

Wusool System to be launched

HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, will preside over the launching ceremony of 'Wusool System' for the management of electronic documents, at Al Bustan Palace hotel, on Monday. The project aims to provide a system for managing e-documents including all features necessary for document management in an optimal manner. **DETAILS ON P2**



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VERSTAPPEN TARGETS F1 DOMINATION AFTER SECOND TITLE



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OMAN SET TO RECORD BUDGET SURPLUS OF 6.3% OF GDP: REPORT



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OMAN IS THE BEST KEPT SECRET FOR THRILL SEEKERS OF ADVENTURE TOURISM



■ **MUSCAT**

HM GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT OF FIJI

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Wiliame Katonivere of the Republic of Fiji, on the occasion of his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to the President and the friendly people of Fiji further progress and prosperity. — ONA

■ **TOKYO**

NORTH KOREA FIRES 2 BALLISTIC MISSILES

North Korea fired two ballistic missiles early on Sunday, authorities in neighbouring countries said, the seventh such launch by Pyongyang in recent days that added to widespread alarm in Washington and its allies in Tokyo and Seoul. Officials in the South Korean capital have said the uptick in the North's missile launches could signal it is closer than ever to resuming nuclear testing for the first time since 2017, with preparations observed at its test site for months. Both missiles reached an altitude of 100 km and covered 350 km, Japan's state minister of defence, Toshiro Ino, told reporters. The first was fired at about 1:47 am and the second some six minutes later. **DETAILS ON P6**



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■ **ART CONTEST WINNERS TO BE FETED**



The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth honours the winners of the Visual Arts Competition under the auspices of HH Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, at the premises of the Oman Association of Arts in Ghala. **DETAILS ON P3**

Oman Science Festival to exhibit global innovation trends

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, Oct 9

The activities of the Oman Science Festival in its third edition, under the slogan “Together we live the passion for Science”, will begin on Monday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The six-day festival aims to communicate science to students and members of the society in an easy and interactive way which stimulates creative thinking, and to bring a positive trend towards science, innovation and scientific research, and to keep pace with global trends based on the dissemination of science and technology and the expected future changes and developments. It will encourage students to realise the importance of science in life, and urges them to innovate, enhance their skills to integrate into the knowledge-based economy, and encourage them to continue learning in scientific disciplines.

The festival will be attended by 110 government, private, military and civil institutions and bodies, and



It is a mirror which reflects the ambitions of the Oman Vision 2040, and the national strategy for innovation so that Oman emerges as a model destination among the 20 countries in the innovation index by 2040

DR ABDULLAH BIN KHAMIS AMBUSAI

Under-Secretary, Ministry of Education

associations, and more than 1,000 participants, and will include approximately 452 activities, interactive scientific seminars, scientific exhibitions of innovations, experiments and scientific competitions, lectures and discussion sessions, and scientific theatre.

The festival will be launched under the auspices of Eng Said bin

Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, in the presence of Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education. The festival will also witness the participation of military authorities in the Sultanate of Oman and is a meeting point for scientists.

“It is a mirror which reflects the ambitions of the Oman Vision 2040, and the national strategy for innovation so that Oman emerges as a model destination among the 20 countries in the innovation index by 2040,” said Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education and Chairman of the festival at a recent press conference.

The festival will include the screening of 25 various scientific films, in addition to a Stemazone corner, the challenges, and the various scientific competitions corner such as hackathons, programming, robots, drones, and the scientific theatre, for which two theatres are allocated - Ahmed bin Majid Theatre and Ibn Al-Haytham Theatre. **TURN TO P2**

Zanzibar President arrives on Tuesday

MUSCAT: Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi, President of Zanzibar, will pay a several-day official visit to the Sultanate of Oman from Tuesday, said a statement issued by the Diwan of Royal Court.



The statement reads as follows: “In order to bolster the age-old relationship and the historic and cultural bonds between the Sultanate of Oman and Zanzibar, and to enhance existing cooperation between the two countries in various fields to serve the joint interests and achieve further progress, development and prosperity, Dr Hussein Ali Mwinyi, President of Zanzibar, will pay a several-day official visit to the Sultanate of Oman starting from Tuesday

(October 11).

“Aspects of the existing cooperation between the two countries and ways of strengthening them to realise the desired objectives and the aspirations of both peoples, will be reviewed during the visit.” — ONA

■ **RUSSIA MISSILE STRIKES IN ZAPORIZHZHIA KILL 13**



A view shows a residential building heavily damaged by a Russian missile strike in Zaporizhzhia, Ukraine, on Sunday. The missile attack killed at least 13 people and wounded 89 others, Ukrainian officials said. **DETAILS ON P7**

Girl survived Thailand day care massacre while sleeping

UTHAI SAWAN: A three-year-old child who managed to survive last week's massacre at a nursery in northeast Thailand slumbered through the horror under a blanket in the corner of a classroom.

Paveenut Supolwong, nicknamed “Ammy”, is normally a light sleeper, but at naptime on Thursday when the killer burst into the nursery and began mur-

dering 22 children, Ammy was fast asleep with the blanket covering her face, her parents said. It likely saved her life.

She was the only child in the nursery to have escaped unscathed after former police officer Panya Khamrap killed more than 30 people, mostly children in the nursery, in a rampage through the town of Uthai Sawan.



“I’m in shock,” said Ammy’s mother, Panompai Sithong. “I feel for other families... I’m glad that my kid survived. It’s a mixed feeling of sadness and gratitude.”

On Sunday, the family’s wooden home was bustling with relatives and neighbours sharing plates of fish, papaya salad, and reflections on the tragedy.

They fussed over Ammy as she played in the yard in a flowery gown, an amulet tied around her neck, alternating between bewilderment and gap-toothed smiles at all the sudden attention.

Ammy’s parents said she seems to have no memory of the tragedy. Someone found her stirring in a far corner of a classroom, after the killer had left, and carried her out with her head covered by the blanket so she did not see the bodies of her classmates. — Reuters



ROP SHOOTING CHAMPIONSHIP KICKS OFF



The Royal Oman Police's commenced shooting competition of its Special Tasks Force in the Wilayat of Qurayat on Sunday. Around 45 teams from various ROP formations will participate in the tournament. The tournament includes competitions in pistol, rifle for officers, other ranks and women.

Theyazin to unveil Wusool System today

MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, will preside over the launching ceremony of 'Wusool System' for the management of electronic documents, at Al Bustan Palace hotel, on Sunday.

Wusool project is among the most important projects related to the digital transformation strategy spearheaded by the National Records and Archives Authority (NRAA).

The project embodies the government's directives for boosting the e-government as an implementation of Oman Vision 2040.

The project aims to provide a system for managing e-documents including all features necessary for document management in an optimal manner that accords Wusool is a system for electronically managing documents and information assets of an institution in accordance with the standards followed by the NRAA.

The system allows direct communication between authorities thus minimising paperwork, easing procedures and boosting the efficiency of communication at the public institutions. — ONA

GCC railway network gains momentum

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The GCC Railway Network has regained its momentum with Saudi Arabia completing nearly 200 kilometres of the track laying within its territory.

With the work continuing the rest of the project, the General Secretariat of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) said the UAE has completed the implementation of the project on its side up to borders with Saudi Arabia, and other members are completing the necessary requirements to implement the project.

Quoting the General Secretariat, Al Eqtisadiyah newspaper of Saudi Arabia said that several steps have been achieved in the project so far, including the completion of several studies, estimates on the number of passengers and goods, and the establishment of the Gulf Railways Authority.

Work is underway to complete the implementation of the project, cost of which was estimated by the economic study at around \$15 billion, in member states to train the nationals to operate the project and to cooperate with



international organisations with expertise in railways.

The decision to establish a railway project linking the member countries was approved by the leaders of the Gulf Cooperation Council countries to facilitate the movement of goods, citizens, and residents within the region, which will also boost the economies.

The planned railway would begin at Kuwait City, pass through Dammam and Al Batha Port in Saudi Arabia, Abu Dhabi and Al Ain in the UAE, and then enter Oman through Suhar before terminating at Muscat. From Dammam, branches will link to Bahrain through the proposed King Hamad Causeway, and to Qatar via Salwa port. The proposed Qatar-Bahrain Causeway between Bahrain and Qatar will provide additional connectivity.

After entering Bahrain from Dammam, the first station on the line will be at Khalifa bin Salman Port, followed by stations at the Bahrain International Airport and Amwaj Islands. From Amwaj, the line will head to Qatar.

"The total length of the track is estimated at 2,117 km, according to the website of the GCC and the speed of passenger trains is scheduled to be approximately 220 km per hour, and freight trains between 80 to 120 km per hour, using diesel to generate electric power," the Al Eqtisadiyah said.

Last week, the Sultanate of Oman and the United Arab Emirates signed an agreement in the field of cooperation between Oman Railways and Etihad Rail. With investments amounting to about RO1.160 billion (\$3 billion), Oman Rail and Etihad

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Science Festival to exhibit global innovation trends



FROM P1

Dr Mai bint Said al Azriyah, Head of the Scientific Committee of the festival, mentioned that the festival would be distinct this year in terms of space, number of events, participating institutions, and national and international delegations.

The festival targets school students, educators and parents, government and private higher education institutions, researchers, scientists, specialists and academics, government, military and private institutions and bodies concerned with science and technology, civil society institutions, and those interested in science from different countries.

These drawings, inscriptions trace life in ancient times

TEXT& PHOTOS
BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

The inscriptions and drawings on rocks, walls and wooden doors of ancient mosques and tombs trace the progress of history of successive civilisations. Most of them are found in caves illustrating the life and society in ancient times.

Hunting tools are among the most common drawings. Some of these drawings resemble the letters of ancient Arabic alphabets.

Archaeological excavations and surveys in the Sultanate of Oman reveal the presence of rock drawings dating back to the Stone Age (5000 -10,000 years) showing animals, humans, ships and trees.

Rare inscriptions of ancient Arabic calligraphy were also found in Al Rustaq. A large number of Hadrami inscriptions were found in the Dhofar Governorate. Some of the Arabic inscriptions painted on pottery jars dated back to the second half of the third millennium BC.



In most cases, inscriptions on rocks that were found far from the streams of valleys stayed intact for a long period. There are drawings on the reclamation of agricultural lands and the construction of aflaj, details about drought, family trees, and inscriptions of Qur'anic verses, Hadiths and poems.

The sizes of the rocks on which these topics are engraved vary, some of which reach about 6 square meters. The large rocks contain



more than one topic, documenting important events that occurred during a particular era.

Dr Saleh bin Amer al Kharousi said, "In the mountains and caves of the Sultanate of Oman, multi-form drawings were found, the most prominent of which are drawings of animals such as camels and horses. The trend towards rock writing was probably to satisfy the desire to practice an art that does not clash with the restrictions there were in vogue."

Dr Al Kharousi said "due to the lack of easy means of writing during those periods, people resorted to engraving on stone to document events so that future generations could see them".

There seems to be an urgent need to conduct a comprehensive survey of the sites of drawings, inscriptions and rock inscriptions by specialists for accuracy and fill in the gaps in history.

Thanks to some social media users, some of the sites with inscriptions are easy to find. Most of these inscriptions are located in valleys and on steep paths in the foothills of the mountains. It may be difficult to reach some of these sites without a tour guide or local people.

Specialists in archaeology called upon authorities to pay attention to these rare archaeological sites, which fall prey to elements or are damaged by acts of vandalism.



Surge of tourists likely in next 4 years

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Sultanate of Oman is expected to witness an increase of 37 per cent in the number of visitors during the next four years.

The tourism sector in the country has been strongly recovering this year after two years of Covid-infected market slowdown, the Alpen Capital in its recent report said that the tourism sector in general and the hospitality sector are expected to grow annually at 3.6 per cent between this year and 2026 to reach \$900 million or around RO 346 million.

The average room rate is to grow by 3.6 per cent in 2022 to reach RO 146, while it is expected that the yield per available room will be up 7.83 per cent annually to \$68 or RO 26.

The robust growth will be supported by the various projects that are in the pipeline, including the Yiti Sustainable Project in Muscat and others in various governorates. These include recreational parks, nature tourism, water parks, and entertainment centres.

Meanwhile, the work on the Darbat tourist area in the Governorate of Dhofar will start soon, the Chairman of Dhofar Municipality said in a



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statement.

Salim bin Mohammed al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism, has said that several projects are in various

stages of implementation in cooperation with Omran.

These projects include the Al Buraimi Talalat project, which will offer hospitality, recreation,

and entertainment facilities to visitors, the Al Abaila Park in Al Buraimi.

The Nizwa Gate in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate,

the Atalaa Ibri project, the Yanqul Rest House project and the Dhank Rest House are other projects that are being implemented in the country.

Oman's progress on e-governance draws praise

NEW YORK: Dr Mohammed bin Awad al Hassan, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations, met Deemah al Yahya, Secretary-General of the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO) on the sidelines of the United Nations general assembly meetings being held in New York.

They reviewed the initiatives and programmes launched by the Sultanate of Oman through the National Strategy for Oman's Digital Society and e-Government. These include the executive programme for government transformation, the executive programme for e-library, executive programme for infrastructure, the executive programme for cybersecurity and the artificial intelligence programme.

The Secretary-General of the DCO reviewed the initiatives and activities undertaken by the Organization which the Sultanate of Oman is among its founders. She said that she is proud of the development achieved by the Sultanate of Oman and the GCC countries in the field of digital and information and communication technology.

She also pointed out to Oman's ranking in the third place on the GCC and the Arab world in IT as well as achieving high ranking in the UN survey on e-government for 2022 which was published by the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, and the naming of Muscat as the Arab Digital Capital for the year 2022 by the Council of Arab Ministers for Communications and Information. — ONA

Art contest winners to be feted today

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth on Monday honoured the winners of the Visual Arts Competition under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Azzan bin Qais al Said, at the premises of the Oman Association of Arts in Ghala.

The competition comprised categories of painting, photography, Arabic calligraphy and digital arts.

By launching the competition, the ministry aims to highlight these art genres within the framework of the strategic project Zawaia which is concerned with creating an environment that encourages cultural innovation.

A total of 1,500 entries were in contention in all categories of which 173 were shortlisted.

— ONA



Volunteers remove tonnes of waste from Filam beach and Shanna port

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

A group of volunteers removed tonnes of waste from Filam beach in Mahout and Shanna Port during a two-day cleaning drive in three sessions.

The volunteers of Save Oman Beaches did the daunting task of massive cleaning during the weekend. The collected debris included oil cans used for fishing boats, plastic bottles and caps, dead fish and tortoises, fishing nets and many other plastic and non-plastic materials left at both places.

"Waste materials, mostly plastic, which is harmful to our environment, were removed from the beaches in and around Mahout over the last two days, thanks to all volunteers," said Ammujam Raveendran, founder of the volunteer group, Save Oman Beaches.

"It could be anything between 14 and 15 tonnes because some bags were easily more than 80 to 100 kgs each. And to have 138 bags of such size at one location (less than 150 metres of nearly 1km stretch). It is shocking to see the quantity of waste caused by us humans," she added.

The Environment Authority, the



Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) supported the campaign, which Al Ahlia Insurance sponsored. It also had support from Mahout Municipality and Beah. Some 50 volunteers from different walks of life participated in the clean-up drive.

"Kudos to the team, those ministries which took part, and Al Ahlia Insurance for their support. It was a wonderful experience to have helped our environment breathe by removing nearly 14

tonnes of trash," a participant volunteer said.

