

P9

RICHARDSON TRUMPS JAMAICANS FOR 100M GOLD



P11

RAS AL HADD – A SAFE BET FOR TURTLES



P13

OMAN HOTELS POST 27.8% REVENUE INCREASE UNTIL JULY



■ RIYADH

OMAN, SAUDI TO ENHANCE RELATIONS

The Political and Diplomatic Coordination Committee of the Omani-Saudi Coordination Council on Tuesday held its first meeting in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The meeting was co-chaired by Shaikh Khalifa Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, and Dr Saud Mohammed al Sati, Deputy Minister for Political Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The meeting discussed ways of enhancing bilateral relations in line with the directives of the two countries' leaderships and their aspirations to achieve the interests of their peoples. The two sides also exchanged views on regional and international issues of common concern.

SEE ALSO P3



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# National early warning system for financial crises soon

MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation with the Korean Ministry of Economy and Finance and Korea Development Institute, the Ministry of Finance on Tuesday held a coordination meeting on establishing a national early warning system for financial and economic crises.

The meeting was co-chaired

by Nasser bin Khamis al Jashmi, Secretary-General of the Ministry of Finance, and Wong Seop-Zin, Senior Adviser and former governor of the Financial Supervisory Authority, Korea.

The meeting looked into the outcome of the final study and recommendations on establishing Oman's national

early warning system.

The meeting included a simulation of the model of the forecasting system. The simulation demonstrated the structure and components of the system, financial and economic inputs, as well as designs of the early warning system - prior to issuing a user guide.

The joint meeting was in pursuance of a bilateral programme that was launched in December 2022 within the purview of the Korean Knowledge Exchange Programme. The programme is aimed at conveying Korean knowledge and expertise to partner countries, notably in the

field of macroeconomic policies and financial systems.

On the Omani side, the meeting saw the participation of the Ministry of Economy, the Capital Market Authority, the Central Bank of Oman, the National Centre for Statistics and Information and the National Risk Registry System. — ONA

■ RUSSIAN PRESIDENT CONFERS PUSHKIN MEDAL



President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation has conferred the "Pushkin Medal" on Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, for his efforts in strengthening bilateral relations in the cultural and museum fields between the Sultanate of Oman and Russia. Ilya Morgunov, Ambassador of Russia to Oman, handed over the high ranking medal at a ceremony held on Tuesday at the National Museum in Muscat.

DETAILS ON P2

# 80% of deaths in Oman due to NCDs, says report

KABEER YOUSUF  
@kabeeryousuf

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) are a major threat to the Sultanate of Oman's public health, as about 80 per cent of deaths in the country are attributed to NCDs, according to a recent systematic review on NCDs and health equity in the EMR by the Ministry of Health (MoH).

In light of this, HH Sayyidah Dr Mona bint Fahd al Said, Assistant Vice-Chancellor for International Cooperation at Sultan Qaboos University, Chair of the National Committee for Disease Prevention Non-Communicable Diseases and Control, and Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, held a meeting on Tuesday.

NCDs are a major public health issue, and sedentary lifestyle, consumption of junk food and oily foods, and other factors are contributing to the NCDs including heart disease, cancer, chronic respiratory disease and

“Adult-onset NCDs are increasingly being seen because of poor nutrition in infancy and early childhood, and an outcome of the ongoing nutritional transition with its characteristic shifts in diet, lifestyle and body composition”

DR SALIMA

Director of the Nutrition Department at the MoH

diabetes. Additionally, faulty dietary practices characterised by high intake of salt, fat and sugar among both the adults and adolescent population in Oman have been touted to be the reasons behind these 'silent killers'.

“Adult-onset NCDs are

increasingly being seen because of poor nutrition in infancy and early childhood, and an outcome of the ongoing nutritional transition with its characteristic shifts in diet, lifestyle and body composition,” said Dr Salima, Director of the Nutrition Department at the MoH.

During the meeting, they discussed joint cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the World Health Organization to reduce and prevent these diseases.

She further said there is a need for the development of culture-specific interventions aimed at improving early child-feeding practices, decreasing the intake of atherogenic nutrients and favouring the consumption of cardio-protective foods in Oman.

“In the planning for any intervention to alter the population's food consumption patterns, the first step should be an assessment of the consumer's knowledge and attitudes as potential determinants of dietary practices,” Dr Salima added.

## Former Thai PM Thaksin jailed on return from exile

BANGKOK: Thailand's fugitive former premier Thaksin Shinawatra made a historic homecoming on Tuesday and was escorted to jail after years in exile, on a day when an ally and fellow tycoon was elected prime minister after winning a parliamentary vote.

The 74-year-old Thaksin, the billionaire founder of the electoral juggernaut Pheu Thai, finally made good on promises to go back to Thailand after a run of 15 years in self-exile, stealing the limelight from real estate mogul Srettha Thavisin as he

prevailed for their party in parliament. Thaksin was given a rapturous welcome after arriving in Bangkok before being escorted by police to the Supreme Court, then to a prison to serve eight years for abuse of power and conflicts of interest. SEE ALSO P6

# Met warns of high temperatures in coming days

VINOD NAIR  
@vinot\_nair

Oman Meteorology has predicted a gradual rise in the maximum temperatures during the next three days, which may reach mid-forties (in degrees Celsius) and above in the desert areas.

The warning was seen as little surprise as temperatures were expected to subside in the coming days, with some people hoping that it will be the beginning of the end of the peak summer in the country.

Even the neighbouring UAE is expected to have temperatures as high as 47°C in some places, including around 43°C in Abu Dhabi and 42°C in Dubai. In the



coastal areas of the Sea of Oman and the Hajar Mountains, during the next two days, it will be above 40 degrees Celsius to mid-forties.

According to a report by the

Nature Sustainability Journal, countries across the Gulf region and the Middle East are highly vulnerable to extreme heat borne out of climate change.

The report looks at how countries are exposed to “unprecedented heat” that it describes as mean annual temperatures of 29 degrees Celsius or higher.

Authorities have urged people to take necessary measures to avoid sunstroke and heat exhaustion, especially workers who are exposed to sunlight and high temperatures.

“Companies should take proper care and tell workers to avoid exposure to sun, and ensure that they get enough rest periods and drink water,” they said.

Oman is well-known for its sweltering summers and low annual rainfall, and it has become even hotter over the past five years.

INSIDE



HANDLE WITH CARE

SPOTLIGHT

P4



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# Putin confers Pushkin Medal on Al Moosawi

MUSCAT: President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation confers the “Pushkin Medal” on Jamal bin Hassan al Moosawi, Secretary-General of the National Museum, for his efforts in strengthening bilateral relations in the cultural and museum fields between the Sultanate of Oman and Russia.

Ilya Morgunov, Ambassador of Russia to Oman, handed over the medal at a ceremony in the National Museum on Tuesday. The medal is named after the poet Alexander Sergey Pushkin. It is awarded to foreign personalities for their role in bringing cultural rapprochement between their countries and the Russian Federation.

Al Moosawi said, “This honour is an inspirational source for more upcoming achievements and continuous cooperation between the Sultanate of Oman and the Russian Federation. It also reflects the work in the cultural and museum fields over the past 12 years.” He added: “Russia’s interest in Arab culture and the ability to accommodate



other cultures embodies the Russian spirit of cultural and religious pluralism, based on a civilisational experience that extends its roots to ancient times. Also, its identity is based on the glorification of the well-established system of noble

values, and the soul inclined towards amity and fraternity. The roots of cooperation between the National Museum and its counterparts in the Russian Federation go back to the year 2015, when a memorandum of understanding was signed in

the cultural and museum fields between the National Museum and the State Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg on 28 May 2015, and the appointment of Prof. Dr. Mikhail Piotrovsky, Director-General of the State Hermitage Museum, as a member of

the Board of Trustees of the National Museum (2014 - to date), in addition to providing specialised professional training and qualification for the National Museum staff at the State Hermitage Museum (May 24 - June 6, 2015). This was followed by hosting the exhibition “Oman Day” at the Winter Palace on July 23, 2018, followed by hosting the “Hermitage Day” exhibition at the National Museum during the period from March 11 to May 11, 2019.

The National Museum also inaugurated the first gallery bearing the name “Oman Gallery” in the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg on June 2, 2021, and on November 22, 2021, the National Museum inaugurated a display of the original manuscript of “A Collection of Poetic Arages in Maritime Navigation” by the Omani navigator Ahmed bin Majid al Saadi, on loan from the Institute of Oriental Manuscripts. On November 24, 2021, the Museum launched the “Reflections” display by the Russian designer Kirill

Ovchinnikov, who is known for the integration of fine art with design, and on November 25, 2021, the National Museum launched the exhibition “Islamic Civilisation in Russia and the “ Hermitage Corner” at the headquarters of the National Museum.

The State Hermitage Museum and the National Museum, preserved the Palmyra ruins which were damaged during the years of the crisis in Syria, some of which were displayed in an exhibition titled “Syria the Cradle of Civilisations” at the National Museum in 2022.

On 16 June 16, 2022, the National Museum inaugurated a specialised corner for Omani publications at the Institute of Oriental Studies at St. Petersburg State University.

Moreover, on November 2023, the second exhibition at “Oman Gallery” will be inaugurated at the Winter Palace in St. Petersburg, in addition to the inauguration of the second exhibition at the “Hermitage Corner” at the National Museum. — ONA

## Environmental permit fees cut

VINOD NAIR  
@vinot\_nair

The Environment Authority (EA) issued new environment permit regulations that reduces fees and fines. Fees have been reduced to a maximum of RO 900 for a period of 3 years with the flexibility to change, update and add new activities and projects.

The regulation aims to facilitate obtaining environmental permits for projects by simplifying and improving procedures, reducing costs and complexities, while enhancing the efficiency of the issuance process for investors and companies. It ensures flexibility in environmental permit requirements that allows companies and establishments to implement innovative technology in order to achieve the highest levels of environmental performance. The new regulations were notified in decision 107/2023, which was published in Official Gazette on Sunday.

The application for

**Fees have been reduced to a maximum of RO 900 for a period of 3 years with the flexibility to change, update and add new activities and projects**

environmental permit must include including details of project site, and the study of environmental impact assessment. The permit is given for 3 years, which can be renewed. The earlier regulation did not mandate authorities to issue a warning before issuing a violation, while the new decision calls for a sufficient notice period. Article 19 decision states that EA may conduct a sudden inspection of the project sites with prior coordination to verify the extent of compliance with the general environmental and standards stipulated in the permit.

The Authority’s inspectors may also take samples randomly to be

examined at the expense of the project owner, and he must correct the situation if needed. Article 20 states that the owner of the project or those in charge of it must take immediate action in case of accident.

The project owner should notify the Authority and the relevant authorities as soon as it occurs and provide the Authority within 14 days from the date of the accident with a detailed report specifying the causes of the accident and the person responsible. It must also specify the extent of the damages and the time plan to deal with it. The project owner must bear the costs return the site it to normal. Article 21 states that the project owner must follow the best environmental practices and technology available globally in the project by treatment, recycling, recovery, or reduction of concentration and quantity of pollutants and emissions. S/ he must avoid unpleasant odours or sources of nuisance to the maximum extent possible.

### ■ RAS AL KHAIMAH RECEIVES MUSANDAM GOVERNOR



Ras Al Khaimah: Sheikh Saud bin Saqr Al Qasimi, Member of the Supreme Council of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Ruler of the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah, received on Tuesday Sayyid Ibrahim Said Al Busaidi, Governor of Musandam, as part of his official visit to the Emirate of Ras Al Khaimah. They discussed relations and ways of developing and strengthening them towards broader horizons of development and prosperity in various fields. The meeting was attended by a number of senior officials from both sides. — ONA

## Over 180 doctors join specialty medical board programmes



MUSCAT: A total of 183 doctors joined various residency and fellowship programmes at Oman Medical Specialty Board (OMSB) starting from the 2023/2024 academic year.

Specialties and subspecialties include adult cardiology, paediatric cardiology, paediatric intensive care in the Royal Hospital; and medical genetics, adult clinical haematology in Sultan Qaboos University Hospital.

OMSB organised its annual orientation day at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Tuesday. The orientation programme started with a welcome speech by Dr Houd al Abri, vice-president for academic affairs, in-charge of OMSB. An introduction was also given on the post graduate training programmes and their activities, encouraging the new trainees to excel in their training journey. The programme was

concluded with a panel discussion addressing trainees’ queries.

The new trainees have started their orientation programme before the orientation event (since 1 August) through Tebyan national e-learning platform, which contains all educational materials, policies, rules and regulations, and required courses. The orientation activities will continue, as the new doctors enrolled in the Board’s training programmes will meet

with the programme directors and members of the education committees. These meetings will be held in the board’s headquarters and in some of the training centres at the Royal Hospital, Sultan Qaboos University Hospital and Khoula Hospital.

They will also get training in infection prevention and communication skills, evidence-based medicine, and medical professionalism. — ONA



# Bags of 1-4 grade students to weigh less

STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, AUG 22

To reduce the weight of the school bag, the Ministry of Education plans to reduce the number of books that pupils (1-4 grades) can carry for daily studies.

This will be a big relief for small children who often carry on an average 8-12 kg bags putting pressure on their spinal cord and risking overall body growth. The plan is to restrict homework on weekends and limit the number of notebooks to two by clubbing together subjects; one for Arabic, Islamic studies and social studies, and second for science and maths. This will reduce the weight of school bags below 10 per cent of the body weight of the child, which the international standard accepts globally.

The ministry's move follows a long standing demand by parents, students and teachers to cut the size of school bags. In a study conducted across educational governorates by MoE, it was found



that a bag of a primary student with all text books, water bottle and lunch box weighed 4-5kg which is more than 15 per cent of the body weight of students. The students in 1-4 grade have an average weight of 24-30 kg.

