

HM congratulates leaders of Somalia, Burundi, Rwanda and Canada

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent National Day congratulations to President Hassan Sheikh Mahmoud of Somalia; President Evariste Ndayishimiye of Burundi; President Paul Kagame of Rwanda; and Marie Simon, Governor-General of Canada. In separate cables, His Majesty the Sultan wished these leaders good health and happiness and their peoples progress and prosperity.



P11

VERSTAPPEN LEADS RED BULL ONE-TWO ON SPRINT GRID



P13

NEW INITIATIVES PUSH MSX TO RECORD BEST MONTHLY RISE IN 2023



P20

A WALK IN ZADAR: A LOOP THROUGH HISTORY



BONDING WITH BEASTS

A boy with a herd of camels in Sur.

PHOTO BY ABDULLAH AL GHAILANI

Yiti Sustainable City takes aim at net zero

KABEER YOUSUF
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Oman will soon be home to the first city that is completely run on green energy, a milestone in the national March towards sustainable cities envisaged in the Oman Vision 2040.

The Sustainable City in Yiti, one of its kind projects by Omran, aims to embark upon achieving net zero emissions with the largest sustainable community in the region, with 422 residential units which are designed in line with the highest social, environmental and economic sustainability

standards globally. Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrrouqi, Chairman of Sustainable Development and Investment Company (SDIC), and Chief Executive Officer of Omran, said, “The Sustainable City in Yiti is one of the largest sustainable and urban developments in the region, that meets global green practices and is in adherence to the highest sustainability standards.”

Expected to be completed by 2025, the city will be powered by clean, renewable energy sources, prominently featuring solar panels that are tactically mounted on rooftops and parking facilities. This approach enables residents

to achieve up to 100 per cent energy bill savings.

Simultaneously, the introduction of high-efficiency water systems will lead to a significant decrease in water bills, potentially by as much as 50 per cent.

“The project, developed in partnership with Diamond Developers, is a significant milestone in establishing the first development of this scale in Oman as well as growing our portfolio in developing a responsible tourism sector, and in attracting international partners and investors,” Al Mahrouqi said.

TURN TO P2

Dutch king says sorry for slavery

AMSTERDAM: Dutch King Willem-Alexander issued a historic royal apology on Saturday for the Netherlands’ involvement in slavery, saying he felt “personally and intensely” affected.

Thousands of descendants of slaves from the South American nation of Suriname and the Caribbean islands of Aruba, Bonaire and Curacao attended the celebrations in Amsterdam for “Keti Koti” (“breaking the chains” in Surinamese) to commemorate 150 years since the practice was abolished.

“Today I’m standing here in front of you as your king and as part of the government. Today I am apologising personally,” Willem-Alexander said to loud cheers from the crowd.

“I am intensely experiencing



King Willem-Alexander (R) lays a wreath during the National Remembrance Day of Slavery in Amsterdam on Saturday. – AFP

this with my heart and soul,” the monarch told those attending the event, held under a light drizzle in the capital’s Oosterpark gardens.

Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte already officially apologised in December on behalf of the government. — AFP

Be careful while driving, warns Met

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Holidaymakers must be careful while driving as Oman Met Office warned dust storm in the governorates of Al Wusta and Dhofar.

Thamrait to Haima has been a busy route with tourists taking the road to enjoy Khareef in Dhofar.

The weather officials said the dust and dirt rise will continue on Sunday.

“Pay attention and take caution as dust will continue to rise and visibility will decrease on Saturday and Sunday due to active winds (15-25) knots over the desert areas of Al Wusta and Dhofar governorates, and

opportunities for activity from northwest winds will cause dust to rise on Sunday over parts of Al Buraimi, Al Dhahirah and Al Dakhiliyah governorates.”

Wind speeds at some monitoring stations recorded showed Haima Station with 21 knots Duqm station - 22 knots, Thamrait - 22 knots and Al Mazyouna - 16 knots.

Meanwhile rains continued and a strong hail storm was experienced in Samad al Shan in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi.