"Happy to be one of the ants that moved this mountain. May peace and love for green sustain on earth. It was such a wonderful event. Thanks to the entire team, and it was great teamwork," another participant said.

These waste would have choked many sea creatures to death and plants to perish. It had turned the area into a breeding ground for pests, insects and other carriers of diseases.

"At Filam beach, the trash removed seems to be brought in during high tide, unlike other beaches where it is majorly part of picnics or fishing activities. Thanks to all the participants for this amazing weekend on the beaches in and around Mahout. We thank the Environment Authority and the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MoAFWR) for consistent support and Al Ahlia Insurance for believing in our efforts," said Ammujam.

Conference to discuss the impact of Covid on economy, society

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 9

A conference to discuss the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on the economy and society will start at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) on Monday, organised by the Humanitarian Research Center and represented by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry Research Chair for Economic Studies.

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, will attend the conference.

"The conference comes within a series of events held by the university and will continue for three days," said Dr Majid bin Saeed al Busafi, director of the centre and head of the conference's main committee, adding that it aims to bring together scholars, researchers, and policymakers from various sectors to discuss policy measures taken by governments and individuals to mitigate the economic and social consequences of the pandemic or any such crises that may occur in the future.

The conference is an international platform for exchanging views, visions, and



experiences on the economic, financial, social, and other effects of the Covid-19 pandemic and other sectors.

The main topics are the impact of the pandemic on the economy, business, and society, in addition to its impact on financial policies, international trade, logistics, public policy, and global responses to the Covid-19 pandemic.

The conference will also evaluate the effectiveness of the political measures taken by governments to mitigate the social and economic consequences of the pandemic.



EDUCATION GROWTH AND HAPPINESS

KAUSHALENDRA SINGH

[@patkaushal](#)

Do we not need a revisit to our education system, which is creating a rural-urban divide and creating a situation for mass migration towards cities from the villages? Under the current system, cities are better platforms for growth. Those who insist on their 'happiness' by staying and working in the villages have to be content only with happiness but not growth.

The cities, however, are no better in reality. Most of them are overburdened with the influx of people from all directions, so much so that their systems overwhelm and need frequent upgrades, be it roads, drainage, water supply or even availability of food items.

A UN report has classified the process of urbanisation into two primary forms — one is Classical and another Greenfield.

“The classical model refers to urbanisation through the migration of rural inhabitants into pre-existing urban centres, while in the Greenfield model new cities develop in what were previously rural areas.”

There may be debates and discussions over development models, opportunities and many other things, but the Greenfield model suits any country due to its strong fundamentals of sustainability into it.

“Our education system needs to revolve around the Greenfield model where the Classical model should not have any clash with the former and can freely use the great natural resources of the rural settlements,” says educationist Jaya Shah, who served in the MENA region in various academic capacities.

In terms of the rural-urban divide, the Sultanate of Oman is better placed than many other countries due to the wide range of infrastructural developments and reach of basic amenities and facilities even in remote areas. Its mode of development is closer to the UN’s Greenfield model.

However, when it comes to opportunities, career-oriented people have to look towards cities where they find recognition for their knowledge and acquired skills.

“Can’t there be a situation where people from big cities have to come to the rural areas or to semi-urban establishments to explore their resources and encourage the local people to stay put in their establishments, taking care of the huge wealth that these area store? So why the job of an agriculturist, environmentalist, a beekeeper or a farmer is not as respected as other mainstream jobs,” asked a curious college graduate who firmly believes that some courses are over-rated while many others with better job prospects are underrated.

Our education policy should revolve around the Greenfield model of development, which is suitable also for the Classical model for better exploration of resources of both the models.

WHEN IT COMES TO OPPORTUNITIES, CAREER-ORIENTED PEOPLE HAVE TO LOOK TOWARDS CITIES WHERE THEY FIND RECOGNITION FOR THEIR KNOWLEDGE AND ACQUIRED SKILLS.



Jailed Duterte critic held hostage during deadly breakout attempt

MANILA: Jailed Philippine human rights campaigner Leila de Lima was briefly taken hostage on Sunday during an attempted breakout by three detained militants who were shot dead by police, authorities said.

The incident happened at the national police headquarters, where de Lima, a former senator, has been held for more than five years with other high-profile detainees. A police officer handing out breakfast was stabbed with a fork by an inmate, who then freed two others from their cells.

Two of the prisoners were shot dead by a sniper, Interior Secretary Benjamin Abalos told reporters.

The third prisoner ran to de Lima's cell. He tied up and blindfolded the 63-year-old before a police officer shot him in the head, Abalos said.

De Lima said the inmate held her at knifepoint and threatened to kill her. She credited the police

with saving her life.

"Being so near death has only made me value life even more," she said in a statement.

Police said the situation inside the detention facility had "returned to normal" and an investigation was underway.

Police chief General Rodolfo Azurin said the three inmates were members of the militant group Abu Sayyaf, which has been accused of kidnapping and beheading several foreigners.

De Lima did not appear to have been the target, Azurin told local radio station DZBB.

"They saw her as an ideal cover. Their intention really was to escape," he said.

De Lima was unhurt, Boni Tacardon, her lawyer, confirmed. "She was brought to the hospital for the standard medical check-up," Tacardon said. "But based on the information given to us by our staff who's with the senator now,



Relatives of slain journalist Percival Mabasa grieve during his funeral in Paranaque, Metro Manila. — AFP

she appears OK."

De Lima, an outspoken critic of former president Rodrigo Duterte and his deadly drug war, is due to appear in court on Monday.

She has been behind bars since 2017 on drug trafficking charges that she and human rights groups have called a mockery of justice and payback for going after Duterte.

Since President Ferdinand Marcos Jr took power in June, there have been renewed calls from diplomats and rights defenders for de Lima to be released.

The latest incident underscored the need for her to be "freed immediately", said Carlos Conde of Human Rights Watch.

Marcos tweeted that he would speak to de Lima "to check on her condition and to ask if she wishes to be transferred to another detention centre". But Tacardon said de Lima did not want to be transferred. — AFP

Austria's Van der Bellen wins presidential race

VIENNA: Austrian President Alexander Van der Bellen has been re-elected, projections showed on Sunday, after campaigning on promises of stability as the Alpine country struggles with an energy crisis and inflation.

The projections showed the 78-year-old incumbent swept 54.6 per cent of the votes with six other candidates -- all men -- lagging far behind. The final official result is not expected until Monday.

Campaigning on a slogan of "clarity" and "stability", Van der Bellen had been widely tipped to clinch a second mandate.

"It would be nice if we had clarity today," the economics professor said after casting his ballot in central Vienna earlier on Sunday.

"Nice for Austria, nice for us -- if we can then fully concentrate on the diverse tasks ahead, the multitude of crises... that we in Austria, in Europe, are facing"

Polls ahead of the election had suggested the pro-



Supporters of President Alexander Van der Bellen react to first exit polls in presidential elections in Vienna. — Reuters

European liberal would secure more than 50 per cent of the vote, thus avoiding a run-off. Some 6.4 million people were eligible to cast their ballots from the European Union country's total population of nine million.

The presidential post, which has a term of six years, is largely ceremonial.

"I am in favour of consistency," 73-year-old

retiree Monika Gregor said outside a Vienna polling station earlier on Sunday, saying she had voted for Van der Bellen and thought he was "very clever". Posters proclaim the former Greens leader to be "the safe choice in stormy times" as the ripple effects of Russia's invasion of Ukraine push up inflation throughout Europe.

Van der Bellen was running again as an

Campaigning on a slogan of 'clarity' and 'stability', Van der Bellen had been widely tipped to clinch a second mandate

independent, but he has the explicit or implicit backing of Austria's major parties except the far-right Freedom Party (FPÖ).

The latter has fielded its own candidate, Walter Rosenkranz who, according to the projections, got 18.9 per cent.

Also standing for the presidency was 35-year-old punk rocker Dominik Wlazny, founder of the Beer Party, named for its advocacy of the popular beverage. He came in fourth place with 8.1 per cent, according to the projections. Alexander Nittmann, 35, a software developer, said he had voted for Wlazny, hoping he would bring "a breath of fresh air". — AFP

Five-year-old girl among the 10 victims of Irish explosion

LONDON: A five-year-old girl and her father are among the 10 people named as victims of the devastating explosion at a petrol station in Ireland. Police are continuing to investigate the blast that ripped through the Applegreen service station and convenience store in Creeslough, County Donegal, on Friday afternoon.

The huge explosion claimed the lives of 10 local people who have now been named by police.

Those who died were 48-year-old James O'Flaherty, 24-year-old Jessica Gallagher, 49-year-old Martin McGill, 39-year-old Catherine O'Donnell and her



Members of the emergency services leave scene of an explosion at a petrol station in Creeslough, in the north west of Ireland. — AFP

13-year-old son James Monaghan, 59-year-old Hugh Kelly, 49-year-old Martina Martin, 50-year-old Robert Garwe and his five-year-old daughter Shauna Flanagan Garwe, and 14-year-old Leona Harper.

Police said a man in his 20s

remains in a critical condition at St James's Hospital in Dublin.

The seven other surviving casualties continue to receive treatment in Letterkenny University Hospital and remain in a stable condition.

Irish premier Micheal Martin has met those who were admitted to hospital, the medical team which was on duty on the day of the explosion, and members of Letterkenny fire station.

Accompanying Martin were Agriculture Minister and Donegal TD Charlie Mc Conalogue and deputy leader Leo Varadkar.

— dpa

Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Center

Tender Advertisement

Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care & Research Centre announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender Title	Site Visit Date	Last Date for Collection of Tender Document	Bid Submission Closing	Tender Fees
CCCCRC/T/ 611/2022	Study, Supply, Installation, Testing and Commissioning of HVAC system for SQCCRC	19/10/2022 09:00AM <u>Meeting Point:</u> SQCCRC Main Lobby	19/10/2022	27/10/2022	50 OMR

Qualified companies interested in participating in this tender shall collect the tender specifications from the date of this advertisement from the following address:

Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Centre – Purchase Department.

Biddings that meet the above requirements should be submitted in a sealed envelope (hardcopy & softcopy) and should be delivered and deposited in the tender box at SQCCRC.

Please note:

- Bids received after the deadline indicated above, for whatever reason, will not be considered.
- Queries/ clarifications should be submitted immediately, but not later than One week before the date of tender submission.
- For Queries you may Contact via e-mail: purchase@cccrc.gov.om
- The committee is not obliged to accept the lowest price of the bid or any other bid.

SULTANATE OF OMAN
MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health, represented by Ibri Hospital, invite companies and individuals to participate in the bids listed below:

No.	Subject of Bid	Through	Deadline for Obtaining Bid Documents	Date of Submission of Bids	Type of Companies	Value of Documents (non refundable)
03/2022	Rent a Coffee Shop	Sealed Envelopes	20/10/2022	Before 12:00p.m on Thursday 3/11/2022	Specialized Companies and establishments and Individual	25 OMR

- The bid documents available in (Financial Affairs Department) at Ibri hospital Tel no. 25881112 Fax no. 25881440 within the official working hours from 8:00 a.m. until 12:00 pm. The documents costs shall be only as per mentioned above- non refundable.
- A Bank Guarantee or a Certified Cheque valid for 90 days issued by a local bank for (1%) of the Auction Value addressed to Ministry of Health shall be enclosed with the bid as an auction bond that may be reimbursed to unsuccessful bidder. A bid unaccompanied by the auction bond will be rejected.
- The envelope shall be sealed with red wax and addressed to head of Tenders Committee at Ibri hospital, number and subject of the bid shall be written there on, and nothing that would refer to the tender holder or his name.
- The Ministry of Health is unrestricted to provide any reasons for the offers that will not be accepted.

North Korea fires two ballistic missiles

TOKYO: North Korea fired two ballistic missiles early on Sunday, authorities in neighbouring countries said, the seventh such launch by Pyongyang in recent days that added to widespread alarm in Washington and its allies in Tokyo and Seoul.

Officials in the South Korean capital have said the uptick in the North's missile launches could signal it is closer than ever to resuming nuclear testing for the first time since 2017, with preparations observed at its test site for months.

Both of Sunday's missiles reached an altitude of 100 km and covered 350 km, Japan's state minister of defence, Toshiro Ino, told reporters.

The first was fired at about 1:47 am and the second some six minutes later.

They fell outside Japan's exclusive economic zone, and



People watch a news broadcast showing file footage of a North Korean missile test at a railway station in Seoul. — AFP

authorities were looking into what type they were, including the possibility that they were submarine-launched ballistic missiles, he added.

The US military said it was

The US military said the launches highlighted the ‘destabilising impact’ of the North Korean nuclear arms and ballistic missile programmes

Still, the United States assessed that the latest launches did not pose a threat to US personnel or American allies.

“The US commitments to the defence of the Republic of Korea and Japan remain ironclad,” the Hawaii-based US Indo-Pacific Command said in a statement. The latest missile launches from the Muncheon area on North Korea's east coast are a “serious

provocation” that harms peace, South Korean authorities said.

On Tuesday, North Korea test-fired a ballistic missile farther than ever before, sending it soaring over Japan for the first time in five years and prompting a warning to residents there to take cover.

Ino said Tokyo would not tolerate the repeated actions by North Korea. The incident was the seventh such launch since September 25.

Japan's foreign ministry said the nuclear envoys of the United States, South Korea and Japan held a telephone call and shared the view that the North's ballistic missile launches threatened the peace and security of the region and the international community, besides posing a civil aviation risk.

North Korea, which has pursued missile and nuclear tests in defiance of UN sanctions, said on Saturday its missile tests were

for self-defence against direct US military threats and had not harmed the safety of neighbours.

“Our missile tests are a normal, planned self-defence measure to protect our country's security and regional peace from direct US military threats,” said state media KCNA, citing an aviation administration spokesperson.

South Korea and the United States held joint maritime exercises on Friday, a day after Seoul scrambled fighter jets in reaction to an apparent North Korean bombing drill.

The United States also announced new sanctions on Friday in response to North Korea's latest missile launches. North Korea's neighbour and ally China pointed to joint military exercises held by the United States and its allies around the Korean peninsula when asked about Sunday's launches. — Reuters

French PM leads delegation to Algeria as ties ease



Algeria's Prime Minister Aymen Benabderrahmane meets with French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne upon her arrival in Algiers. — AFP

ALGIERS: French Prime Minister Elisabeth Borne began a visit to Algeria on Sunday with a top-level delegation, pushing for better ties with the former French colony and major gas exporter.

Her two-day trip along with 16 ministers — over a third of her government — comes just six weeks after President Emmanuel Macron concluded a three-day visit aimed at ending months of tensions with Algiers.

Borne is expected to sign deals on economic cooperation, including energy — although deliveries of natural gas to France are “not on the table”, according to her office. Ties between the North African country and its former colonial ruler had seen months

of tensions after Macron last year questioned Algeria's existence as a nation before the French occupation, accusing the government of fomenting “hatred towards France”.

But during his visit in August, Macron and his Algerian counterpart Abdelmadjid Tebboune drew a line under the spat, declaring a “new, irreversible dynamic of progress”. Borne is also set to meet Tebboune, as well as Algerian Prime Minister Aïmene Benabderrahmane, with whom she is expected to sign several agreements.