In an online statement, MoE listed several measures to ensure the well-being of students. It asked parents/ guardians to avoid buying wheeled trolley school

bags as it will prompt some students to pack more books. The ministry has mooted setting up lockers in schools to keep supplies and books

Parents and teachers have welcomed the MOE plan. Ammar bin Youssef Al Hadi said: The decision to reduce the weight takes into account the health of the children. Every year, my young children suffer from shoulder

and back pain after carrying the school bag with a large number of textbooks and notebooks. It is good to set up lockers in school premises that allow students to keep books that are used daily.

Shaima bint Zayed Al Mawliya said wheeled bags reduce the burden on her children who often feel exhausted after school hours from carrying heavy bags and it is better to reduce the number of books. She suggested e-books to reduce the size of school bag.

Tahira Bint Ali welcomed MoE regulations to reduce the school bag. "My children in the first cycle suffer a lot from carrying a bag full of textbooks and notebooks, which causes them insomnia and fatigue. I wish they had digital books as it will eliminate the need to carry physical books and lighten the weight of the bag.

Sarah bint Saif al Lamkiya, an English language teacher, said these measures will reduce the risk of chronic injuries and reduce the workload of both students and teachers.



## Al Dakhiliyah ready to receive students for the new academic year

AMAL AL RIYAMI  
NIZWA, AUG 22

The Directorate-General of Education in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah has completed its preparations to receive 111,198 students (57,562 males and 53,636 females) in 169 schools for the new academic year 2023/2024.

It implemented several modern development plans and programmes to achieve the goals of the educational system.

During the new academic year, the governorate will have two new school buildings: Shaikh Shames bin Hassan Al Amri School for Basic Education for Boys (10-12) in Izki, and Al Shatha'a Bint Jaber School for Basic Education (9-12) in Nizwa. In addition, 15 schools will operate on the evening shift, of which seven schools are new.

The total administrative and teaching cadres in the governorate's schools reached 9,778 employees of which 6,769 are female and 3,009 are males. The Department of Administrative Affairs completed the transfer of 253 teachers of which 235 are females and 18 are males. It also completed posting of 1,310 newly appointed teachers.

The training centre, in cooperation with the Educational Supervision Department of the Directorate, will conduct an induction meeting for new teachers. It will also implement a rehabilitation programme for two days.

The Educational Supervision Department has likewise drawn up a plan for science and mathematics series training. The directorate will also continue to receive the 10th batch of teachers at the Specialised Institute.

Innovation and programming

The Directorate pays extensive attention on talented students in innovation and programming. It provides technical support and implements a special programme to develop their skills and innovations. It continues to organise meetings with all schools and notify them of competitions in innovation and science Olympiad.

It also monitors the progress and readiness of schools implementing the STEM project (5 schools), the GLOBE project (4 schools), and the Future Engineers project (10 schools). It ensures their implementation of programme protocols and readiness to participate in competitions related to each programme.

The Department of Special Education and Continuing Education in the Directorate is also working to monitor the functioning of the educational system in the schools of special education and continuing education.

Applications for registration in literacy classes have been approved in each wilayat following the requirements set by the Ministry of Education. This is part of the continuous learning system. It has also been confirmed that the classrooms are ready to receive integration students from special education schools, and to prepare cadres to work with them.

The Directorate, represented by the Science and Technology Centre, is keen to keep pace with generative artificial intelligence applications, robotics, renewable energy, nanotechnology, interactive learning and cybersecurity.



## Oman-Saudi Arabia diplomatic committee meets in Riyadh

RIYADH: The Political and Diplomatic Coordination Committee of the Omani-Saudi Coordination Council held its first meeting in Riyadh on Tuesday.

The meeting was co-chaired by Shaikh Khalifa bin Ali al Harthy, Under-Secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, and Dr Saud bin Mohammed al Sati, Deputy Minister for Political Affairs of Saudi Arabia.

The meeting discussed ways of enhancing bilateral relations in line with the directives of the two countries' leaderships

and their aspirations to achieve the interests of their peoples. They also exchanged views on regional and international issues of common concern. This meeting was held in the context of preparation for the first meeting of the Omani-Saudi Coordination Council, headed by foreign ministers of the two countries.

The meeting was attended HH Sayyid Faisal bin Turki al Said, Ambassador of Oman to Saudi Arabia, and officials of the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

— ONA

## Oman Song Festival returns after 7 years

MUSCAT: The 12th edition of the Omani Song Festival will kick off in December.

The event is organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. Making a comeback after a 7-year suspension, the festival seeks to attract talented singers, nurture their skills and motivate them to portray their artistic potential as they communicate with the masses, wherever they might be.

Through its nonconventional

re-emergence, the festival also aims to consolidate partnership between various government departments and private sector establishments in their mission to enrich cultural and artistic domains.

It is worth noting that the first edition of the Omani Song Festival was launched in December 1994. In that edition, Ahmed al Harthy won the Golden Bulbul (nightingale) Award. — ONA



# 30 young sailors compete at Oman Sailing Championship

MUSCAT: Thirty young sailors from Oman Sail's Sailing Schools will take to the waters of Ras Al Hadd over three days from August 22-24 to help select the next national sailing squads. Sailors between the ages of 10 and 18 in Optimist, ILCA 4 and ILCA 6 classes will compete in nine races for the honour of being crowned Oman national champion and joining the national team for upcoming regattas.

Sailors have been selected from Oman Sail's Sailing Schools at Al Mouj Muscat, Barceló Mussanah Resort and Sur. The fleet will also include five sailors from the Al Hamriyah Sailing Team in the

United Arab Emirates as part of their own preparation plans for the coming season. Each team will be accompanied by a coach to support the sailors throughout the event.

Abdulaziz al Shidi, Oman Sail's Sailing Development Manager, said, "The Oman Sailing Championship is both the culmination of our season's training and a chance to see the progress of our sailors in action. Progressing to the national squad is a key step in our 'performance pathway' and offers the best performing sailors the opportunity to represent Oman in regional and international

competition."

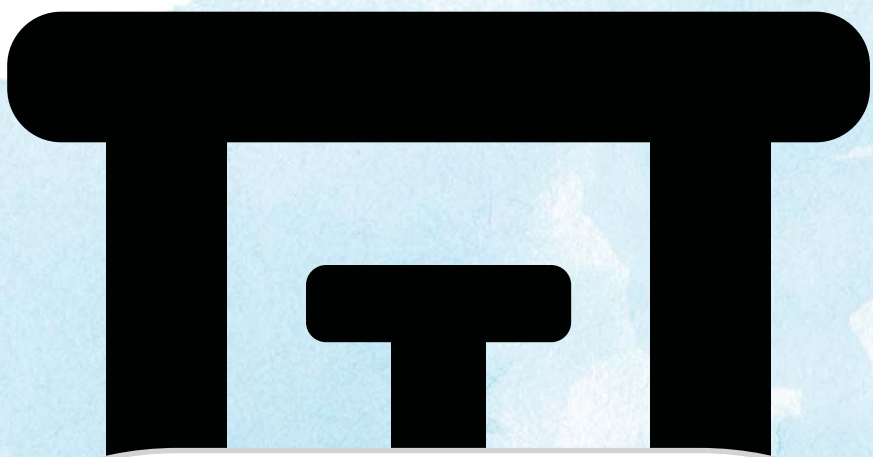
"We are looking forward to bringing together sailors in all four classes from each of our Sailing Schools to see the most promising of the next generation of Omani sailors," he added.

The next major event for the young sailors will be held at Barceló Mussanah Resort where 50 sailors from across the region will compete in the Optimist, ILCA 4 and ILCA 7 classes from October 18-24. Then, the national Optimist team will travel to Abu Dhabi for the 2023 IODA Optimist Asian & Oceanian Championship from October 29 to November 5.





# HANDLE WITH CARE



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH  
@lakshmioman

**T**O avoid cooking gas cylinder accidents, there is an urgent need to review common practices to keep safe and avoid accidents. Some of the practices could be the cause for concern, according to Samir al Zadjali, Health, Safety and Environment Advisor at Petroleum Development Oman and Secretary at the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (UK) IOSH Oman Branch. “There might be several reasons behind such events; most importantly, lack of awareness regarding safe handling of LPG cylinders; improper fitting of regulators; poor condition of hoses; inappropriate connection and fitting; storage of gas cylinders close to combustible materials as well as keeping regulator knob open position when not in use,” he said.



### NEED FOR AWARENESS

According to him, there is a drastic need for awareness. “The concerned authorities shall increase the safety awareness related to LPG cylinders by organising seminars at different venues including universities, colleges, TV programmes etc, emphasising the safe handling of gas cylinders. “Some misconceptions might need clarification; for instance, keeping the cylinders outdoors is a good procedure, but how is it stored? Should we pay attention to how the cylinders are moved? Al Zadjali noted that people sometimes keep cylinders in laying positions or leave them in hot water tubs in an attempt to get the residual LPG left at the bottom of the bottle. It might cause serious explosions.



### NEVER EXPOSE IT TO SUNLIGHT

Many households prefer to keep the gas cylinders outside in the open. Is there any danger when the temperature is high? Al Zadjali replied, “Keeping domestic gas cylinders outside and separated from the kitchen is a good practice. However, under no circumstances should they be kept in an open atmosphere or exposed to direct sunlight. Due to high temperature, this will increase the pressure inside the cylinder bottle and subsequently cause a blast.” So where and why do people go wrong? According to Al Zadjali these are some of the errors leading to mishaps. “After installing or replacing a gas cylinder people fail to ensure that the connections and fittings are adequately secure and there’s no sign of leakage. Using pipes or hoses with signs of wear/damage is another error. Igniting the burner without prior check could also to accidents. Sometimes, people also opt to drop or slam the cylinders on hard surfaces, especially when transporting and handling them, which could lead to an explosion.”



### SAFETY MEASURES

According to Al Zadjali, people must ensure that the cylinders are protected against sunlight exposure and extreme weather conditions. Regularly inspect the fittings, connections, and regulators for possible leaks and repair them if deemed necessary. Always ensure that knobs are kept OFF when not in use. Maintain proper handling of electrical appliances installed near LPG cylinders. Ensure kitchens have proper ventilation. Ensure the kitchen is equipped with safety equipment like fire extinguishers, fire blankets, and heat detectors. Ensure that people at home are trained on how to use the fire extinguisher and what type to select for different fires. Never put gas cylinders in the laying position; make sure the valve is always at the uppermost/stand position.



Keeping domestic gas cylinders outside and separated from the kitchen is a good practice. However, under no circumstances should they be kept in an open atmosphere or exposed to direct sunlight. Due to high temperature, this will increase the pressure inside the cylinder bottle and subsequently cause a blast.

Samir al Zadjali, HSE expert



# Japan to release Fukushima water into ocean from Aug 24



An aerial view shows the storage tanks for treated water at the tsunami-crippled Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant in Okuma town, Fukushima prefecture, Japan. — Reuters

**TOKYO:** Japan said on Tuesday it will start releasing into the sea more than 1 million metric tonnes of treated radioactive water from the wrecked Fukushima nuclear power plant on August 24.

The plan, approved two years ago by the Japanese government as crucial to decommissioning the plant operated by Tokyo Electric Power Company (Tepco), has also faced criticism from local fishing groups fearing reputational damage.

“I expect the water release to start on August 24, weather conditions permitting,” Prime Minister Fumio Kishida said.

The announcement comes a day after the government said it had won “a degree of understanding” from the fishing industry over the release of the water into the Pacific Ocean, even as fishing groups said they still feared the reputational damage would ruin their livelihood.

The water will initially be released in smaller portions and with extra checks, with the first discharge totalling 7,800 cubic metres over about 17 days starting on Thursday, Tepco said.

That water will contain about 190 becquerels of tritium per litre, below the World Health Organisation drinking water limit of 10,000 becquerels per litre, according to Tepco.

Japan has said that the water release is safe. The International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the UN nuclear watchdog, greenlighted the plan in July, saying that it met international standards and that the impact it would have on people and the environment was “negligible”.

About 56 per cent of respondents to a survey conducted by Japanese broadcaster FNN over the weekend said they supported the release, while 37 per cent opposed.

“The IAEA and many other countries have said it’s safe, so I believe it is. But fishermen are facing so many problems so the Japanese government needs to do something to convince them,” said 77-year-old NGO worker Hiroko Hashimoto.

Despite assurances, some neighbouring countries have also expressed scepticism over the safety of the plan, with Beijing the biggest critic.

Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Wang Wenbin called the move “extremely selfish”. He said China was deeply concerned about the decision and had lodged a formal complaint. — **Reuters**

# African Union suspends Niger over coup, weighs risks of intervention

**ADDIS ABABA:** The African Union said on Tuesday it had suspended coup-hit Niger until civilian rule is restored and announced it would assess the implications of any armed intervention in the Sahel nation.

In a crisis now nearly four weeks old, the West African regional bloc ECOWAS has threatened to use force to reinstate Niger’s elected president, Mohamed Bazoum.

The Peace and Security Council “requests the AU Commission to undertake an assessment of the economic, social and security implications of deploying a standby force in Niger and report back to Council,” the bloc said, following strong differences on the matter.

Army officers toppled Bazoum on July 26, prompting the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) to approve activation of a “standby force to restore constitutional order” in Niamey.

The bloc has said it is ready to intervene as a last resort but is continuing to press for a diplomatic solution.

The AU last week held a meeting on the crisis against a backdrop of divergent views within the bloc over any military intervention.

The coup has heightened international worries over the Sahel, which faces growing groups insurgencies linked to Al Qaeda and the IS.

The new military ruler General Abdourahamane Tiani has proposed a three-year transition back to democracy, a call rejected by ECOWAS, which sent a delegation to visit Niger on the weekend in a final diplomatic push.