Partly cloudy skies are expected along the coastal areas of Dhofar and adjoining mountains with a chance of intermittent drizzle. There are also chances of isolated thunderstorms over the desert

parts of the governorate. Mainly clear skies over most of the governorates with chances of convective clouds development and isolated rain over parts of Al Hajar Mountains and adjoining areas towards afternoon.

There are chances of low clouds or fog patches at late night to early morning along the east coast of Musandam and parts of coastal areas of Oman Sea and Arabian Sea.

Humidity in Muscat is expected to range between 55 to 80 per cent, while in Salalah it will range between 80 per cent to 95 per cent.

The sea is rough along the coastal areas of Arabian Sea with a maximum wave height range of 3.5 metres.



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3-5 star hotels witness 34.7pc revenue growth

HAMAD AL HASHEMI
MUSCAT, JULY 1

The revenues of 3- and 5-star hotels in Oman experienced a notable increase of 34.7 per cent to reach RO 98.4 million by the end of May, as reported by statistics published by the National Centre for Statistics and Information. Furthermore, the occupancy rate in these hotels rose to 13.6 per cent.

The number of guests also showed a significant growth. Among the guests, citizens constituted the largest group, with 274,700 staying in these hotels, followed by European guests with 239,600, and Asians with 110,300. The number of Gulf guests amounted to 54,500.

However, the revenues of these hotels experienced a decline in May, amounting to RO 14.3 million compared to RO 17.6 million in June. Nevertheless, the number of guests remained relatively stable during May 2023, with 133,900 guests compared to 133,800 in June. Citizens remained the dominant group among the guests, with 55,200 staying in these hotels, followed by European guests with 22,000, and Asians with 21,000. The number of Gulf guests reached 10,200.

It is worth noting that the number of guests in (3-5) star hotels in March 2023 totalled 166,600, while in February the number reached 187,800, and in January 2023 it reached 178,700.



Yiti Sustainable City takes aim at net zero

FROM PAGE 1

A diverse selection of 136 eco-friendly residential villas will be designed for sustainable living, each showcasing an elegant and energy-efficient design with spacious three and four-bedroom units.

Additionally, a wide variety of 286 modern apartments will be constructed with the design to enhance the quality of life for residents while reducing their carbon emissions.

The project will further feature a green spine running the length of the community, complete with biodomes and community gardens. This holistic, wellness-inspired environment aims to reduce air and noise pollution with its car-free areas and a variety of outdoor amenities promoting an active lifestyle. These include gyms, swimming pools, a running and jogging track, a cycling track, hiking

trails, and an equestrian club, all powered by alternative energy sources.

The development provides an environment for its residents to live, work and thrive within the community. It boasts a comprehensive master plan that includes a plaza featuring commercial outlets, a school and nursery, 5-star beach resort and spa, a 4-star hotel, a wellness centre, an autism centre and an educational institute.

The project which will pave the way towards Oman's target of Net-Zero Carbon by 2050, whilst providing immense in-country value through job creation, and exceptional tourism, with a focus on a sustainable impact to the circular economy, is considered to be a model that ensures a reduction in carbon footprint, from design to operation, using disruptive innovation to achieve transformational social change.



EID RACES SHOWCASE OMANI CULTURE



Al Yahmadi village in Ibra, Al Sharqiyah North Governorate, marked the third day of Eid al Adha celebrations with traditional camel and horse races showcasing Omani culture and tradition. Despite rains, large crowds gathered to watch the races as the citizens were dressed in their festive dresses, says Dutch neuro psychotherapist and photographer Reinilda van Heuven Dernison who used a wide angle and zoom lens to capture the event.
PICTURE BY REINILDA VAN HEUVEN DERNISON

First batch of Haj pilgrims to return on July 4

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The Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs has announced that the initial group of Omani pilgrims who completed their Haj rituals will be arriving back in the Sultanate. This year, Oman sent a total of 14,000 pilgrims, including 250 expatriate Arabs and an equal number of individuals from various nationalities, through its official website for Hajj registration.