In an interview with news website Tout Sur l'Algérie (TSA), she said the visit would focus on “education, culture, the ecological transition and the economy”. — AFP

Thai nursery massacre families pray to free children's souls

NA KLANG: Mourning families knelt on Sunday outside a Thai nursery where their children were murdered, performing a Buddhist ceremony to put their souls at rest. Sacked police officer Panya Khamrab killed 36 people — 24 of them children — on Thursday in a gun and knife rampage in northeastern Nong Bua Lam Phu province, in one of the kingdom's worst-ever mass killings.

Saffron-robed monks led prayers for the dead on Sunday on a second day of ritual mourning at a temple close to the nursery in Na Klang district, a quiet farming area torn apart by Thursday's bloodshed.

Earlier, families wept as they knelt outside the nursery in a ceremony to help release their children's souls. Some clutched their children's portraits, beloved toys and favourite food, which they placed outside the compound as offerings.

Around a low fence surrounding the single-storey, pink-roofed nursery where just a few days ago youngsters played happily, piles of flowers built up.

The sweet aroma of incense scented the air as the assembled crowd, including many well-wishers from the close-knit local community, bowed their heads in prayer, a low crackle of thunder echoing in the distance.

Officials solemnly carried



Dolls and flowers sit outside the day care centre which was the scene of a mass shooting in the town of Uthai Sawan, in the province of Nong Bua Lam Phu, Thailand. — Reuters

children's treasured possessions out of the nursery to return to families — favourite blankets and much-loved toys, each carefully placed in name-tagged bags.

“When I see the tears of the families, I just feel very sad... I can't describe it. I feel really bad (about) what's happened in my hometown,” Rutt, 57, said after joining her fellow villagers in supporting the bereaved.

The carnage began when the attacker forced his way in during the children's nap time at about

12:30 pm on Thursday, opening fire with his own legally owned 9mm pistol and slashing with a knife.

Afterwards, the 34-year-old went home to murder his wife and son before taking his own life, police said, ending the rampage at about 3:00 pm.

Most of the victims died from knife injuries or gunfire, and relatives said of the horrific wounds inflicted on their little ones.

Prime Minister Prayut Chan-O-Cha, has ordered a swift

investigation and police have said they expect to interview about 180 witnesses in the coming days.

Panya was sacked as a police sergeant earlier this year for drug abuse and locals say they suspected he was a methamphetamine addict, although preliminary tests found no drugs in his system.

King Maha Vajiralongkorn met survivors and relatives at a hospital late on Friday in a rare public interaction for the monarch, who is officially regarded as semi-divine. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

NEW DELHI

‘Man-eater’ tiger that killed 9 shot dead in India

Indian police have shot dead a tiger dubbed the “Man-eater of Champaran” that killed at least nine people, in a major operation involving 200 people including trackers on elephants, officials said. The big cat had terrorised locals on the fringes of the Valmiki Tiger Reserve in Champaran in eastern India, killing at least six people in the past month including a woman and her eight-year-old son on Saturday.

Even before the two latest



kills, authorities had designated the tiger, reportedly a male three or four years old, as a “man-eater”, meaning that it could be shot. Earlier attempts to tranquillise the animal had failed.

YANGON

Thousands mark Buddhist festival of lights

Thousands of Buddhist devotees thronged Myanmar's Shwedagon Pagoda to mark the full moon of the Thadingyut festival, some offering prayers for a country plunged into turmoil by last year's coup.

The three-day festival marks Buddha's descent from heaven and is normally marked by riotous fireworks displays, with candles and colourful lanterns lighting up streets and homes. Early morning crowds lined up in commercial hub Yangon



to pray at the towering, gold-plated Shwedagon pagoda, Myanmar's most important Buddhist site. Local chronicles say it contains strands of the Buddha's hair.

SHANGHAI

Mainland China reports new Covid cases

Mainland China reported 1,925 new Covid-19 infections on October 7, up from 1,656 cases the previous day, authorities said on Saturday. Of the total, 501 were symptomatic and 1,424 were asymptomatic, the National Health Commission said in a daily bulletin.

The financial hub of Shanghai reported two new local symptomatic cases on Friday, up from one a day earlier, and 21 asymptomatic cases, up from 17.

The capital, Beijing, recorded



three new local symptomatic cases, down from five a day earlier, with no asymptomatic infections. Mainland China's tally of confirmed Covid-19 cases is 252,638, with the death toll unchanged at 5,226.



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In brief

■ FRANKFURT



GERMANY PROBES RAIL 'SABOTAGE' AMID RUSSIA TENSIONS

German police were probing an act of 'sabotage' on the country's rail infrastructure, with some officials pointing the finger at Russia in the wake of the Nord Stream pipeline explosions. Important communications cables were cut at two sites on Saturday, forcing rail services in the north to be halted for three hours and causing travel chaos for thousands of passengers. Rail operator Deutsche Bahn blamed the travel disruptions on "sabotage", while Transport Minister Volker Wissing spoke of "a targeted and deliberate action". — **AFP**

■ PARIS



FRENCH PETROL STATION SUPPLY WOES DEEPEN

Almost a third of France's petrol stations were grappling with supply difficulties on Sunday, up from 21 per cent the day before, the office of the energy minister said as strikes at some of the country's main refineries continued. France has released further strategic reserves and raised imports, Energy Minister Agnes Pannier-Runacher was cited as saying in a statement, adding: "These additional volumes should allow the situation to improve throughout the day on Monday." More than a fifth of France's service stations were grappling with supply problems at the weekend as industrial action to push for higher pay disrupted operations at four of the country's main refineries, three of which are shut down, according to the government. — **Reuters**

■ JAKARTA



EARTHQUAKE HITS INDONESIA'S JAVA ISLAND

An undersea 5.5 magnitude earthquake occurred southwest of Indonesia's Java island shortly after 5 pm, the country's meteorology and climatology agency said on Sunday. The agency said the quake had no potential to cause a tsunami. There were no immediate reports of damage caused by the quake that occurred at a depth of 12 metres off Indonesia's most densely populated island. The earthquake's epicentre was 131 kilometres southwest of the Indonesian capital Jakarta. — **dpa**



A view shows a residential building heavily damaged by a Russian missile strike, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine in Zaporizhzhia. — **Reuters**

Russia missile strikes in Zaporizhzhia kill 13

KYIV: A Russian missile attack early on Sunday struck an apartment block and other residential buildings in Ukraine's southeastern city of Zaporizhzhia, killing at least 13 people and wounding 87 others, including 10 children, Ukrainian officials said.

Rail services and partial road traffic meanwhile resumed a day after a powerful blast damaged a bridge linking Russia to Crimea that is a key supply route to Moscow's forces battling in southern Ukraine and an imposing symbol of its annexation of the peninsula.

Saturday's explosion on the bridge over the Kerch Strait prompted gleeful messages from Ukrainian officials but no claim of responsibility. Russia did not immediately assign blame for the blast, which images showed blew away half of a section of the bridge's roadway, with the other half still attached.

The pre-dawn fusillade in Zaporizhzhia on Sunday was the second of its kind against the city in three days.

Russian aircraft launched at least 12 missiles, partially de-

Russia says rail traffic across bridge running on schedule as bridge across Kerch Strait vital to supply Russian troops

stroying a nine-storey apartment block, levelling five other residential buildings and damaging many more, Oleksandr Starukh, governor of the Zaporizhzhia region, said on state-run television.

At least 13 people died and 87 others were wounded, 60 of whom were hospitalised, regional officials said. The wounded included 10 children.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky condemned the attack as "absolute evil" by people he called "savages and terrorists", vowing those responsible would be brought to justice.

Zaporizhzhia city, about 52 km from a Russian-held nuclear power plant, has been under frequent shelling in recent weeks, with 19 people killed on Thursday.

Emergency workers and fire-

fighters cordoned off the nine-storey building and dug for survivors and casualties in the smouldering rubble of a massive central section that had collapsed.

The blast wrecked cars and left torn metal window frames, balconies and air conditioners dangling from the building's shrapnel-pitted facade.

Most of the Zaporizhzhia region, including the nuclear plant, have been under Russian control since the early days of Russia's attack in February. The capital of the region, Zaporizhzhia city, remains under Ukrainian control.

Russian Deputy Prime Minister Marat Khusnullin said divers would start work on Sunday examining damage to the Crimea Bridge, with a more detailed survey above the waterline expected to be complete by day's end, domestic news agencies reported.

"The situation is manageable - it's unpleasant, but not fatal," Crimea's Russian governor, Sergei Aksyonov, told reporters. "Of course, emotions have been triggered and there is a healthy desire to seek revenge." — **Reuters**

Germans in Lower Saxony go to the polls

HANOVER: Voters went to the polls in Germany's north-western state of Lower Saxony on Sunday, in what was expected to be a close race between Chancellor Olaf Scholz's Social Democrats (SPD) and their Christian Democratic (CDU) challengers.

With soaring inflation, an energy crunch and a potential looming recession weighing on Germans, some 6.1 million people in the large state that stretches from the North Sea to the Harz mountains are eligible to elect a new state parliament.

By 12:30 pm (10:30 GMT), voter turnout was 24.59 per cent, a little lower than the 26.91 per cent who had voted by the same time in the last elections five years ago. The turnout figure does not include postal votes, which are expected to be especially high this year. The polling booths are open until 6 pm.

Lower Saxony is led by the centre-left SPD, in a coalition with the conservative CDU. The most recent surveys put the SPD slightly ahead of the CDU.

During the election campaign, the SPD focused heavily on the popularity of its state premier, Stephan Weil. The polls indicate Weil has a personal lead of several percentage points ahead of his CDU rival, Bernd Althusmann.

"We hope for a strong turnout. And we hope for a strong result for the SPD," Weil said as he cast his vote in Hanover on Sunday



Candidate of the Christian Democratic Party Bernd Althusmann casts his ballot in Heiligenthal, during the state elections in Lower Saxony. — **AFP**

morning. Althusmann said he was counting on a "strong CDU," arguing that the serious crisis required a stable government.

Weil is seeking a third term but is aiming for an alliance with the Greens this time around. The two parties - plus the liberal Free Democrats - form Scholz's government at the federal level.

The energy crisis and rising prices have been the dominant issues in the campaign, meaning the election outcome will be closely watched by the federal government in Berlin.

State policy such as a lack of teachers and a restructuring of agriculture are the top local issues, but have taken a back seat to the national concerns. — **dpa**

■ CLIMATE ACTIVISTS IN PROTEST



Protesters, some with their necks padlocked together, block the road as they take part in a demonstration by Just Stop Oil climate activists at Piccadilly Circus London. — **AFP**

UK ministers urge party to back under-fire PM

LONDON: Four ministers in Liz Truss's government on Sunday urged Conservative colleagues to back the embattled UK prime minister following a punishing week that exposed deep divisions within the party.

Interior minister Suella Braverman, former finance minister Nadhim Zahawi, Commons leader Penny Mordaunt and environment minister Ranil Jayawardena all wrote articles for Sunday newspapers warning that they would soon find themselves in opposition unless the party united quickly.

Braverman wrote in The Sun on Sunday, "Those working with Labour to undermine our prime minister are putting the Conservatives' chance of victory at the next election in real danger."

"So the choice for my colleagues and for us is as party is simple — Back Liz or get (Labour leader) Keir Starmer, hand-in-hand with (SNP leader) Nicola Sturgeon."

Braverman, however, was one



Britain's Prime Minister Liz Truss delivers her keynote address on the final day of the annual Conservative Party Conference in Birmingham. — **AFP**

of several ministers who went against Downing Street directions during her speech at the chaotic Tory Party conference this week.

Zahawi wrote in the Mail on Sunday that the government had made mistakes unrolling its fiscal policy, which led to a humiliating

climbdow over a plan to cut income tax rates for the top earners. But he said that "now is the time" to rally behind Truss, again warning that rebels risked ushering in a Labour government "propped up" by the SNP. Fresh polling by Opinium for the

Fresh polling by Opinium for the Observer has put Truss's personal approval rating at minus 47

Observer has put Truss's personal approval rating at minus 47.

In a sign of her fallibility, cabinet ministers are reported to be joining forces to demand Truss rules out mooted plans to raise benefits in line with wages rather than inflation, The Sunday Times reported. Former leadership rival Mordaunt was one of those who spoke out on the issue during the party conference. But she struck a conciliatory tone in a Sunday Telegraph article.

"You measure leaders when they are in the ring dazzled by the media lights taking punch after punch and taking the hard decisions required," she wrote.

"All my colleagues have a part

to play in delivering for the British people. Division will only play into the hands of those who would take our country in the wrong direction."

Jayawardena meanwhile wrote in the Sunday Express that Tory MPs must "get behind" the PM.

"We need to back Liz Truss — or get Keir Starmer in Nicola Sturgeon's pocket."

Starmer has vowed not to make an electoral deal with the SNP, which favours Scottish independence from the rest of the UK, and said Labour would rather form a minority government.

Former culture secretary Nadine Dorries is one of those Conservatives taking aim at Truss's government.

She warned again on Sunday that the prime minister would have to change course on certain key policies or see the party's polling deficit, currently sitting around 30 points behind Labour, worsen. — **AFP**

Do we need parenting classes?



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
@alsinawi

The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

A fourteen year-old boy is brought to the psychiatrist clinic by his parents who were very concerned about a recent change in his behaviour.

Over the past few weeks the boy refused to go to school and spent most of the time in his room. He looked sad, preoccupied breaking into tears for no clear reason.

The parents denied any recent events but when they left the room the boy told the psychiatrist that he was sexually abused by a cousin who was a few years older than him.

When he told his parents they ‘promised to take action’ but the cousin continued to bully him, threatening to abuse him again.

The boy became more distressed when he realised his parents did not take the matter seriously and the abuser got away with it.

Understandably he felt let down by his parents which led to his psychological distress.

The above event made me think about the boy’s parents and how negligent they are of their son’s well-being.

Being subjected to abuse is a very traumatic thing that can damage one psychologically but having unsupported parents makes the situation worse.

Some parents chose to turn a blind eye and ignore the matter or even worse accuse the victim of making it up.

According to research, most abusers are known to the victims and usually a person whom the child would trust, someone like a close family member, a friend and in some situation even a parent.

The impact of sexual abuse

‘THE IDEA OF PARENTING CLASSES’ STEMS FROM THE FACT THAT PARENTING IS A SKILL THAT CAN BE LEARNT AND IMPROVED NOT SOMETHING WE ARE BORN WITH’

can last for a very long time and deprive the victim of forming healthy relationships with others due to the initial betrayal they experienced from their close family member. Studies show that some victims develop unhealthy coping techniques like self-harm or addiction to drugs and alcohol, others experience a variety of mental health problems ranging

from depression to eating disorders.

Some people advocate for parenting classes that would enhance parents’ skills to take good care of their children and be mindful of their needs.

So, how would parenting classes help?

The idea of parenting classes stems from the fact that parenting is a skill that can be learnt and improved, not something we are born with.

Most people bring up their children the same way they were brought up, while some become over protective and wanting to provide their children with all the things they never got as children, others become harsh and uncaring because that was the way their parents brought them up.

Some people may argue that

parenting classes are nothing but the state’s interference with parent’s right to bring up their children the way they see fit, but the argument against is that parenting classes will be optional and designed by qualified psychologists without interference from the state.

Also the consequences of poor parenting are long lasting and often irreversible.