A supporter of Niger’s National Council of Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP) holds a placard of Niger’s new military ruler, General Abdourahamane Tiani, as they gather at Place de la Concertation in Niamey. — AFP file photo

Abdel-Fatau Musah, ECOWAS commissioner for politics and security, described the proposal as “a joke” and said the bloc would “never accept it”.

“We want constitutional order to be restored as soon as possible,” he said on Monday.

Tiani accused ECOWAS of preparing to attack Niger by setting up an occupying force in collaboration with a foreign army, without referencing which country.

ECOWAS has given no date or details about any intervention.

Unlike a previous ECOWAS

**The new military ruler General Abdourahamane Tiani has proposed a three-year transition back to democracy, a call rejected by ECOWAS, which sent a delegation to visit Niger on the weekend in a final diplomatic push**

mission in early August, this time the delegation held talks with Tiani and also met Bazoum, who

is being held with his family at the presidential palace and could be facing treason charges.

ECOWAS has imposed sanctions on Niger while Benin and Nigeria have closed their borders.

However, the juntas in neighbouring Burkina Faso and Mali have said that any military intervention in Niger would be considered a “declaration of war” against their countries.

Around 300 trucks arrived in Niger’s capital of Niamey on Monday from Burkina Faso, most of them carrying food. — **AFP**

# Turkiye denounces UN statement over Cyprus unrest

**ISTANBUL:** Turkiye on Tuesday angrily denounced a United Nations Security Council statement blaming the latest unrest on the divided island of Cyprus on the breakaway government backed by Ankara.

Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan has made mending ties with Western allies one his main objectives since winning election in May.

But the long list of Turkiye’s disputes with Europe includes its support for a breakaway government in the north of EU member Cyprus whose rule is recognised only by Ankara.

Those tensions spilled over when UN peacekeepers last Friday tried to physically block the Turkish Cypriot administration from constructing a road in the buffer zone splitting the east Mediterranean island.

Both sides agree that four members of the UN Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) were injured in the incident.

The UN Security Council issued a statement after a closed-door meeting on the emerging crisis warning that “attacks targeting peacekeepers may constitute crimes under international law”.

The 15-member council also “called for the removal of all unauthorised constructions and the prevention of unauthorised military or civilian activities within and along the ceasefire lines”.

Turkiye called the UN statement unfair. “The press statement issued by the United Nations Security Council... is completely divorced from the realities on the ground,”



Turkish flags flutter in Pyla village, which lies between the internationally disputed lands in Cyprus. — AFP file photo

the Turkish foreign ministry said.

“The notification regarding the road work was made well in advance. This being the case, the physical intervention by soldiers of the UNFICYP in the road construction work was the cause of the tension,” the Turkish statement said.

Turkish Cypriot officials have since opened talks with local UN envoys and halted work in the disputed zone.

But both they and Ankara insist that the road was both legal and essential for linking Turkish Cypriot communities in the ethnically mixed village of Pyla with

those living in the north.

Turkish officials also argue that the UN had turned a blind eye on roads linking Greek Cypriot communities in the buffer zone with the south.

EU officials have made the revival of their own long-stalled negotiations on closer ties with Turkiye contingent on finally settling the Cyprus dispute.

“Solving the Cyprus issue in line with the relevant United Nations resolutions will be key in this re-engagement with Turkiye,” EU foreign policy chief Josep Borrell said last month. — **AFP**

**Tender Announcement**

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

| Tender No. | Tender Subject                                                                                   | Grade                                                                                                                                                                                                           | Last date for obtaining of Tender Document | Last date for Tender Submission | Tender Document Price (non-refundable) |                 |
|------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------|-----------------|
|            |                                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                 |                                            |                                 | Small and Medium Companies             | Local Companies |
| 283/ 2023  | Implementation of an introductory campaign on the services of the Ministry of Social Development | Companies specialized in the field of television, cinema and radio production services registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board with the grade of excellent, first, second, third or fourth. | Sunday 10-9-2023 02:00 PM                  | Sunday 1-10-2023 10:00 AM       | 10 R.O                                 | 25 R.O          |

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Wednesday 23/8/2023**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website ([reg@tenderboard.gov.om](mailto:reg@tenderboard.gov.om)) tel. (24402200).

**“The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry”**

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# BRICS no rival to G7 and G20, Brazil’s Lula says as bloc meets

**JOHANNESBURG:** Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva said on Tuesday that the BRICS bloc of nations aims to organise the developing Global South and is not meant to rival the United States and the Group of Seven (G7) wealthy economies.

His comments point to a divergence of vision as leaders of the bloc — Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa — arrived in Johannesburg for a summit that will weigh expanding the group as some members push to forge it into a counterweight to the West.

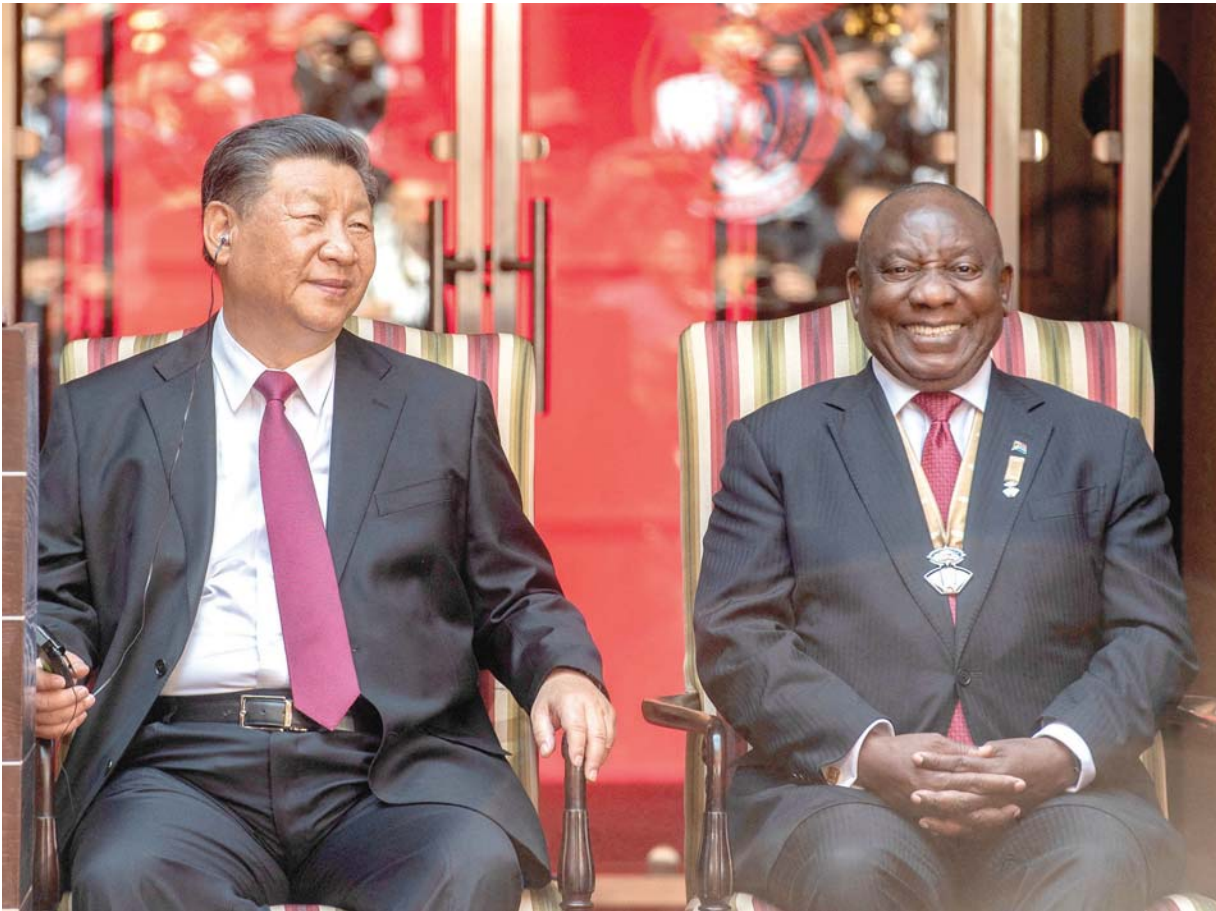
Heightened global tensions provoked by the Ukraine war and Beijing’s growing rivalry with the United States have pushed China and Russia — whose President Vladimir Putin will attend the meeting virtually — to seek to strengthen the BRICS bloc.

Their vision of an expanded BRICS capable of rivalling US and European global dominance has, however, been met with skepticism by some members.

And the outcome of the debate over enlargement could determine the future of a bloc long criticised for a lack of cohesion.

“We do not want to be a counterpoint to the G7, G20 or the United States,” Brazil’s Lula said on Tuesday during a social media broadcast from Johannesburg. “We just want to organise ourselves.”

Summit host South Africa welcomed China’s Xi Jinping, the leading proponent of enlarging



China’s President Xi Jinping sits next to South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa at the Union Buildings ahead of the opening remarks of the BRICS in Pretoria, South Africa. — Reuters

BRICS, for a state visit on Tuesday morning ahead of meetings with the grouping’s other leaders planned for later in the day.

“I am confident that the upcoming summit will be an important milestone in the development of the BRICS mechanism,” Xi said shortly after his arrival in South Africa.

South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said during a bilateral meeting with Xi that their two

countries had “similar views” regarding expansion.

“We share your view, President Xi, that BRICS is a vitally important forum which plays an important role in the reform of global governance and in the promotion of multilateralism and cooperation throughout the world,” he said.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi are also attending the August 22 to 24 summit.

Putin, who is wanted under an

international arrest warrant for alleged war crimes in Ukraine, will not travel to South Africa.

Beyond the enlargement question, boosting the use of member states’ local currencies is also on the summit agenda. South African organisers, however, say there will be no discussions of a BRICS currency, an idea floated by Brazil earlier this year as an alternative to dollar-dependence.

— Reuters

# Thailand’s ex-PM Thaksin jailed on return from exile

**BANGKOK:** Former Thai leader Thaksin Shinawatra returned to the kingdom on Tuesday after 15 years in exile and was immediately jailed, just hours before his party’s candidate was elected prime minister.

The Supreme Court ordered the 74-year-old billionaire to serve eight years on old graft charges, though it is not clear how much time he will serve behind bars, as his Pheu Thai party forms the government and rumours swirl of a deal for leniency.

Thaksin, loved and loathed in almost equal measure in Thailand, landed in a private jet at Bangkok’s Don Mueang airport on Tuesday morning, and was greeted by hundreds of noisy “Red Shirt” supporters waving banners and singing songs.

He emerged briefly to bow and offer a floral garland at a portrait of King Maha Vajiralongkorn as a mark of respect before waving to supporters.

More Red Shirts lined the streets as the former Manchester City owner was taken to the Supreme Court.

There he was ordered to serve eight years for three convictions passed in his absence — one linked to his former Shin Corp company, another linked to a bank loan, and a lottery case.

Just hours after he landed, parliament approved business tycoon Srettha Thavasin as prime minister at the head of a coalition led by the Pheu Thai party — the latest incarnation of Thaksin’s political movement.



Former Thai PM Thaksin Shinawatra pays his respects to a portrait of Thailand’s King Maha Vajiralongkorn and Queen Suthida at Don Mueang airport in Bangkok. — Reuters

“I will try my best and work tirelessly to improve the quality of life for Thai people,” Srettha told reporters after he was confirmed as the kingdom’s 30th prime minister. Pheu Thai’s controversial alliance includes parties from its old enemies in the military — which ousted both Thaksin and his sister Yingluck as prime minister.

This has led to widespread speculation of a backroom arrangement with Thailand’s powerful pro-military royalist establishment to let Thaksin off lightly — though Pheu Thai has denied such a deal.

Thaksin will spend his first days in prison in isolation because of health problems, but his family will be able to visit him after five days, the Department of Corrections said.

Asked about the possibility of a royal pardon, the deputy director of the Department of Corrections Sithi Suthiwong told reporters Thaksin could apply, and the process took “about one to two months, if the documents are sufficient.” — AFP

# Greece finds 18 charred bodies as Europe wildfires spread

**ALEXANDROUPOLIS:** Eighteen charred bodies were found in a remote village in northeastern Greece on Tuesday where wildfires have been raging for days, the fire brigade said, as a heatwave that has seen red alerts issued across southern Europe turned deadly.

Firefighters said they were investigating whether the bodies, found near a shack south of the village of Avantas, were migrants. The surrounding Evros region is a popular route for migrants from the Middle East and Asia crossing from Turkiye.

In Spain, Italy and Portugal, firefighters were battling blazes as the region suffered hot, dry and windy conditions that scientists have linked to climate change.

Temperatures in many parts of the region were expected to reach or exceed 40 degrees Celsius, forecasters said. Italy and France

declared red alerts in a number of areas.

The latest heatwave comes after a July that was the hottest month on record. Some 20,000 people were evacuated on the Greek island of Rhodes in mid-July and a severe fire hit Spain’s La Palma.

Blazes on Hawaii’s Maui island earlier this month killed more than 110 people, while Canada this week deployed the military in British Columbia to tackle fast-spreading fires. In Greece, gale-force winds complicated the efforts to control the fires.

“Weather conditions are extreme and will remain extreme for the coming days,” Fire Service spokesman Vassilis Varthakogiannis told ERT TV.

The 18 bodies were found south of the village of Avantas near the vast Dadia forest, authorities said. Another body thought to belong to



Policemen stand on a road during a wildfire in Chasia in the outskirts of Athens. — AFP

a migrant was found on Monday, in a rural area some 40 km away.

“Given that there have been no reports of disappearances or missing residents from the surrounding areas, the possibility that these are people who entered the country illegally is being investigated,” the fire brigade said. It said searches were ongoing.

