HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said receives Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili in Muscat on Wednesday. PHOTO BY MOHAMAD AL RASHDI

in line with the Basic Law of the State and the Law of the Council of Oman, was in pursuance of continuous coordination between all institutions of the state to formulate common visions for upgrading Oman’s comprehensive development.

At the outset of the meeting, HH Sayyid Fahd commended the State Council’s role in implementing the State’s general policies and rendering the best services to citizens. He stressed that the government values all visions and proposals for developing public services and upgrading facilities.

During the meeting, it was agreed that all efforts should be combined to safeguard the national accomplishments and enable the State Council to continue conducting studies and proposals on all that advances the national action.

The Chairman and members of the State Council expressed their satisfaction at the meeting and the importance of topics and opinions exchanged by the two sides. They affirmed that many of the common goals and approaches would be realised during the next stage of joint action.

RO 45 MILLION SAMAYIL HOSPITAL FOUNDATION STONE LAYING TODAY

MUSCAT: The foundation stone for Samayil Hospital will be laid on Wednesday.

The hospital will occupy a total area of 250,000 square metres with a built-up area of 61,000 square metres at a cost of RO 45 million.

The foundation stone laying ceremony will be held under the auspices of Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, in the presence of Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health.

The upcoming Samayil Hospital will be one of the important health development

projects in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. It will contain clinics, departments, various units, pharmacies and laboratories. The hospital will be appropriately equipped in such a way as to provide primary and secondary health care services to the residents of the Wilayat of Samayil and nearby areas.

Dr Nasser al Shukaili, Director-General of Health Services in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, said that the establishment of this integrated hospital in the Wilayat of Samayil constitutes a milestone and a significant achievement in terms of upgrading healthcare services in the governorate.

In addition to the health services that the hospital will provide to the residents of the Wilayat of Samayil, the hospital's service will be available to the neighbouring wilayats thus reducing the burden on Nizwa Referral Hospital and the central hospitals in Muscat Governorate. The hospital will also provide the necessary emergency services to the users of Al Sharqiyah and Al Dakhiliyah highways.



Arabian Tahr drinks seawater

MUSCAT: The Arabian tahr drinks seawater, a field study by a research team of the Environment Authority (EA) using camera traps found.

HH Sayyid Taimur bin Abdullah al Said, an environmental specialist at the Environment Authority, said: “The drinking of seawater is a rare occurrence among wild mammals. We collected and analysed camera trap data from the study site on a secluded area in Ras Abu Dawood in Muscat Governorate where fresh water is scarce with an



The study proved the ability of the Arabian Tahr to drink seawater due to the scarcity of fresh water in the Ras Abu Daoud area.

average annual rainfall of 117.2 mm, which mostly falls in winter. The Arabian tahr (Arabitragus jayakari), is one

of the rare wildlife species of the Sultanate of Oman. It is a small mountain goat belonging to the bovidae family and lives in the Al Hajar Mountains in the Arabian Peninsula (from Musandam Governorate to Ras Al Hadd in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate), the only habitat of the Arabian tahr in the world.”

The Arabian tahr lives in very steep and rugged habitats at altitudes ranging between 400 and 1,200 metres according to previous studies carried out by the Environment Conservation Office of the EA. TURN TO P2



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■ MINISTERS, STATE COUNCIL DISCUSS COORDINATION



MUSCAT: HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, and several members of the Council of Ministers on Tuesday received Shaikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, and members of the State Council's Office. The meeting was held within the context of coordination between the Council of Ministers and the Council of Oman. — ONA

Mauritanian President receives Foreign Minister



NOUAKCHOTT: President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani of the Islamic Republic of Mauritania received at the presidential palace in Nouakchott on Tuesday, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister.

During the meeting, Sayyid Badr conveyed greetings and best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to President El Ghazouani and the people of Mauritania. His Majesty also wished bilateral relations further progress.

On his turn, the Mauritanian President asked Sayyid Badr to convey his greetings and best wishes to His Majesty

the Sultan and the people of Oman.

The meeting reviewed path of relations between Oman and Mauritania. It underlined the joint keenness to promote them in various spheres to serve interests of the two countries and their peoples.

The meeting also touched on a set of issues and developments at the regional and international arenas.

It was attended by Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Mauritanians Abroad and Shaikh Saif bin Hilal al Maamari, Ambassador of Oman to Mauritania.

— ONA

Oman, Mauritania ink several MoUs

NOUAKCHOTT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, met in the Mauritanian capital, Nouakchott, with Mohamed Zein El Abidine Ould Cheikh Ahmed, the President of the National Union of Mauritanian Employers (UNPM).

During the meeting, the two sides explored means of boosting economic and trade cooperation between Oman and Mauritania, as well as means of augmenting joint investments in vital sectors.

They also touched on opportunities to encourage businesspeople in establishing partnerships and exchange expertise in areas of common interest.

Al Busaidy underscored the Sultanate of Oman's keenness to enhance trade and economic relations with Mauritania. He also lauded the promising



Sayyid Badr met in the Mauritanian capital, Nouakchott, with the President of the National Union of Mauritanian Employers (UNPM). — ONA

opportunities in Mauritania in various sectors, such as energy, mining, tourism, agriculture, livestock and fisheries.

On his turn, the President of the

National Union of Mauritanian Employers said the Mauritanian private sector welcomes the boosting of economic cooperation with the private sector of Oman.

He affirmed that the National Union of Mauritanian Employers is ready to help in overcoming any obstacles or challenges that Omani companies may face in Mauritania.

Moreover, during the visit, Oman and Mauritania signed several memorandums of understanding (MoUs) dealing with political consultations, diplomatic training, studies and research, as well as cooperation in fields of oil and gas, minerals, energy and information and communication technology (ICT).

The MoUs were signed by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister and Mohamed Salem Ould Merzoug, Minister of Foreign Affairs, Cooperation and Mauritanians Abroad. — ONA

ARABIAN TAHR DRINKS SEAWATER

FROM PAGE 1

He said noting that the study area does not only contain the Arabian tahr, but also other mammals such as the Arabian gazelle, the Arabian wolf, the lynx, the wild cat, the red fox and the mountain fox.

The study proved the ability of the Arabian tahr to drink seawater due to the scarcity of fresh water in the Ras Abu Daoud area. Besides, the study corroborated the hypothesis that this species uses seawater as a nutritional supplement to make up for lack of sodium and minerals. The Arabian tahr was monitored by two cameras. One of them monitored the male tahr and the other monitored the female and young tahr. The Arabian tahr drank seawater for only 2-3 seconds from large pools on the rocky shore between high and low tide but not directly from sea, he said. — ONA



The study proved the ability of the Arabian tahr to drink seawater due to the scarcity of fresh water

Temperature in Salalah above monthly average in May

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Wilayat of Salalah in the Dhofar Governorate recorded a temperature 1.3 above the monthly average at 30.8 degrees Celsius, followed by Masirah at 31.3 (+0.9) and Thamrait at 31.3 (+0.4).

At the same time, Dhalkout in the Dhofar Governorate reported 72.2 mm of rainfall, followed by Salalah Port (52.2 mm) and Wadi Bani Khalid in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate (52.2 mm).

In Al Batinah South Governorate, Barka had one of the highest temperatures recorded in May at 47.9 degrees

Celsius, while Jabal Shams in Al Dakhilayah Governorate had one of the lowest temperatures at 18.9 Celsius during the same period.

Meanwhile, the Copernicus Climate Change Service (C3S) reported that May 2024 was the warmest May on record, marking the 12th consecutive month in which the global average temperature reached a record value for the corresponding month.

The C3S data were cited by the UN Secretary-General in a call for urgent action, as two new reports detailing aspects of climate change are published.

The global average temperature



Salalah recorded a temperature 1.3 above the monthly average at 30.8 degrees Celsius

for May 2024 was 0.65°C above the 1991–2020 average and 1.52°C above the 1850–1900 pre-industrial average, marking the 11th consecutive month (since July 2023) for which the global average temperature reached or exceeded 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels.

Reflecting the succession of record-breaking monthly temperatures, the global average temperature for the last 12 months (June 2023 – May 2024) is the highest on record, at 0.75°C above the 1991–2020 average and 1.63 °C above the 1850–1900 pre-industrial average, according to the C3S data.



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National Museum organises cultural evening in St. Petersburg

ST. PETERSBURG: The National Museum organised a cultural evening at the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg. The event, titled “Omani Cultural Evening,” was held in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in Moscow, and the State Hermitage Museum. This event was part of the Sultanate of Oman’s participation as the guest of honour at the 27th St. Petersburg International Economic Forum, which took place from June 5 to 8.

This cultural event is part of the “Oman Hall” initiative, inaugurated at the Hermitage Museum in 2020. The second edition of the Oman Hall, titled



The exhibition includes 28 artefacts reflecting the history of the Omani Empire in both Asia and Africa

“The Omani Empire: Asia and Africa,” inaugurated in December 2023.

The Omani delegation was led by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. On the Russian side, it was headed by Maxim Gennadievich Reshetnikov, Minister of

Economic Development of the Russian Federation.

In his speech, Jamal bin Hassan al Mousawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, stated, “The relationship between the National Museum and the State Hermitage Museum goes beyond strategic cooperation to true friendship.” He added that



this event is part of the “Oman Hall” initiative, highlighting the second edition’s theme, “The Omani Empire: Asia and Africa.” Al Mousawi emphasised that this cultural event showcases positive aspects of human experiences in a multipolar world, a theme reflecting the equitable and fair development opportunities for

nations and peoples, which is the main theme of the 27th forum.

The evening included performances by the Omani musical group “Skills,” led by Yusuf bin Said al Foori.

Guests also toured the “Oman Hall” and viewed the “Omani Empire: Asia and Africa” exhibition, which depicts the

history of the Omani Empire in both Asia and Africa. It illustrates the Omanis’ role in expelling the Portuguese from East Africa and establishing the vast Omani Empire, highlighting Omani cultural influences in East Africa across social, religious, political, economic and architectural fields.

The exhibition includes 28 artefacts reflecting the history of the Omani Empire in both Asia and Africa. Notable artefacts on display include artefacts from the late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, as well as artefacts related to the Russian Federation, such as a curved single edged sword “Kittarah” dating back to Al Busaid dynasty between the two centuries (11-13 AH/17-19 CE), believed to be used in duels aboard Omani Empire fleets.

Al Dakhiliyah unveils Entrepreneurship and Innovation Award

AMAL AL RIYAMI
NIZWA, JUNE 11

Al Dakhiliyah Governorate unveiled its plans for the highly anticipated 2025 Entrepreneurship and Innovation Award at Al Shahba Hall in Nizwa on Tuesday.

This comes in compliance with the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, emphasising the importance of the small and medium enterprises sector and entrepreneurship, especially projects based on artificial intelligence and other advanced technologies.

During the inauguration ceremony, Shaikh Hilal bin Said al Hajri, Governor of Al Dakhiliyah, signed a number of partnership and support agreements for the Entrepreneurship and Innovation Award with a number of companies in the presence of walis, members of the municipal council, OCCI

members and other officials.

Al Hajri said: “The governorate has been actively implementing programmes to support entrepreneurs by offering financial assistance, business development workshops and mentorship to help them overcome obstacles and succeed in their ventures. The governorate studies the feedback from the beneficiaries of these services and updates the quality of services.” The governor also praised the role played by Nizwa University and the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Nizwa in participating in framing and preparing the criteria of the award.

Two strategic partnership and support agreements were signed with Ooredoo and PDO for providing financial support, resources and expertise for the award.

Partnership and support agreements were established with the Oman Chamber of

Commerce and Industry and Bank Nizwa.

The Entrepreneurship and Innovation Award in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate aims to align strategies with Oman Vision 2040, promote best sustainable practices, engage stakeholders and decision-makers, enhance the Sultanate of Oman’s position regionally and internationally, enhance the culture of institutional excellence, and encourage competitiveness and innovation, in addition to enhancing efficiency, effectiveness and national product reliability. Furthermore, the award strengthens individuals and institutions by offering mentorship programmes, networking opportunities and knowledge-sharing platforms, creating a supportive environment for building relationships, exchanging ideas, and fostering growth in the entrepreneurship ecosystem.



The Entrepreneurship and Innovation Award in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate aims to align strategies with Oman Vision 2040 and promote best sustainable practices

VOLTAMP ANNOUNCES SUCCESSFUL ENTRY INTO THE UNITED STATES MARKET



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Voltamp is pleased to announce its successful entry into the United States of America (USA) market, having secured a contract to supply power transformers of 123 kV for a prestigious project.

This milestone is the result of extensive efforts, including numerous visits and confidence-building activities.

The Free Trade Agreement signed between the USA and the Sultanate of Oman served as a catalyst for this achievement.

Group Chairman Sayyid Aymen al Busaidy commented, “The US market is a developed and sustainable market, and this order is a testimony to Voltamp’s capability and vision.” Group CEO Mohammed Ajmal Basha added, “This is indeed a significant leap into a market dominated by highly reputed and large technology companies globally. Voltamp’s entry and acceptance are significant achievements for all of us.”