When you read daily news about gun shootings in the schools and other crimes done by young people you can’t help but wonder how did this happen and what led this young person to behave this way?. Was it poor parenting or peer pressure or was it learned behaviour from movies promoting crime and violent behaviour and what can be done to avoid such tragic events in the future?

Why more Americans are flocking to Florida

GERARD MARTINEZ & LUCIE AUBOURG

There’s nothing in the world that would convince Cape Coral resident Kenneth Lowe to leave — not even having to empty his home of flood water a week after Hurricane Ian pummelled the city.

“Southwest Florida is my heaven on earth and hurricanes come with South Florida. So you just have to take it,” the 28-year-old tells standing in a street strewn with debris. “It’s my favourite place, it’s worth it.”

Experts warn the frequency of supercharged hurricanes and floods in this climate-prone region is only expected to increase over time — but the population of the southeastern United States continues to rise. The paradox is especially striking in Cape Coral.

Between 2010 and 2021, its population grew by 33 per cent to 204,000 people, according to census data. Founded in 1958, it embodies the Florida dream that many come looking for.

Navigable canals criss-cross the region, connecting to the Caloosahatchee River, which gives way to the Gulf of Mexico. This affords many people the chance to enjoy a house on the water, and even space for a small boat.

But developing Cape Coral meant first draining the swamp it was built on — and destroying the mangroves and coral reefs that acted as natural defenses against waves and storm surges.

The city was pulverised by Ian, which intensified especially rapidly, fuelled by warm waters and high humidity. A study in Nature Communications earlier this year found that due to climate change, Atlantic hurricanes dump around 10 per cent more water during their rainiest three-hours.

In the streets of Cape Coral, dozens of residents are now piling up their belongings in front of their homes: beds, cupboards, refrigerators that have become unusable.

“We will just rebuild and, hopefully, it will be another 100 years before the next big one,” said Tamara Lang, 56.

Lang moved from Chicago and bought her house in Cape Coral just a few months ago — and says she didn’t factor hurricanes into her decision. But she too has no intention of leaving.

“We love it here,” she said. “This has been our happy place since we got it.”

According to sociologist Mathew Hauer, who studies the impacts of climate change on society, people are not adequately informed about the risks they are taking on. — AFP

A new capital worthy of the Pharaohs rises in Egypt, but at what price?



Vivian Yee

The writer is the Cairo bureau chief at NYT



Declan Walsh

The writer is the chief Africa correspondent at NYT

Sprawled across a patch of desert four times the size of Washington, DC, a showy new capital is rising in Egypt, imperial in scale and style, embodying the grandiose ambitions of President Abdel-Fattah el Sissi and his mantle as the country’s ruler.

The new administrative capital just outside Cairo encompasses Africa’s tallest building, a crystal pyramid and a vast, disc-shaped palace for Sissi inspired by the symbols for an ancient Egyptian sun god.

Six years in the making at an estimated cost of \$59 billion, it is the grandest in a slew of megaprojects being built by a president determined to reshape Egypt.

Eight-lane highways swoop across the crumbling streets of Cairo, skirting ancient tombs and the pyramids of Giza. Giant bridges, freshly built, span the Nile. A new summer capital gleams on the Mediterranean coast, just outside the city of Alexandria.

The projects, mostly constructed by the country’s powerful military, make Sissi the latest in a long line of Egyptian leaders, stretching back centuries, who have sought to mirror their authority in imposing structures that rise from the desert.

In the past six years alone, the International Monetary Fund has given Egypt three loans totalling about \$20 billion, even as US aid kept flowing in. Even so, the country is once again in trouble.

The president is “borrowing money from abroad to build a massive city for the rich,” said Maged Mandour, an Egyptian political analyst.

But poor and middle-class Egyptians are paying the price tag for the mega projects through taxes, lower investment in social services and subsidy cuts, he added.

Although financing for the new projects remains opaque, they are funded in part by Chinese capital as well as high-interest bonds that will be costly for Egypt to repay in coming years.

Egypt’s finances, overall, were fragile even before Russia attacked Ukraine in February. Sissi had borrowed heavily to fund the mega projects, as well as

A NEW EGYPTIAN CAPITAL WAS SUPPOSED TO OFFER A RESPITE FROM THE FUME-CHOKED CHAOS OF CAIRO, WHERE THE POPULATION HAS TOPPED 20 MILLION

billions of dollars in international arms purchases, helping to quadruple the national debt over a decade.

Egypt is making too little to cover its debts.

Foreign investors have mostly stayed away from Egypt, deterred by the military’s tight grip on the economy. That, combined with a lack of focus on developing domestic industries, has meant the private sector, outside oil and gas, has contracted every month for nearly two years.

Investment bank Goldman Sachs recently estimated that Egypt needed a \$15 billion bailout from the International Monetary Fund to fend off its creditors.

Egypt’s finance minister, who confirms that the country is seeking a new IMF loan, said the actual sum it will receive is much smaller, and diplomats put the amount at \$3 billion.

Russia’s war with Ukraine sent Egypt’s financial house of cards tottering. As interest rates and food prices soared this summer, public finances became so strained that the government ordered malls, stadiums and other public facilities to ration their air conditioning and dim the lights so it could sell more energy abroad.

Now, economists warn, Egypt is one of a handful of countries that runs a significant risk of debt default.

“2023 will be dark and horrific,” Amr Adeeb, a popular television host and longtime supporter of the president, said recently.

A new Egyptian capital was supposed to offer a respite from the fume-choked chaos of Cairo, where the population has topped 20 million.

Although the idea was first dreamed up by Hosni Mubarak, Sissi has taken it to new heights: A Chinese-built skyscraper called the Iconic Tower soars to 1,293 feet, the tallest building in Africa.

— New York Times



Paving the way for others

“What would you like to be in the future? This was the question, which paved the way for most of us; it changed the way we look at life instead! Teachers have always been the ones who first inspired us to dream; to have dreams and believe in them. For most of us, we will be remembering at least one teacher who made a positive impact on our life at some point or the other. Teachers contributed to making us the person we are today. For the teachers, they are as proud as our parents when celebrating our accomplishments.

Teachers are the first who believe in their students; it is them who start paving the way for students. Without their support and guidance, most of students could have lost their way. During the early days of school, our teachers used to question us aiming to instill hope, confidence and the brightness of future in us. With their interest to bring us the brighter future even closer while we were kids, we were longing to live our dreams. All our dreams have started since our teachers believed in us and urged us to plan our dreams and future.

Everyone of us dreamed in the past to become something - a doctor, a policeman, a pilot, an engineer, a teacher, a captain and just any other professionals.

This is how our dreams started, rather even became bigger and bigger by the time we grow. Teachers switch the flames of our dreams, which some of us are experiencing now. Perhaps, some have not achieved what they dreamed of, but at least they started the journey of their dreams. It is all because of their teachers’ inspiration.

Without the teachers’ encouragement and support, students’ dreams would have never become true. Oprah Winfrey, an American media executive, actress and TV producer, said right, “For everyone of us that succeeds, it is because there is somebody there



Abdulaziz al Jahdhami
aljahdhami22@gmail.com

An author, columnist, creative writer, translator and a communications professional

A GOOD TEACHER IS LIKE A CANDLE, IT CONSUMES ITSELF TO LIGHT THE WAY FOR OTHERS. REGARDLESS HOW POSITIVE AND NEGATIVE THE ATTITUDE OF A TEACHER IS, HE/SHE COULD DEFINITELY MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN ONE’S LIFE

to show you the way out. The light doesn’t always necessarily have to be in your family; for me it was teachers and schools.” It is an undeniable fact that teachers have highly contributed in shaping their students’ personalities and future.

A good teacher is like a candle, it consumes itself to light the way for others. Regardless how positive and negative the attitude of a teacher is, he/she could definitely make a difference in one’s life. Students kick off their journey of life with their teachers since the early years of childhood. For some kids, the journey starts at the age of five or earlier perhaps at kindergarten, while others in first grade of school at the age of six.

In teaching, you cannot see the fruits of a day’s work; it is invisible and remains so maybe for 20 years. This is how it works because the outcomes are not always tangible. However, teaching is the profession that teaches all other professions.

All the successful people, leaders and decision-makers have been taught by teachers either at schools, colleges or universities. Teachers had started their student’s mission of acquiring knowledge from all the experiences that students have come across throughout their years of study. Every teacher takes a hand, opens a mind and touches a heart.

Dear valued teachers, you are all very admirable and respectable. You have always left no stone unturned to feed students with knowledge and enlighten them with experiences. You are more than just teachers, but fathers, brothers and friends. Likewise, women teachers are mothers, sisters and friends for the girls.

As the world is commemorating International Teacher Day, it is time to acknowledge the commendable devotion of all teachers towards their students. Thank you, all teachers, and may Allah bless all teachers in the world.

CRACKED AND DRIED!



A youth walks on cracked and dried up soil at the Hawizeh marshes, which straddle Iraq’s border with Iran, in the southeastern Maysan province on Sunday. – AFP

Research ethics and non-human subjects

IN August, Springer Nature, the publisher of 3,000 academic journals, including the Nature portfolio of the world’s most influential science journals, announced new ethics guidance for its editors, addressing the balance between academic freedom and the risk that publication of some research will harm specific groups of humans. The guidance also mentions, though much more briefly, research using animals.

There are long-established guidelines proscribing the publication of articles based on experiments or trials that fail to protect the rights of human research subjects. The new guidance goes beyond this, implying that editors should reject research that contributes to knowledge, and properly protects its research subjects, if, for example, it indirectly contributes to the stigmatisation of a vulnerable human group.

The updated ethics guidance therefore adds a new and complex set of considerations to the already difficult decisions that the editors of scientific journals must make. The guidance leaves ample scope for varying interpretations, either more favourable to academic freedom, or more protective of the rights and dignity of members of specific groups of humans. It remains to be seen whether the guidance will narrow the range of topics – and if so, to what extent – on which scientists can hope to be published in a leading scientific journal.

The Journal of Controversial Ideas, of which I am a founding co-editor, has already published papers that other journals rejected, not because of flaws in the research, but because



PETER SINGER

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

THERE ARE LONG-ESTABLISHED GUIDELINES PROSCRIBING THE PUBLICATION OF ARTICLES BASED ON SCIENTIFIC EXPERIMENTS OR TRIALS THAT FAIL TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF HUMAN RESEARCH SUBJECTS

they support views contrary to widespread and strongly-held political or ethical beliefs. I would not be surprised if the new Springer Natureethics guidance brings us more such papers.

One aspect of the guidance that I welcome unreservedly, as far as it goes, is the statement that, “Research should also respect the rights of non-human life.” This would have been more helpful if it had been accompanied by a brief list of the rights that non-human life possesses. I can understand why that task was not attempted. But the guidance does include, among a list of harms to be avoided, “unnecessary suffering of non-human animals as a result of experimentation.”

Against this background, consider an article entitled

“Chronic unpredictable mild stress produces depressive-like behaviour, hypercortisolemia, and metabolic dysfunction in adolescent cynomolgus monkeys,” published in 2021 in the Springer Nature journal Translational Psychiatry. The article describes how the researchers – mostly from Chongqing Medical University, but with two co-authors at US universities – reared monkeys in large social groups for the first year of their lives, and then put them into cages, alone, for 70 days.

For adolescent social animals, removal from a social group and isolation is already extremely stressful, but much worse was to come. Additional stress was inflicted on the monkeys in five cycles of seven days each.

On each of these 35 days, the monkeys were subjected to two of the following: 12 hours of loud noise, 12 hours without water, 24 hours without food, four hours in a more restricted space, 12 hours of a stroboscope, a temperature of 10 C for ten minutes, and inescapable electric shocks delivered to their feet 3-4 times for 10-15 seconds.

Although the paper’s title suggests only “mild” stress, according to the researchers’ own account, the experimental protocol was severe enough to cause the monkeys to spend significantly more time than a control group in what the researchers called “huddle posture” – hanging their heads down to shoulder level or lower, and clasping themselves. The

researchers conclude that the stresses they inflicted “can induce depressive-like and anxiety-like behaviours.”

The Springer Nature research ethics guidance reiterates a long-standing and widely used requirement that authors of manuscripts reporting research on live vertebrates or higher invertebrates confirm that all experiments were performed in accordance with relevant guidelines. The article reporting the research just described, includes this statement: “Animals were maintained under an experiment protocol approved by the Ethics Committee of Chongqing Medical University (approval No: 20180705) in accordance with the recommendations of ‘The use of non-human primates in research’ and ‘Guide for the Care and Use of Laboratory Animals.’”

The requirement that the researchers confirm that they have complied with the relevant guidelines may protect editors from criticism, but it often fails to protect the animal subjects of the research. People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals (PETA), a US animal rights organisation, asked Emily Trunnell, who has a doctorate in neuroscience from the University of Georgia, to review this and two similar experiments on monkeys. In a letter to the editor of Translational Psychiatry, she wrote: “Essentially, monkeys were tortured for these experiments.”



Research should also respect the rights of non-human life.

sport

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Red Bull's Max Verstappen celebrates winning the race.
— REUTERS

VERSTAPPEN TARGETS F1 DOMINATION AFTER SECOND WORLD TITLE

SUZUKA: Max Verstappen said he was capable of dominating Formula One for years to come after clinching his second straight world title at the Japanese Grand Prix on Sunday.

The Red Bull driver won a dramatic, rain-shortened race in Suzuka and claimed the championship when his nearest rival Charles Leclerc was relegated to third by a five-second penalty.

The flying Dutchman said it was a “crazy feeling” to lift the trophy for a second time -- then set his sights on ruling the sport for years to come.

“If I have a competitive car, I’m confident that we can keep this going,” said the 25-year-old, who has won 12 of 18 races this season.

“It also depends on what the competition is going to come up with. I really believe in this group and I really hope that in the coming years we can enjoy a lot more wins and potentially of course championships.”

Verstappen was only informed he had retained his title midway through the post-race TV interview, and even the driver himself was not sure.

Ferrari’s Leclerc crossed the line second in front of Red Bull’s Sergio Perez, but he was hit with a penalty after squeezing Perez in the final chicane and being deemed to have gained an advantage by leaving the track.

“I made a mistake and tried to minimise it,” said Leclerc, who led the championship early in the season. “Huge congratulations to Max and Red Bull. Max has been incredible and it’s a title fully deserved.”

The amended result gave Verstappen an unassailable 113-point lead over Perez and made him only the third driver after Michael Schumacher and Sebastian Vettel to clinch the title with four races to spare.

“I was told I was the world champion, we celebrated and then people told me ‘no, you’re still missing a point,’” he said of the post-race confusion.

“Eventually we had enough points so we were world champion again.”

The Japanese Grand Prix was staged for the first time since 2019 because of the pandemic, but the race got off to a chaotic start in heavy rain.

Leclerc was quicker off the line than pole sitter Verstappen, who admitted he made “a terrible start”, before the Dutchman regained the lead with a brave overtake around the outside of turn one.

“It was very close but that’s what people like to see,” he said.

HAMILTON PRAISE

Ferrari’s Carlos Sainz spun out on the first lap and the Williams of Alex Albon broke down prompting a safety car.

A red flag soon followed and forced the drivers back to the pit lane for almost two hours.

Verstappen resumed on a rolling start ahead of Leclerc and Perez and extended his lead with ease once the safety car dived back into the pits and track conditions began to improve.

“Congratulations to Max, he’s done exactly the job he needed to do to win his second title,” said seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton, who Verstappen pipped to the championship a year ago in controversial circumstances.