In the Greek port town of Alexandroupolis, not far from Avantas, wildfires forced the evacuation of dozens of hospital patients, including newborn babies. A ferry was turned into a makeshift hospital after 65 patients were evacuated from the University Hospital.

Fires also broke out on Tuesday near the capital Athens, where a blaze on the city’s outskirts, on the foothills of Mount Parnitha, burned homes and forced residents to flee. — Reuters

## SHORT TAKES

### MOSCOW

#### 8 dead after sewer floods during tour

Eight members of a tour group exploring underground tunnels in Moscow’s sewer system have been found dead after getting caught off-guard by flash flooding.

The victims, who were touring an underground river known as the Neglinka, are believed to have become trapped by rising water levels following a downpour and were unable to escape to the surface.

Among those who drowned were the tour guide and seven



members of his party, which included a minor.

“The bodies of all participants of the excursion have been found,” investigators said, adding formal identification of the victims was underway. — AFP

### EDINBURGH

#### Scotland drug deaths fall to lowest level

Scotland recorded its lowest drug death figures in five years but the rate remains higher than in the rest of Europe, according to figures published on Tuesday. The National Records of Scotland said 1,051 people died due to drug misuse in 2022 — a decrease of 279 deaths over the previous year.

“While drug misuse deaths have been rising over the last two decades, with a particularly sharp increase after 2013, today’s statistics show the biggest year-on-year decrease since the series



began”, said Julie Ramsay, the head of Demographic Statistics at National Records of Scotland. After controlling for age, there were 19.8 drug misuse deaths for every 100,000 people in Scotland in 2022, down from 25 in 2021.

### AMSTERDAM

#### EU climate chief to quit for Dutch election

EU climate chief Frans Timmermans will quit his job at the European Commission to run as a candidate in Dutch national elections in November, depriving the European Union of a heavyweight in upcoming international climate negotiations.

The Dutch Labour and Green Left said Timmermans would be their leader in the November 22 general election.

Timmermans, whose stint at the European Commission ends in November next year, said he



wanted a chance to become the next Dutch prime minister.

A Commission official said that Timmermans will resign from the Commission following the announcement from the Labour and Green parties. — Reuters

# Shinawatra is Thailand’s divisive former PM

LISA MARTIN AND MONTIRA RUNGJIRAJITTRANON

He was ousted in a coup 17 years ago and spent the last 15 of them in self-imposed exile, but Thailand’s billionaire former premier Thaksin Shinawatra still casts a remarkable shadow over the kingdom’s politics.

Loved and loathed in almost equal measure, the 74-year-old transformed Thailand’s political scene in the early 2000s with populist policies that won him and his party enduring loyalty from the rural masses.

But that success came at a cost: he is despised by Thailand’s powerful elites and conservative establishment who saw his rule as corrupt, authoritarian and destabilising on social order.

Ousted as prime minister by the army in 2006, Thaksin took himself into exile two years later but never stopped commenting and meddling in the kingdom’s affairs.

He pledged repeatedly to return, and on Tuesday finally made good on his vow.

Thaksin was born on July 26, 1949, into one of the

most prominent ethnic Chinese families in northern Chiang Mai province.

He served as a police officer before amassing a vast fortune founding a series of data networking and mobile telephone firms that would become telecoms giant Shin Corp.

In 1998, he launched his own political party, Thai Rak Thai (Thais Love Thais), and was elected as prime minister in 2001, becoming the country’s first premier to serve a full term.

With the Thai economy on its knees from the Asian financial crisis, Thaksin promised to use his business savvy to rebuild and lift poor rural villagers out of poverty with his “Thaksinomics”.

His “war on drugs”, which Human Rights Watch says resulted in around 2,800 extrajudicial killings, brought international condemnation.

He was re-elected in a landslide victory in 2005, thanks to huge support from rural voters grateful for cash injections and debt relief. The following year he was dogged with corruption allegations and mired in controversy over the tax-free sale of Shin Corp shares. Months of mass protests culminated in the nullifying of elections, and in September 2006 army tanks rolled into Bangkok and toppled Thaksin’s

LOVED AND LOATHED IN ALMOST EQUAL MEASURE, THE 74-YEAR-OLD TRANSFORMED THAILAND’S POLITICAL SCENE IN THE EARLY 2000S WITH POPULIST POLICIES

government while he was at the United Nations in New York.

Despite his Thai assets being frozen in 2007, he purchased Manchester City football club and later sold it for a sizeable profit. Thai Rak Thai was dissolved by court order after the 2006 coup but eventually evolved into the Pheu Thai party, which brought Thaksin’s sister Yingluck to power in 2011.

Thaksin is seen by many as the true master of Pheu Thai, which came second in May’s general election and is set to lead a new coalition government. Yingluck laboured under claims she was a Thaksin stooge and eventually she too fell to a coup.

From exile in Dubai, divorced Thaksin regularly took to the Clubhouse social media platform under the moniker “Tony Woodsome” to address supporters in Thailand.

Over the past year he has thrown his weight behind his daughter Paetongtarn as she took up the Pheu Thai mantle and led the party’s election campaign. He is believed to be particularly close to Paetongtarn, 37, and has said his main motivation for returning to Thailand is to spend time with his grandchildren.

— AFP

## Walking his father’s path into top job

Cambodia’s new prime minister Hun Manet was groomed for years for the job by his iron-fisted father Hun Sen, and his takeover sees the completion of a dynastic transition long in the making.

Tuesday’s unanimous parliamentary vote to install him as PM sees Hun Manet move from the premier’s bodyguard unit to the seat of power.

Hun Sen last month announced his resignation, three days after claiming a landslide victory in a one-sided election that the ruling party was guaranteed to win after having silenced all viable opposition.

Hun Manet, already a member of the ruling Cambodian People’s Party’s (CPP) powerful permanent committee, has served as commander of the Royal Cambodian Army since 2018.

Born on October 20, 1977, the princeling graduated from US Military Academy West Point in 1999 and has more recently met world leaders including President Xi Jinping of China — Cambodia’s main ally and benefactor.

But the 45-year-old four-star general only contested a parliamentary seat for the first time in July’s election, a poll criticised internationally as neither free nor fair.

Hun Sen has trailed the handover to his son for a year and a half but he has also made it clear that he intends to wield influence after he steps down, scotching the notion the country could change direction when Hun Manet assumes power.

While Hun Sen’s politics are shaped by his experiences of revolution and war as a young man during the genocidal Khmer Rouge regime in the 1970s, his son was raised in luxury and educated abroad.

Married with two daughters and a son, Hun Manet holds a PhD in economics from the University of Bristol in Britain and was the first Cambodian to graduate from West Point.

He has also served in leadership roles in the ruling CPP’s youth movement, his father’s bodyguard unit and the counterterrorism special forces.

Higher education abroad is no guarantee of a more liberal approach, exiled politician Sam Rainsy, a longstanding foe of Hun Sen, said last month — pointing to Syria’s brutal Assad dynasty.

“Syria’s Bashar al-Assad is more educated than Hafez al-Assad, but the son is politically worse than the father,” he said.

— AFP

## Science, tech and war beyond the bomb



Paul Krugman

The author a Nobel laureate and New York Times columnist

. WARS STILL REQUIRE ALMOST UNIMAGINABLE COURAGE AND ENDURANCE ON THE PART OF COMBATANTS. BUT THEY HAVEN’T BEEN WON BY SHEER BRAWN FOR A LONG TIME. THEY ARE INSTEAD WON LARGELY BY PRODUCTION CAPACITY — AND INTELLECTUAL CREATIVITY.

If you’ve seen the movie “Oppenheimer,” which you should — trust me, it’s gripping even though it’s three hours long and you know how the story ends — you probably noticed several appearances by the physicist Isidor Isaac Rabi, who is portrayed in some ways as Oppenheimer’s voice of conscience. I was a bit puzzled when I watched, because I happened to know that Rabi wasn’t a resident at Los Alamos during the Manhattan Project. But the film was historically accurate: Rabi did visit Los Alamos on occasion, and was present for the Trinity bomb test.

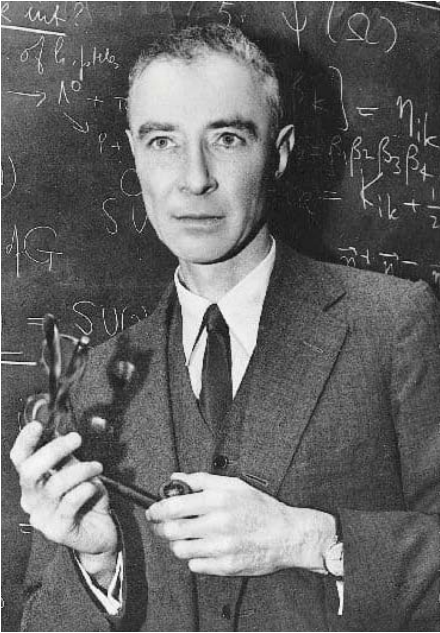
Why wasn’t Rabi at Los Alamos? The film highlights his ethical qualms. But the truth is that he was involved in another secret project applying cutting-edge science to the war effort, MIT’s Radiation Laboratory, which basically worked on advanced radar. The Rad Lab arguably had an even bigger impact on the course of the war than the Manhattan Project, because it turned microwave technology, originally developed in Britain, into a radar system that German submarines couldn’t detect. This was a major factor in the Allies’ 1943 victory in the Battle of the Atlantic, which secured the sea lanes to Britain; this in turn set the stage first for the decisive defeat of the Luftwaffe in early 1944, and then for D-Day.

There were other crucial scientific efforts, too, like the group at Johns Hopkins that developed the proximity fuse, which made anti-aircraft guns far more effective because they could bring down a plane without scoring a direct hit.

All of this was made possible not just by America’s economic might but also by its cultural and social openness. At one point in the movie Oppenheimer says that the only reason we might beat the Germans to the bomb is Nazi antisemitism; indeed, America’s war effort was crucially aided by our willingness to take in and make use of the scientific talents of refugees.

If you’re a history buff like me, you find this stuff fascinating in its own right. But it’s also relevant, even now, to American politics — and to the war in Ukraine.

Many people on the US right seem to



J Robert Oppenheimer

equate national greatness with military prowess and believe that military prowess is associated with macho posturing. The epitome of this attitude was Ted Cruz’s infamous ad contrasting tough-looking Russian recruits with US recruiting ads that celebrated diversity, and declaring that we were made weak by having a “woke, emasculated” military. And you still hear that sort of thing despite the catastrophic and very recent failures of Russia’s un-woke, un-emasculated army.

This is all, of course, deeply stupid. Wars still require almost unimaginable courage and endurance on the part of combatants. But they haven’t been won by sheer brawn for a long time. They are instead won largely by production capacity — and intellectual creativity.

I’ve read many books about World War II. The book that did the most to change how I thought about the conflict was “How the War Was Won,” by the military historian Phillips P. O’Brien, which begins with this memorable sentence: “There were no decisive battles in World War II.” O’Brien shows that even the bloodiest, most stupendous battles, like the battle of Kursk in 1943, destroyed at most a few weeks’ worth of the losing side’s war production. What decided the war was Allied success in dominating first the seas, then the air — success that depended crucially on intellectuals like Rabi, who didn’t look like anyone’s idea of a warrior, or Alan Turing, who led the code-breaking efforts at Bletchley

Park but whose gayness would have made him an outcast in the right-wing vision of what America should be.

O’Brien was, as it happens, one of the few prominent military analysts who disagreed with the consensus that Russia would quickly and easily conquer Ukraine, and has been a frequent and insightful commentator on the course of the ongoing war. He believes that Ukraine’s counteroffensive will eventually succeed; I’m not qualified to judge whether he’s right, but I do understand his reasoning.

Here’s how I’d put it: The Ukrainians discovered early on that they couldn’t pull off a blitzkrieg, using armoured vehicles to punch a hole in Russia’s defence lines and then racing for the coast. When they tried that, they ran into dense minefields and withering artillery fire. So they reverted to tactics that seem on the surface almost like those of World War I: small-scale (and incredibly brave) infantry attacks that gain at most a few hundred yards at a time.

Under the surface, however — pun not really intended — what’s going on is something like the Battle of the Atlantic. Those infantry assaults force the Russians to respond, exposing their artillery systems in particular to attacks from Ukrainians using superior Western technology, supplemented by local ingenuity.

If this strategy is working — again, a question I’m not competent to answer — Ukraine’s slow gains on the ground aren’t a good indication of what’s really happening. If the optimists are right, the real story is the gradual degradation of the stuff behind Russia’s lines — counter-battery radar, artillery pieces, command centres and so on.

One notable thing about the Battle of the Atlantic is that the denouement was quite sudden. We now know that the Allies were gradually gaining the upper hand for many months before a sudden surge in U-boat losses forced the Germans to abandon their attacks.

Will there be a similar tipping point in Ukraine? I don’t know. But what we do know is that this war, like most modern wars, will be determined more by brains and open-mindedness than by tough-guy posturing.

— *The New York Times*

To comment & email: [opinion@omanobserver.om](mailto:opinion@omanobserver.om)

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# No doubt, fake content is a real harm!

The telecommunications sector has witnessed a decisive transformation in a short period of time. Subsequently, the growth of the Internet and the World Wide Web have transformed our lives as well. No one today can imagine living in a world without the Internet and social media. It makes us feel more connected to the world!

Notwithstanding the fact that the Internet and social media platforms have become almost an inevitable part of our society now, misinformation spread by word-of-mouth is increasing rapidly along with it. Nothing can be more dangerous than spreading fake news and misinformation.

While fake news is an increasingly used term to refer to shared falsehoods, misinformation is false or misleading information. Although the Oxford English Dictionary only added the term ‘fake news’ to the dictionary in 2019, the use of the term has increased over the years.