Voltamp has evolved from being a local manufacturer in the Sultanate of Oman to becoming

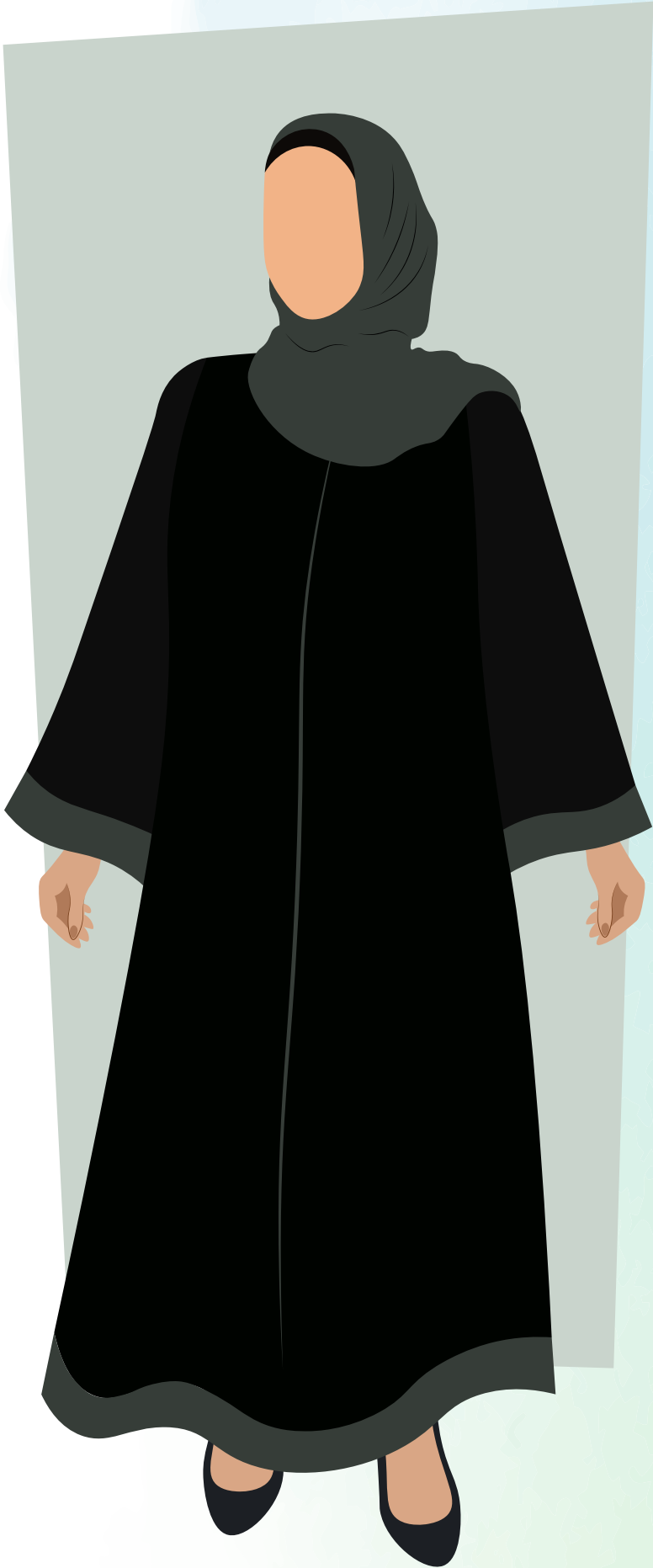
a prominent player in the GCC, MENA, Europe (last year), and America (this year), thus covering four continents. We remain committed to providing our customers with high-technology products and services.

As a major transformer manufacturer based in the Sultanate of Oman, Voltamp offers transformer capacities from 100 KVA to 500 MVA, with ratings up to 400 kV.

With over 110,000 transformers in satisfactory service, Voltamp continues to set industry standards.



Abaya or suit?



SIHAM AL SAIDI
MUSCAT, JUNE 11

The choice of attire for professional women often triggers lively discussions. As professional gatherings become more frequent and diverse in Oman, the debate boils down to two options: abaya or suit. Both choices reflect different cultural, professional and personal preferences.

For many Omani women, the abaya is not just a garment but a symbol of cultural identity and elegance. It is deeply rooted in tradition and is often seen as a mark of respectability.

Lubna Salim, a marketing manager who frequently attends business conferences, expresses her preference for the abaya. “Wearing abaya makes me feel connected to my heritage. It’s elegant and modest, which are important values for me, I wear it inside and outside Oman and I can see how people are taken by,” she said. The abaya’s lines and design are particularly valued in

formal settings, providing a sense of cultural continuity.

Moza al Kahali, a nurse, said: “I can’t understand why some women decide to replace our traditional attire with jackets. We should be proud of our abaya!” The abaya offers versatility in style. Modern abayas come in a variety of designs, incorporating contemporary elements that appeal to younger generations while maintaining traditional aspects. This adaptability makes the abaya a popular choice for women who wish to honour their cultural roots while also embracing modern fashion trends.

Alia Qasim, a business woman said: “I personally prefer designer abayas. Abaya looks formal like suits.” On the other hand, some Omani women prefer the suit and jacket, viewing it as a powerful symbol of professionalism and modernity. Ayda al Salmi, an academic lecturer, shares her perspective: “Wearing a suit gives me confidence and aligns with the global environment. It

INTERESTINGLY,
SOME WOMEN
FIND WAYS
TO BLEND
BOTH STYLES,
CREATING A
UNIQUE FUSION
THAT RESPECTS
TRADITION
WHILE
EMPHASISING
MODERNITY. THIS
PERSPECTIVE
CAN BE SEEN IN
THE INCREASING
POPULARITY
OF ABAYA-
STYLE SUITS
OR SUITS WITH
TRADITIONAL
OMANI
ELEMENTS

shows that I am serious about my career and ready to compete on an international level.” The suit is often associated with authority and competence.

For women working in multinational institutions or those who frequently interact with international colleagues, the suit can be a strategic choice. It facilitates smooth integration into the global business culture.

The suit offers practicality and comfort, particularly in settings that require long hours of participation. Its structured design and tailored fit provide easy movement, which can be crucial during presentations or active engagement in discussions.

Dr Amna Ali, CEO of a company, said, “I can’t wear abaya in training sessions where I need to move among trainees and interact easily, not only in Oman but outside. It is a challenge for me and I avoid wearing abaya outside all the time.”

Interestingly, some women find ways to blend both styles,

creating a unique fusion that respects tradition while emphasising modernity. This perspective can be seen in the increasing popularity of abaya-style suits or suits with traditional Omani elements.

Haifa al Kiyumi, a student, said: “We have new colourful and elegant abayas. These new styles are attractive and sometimes you can’t distinguish between abaya and suits. “ The choice is influenced by various factors including age, profession and the nature of the event. Younger women and those are more active may prefer suits, while those in traditional sectors might prefer abaya.

Abaya and suit have advantages, catering to different needs and preferences. As Omani women continue to make their mark in various professional fields, the choice of attire remains personal, influenced by individual values, professional demands and sometimes changes of fashion trends.



Oman Vision 2040 unit issues 3 new guidelines



The guidelines inaugural ceremony was presided over by HH Sayyid Dr Kamil bin Fahd al Said, Secretary-General at the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers. – ONA

MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation with Alizz Islamic Bank, Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit on Tuesday issued three guidelines on ‘quality management and institutional excellence’, ‘institutional innovation’ and ‘application of Lean process improvement methodology’.

The guidelines inaugural ceremony was presided over by HH Sayyid Dr Kamil bin Fahd al Said, Secretary-General at the Secretariat General of the Council of Ministers.

Speaking at the ceremony, Sayyid Dr Munthir bin Hilal al Busaidy, Deputy Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit, said that the issuance of the three guidelines reflects the

efforts undertaken by Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit and its partners to support government service departments.

Emphasis was laid on providing enablers in accordance with the best international practices, said Sayyid Dr Munthir, noting that the overall objective is to upgrade the government system in a manner that meets the expectations of beneficiaries and enhances the competitiveness of the Sultanate of Oman.

During the ceremony, Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit and Alizz Islamic Bank signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) on achieving private sector participation in the objectives of Oman Vision 2040. — ONA

NCEM reviews integration among sectors

MUSCAT: The National Committee for Emergency Management (NCEM) on Tuesday held a meeting under the chairmanship of Lt Gen Hasan bin Mohsin al Shraiqi, Inspector General of Police and Customs, Chairman of the NCEM.

The meeting reviewed the level of integration among the NCEM sectors in terms of preparedness to deal with emergencies,



enhancing measures and methodology of responding to exceptional cases. — ONA



RAM launches 3rd edition of leadership programme

MUSCAT: The Royal Academy of Management (RAM) today launched the third edition of ‘Etimad’, the national leadership development programme for empowering mid-level and senior managers in the private sector.

A total of 202 private sector workers and entrepreneurs will be attending courses as part of ‘Etimad’ programme.

The programme is implemented in partnership with Emeritus and in collaboration with Columbia Business School, Tuck Executive Education Programme at Dartmouth and the Executive Education School of Management at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

The programme highlights the Academy’s efforts to hone the skills of mid-level leaders in a way that contributes to excellence in performance and the establishment of departments run by human resources that are capable of responding to market dynamics, future expectations and rapid developments. It also enables the participants to benefit from the capabilities of national and international experts who provide the best global practices.

The programme offers a 7-month course on four educational units based on specialised orientation learning, practical workshops in simulation style and distance learning.



The programme offers a 7-month course on four educational units based on specialised orientation learning, practical workshops in simulation style and distance learning. – ONA

The course also includes group learning projects and virtual learning sessions. This will enhance the participants’ potential in areas of digital business strategies, financial statement analysis, financial data analysis, creative thinking and skills on how to deal with individuals and organisations, innovation and

change management. The programme targets employees at the level of department heads and team leaders in the private sector. The recent batches of participants were selected from among more than 3,400 applicants. Earlier, a total of 750 participants from private sector

institutions and entrepreneurs attended Etimad Programme during its past editions. The programme provided the local market with skilled managers, and thus serving domestic development and economic projects in the Sultanate of Oman in a manner that meets the objectives of Oman Vision 2040.

Drive to remove mesquite tree in Masirah

BALQEES AL ORAIMI
MUSCAT, JUNE 11

A campaign was launched to remove mesquite and other invasive tree species in the Wilayat of Masirah. It was launched by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) in the Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, under the auspices of Shaikh Abdulhamid bin Ali bin Hamdan al Abri, Deputy Wali of the Wilayat of Masirah, in the presence of MoAFWR officials.

Hilal bin Rashid al Sunaidy, Director at MoAFWR in the Wilayat of Masirah, said this campaign will take several days supported by many governmental, military and



The campaign will take several days supported by many governmental, military and private agencies.

The inauguration included a speech by Mohammed al Alawi, Assistant Director-General of MoAFWR, and two lectures; mesquite damage to the environment presented by Majid al Araimi from the Environment Centre in the Wilayat of Masirah, and mesquite trees and the ministry’s role in combating them. A film about the damage done mesquite trees was also shown. Invasive species like mesquite affect the growth of seasonal plants and grass by drawing more water and nutrients from the soil. In addition, such trees on the banks of the valley force it to change course to the adjacent farms.

ESO’s new board driven to contribute to zero-carbon transition

MUSCAT: The Environment Society of Oman (ESO) held its Annual General Meeting (AGM) recently, highlighting its 2023 achievements and publishing its new Annual Report, available on its website www.eso.org.om. The report underscores the importance and impact of ESO’s work, acknowledges the many entities that made it possible, and celebrates Oman’s incredible biodiversity.

This year’s AGM was a voting year, requiring members to elect new board members.

The voting resulted in a Board comprising the Honourable Dr Amer bin Nasser al Mataani as President, Rumaitha al Busaidy

as Vice-President, Abdulaziz al Abdali as Treasurer, Nashwa al Rawahi as Secretary and Amira al Yaarubi as Director. Other members include Omar al Riyami, Dr Mohammed al Kalbani, Dr Ali Akaak, Esam al Shaibani, and Nasser al Maskari. Each of these distinguished board members holds strategic roles in multiple sectors, providing extensive perspectives on environmental conservation and sustainability.

Following the official board appointment by the Ministry of Social Development, the board held its first official meeting to discuss the contents of the noble speech delivered by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik at the



Following the official board appointment by the Ministry of Social Development, the board held its first official meeting.

opening of the Oman Council in November 2023. His Majesty emphasised the national goal of achieving climate neutrality by mid-century through adopting

environmentally friendly technologies, sustainable projects, and nature-based solutions, enhancing biodiversity, and preserving ecosystems.

The Honourable Dr Amer al Mataani, President of the Board of the Environment Society of Oman, said, “We are following the wise approach of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, may God protect him, and have the genuine ambition, vision, and commitment to implement the contents of his noble speech as a roadmap to achieving Oman Vision 2040. The national course towards carbon neutrality by 2050 is one of our most important goals, and we are committed to raising community awareness and preserving Oman’s natural heritage for future generations. This is a concept deeply rooted in Oman and its Renaissance,

and we aim to achieve it through our future projects and programmes.” This commitment aligns well with Oman’s success in raising its environmental index and setting ambitious environmental targets. ESO is dedicated to supporting the government’s vision to achieve these targets and emphasises the importance of cooperation with government and private entities, as well as civil society, to meet the environmental and climate goals aspired to by the Sultanate of Oman. This collective effort is essential to ensure a sustainable future for our coming generations.



People walk towards a devastated building at Al Shifa hospital damaged by Israeli bombs in Gaza City. – AFP

Civilian deaths in Nuseirat camp may be war crimes

GENEVA: The UN human rights office said on Tuesday the killings of civilians in Gaza during the Israeli operation to free four captives could amount to war crimes. Israel said the operation, accompanied by an air assault, took place on Saturday in the heart of a residential neighbourhood in central Gaza's Nuseirat area where Palestinians had kept the captives in two separate apartment blocks. The operation killed more than 270 Palestinians, according to Gazan health officials. "The manner in which the raid was conducted in such a densely populated area seriously calls into question whether the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution — as set out under the laws of war — were respected by the Israeli forces," Jeremy Laurence, spokesperson for the UN human rights office, said. Laurence added that the holding of captives in such densely

The manner in which the raid was conducted in such a densely populated area seriously calls into question whether the principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution were respected by the Israeli forces

JEREMY LAURENCE
UN spokesperson

populated areas by Palestinian armed groups was "putting the lives of Palestinian civilians, as well as the captives themselves,

at added risk from the hostilities." "All these actions, by both parties, may amount to war crimes," he said. In response to the statement, Israel's Permanent Mission to the United Nations in Geneva accused UN High Commissioner for Human Rights of "slandering Israel". "The toll of this war on civilians is first and foremost the product of Palestinians deliberate strategy to maximise civilian harm," the mission said. The conflict in Gaza was triggered when Palestinians charged into Israel on October 7 and killed some 1,200 people, according to Israeli tallies. Israel's subsequent bombardment and invasion of Gaza has killed more than 37,000 Palestinians, according to health authorities in the enclave. Gunmen took around 250 captives back to Gaza on October

7, more than 100 of whom were released in exchange for about 240 Palestinians held in Israeli jails during a week-long truce in November. There are 116 captives left in the coastal enclave, according to Israeli tallies, including at least 40 whom Israeli authorities have declared dead in absentia. Meanwhile, Israeli forces killed four Palestinians in the occupied West Bank, Palestinian officials said, and Israel's border police said they had opened fire at a vehicle that tried to run them over during an arrest raid. The official Palestinian news agency Wafa said Israeli forces opened fire at a vehicle near a village outside the city of Ramallah. It reported that Israeli forces later entered the village and eight people were injured during clashes. Violence in the West Bank, already on the rise before the war in Gaza, has escalated further. — Reuters