Verstappen was 46 points behind Leclerc after three races but went on to dominate, winning 11 of the next 15 Grands Prix. And he is hungry for more.

“I still want to try to win more races because with the car that we have now, you have to try to take advantage of that because you don’t know if you’re ever going to have that again in the years to come,” he said.

Red Bull team principal Christian Horner paid tribute. “Carrying that number one this year, he’s done it with a lot of pride,” he said.

French driver Pierre Gasly reacted furiously after a frightening moment when he nearly hit a tractor on the track in rain and poor visibility early in the race.

AlphaTauri’s Gasly said he could have been killed by the vehicle, which was deployed to recover Sainz’s car.

It brought back painful memories of the tragic 2014 race at Suzuka, when another French driver Jules Bianchi died after colliding with a recovery vehicle in poor conditions.

— AFP



DJOKOVIC TAKES 90TH CAREER TITLE WITH ASTANA VICTORY

ASTANA: Novak Djokovic claimed the 90th title of his career and the fourth of 2022 with a dominant straight-sets victory over Stefanos Tsitsipas in the ATP final in Astana on Sunday.

The 35-year-old Djokovic triumphed 6-3, 6-4 in 75 minutes to add to the trophies he won this season in Israel, Rome and at Wimbledon.

It was the ninth consecutive match victory for the fourth seed, who guaranteed himself a spot at the 2022 ATP Finals as a result of the win.

"I dared to dream, actually," Djokovic replied when asked if he had ever imagined he would win 90 titles.

"I always hoped that I would be going to have a great career. Obviously, didn't know the amount of finals I was going to play, the amount of tournaments I was going to win, but my intention was always to reach the highest heights in our sport."

The Serb won in Tel Aviv a week ago, his first singles



tournament since wrapping up a seventh Wimbledon crown and 21st Grand Slam title in July. He was banned from the US Open and the entire North American hard court swing over his refusal to be vaccinated before returning for Roger Federer's farewell in the Laver Cup team event in London last month.

His time away had increased his motivation, he agreed. "Well, it did," Djokovic said. "I could not ask for a better re-start of the season. I'm super-pumped and motivated to end the season as well as I have done these past couple of weeks."

For third-seeded Tsitsipas, who had been bidding for a tenth

career title, it was a ninth defeat in as many ATP Tour 500-level finals he has played in.

Djokovic got off to a flying start, winning the first game at love in a little over one minute.

With Tsitsipas serving at 3-4, Djokovic took the only break point of the first set.

Djokovic earned another break in the fifth game of the second set when a Tsitsipas drop shot fell into the net.

The Serb converted his third match point with a backhand winner into an open court.

"I'm just very grateful and blessed to be able to play this well at this stage of my life," Djokovic added.

"You know, 35 is not 25. But I think the experience, probably, in these kinds of matches and big occasions helps as well to approach mentally in the right way."

Djokovic leads Tsitsipas 8-2 in their meetings and has won the past seven clashes. — AFP

Iyer, Kishan star as India hammer South Africa

RANCHI: Shreyas Iyer hit a century and Ishan Kishan made 93 to power India to a seven-wicket win over South Africa in the second one-day international on Sunday and keep the series alive.

Chasing 279 for victory, the hosts depended on a 161-run third-wicket partnership between the left-handed Kishan and Iyer, unbeaten on 113, to achieve their target with 25 balls to spare in Ranchi.

The bowlers led by Mohammed Siraj set up victory after they choked the opposition runs in the final overs and kept South Africa down to 278-7 despite a 129-run stand between Reeza Hendricks (74) and Aiden Markram (79).

The three-match series remains level at 1-1 with the decider on Tuesday in New Delhi.

India lost their openers including skipper Shikhar Dhawan for 13 after getting starts but Kishan and Iyer stood firm to revive the chase and take the attack to the opposition.

Kishan took on Anrich Nortje in one over to smash the pace bowler for a four and two sixes, but missed out on a maiden international hundred when he fell to Bjorn Fortuin.

Iyer, who reached his second ODI ton with a boundary, kept up the attack despite struggling with cramps midway into the innings and stood unbeaten with Sanju Samson, who made 30, to steer the team home.

Chasing 279 for victory, the hosts depended on a 161-run third-wicket partnership between the left-handed Kishan and Iyer, unbeaten on 113, to achieve their target with 25 balls to spare in Ranchi

Iyer and Samson put on an unbeaten stand of 73 in 68 balls.

Earlier Siraj returned figures of 3-38 from his pace bowling as South Africa, who opted to bat first in the absence of captain Temba Bavuma, managed just 57 runs in the final 10 overs.

The Proteas were 204-3 in 37 overs and looked likely to get more than 300 but the tables turned after Hendricks got out and then Heinrich Klaasen (30) and Markram fell in the space of three deliveries.

Siraj, who struck first with the wicket of Quinton de Kock, got Hendricks caught by debutant Shahbaz Ahmed to break the big stand.

David Miller hit an unbeaten 35 off 34 balls but failed to provide an attacking finish to the innings as Siraj gave away just three runs in the 50th over and got the wicket of stand-in-skipper Keshav Maharaj. — AFP



A vital 50-run partnership between Shreyas Iyer and Sanju Samson sealed the victory for the hosts.

OOC sets up Oman Challenge programme for women sports leaders

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, OCT 10

Oman Olympic Committee, represented by the Oman Committee for Women's Sports and Gender Equality, organised the Oman Challenge programme for women sports leaders in the Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar from October 4 to 6, in cooperation with the Outward Bound Oman Training Foundation with the support of OQ.

The programme witnessed the participation of many women sports' leaders, administrators and coaches from the Ministry of

Culture, Sports and Youth, sports associations and committees, and Women's Sports Committee. The event focused on strengthening participation in sports by women and providing them with life skills including taking responsibility by taking a new experience in dealing with nature. Training was provided for raising morale and motivating the team, as well as increasing productivity and developing basic skills to work effectively as a team.

Three days of activities in the programme included workshops and miscellaneous tours.

On the first day, they started



with the introduction and objectives of the programme, then discussed developing relationships and breaking down

barriers in life, and also ensured the practical workshop to solve problems using effective Team Model.

On the second day, the expedition began in the foothills of the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar by hiking and enjoying the landscapes of

the mountain and stopping along the way to explore the flora and biodiversity of the mountain. Also, an individual meditation and self-reflection session was conducted for all participants with the aim of connecting with nature and thinking about the experience at 'Oman Challenge', and planning for the future.

The third day dealt with the final challenge to solve problems through debriefing and focus on knowledge transfer, also included course review and challenges that took place, the camping experience, finally the submission of certificates.



Shonal claims top honours in the first round of Oman RMC series

MUSCAT: Shonal Kunimal began his 2022-23 season in Oman on a victorious note as the 11-year-old claimed the top honours in the Mini Max category of the opening round of the Oman Rotax Max Challenge (RMC) Championship at the Oman Automobile Association (OAA) Muscat Speedway recently.

This is the first time that the OAA is organising a domestic Rotax Max Challenge series and the championship will comprise three rounds in various categories.

Shonal, an Indian School Ghubra (ISG) student, has been a regular face in the regional karting circuit over the past five years.

A solid display saw him claim the top prize in the first round of the 2022-23 Oman Rotax Max Challenge by the best lap time of 56.316 sec. He was followed by another promising racer Adam Awan, who has a best lap time of 56.498 sec. With the best lap time of 57.377 sec Devansh Bandyopadhy completed the podium.

Ahead of the final race, the round included qualifying and pre-final races. Shonal dominated all the three sessions.

This is the inaugural edition of the Oman Rotax Max Challenge

Championship and the next round will be held on December 10. All the rounds will be held at the Muscat Speedway and the overall champion will be crowned after the third and final round, to be held on February 3, 2023.

Later, OAA Oman Automobile Association manager Sanad al Rawahi gave away the awards.

Speaking after winning the first round, Shonal said, "It was a good start to the new season. It also served as a good warm-up for the MENA Nations Cup 2022. I hope to continue with my good form and hope to claim the overall title."

Meanwhile, OAA is getting ready to host the biggest karting championship in the region, the MENA Nations Cup, for the third time later this year.

A total of 20 nations will take part in the Middle East North Africa International Championship (MENA Nations Cup 2022) from December 13 to 17.

The MENA Nations Cup will feature Micro Max, Mini Max, Junior Max, Senior Max, DD2 & DD2 Master categories.

Drivers from Oman, Egypt, Jordan, Palestine, Morocco, Lebanon, Syria, Cyprus, Algeria, Tunisia, Sudan, Iraq, Yemen, Saudi Arabia, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, Libya, Iran, Mauritania & Djibouti.

Italy's Ganna powers to cycling world one-hour record

GRENCHE: Italian Filippo Ganna made up for a disappointing season so far by powering to a new track one-hour world record of 56.792km at the Grenchen velodrome in Switzerland on Saturday.

Olympic team pursuit champion Ganna bettered the surprise mark set by Britain's Daniel Bigham, a performance engineer at his Ineos Grenadiers team, of 55.548km on the same track last August.

"It's amazing, fantastic. I achieved my goal," said a delighted Ganna.

"I thank my staff and everyone who contributed to this record."

Starting cautiously, the double time-trial world champion gradually increased his pedalling rate to dislodge Bigham, 31, who had attempted the world record in order to collect data for Ganna's quest.

Ganna, 26, also erased the mark of Briton Chris Boardman, 56.375km, from 1996. That distance had been cancelled by the International Cycling Union after a change in equipment regulations.

"Congratulations Filippo Ganna, haven't watched one in quarter of a century, glad I tuned in, a beautiful thing to witness," Boardman, 54, wrote on Twitter.

The first Italian to set the hour record since Francesco Moser in 1984, Ganna has established himself in recent years as one of the most successful riders of his generation with world time-trial titles in 2020 and 2021, four individual pursuit gold medals at the worlds and Tokyo Olympic victory in the team pursuit.

On Saturday, Ganna started relatively calmly, trailing Bigham's mark by almost four seconds.

But the Italian, riding a bike created by the Pinarello brand with a 3D printed frame to increase aerodynamic performance, gradually overtook Bigham's mark after 20 minutes.

In front of a ecstatic crowd, the slender rider from Piedmont raised his arms aloft as he crossed the line.

"The hardest threshold came in the last five minutes. I didn't



Ineos Grenadiers' Italian rider Filippo Ganna celebrates after breaking the hour record with a distance of 56.792km in the Velodrome Suisse, an indoor velodrome in Grenchen, northern Switzerland. — AFP

have enough energy to do the 57 kilometres. But that's okay," said Ganna.

"Next time maybe I will try at another part of the season when I have fresher legs and we can

go even higher, but now we will think about recovery."

The record put a shine on a disappointing campaign so far with a seventh-place finish in the road world time-trials in

Australia, losing at the Europeans, with his best time-trial a fourth place in the Tour de France. Ganna next heads for the world track championships outside Paris between October 12-16. — AFP



66 horses qualify for endurance race

WALEED AL JAHWARI
MUSCAT, OCT 9

As many as 66 horses were able to win the qualification card in the second endurance competition organised by the Oman Equestrian Federation for this season 2022-2023, at Al Mohammed Endurance Village in Barka with participation of 70 horses for distances of 40 km and 80 km.

Fourteen horses out of 16 qualified in the 80 km race, 52 horses out of 54 qualified in the 40 km race. The two races witnessed wide participation which indicated the high readiness of the participants,

including owners, trainers and jockeys.

The qualifying competition for the distance of 80 km started in the evening, in which 16 horses participated, and 14 horses were able to successfully pass the competition. An hour, the maximum speed limit was 16 km/h, and the maximum heart rate was 56 beats/minute, and the age of the horse was five years.

In the 40 km qualifying competition, which started in the afternoon, 54 horses, and 52 horses were able to successfully pass the competition. The maximum heart rate was 56 beats/minute, and the age of the horse was five years.



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OPAZ reveals details of AMAD DUQM 2022 event

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 9

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth will hold on Tuesday, October 11, a press conference, in which they reveal the ongoing preparations for (AMAD DUQM 2022) event, which will be hosted by the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) in November.

The 9-day event will bring more than 30 youth activities in various fields, including culture, sports, innovation, technology, sustainability and entertainment.

The press conference will be held at the Innovation Factory in Muscat to reveal the details of the activities that are being prepared in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm. This event is aimed to attract over 20,000 youth.

During the conference, further details about the facilities, provided by the two organising parties for AMAD DUQM 22, in regards with the event, accommodation facilities and activities will be announced during the press briefing.

Sohar Intl successfully raises RO 160m through biggest domestic Rights Issue

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, OCT 9

Receiving an overwhelming response from investors, Sohar International has announced a fully subscribed rights issue of RO 160 million. The funds raised will contribute to enhancing the bank's capital base in order to meet the bank's ambitious strategic growth objectives.

Sohar International issued RO 160 million in new shares through rights issue at 0.102 bz per share (0.002 bz being cost of issuance) starting on September 12, 2022. The issuance was fully subscribed with strong investor appetite



across government and corporate institutions, family offices, and retail.

Commenting on Sohar International's consistent growth trajectory, Ahmed al Musalmi, CEO of Sohar International, said, "The fully subscribed rights issue is a strong testament to the bank's capacity in attracting and raising

adequate capital. This is because Sohar International has not just demonstrated utmost resilience in times of uncertainty but has remained consistent in recording exceptional performance across all its operations.

Committed to acting as a catalyst for socio-economic progress and strongly aligned to Oman Vision 2040, the bank has also earned strong goodwill in the market because of its ground-breaking initiatives that have led to transformational change in the sector."

He added: "We are indeed grateful for the unfaltering trust our shareholders have bestowed on us.

We would also like to thank the Central Bank of Oman and the Capital market Authority for their consistent support as we achieve yet another milestone in our journey. The increase in capital base will further enhance the bank's position and help leverage market opportunities and expand horizons while contributing to the country's progress."

The bank's Extraordinary General Meeting (EGM) held in August 2022 has approved the increase of the authorised share capital of the bank from RO 400 million to RO 1 billion while amending Article 5 of the Articles of Association accordingly.

Omani firm receives maiden TRA licence to provide IoT services

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, OCT 9

An Omani technology start-up has been awarded the first ever licence by the Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) to provide Internet-of-Things (IoT) related services in the Sultanate of Oman. Muscat-based Artificial Recognition Technology LLC (ART) received a licence to serve as an IoT Service Provider under the recently enacted IoT Security Regulation Framework and Standard 2022.

Established in 2020, ART specialises in developing end-user services / applications that can be positioned either as the end-to-end service provider or sub-contractor of the customer owner party under the scope of IoT, said Arfat al Aghbari, Founder and Managing Director – ART.

"While our vision is to optimise digital



INTERNET OF THINGS: The roll-out of IoT networks will help Oman realise its vision to establish smart cities and accelerate its digital transformation: ART LLC

transformation solutions in Oman and regionally, our mission is to connect the unconnected through our large-scale LoRaWAN Gateway network to cover all areas of Oman . This will enable the 4th Industrial Revolution to take hold in the Sultanate of Oman, thereby spawning the growth of smart cities through deployments

of wider and affordable networks that, in turn, will improve the quality of life of individuals and the community."