The pilgrims arrived in batches via air transportation well in advance of the religious rituals, which began with the gathering at the foothills of Mount Arafah, a day prior to the Stoning of the Devil and other significant ceremonies.

Expressing gratitude to the Saudi authorities and both government and private entities in both countries, a spokesperson from the ministry stated, "The first flight carrying Omani pilgrims from the holy land will arrive on July 4, Tuesday, and we are delighted to have had a highly successful pilgrimage this year."

The registration process on the Awqaf website allowed all interested citizens and residents in

MILITARY PILGRIMAGE MISSION BACK IN OMAN

MUSCAT: The military pilgrimage mission returned to Muscat on Saturday, arriving from the Holy Land after successfully completing this year's pilgrimage.

At Seeb Air Base, the mission was warmly received by Major General Hamed bin Ahmed Sakroun, Head of the Academy of Strategic and Defence Studies, and Brigadier General Hassan bin Ali al Mujaini, Head of Moral Guidance and Military Ceremonies at the Sultan's Armed Forces. They were joined by several senior officers from the Sultan's Armed Forces and other military and security authorities.

Head of the Academy of Strategic and Defence Studies congratulated the members of the military Haj mission on their safe return and commended the efforts of the mission's commander and administrators. Their dedication ensured that all members of the military mission were able to fulfil the sacred rituals of Haj, providing them with necessary means and



support. The annual military pilgrimage mission is organised under the supervision of the moral

guidance and military ceremonies department at the Sultan's Armed Forces. — ONA

the Sultanate to participate, with priority given to senior citizens, cancer patients, and first-time applicants. A random selection was carried out to determine the final list of pilgrims.

This year, Saudi Arabia hosted nearly 1.8 million

pilgrims, nearly double the number from the previous year. The demanding Haj rituals were completed amidst scorching summer temperatures, culminating in the Stoning of the Devil at the Jamarat complex in Mina on Friday.

Following this, the pilgrims performed the farewell Tawaf at the Grand Mosque in Mecca, circling the Kaaba seven times, before heading to Madinah to pray in the Prophet's Mosque and visit Islamic landmarks, as per the customary traditions.

Workshop held to boost fisheries stocks

MUSCAT: In a collaborative effort between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), a consultative workshop was held to discuss the draft plan for the sustainable management and development of small pelagic fisheries in the Sultanate of Oman. Through video communication, the workshop aimed to enhance the capabilities of stakeholders and specialists involved in the



fisheries sector, ensuring the preservation and responsible utilisation of fish stocks, while

also boosting economic returns and elevating product quality. Attendees included government

officials, FAO representatives, as well as fisheries sector specialists and investors. — ONA



GCC states reaffirm commitment to education as fundamental right

GENEVA: The Gulf Cooperation Council states reaffirmed their belief in the primacy of the right to education and their unwavering commitment to ensuring access to education for all members of society, and the common goals seeking to promote this basic human right.

This came in a statement delivered by Ambassador Idris bin Abdul Rahman al Khanjari, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations and international organisations in Geneva on behalf of GCC countries, within the framework of the interactive dialogue on the report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education in Geneva.

The ambassador explained that the GCC countries are striving to achieve equal access to education in all its stages and equality for all students, regardless of their nationality or social background, and to provide an educational environment that encourages respect for all. The ambassador indicated that the joint cooperation of the GCC states in higher education and scientific research has embodied



the vision of the leaders of the GCC states to achieve progress and development in this field, as high-level ministerial committees, educational centres, and offices have been formed that contribute to enhancing cooperation, exchanging expertise and experiences, and unifying systems.

The ambassador expressed the pride of the GCC countries in implementing their joint initiatives, such as the Gulf Network for Quality Assurance of Higher Education, the scientific research database (Jisr), and the Education Excellence Award, which aims to raise the level of

higher education and scientific research in the GCC countries.