Emergency summit presses aid and ceasefire

SWEIMEH: Leaders at an emergency summit on Gaza's humanitarian crisis pleaded on Tuesday for greater aid access into the war-ravaged territory and backed a US-proposed ceasefire as the only long-term solution. Jordan invited leaders from around the world to its Dead Sea coast for urgent talks as aid groups warn that conditions are worse than ever in Gaza, with virtually the whole population of more than two million people relying on sporadic aid deliveries. "The horror must stop," UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres told the conference. "The speed and scale of the carnage and killing in Gaza is beyond anything in my years as secretary-general," he said. UN humanitarian coordination Martin Griffiths described the Gaza war as a "stain on our humanity" and appealed for \$2.5 billion to meet the humanitarian needs of Gazans from April until December. Guterres voiced his backing for a ceasefire plan put forth by US President Joe Biden, under which Israel would withdraw from Gaza population centres and Hamas would free hostages in exchange for Palestinian prisoners. Secretary of State Antony Blinken on Tuesday announced \$404 million in new US assistance for the Palestinians, as he urged other countries including US critics also to give money to address Gaza's humanitarian crisis. "Some have expressed great concern over the suffering of the Palestinian people in Gaza, including countries with the capacity to give a lot, have provided very little or nothing at all," Blinken told an emergency aid conference in Jordan. Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez, an outspoken critic of Israel's military operation, announced that his government would offer another 16 million euros in assistance. Guterres on Tuesday said that since the closure of the border, "the flow of critical humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza — which was already woefully inadequate — has plummeted by two-thirds". He estimated that more than 50,000 children required treatment for acute malnutrition. Jordan's King Abdullah II and Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el Sisi, the co-hosts of the summit, also backed the calls for a ceasefire. Sisi blamed the humanitarian crisis on Israel, saying it was "manufactured" and accusing Israel of using hunger as a weapon of war. — AFP



King Abdullah II, president al-Sisi and other officials attend a plenary session during the emergency aid summit for Gaza, in Jordan. – AFP

Palestinians accept UN's Gaza truce resolution

CAIRO: Palestinian authority and groups accept a UN resolution backing a plan to end the war with Israel in Gaza and is ready to negotiate details, a senior Palestinian official said on Tuesday in what the US Secretary of State called "a hopeful sign". Conversations on plans for Gaza after the Mideast war ends will continue and in the next couple of days, Secretary of State Antony Blinken said in Tel Aviv after talks with Israeli leaders. "It's imperative that we have these plans." Blinken met Israeli officials on Tuesday in a push to end the eight-month-old Israeli air and ground war that has devastated Gaza, a day

after President Joe Biden's proposal for a truce was approved by the UN Security Council. Ahead of Blinken's trip, Israel and Palestinian Hamas both repeated hardline positions that have undermined previous mediation to end the fighting, while Israel has pressed on with assaults in central and southern Gaza, among the bloodiest of the war. On Tuesday, however, senior Hamas official Sami Abu Zuhri said it accepted the ceasefire resolution and was ready to negotiate over the details. It was up to Washington to ensure that Israel abides by it, he added. He said Hamas accepted

the formula stipulating the withdrawal of Israeli troops from Gaza and a swap of captives held in Gaza for Palestinian prisoners jailed in Israel. "The US administration is facing a real test to carry out its commitments in compelling the occupation to immediately end the war in an implementation of the UN Security Council resolution," Abu Zuhri said. Blinken said the Hamas statement was "a hopeful sign" but definitive word was still needed from its leadership inside Israeli-besieged Gaza. "That's what counts, and that's what we don't have yet." — Reuters



Family members mourn during the funeral of a man killed in Israeli bombardment, in Deir al Balah. – AFP



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In brief

■ COPENHAGEN

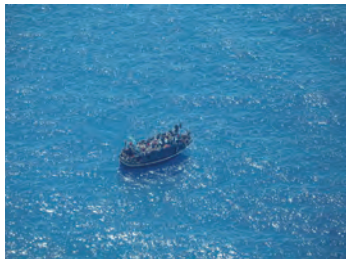


DENMARK'S PM SAYS SHE RECOVERS, WARNS OF AGGRESSION

Denmark's Prime Minister Mette Frederiksen said on Tuesday she was still recovering both physically and mentally from an assault in central Copenhagen last week and warned about more aggression in the public.

"I'm not quite myself yet," Frederiksen said in an interview with broadcaster DR. "I look after my work as prime minister, and I always will. I was also able to do so over the weekend, but not in the same way as I normally do." Frederiksen said she has witnessed a shift in the public domain. "We all experience across parties that the boundaries are shifting wildly," she said. — **Reuters**

■ DUBAI



UN SAYS 49 MIGRANTS DEAD AFTER BOAT SINKS OFF YEMEN

A boat carrying more than 200 migrants sank off Yemen, leaving at least 49 dead, mostly women and children, in the latest disaster on the perilous migration route from Africa, a UN agency said on Tuesday. "At least 49 migrants have died and 140 others remain missing after a boat" carrying 260 people capsized off the southern province of Shabwah on Monday, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) said. "Search and rescue operations are ongoing despite significant challenges due to a shortage of operational patrol boats," it said. The boat departed from Bossaso in Somalia at around 3 am on Sunday. — **AFP**

■ SYDNEY



CHINESE PREMIER TO VISIT AUSTRALIA AS TRADE TIES WARM

China's Premier Li Qiang will travel to Australia on the highest-ranking visit in seven years, Canberra announced on Tuesday, as the two nations' trade ties improve despite their strategic rivalry in the Pacific. Li's four-day trip, which begins on Saturday, comes after Beijing lifted most of the trade barriers it had imposed several years ago on Australian exports including coal, timber, barley, and wine.

The Chinese premier's visit "represents another important step in stabilising our relationship with China," Prime Minister Anthony Albanese told a news conference. — **AFP**

Russia captures more villages

MOSCOW: Russia said on Tuesday it had captured two more villages in eastern Ukraine, in the latest in a string of gains for Moscow on the battlefield.

Russian forces have advanced in Ukraine for weeks and the fall of the villages comes days before an international summit on Ukraine.

Moscow's defence ministry said Russian forces took Timkovka in the northeastern Kharkiv region and Miasozharivka, calling it by its Russian name of Artemovka, in the eastern Lugansk region. Timkovka lies near Kupiansk in the northeastern Kharkiv region.

Russia launched a fresh offensive in the Kharkiv region in May. Miasozharivka lies in the north of the Lugansk region, which Russia has claimed to have annexed, near the border with the Kharkiv region. Russia has made the gains in Ukraine this spring and early summer as Kyiv's forces have struggled with a lack of men and ammunition.

Meanwhile, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky on Tuesday pleaded for more air defence help to stop Russian attacks as he began an intense week of diplomatic meetings with Western partners.

"Russia's greatest strategic advantage over Ukraine is superiority in the sky. It is missile and bomb that helps Russian troops advance on the ground," Zelensky told a reconstruction conference in Berlin. "Air defence is the answer," he said.

Zelensky, who is also due to address the German parliament, will join the heads of the G7 developed nations later this week in Italy.



Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky (3rdR) makes a greeting gesture as he receives an applause after giving a speech at the German Bundestag, in Berlin. — **AFP**

“Russia’s greatest strategic advantage over Ukraine is superiority in the sky. It is missile and bomb that helps Russian troops advance on the ground

VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

Ukrainian President

He then heads to Switzerland for peace talks over the weekend on the war in Ukraine. Russia has not been invited.

Opening the Berlin conference, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz also urged allies to provide more air defence for Ukraine.

"I would like to make a heartfelt plea to everyone here today: please support our initiative to strengthen Ukraine's air defence with everything that is possible," Scholz told delegates.

"The best reconstruction is the one that doesn't have to take place at all," he said.

Germany has contributed

three Patriot air defence systems to Kyiv, while Zelensky said a total of seven Patriots are needed for Ukraine to shield its urban centres from the storm of Russian missiles.

"You can understand why we are fighting so hard against Russia's attempts to divide us, to divide Ukraine. Why we are doing absolutely everything to prevent a wall between parts of our country," Zelensky told German lawmakers. Russian aerial attacks had already destroyed half of the country's electricity production since winter, according to Zelensky. — **AFP**

UK's Sunak offers 17 bn pounds tax cuts plan

SILVERSTONE: Prime Minister Rishi Sunak pledged to cut 17 billion pounds (\$21.7 billion) of taxes for working people if re-elected, in a final throw of the dice to overturn polls that put him on course for a heavy defeat in Britain's July 4 election.

With his Conservative Party consistently about 20 points behind Keir Starmer's opposition Labour in the polls, Sunak made a new appeal on Tuesday to what one Conservative lawmaker described as Britain's carpenters, bricklayers and electricians, by promising further tax cuts if they give him their vote.

The party manifesto aims to put tax cuts at the heart of the campaign, with Sunak's team believing that the move will put pressure on Labour, traditionally seen as the party of tax and spend. Starmer has said his party will not lift the main taxes.

Sunak, a 44-year-old former investment banker, acknowledged that people were frustrated with him and his party after 14 years of power, dominated at times by political turmoil and scandal, during which many have struggled to make ends meet.

Sunak argued that the economy was finally recovering and if re-elected he would cut payroll taxes for workers to reignite economic growth further.

"I'm not blind to the fact that people are frustrated with our party and frustrated with



Britain's PM and Conservative Party leader Rishi Sunak delivers a speech to launch the Conservatives' general election manifesto in Silverstone, central England. — **Reuters**

me," he said at the launch of the Conservatives' manifesto, setting out its future policy pledges.

"Things have not always been easy, and we have not got everything right, but we are the only party in this election with the big ideas to make our country a better place to live."

Under the plan launched on Tuesday at the Formula One racetrack Silverstone in central England, where US actor Brad Pitt was filming, Sunak said taxes would be cut by 17.2 billion

pounds a year by 2029/30.

That will be funded by an annual 12-billion-pound cut to welfare spending and 6 billion pounds a year of savings by tackling tax avoidance and evasion.

The biggest tax cut - accounting for 10 billion pounds of the 17-billion-pound reduction planned - is a 2-percentage-point cut in the rate of National Insurance paid by employees, which will take effect by April 2027. — **Reuters**

Malawi VP and nine others killed in plane crash

BLANTYRE: Malawi's Vice President Saulos Klaus Chilima and nine others, including former first lady Shanil Dzimbiri, were killed when the military plane they were travelling in crashed, President Lazarus Chakwera said on Tuesday.

The aircraft carrying Chilima, who was seen as a potential candidate in next year's presidential election, went missing on Monday.

"I'm deeply saddened, I'm sorry to inform you all that it has turned out to be a terrible tragedy. The search and rescue team has found the aircraft near a hill. They have found it completely destroyed with no survivors," Chakwera said in an address to the nation.

The plane left the capital Lilongwe at 09:17 am on Monday but was unable to land at Mzuzu airport as scheduled at 10:02 am due to poor visibility.

It was ordered to return to Lilongwe but went off the radar and aviation authorities could not make contact with it.

Chakwera said all passengers on board were killed on impact and that the military was bringing their remains back to the capital.

"Despite the track record of the aircraft and the experience of the crew, something terrible went wrong with that aircraft on its flight back to Lilongwe, sending it crashing down and leaving us all devastated," he said.

Images shared online showed security and rescue personnel on

Singapore Airlines offers \$10,000 to passengers

SINGAPORE: Singapore Airlines (SIA) said on Tuesday it had offered \$10,000 in compensation to passengers who suffered minor injuries on a flight hit by extreme turbulence last month and will discuss higher payouts with those more badly hurt.

In a statement on Tuesday, SIA said it had sent out emails offering US\$10,000 in compensation to passengers who sustained minor injuries during the incident.

"For those who sustained more serious injuries... we have invited them to discuss a compensation offer to meet each of their specific circumstances when they feel well and ready to do so," the airline said.

"Passengers medically assessed as having sustained serious injuries, requiring long-term medical care, and requesting financial assistance are offered an advance payment of US\$25,000 to address their immediate needs. In addition, the carrier said it would refund the airfares of all passengers on the flight, including those who were not injured.

"All passengers will also receive delay compensation in accordance with the relevant European Union or United Kingdom regulations," it said.

As of Tuesday afternoon, 11 passengers from the flight were still receiving treatment in hospitals in Bangkok, a SIA spokesperson said. Under the Montreal Convention, airlines are liable for damages for the injury or death of passengers while on an aeroplane. — **AFP**



Boeing 777-312ER aircraft of Singapore Airlines takes off. — **Reuters file photo**



Saulos Klaus Chilima, Malawi Vice President

the crash site on a hillside with debris scattered around the tail of the Dornier 228-202K military transport plane, its tail number MAF T03 still visible.

Chilima, 51, returned from South Korea on Sunday after participating in the Korea-Africa summit, and was travelling with the other passengers on Monday morning to attend the funeral of Malawi's former justice minister in the north of the country.

"Dr. Saulos Klaus Chilima was a good man, a devoted father and husband, a patriotic citizen who served his country with distinction, and a formidable vice president," Chakwera said.

Chilima, a former director of Airtel Malawi, was the leader of the United Transformation Movement party. He partnered with Chakwera to form the ruling Tonse Alliance and ran as his running mate in their 2020 victory. — **Reuters**

Discover new areas for AI and digital applications



Dr Muamar bin Ali al Tob

The writer is Omani academic and researcher

Oman is charting its path to economic growth by adopting an economic diversification policy, with digital transformation being a key branch that can contribute significantly to local economic development. According to a 2018 report by PwC, investing in artificial intelligence (AI) is crucial for achieving substantial sustainability in Oman's economy. The report suggests that AI technologies could increase the GDP of Oman, Kuwait, Qatar, and Bahrain by up to 8.2 per cent by 2030. Previous articles have discussed AI practices and current digital systems in Oman, the government's future ambitions for digital transformation, and the clear plans stemming from Oman Vision 2040.

This article continues the discussion on the practical trajectory of AI in Oman.

Recently, local media have reported on developments in AI. Two noteworthy reports were published in the *Oman* newspaper on May 27. The first report highlights the Environmental Authority's use of AI algorithms to analyse data collected through remote sensing systems and satellite images

to monitor frankincense trees, predicting future changes to protect these trees. The second report recommends using AI to guide workers and mediate labour disputes, with human intervention available if digital mediation fails. These reports illustrate AI's potential in complex sectors such as agriculture and labour, which have not typically been associated with AI in Oman, unlike health and education.

In the labour sector, using AI to guide workers and mediate disputes reflects the digital awareness in Oman and the potential of AI to interact with human emotions and analyse behavioural patterns, marking a significant shift in community services. AI's analytical capabilities can reduce operational costs, improve quality, and provide efficient solutions, thereby contributing to GDP growth directly or indirectly by being employed in key sectors.