‘Fake news’ got its popularity during Donald Trump’s presidential election campaign in 2016, with Trump suggesting he created the term when, in fact, it has been around since the 19th century, according to the Oxford English Dictionary.

According to the 2023 World Press Freedom Index, which evaluates the environment for journalism in 180 countries and territories, the digital ecosystem’s fake content industry has had a rapid effect on press freedom.

In two-thirds of the countries evaluated by the Index, most of the Index questionnaire’s respondents reported that political actors in their countries were often or systematically involved in massive disinformation or propaganda campaigns.

“The difference is being blurred between true and false, real and artificial, jeopardising the right to information. The unprecedented ability to tamper with content is being used to undermine those who embody quality journalism and weaken journalism itself”, the Index report points out.

According to a recent Forbes report, an important development that is shaping and will continue to shape the media landscape in 2023 and beyond is the proliferation of fake news.

The disinformation industry



Samuel Kutty @samkuttyvp

The writer is author, senior journalist and policy analyst with nearly four decades of experience in editing and reporting for newspapers and magazines in India and the Gulf region

ALTHOUGH THE ADVENT OF THE INTERNET HAS GIVEN INDIVIDUALS AND ORGANISATIONS NUMEROUS WAYS TO DISSEMINATE INFORMATION, MISINFORMATION MASQUERADING AS EXPERT ADVICE ONLINE CAN BE DETRIMENTAL TO OUR COLLECTIVE GROWTH

disseminates manipulative content on a huge scale. “Digital technologies increasingly allow the spread of real information and content, but also of content that can appear to be real but it’s really not”, Nelson Granados, the contributor of the report says.

To drive home, he points out the developments in technologies enabled by artificial intelligence that allow the creation of unreal content that looks very real. For example, there are major advances in the creation of deepfake photos, audio, and videos that look real and in the meshing of recorded scenes with virtual sets.

Further confirming is the World Press Freedom Index report that AI is digesting content and regurgitating it in the form of syntheses that flout the principles of rigour and reliability.

“The remarkable development of artificial intelligence is wreaking further havoc on the media world”, it says.

According to the report, the fifth version of Midjourney, an AI programme that generates very high-definition images in response to natural language requests, has been feeding social media with increasingly plausible and undetectable fake “photos”.

We remember how those quite realistic-looking photos of Donald Trump being stopped by police officers and a comatose Julian Assange in a straitjacket went viral.

The technological ease of copying, pasting, clicking and sharing content online has helped misinformation and disinformation to proliferate. In some cases, stories are designed to provoke an emotional response and placed on certain sites in order to entice readers into sharing them widely.

Although the advent of the Internet has given individuals and organisations numerous ways to consume and disseminate information, misinformation masquerading as expert advice online can be detrimental to our collective growth.

People are increasingly getting worried about the fact that the news they come across is real or fake! It is high time for the media to tack more closely to professional standards and ethics, to eschew the publishing of unchecked information, and to take a distance from information which may interest some of the public but which is not in the public interest.

## SECURING HIMSELF!



A boy peeps from behind a gate during clashes with Israeli forces as soldiers conduct a search operation in Baita village in the occupied West Bank, on Tuesday. – AFP

# The health benefits of financial inclusion

At least half of the global population lacks access to essential health services, and healthcare expenses push almost 100 million people into extreme poverty each year. How scarce resources are distributed should matter, and there are good reasons to believe that finance could play a crucial role in addressing this challenge. More than 60 countries have launched national financial-inclusion strategies, and academic research is keen on understanding their impact.

Until recently, there was no evidence that finance could make a significant difference for health. Randomised controlled trials that offered households financial products such as savings accounts, credit, and health insurance found no effects. But, crucially, these studies did not examine important long-term and large-scale aspects of banking, nor did they account for the financial products and services offered to businesses and healthcare providers.

In a recent study, I used a natural experiment that introduced variation in bank presence in India to assess the effects of improving financial inclusion



Kim Fe Cramer

The writer is an assistant professor at the London School of Economics, studies household finance in developing countries

nationwide, over 10 years, and on different actors in the market. In contrast to previous research, I found substantial improvements in households’ health.

In 2005, the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) introduced a policy to incentivise banks to open new branches in underserved districts nationwide. After five years, the number of bank branches in these districts had increased by 19 per cent. More importantly, two nationally representative household-level surveys have shown improved health in these districts compared to similar districts where the policy did not apply.

The Indian Human Development Survey (IHDS), conducted six years after the RBI policy went into effect, demonstrates that households in districts with an increased bank presence were 36 per cent less likely to experience non-chronic illnesses such as fever or diarrhea. Likewise, the Demographics and Health Survey, conducted 10 years after the policy was implemented, shows higher vaccination rates and lower

risks associated with pregnancy in these districts. Decreased morbidity rates also improved health-related economic outcomes: the IHDS shows that households missed less school and work owing to illness and incurred significantly lower medical expenses.

Three mechanisms likely played a role in improving health outcomes. For starters, banks provided credit to local businesses, allowing households to earn more and invest more in health. Second, the data suggest that households directly gained

access to financial services. They established savings accounts and, importantly, could also buy health insurance. In India – as in over half of developing countries – local banks sell health-insurance policies to their customers, serving as middlemen for insurance companies in major cities. This differs sharply from most developed countries, where health insurance is purchased only directly from insurance companies or obtained from government programmes.

Lastly, healthcare providers gained access to credit. Eight

years after the RBI policy was implemented, the number of hospitals operating in the incentivised districts had grown by 140 per cent, and providers were more likely to report institutional loans as their primary source of finance. Local households also reported fewer problems with health-care supply. Policymakers took to heart the importance of expanding credit to health-care providers: in May 2021, during the Covid-19 crisis, the RBI provided \$6.78 billion in easily accessible credit for the sector.

The substantial effects of finance on health in this natural experiment are more evident than they were in prior randomised controlled trials. Exploring finance using a natural experiment has two important added merits. First, it allows one to capture general equilibrium effects: evidence suggests that both demand and supply of the health-care market are stimulated, potentially creating a virtuous cycle. Second, one can explore effects on a larger scale over a longer period time.

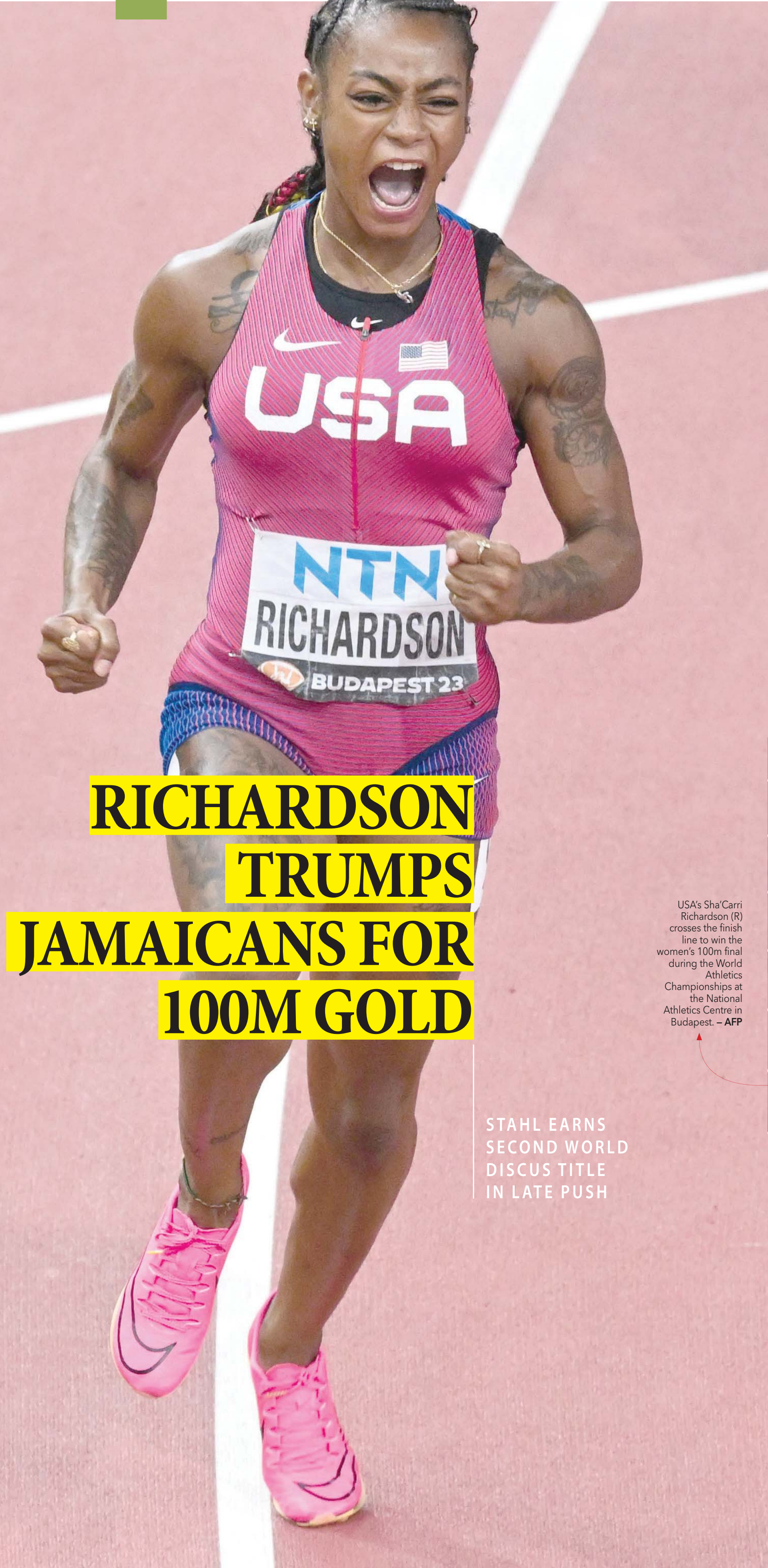
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There are substantial improvements in households’ health in India.

# sport

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## RICHARDSON TRUMPS JAMAICANS FOR 100M GOLD

USA's Sha'Carri Richardson (R) crosses the finish line to win the women's 100m final during the World Athletics Championships at the National Athletics Centre in Budapest. — AFP

STAHL EARNS SECOND WORLD DISCUS TITLE IN LATE PUSH

**BUDAPEST:** American Sha'Carri Richardson crushed Shelly-Ann Fraser-Pryce's hopes of a sixth women's world 100m title when she stormed to victory in Budapest on Monday.

Richardson sprinted to a championship record of 10.65sec despite being in lane nine to seal a US 100m double after Noah Lyles' victory in the men's event on Sunday.

Shericka Jackson and veteran Jamaican teammate Fraser-Pryce took silver and bronze in 10.72sec and 10.77sec respectively on the third day of action in the Hungarian capital.

It was a remarkable run for the 23-year-old Richardson, who was barred from the pandemic-delayed Tokyo Olympics in 2021 after testing positive for marijuana.

She then saw her hopes of challenging for a medal at last year's world championships in Eugene go up in smoke when she failed to qualify in the US trials.

"I'm here. I'm the champion. I told you all. I'm not back, I'm better!" said Richardson, whose penchant for regular hair colour changes and brightly painted nails has earned inevitable comparisons to the late Florence Griffith-Joyner.

Fraser-Pryce, the reigning champion, said she was "really grateful" for a bronze medal after a difficult season that was hampered by a knee injury.

"Last year I ran and won in a championship record and it took another championship record to win tonight," the 36-year-old told the BBC.

"So it just speaks to the level of consistency for female sprinting and being able to make sure that when you show up you have to give 100 per cent," she said.

**THREE IN A ROW**

In a good night on the track for the USA as Grant Holloway became the second athlete after compatriot Greg Foster to claim three consecutive world 110m hurdles titles.

Holloway, 25, shot out to a season's best of 12.96sec to win gold ahead of Jamaica's Olympic champion Hansle Parchment, who finished in 13.07sec.

"Three in a row!" said Holloway. "The main thing was really just to come through here and defend my title."

"I felt no pressure at all, I just wanted to run cleanly and stay calm at the finish line."

The two field event medals on offer went to Sweden and, in a historic first, Burkina Faso.

Olympic champion Daniel Stahl left it late to win a second world discus title that had the crowd gripped.



The Swede, who previously triumphed in Doha in 2019, had control of the leaderboard only for defending champion Kristjan Ceh of Slovenia to grab the lead with his sixth and final throw.

All eyes turned to Stahl for the final throw of the competition and the Swede did not disappoint, throwing a championship record of 71.46m.

"This was my best performance ever," said Stahl. I had so much focus, I would say 1,000 per cent on the last throw after I saw Kristjan."

Ceh took silver with 70.02m while Lithuania's 19-year-old Mykolas Alekna claimed bronze with 68.85m.

**FIRST GLOBAL TITLE**

In the triple jump, Hugues Fabrice Zango gave the

west African nation of Burkina Faso its first global athletics title when he won with a mark of 17.64m.

Cubans Lazaro Martinez and Cristian Napoles won silver and bronze.

"The competition was easy for me," said Zango, who won world silver last year and also claimed his country's first ever Olympic medal with a bronze in Tokyo in 2021.

Zango's path to glory was made easier by the first-round withdrawal through injury of much-vaunted 18-year-old Jamaican Jaydon Hibbert.

In other track events, 400m hurdles stars Karsten Warholm and Femke Bol made short work of their qualifying rounds.

World record holder Warholm seemed to barely break sweat despite the sultry conditions as he cruised through to Wednesday's final.

Defending world champion Alison Dos Santos of Brazil and American Rai Benjamin also sailed through.

"There is surely going to be someone who challenges me but today it was very good and I felt strong," said Warholm.

Bol made up for the disappointment of falling with the line at her mercy in the mixed 4x400m relay by striding clear to ease into Tuesday's semifinals.