The ambassador said that the strategic plan for cooperation in the field of higher education and scientific research (2022-2026) constitutes an important initiative to achieve the goals of sustainable development and establish global competitiveness in higher education and scientific research, stressing the commitment of the GCC countries to achieve the goals of this strategy through policies, frameworks, and programmes that enhance cooperation and development of the educational system.

Ambassador Idris bin Abdul Rahman al Khanjari affirmed the GCC's unwavering commitment to the right to education as a basic right that plays a fundamental role in immunising children and youth from extraneous ideas and alien to their values, and from exploitation and incitement to hatred, violence, and extremism.

It urges all parties to strengthen their efforts to achieve universal access and quality in education for all, as it represents the basis for achieving sustainable development. — ONA

Nat Geo expedition jet explores Oman's cultural treasures

LIJU CHERIAN
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Embarking on an epic 10-nation adventure, the renowned National Geographic Expedition Private Jet touched down in Oman, captivating travellers on its Europe, Arabian Gulf, and Asia itinerary.

For three extraordinary days from June 24, 62 esteemed guests revelled in Oman's cultural splendours, astounded by the genuine Omani hospitality they encountered.

The expedition was part of Nat Geo's Europe, Arabian Gulf, and Asia itinerary, which used a Boeing 757 throughout the journey.

The guests began their journey from London, United Kingdom, on June 7 and they flew to Berlin, Budapest, Tbilisi, Samarkand, Mongolia, Sri Lanka, Oman, and Egypt, and returned back to London on June 30.

Arun Raj, Vice President of Zahara Tours, expressed his profound honour and privilege in managing the esteemed visit of the prestigious National Geographic Private Jet.

He shared that the 62 guests, the majority of whom were Americans except for two Canadians and a UK national onboard were deeply impressed by the rich cultural heritage of Oman.

They left amazed by the genuine Omani hospitality they encountered during their stay. Arun further emphasised Zahara's immense pride in their

The prestigious National Geographic Expedition Private Jet made a remarkable landing in Oman, marking the seventh stop on its extraordinary 10-nation journey that commenced from London

partnership with the National Geographic Society and eagerly anticipates welcoming more expeditions in the future.

With the luxurious Shangri-La Al Husein as their base, the journey unfolded aboard a Boeing 757, offering unparalleled flexibility and a superior travel experience.

Guided by Zahara Tours, the prestigious expedition took the guests on a captivating journey through Muscat's iconic landmarks, from the majestic Grand Mosque to the exquisite Royal Opera House Muscat and the enlightening National Museum of Oman.

The adventure continued to the awe-inspiring Nizwa Fort, where guests immersed themselves in the art of pottery-making alongside local Omani artisans.

Weaving traditions came to life as encounters with skilled local weavers displayed the intricacies of Omani textiles. Warmly welcomed by Omani children in traditional attire, the guests gained a glimpse into the vibrant cultural fabric of Oman.



ROP urges caution amid dust storm, heavy rains

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The ROP has intensified monitoring efforts to address reckless driving, resulting in the seizure of two vehicles on the Haima-Thamrait road for exceeding speed limits. Legal measures have been taken against the drivers to reinforce the importance of adhering to traffic regulations.

Furthermore, heavy rainfall in certain areas of Nizwa has led to the flow of wadis, prompting authorities to evacuate public parking lots in front of Nizwa market. Citizens are advised to comply with instructions and exercise vigilance to ensure their safety.



Emphasising the significance of responsible driving, the General Traffic Department urges all road users to abide by traffic rules and regulations, prioritising the well-being of themselves and others.

Highlighting the alarming impact of excessive speed, the ROP cites research studies showing that a mere 10 km/h reduction in speed can lead to a 20-per cent decrease in accident probability, a 30-per cent decrease in injuries, and a 40-per cent decrease in fatalities.

With road safety as a paramount concern, the ROP continues its efforts to raise awareness and foster a culture of cautious driving, aiming to mitigate the occurrence of traffic accidents and their devastating consequences.