A PwC report outlines potential AI contributions to GDP in the Middle East. For example, AI could contribute 12.4 per cent to the GDP in the construction and manufacturing sector, 18.6 per cent in the public sector (including education and health), 19 per cent in retail and wholesale

EDUCATION IS ANOTHER SECTOR NEEDING GREATER INTERACTION WITH SMART DIGITAL TECHNOLOGIES, CONSIDERING THE POTENTIAL NEGATIVE IMPACTS OF IRRESPONSIBLE AI USE.

trade, consumer goods, accommodation, and food services, 15.2 per cent in transportation and logistics, and 14 per cent in technology, media, and telecommunications.

We have previously outlined aspects of Oman's digital economy vision and continue to monitor its progress according to the planned schedule. The success of this vision is evident, yet the rapid development of digital systems requires continuous updating of our digital execution plans. This involves discovering new areas for AI and digital system applications in sectors that were not initially prioritised in the digital transformation programme such as community and humanitarian sectors.

The recommendation to use AI in labour dispute resolution is an example of innovative AI applications in human-related tasks, ensuring workers' rights. Education is another sector needing greater interaction with smart digital technologies, considering the potential negative impacts of irresponsible AI use.

Clear practices and ethical guidelines for digital applications are essential for all sectors where digital systems are integrated.

French bosses fear far right's vague plans

KATIA DOLMAJIAN

French business leaders have been pitched into fresh uncertainty by snap elections called by President Emmanuel Macron that risk strengthening the far right.

Federations are treading lightly with their public comments, aware that they could be sitting across the table from National Rally (RN) ministers if the party scores a major breakthrough in the June 30 and July 7 ballots.

Local business group U2P would "respect the people's choice, but the RN has to say more precisely what it proposes on questions with a tax, social and economic effect on small firms," its chief Michel Picon said.

At the last presidential election in 2022, the outfit had warned that RN chief Marine Le Pen's manifesto promises "would have bad consequences for business," he recalled.

At stake are issues such as returning to an official retirement age of 60 — raised to 64 in a wildly unpopular Macron reform last year — and a still harsher crackdown on immigration.

"What does this mean for people working for us today?" Picon asked.

"We're business players who don't get involved in politics," said Thierry Cotillard, head of the Mousquetaires/Intermarche supermarket chain.

But "whoever the politicians are, we will fiercely defend our positions," he warned.

Centrist Macron's time in office has been marked by reforms aimed at making life easier for businesses and high-profile courting of foreign investment.

By contrast, "we know nothing" about the RN's plans, said the head of one major European industrial firm's French subsidiary on condition of anonymity.

"We've just seen the beginnings of a reindustrialisation for 10 years, with supply-side policies bearing fruit. Will all that be kept up?" he asked.

Macron's Finance Minister Bruno Le Maire on Tuesday urged business to "stick their neck out" against the far right.

Groups including the big companies' federation MEDEF should "clearly say what they think of the different parties' economic programmes" and warn about "the cost of Marine Le Pen's Marxist plans," he said.

Without naming any party, MEDEF said in a statement that "a new campaign is starting in which we do not share certain political visions, which are incompatible with business competitiveness and prosperity for our country and fellow citizens".

— AFP

Data insights can 10X khareef experience



Khalid Alsafi Al Huraibi

The writer is an entrepreneur and innovation adviser

Unless one is living under the air conditioner for the whole day, we can all notice that climate change is making our weather conditions more extreme.

While this is making summers hotter everywhere, my hometown of Salalah is becoming an even more attractive destination thanks to khareef.

Despite its numerous attractions, Dhofar's annual tourism season has yet to fully realise its potential, trying to break the million visitor barrier.

Integration of emerging data insights offers a paradigm shift opportunity to improve the tourism sector, ensuring sustainable growth and an enriched experience for visitors.

The 10-times experience improvement approach, known globally as 10X can be achieved through leveraging data insights in at least six different ways.

UNDERSTANDING VISITOR BEHAVIOUR

Data analytics provides invaluable insights into what attracts visitors to Dhofar. For example, understanding which attractions are most popular during the khareef season can help in allocating public and private resources more effectively. Additionally, insights into peak visiting times and the demographic profiles of visitors enable more targeted marketing strategies. By tailoring promotions to specific age groups, nationalities, or interests, the appeal of Dhofar can be broadened to diverse audiences.

ENHANCING THE VISITOR EXPERIENCE

Real-time data on weather conditions, traffic patterns especially around Ittin or Darbat waterfalls, and crowd densities at popular sites can be integrated into a user-friendly mobile app. Such an app can offer personalised recommendations, alternative routes to avoid congestion, and updates on local events. For instance, if the newly upgraded Sha'th viewpoint, or Al Mughsail Beach are particularly crowded, the app can suggest less busy yet equally stunning alternatives like Al Fazayah Beach.

This not only improves the visitor experience but also distributes tourist traffic more evenly, reducing the strain

on heavily visited sites.

OPTIMISING RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Effective resource allocation is crucial for the sustainability of tourism. Data insights can help authorities in Dhofar, especially the Municipal Council, predict and prepare for fluctuations in tourist numbers.

By analysing historical data, predictive models can forecast peak periods, enabling better planning for accommodation, transport and staffing needs. For example, if data indicates a surge in bookings from AGCC tourists during a specific month, local businesses can stock up on preferred supplies and hire multilingual staff to cater to these visitors. This ensures that services are not overwhelmed and that

FROM UNDERSTANDING VISITOR PREFERENCES TO OPTIMISING RESOURCE ALLOCATION, PROMOTING SUSTAINABILITY, BOOSTING THE LOCAL ECONOMY, AND FOSTERING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS, DATA-DRIVEN STRATEGIES CAN UNLOCK THE FULL POTENTIAL OF DHOFAR'S TOURISM SECTOR

tourists receive a consistently high-quality experience.

PROMOTING SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Data analytics can play a pivotal role in promoting eco-friendly practices in Dhofar. By tracking the environmental impact of tourist activities, authorities can identify areas where Environment Authority, or perhaps a new Royal Oman Police tourism team intervention is needed.

For example, data on green spaces usage, waste generation and water usage in popular tourist spots can inform policies to mitigate environmental degradation. Promoting less-visited natural sites such as Sadah or Dhalkout or encouraging off-peak travel from September to May can help preserve the region's pristine landscapes.

In addition, data can support the

development of eco-tourism packages that appeal to environmentally conscious travellers, fostering a sustainable tourism model.

BOOSTING INCOME GENERATION

Tourism is a significant driver of local economies, and data insights can enhance its impact.

By analysing spending patterns of tourists, businesses can tailor their offerings to match demand, ensuring that local products and services are prominently featured. Data can reveal which souvenirs, foods, or activities are most popular, allowing local entrepreneurs to capitalise on these trends in places such as the newly remodelled Hafa Souq and Dahariz Beach. Moreover, insights into seasonal variations in tourist numbers can help in designing training programmes for residents, equipping them with the skills needed to thrive in the tourism industry. This not only boosts employment but also ensures that the economic benefits of tourism are widely distributed.

FACILITATING STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

Data-driven insights can facilitate strategic partnerships between the public and private sectors.

By sharing data with airlines, travel agencies, and hospitality providers, a more cohesive and attractive tourism package can be developed.

For instance, if data indicates a high interest in cultural heritage and Frankincense trail tours, collaborations can be formed to offer comprehensive packages that include guided tours, traditional dining experiences, and cultural performances.

Data is the new oil, this is why leveraging data insights presents a dynamic avenue for enhancing the national economy.

From understanding visitor preferences to optimising resource allocation, promoting sustainability, boosting the local economy, and fostering strategic partnerships, data-driven strategies can unlock the full potential of Dhofar's tourism sector.

By embracing these insights, Dhofar can not only attract more visitors but also provide them with an unforgettable 10 experience, ensuring continued growth and prosperity for all of us.

Life is passing by so fast

The years have passed much faster than I ever realised that they would. A week now feels like a day, as does a month or a year. Each day slips by faster than the day before.

Many of my retired friends wonder how fast the years go by. They feel that time just flies.

This feeling seems to be true across cultures, time, and the world!

It's normal to feel like time speeds up the older you get. When we were teenagers, time seemed never-ending, and as we grew into young adults, we found that even half an hour looked like an age.

Days and nights seem to be shorter, and our watch goes faster than it used to. Birthdays, anniversaries and holidays are going to seem like they're racking up more and more quickly. It's another year and another Eid or Christmas around the corner in a blink.

Here, I am not attempting to dispute the biologist's claim that when you get older, the metabolic process in the body starts slowing down. So time does not get faster, but the process in the body gets slower and slower.

I am not debating the mathematical or psychological explanation as to why we think time goes faster as we get older.

When I was young, I had never been bothered by the passing of the years or my youth.

But now I bother, not for me, but for my children, who are slowly becoming old. My children turned 34 and 30, and I can't still believe it.

After about 25 years, time really seems to go faster. Those years passed so fast — much faster than I ever realised they would.

True, as we get older, we feel the passage of time due to the relative proportion of time in our lives.

A scientific explanation for



Samuel Kutty
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The writer is a senior journalist, author and columnist

FOR MYSELF, I CAN SAY THAT LIFE HAS PASSED AT JUST ABOUT THE SPEED NECESSARY. IT'S BEEN TWO YEARS SINCE I RETIRED. THE DAYS ARE GOING BY VERY FAST. I GET UP, DO A FEW THINGS, AND SUDDENLY IT'S EVENING

this is that our brains process less information as we grow older, which makes time seem to speed up.

Researchers suggest that the biggest factor that influences our perception of time is motivation. "When we are motivated to approach something, we will perceive time passing faster," they say.

However, time is relative to how you measure it. None of us knows how much time we have, but, interestingly, we do actually have a lot of control over how we experience that time.

I know good things come along with getting older, and that the future is filled with possibilities.

For myself, I can say that life has passed at just about the speed necessary. It's been two years since I retired.

The days are going by very fast. I get up, do a few things, and suddenly it's evening.

My career as a working journalist spanned nearly four decades. When I finally retired, I was ready for a rest, and rest is what I do, including my regular habit of reading and writing.

As a grandfather, I try to spend time with my two grand kids. I love to see the two little angels coming home and spending time with them. My life now feels like it moves at a leisurely pace by comparison.

In conclusion, I do what I want. I sleep when I feel like it, I wake up when I want, and rarely ever set an alarm.

I have no deadline to meet, it's a deadline set by me, not by someone else.

However, time can be influenced by a variety of factors, often different for different individuals.

The fact is that time itself is unaffected by it. It just keeps ticking along like it always has. It's a journey from one moment to the next.

COOL TACTIC



Two women use a fan to keep cool on a hot day in Beijing on Tuesday. — AFP

The art of leadership is to create something from nothing

This is not my first article about leadership, and it certainly won't be my last. While the topic is far from novel, it continually evolves with new practices and theories.

Yet, it seems that in today's business landscape, anyone who holds a position in the workplace is often labeled a leader. This trend has arguably diluted the true essence of the term leader, making it seem almost "cheap" in contemporary usage.

A pertinent question arises: Why do individuals act as leaders if they were not inherently born to lead? This proliferation of so-called fake leaders prompts the response often heard: "Leaders are made, not born." While this idea has long been accepted, it's essential to re-examine it from different perspectives.

Can leadership qualities be instilled forcibly if they do not naturally exist? This leads us to consider how the "DNA" of leadership can be developed.

A core aspect of leadership is the ability to cultivate new leaders. True leadership involves creating leaders and then moving on, fostering a continuous cycle of growth within the organisation.

A leader should not just assemble a loyal team to carry out tasks. Such an approach may benefit the organisation in the short term but fails to build new leaders, potentially harming the organisation in the long run.

Relying on a self-created circle without fostering new talent can stifle innovation and resilience.



Mohammed Anwar Al Balushi

The author is with Oman College of Management and Technology

LEADERSHIP IS NOT MERELY ABOUT HOLDING A TITLE OR POSITION. IT IS ABOUT EMBODYING AND PRACTICING VALUES THAT INSPIRE, DEVELOP AND UPLIFT OTHERS, CREATING A LEGACY OF CONTINUOUS GROWTH AND ETHICAL INTEGRITY.

Research underscores that a significant issue in business today is the failure of senior leaders to effectively implement strategies that transition new subordinate leaders into the organisation. This oversight can disrupt employee engagement, processes and workflow continuity.

Consider the renowned business leaders like Elon Musk (SpaceX and Tesla), Tim Cook (Apple), Satya Nadella (Microsoft), Jeff Bezos (Amazon), Warren Buffett (Berkshire Hathaway), Jamie Dimon (JPMorgan Chase), and Reed Hastings (Netflix). These leaders are celebrated for their substantial contributions to their respective companies and industries.

However, they have become uninteresting, and people now seek leaders who are charismatic, human-centric, service-oriented and relatable.

Aspiring to emulate these high-profile leaders can sometimes mean undervaluing one's unique leadership traits and skills. Great leaders are both born and made, shaped by nature and circumstances rather than from just formal education from prestigious institutions like Harvard or Oxford.

It's important not to misconstrue my point: chief executive officers, chief human resources officers, chief digital officers, chief operating officers,

chief risk officers, chief Internal auditors, and chief compliance officers often do not exemplify true leadership.

In many cases, they fail to meet the holistic demands of leadership. True leaders strive to balance the goals of all stakeholders. If the objectives of one key group are neglected, true leadership has not been achieved.

Mahatma Gandhi's insights into leadership remain profoundly relevant. He said, "The best way to find yourself is to lose yourself in the service of others." Unfortunately, many modern leaders with grand titles seem to prioritise their own interests

over serving others. Gandhi also remarked, "A leader is useless when he acts against the promptings of his own conscience." This highlights the necessity of ethical integrity in leadership.

Daniel Goleman's works on emotional and social intelligence are invaluable for anyone aspiring to leadership. Goleman emphasises that effective leaders possess high emotional intelligence, which includes self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy and social skills. Leaders with these qualities are better equipped to navigate complex interpersonal

relationships with empathy and judiciousness.

In conclusion, the insights and reflections from various leaders and thinkers underscore the complexity and profound impact of leadership on individuals, organisations, and society at large.

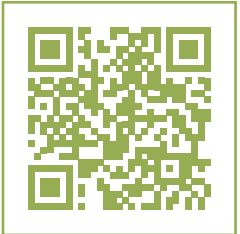
Leadership is not merely about holding a title or position. It is about embodying and practicing values that inspire, develop and uplift others, creating a legacy of continuous growth and ethical integrity. True leadership requires a balance of innate qualities and situational development, driven by a genuine commitment to serve and elevate others.