LoRAWAN Gateways enable digital devices to connect to a secure wireless network, say experts. A LoRaWAN gateway creates a Long Range (LoRA), lower-power wide-area network and is used to wirelessly connect sensors and devices for IoT solutions across a range of industries. LoRaWAN solutions are ideal for supporting wireless connectivity and are being deployed across several industries.

"As the first company in Oman to be awarded a licence in the IoT category, ART will be looking to roll out IoT networks for public and private communities in the country," said Al Aghbari.

"The IoT network is essential for any IoT-based services as it is the medium through which data is transmitted/transferred.

LoRaWAN is a low-power, wide area networking protocol built on top of the LoRa radio modulation technique. It acts as an intermediate that connects the devices to the Internet and manages communication between end-node devices and network gateways."

The roll-out of IoT networks will help Oman realise its vision to establish smart cities and accelerate its digital transformation, says Al Aghbari. "Usage of LoRaWAN in industrial spaces and smart cities is growing because it is an affordable long-range, bi-directional communication protocol with very low power consumption — devices can run for ten years on a small battery. With cheaper and affordable unit rates, this will allow and encourage digital transformation to take place naturally by increasing acceptance from the public and private sectors."

TURN TO PAGE 14

Oman set to record budget surplus of 6.3pc of GDP: Report

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, OCT 9

Buoyant international oil and gas prices will help the Sultanate of Oman deliver a budget surplus of 6.3 per cent of GDP, according to a new report by Emirates NBD Research.

Revenues for the year up to July-end surged 47 per cent year-on-year, while expenditure grew a mere 8.8 per cent over the same period, the report noted. While oil revenues jumped 45 per cent during this period, gas income was up 120 per cent, it further stated.

"We have upgraded our forecast for 2022 GDP growth largely on the back of higher than expected oil production year-to-date: Oman's crude oil output exceeded 1.1mn b/d in July and August, and is up over 9 per cent so far this year, compared with average



2021 production. Oman has also increased LNG exports this year and is investing in boosting capacity in this space as well," Khatija Haque, Head of Research and Chief Economist, said.

According to the report, the Omani government channelled part of the fiscal surplus to reduce its public debt, which dipped around 11 per cent year-on-year in H1 2022 following a voluntary debt buyback of \$700 million at the end of June.

"Further debt reduction in H2 should see the debt to GDP ratio

decline to 43 per cent of GDP by the end of this year, down from over 67.3 per cent at the end of 2021. Our forecasts for 2023 show another sizeable budget surplus of 7.6 per cent of GDP which will further allow the government to strengthen the sovereign balance sheet.

Importantly, CPI inflation has slowed to 2.4 per cent year-on-year in August from 4.4 per cent in January, with food prices up 4.9 per cent in the latest reading.

Haque further added: "Housing and transport costs have been relatively contained in Oman, and aside from food prices, the component showing the fastest price growth this year has been education followed by healthcare. Like many other GCC countries, petrol prices have not increased in Oman this year, helping to curb overall inflation."

OCCI conducts training programme for employees



MUSCAT: In order to promote a culture of flexibility and streamline procedures in institutions, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) implemented a training programme in cooperation with Al Asayel Training Services Company on the flexible transformation process for the Chamber, presented by Dr Yousef bin Nasser al Khamisi (pictured), CEO of BDQ Consulting, consultant and a specialist in Lean methodology.

The programme targets senior management, managers and service providers in the institution, where more than 65 employees of the Chamber participated in the programme.

Through this programme, the Chamber aimed to provide an outline for the role of the executive management in the Chamber in the Agile Transformation process, which will enhance and improve their participation and sponsorship of flexible transformation projects and be more efficient and effective.

Agile Leadership discusses the role of the leader in nurturing, supporting, spreading and applying a culture of flexibility in all steps of services that provided by the institution.

Oman’s green hydrogen sector is the most developed in GCC: Report

JOMAR MENDOZA
@JmObserver

The Sultanate of Oman has a long pipeline of green hydrogen projects and the clearest strategy in the GCC for the industry’s development, according to a report of Oxford Analytica, an independent geopolitical analysis and advisory firm drawing on a worldwide network of experts.

The Sultanate of Oman aims to achieve 30 gigawatts of electrolyser capacity by 2040, the report said, noting that investors are attracted by the country’s sun, wind and land resources, access to potential markets and supportive government policy.

“The hydrogen sector will become a major contributor to Oman’s GDP and external balances by 2030, which will offset the decline in oil revenues. The Sultanate of Oman will increasingly shift its marketing focus from Asia to Europe, as the latter attempts to reduce its energy dependence on Russia, and regional sovereign wealth funds are likely to be major investors in Oman’s green hydrogen revolution,” Oxford Analytica said.

The Omani government’s decision to embark on the green hydrogen journey is driven by four interrelated factors: (1) The domestic and external financial crises caused by the decline in oil prices in 2020; (2) The high cost of oil production in the Sultanate of Oman and the low levels of reserves. (3) Gas shortage caused



THE HYDROGEN SECTOR WILL BECOME A MAJOR CONTRIBUTOR TO OMAN’S GDP AND EXTERNAL BALANCES BY 2030, WHICH WILL OFFSET THE DECLINE IN OIL REVENUES. THE SULTANATE OF OMAN WILL INCREASINGLY SHIFT ITS MARKETING FOCUS FROM ASIA TO EUROPE, AS THE LATTER ATTEMPTS TO REDUCE ITS ENERGY DEPENDENCE ON RUSSIA, AND REGIONAL SOVEREIGN WEALTH FUNDS ARE LIKELY TO BE MAJOR INVESTORS IN OMAN’S GREEN HYDROGEN REVOLUTION

by high domestic demand, limited production and the need to

meet LNG export contracts. (4) Acknowledgment that the Sultanate of Oman needs to diversify its economy from dependence on hydrocarbons.

Both the government and foreign investors recognised Oman’s potential to develop green hydrogen (based on renewable energy sources). In 2020, the country initiated plans for its first green hydrogen project as more countries and firms look to clean fuels to help solve the challenge of decarbonising economies.

Duqm is an ideal location for green hydrogen export, the report added. The place is located on major global trade routes and just outside the crowded and politically sensitive Strait of Hormuz.

There is also the availability of solar and wind energy throughout the year in Duqm. Other potentials include having a port that facilitate the easy import and export, in addition to the spacious areas of land allocated for renewable energy projects, covering 150 square kilometres.

The growing momentum behind the development of green hydrogen in Oman will intensify over the next decade, benefiting from the development of the nascent industry with lower production costs, acceleration of decarbonisation efforts and the development of the international market in both green hydrogen production and its liquid carriers, the report concluded.

Omani firm receives maiden TRA licence to provide IoT services

FROM PAGE 13

Although a young start-up, ART already has a well-established presence in Oman. Among its achievements is a contract to install and configure 500 smart water meters with an integrated Utility Dashboard app in Jebel Sifah.

“The Smart Water Meters come with a shut-off control valve that will allow the Facility Management Team to manage water consumption and supply to their residents via the Smart Utility Dashboard (SUD) Application itself,” Arfat explained.

Longer term, ART aims to establish its presence in the IoT space across the country – a goal it seeks to achieve with funding support from local and international investors.

“ART is currently a self-financed start-up that has invested a great deal of time and resources in R&D. But going forward, we would welcome any local or foreign investors to support our ambition to expand our network range to cover length of the country. Eventually, we hope to become the IoT Service and Network Provider of choice in Oman, as well as expand our services across the GCC and beyond,” he added.

Less drama for commodities in fourth quarter of 2022



OLE S HANSEN

Multiple uncertainties will continue to create a volatile environment for most commodities ahead of the year-end. While the recession drums will continue to bang ever louder the sector is unlikely to suffer a major setback before picking up speed again during 2023.

This forecast for stable to potentially even higher prices will be driven by pockets of strength in key commodities across all three sectors of energy, metals, and agriculture.

With that in mind, we see the Bloomberg Commodity Index, which tracks a basket of 24 major commodities, hold onto its +20 per cent year-to-date gain for the remainder of the year.

It highlights the behaviour of commodities where supply and demand ultimately set the price. While we are seeing concerns about growth and demand, the supply of several major commodities remains equally challenged.

An explosive rally during the first quarter was led by war, sanctions, and the backend of a



post-pandemic surge in demand for consumer goods and energy to produce them. The market then retraced sharply lower during June when the US Federal Reserve turbocharged its rate hikes to combat runaway inflation, while China’s zero-Covid policy and property sector woes drove a sharp correction.

During the third quarter, however, the sector has reasserted itself and while pockets of demand weakness will be seen, we see the supply side equally challenged developments that we see support the long-lasting cycle of rising commodity prices that we first

wrote about in the start of 2021.

Crude oil has returned to pre-Russian invasion levels as the market continues to price in the prospect of an economic slowdown hurting demand. The result is lower spot prices and a flattening forward curve to an extent that is not yet backed up by a corresponding rise in inventories.

It raises the question of whether the macroeconomic outlook has driven prices down to levels that are not yet justified by current supply and demand developments.

There is no doubt demand has softened in recent months, especially following the end of

the summer driving season, and continued but temporary lockdowns in China that are hurting mobility and growth.

In Europe, punitively high prices for gas and power have also helped drive a slowdown in fuel demand but the region is still importing around 3 million barrels per day from Russia.

The introduction of an import embargo on December 5 will likely tighten the overall market with Russia struggling to find other buyers. We view the current weakness in oil fundamentals as temporary and side with the major oil forecasters

of EIA, Opec and the IEA who, despite current growth concerns, have all maintained their demand growth forecasts for 2023.

During the final quarter prices are likely to remain challenged at times resulting in a potential lower range in Brent crude between \$80 and \$100 dollar-per-barrel. The main developments that could impact prices include:

- China’s continued battle with Covid versus additional stimulus to offset growth risks
- Gas-to-fuel switching supporting demand for distillate products
- EU embargo on

Russian oil potentially forcing a reduction in Russian production

- The US plans to begin refilling its strategic reserves
- Opec threat to lower production should prices drop further
- The direction of US inflation and the dollar — both key drivers of the general level of risk appetite
- US production growth, which is showing signs of stalling, thereby supporting prices

Oil majors swamped with cash, and investors in general, showing little appetite for investing in new discoveries suggest that the cost of energy is likely to remain elevated for years to come. This is driven by the green transformation which is receiving increased and urgent attention, and which will eventually begin to lower global demand for fossil fuels.

It’s the timing of this transition that keeps the investment appetite low. Unlike new drilling methods such as fracking where a well can be productive within months, traditional oil production projects often take years and billion-dollar investments before production can begin.

With that in mind, oil companies looking to invest in new production will not be focused on spot prices around \$90 in Brent and lower in WTI, but instead at +30-dollar lower prices currently traded in the futures market for delivery in five years’ time.

(The writer is Head of Commodity Strategy at Saxo Bank)

Green hydrogen revolution risks dying of thirst

Terry Kallis cancelled the development of a 6-gigawatt green hydrogen facility in South Australia in May. His Kallis Energy Investments encountered an insurmountable problem: a lack of water. It's just one of the 680 or so large-scale hydrogen projects under consideration around the world, per the Hydrogen Council, which estimates some \$700 billion of investment is needed by 2030 to hit net-zero emissions targets.

Plenty of those are likely to die of thirst, too. Large companies including BP, Fortescue Metals and Reliance Industries are leading the charge into green hydrogen, so called because it's manufactured using renewable energy rather than carbon-emitting fossil fuels.

It even helped Fortescue notch up a stock-market premium to rivals. A search for mention of water in prospective producers' statements, though, tends to yield nothing.

That raises concerns they're either ignoring the risks, or underestimating how much they'll need, the challenges of securing it, and how much it will cost. Kallis, at least, had taken the rare step of flagging the H2O concern from the start.

Much is riding on green hydrogen's success. From being a niche climate-change solution three or four years ago, it has morphed into something that could power everything from shipping, aviation, and large trucks to industrial processes like making steel and fertiliser.

The International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA) estimates green hydrogen could account for almost a tenth of global final energy use by 2050.

Water is one of the three key inputs for manufacturing it, along with renewable energy and the electrolyser that splits H2O into its constituent parts of hydrogen and oxygen.

Trouble is, generating the required power usually means building factories either in areas where industry, agriculture and households are already heavily competing for the resource, or in hot, sun-drenched regions suitable for solar panels. Estimates on how much water is needed to make green hydrogen vary wildly.

That's problematic as some 85 per cent of planned facilities are in regions suffering from medium to high water stress, per consultancy Bluefield Research. — Reuters

Much is riding on green hydrogen's success. From being a niche climate-change solution three or four years ago, it has morphed into something that could power everything.



VIETNAM CARS TO ENTER US MARKET

Workers assemble an electric car at the VinFast electric automobile plant in Haiphong. Having conquered most industries at home, optimistic chiefs at conglomerate Vingroup are setting their sights much higher as they ramp up plans to sell the first ever Vietnamese car in the mighty US market. — AFP

The stabilising effect of inflation



DANIEL GROS

The writer is a member of the board and a distinguished fellow at the Centre for European Policy Studies.

IN THE UNITED STATES, THE TOTAL DEBT OF NON-FINANCIAL CORPORATIONS HAS DOUBLED OVER THE LAST DECADE, REACHING \$12 TRILLION, AND GROSS NATIONAL DEBT HAS JUST SURPASSED \$31 TRILLION FOR THE FIRST TIME.

Central banks are busy tightening monetary policy as quickly as they can. Even the usually careful European Central Bank just increased its key interest rate by an unprecedented 75 basis points, matching an earlier move by the US Federal Reserve.

Financial markets have reacted to these actions as one would expect, with stock markets and long-term-bond prices both tumbling.

But none of this means that a financial crisis is imminent. One might conclude the opposite, given the cocktail of war in Ukraine, exploding energy prices, and soaring inflation, especially because debt levels are much higher today than they were on the eve of the last financial crisis.

In the United States, the total debt of non-financial corporations has doubled over the last decade, reaching \$12 trillion, and gross national debt has just surpassed \$31 trillion for the first time.

The US is hardly alone. Because of the Covid-19 recession, public debt has increased almost everywhere, with the advanced-economy average having grown by 20 percentage points, to over 120 per cent of GDP.

The preconditions for a financial crisis are thus fulfilled. Yet, so far, market volatility has been limited. Why is this time different? In 2007, borrowers were hit by the double whammy of an increase in risk premia (which made it very difficult to

re-finance debt) and low inflation (which reduced the income of debtors, impeding debt service and validating creditors' risk aversion).

Today, by contrast, inflation has risen rapidly, reducing the real value of debt. If the price level increases by 15 per cent, the real value of the debt held by a country with a debt-to-GDP ratio of 120 per cent would fall by about 18 percentage points of GDP, offsetting nearly all of the 20-point increase caused by the pandemic.

This is an entirely plausible scenario: inflation already is running at 10 per cent in the US and the eurozone, and prices are expected to increase by another 5 per cent next year. While the gain for governments is a loss for savers, who bought long-term government bonds at rock-bottom interest rates over the last decade, little can be done to offset this.

It also helps that, despite recent central-bank actions, inflation remains much higher than interest rates. Even after the tightening that markets have already priced in, governments and firms can issue new debt at negative real rates. This makes a new debt crisis, like the one that gripped the eurozone in 2009, unlikely.

The sustainability of public finances depends significantly on the so-called snowball effect: when interest costs exceed nominal GDP growth, the debt ratio rises (and vice versa).