Explore diverse beauty and rich heritage of Taqah

QASIM AL MAASHANI
TAQAH, JULY 1

The wilayat of Taqah is a popular tourist destination in Dhofar Governorate during the Khareef season. It is characterised by its diverse terrain and geological features, including mountainous regions, water springs, caves, creeks, and silver beaches. Taqah also boasts numerous historical landmarks that shed light on its rich civilisation.

Located along the coastal strip of the governorate, east of Salalah, Taqah has a population of 21,487 people, living in over 153 neighbourhoods and population centres. Taqah is known for its fishing industry, and its sardine catches are used for animal feed and agricultural fertilisers.

The wilayat also has several ancient archaeological sites and distinct tourist attractions.

The ancient city of Samhuram is one of the most notable archaeological sites in Taqah

From majestic mountains and cascading waterfalls to ancient archaeological sites and traditional crafts, Taqah offers a mesmerising experience for adventurous travellers seeking an off-the-beaten-path destination in Oman

dating back to 3rd millennium BC. Another notable site is Taqah Castle located in the heart of the City and is currently undergoing maintenance. Taqah is also known for its water springs, which give rise to magnificent waterfalls during Khareef. The wilayat is also home to various cave structures, some of which can be visited by adventure-minded tourists.

Wadi Darbat is one of the most



significant wadis in Dhofar. It is also known for its picturesque landscapes, lush vegetation and large trees, including Sidr trees. The valley is a natural garden with captivating scenery.

Taqah also boasts a range of prominent crafts, cottage industries, and traditional arts. Fishing, livestock rearing, honey extraction, dairy production, and

carpentry are among the most noteworthy crafts. Industries such as leather, palm frond weaving, fishing net production, handicrafts, sewing, and embroidery also thrive here.

The municipal council in Taqah has emphasised the importance of preserving environmental cleanliness and avoiding damage to green areas and public facilities.



They have also highlighted risks associated with swimming in the sea and water springs during the Khareef.

Said al Mashani, a prominent figure in the wilayat, says Dhofar is an ideal year-round tourist destination, owing to its diverse terrain and abundance of captivating sites and distinctive attractions.

In particular, the wilayat also includes large mosques, historical buildings, and archaeological villages dating back to three thousand years BC, and castles dating back to 19th century AD. Its picturesque settings vary from the soft sand beaches to desert expanses, wadis, towering mountains, and water springs in the hinterlands.



RESONATING RHYTHMS OF TRADITION AND CELEBRATION



OMANI DRUMS TAKE CENTRE STAGE IN FESTIVITIES AND CELEBRATIONS AS PERCUSSION INSTRUMENTS REPRESENT THE BASE OF MUSIC AND DANCE IN OMANI FOLK ART



TEXT, PHOTOS BY
YAHYA AL SALMANI

OMANI DRUMS are one of the vital musical instruments used in many folk arts. During social or national occasions, people find the sounds of drums resonate with their beautiful rhythms on various occasions.

Thus, during the Omanis' celebration of Eid al Adha, popular chants did not leave them. The sounds of drums resonate in the old alleys, and the squares of the celebration field are filled with folk bands singing songs of loyalty to Allah, the homeland and the Sultan.

Among the most important drums used for popular songs are Al Rahmani, Al Rannah and Al Kaser. Al Rahmani is considered the most important percussion instrument in Omani traditional music. It can be heard in all governorates of Oman. This type of drum plays the role of the rhythmic base, so its sound is deep and full compared to other accompanying percussion instruments.

As for Al Rannah drums, they are distinguished by their medium size, and this type gives a thicker sound than Al Rahmani. Al Rannah is used in the arts like Al Ayalah, and Al Rannah varies according to the diversity of the art and the area used in it.

As for Al Kaser, its size is smaller

than Al Rahmani, so it makes a shrill sound compared to Al Rahmani. The relationship between Al Rahmani and Al Kaser is a closer one, and we often see them together because each completes the role of the other.

Studies confirm that percussion is a dominant feature in traditional Omani music and has the lion's share of these arts. Percussion instruments represent the base of music and dance in Omani folk art. If we compare percussion instruments with melodic instruments used in traditional Omani music, we find seven melodic instruments compared to 27 percussion instruments.