True leadership involves creating leaders and then moving on, fostering a continuous cycle of growth within the organisation

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Oman draw with Kyrgyzstan to top group



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JUNE 11

Oman played out a 1-1 draw against Kyrgyzstan in the concluding clash of Group D in the Preliminary Joint Qualification for the Fifa World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 on Tuesday at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex. The draw meant that Oman reached to 13 points and confirmed as group leaders while Kyrgyzstan raised their tally to 11 points and moved to the deciding stage of the joint qualifiers. In the other match of the group, Malaysia blanked Chinese Taipei 3-1 on Tuesday, but the win was not enough for Malaysia to progress into the next round.

The visitors commenced scoring in the match as Eldiyar Zarypbekov netted the first goal in the 19th minute from inside the box. Abdulaziz al Shmoosi equalised for the hosts in the 57th minute.

Oman dominated Kyrgyzstan in the early stages of the match as the attackers were seeking for a leading goal. Harib al Saadi made the first attempt for the hosts as he sent a strong ball from long distance but it went away from the target in the 11th minute. Kyrgyzstan's response was in 19th minute as G Alykulov gave a pass to J Kojo who was inside the box but Oman's defender cleared the ball for a corner. Eldiyar Zarypbekov's shot from inside box to the centre of the goal gave the lead for his team after a perfect cross by Murolimzhon Akhmedov from corner kick in the 19th minute.

After the opening goal from the

opponents, Jaroslav Silhavy's battalion tried to increase their control and pressed hard towards the attacking zone. Mohsin al Ghassani played a nice assist to the star of the previous match, Abdulrahman al Mushefri, who shot the ball but was saved by goalkeeper E Tokotaev in the 25th minute. Five minutes later, the active man Mohsin al Ghassani gave another pass to Salah al Yahyai who missed a golden opportunity to equalise after a one-one situation with the Kyrgyz goalie but his shot was saved again by Tokotaev. During first half, Oman players created some chances while the visitors had some opportunities as well in front of Ibrahim al Mukhaini's net.

In the second half, the Red Warriors improved their focus in the Kyrgyz penalty box as they controlled the match and created more chances. In the 57th minute, Oman's Abdulaziz al Shmoosi managed to score the equaliser after he received a pass from Harib al Saadi and converted to the goal through a ground shot.

The goal powered Oman's attackers to press hard in the penalty box of Kyrgyzstan for another goal. Mohsin al Ghassani got a golden chance after a cross from Zaher al Aghbari in the 64th minute but Al Ghassani's header missed the target.

On the other side, Kyrgyzstan's A Shukurov sent a strong shot from outside the box but went over the bar in the 70th minute. Five minutes were added as additional time but the dying minutes of the match did not see any change in result as the match ended in a 1-1 draw.



Oman beach handball team posts third win over Thailand

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, JUNE 11

In preparation for its participation in the 11th Men's and Women's Beach Handball World Cup, the Oman national beach handball team continues to achieve victories in its current external camp in the Thai capital, Bangkok. These preparations will continue until June 14, before heading to the Chinese city of Pingtan, where the tournament will be held from June 18 to 23.

In their latest friendly match, Oman registered their third victory against Thailand by 2-0. The first set ended at 24-20, while Oman maintained their lead in the second set at 16-12. This victory comes after two previous victories over the same team, where the second friendly match ended with a score of 22-14 and 20-16 in favour of Oman and the



first match ended with a score of 14-8 and 23-22. Oman national coach Hamood al Hassani is keen to try out new methods and tactics in the friendly matches to get the players used to them in preparation for the official matches in the tournament. Al Hassani is also trying out all the players to assess their levels and their application



of the instructions and playing style. Oman will play three matches in the World Cup within the first group, where they will face Hungary on June 18, and then play against Australia and Denmark on June 19. The technical staff, led by coach Hamood al Hassani and his assistant Jaber al Balushi, is

aiming to achieve honourable results in the tournament, in which Oman team is participating for the eighth time in its history. Group two includes the teams of Tunisia, Spain, China and Brazil, while group three includes Puerto Rico, Portugal, Argentina and Croatia. Group four includes the

teams of Qatar, USA, Uruguay and Germany, and the top three teams from each group in the preliminary round qualify for the main round of the championship. After the end of the Thailand camp, the team will head to the city of Pingtan for an external camp for four days before the start of the tournament, where it

will play several friendly matches with the participating teams to select the appropriate formation and tactics that they will play in the tournament. These preparations are the last opportunity for the technical staff to adopt the final formation and strategies that will lead the team towards achieving outstanding results in the world championship. The technical staff of the Oman national team has reduced the number of players from 12 to 10 players based on a decision by the International Handball Federation. The following players have been approved for participation: Huthaifa al Siyabi, Bashar al Hinai, Muhanad al Zarafi, Abdulhakeem al Siyabi, Mahmoud al Wahhabi, Ali al Jamui, Ahmed al Ghaylani, Mahdi al Sulaimani, Said al Hasani and Yasser al Harthy.

SA EDGE BANGLADESH BY 4 RUNS TO BOOK SUPER 8

NEW YORK: South Africa defeated Bangladesh by just four runs in another low-scoring game at the T20 World Cup on Monday, a result likely to spark fresh debate over the suitability of the pitch being used in New York.

South Africa were restricted to 113-6 in their 20 overs with Heinrich Klaasen top-scoring on 46 while fast bowler Tanzim Hasan Sakib returned a career-best 3-18.

However, Bangladesh could only manage 109-7 in reply as South Africa wrapped up a third win in three Group D games.

“It was not a nice one to watch, it was good that the boys got it over the line,” said Klaasen. “The wicket is not too great for stroke play.”

Chasing just 114 to win on the controversial drop-in strip at the Nassau County International Cricket Stadium, Bangladesh initially struggled in the face of the Proteas’ pace battery.

They were 50-4 at the 10-over mark having lost Tanzid Hasan (nine) to Kagiso Rabada while Anrich Nortje accounted for skipper Najmul Hossain Shanto (14) and Shakib Al Hasan (three).

Spinner Keshav Maharaj sent back Liton Das for just nine.

However, Towhid Hridoy, who top-scored with 40 when Bangladesh defeated Sri Lanka in their opener, and 38-year-old Mahmudullah steadied the ship for the Tigers.

The pair put on 44 for the fifth



South Africa's Heinrich Klaasen runs between the wickets as Bangladesh's Taskin Ahmed looks on during the ICC Twenty20 World Cup 2024 Group D match at Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in East Meadow, New York. – AFP

wicket before Hridoy was lbw to Rabada for 37, an innings which took up 34 balls and featured two fours and two sixes.

Bangladesh took seven off the penultimate over but still needed 11 off the last to be bowled by Maharaj.

That became seven off four balls. With the pressure building both Jaker Ali and Mahmudullah were caught by Aiden Markram going for big heaves over long on.

Needing six off the final ball, Taskin Ahmed could only produce a scrambled single.

‘SHOULD HAVE WON’

“I think this is a match we should have won. In the last couple of overs they bowled well, but this can

happen in cricket,” said Shanto.

Earlier, Bangladesh restricted South Africa to 113-6 with Tanzim backed up by Taskin's 2-19 after Proteas skipper Markram won the toss and opted to bat.

South Africa were struggling at 23-4 at one stage before Klaasen and David Miller, celebrating his 35th birthday, came to their team's rescue with a partnership of 79 for the fifth wicket.

Klaasen's 46 came off 44 balls with two fours and three sixes before he was clean-bowled by Taskin, slogging across the line in the 18th over with the score on 102.

Miller, who made a match-winning undefeated 59 in the nervy win over the Netherlands, went four runs later, bowled by

Rishad Hossain.

His innings of 29 came from 38 deliveries with a boundary and one six.

The Proteas had been 12-4 against the Dutch on the same pitch on Saturday.

On Monday, they were quickly four down for just 23 runs in the fifth over thanks to Tanzim and Taskin.

Tanzim, playing in only his eighth T20 international, started the collapse, having out-of-form opener Reeza Hendricks lbw for nought off his first ball.

Star batsman Quinton de Kock was the next to go, clean-bowled by the 21-year-old for 18 with the total on 19.

Taskin uprooted the stumps of Markram (four) before Tanzim grabbed the third of his opening spell when he forced Tristan Stubbs to spoon a catch to Shakib Al Hasan in the covers without scoring.

Miller could have been dismissed on 13 but wicket-keeper Liton Das dropped an edge off Mahmudullah's first ball. With South Africa virtually certain of a place in the second round Super Eight phase, Bangladesh, with two points, are still well-placed to join them. —AFP

BRIEF SCORES
SOUTH AFRICA 113-6 in 20 overs (Heinrich Klaasen 46; Tanzim Hasan Sakib 3-18) v **BANGLADESH** 109-7 in 20 overs (Towhid Hridoy 37; Keshav Maharaj 3-27)



South Africa's Keshav Maharaj reacts after dismissing Bangladesh's Tanzim Hasan Sakib during the ICC Twenty20 World Cup 2024 Group D match at Nassau County International Cricket Stadium in East Meadow, New York. – AFP

Muscat Blazers clinch title in 10th edition of women's volleyball tourney



MUSCAT: Muscat Blazers claimed the title in the 10th edition of women's volleyball tournament organised by the Oman Expatriates Volleyball Association recently.

Sixteen teams vied for the honours in the one-day tournament held at the Strike Sports Centre near Oman Automobile Association from 9 am to 6 pm on June 7.

The 10th anniversary edition saw some thrilling matches among the teams, said Khalil al Balushi, chief organiser of the tournament and founder of Oman Expatriates Volleyball Association.

“The tournament in its 10th edition saw around 200 players from several nationalities including Omani, Iranian, Filipino, Canadian, Russian,

Indian, Sri Lankan and several European countries,” Khalil said.

Saada al Ismaili, Vice-Chairperson of Oman Women's Sports Committee, was the chief guest of the tournament in presence of Aisha al Jabri, member of board of directors of Oman Volleyball Association and Madhia al Suleimani from Al Wasl Radio.

The Mixer team claimed the runners-up trophy while Vollocity Academy came third.

Among the individual awards, Apple of Muscat Blazers claimed the Most Valuable Player (MVP) honour. Nastran of Mixer won the best spiker award, Jovy of Muscat Blazers was selected as the best server and Kira from Vollocity Academy bagged the best setter award.

Mehran stands out for Oman in T20 WC

ANTIGUA AND BARBUDA: Oman's thrilling journey at the ICC Men's T20 World Cup 2024 is all but over with their hopes of advancing extinguished after a hat-trick of losses in West Indies.

However, one player who has emerged as a standout bowler is Mehran Khan. Amidst the fierce competition and heart-pounding moments, Mehran's exceptional bowling performances have captivated audiences worldwide, showcasing not only his skill but also his unwavering determination to leave an indelible mark on the cricketing world.

Mehran's name is among the list of top wicket-takers after the World Cup has witnessed 22 matches so far across four groups comprising 20 nations.

Mehran has stood out as a formidable force in Oman's bowling lineup. With a presence exuding quiet confidence and a smile that conceals his competitive fire, the 37-year-old medium pacer has made a significant impact on the field. His tally of six wickets places him among the top five bowlers in the tournament, a testament to his skill and consistency.

Afghanistan's left-arm pacer Fazalhaq Farooqi, who claimed a five-wicket haul against Uganda, leads the table of the highest wicket-takers with nine wickets from two matches and is followed by South Africa's pacer Anrich Nortje with eight.

At the third spot there are three bowlers including Mehran with six wickets each. The other two are West Indies' left-arm spinner Akeal Hosein and Afghanistan's spinner Rashid Khan.

Except for Mehran and Nortje who have featured in three matches each, the rest have played two games so far. India's Jasprit Bumrah, who was the star of India's win over Pakistan on Sunday, is next best with five wickets from two games.

Mehran's bowling has also been rated as one of the most impactful performances so far. According to ESPNcricinfo, with Farooqi is on top with a score of 190.1 in the bowling



Oman's Mehran Khan (2R), captain Aqib Ilyas (L), Ayaan Khan and Pratik Athavale celebrate the dismissal of Australia's captain Mitchell Marsh during the ICC Twenty20 World Cup 2024 Group B match at Kensington Oval. – AFP

The experienced Oman medium pacer is among the top wicket-takers in the tournament with his tally of six wickets and a game against defending champions coming up to conclude Oman's campaign

impact category. At second spot is Mehran, who with a score of 146, is ahead of Bumrah with 128.7. The rating of most impactful bowlers is measured not only by the wickets taken and economy rate but also of the pressure under which these performances happened.

Mehran's show has been one of the highlights of Oman in Group B at the ongoing World Cup, but the all-rounder admitted that these figures and bowling would have been sweeter had the team won.

“I would have been happier had we won the matches. We went close in the opener and to lose in a Super Over against Namibia was heart-breaking as we had them on the back foot,” said Mehran.

The experienced campaigner, who has been recalled in the national squad late last year after

a gap of four years, justified the faith of head coach Duleep Mendis and produced one of the most memorable spells against Namibia.

Mehran returned with dream figures of 3/7 and led to defend the meagre total of 109 and force a tie and a Super Over. The spell against Namibia was his career-best in the 40 T20Is he has played since his debut Oman against Afghanistan in July 2015.

“We could have even won the match against Namibia but for the fumble off the last delivery behind the wickets that allowed [David] Wiese to steal a single off a bye,” he said.

Namibia needed a comfortable 18 runs off 18 balls with as many as seven wickets in hand before Mehran delivered a wicket maiden to start a streak of 18 deliveries that almost turned the tables on Namibia to result in a Super Over.

After his 18th over, Mehran returned to defend five runs in the final over with an economy of 2 and claimed two wickets and conceded only four to force a tie. Namibia won the Super Over but Mehran's spell earned plaudits all across the cricketing world.

His tidy line and length and ability to pull back his length came in handy against the mighty Australia. Mehran not only

shone with the ball but made an enterprising 27 off 16 balls against the Aussies forging a crucial partnership with Ayaan Khan in the chase of 164/5.

Mehran had the Aussies in a spot as he struck twice off successive balls to get rid of their skipper Mitchell Marsh and Glenn Maxwell in the ninth over of the game. He was on a hat-trick and nearly had the star performer Marcus Stoinis caught at the boundary in the 15th over, a drop that will haunt Oman for long.

Stoinis' hoick off a length ball to long off had Ayaan Khan take a superb catch back pedalling but he failed to keep his balance and tumbled over the ropes with the ball for a six.

Looking back, Mehran said: “It was the turning point of the match. We had them in the knots as they were 80/3 and had the catch been taken, it would have put pressure on them.”

He finished with 2/38 and was the bowler when skipper Ilyas came up with one of the best catches of the tournament to dismiss Maxwell.

In the match against Scotland, which Oman lost by seven wickets, Mehran picked his sixth wicket of the tournament when he had opener George Munsey caught at short backward point by Shakeel Ahmed for 41.