For Italy, interest costs exceeded nominal GDP growth by seven percentage points of GDP at the height of the euro crisis in

2012, and by 5.7 points in 2013. This made it almost impossible to reduce the debt-to-GDP ratio.

Today, nominal growth is expected to remain 4.5 percentage points higher than interest costs, thanks to inflation. This will help to reduce the debt ratio.

In fact, the difference between nominal growth and interest costs has not been so favourable at any other time in recent memory. This goes a long way toward explaining why financial markets are not in crisis mode.

But that does not mean that they are not nervous. Recent market ructions in the United Kingdom are a case in point. At first glance, the financial-market turmoil triggered by the UK government's proposal of unfunded tax cuts might be surprising. After all, this is an AA-rated country with a large but manageable public debt that would not be rendered unsustainable by a couple of years of high deficits. But doubts about debt sustainability were not the problem.

UK pension funds had invested in derivatives, in order to avoid exposure to wild swings in the price of government bonds. But the derivative contracts demand collateral.

When asset prices slumped, the amount of collateral pension funds needed to offset their liabilities increased, forcing them to sell off assets (gilts) and raise cash. This drove down prices – and increased the need for collateral – still further.

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Nations agree to curb emissions from flying by 2050



HIROKO TABUCHI

The writer is a climate reporter for The New York Times, based in New York. She previously wrote for the paper on Japanese economics, business and technology from Tokyo.

After almost a decade of talks, the nations of the world committed on Friday to drastically lower emissions of planet-warming gases from the world's airplanes by 2050, a milestone in efforts to ease the climate effects of a fast-growing sector.

The target to reach "net-zero" emissions — a point at which air travel is no longer pumping any additional carbon dioxide into the atmosphere — would require the aviation industry to significantly step up its climate efforts.

Previously, companies had relied on offsetting aviation's emissions growth through tree-planting programmes or through yet-to-be-proven technology to pull carbon dioxide out of the air.

But to reach net-zero, companies and governments would need to invest hundreds of billions of dollars in increasingly efficient planes and cleaner fuels to sharply reduce emissions from air travel itself.

And even those investments are unlikely to be enough, compelling countries and companies to adopt policies to curb flying itself, by scrapping fuel subsidies or halting airport expansion plans, for example, or ending frequent flyer programmes.

That puts the onus on the world's richest countries, which account for the bulk of global air travel.

The richest 20 per cent of people worldwide take 80 per cent of the flights, according to estimates by the International Council on Clean Transportation,

a non-profit think tank. The top 2 per cent of frequent flyers take about 40 per cent of the flights.

"To build room for poorer countries to grow their aviation sectors, richer countries will need to peak emissions even faster," said Dan Rutherford, director of the think tank's aviation and marine programmes.

Emissions from global commercial aviation made up about 3 per cent of global emissions in 2019, and had surged more than 30 per cent over the previous decade before the coronavirus pandemic hit and traffic slumped. But air travel has come back with a vengeance, making action to address rising emissions imperative.

The aviation industry has been slow to address its emissions, which aren't covered by the Paris

accord, the 2015 agreement among nations to fight climate change. Instead, a United Nations-like body called the International Civil Aviation Organization has overseen the climate talks.

Those talks quickly became a microcosm of the politics involved in global climate negotiations, with less wealthy nations arguing that they should not face the same restrictions as richer nations.

India and China, where air travel is surging, argued at the talks in Montreal this week that their air carriers would require until 2060 or 2070 to achieve net-zero emissions. The 2050 target comes with no guarantees of success.

Similar to the Paris agreement, ICAO's targets don't come with any authority to set policy.

In addition, the agreement

doesn't assign targets to specific countries or airline companies, leaving the task of setting rules to member states. Aviation's contribution to climate change has been thrust into the spotlight in recent years by climate activists such as Greta Thunberg, the Swedish environmentalist who inspired a worldwide no-fly campaign.

The European Union has also taken the lead in policy, proposing a plethora of changes including ending tax exemptions for jet fuel and taxing carbon emissions instead.

French politicians have also proposed banning short-haul flights. In the United States, the ambitious Inflation Reduction Act passed this year includes subsidies for sustainable aviation fuel. — The New York Times

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According to the decision taken in the Extraordinary General Assembly held on Wednesday 7/9/2022, and during the meeting, it was approved and obtained the approval of all official bearers in the Sultanate of Oman to change the name of the company with the same commercial registration number 1244920 from Vision Asset Management Company SAOC to

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Egypt calls for return of Rosetta Stone 200 years after it was deciphered

PROMINENT EGYPTIAN archaeologists have renewed a call for the return of the Rosetta Stone from the British Museum to Egypt, 200 years after the deciphering of the slab unlocked the secrets of hieroglyphic script and marked the birth of Egyptology.

The archaeologists' online campaign

has gathered 2,500 signatures so far and aims to "tell Egyptians what has been taken from them", said Monica Hanna, acting Dean of the College of Archaeology in the Egyptian city of Aswan.

The Rosetta Stone dates to 196 BC and was unearthed by Napoleon's army in



northern Egypt in 1799. It became British property after Napoleon's defeat under the terms of the 1801 Treaty of Alexandria, along with other antiquities found by the French, and was shipped to Britain. It has been housed at the British Museum since 1802.

Bearing inscriptions of the same text in Hieroglyphs, Demotic and Ancient Greek, it was used by Frenchman Jean-

restituted because the ethical code of museums is changing, it's just a matter of when," said Hanna.

"The stone is a symbol of cultural violence, the stone is a symbol of cultural imperialism.

"So, restituting the stone is a symbol of changing things - that we're no longer in the 19th Century but we're working

with an ethical code of the 21st Century." A British Museum spokesperson said there had been no formal request from the Egyptian government for the return of the Rosetta Stone.

In an e-mailed statement the spokesperson noted that 28 stelae engraved with the same decree written by Egyptian priests had been discovered, starting with the Rosetta Stone in 1799, and that 21 remain in Egypt.

The museum is opening an exhibition entitled "Hieroglyphs: unlocking ancient Egypt" on October 13 which sheds light on the role of the Rosetta Stone.

"The British Museum greatly values positive collaborations with colleagues across Egypt," the statement added.

Egypt says the return of artefacts helps boost its tourism sector, a crucial source of dollars for its struggling economy. It is due to open a large new museum near the Giza pyramids to showcase its most famous ancient Egyptian collections in the next few months.

"Egyptian antiquities are one of the most important tourism assets that Egypt possesses, which distinguish it from tourist destinations worldwide," Tourism Minister Ahmed Issa said last week at an event to mark the 200th anniversary of Egyptology. — **Reuters**

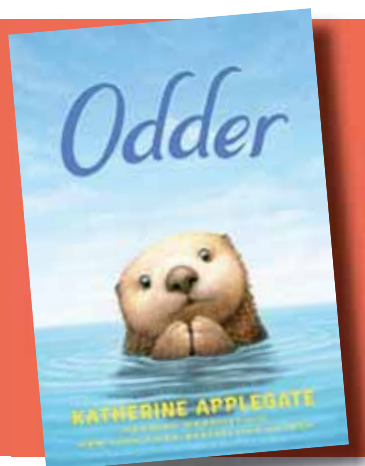
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ODDER

BY KATHERINE APPLIGATE.

ILLUSTRATED BY CHARLES SANTOSO

After a shark attack, Odder recuperates at the aquarium with the scientists who raised her.



AT THE MUSEUM

A cavalry armour from the Ottoman era sits at the Museum of Islamic Art in Doha as it reopens following a year-long facilities enhancement project and the re-imagining and reinstallation of its permanent collection galleries. The Museum of Islamic Art, an architectural tour de force designed by internationally acclaimed Pritzker Prize-winning architect IM. Pei (1917-2019), was the first institution opened by Qatar Museums in 2008. The Museum is a beacon for Islamic arts and a platform for international dialogue and exchange bridging past and present, East and West. — **AFP**



ENVIRONMENT

A dead southern right whale (Eubalaena australis) lying on the shore of El Doradillo beach is towed by a ship of the Naval Command to be taken to a deserted beach away from the presence of people, in Puerto Madryn, Chubut Province, Argentina. At least 13 dead southern right whales appeared on the coast of the Golfo Nuevo and Peninsula Valdez sanctuary, in northern Patagonia, in the past few days. The cause of their death is being investigated, the Whale Conservation Institute (ICB) reported. — **AFP**





Dragon Fruit Is Showing Up All Over. So Why Are Farmers Leaving the Business?

DRAGON FRUIT, the colourful cactus fruit also known as pitaya, has brought its subtle flavour far and wide this summer, from iced teas at Taco Bell to fruit drinks at Starbucks. So you'd think farmers would be having a banner year.

But in Florida, the business hasn't been so rosy.

In early June, as the pink, spiky bulbs of fruit were ready to be picked off the cactus, farmers learned that they would get only pennies per pound for fruit that can sell for \$7.99 a pound at the grocery store.



"Everybody expected to have a great year," said Elide Santos, who owns Dragon Fruit Nature Farms, north of Homestead, with her uncle. "But nobody made money."

The problem? Too much dragon fruit, because of a recent influx of produce grown in Ecuador.

The flood of Ecuadorian fruit is "a once-in-a-lifetime type of thing," said Peter Leifermann, the vice president of sales at Brooks Tropicals, a distributor that works with select number of Florida dragon fruit farmers.

Florida dragon fruit growers have long competed with farmers from Ecuador, Peru and Vietnam. But this year, Ecuadorian farmers extended their dragon fruit season just as Florida's began in June, most likely because of unusual weather patterns and a rush to offload fruit in the face of inflation and civil unrest in the country, Leifermann said. That overlap with the Florida

season has been a major blow for South Florida farmers, whose budgets have been tightened by inflation and high labour costs.

Dragon fruit typically grows here from June to November. The rest of the year, the cactuses require expensive round-the-clock care, including lots of water, fertiliser and pruning.

Distributors like Brooks Tropicals have increasingly handled Ecuadorian dragon fruit because those growers have provided a reliable supply in recent years as Florida farmers dealt with labour

busy road near his farm.

Demand for dragon fruit has been increasing over the past 20 years, thanks in part to its reputation as a nutrient-dense fruit, said Dr. Jonathan Crane, the associate director of the Tropical Research and Education Center at the University of Florida. The fruit, which depending on the variety are typically red, pink or yellow, is only slightly sweet and has a flavour reminiscent of a pear.

Dragon fruit requires long, sunny days to flower and fruit. Farmers have been able to extend the season



couldn't plant fast enough," he said. Morera's group represents his own farm and eight other dragon fruit growers, at least 30 per cent of them in South Florida.

He says his costs — including labour, fertiliser, pallet crates and boxes — have increased by 38 per cent this year. But because of the glut of Ecuadorian fruit, he has had to throw away 600,000 pounds of meticulously packed fruit because he couldn't sell it. Ecuadorian dragon fruit was being sold for pennies per pound, but his break-even price was 72 cents.

Toward the middle of season, he began to sell some of his fruit at a loss. Now, distributors are taking his fruit at the prices he sold them for last year, but he won't be able to make up the season's earlier losses. Many farmers, like Morera, are hoping that they'll harvest more fruit in November. He'll be looking for small buttons on the dragon fruit tree that will flower and then grow the white-and-red-fleshed fruit about a month later.

"It's something really hard to recover from," Morera said of the season, if there's a flood of Ecuadorian fruit next year, he said, "everyone's pulling out."

Until this year, Morera kept expanding his dragon fruit farm. Now, to recover from these losses, he sold 5 acres to someone who is using the land to build a house. "This is an expensive passion," Morera said. "You can only be passionate so much." — **NYT**

shortages during the pandemic, Leifermann said. Ecuador also has a longer dragon fruit season than Florida's — an average of eight months through winter and spring.

Ecuadorian dragon fruit also has more appeal with many retailers because it is typically larger than Floridian varieties, Leifermann said.

After Victor Farinas invested nearly \$600,000 in the past year for his 10-acre Homestead farm, he called his distributors in June to tell them that his harvest was nearly ready. But they were so inundated with Ecuadorian fruit, he said, that they couldn't take his. Farinas decided to end the business he'd started in 2008.

He said he would lose even more money if he picked the fruit and sold it himself. So he opened the gates to his farm and let people pick and take home the fruit, without charge. He is now selling 1,500 dragon fruit trees, for \$80 apiece, by the side of a

HEALTH & WELLNESS

Is Matcha Good for You?



Q: IS MATCHA HEALTHY?

A: Walk into any coffee shop or health food store and you're almost guaranteed to find this bright jade-coloured powdered green tea. It's mixed into lattes, milkshakes, sodas, hot chocolates, smoothies — and even in desserts like ice creams and brownies. It's recommended by many as an antioxidant-packed superfood that can prevent cancer, improve memory, and reduce stress and anxiety. That's enough to persuade almost anyone to drink matcha. But does it actually live up to the hype?

WHAT IS MATCHA?

Matcha is a type of powdered green tea that has traditional roots in tea ceremonies in Japan, and has become popular in the United States and elsewhere. It comes from the same plant (*Camellia sinensis*) as other caffeinated teas, and is cultivated in an unusual way: The tea plant is shaded from excessive sunlight for much of its growing period so that it can produce more amino acids and biologically active compounds, like chlorophyll and theanine. Once the leaves are harvested, they're ground into a fine powder.

DOES MATCHA HAVE HEALTH BENEFITS?

Whereas other green tea leaves are usually steeped whole in hot water, "matcha is much more concentrated in terms of the ingredients because it's made from ground whole tea leaves," said Dr. Frank Hu, a professor of nutrition and epidemiology and chair of the department of nutrition at the Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health.

And while the research on its health benefits is not definitive, experts say that matcha does contain high amounts of potentially beneficial compounds.

— Antioxidants. "As we age or as we're exposed to things in the environment, like ultraviolet light or carcinogens, we end up with reactive oxygen species and they do harmful things like damage our cellular membranes," said Jamie Alan, an associate professor of pharmacology and toxicology at Michigan State University. Antioxidants, which are abundant in matcha, are substances that "neutralise" those harmful molecules, Alan said, preventing a "whole cascade of damaging downstream events." The tea therefore may theoretically help protect the body's cells from damage and reduce the risk of certain health problems such as heart disease or cancer, Hu and Alan said, though this has not been proven.

— L-theanine. This unique amino acid, which can be found in green tea as well as certain mushrooms, is another component of matcha that experts highlight as potentially benefiting health. However, the evidence on how it might do so is weak, Hu said. Some small, placebo-controlled trials have suggested that L-theanine may improve cognitive performance and reduce stress. But there have been only animal studies and a few small trials in humans, both experts noted.

— Caffeine. While most people might not think about caffeine's health effects when drinking their morning cup of coffee, the evidence for its health benefits is fairly strong, Hu said. Studies have found, for instance, that caffeine can increase cognitive function and alertness and ramp up metabolism. And regular consumption of coffee — the primary source of caffeine for adults in the United States — has been associated with a reduced risk of diabetes, heart disease, liver disease and age-related cognitive decline, Hu said.

SO IS MATCHA HEALTHY?

Few studies have focused specifically on how matcha might benefit health, so it's hard to say for sure. But scientists do have a fairly good understanding of green tea's benefits. "There is a lot of research on green tea, and the overall evidence indicates that it is a healthy beverage," Hu said. "We don't have similar evidence for matcha, but given that matcha has the same ingredients as green tea, just in much higher concentrations," he continued, it's probably safe to infer that it offers the same benefits.