Traditional drum makers are widespread in most regions of the Sultanate, and all of them, without exception, inherited the craft from their ancestors, which contributed greatly to its survival. There are many details in making drums and distinguishing their leather and wood, starting from choosing the type of leather, through the stage of cleaning it, and ending with determining its location in the drum, with the aim of obtaining a special tone for the traditional art. There are many types of wood used in the manufacture of drums, including walnut wood, Sidr wood, mangroves, and many other types which are imported from West Asia and East Africa.

Despite the difficulty of practicing this profession which requires precision and high skills, the practice of the craft of musical instruments still exists. Omanis inherited this art from their older generations.

Omanis are skilled in making drums and Tambourah.

To make the best types of drums, the trunk of the wood is hollowed out evenly, and this

work needs longer periods, maybe several weeks. After completing the hollowing of the wooden trunk, the stage of laying the skin begins. Sheep and cow skins are used in this industry, and the leather is fixed to the wood after cleaning it with traditional tools.

The most used types of wood in the manufacture of Omani drums namely trunks of Acacia trees, Al Suqam, Al Neem, Al Qurum, and the palm trees. In addition to instruments made of wood, it is sometimes found that percussion instruments such as Al Rahmani, in which metal cylinders are used from old materials. The skins used in making drums are sheep, cows, and sometimes camel skin.

Studies indicate that the history of making drums goes back 6,000 years. This industry relied on clay barrels that were discovered in a mountainous area in the east of the Czech Republic.

According to sources, the large round drum is the oldest type of drum. The Sumerian Obelisk, known as the Badra Obelisk, which is in the Iraqi Museum, is considered one of the oldest percussion instruments, dating back to between 2600-2500 BC, and one of the most famous drums among the ancient Sumerians and Babylonians was the sacred drum, as it was necessary to listen to its rhythm with great respect. In addition, drums were sacred, especially during the Babylonian and Assyrian eras.

During the festive Eid occasions, one can hear the rhythms of the drums that resound in public squares and popular neighbourhoods. This indicates the Omanis' adherence to their traditional heritage, which they inherited from their ancestors centuries ago.



A SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket sits on Launch Pad 40, July 1. — AFP

Europe's space telescope to target universe's dark mysteries

KENNEDY SPACE CENTER: Europe's Euclid space telescope blast off on the first-ever mission aiming to shed light on two of the universe's greatest mysteries: dark energy and dark matter.

The launch is planned from Cape Canaveral in Florida at 11:12 am local time on a Falcon 9 rocket of the US company SpaceX.

The European Space Agency was forced to turn to billionaire Elon Musk's firm to launch the mission after Russia pulled its Soyuz rockets in response to sanctions over the war in Ukraine.

After a month-long journey through space, Euclid will join its fellow space telescope James Webb at a stable hovering spot around 1.5 million kilometres from Earth called the second Lagrange Point.

From there, Euclid will chart the largest-ever map of the universe, encompassing up to two billion galaxies across more than a third of the sky.

By capturing light that has taken 10 billion years to reach Earth's vicinity, the map will also offer a new view of the 13.8-billion-year-old universe's history.

Scientists hope to use this information to address what the Euclid project manager Giuseppe Racca calls a "cosmic embarrassment": that 95 per cent of the universe remains unknown to humanity.

Around 70 per cent is thought to be dark energy, the name given to the unknown force that is causing the universe to expand at an accelerated rate.

And 25 per cent is dark

matter, thought to bind the universe together and make up around 80 per cent of its mass.

"Ever since we could see stars we've wondered, is the universe infinite? What is it made out of? How does it work?" Nasa Euclid project scientist Michael Seiffert said.

"It's just absolutely amazing that we can take data and actually start to make even a little bit of progress on some of these questions."

Euclid consortium member Guadalupe Canas told a press conference that the two-tonne space telescope was a "dark detective" which can reveal more about both elements.

Euclid, which is 4.7 metres tall and 3.5 metres wide, will use two scientific instruments to map the sky.