Over the three games, Mehran's presence has been remarkable, an achievement given the fact that he was out of the national squad from 2019 to 2023.

Speaking on his experience in the World Cup, Mehran said: “It is a dream to play a team like Australia. I played against a Test-playing nation for the first time. They are former world T20 champions and to perform against that side is a proud moment for me.”

He added, “I picked three wickets against Namibia and carried the momentum to pick two more against Australia. I even had a chance of claiming a hat-trick. We could have kept Aussies to a much lesser total but for the dropped chances.”

2024 European Championship

June 14 - July 14



Groups

A	D
Germany	Netherlands
Scotland	France
Hungary	Poland
Switzerland	Austria
B	E
Spain	Ukraine
Croatia	Slovakia
Italy	Belgium
Albania	Romania
C	F
Slovenia	Portugal
Denmark	Czech Rep.
Serbia	Georgia
England	Turkey



Tournament stadiums

Signal Iduna Park Dortmund	Volksparkstadion Hamburg
Arena AufSchalke Gelsenkirchen	Olympic Stadium BERLIN
Dusseldorf Arena Dusseldorf	Leipzig Stadium Leipzig
Cologne Stadium Cologne	Frankfurt Arena Frankfurt
Stuttgart Arena Stuttgart	Allianz Arena Munich

A June 14 - 1900 GMT Germany - Scotland	B June 15 - 1600 Spain - Croatia	C June 16 - 1600 Slovenia - Denmark	D June 16 - 1300 Poland - Netherlands	E June 17 - 1300 Romania - Ukraine	F June 18 - 1600 Turkey - Georgia
June 15 - 1300 Hungary - Switzerland	June 15 - 1900 Italy - Albania	June 16 - 1900 Serbia - England	June 17 - 1900 Austria - France	June 17 - 1600 Belgium - Slovakia	June 18 - 1900 Portugal - Czech Rep.
June 19 - 1600 Germany - Hungary	June 19 - 1300 Croatia - Albania	June 20 - 1300 Slovenia - Serbia	June 21 - 1600 Poland - Austria	June 21 - 1300 Slovakia - Ukraine	June 22 - 1300 Georgia - Czech Rep.
June 19 - 1900 Scotland - Switzerland	June 20 - 1900 Spain - Italy	June 20 - 1600 Denmark - England	June 21 - 1900 Netherlands - France	June 22 - 1900 Belgium - Romania	June 22 - 1600 Turkey - Portugal
June 23 - 1900 Switzerland - Germany	June 24 - 1900 Albania - Spain	June 25 - 1900 England - Slovenia	June 25 - 1600 Netherlands - Austria	June 26 - 1600 Slovakia - Romania	June 26 - 1900 Georgia - Portugal
June 23 - 1900 Scotland - Hungary	June 24 - 1900 Croatia - Italy	June 25 - 1900 Denmark - Serbia	June 25 - 1600 France - Poland	June 26 - 1600 Ukraine - Belgium	June 26 - 1900 Czech Rep. - Turkey

LAST 16



Winners of Euro football

USSR	Spain	Italy	West Germany	Czechoslovakia	West Germany	France	Netherlands	Denmark	Germany	France	Greece	Spain	Spain	Portugal	Italy
1960	1964	1968	1972	1976	1980	1984	1988	1992	1996	2000	2004	2008	2012	2016	2020*

Source: UEFA *tournament held in 2021 due to Covid-19



Germany's
midfielder #8
Toni Kroos
attends a
training session
at the team's
training camp in
Herzogenaurach
on Tuesday,
ahead of the
Uefa Euro 2024
competition.
— AFP

HERZOGENAURACH, Germany: Germany feel pressure to deliver as hosts of Euro 2024 but the team should feel privileged to play a major tournament on home soil, midfielder Toni Kroos said on Tuesday.

The Germans kick off the tournament on Friday with their opening Group A match against Scotland in Munich before also playing Hungary and Switzerland.

The 34-year-old Kroos, who won the Champions League with Real Madrid on June 1 and will retire from football following the Euros, said there was pressure for the hosts to do well after a decade without any major international title.



UNDER-PRESSURE GERMANY 'PRIVILEGED' TO PLAY AT HOME

But he urged his teammates to enjoy what is a rare occasion for most professional footballers, a major tournament in their own country. "Basically at every tournament on home soil (there is pressure). It is even more special," Kroos told a press conference.

"You get feedback instantly, the positive and the negative. We have a big responsibility for the atmosphere in the country for the next few weeks. We know what this is about but it is also a great honour and joy to play this tournament."

"How many players do get to play a home tournament," he said.

The Germans, four-time world champions and three-time European champions, have not tasted major international success since winning the 2014 World Cup. Their disappointing run in recent years, including two consecutive first round exits at World Cups in 2018 and 2022, have seen more than one in four Germans not showing an interest in the Euros, a recent poll showed.

"We know the pressure is there, we don't want to brush it aside, but we have to enjoy this pressure," added Kroos. "We want to influence the atmosphere positively and we have to make amends for past tournaments." — Reuters



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16.4 per cent jump in air travellers in Oman



Indian nationals topped the number of passengers travelling through Muscat International Airport.

MUSCAT: The number of passengers passing through the Sultanate of Oman's airports by the end of April 2024 increased by 16.4 per cent to reach 4,901,796 on board 36,042 flights, compared to 4,209,846 passengers on board 32,071 flights during the same period last year.

Preliminary statistics issued by the NCSI showed that the number of passengers travelling through Muscat International Airport by the end of April 2024 reached about 4,430,119, an increase of 16.8 per cent, on 32,520 flights, an increase in the number of flights of 12.4 per cent.

Among the flights were 29,862 international flights on which 4,097,728 passengers travelled, and 2,658 domestic flights on which 332,391 passengers travelled.

Indian nationals topped the number of passengers travelling through Muscat International Airport during

the month of April, with the number of arrivals reaching 89,206 passengers and 83,855 departing passengers, followed by Pakistani nationals with 21,191 arriving passengers and 19,532 departing passengers, then Bangladeshi nationals with 12,829 arriving passengers and 20,597 departing passengers.

The number of passengers travelling through Salalah Airport reached 429,181, an increase of 9.9 per cent. They travelled on 3,122 flights, an increase in flights of 9.9 per cent.

The number of international flights through Salalah Airport reached 1,660, carrying 214,934 passengers, while the number of domestic flights reached 1,462, carrying 214,247 passengers. The number of passengers through Sohar Airport reached 22,390 on 192 flights, while the number of passengers through Duqm Airport reached 20,106 on 208 flights. — **ONA**

Oman's public revenues exceed RO 3.744 billion by April-end

MUSCAT: As of the end of April 2024, Oman's public revenues amounted to more than RO 3.744 billion, marking a decline of 15 per cent compared to RO 4.392 billion in the same period of 2023.

This decrease is primarily attributed to a drop in both oil and non-oil revenues.

The financial performance bulletin for the period up to April 2024, issued by the try of Finance, revealed that net oil revenues fell by 3 per cent, totalling RO 2.237 billion, down from RO 2.308 billion by the end of April 2023.

The average oil price achieved was \$82 per barrel, with average oil production reaching 1.009 million barrels per day.

Net gas revenues also saw a significant decline, decreasing by 38 per cent to RO 565 million by the end of April 2024, compared to the same period in 2023. This drop is attributed to a change in the methodology for collecting gas revenues.

Current revenues collected until the end of April 2024 decreased by approximately RO 234 million, amounting to RO 938 million, compared to RO 1.172 billion collected in the same period in 2023.



The average oil price achieved was \$82 per barrel, with average oil production reaching 1.009 million barrels per day.

Public spending up to the end of April 2024 stood at RO 3.597 billion, a reduction of RO 275 million, or 7 per cent, compared to actual spending for the same period in 2023.

The current expenditures of civil tries saw a marginal increase of about RO 4 million by the end of April 2024, reaching RO 2.678 billion, compared to RO 2.674 billion in April 2023.

Development expenditures of tries and civil units amounted to about RO 304 million by the end of April 2024, with a disbursement rate of 34 per cent of the total development liquidity allocated for 2024, which is RO 900 million.

Total contributions and other expenditures surged to about RO 615 million, an increase of 68 per cent compared to RO 365 million recorded in the same

period of 2023.

Support for the social protection system, petroleum products and the electricity sector until the end of April 2024 amounted to approximately RO 186 million, RO 96 million, and RO 83 million respectively. Additionally, transfers to the debt repayment allocation item reached RO 133 million.

Strategic JVs deliver 'rewarding returns on investment' in 2023: OIA

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, JUNE 11

Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has reported significant growth in the values of the investment portfolios of its strategic joint ventures that it oversees in partnership with key countries around the world.

To date, there are seven strategic joint ventures in operation between Oman and a number of friendly countries, including Qatar, Vietnam, India, Pakistan, Spain, Uzbekistan and Brunei Darussalam.

They continue to play an important role in strengthening economic cooperation, investment and technology transfer between the two sides.

Among the oldest is Oman-India Joint Investment Fund (OIJIF), which has added a third fund to capitalise on the performance of the first two.

Fund III was approved last year by the Indian JV partner, the State Bank of India (SBI) with a fund of



OIA overseas a portfolio of seven strategic joint ventures with several friendly countries.

\$300 million.

It seeks to build on the success of Fund I, which generated an IRR of 6 per cent as of September 2023. Fund II's IRR topped 17 per cent as of September 2023.

Also noteworthy is Al Hosni Investment Company, an Omani-Qatari JV, with a portfolio of 14 investments totalling RO 139 million in value (as of September 20, 2023). The JV focuses on

"using its portfolio to create strategic value and improve returns for shareholders", said OIA in its 2023 Annual Report.

Equally significant is Vietnam-Oman Investment, which has approved an allocation of \$100 million for investment in public equity, IPO subscription, and pre-listing, in addition to investment in private equity. Of this figure, \$34.6 million has so far been pumped

TO DATE, THERE ARE SEVEN STRATEGIC JOINT VENTURES IN OPERATION BETWEEN OMAN AND A NUMBER OF FRIENDLY COUNTRIES, INCLUDING QATAR, VIETNAM, INDIA, PAKISTAN, SPAIN, UZBEKISTAN AND BRUNEI DARUSSALAM.

into five new public equity investments as of December 2023.

Private equity portfolio projects focused on 13 investments, earning a 5.2 per cent IRR and 1.75 times of the investment value as of June 2023, the Authority noted. Uzbek-Oman Investment Company (UOIC) has grown its portfolio to 11 investments as of the end of 2023, having added three public equity investments and one financial services company last year.

Pak Oman Investment Company posted net profits of \$2.6 million in 2023, compared to \$1.4 million for the same period in 2022.

TURN TO P15

Housing ministry signs 14 usufruct contracts worth RO 8.3 million



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, in cooperation with the Ministry of Agricultural Wealth, Fisheries and Water Resources, on Tuesday signed 14 usufruct contracts in the agricultural sector with an investment value exceeding RO 8.3 million.

The signed contracts relate to raising and marketing carnivorous poultry, cultivating frankincense, raising and marketing livestock, cultivating palm trees to produce dates and basur, manufacturing their waste, beekeeping, honey production, cultivation and production of wheat and coffee,

establishing a farm to produce fig and fifa fruits and seedlings, tourism agriculture, and raising Saanian and Boer goats on a total area exceeding 850 acres.

These projects were distributed across several governorates, including the governorates of Dhofar, Al Dakhiliyah, Al Sharqiyah North, Al Batinah South, Al Buraimi, and Muscat. The contracts were signed by Eng Hamad bin Ali al Nazwani, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for Housing, of the try of Housing and representatives of companies and institutions investing in the projects. — **ONA**

Al Mouj Muscat wins Office Development of the Year - Oman at Real Estate Asia Awards 2024

MUSCAT: Reaffirming its position as leading developer of the year, Al Mouj Muscat (AMM) has secured a victory at the Real Estate Asia Awards 2024, earning the title of Office Development of the Year – Oman for its Business Park. Competing against a number of developers, this marks AMM's third consecutive win at the awards.

This accolade highlights the excellence and innovative design of the Business Park, strengthening AMM's reputation in the real estate sector.

Nasser al Shaibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said, "We are proud to win at the Real Estate Asia Awards for the third year, with our first-time recognition in the business development category.

This award is a testament to our commitment to excellence



and innovation in the real estate sector. We are dedicated to creating spaces that enable local businesses to grow and thrive within our expanding economy.

Our Business Park reimagines the possibilities of modern business, offering a high-tech working environment that supports both well-being and productivity."

The state-of-the-art Business Park is celebrated for its eight standalone buildings set across two districts – three in Business Park East and five in Business Park West, combining G+2 and G+3 structures that integrate seamlessly with natural landscapes. Built to exacting grade A standards, the buildings are separate yet seamlessly connected by beautiful landscaped gardens and outdoor

spaces, designed for business networking. The complex offers 39,000 square meters of office space, with flexible floor plans and access to basement car parks with between 115 and 148 spaces per office block.

Recognised as one of the most prestigious awards in the region, the Real Estate Asia Awards celebrate excellence in the Asian real estate sector. Each year, an independent panel of industry experts evaluates entries based on design, quality, service, innovation, originality, and commitment to sustainability.

Now in its fourth year, the awards continue to highlight outstanding projects and companies that are setting new benchmarks and making significant contributions to their communities.

BANK MUSCAT OFFICIALLY CELEBRATES RELOCATION OF JAALAN BANI BU ALI BRANCH

MUSCAT: In enhancement of its pioneering role in providing the best banking services and facilities and developing the branches network distributed across the governorates, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, celebrated recently the official relocation of its branch in Jaalan Bani Bu Ali in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate.

The inauguration ceremony was held under the auspices of Shaikh Mohammed bin Humaid al Ghabshi, Wali of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, in presence of Executive Management members, officials, and a number of customers.

The relocated branch is characterised by a large space and a modern design considering the



latest standards of the banking sector, the most important of which are security and safety standards and the use of modern technologies harnessed to serve customers. It also offers a wide range of diverse banking services and products to meet the growing

requirements of customers. The services provided by the branch can be availed during weekdays from Sunday to Thursday starting from eight in the morning until two noon.

On this occasion, Taya bin Eid Bait Sabeea, Deputy General

Manager — Regional Branches, Bank Muscat, expressed his pleasure with the official relocation of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali branch.

He clarified: "The new place is more spacious and is located in a vital area inside the Wilayat to meet the growing needs of the residents through a wide range of products and facilities. I urge our dear customers to visit the redesigned branch and benefit from the special services it offers."