"I do not want to talk about what happened last Saturday," said the Dutchwoman, the stand-out favourite in the absence of injured American world record holder Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone. — AFP



# Oman clinch 19 medals at West Asia bodybuilding

AHMED AL KAABI  
MUSCAT, AUG 22

The Oman national bodybuilding and physique team showcased their prowess at the recently concluded West Asia Bodybuilding and Physique Championship held in the capital city of Manama, Bahrain. From August 16 to 19, the team displayed exceptional dedication and skill, securing a remarkable total of 19 medals in various categories.

Among the standout achievements, Abdulmajid al Raisi stood out by securing the gold medal in the Junior Physique category, showcasing not only his talent but also the future potential of the team.

Another significant victory came from Imran al Dhafari, who clinched the prestigious gold medal in the Muscle Physique category for athletes measuring above 179 cm.

In the Physique category for individuals measuring above 170 cm, Ghanem al Maamari earned the gold medal, further showing the diversity of the team's talents. Nasr al Wahibi's commendable performance secured him the silver medal in the same category.

The achievements continued



with Omar al Masoudi, who seized the gold medal in the Physique category for those above 173 cm. The silver medals were not far behind, with Abdulmajid al Hadrami and Malik al Kasbi both attaining recognition for their impressive performances in the Physique category for athletes above 173 cm and 176 cm respectively.

The 179 cm height category saw Mazen al Balushi claiming the bronze medal, while Aamer al Balushi took home the silver medal in the Physique category for those above 182 cm. These successes further cement the team's reputation as a force to



be reckoned within the realm of bodybuilding and physique competitions.

**CHAMPION OF CHAMPIONS**  
A thrilling highlight of the championship was Ghanem al Maamari's becoming the Champion of Champions, accompanied by the award of a professional card.

Omar al Masoudi further solidified the Oman team's success by emerging as the second Champion of Champions. His outstanding performance secured the silver medal along with a professional card.

In addition, Nabhan al Zadjali's

exceptional skills earned him the silver medal in the Classic Physique category for individuals above 173 cm, while Muhsin al Harthy's noteworthy performance secured the silver medal in the Classic Bodybuilding category for athletes above 175 cm. Samer al Balushi displayed his strength by securing the fourth position in the Classic Bodybuilding category for above 180 cm.

The Oman team's achievements extended to the weight categories as well. Sami al Gharbi claimed the gold medal in the 65 kg bodybuilding category. In the 75 kg bodybuilding category, Nabhan al Zadjali secured the bronze, while Ali al Maamari claimed the gold in the 85 kg bodybuilding category.

Additionally, Mohammed al Ajmi secured the silver medal in the 95 kg bodybuilding category. Ali al Maamari's accomplishments were further celebrated as he was crowned the Champion of Champions and received a professional card. The team's achievements culminated with Ishaq al Farsi securing the fourth position and Khaled al Shihi claiming the sixth position in the Muscle Physique category for athletes above 179 cm.

## KMFA football season begins

**MUSCAT:** The football season under Kerala Muscat Football Association (KMFA) has started on August 11 onwards.

The season's first tournament was conducted by Muscat Hammers FC. It was one of the best tournaments with a lot of variety. There was a match for team managers as well, much to the entertainment of the crowd.

This season's first tournament was on August 11, where Gallants FC Oman emerged the champions.

Next tournament is on August 25 at Al Hail ground conducted by Kerala Blasters fans Manjapada Oman.

They have also planned some varieties of cultural programmes also.

Tournaments will run under the KMFA rules. Compared with the previous season, this season is restricted with rules for players and teams. Now 23 teams and above 300 players have registered with KMFA. If a player wants to play for another team, both team managers and player should sign and fill the temporary transfer form. Permanent transfer to another team is also possible, only once a player can make a

permanent transfer during a season.

The season runs from August to April 30. In May, every team managements get a period to prepare for next season and the free transfer window opens in June. In July, KMFA authorities will verify and publish the list of players and rules, if any changes.

Cultural and social related organisations are also conducting football tournaments with the approval of KMFA.

If any team or players violate the rules or play rough, they will face punishment like ban or suspension for a limited period or a season. Only registered players can play in KMFA approved tournaments. If the tournament committee didn't get enough teams from KMFA, they could approach non-registered teams. Registered players can't play in non-registered teams.

The KMFA was formed six years ago, however faced difficulties in functioning due to Covid 19.

The football body is looking forward to conducting the tournaments successfully.



# Oman squad gains valuable experience at Sailing Worlds

**MUSCAT:** Oman Sail's Para Sailing team concluded their campaign in the Netherlands at the 2023 Allianz Sailing World Championships after a series of tough races that underlined the experience and high standards the squad aims to reach. Taking part in the first Sailing World Championships to feature Para Sailing events, Marjan al Balushi finished 11th in the Women's Hansa, Nasr al Rahbi finished 12th out of 15 in the Men's Hansa, and the crew of Sami al Sulaimi and Ghaliya al Jabri finished 15th out of 16 in the RS Venture event.

Mohsin al Busaidy, Oman Sail's Head of Performance, said, "The results leave us with mixed feelings. We had hoped for a stronger showing but it is important to remain focused on the wider context. Some of the sailors at the Allianz Sailing World Championships have been sailing for decades. This is the level we are

aiming for, and this event gave us a first hand look at what we need to do."

"All four sailors began their journey in the sport in 2019 with the launch of Oman Sail's SailFree initiative, a joint project with bp Oman and the Oman Paralympic Committee. They have already made significant progress and the exposure to the highest level in the sport will serve them well in the future," he added.

Elsewhere, Abdulmajeed al Hadhrami continued his quest for Olympic qualification in the Men's Windsurfing iQFOiL where he finished 85th in a strong fleet. The top ten qualify automatically for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games, while more places are on offer at competitions around the world in the coming months. Abdulmajeed will be part of the Oman team travelling to the Hangzhou 2023 Asian Games, taking place from 23 September to 8 October, and also

at the Asian Olympic Qualifier in Chon Buri, Thailand, from December 10-20, 2023. A Last Chance Regatta is also scheduled where the final places will be decided.

Mohsin al Busaidy, Oman Sail's Head of Performance, said, "The iQFOiL is one of the fastest-growing disciplines in watersports and we have a great opportunity to qualify. The Allianz Sailing World Championships featured the very best in the world and it was a chance to see where we stand and how to improve. The two regional events give us another way to qualify and time to take back our learning from Europe to Oman and prepare to end the year in strong form."

The 2023 Allianz World Sailing Championships, The Hague, were organised by TIG Sports and the Koninklijk Nederlands Watersport Verbond (The Royal Netherlands Watersport Association) in conjunction with World Sailing.



## Ras al Hadd — A safe bet for turtles



BY KHALID AL BALUSHI

Turtles are a source of tourist attraction. Ras Al Hadd is always a stopping point for most tourists who like spending time watching turtles nesting and laying eggs on the beaches.

Nasser bin Saleh al Zadjali, head of guiding department at Ras Al Jinz Turtle Reserve, said: "As of now the reserve is 120 square km, and the length of the beach is 42 km from Ras Al Hadd to Asilah. Turtles nest along this beach, but most of them are in Ras Al Hadd and Ras Al Jinz."

"There are several types of turtles that nest on the beaches of the Sultanate of Oman — Green turtle, Olive Ridley, Loggerhead, Hawksbill, but most of them are green turtles," Al Zadjali said.

"There are 5 turtles from 7 types which are nesting on our beaches and the Sultanate of Oman is one of the most environmentally important sites in the world.

"Turtles can know whether a beach is safe or not, and before

leaving the sea, turtles monitor the beach as sea turtles have a strong sense of sight," Al Zadjali stated.

Hence, female turtles have to find a safer beach in order to avoid any disturbance when they lay eggs. Furthermore, female turtles work hard to secure their eggs.

"Turtles dig large holes, even larger than the size of their body, and inside this hole, they dig a small and deep hole to lay eggs, and then they bury the eggs in the large hole and work to camouflage the location of the eggs," Al Zadjali added.

### TEMPERATURE

"The temperature of the sand determines the gender. If the temperature is less than 28 degrees, Celcius most of them are male. If the temperature is more than 29 degrees Celcius, they are female. If it is in the middle, some of them are males and others are females. The eggs remain for 55 to 60 days until they hatch, and the nesting season is from June to October. The number of turtles gradually decreases in the winter," he added.

After these turtles grow up, they return to our beaches again and we can know if the same turtle has returned through a study and follow-up of these turtles has been done with the help of various devices placed on the back of the turtles linked to satellites.

The Environment Authority is playing its role in numbering the turtles for many years, and most turtles have a longer life. The average age for green turtles is from 80 to 90 years.

"However, there are many possibilities of extinction, due to overfishing in some countries and also due to pollution. There are significant risks that can cause turtles not to nest on our beaches such as throwing plastic bags into the sea, driving vehicles on the nesting beaches, camping, and using lighting," Al Zadjali said.

Turtles also lose their right to live because of their presence in the food cycle or oil pollution in the sea.



INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



At Bo's Bagels, all of these play second fiddle to the "everything bagel," which includes a smattering of all these toppings. Bo's sells more everything bagels than all of the other types combined, said owner Andrew Martinez.

The origin of the everything bagel is "disputed," with claims to fame made by New York restaurateur Joseph Bastianich and Long Island advertising businessman David Gussin, who told The New Yorker in 2008 that he experimented with the seasonings during a stint at a Queens takeout shop in around 1980.

While the everything bagel reigns in the Big Apple, it ranks third nationally behind blueberry and cinnamon raisin, according to



**BAGELS ARE AS** synonymous with New York as pizza and the Statue of Liberty.

Although there is no official count of New York's daily bagel production, Sam Silverman, chief executive of the trade group Bagelup, estimates there are about 500 specialty shops across the city's five boroughs.

The ring-shaped bread has evolved and been reinvented since its arrival more than a century ago thanks to Polish Jewish immigrants.

Here are some key points in New York bagel history:

**- THE EARLY DAYS -**

While there is debate over just when the first bagels appeared, historians agree that the bread originally arrived in New York in the late 19th century. The bagel grew in popularity in Manhattan's Lower East Side in neighbourhoods populated by Jewish immigrants from Poland, where it had been made for centuries.

By 1900, the industry had already expanded to 70 bagel shops, although working conditions were "terrible," according to Maria Balinksa's book, "The Bagel: The Surprising History of a Modest

Bread."

Balinksa chronicles a triumphant 1909 baker strike that upgraded pay and working conditions, helping to propel the broader labour movement in the early 20th century.

**- LOX AND CREAM CHEESE -**

The iconic sandwich — a bagel with cream cheese and lox, or cured salmon that may or may not be smoked — became popular in New York in the period between the World Wars and has been a mainstay ever since.

Author Jeffrey A Marx dates the

dish to the late 1920s, about a half century after cream cheese was invented by New York state dairy farmer William Lawrence.

The combination took off during a banner period for New York Jewish delicatessens, which specialised in expensive smoked and pickled meats, spawning new concoctions including the Reuben sandwich.

**- GOING MAINSTREAM -**

Balinska points to the 1960s as the period when bagels attained broader popularity beyond the Jewish community.

Innovations such as the rotating

oven enabled bakers to significantly increase output. That led to the arrival of shops touting "hot" bagels directly to consumers; before, they were only available wholesale.

Central players in the further "bagelizing" of America were the Lender brothers, who successfully mass marketed the frozen bagel — pre-sliced, of course — in the 1960s, expanding nationwide by 1977.

**- EVERYTHING JUGGERNAUT -**

Over the years, bakers began coating bagels with toppings including salt, sesame seeds, poppy seeds, onion and garlic.

Silverman, noting the popularity of sweet foods outside the bagel's US hometown.

**- THE FOODIE ERA -**

The mainstreaming of foodie culture has led to increasingly ambitious bagel sandwiches in the twenty-first century, making the traditional lox sandwich look quaint, with sushi and pulled pork in the mix.

Funky, newer bagel flavours include french toast and cheddar jalapeno, while blueberry, avocado garlic and red velvet cream cheese are now available. — **AFP**

DISNEY

Disney to shut Lucasfilm studio in Singapore

**DISNEY TO SHUT LUCASFILM** studio in Singapore

Lucasfilm's visual effects and animation studio in Singapore will close down in the coming months due to economic reasons, parent firm Disney said on Tuesday.

The Singapore studio was set up in the 2000s by Industrial Light & Magic (ILM), which was founded by Star Wars creator George Lucas and is a division of Lucasfilm.

For years, its home in Singapore was the striking Sandcrawler building, named after the Star Wars transport that inspired its design. Lucasfilm sold the building in 2021.

"Over the next several months, ILM will be consolidating its global footprint and winding down its Singapore studio due to economic factors affecting the

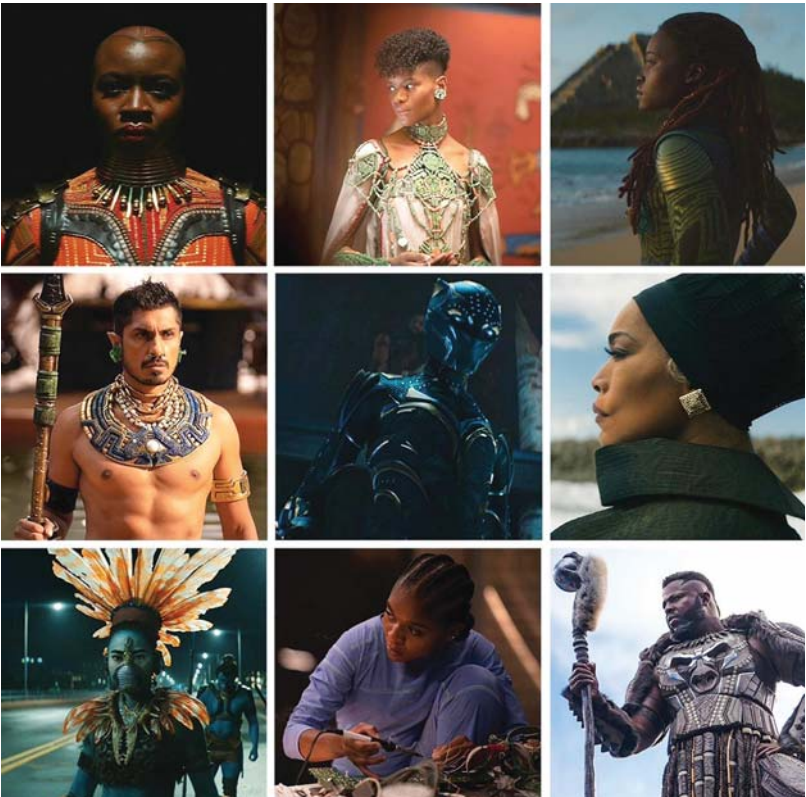
industry," Disney said in a statement.