Its visible light camera will let it measure the shape of galaxies, while its near infrared spectrometer and photometer will allow it to measure how far away they are.

The light coming from billions of light years away is slightly distorted by the mass of visible and dark matter along the way, a phenomenon known as weak gravitational lensing.

"By subtracting the visible matter, we can calculate the presence of the dark matter which is in between," Racca said.

While this may not reveal the true nature of dark matter, scientists hope it will throw up new clues that will help track it down in the future. — AFP

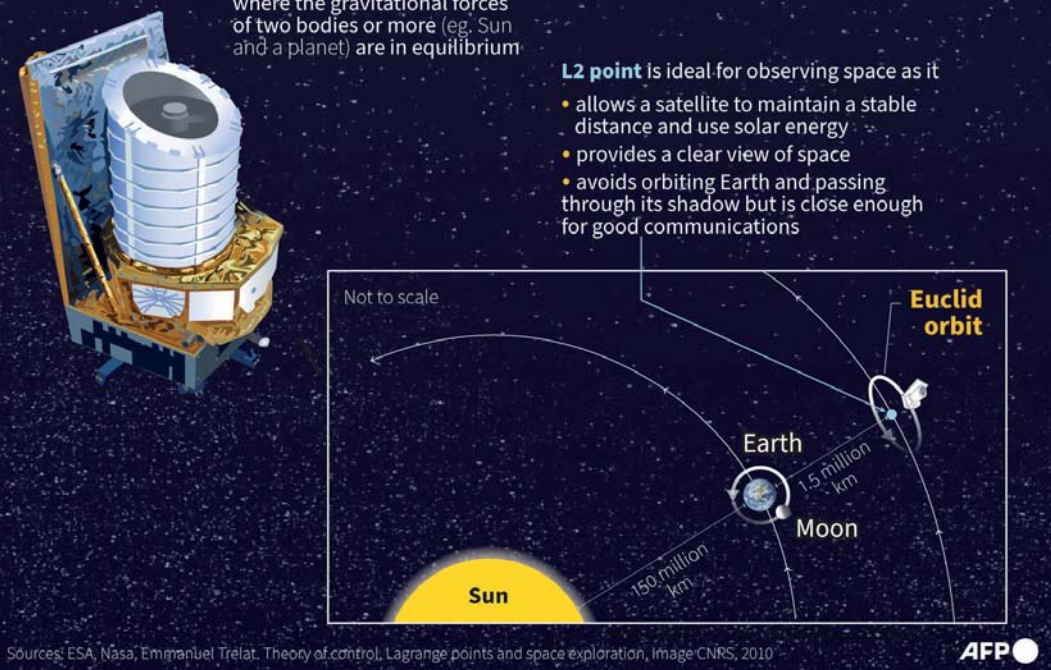
Europe's space telescope Euclid

The spacecraft will be sent to explore the evolution of the dark matter and dark energy in the Universe, joining the James Webb telescope in orbit around the **second Lagrangian Point, or L2**

A **Lagrangian point** is a point where the gravitational forces of two bodies or more (eg. Sun and a planet) are in equilibrium

L2 point is ideal for observing space as it

- allows a satellite to maintain a stable distance and use solar energy
- provides a clear view of space
- avoids orbiting Earth and passing through its shadow but is close enough for good communications



A Palestinian poses for a souvenir picture with an RPG launcher during a military exhibition in Gaza City. — AFP

Hamas displays weapons for first time in Gaza

GAZA CITY: The armed wing of Gaza, Hamas, has put its weapons on public display for the first time, drawing hundreds of Palestinians brandishing rocket launchers for selfies.

Dressed in black balaclavas and tactical camouflage suits, members of the Ezzedine al Qassam Brigades mingled with young men and women at the exhibition in Gaza City's Unknown Soldier's Square.

"Resistance is an image and a memory. Take souvenir photos with many of Al Qassam's weapons," the group said in an invitation on social media and posters in mosques.

The event was the first at which Hamas has allowed the public to take photos of weapons.