The Deputy General Manager — Regional Branches added that Bank Muscat is keen to continue developing its branch network as a key pillar of its long-term strategy, aiming to improve the quality of services, and provide the best solutions and innovative banking products.



Oxy Oman renews multi-year contract with SalamAir

MUSCAT: As part of its In-Country Value (ICV) strategy to support local businesses and services in the Sultanate of Oman, Oxy Oman renewed its multi-year contract with SalamAir SAOC for air charter services between Muscat and Mukhaizna Airport.

The signing ceremony was held at Oxy Oman's headquarters in Muscat. Steven Lauver, the President and General Manager of Oxy Oman, and Captain Ahmed bin Mohammed al Shaithani, Acting CEO of SalamAir SAOC, were signatories for their respective organisations. Abdulkarim al Ghassani, Vice-President for Supply Chain at Oxy Oman, and other senior executives were also present at the ceremony.

Under this renewed agreement, SalamAir will continue to provide essential air charter services for the transportation of Oxy Oman personnel to support its Mukhaizna operations.

"Our collaboration with SalamAir underscores Oxy Oman's unwavering commitment to local partnerships that drive operational excellence and support Oman's economy. Oxy Oman's In-Country Value strategy is designed to enhance and prioritise the sustainable growth of Omani products and services, in alignment with Oman Vision 2040," said Lauver.

This programme demonstrates the efforts by Oxy Oman to contribute to the Government's ICV strategy, and Oxy Oman's endeavour to support economic development in the country under the umbrella of strategic partnerships and continuous collaboration with key stakeholders.

NBO launches innovative Eid note dispensing machines



MUSCAT: As a testament to its commitment to providing a seamless digital banking experience, The National Bank of Oman (NBO) is set to launch five Eid note dispensing machines across Oman this month.

This innovative service, available exclusively to existing NBO customers, will be introduced at five digital branches: the NBO Head Office, Suhar Branch, New Salalah Branch, Ibra Branch and Bahla Branch.

The machines will dispense 100 baisa and 500 baisa notes, addressing the high demand for these denominations during the festive season.

Dr Ali bin Salim al Shukaili, Assistant General Manager - Head of Digital & E-Channels at NBO, commented on this initiative: "At NBO, we recognise the challenges individuals face in obtaining Eidiya notes during Eid due to the high demand. Hence, we introduced this service, the first of its kind in Oman, to provide a seamless experience for our clients and meet their needs effectively. Our Eid note dispensing machines also represent a significant advancement in our digital banking capabilities, underscoring our dedication to enhancing customer experience through cutting-edge solutions."

This launch follows the successful unveiling of the trial version of the Eid note dispensing machine at COMEX 2024, held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 350 showrooms across 13 countries, have extended their partnership with Brink's Inc., a leading provider of cash and valuables management, digital retail solutions, and ATM Managed Services, to utilise their cash management services in the UAE & precious metal storage facilities globally.

"Brink's Global Services has been Malabar Gold & Diamonds' exclusive logistics partner for several years, and we are very excited to expand our long-standing partnership with them.

By broadening the scope of our partnership to cash management services across our retail stores in the UAE and precious metal storage facilities globally, we are further optimising our efficiency in retail operations and driving Malabar Gold & Diamonds' global growth", commented Shamlal Ahamed, MD-International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds.

Through Brinks' state-of-the-



art cash management solutions, Malabar Gold & Diamonds' retail stores in the UAE will optimise cash resources, improving liquidity and streamlining cash-related operations. By utilising these solutions, Malabar Gold & Diamonds can enhance their financial performance, minimise risk, and maintain better control over their cash reserves.

"The signing of this agreement is a great example of the strong partnership between Brink's and Malabar Gold & Diamonds. We

look forward to many more years of successful collaboration as we continue to grow our businesses alongside each other," commented Mark Eubanks, President and CEO of Brink's.

"Malabar Gold & Diamonds has always been a pioneer in the adaptation of technology and our latest venture with Brink's, a name that is synonymous with security, trust and excellence, is a testimony to our never ending strive for innovation. The advantages that the Brink's

cash management services and precious metal storage facilities offers us will add another layer of efficiency to our global operations, aiding us on our path to become the world's no 1 jewellery retailer", commented Abdul Salam K P, Vice-Chairman of Malabar Group.

With access to Brinks' sophisticated vaults, Malabar Gold & Diamonds will be able to access precious metals across key trading locations, boosting their global growth.



In brief

■ LONDON

OIL STEADY AS INVESTORS
HOLD FOR FED MEET

Oil prices were largely steady on Tuesday, as investors waited for US and China inflation data and the outcome of the Federal Reserve's policy meeting to see how changing prices could hit demand.

Brent crude futures fell 14 cents, or 0.2 per cent, to \$81.39 per barrel by 1121 GMT, easing after a recovery from a close of \$77.52 a week earlier. That close, the lowest since February, came as investors fretted about oversupply and low demand through the rest of 2024. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures slipped 18 cents, or 0.2 per cent, to \$77.47. Prices had climbed about 3 per cent to a one-week high on Monday. — **Reuters**

■ ISLAMABAD

PAKISTAN ECONOMY TO
GROW 2.4% IN FY24

Pakistan's economy is likely to expand 2.4 per cent in the fiscal year ending June 2024 after contracting 0.17 per cent during the previous year, the economic survey showed on Tuesday, a day before the announcement of the country's federal budget.

Meanwhile, with the inflation rate easing and the economy holding in, the State Bank of Pakistan on Monday cut its key policy rate by 150 basis points to 20.5 per cent — its first rate reduction in nearly four years.

The decision to cut the key rate comes two days ahead of the announcement of annual budget and a week after data showed inflation slowed to a 30-month low of 11.8 per cent in May.

— **Reuters**

■ BEIJING

CHINESE AUTOMAKERS
COMMITTED TO EUROPE

Chinese automakers' plans to invest in Europe won't be deflected by the EU's anti-subsidy probe into Chinese-made electric vehicles, a leading Chinese auto industry association said on Tuesday.

"Chinese enterprises will continue to unswervingly develop in Europe and integrate into local markets," said Cui Dongshu, Secretary-General of the China Passenger Car Association (CPCA). He made the remarks while announcing a rare drop in Chinese car exports for May amid an ongoing slide in domestic sales.

The European Union alleges Chinese automakers benefit unfairly from state subsidies and accuses them of dumping excess production on Europe, charges that Beijing denies. — **Reuters**

OCCI launches new initiative to
finance purchase contracts

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, JUNE 11

The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), through its Small and Medium Enterprises Committee and in collaboration with the Gulf Investment House, has launched a groundbreaking support initiative aimed at financing purchase contracts.

This initiative seeks to provide a range of facilities designed to bolster the growth and expansion of small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

It features numerous offers and products tailored to meet the needs of various sectors, offering more than 20 products that span across all industries.

Notably, the initiative includes signing direct contracts with payment facilities extending up to 90 days, without imposing interest rates or requiring collateral.

Shaikh Ahmed bin Amer a Musalhi, Chairman of the Chamber's Small and Medium Enterprises Committee, emphasised the significance of this initiative.

He highlighted it as a crucial step for SMEs, enhancing their competitive capabilities and



Special guests are pictured during the launch ceremony.

purchasing power by facilitating financing for purchase contracts.

This allows individuals and companies to access goods and services without needing to pay the full amount upfront, thereby stimulating economic activity and supporting the commercial sector.

Al Musalhi added that this initiative aligns with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry's ongoing efforts to support the SME sector.

He expressed optimism that both male and female business owners would leverage this initiative to achieve further growth and development.

Mohammed bin Hassan al Bahrani, owner of the Gulf House Investment Corporation, echoed these sentiments.

He described the initiative as a vital step towards boosting economic activity by enabling companies to acquire goods and services more easily.

This, in turn, bolsters market confidence and supports businesses in increasing sales and expanding operations.

Al Bahrani further noted that by financing purchase contracts, the initiative opens new avenues for growth and expansion for both individuals and companies.

This economic strategy not only fosters sustainability but also strengthens economic interactions among participating entities.

Strategic JVs
deliver 'rewarding
returns on
investment' in
2023: OIA

FROM PAGE 13

Rounding off the list is the Spain Oman Private Equity Fund, which has spawned a second fund on the back of the success of the original fund. Of a total commitment of 100 million euros, OIA invested 85.9 million euros in the original equity fund.

Since its establishment, the fund had invested in 11 investments divested from two in 2023, one of which returned 4.5 times the investment value, while the other returned 1.3 times the investment value.

Last year, OIA reached agreement with Spanish Sovereign Wealth Fund COFIDES to create a second fund of 102 million euros, with each partner contributing 50 million euros. Fund II has since commenced investment in leading Spanish companies.

Highlighting the performance of the strategic joint ventures during 2023, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), stated: "With the government's economic diplomacy to improve strategic partnerships with partner countries, we established the second Spain Oman Private Equity Fund to our strategic joint ventures, after the first fund achieved excellent results."

"We came to an agreement with Indian representatives to launch a third joint venture, after the first and second funds achieved rewarding returns on investment."

Business Class podcast series
kicks off at the *Observer*

NASRULAH AL AJMI

MUSCAT, JUNE 11

In the latest episode of the Business Class podcast hosted by the *Observer*, Ahmad al Mukhaini, a well-known expert at the Financial Services Authority, shared his insights on a range of topics related to business, governance and personal development.

Al Mukhaini, with an extensive background in political economy and socio-economic consultancy, detailed his professional journey and underscored the importance of governance in both public and private sectors.

He emphasised that effective governance extends beyond mere compliance, aiming to cultivate a culture of self-regulation and ethical behaviour within organisations.

The episode, hosted by Khalid al Huraibi, marks the beginning of the Business Class series, focusing on interconnected values in the business world and personal lives, such as governance, self-care and well-being.

The discussion also explored emerging trends like corporate activism and the evolving purposes of companies, especially in the post-Covid-19 landscape.

Al Mukhaini highlighted how businesses are increasingly advocating for social causes and rethinking their core missions to adapt to changing global dynamics.

He pointed out the significant opportunities technology has created for young entrepreneurs, enabling them to develop innovative solutions and access global markets.



Khalid al Huraibi – podcast host



Ahmad al Mukhaini – guest

Additionally, Al Mukhaini stressed the importance of academic freedom, responsible student activism, and the value of self-awareness and personal reflection in navigating the complexities of modern life.

The conversation delved into careershiftsandentrepreneurship, particularly for individuals transitioning from established sectors like government or private corporations.

Al Mukhaini advised that a move to entrepreneurship should be driven by genuine passion, as it fuels creativity and resilience. He noted that the current technological landscape offers unparalleled opportunities for innovation and global reach, making it an ideal time for aspiring entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, he underscored the importance of being thoughtful and self-aware in both professional and personal realms, advocating for a balanced approach that incorporates ethical considerations, continuous learning, and a commitment to making a positive societal impact.

In addition to these key themes, Al Mukhaini highlighted the role of education and mentorship in shaping the future of young professionals and entrepreneurs.

He emphasised the importance of critical thinking and objective analysis in academic and professional pursuits, encouraging students and young entrepreneurs to seek knowledge beyond their immediate fields and remain open to interdisciplinary approaches. Moreover, he touched upon the significance of cultural understanding and appreciation, particularly within the diverse Omani context.

Sharing his experiences in various roles, Al Mukhaini illustrated how these have enriched his perspective on human behaviour, governance and socio-economic development.

He argued that this holistic understanding is essential for fostering sustainable development and creating resilient, adaptive organisations.

Al Mukhaini's reflections on personal integrity and moral responsibility resonated throughout the conversation.

He advocated for a values-driven approach to both personal and professional life, suggesting that true success comes from aligning one's actions with core ethical principles and contributing positively to the broader community.

UK to be concerned about workers who emigrate

With the ensuing general election in the UK, recent migration statistics reaffirmed the issue's place on the political agenda.

As a result of a post-Brexit surge in non-EU immigration, as well as the arrangements for Ukrainians and Hong Kong nationals arriving in the UK, net migration reached a record high of over 600,000.

As numbers continue to rise, the government pledge to reduce net migration to tens of thousands looks just symbolic.

While the focus has been primarily on inflows, the UK would do well to show more concern about outflows.

With wages in Britain stagnating and prices increasing, leaving the country is appealing to an increasing number of workers, particularly the highly



ANDY JALIL
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The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

A JUNIOR PROFESSIONAL COULD EARN DOUBLE IN NEW YORK COMPARED TO LONDON, WITH THE COST OF LIVING ONLY ABOUT ONE THIRD HIGHER.

skilled and most productive.

Research from last year suggested that 3.4m UK citizens were planning to move abroad, with around 400,000 workers planning to do so in the next two years.

A decade of stagnating wages has made Britain less attractive for the most productive.

A junior professional could earn double in New York compared to London, with the cost of living only about one third higher.

Places such as Australia offer higher wages for a range of careers, including trades and medical care, over and above the wonderful weather that would appeal to younger workers.

Many of these countries are keen to tap into British talent. New Zealand has announced a new visa programme offering all under the age of 35 in the UK a chance to relocate for three years.

When tech firms began lay-offs last year, posters began appearing around London tempting the newly redundant workers to move to Lithuania.

Social media is replete with ad campaigns trying to lure high-value employees abroad.

One can't tell yet how much effect this will have. Emigration from the UK rose from about 2008, and now sits firmly at around 600,000, about half of the number of people moving into Britain.

This figure also includes, however, migrants returning home after shortish stays. The figure for UK natives moving away is around a fifth of that number which has held steady for sometime.

But there is no guarantee it will stay that way. There has probably not been a better time to move abroad.

Advances in technology have

made the process far easier, with complications such as banking readily solved with financial apps.

Equally, the growth of Zoom has made staying in touch with relations far easier than before.

The possibility of remote work has also increased the lure of new shores. For many it's now possible to relocate without even changing job, taking some of the uncertainty out of emigrating and allowing to exploit differences in the cost of living.

Those who can consult or freelance may be particularly footloose and able to swap the struggles of the UK housing market for a higher standard of living in Southern or Eastern Europe.

These outflows should be a concern. Those who leave tend to be ambitious and productive, workers in their prime years who pay taxes, spend money and don't need much in return from the

state.

They are significant net contributors to the economy and essential to the running of businesses and public services. A brain drain is rarely good for a country.

It's been a while since Britain was a major source of emigres. Outflows peaked in the 60s, as people were tempted by generous packages to move to newly industrialising commonwealth nations. Later the oil-rich Gulf states attracted many as they developed into oil-rich powers.

While some tradesmen from deindustrialised areas ply their trade in Europe, Britain largely remained an importer of labour.

Whether it is the big dollars lure of the US or the sunshine of the antipodes, emigration is back on the agenda.