It did not say how many employees will be affected in Singapore.

Disney said in February it was cutting 7,000 jobs worldwide — part of a reorganisation as its traditional television business erodes and in the face of stiff competition and eroding subscriber numbers for its streaming service, Disney+.

"Lucasfilm's decision to wind down its Singapore operations is in response to changes in the industry and business conditions," Singapore's Infocomm Media Development Authority (IMDA) and the Economic Development Board (EDB) said in a joint statement.

"The global media industry is facing disruption from rapid technological advancements, while studios are coping with challenges relating to talent and



profitability."

The Singapore studio was involved in high-profile Hollywood productions

including "Iron Man", "The Avengers" and Star Wars films, according to the EDB's website. — **AFP**

SCIENCES

New species of snake found in Peru named after Harrison Ford

**SCIENTISTS WORKING IN** Peru have named a new species of snake after Harrison Ford in honour of the "Indiana Jones" actor's support for conservation work.

The 40 cm (16 inch) reptile was first discovered in May 2022 in the jungle mountains of Otishi National Park, San Marcos National University said on Wednesday.

But it was not until now that researchers concluded it was indeed a previously unknown species.

This creature is a yellowish-brown colour, with black spots, a black belly and copper eyes.

It has been given the scientific name *Tachymenoides harrisonfordi*.

The snake was first found by a team led by Edgar Lehr, a US-German



biologist.

It is now named after Ford because he is active in environmental issues, Lehr said from the state of Illinois.

"I found out that Harrison Ford agreed to have his name used via a consultation that Conservation International made", he added, referring to an NGO.

He said the snake was discovered in an area that is only accessible by helicopter.

"It took us seven days to find it," said Lehr.

The snake is harmless to adult humans but it is good at hunting toads and lizards, he added.

Lehr led a team of researchers from San Marcos National University, Florida International University and Illinois Wesleyan University.

Salamandra, the German Journal of Herpetology, published on Tuesday a study on the discovery of the snake. — **AFP**

MUSCAT  
STOCK  
EXCHANGE

4,772.589



CRUDE  
OIL PRICE

Oman Crude **\$85.81**  
Brent Crude **\$84.28**  
Light Crude **\$80.02**



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# GCC aims for \$100 bn investment in water desalination capacity



QASIM AL MAASHANI  
SALALAH, AUG 22

The Independent Water Regulatory Forum opened in Salalah on August 22, 2023 with the participation of experts from the Sultanate of Oman and officials from other GCC countries to discuss the latest trends in water regulation.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

A key organiser of the two-day forum is the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), an independent regulatory body responsible for ensuring the quality and efficiency of public services in Oman.

It was organised in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf (GCC).

In opening remarks, APSR Chairman Dr Mansour bin Talib al Hinai highlighted the importance of independent

regulation of the water sector.

He said that the APSR is committed to working with all stakeholders to ensure that the water sector in Oman is well-regulated and sustainable.

Delivering the keynote address, Khalid bin Ali al Sunaidi, Assistant Secretary General for Economic and Development Affairs at the GCC General Secretariat, spoke about the importance of cooperation between GCC countries in the water sector.

Highlighting the challenges facing the sector, Al Sunaidi said: “The GCC grapples with distinctive obstacles arising from limited renewable water resources amidst global water scarcity and quality concerns. Holding an impressive 50 per cent of the world’s desalination capacity, the GCC nations aim to boost this by 37 per cent over the next five years, investing \$100 billion to address their water requirements.”

He warned however, that the existing per capita water consumption, ranging from 450 to 500 litres daily, is

Establishing an independent water regulatory authority stands as a pivotal stride toward effective oversight, ensuring quality, accessibility, innovation, and stability, benefitting consumers and providers alike.

DR MANSOUR BIN  
TALIB AL HINAI  
APSR Chairman

unsustainable.

“Notable advancements include the endorsement of water-efficient devices and the adoption of treated wastewater, yet more action is imperative.

Establishing an independent water regulatory authority stands as a pivotal stride toward effective oversight, ensuring

quality, accessibility, innovation, and stability, benefitting consumers and providers alike.

This decisive move signifies an earnest investment in fortifying the GCC’s future water resilience,” the official stressed. The forum featured 13 working papers on topics such as water quality management, efficiency, and sustainable water management.

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia presented its experience in water sector regulation at the forum. The working paper highlighted the Saudi government’s efforts to improve water efficiency and sustainability.

The forum also discussed topics such as the legal framework for water regulation, restructuring of the water sector, and technical regulation of the water sector.

The second day of the forum will focus on sustainable water management and efficiency improvement. Participants will present working papers on various topics, such as rainwater harvesting, desalination, and water conservation.



## Oman to study energy storage options

CONRAD PRABHU  
MUSCAT, AUG 22

Nama Power & Water Procurement Company (PWP), the sole national buyer of all electricity and potable water output, plans to study options for developing energy storage capacity – a prerequisite for the optimal utilisation of renewable resources in the Sultanate of Oman.

Widely hailed as a game-changer for economies transitioning to clean energy, energy storage allows for the storage of energy for use at another time, thereby enhancing grid reliability, curbing fluctuations in energy costs for consumers, and ultimately helping build a more resilient grid.

Storage becomes imperative when the renewable power source is, for example, solar and wind – renewable electricity from which is intermittent. But when integrated with energy storage, electricity supply is balanced out, ensuring seamless, uninterrupted power supply to industrial and other consumers.

With multiple gigawatts of renewable capacity envisioned for procurement in Oman over the coming decade, PWP – part of Nama Group – says it will evaluate the “potential role of energy storage technologies in Sultanate of Oman’s power system over the period from 2025 to 2040”.

The study, it said, will focus on the “role of such technologies in supporting the transition from today’s predominantly gas-based system to a mixed system with a high renewable energy share consistent with Oman Vision 2040.” “A study will be initiated in 2023 to determine the optimal generation mix including storage optimisation

for the short- and long-term horizons,” the capacity procurer noted in its latest 7-Year Statement detailing the outlook for power and water demand growth over the 2023-2029 timeframe.

However, pending a decision on the deployment of energy storage technologies, renewable energy development will be pursued as a combination of solar and wind based generation – a move designed to mitigate the variability and intermittency factors associated with these energy resources. Nevertheless, energy storage becomes necessary if these challenges are to be fully addressed.

Among the most commonly deployed technologies to support energy storage is Pumped Storage Hydropower, say experts. It centres on the use of surplus power during peak generation to pump water into a reservoir located at a certain height. When required, the reservoir is allowed to drain out into a lower reservoir to produce electricity in the process, particularly when renewable resources are not available.

But rapidly gaining popularity around the world are Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS), which enable energy from renewables, such as solar and wind, to be stored and then discharged when the power the needed.

Regardless of the technologies used, energy storage is indispensable for countries like the Sultanate of Oman that have firm commitments to become carbon neutral by 2050. Managing the peaks and troughs associated with renewable power, without recourse to carbon-emitting power generation, can be achieved only through the deployment of effective energy storage solutions, experts stress.

# Oman hotels post 27.8% revenue increase until July

Total number of guests surge to 1.098 million as Oman attracts diverse international visitors

JOMAR MENDOZA  
MUSCAT, AUG 22

Oman’s hotel industry has demonstrated significant resilience and recovery as it records an impressive 27.8% increase in total revenues until July 2023 compared to the same period last year. This growth is indicative of the country’s success in reviving its tourism sector and attracting a diverse range of international visitors.

According to a preliminary data released by National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the total number of guests

in Oman’s 3-5 star hotels reached 1,098,157 by the end of July 2023, reflecting a remarkable 25.8% surge compared to the figure of 872,796 guests during the same period in 2022. This surge in visitor numbers has had a direct positive impact on the overall revenue generated by the hotel industry.

In terms of revenue, the hotel industry in Oman generated RO 122.530 million until July 2023, a substantial increase of 27.8% when compared to the RO 95.842 million earned during the same period last year.

This growth in revenue can be attributed to the surge in occupancy rates as well as the increased spending by both domestic and international guests.

Analysing the composition of guests, Omani nationals



accounted for 411,551 visitors, reflecting a modest growth of 2.3% from the 402,247 guests recorded in 2022. This slight

increase suggests that efforts to encourage domestic tourism are yielding positive results.

The number of visitors from

the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries witnessed a notable increase, with 99,947 guests visiting Oman until July 2023, representing a 19.1% growth from the 83,909 guests recorded in the same period last year.

Similarly, other Arab guests showed significant interest in Oman, with their numbers increasing by 43.3% from 35,910 in 2022 to 51,567 in 2023.

Diversifying the visitor base, Oman witnessed an influx of tourists from various regions. The number of African guests increased by 37% to reach 6,365 until July 2023, compared to 4,645 visitors in the previous year.

Asian visitors showed remarkable growth, with a 47.1% increase from 111,366 guests in 2022 to 163,779 guests in 2023. Europeans also displayed a strong

interest in Oman, with their numbers surging by 44.4% from 179,751 to 259,949 guests.

American guests experienced a modest growth of 3.3%, reaching 33,420 visitors, while Oceania witnessed an astounding increase of 242.7%, with 24,755 guests visiting Oman in until July 2023.

The rise in visitor numbers has had a positive impact on hotel occupancy rates, which increased by 10.3% compared to the same period last year. This rise in occupancy rates, coupled with increased spending per guest, has contributed to the overall revenue growth in the hotel industry.

The significant growth in Oman’s hotel industry highlights the success of the country’s efforts to promote tourism and attract a diverse range of international visitors.

# OCCI Chairman meets Dhofar’s business leaders

QASIM AL MAASHANI  
SALALAH, AUG 22

The Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Shaikh Faisal al Rawas, met with a group of merchants and businessmen in the Dhofar Governorate on Tuesday.

The meeting focused on discussing the challenges and opportunities facing businesses in the region, as well as ways to promote investment and development in the Dhofar Governorate.

Al Rawas stressed the importance of cooperation between the public and private sectors to achieve sustainable growth and strengthen the local economy.



The merchants and businessmen expressed their appreciation for the meeting and their commitment to working with the Chamber to promote trade and industry in the country. They also welcomed Al Rawas’ focus on communication and cooperation.

The meeting concluded with a call for continued dialogue and collaboration among all stakeholders in order to achieve sustainable development and strengthen the national economy of Oman. Al Rawas reiterated the Chamber’s commitment to supporting merchants and businesses.

He said that the Chamber is working to provide a variety of services that will help businesses

succeed, including training, networking opportunities, and financial assistance.

Al Rawas also highlighted the Chamber’s role in promoting investment and development in the Dhofar Governorate.

He said that the Chamber is working to attract new businesses to the region and to support the growth of existing businesses.

The meeting with the merchants and businessmen in Dhofar is part of Al Rawas’ ongoing efforts to engage with the business community and to listen to their needs.

Al Rawas has said that he is committed to working with the business community to create a more prosperous future for Oman.

## Singapore Airlines to boost services during northern summer season

MUSCAT: Singapore Airlines (SIA) will ramp up frequencies to destinations across its network during the northern summer 2024 operating season starting March 31, 2024 to October 26, 2024, supporting the strong demand for air travel to its key markets.

This includes increasing flight frequencies to pre-pandemic levels across multiple points and exceeding them in some, according to the top management.

These destinations include Dubai in UAE, Beijing and Shanghai in China, Da Nang in Vietnam, Darwin, Melbourne, and Perth (Australia), Tokyo-Haneda (Japan) and many others.

JoAnn Tan, Senior Vice President Marketing Planning, Singapore Airlines, said: “With the release of SIA’s Northern Summer schedules, our customers can plan ahead and start to make their travel plans for 2024.

Our customers will be able to enjoy greater choice and flexibility when they travel with us, as SIA continues to adjust and expand our network in response to demand patterns.”

Also from March 31, 2024, SIA will mount a new four-times weekly service between Singapore and Dubai (SQ496 and SQ497) with the A350-900 medium-haul aircraft.

This will bring services between the two cities from seven-times weekly to 11-times weekly, exceeding the pre-pandemic levels.

“We take immense pride in representing this world-renowned brand as an airline partner over 50 years in the Sultanate of Oman. We would carry forward this legacy with a connectivity option through codeshare partners to travel beyond Dubai on Singapore Airlines.

With this additional frequency airline offers more seamless connections to the rest of the world to cater elite and premium traffic out of Oman,” said Shyamaprasad Kallat, General Manager of Meزون Travel LLC that represent SIA.

## MHD ACERE introduces ‘Unleash your passion’ EMI campaign

MUSCAT: MHD ACERE, the authorised distributor of MG Motor Oman, is thrilled to introduce the “Unleash your passion” EMI Campaign, presenting extraordinary offers on MG’s premium range of vehicles. This limited-time offer, brings an unmatched opportunity for car enthusiasts to experience the sheer power, performance, and technology that MG vehicles are known for.