Alan also stressed that while matcha is generally safe, certain people — including those who must limit their caffeine intake because of a health condition — should probably avoid it. "If you are prone to arrhythmias or if you have heart disease, then matcha could be harmful for you," she said. People who are sensitive to caffeine may also want to pass on matcha because it could cause anxiety and disrupt sleep.

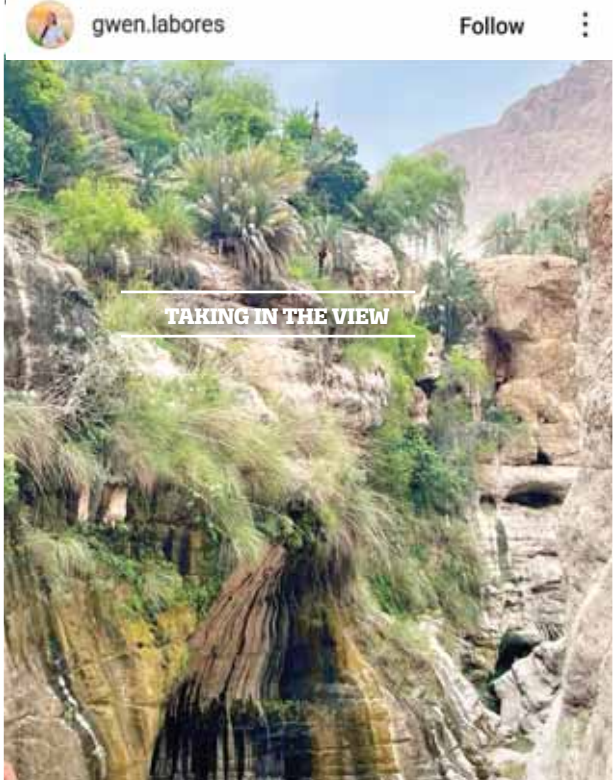
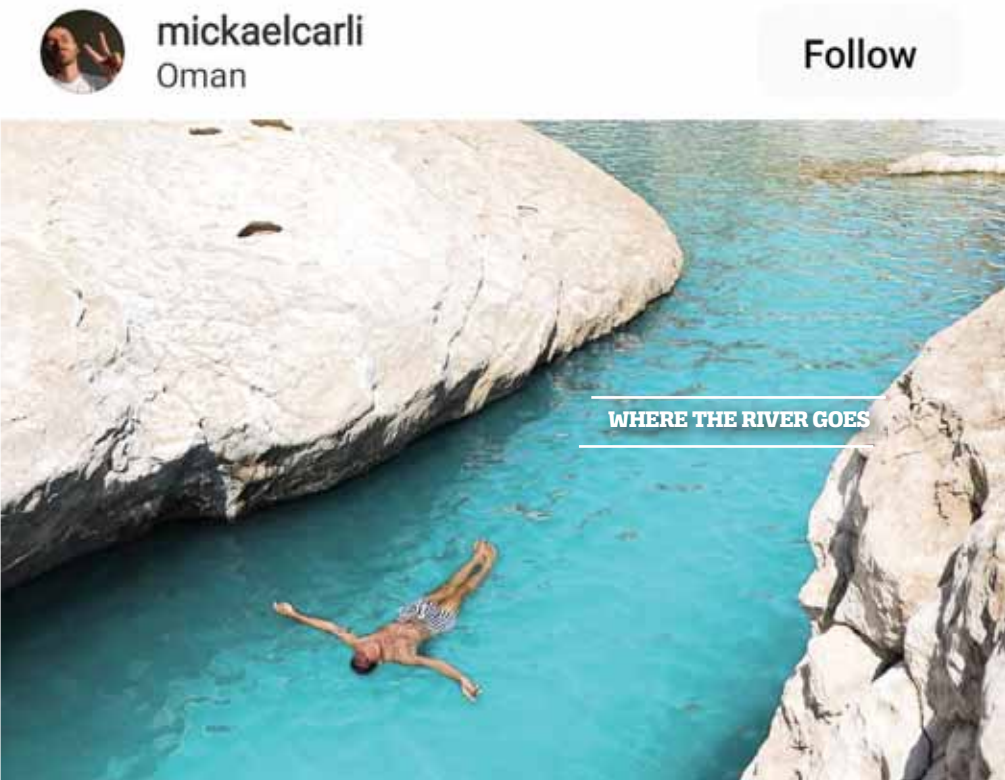
In general, Hu said, matcha can be a healthy addition to your diet, as long as you're mindful of how much sugar and other unhealthful ingredients you're consuming along with it. The amount of sugar and cream people add to their daily coffee or tea "has become so enormous that it really counteracts the health benefits," Hu said. And if you eat a lot of fast food or smoke cigarettes regularly, don't expect matcha to counteract those unhealthy choices.

"If you develop a habit of regular matcha consumption, in the long run you may get some health benefit," Hu said. "But if you just sprinkle some matcha powder on top of chocolate ice cream, then I don't think it will do much to help." — **NYT**



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AROUND THE WORLD

ANIMAL PLANET

This Acrobatic Hunting Trick Is Straight Out of the Spider-Verse



SPIDERS HAVE no shortage of strategies to capture their prey. Some hunt in packs, others set traps and some even mimic the pheromones of their prey's mate. But even so, less than 1% of spider species go after ants. The six-legged insects are fierce, and many are venomous adversaries with sharp, hedge-trimmer-like mandibles.

That's why Alfonso Aceves-Aparicio, a behavioural biologist, was surprised one night during a walk home from Macquarie University in Sydney, when he passed by a Eucalyptus tree.

"I saw a reddish blob hanging off of the tree trunk," he said. And as he got closer he realised it was an ant attached to the silk line of a much smaller spider. As Aceves-Aparicio circled the tree, he noticed more spiders that seemed to be waiting around.

He picked an ant off the ground and placed it on the tree, where it began to move towards one of the spiders. When it got near the ant, the spider began moving frantically and, faster than a blink of an eye, was gone. Aceves-Aparicio thought the spider must have fallen off the tree, but then he noticed the ant hanging from the tree trunk, attached to a silk thread.

Soon after this, Aceves-Aparicio shifted the focus of his research to Euryopis umbilicata spiders and their daring hunting behaviour. He and colleagues detailed what they discovered about the Cirque du Soleil-worthy performance these spiders use to kill ants — acrobatics so impressive that the researchers nicknamed them "ant-slayers." The work was published last week in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

To get an idea of how often these spiders preyed on ants, Aceves-Aparicio and colleagues collected silk-covered carcasses from a large group of Eucalyptus trees and found that, of 182 carcasses collected, 181 were ants, and more than 90% of those ants were Camponotus consobrinus, also known as banded sugar ants.

The researchers then placed banded sugar ants close to the spiders on Eucalyptus trees in that same area and recorded what they saw with high-speed video cameras. The researchers found that, when an ant was in close range or, more often, made contact with a spider, the spider would flip its body over the ant, attaching silk to it in the process.

"It's almost like an action movie stunt-man," said Marie Herberstein, a behavioural ecologist at Macquarie University and a co-author of the study. "Or like Spider-Man, pulling out the piece of silk and sticking it in the right spot before they continue to tumble." — **NYT**

RECIPE



Kale Sauce Pasta

STRIP KALE LEAVES from their stems, then soak them in a bath of boiling water. Throw them into a blender with some olive oil and grated cheese until they're thoroughly puréed, and toss them with whatever pasta you have. (A mix of odds and ends? Sure!) That's all it takes for a dinner that's equal parts rich and light in this recipe, adapted by Tejal Rao from Joshua McFadden, the chef at Ava Gene's in Portland, Oregon, who was inspired by Rose Gray and Ruth Rogers of The River Cafe in London.

Recipe from Joshua McFadden
Adapted by Tejal Rao

Yield: 2 servings as a main course or 4 as a side
Total time: 20 minutes

INGREDIENTS:
Kosher salt (such as Diamond Crystal)
1/4 cup extra-virgin olive oil, plus more for serving
2 garlic cloves, smashed flat and peeled
1 pound lacinato kale, thick ribs removed
Freshly ground black pepper
1/2 pound pasta, like pappardelle or rigatoni
3/4 cup coarsely grated Parmigiano-Reggiano

PREPARATION:
1. Put a large pot of generously salted water over high heat, and bring to a boil. In a small skillet over medium heat, add olive oil and garlic, and cook until the garlic begins to sizzle. Reduce heat

to low, and cook very gently until garlic is soft and begins to turn light gold, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat.
2. When water is boiling,

again.
3. Add the pasta to the still-boiling water, and cook according to directions on the package. Ladle out about



add kale leaves, and cook until tender, but not mushy, about 5 minutes. Pull out the hot, dripping kale leaves with tongs, and put directly into a blender. (Don't drain the pot; you'll use that same boiling water to cook the pasta.) Add garlic and its oil to the blender, along with a splash of hot water from the pot if you need some more liquid to get the blender going. Blend into a fine, thick green purée. Taste, and adjust seasoning with salt and pepper, then blend

a cup of the water to save for finishing the dish, then drain the pasta and return it to the dry pot. Add the kale purée, about 3/4 of the grated cheese and a splash of the reserved pasta water. Toss until all the pasta is well coated and bright green, adding another splash of pasta water if needed so that the sauce is loose and almost creamy in texture. Serve in bowls right away, and top with an extra drizzle of olive oil and the rest of the grated cheese. — **NYT**

DISCOVERY

Fossils Solve Mystery of an Ancient 'Alien Goldfish'



THE EARLY fossil record is littered with bizarre creatures that do not resemble anything living today. And few of those evolutionary enigmas are as perplexing as Typhloesus, an ancient sea animal so strange that paleontologists have referred to it as an alien goldfish.

The bloblike animal has defied taxonomic placement for nearly 50 years. Scientists weren't sure whether the animal, which had a substantial tail fin and a gut often packed with the remains of early fish species, was more closely related to a worm, a jawless fish or something else entirely.

However, the discovery of a tooth-covered tongue in several Typhloesus fossils may bring these seemingly extraterrestrial animals down to earth. "It helps us find the branch of the tree of life that Typhloesus belongs to," said Jean-Bernard Caron, a paleontologist at the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.

Caron and Simon Conway Morris, a paleontologist at the University of Cambridge, made the discovery while examining several Typhloesus specimens that had recently been added to the Royal Ontario Museum collection. Those fossils, which are only a couple of centimetres long, were dug up from the Bear Gulch Limestone in Montana, a 330-million-year-old fossil deposit.

When those fossilised creatures were living, this area was blanketed by a balmy bay. Local monsoons washed nutrients into the bay,

sparking algal blooms that sapped oxygen from the water and kept scavengers at bay. Those conditions allowed myriad soft-bodied invertebrates to be preserved in incredible detail.

Because many of these ancient sea creatures are delicately imprinted onto the limestone, most of their identities are easy to deduce. However, Typhloesus has perplexed scientists since it was described in 1973. The vaguely fishlike critter was once believed to be a conodont, a jawless, eel-like vertebrate. But a closer inspection revealed that the conodont remains were inside an animal's digestive tract. That led scientists to conclude that Typhloesus had snacked on conodonts.

When Caron stuck several of the newly gained specimens under a high-powered scanning microscope, he spotted a ribbonlike structure studded with recurved teeth on both sides. Because the toothy apparatus is lodged within the animal's gut, past analyses had mistaken these rows of tiny teeth for muscle tissue.

In a study published earlier in the month in the journal *Biology Letters*, the researchers describe the new structure as a radula, a tongue-like structure covered in teeth that snails and other mollusks use to scrape food into their mouths.

The existence of Typhloesus' toothy radula led the scientists to deduce that the alien goldfish was in fact a mollusk. — **NYT**

art & life

Local Scene

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MONDAY | OCTOBER 10 | 2022

Oman is the best kept secret for thrill seekers of adventure tourism

By Samuel Kutty

From mountaineering to dune bashing in the desert or exploring cave chambers to snorkeling in the colourful coral reefs or camping under the stars or from scrambling through sheer-sided canyons to the more relaxed pursuit of hot air ballooning, Oman is the Middle East's best kept secret for thrill seekers of adventure tourism.

As endorsed by Lonely Planet, "every encounter in Oman evokes a strong sense of the land", Oman's vibrant cultural heritage is deeply intertwined with the gifts of its terrain, and it permeates every travel experience.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism is working to develop and organise adventure product as one of the fastest growing types of tourism to attract more people to Oman so that they can discover adventure in its efforts to encouraging eco-tourism and sustainable practices.

According to Dawood bin Sulaiman al Rashidi, Director of the Department of Tourism Product Development at the ministry, Oman is blessed by the nature with diverse land-

scapes for those who seek adventure tourism.

"The ministry, along with its partners, has already chalked out an action plan for development of adventure tourism with focus on several key elements including the organisation and legislative framework", he said.

Coinciding with the spring season, the Dhofar Governorate will host the first Spartan race in the Wilayat of Salalah, adjacent to Al Dahariz Beach, on October 14. The second will be held in the Governorate of Muscat as part of the Oman World Cup Programme on December 16 and 17.

In this regard, the Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group) has partnered with Spartan Arabia to host Spartan Races as part of the Group's continued efforts to bring some of the world's most renowned sporting events to the country.

"These races represent the tireless efforts of several parties in developing Oman's sports tourism sector, which in return contributes to the promotion of various tourist destinations across the country and attracts visitors from both inside and outside Oman. This also further strength-

ens the tourism sector's role in achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040," said OMRAN Group CEO Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi.

The ministry accords utmost care and attention for adventure tourism due to the increasing growth in exercising these activities in the Sultanate of Oman, he said at a tourism meeting last week.

"All the programmes are in accordance with the ministry's plan and prospects related to management of risks and safety in exercising various activities of adventure tourism as to ensure safety of all participants and personnel engaged with the adventure tourism", he said.

Statistics issued by the World Tourism Organization indicate that the global adventure tourism market amounted to \$282.1 billion in 2021 and is expected to rise at a compound annual growth rate of 15.2 per cent from 2022 to 2030.

According to Al Rashidi, a cooperation agreement has been signed with the Adventure Training Center of the Royal Army with regard to training in adventure activities especially security and safety.

Ministerial decision 124/2020 specifies the



necessity of obtaining the licensee (travel and tourism operators) organising wild adventure activities need to get a licence from the ministry with regard to security and safety requirements after paying the prescribed fees.

The ministry has already funded a number of projects in cooperation with the OMRAN Group towards developing mountain tracks and mountain bikes in the Musandam Governorate and providing them with information and guidance panels, in addition to mini-oases projects in Wadi Bani Auf in the Wilayat of Rustaq

provide services to visitors of the best valleys in the Sultanate of Oman to practice crossing activity and mountain climbing.

Work is also under way to identify and evaluate natural sites in which adventure activities of all kinds can be practiced, such as mountain hiking, caves, valleys and others related to it, to know the necessary needs for maintenance and service aspects in order to ensure the protection and safety of adventurers and enjoy the passion for adventure in a safe way, with identification of response points.

The ministry has also made arrangements for easy access to those sites, expressing technical opinion on the sites of adventure activities in terms of capacity, and identifying and selecting emergency exits on all approved mountain paths to facilitate the arrival of teams.

Mountain rescue, ambulance, police aviation for emergencies, assessment of potential risks, providing feedback regarding safety and security aspects of mountain trails and adventures or other activities associated with adventure tourism.