The government should be concerned about this as much as it is about immigration.

Suburban sprawl gives insurers the blues



ROBERT CYRAN

The author is a columnist at Reuters Breakingviews, specialising in healthcare, energy, and some aspects of technology.

Insurance losses from natural disasters are rising: last year they topped \$100 billion globally for the fourth year in a row.

While climate change means damage from hurricanes and wildfires are increasing, the bigger risk is thunderstorms and tornadoes.

They are whipping through the suburban sprawl that has happened rapidly in sunbelt cities like Dallas-Fort Worth.

If lots of warm, wet air rises from the earth, thunderstorms and strong winds start to grow, and, if conditions are right, hail and tornadoes, too. A large series of such storms over the Memorial Day weekend hit suburbs of Dallas-Fort Worth.

These weather fronts aren't becoming, significantly more frequent or stronger, and yet losses still grew 11.5 per cent annually over the last 20 years, according to insurance broker Gallagher Re.

Severe convective storms, as they are called, \$70 billion of insured losses last year

according to consulting firm Aon. That's 59 per cent of all losses from natural disasters and over three quarter of these storms occurred in the United States.

The rapidly-expanding suburbs of second-tier cities bear much of the blame. The Dallas-Fort Worth metropolitan area is the country's fourth biggest with over 8 million people, and it's adding more people than any other according to the Cens Bureau.

The hottest growth is occurring in exurbs like Kaufman county, as the Dallas-Fort Worth region sprawls over some 9,300 square miles. Kaufman was declared a disaster area recently.

The Texas city and other rapidly expanding areas like Atin and Denver are at much higher risk for these storms. Dallas, for example, is in what's known as Tornado Alley.

Severe thunderstorms, hurricanes and hail are notorious for localised damage. As metropolises spread out, there's a lot more land covered with valuable hoes. A city where development moves from 30 miles out to 35 miles out will see its area expand over 1,000 square miles.

This sprawl, combined with rising construction costs, an increased stock of honing assets, and higher incomes account for over 80 per cent of the uptick in losses from these storms. — Reuters



A view of the damage sustained by 55-year-old Cindi Watts' home, after a tornado ripped through the city, in Temple, Texas, US. — Reuters

Strategies to build eVTOL public acceptance

DR MAHIR IBRAHIM

From my recent experiences, the public acceptance of eVTOL as Advanced Air Mobility (AAM) appears to be a crucial factor for the success of AAM operation, particularly when entering the beachhead market.

In GCC areas experiencing progressive urbanisation, including Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Neom, and Muscat, there is notable growing interest in moving to the next level of air transportation within or between the cities.

However, gaining public acceptance, particularly among local residents and potential users, remains a central point of contention that must be addressed in order to achieve faster market entry and operational success.

Market research results show that public acceptance of AAM is shaped by noise, safety, privacy, regulation, and visual pollution.

These findings align with the Harvard University study by "Bauranov, A, & Rakas, J (2021). Designing airspace for urban air mobility: A review of concepts and approaches. Progress in Aerospace Sciences, 125, Article 100726", highlighting the success and integration of eVTOL aircraft into urban air mobility systems.

Let's break down some important eVTOL public acceptance factors that enhance the success of the business plans for the eVTOL operation:

A) Safety and Reliability:

Does Redundancy Matter?

When safety becomes a public acceptance concern, the eVTOL aircraft design needs to emphasize redundancy to ensure maximum safety and reliability, increasing public acceptance.

GCC pays attention to safety and puts considerable effort into the safety of transportation means in general.

Therefore, the Aerial Taxi will be part of micro inspection and



compliance for both eVTOL aircraft and their Vertiports.

It is necessary to pay attention to each regulatory level, as internal municipal rules can vary within the same country, as observed during the stakeholder definition phase.

However, fortunately, the big players Archer and Joby, which are going to operate their aircraft in the US and Middle Eastern countries, considered the redundancies with few variances.

They considered redundancy in their eVTOL that can maintain operational integrity even in system failure conditions, including:

Propulsion system redundancy (number of the motors).

Battery system redundancy (multiple independent battery packs).

Flight control system redundancy (Multiple sensors and actuators that provide backup in case of primary system malfunctions or incorporating fly-by-wire system).

Structural redundancy (multiple load paths).

Data and communication redundancy.

B) Noise: Why is low noise a concern?

Noise is a very important factor in public acceptance criteria; evidently, Archer & Joby, the UAM industry leaders, tested the eVTOL noise level range at 45-46 dBA from 2000 ft and 1640 feet, respectively, which is approximately 1000 times less than the helicopter noise level (Archer Investors).

For modern cities like Dubai and Neom, it is significantly essential to ensure their compatibility with the robust regulations set by the city, municipality, or CAA.

The low noise levels of eVTOLs help gain public acceptance of this advanced air transportation.

They will naturally integrate into daily life like quiet, low-emission electric cars and metros. The final definition of airspace structures will largely depend on addressing noise, visual pollution, and privacy concerns.

Some key strategies to approach public acceptance:
Community engagement: The strategy seeks to engage with the local communities and stakeholders from the start. Use

public demonstration flights, exhibitions, public forums, and surveys to address concerns and better announcements for UAM services.

In addition, regular updates should be provided, and open channels for feedback should be maintained.

Transparent

communication: This strategy is to establish public trust. It is crucial to showcase safety and reliability by conducting pilot projects and real-world applications.

Clearly communicate safety measures and the benefits of eVTOL technology as Urban Air Mobility.

Economic and social benefits: This approach should have tangible economic and social benefits, including job creation, improved urban mobility, reduced traffic congestion, and faster travel options.

If the community feels those benefits, they will positively reflect on the success of urban air mobility.

(The author is eVTOL Specialist, Aerospace & UAV Engineering Aero-Technology @ Smart Ejadah)

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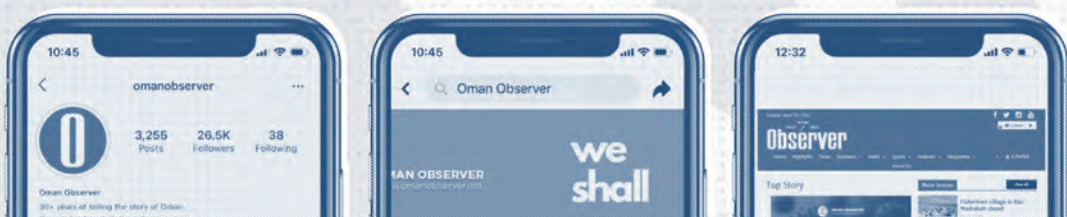
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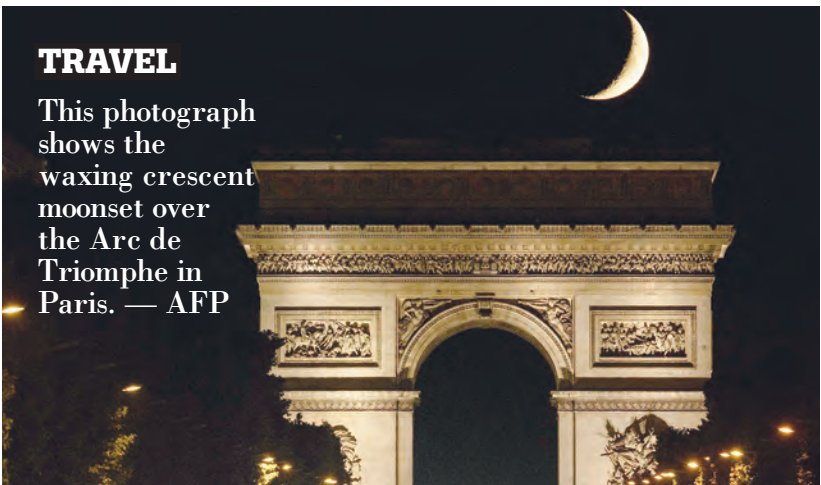


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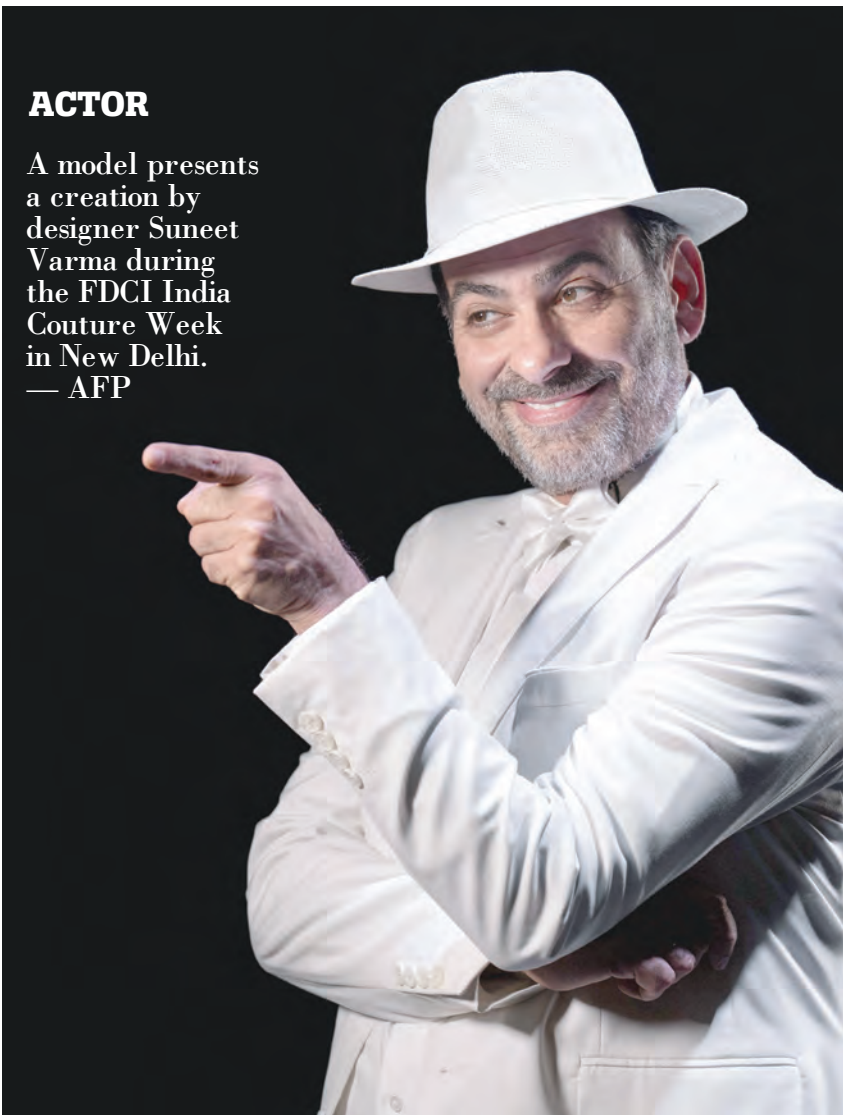
TRAVEL

This photograph shows the waxing crescent moonset over the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. — AFP



MUSIC

American rapper and singer Vince Staples performs on stage at Northside music festival in Aarhus, Denmark. — AFP



ACTOR

A model presents a creation by designer Suneet Varma during the FDCI India Couture Week in New Delhi. — AFP



FASHION

US actress Xochitl Gomez attends the world premiere of Pixar's "Inside Out 2" at El Capitan Theatre in Los Angeles, California. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

A man checks newspapers as shops remain shuttered during a general strike in Ramallah. — AFP

art & life

WEDNESDAY | JUNE 12, 2024 | DHUL HIJJAH 5, 1445 AH

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Safflower: Oman's hidden gem for health, beauty

Despite drought conditions, Oman's safflower, locally known as Shoran, continues to thrive and provide numerous health, cosmetic and culinary benefits. This versatile plant, rich in tradition and modern uses, calls for renewed cultivation to fully harness its potential... P20

Children visit studios of Oman TV, learn process of preparing programmes

BALQEES AL ORAIMI

CHILDREN VISITED television studios of Oman TV as part of a three-day talent workshop organised by the Cultural Library of the Ministry of Information and the Oman Daily Observer. They learned about the process of preparing TV programmes. They also visited the studio of the 'Morning Coffee' programme, which presents the most important local news and monitors the most prominent events and activities. It discusses several social, cultural and health topics. They also



learned about TV cameras. Children were introduced to the character Nour. Twelve children are taking part in the workshop. During the workshop, children will get acquainted with the offerings of Ain smart phone app. It also highlights the importance of recycling and fostering environmental awareness. The participants, who are aged six to nine years, will get training to develop a passion for science and technology through problem-solving, brainstorming, and competitions. It will also instil skills of team building and self-development.



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WEDNESDAY | JUNE 12 | 2024

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FLOWERS

Safflower: Oman's hidden gem for health, beauty

ARWA AL HASHIMI

PHOTOS BY @ORGANIC_HENA.SIDR

Despite the drought, nature produces many beautiful and useful plants. This has made life easier for man and one such plant is the safflower.

These plants have become a wonderful source of treatment. Also known as false saffron, this stunning orange colour serves as a remedy for many diseases.

Locally known as Shoran, it grows along the edges of wadis. Its cultivation begins with the onset of winter in October, and it is harvested during the spring between March and April.

It is found in many governorates, most notably in Siq village in Wadi Bani Khalid in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate where the safflower continues to be valued for its diverse uses and substantial health benefits.

As for harvesting the flower, after picking, it is spread out in flat metal containers and dried overnight. It is then ground finely. When used, a spoonful of ground safflower is mixed with oil called Maadheb oil, a blend of various herbal extracts like cloves and cardamom.

The flower has many uses, the most important being ornamental. It is mixed with water or oil and applied to the faces of women and children.



It is also beneficial for protecting against the scorching sun.

Currently, safflower oil is commonly used in skincare products, as it soothes and calms the skin. It also contains Vitamin E, which acts as an antioxidant and protects the skin from the effects of sunlight.

Safflower is often used in food preparation as an alternative to saffron and has numerous traditional medicinal applications.

It is used to treat the fear and anxiety accompanying depression and to increase the effectiveness of conventional antidepressants.

The use of safflower oil in cooking or as a supplement can aid in lowering bad cholesterol levels in the blood. It does not, however, affect tri-

glyceride levels or increase cholesterol. Additionally, it helps in regulating blood sugar levels and reduces insulin resistance.

Most surprisingly, safflower is used for dyeing clothes due to its beautiful colour.

A woman from Al Sharqiyah says that the planting of this herb is not as prevalent as it once was.

Although it is still particularly important, she mentions that the rate of its cultivation has dropped to 15 per cent compared to earlier times.

The lovely appearance and colours of safflower enhance the beauty of the wonderful Omani farms.