Discover the MG RX8, an epitome of adventure and sophistication, available at an incredible EMI of RO 96. Equipped with a 2.0L turbo engine, 221 HP, and 360nm torque, the RX8 boasts an intelligent real-time torque-on-demand (TOD) 4WD system, ensuring seamless travel across any terrain.

The flagship MG RX8 Black Edition, available at an EMI of 115, presents a captivating blend of style and technology. With features like Apple CarPlay, Android Auto, and a 10.1-inch touch screen, driving becomes an immersive experience.

For those seeking performance with efficiency, the MG 6, with an EMI of RO 69, offers a 1.5L turbo engine, 7-speed dual-clutch transmission, and an 8”



integrated touchscreen.

The MG HS, starting at an RO of 91, promises power with its 2.0L turbo engine, combined with a 7-speed dual-clutch transmission and intelligent 4WD.

The MG 5, available at an EMI of RO 55, sets new standards with its 1.5L engine, 10.1-inch color touchscreen, and advanced safety features such as the 360-degree camera view.

The MG GT, with a starting EMI of RO 75, offers a blend of elegance and speed, while the MG T60, available at an EMI of RO 91, presents exceptional power with its 2.8L turbo diesel engine and versatile 4x2 and 4x4 configurations.

To make this offer even more enticing, MG is providing additional benefits including

free 1st year insurance, free registration, and 3 years/60,000 kms service [whichever comes earlier].

This holistic package ensures that owning an MG is not just about driving excellence, but also about savings and complete peace of mind.

Speaking about the campaign, Mohsin bin Hani al Bahrani, CEO, MHD ACERE, shared his excitement: “At MG, we aim to ignite the passion of driving in every individual. With the ‘Unleash your passion’ EMI Campaign, we’re making luxury and performance more accessible than ever.

The offers have already started making an impact as seen by the customer response we are receiving at all MG showrooms.”

## Make moments fun with the exciting Kia Seltos

MUSCAT: The sleek and exciting to drive Kia Seltos makes a fine mark with its stylish design and fuel-efficient performance.

The Kia Seltos scores high when it comes to valuable ownership experiences, making it an ideal partner for the long run.

The Seltos SUV has a stylish exterior with long hood, a strong, character line on the front bumper, and sharp lines pressed into the bodywork.

The Seltos’ headlights and taillights add to the style quotient besides providing the car with a commanding and confident presence.

For daytime driving, the car also has LED daytime running lights and rear lamps and 3D multi-layer indicators to make it clear exactly where the Seltos is heading.

For driving in foggy conditions, the car is also equipped with LED fog lights.

The Seltos interior is broad with sweeping shapes and is equipped with a range of technologies to maximise convenience, connectivity and ease of use.

Powering the Seltos is a 1.6-liter gasoline engine producing 121 HP that is



paired to a six-speed automatic transmission (6AT).

To further elevate the driving experience, the Seltos is equipped with a Drive Mode Select system that lets drivers adapt the car to their preferred style or the road conditions.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers. Excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities easily ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way.

No wonder then that Reliable International Automotive has been ranked amongst the top Kia distributors worldwide and has been honoured with prestigious accolades including the ‘Good Partnership award, ‘Family Like Care’ Service award, and ‘Kia ‘Distributor of Distinction’ award.

# Ominvest holds first ESG Champions Forum

MUSCAT: Ominvest, one of the oldest and most successful investment firms in the region, held its first ESG Champions Forum on Monday, August 21 for its group companies to share their successes, challenges, and expertise.

The ESG Champions programme was launched in 2022 to help drive ESG integration within the Ominvest group companies. The programme included a 32-hour training course conducted by the EPLO Institute for Sustainable Development. Since then, additional group companies have joined the ESG Champions initiative.

The training course equipped the ESG Champions with the skills to drive ESG integration within their respective organisations. They have worked with their teams to identify and implement ESG initiatives, measure and report on ESG performance, and



communicate ESG progress to stakeholders.

“We are committed to our purpose of Transforming Businesses to Enrich Societies and believe that ESG is essential to achieving this goal,” said Abdulaziz al Balushi, GCEO at

Ominvest. “The ESG Champions programme is helping us accelerate our ESG journey and make a positive impact on the world.”

The ESG Champions are at different stages of their journey. Some companies have already

made significant progress in improving their ESG standing, while others are in the process of identifying material areas that would create the most meaningful impact. The Forum provided a valuable opportunity for the participants to share their

experiences and learn from one another. “It was great to hear from the other ESG Champions about their successes and challenges,” said Mohammed al Adawi, Investment Analyst at Jabreen Capital. “It was also inspiring to see how committed everyone is to making a difference.”

The ESG Champions programme is just one of the many ways that Ominvest is committed to sustainability. The company has also set ambitious targets to reduce its environmental impact, improve its social responsibility, and strengthen its corporate governance.

“We believe that ESG is not just a nice-to-have, it is a business imperative,” said Abdulaziz al Balushi, GCEO at Ominvest. “We are committed to making a positive impact on the world and the ESG Champions programme is a key part of our sustainability strategy.”

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# Upbeat forecast for M&A as fears of recession recede



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

Mergers and acquisitions activity in the Europe, Middle East and Africa (Emea) region is expected to be “meaningfully up” in the second half of 2023, an industry expert has said.

Total global M&A activity was \$1.36 million in the first half of this year, a figure which includes actual data up to June 16, and projected data to the end of June, according to a new report from Bank of America.

The figure is down from \$2.34 trillion in the corresponding period last year. In the Emea region risk appetite is increasing among investors, according to the report.

“We’ve essentially had five quarters in the reset of deal pricing dynamics. Rationality and balance increasingly prevail between buy-side and sale-side, which is the bedrock of being able to sensibly calibrate and price business plans,” Eamon Brabazon, co-head of Emea M&A at Bank of America, said.

Among the M&A deals that have taken place so far this year was Liberty Mutual agreeing to sell its personal lines and small commercial insurance business in Spain, Portugal and Ireland to Generali (one of the largest global insurance and asset management providers, operating primarily in Europe, the Middle East and East Asia) last June.

In April, the British wealth manager Rathbones agreed a deal to buy Investec Wealth & Investment UK for £839 million.

Well capitalised corporations are continuing to pursue strategic ambitions via M&A, according to the report. It also found that there had been a shift of deal size \$5-10 billion to \$1-5 billion in the Emea region.

While in Ireland (an EU country) – at the time of writing

this report – I gathered M&A deal volumes have experienced a decline during the first half of this year, compared to the corresponding period in 2022, according to a report from Renatus (private equity firm, providing information, accounts, annual return, etc).

The report said that deal making had been impacted by inflation, interest rates and soaring energy prices. A total of 198 deals were reported here in the first half of this year, compared to 226 in the first half last year, Renatus found.

Globally, fears of a deep recession have weighed on M&A activity. However, this is beginning to fade, according to the Bank of America report. The report also found that enhanced regulatory scrutiny is reducing certainty and or delaying the timing of M&A. However, investors remain well capitalised.

There are two main reasons for the drop in M&A activity this year, according to Brabazon. “The first was relative: 2022 enjoyed the highest M&A deal volume in history and hence 2023 has a tough year-on-year comparable.

The second reason was that the general economic slowdown and heightened geopolitical uncertainty which hit elevated levels towards the back end of 2022,” he said.

“This created a temporary brake on deal activity in half one 2023 as the M&A market grappled with higher interest rates and robust inflation. We’ve now passed peak uncertainty and we are poised for a material rebound in European M&A,” Brabazon added.

In the Americas, deal-making this year to date by volume slowed relative to 2022, according to the report. Only energy and power, healthcare and financial institutions saw year-over-year volume growth. Technology, which had the largest deal value contribution in 2022, is down a massive 78 per cent year-on-year.

After a 17-year low in 2022 for upstream oil and gas transactions, high oil prices and capital discipline are setting the stage for “robust” M&A activity this year.

Looking forward, there is increasing optimism regarding the depth and length of looming recession in the Americas, according to the report. In addition, there is an “abundance of capital.

# SMEDA chairperson visits Dhofar to empower entrepreneurs

QASIM AL MAASHANI  
SALALAH, AUG 22

The Chairperson of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA), Halima bint Rashid bin Sulaiman al Zariyah, recently visited the Dhofar Governorate as part of a tour of governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. During her stay, she met with government representatives, visited SMEDA offices, and attended a number of events aimed at promoting entrepreneurship.

One of the highlights of the Chairperson’s visit was a meeting with Dr Ahmed bin Mohsin al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality.

The two discussed ways to strengthen cooperation between SMEDA and the Municipality of Dhofar in order to support the growth of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the governorate.

They also talked about the importance of creating a conducive environment for entrepreneurs, such as providing access to funding, training, and other resources.

Al Zari also visited the SMEDA headquarters in Dhofar Governorate. She met with staff and toured the facilities, which include a business incubation centre and a training academy. She also received updates on the



AL ZARI’S VISIT TO DHOFAR WAS A GREAT OPPORTUNITY TO LEARN MORE ABOUT THE CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES FACING SMES IN THE GOVERNORATE.

progress of SMEDA’s various programmes and initiatives.

In addition to her meetings and visits, the Chairperson also attended a number of events aimed at promoting entrepreneurship.

These included the culminating ceremony of the youth challenges event, which featured an assessment of student projects

and the subsequent recognition of top three projects with awards.

She also virtually perused the Windows Park event website at Iteen Plain, which showcases the work of SMEs in the governorate.

Al Zari’s visit to Dhofar was a great opportunity to learn more about the challenges and opportunities facing SMEs in the governorate. She also reiterated SMEDA’s commitment to supporting the growth of these businesses, which are essential to the economic development of the Sultanate of Oman.

In a statement, she said,

“I am very impressed by the entrepreneurial spirit of the people of Dhofar. I am confident that with the support of SMEDA and other government agencies, these businesses will continue to grow and contribute to the economic development of the region.”

SMEDA is a government agency that was established in 2007 to promote the development of SMEs in Oman. The Authority provides a range of services to SMEs, including training, financing, and business development support.

# Oman’s producer price index decreases by 3 per cent

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman’s producer price index (PPI) in Q2 2023 recorded a decrease of 3 per cent, compared to the same period in 2022, according to data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Prices of oil and gas products fell by 2.5 per cent and non-oil products by 5.5 per cent.

Lower oil and gas prices are attributable to a 1.1 per cent drop in crude oil and natural gas prices and refined oil prices by 10.3 per cent.

The decline in the prices of non-oil products is due to the 7.3 per cent decline in manufacturing group prices, most sub-group prices varying, with the prices of mineral products, machinery and equipment falling by 14.2 per cent, prices of other transportable goods by 6 per cent and prices



of food products, beverages and textiles by 1 per cent.

In the group of food products, beverages and textiles, beverage prices rose by 8 per cent, woven fabric prices by 35 per cent, shoes by 1.8 per cent, bakery and other

food products by 1.7 per cent, while dairy prices fell by 2.3 per cent.

In a range of other transferable goods, the prices of chemical products fell by 11.1 per cent, glass, cement and marble

products by 0.8 per cent, furniture and other goods by 0.4 per cent, refined ferrous waste products by 1 per cent, rubber and plastic product prices by 2.7 per cent and dyes and pharmacy products by 0.2 per cent.

In the range of metal products, machinery and equipment the prices of: Ore, iron, steel or aluminium products decreased by 23.2 per cent, power transformers, electricity and cable distributors by 11.4 per cent, 7.1 per cent for empty compact cylinders, 0.2 per cent for auto oil conditioning units and filters, 2.7 per cent for iron, steel or aluminium products, and 2.4 per cent for water heaters.

In contrast, the mining, electricity and water group’s prices rose by 1.8 per cent as the prices of the subsets of metal ores increased by 45.8 per cent and stones and sand by 13.8 per cent.— ONA

# One of Oman’s biggest data centres set to launch in Muscat

BUSINESS REPORTER  
MUSCAT, AUG 22

Leading Omani data centre services provider Datamount is preparing to shortly launch one of Oman’s biggest data centres at a site in Muscat Governorate.

Al Bandar Centre, set to be inaugurated in the Wilayat of Al Seeb, is the company’s third facility after centres in Muscat and Al Jabal al Akhdhar. Upon its completion over three phases, Al Bandar Centre will accommodate more than 700 racks designed according to the specifications and standards required to meet the

requirements of the level (Uptime Tier III) and (TIA 942 Rated 3).

The centre has recently been connected to the electricity network and chilled water lines provided by Tabreed Oman.

In preparation for commercial operation, the work teams are currently working on calibrating devices and systems and conducting accurate tests for all complex systems associated with the centre, including electricity distribution, cooling mechanisms, fire prevention and control protocols, access safety measures, and centre structure control systems, complete and double



backup generators, double data transmission lines and double electric rooms.

The cooling systems are

designed to operate with cooling exchange systems which also come in double; the centre is also equipped with an internal cooling

device that works with cold water (chiller) as an additional supplement.

Abdulmonem al Futaisi, CEO of Datamount, said the quick spread of digital technologies positively impacts the economy of the Sultanate of Oman, while also contributing to diversifying sources of income and creating job opportunities, whether for Omani youth or small and medium enterprises.

This in turn will contribute to raising the development indicators of Oman and advancing the digital transformation, thereby ensuring the continuity and growth of

the digital economy, artificial intelligence and cloud services in government and private sector. Al Bandar Data Centre can cover the current demand of the local, regional, and international market, he said.

“Datamount has well-trained human and scientific expertise to manage this project at the highest professional level, enabling our customers to achieve integration in digital solutions, simplify their business operations, and protect them at competitive prices from any potential dangers that may arise from cyber threats,” he added.