Among the Hamas weapons on display in Gaza City were a range of locally manufactured missiles, "Shihab" drones, rocket-propelled grenade launchers and Russian-made "Kornet" missiles.

Exhibitions are also scheduled to take place in the north and centre of the Gaza Strip, where people are normally forbidden to approach and photograph military sites.

At the entrance to the Gaza City exhibition a banner welcomed visitors, some of whom had come with their families and children. Dozens of uniformed Al Qassam Brigades members were on hand.

"I came with my family to take photos with the weapons and reinforce the spirit of resistance in our children," said Gaza resident Abu Mohammed Abu Shakian. The exhibition is "encouraging and means that the liberation of our land is near", added Shahadeh Dalou, who also came with his children.

Bassam Darwish, 58, said people wanted to show their support for the Al Qassam Brigades.

"Everyone is happy and proud of the Al Qassam exhibition. We are here because we're proud of the resistance," he said. — AFP

LANDS FOR SALE

- ◆ Residential commercial land in Wilayat Bausher/ Al Gubrah Al Janubiyah adjacent to Oman Mall and overlooking Muscat Expressway and has an area of 5000 sqm.
 - ◆ Residential commercial land in Wilayat Bausher/ Ghala has an area of 2934 sqm.
 - ◆ 5 Industrial lands in Wilayat Duqum/ Duqum Al Hadithah and each has 7500 sqm.
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25 dead after bus catches fire in India

MUMBAI: At least 25 people were killed and eight others injured in western India when a bus crashed and caught fire on an expressway early on Saturday.

The bus was travelling to the city of Pune when it hit a pole and overturned after midnight, causing its diesel tank to catch fire, senior police officer Baburao Mahamuni said. "There were about 30 to 35 people in the bus. Twenty-five people have died and eight others are injured," he said.

The injured have been admitted to a hospital near the site of the crash in Maharashtra state, about 400 kilometres east of India's financial capital Mumbai.



The driver and conductor of the bus were taken into custody for questioning, state rural development minister Girish Mahajan told reporters. "The

driver is saying the tyre of the bus burst, after which it hit a pole. But it seems he had dozed off. We will have to see what actually happened," he said.

Mahajan added that the bodies had been charred beyond recognition and forensic teams were on their way to help in identification.

One of the survivors of the accident said he got out of the burning vehicle via a window.

"The passenger seated next to me and I managed to escape by breaking the rear window," he told the Press Trust of India (PTI) news agency. "But not everyone could do it." A witness to the crash said he unsuccessfully tried to help rescue passengers stuck inside the burning bus.

"We saw people getting burnt alive," he said. "The fire was so intense that we could not do anything." — AFP

هيئة تنمية المؤسسات الصغيرة والمتوسطة SMEs Development Authority



In order to support and enable small and medium enterprises and provide a business environment that contributes to developing these establishments and enhancing their growth, SMEs Development Authority floats the following tenders:

SR.	Tender Name	Tender No.	Last Date for Collecting Tender Documents	Last Date for Bid Submission	Tender Price
1	Maintenance and Rehabilitation of Business Centre and Incubators in Rustaq	104/2022	6/7/2023	31/7/2023	RO 40 (Forty Omani Rials)

Requirements for participating in the tenders:

Establishments and companies registered with the General Secretary of Tender Board, specialized in the tender's scope and interested in participating the aforesaid tenders can collect the documents related to the tenders electronically through Isnad Platform: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>



Emergency personnel survey the scene of a burnt out building, which was set alight overnight during continuing protests in the suburb of Nanterre. – AFP

Riots rock France ahead of funeral of teenager shot by police

PARIS: More than 1,300 people were arrested in France during a fourth night of rioting before the funeral on Saturday of Nahel M, whose shooting by police sparked the unrest, in the Paris suburb where the teenager died.

The government deployed 45,000 police and several armoured vehicles overnight to tackle the worst crisis of President Emmanuel Macron's leadership since the "Yellow Vest" protests which brought much of France to a standstill in late 2018.

Macron postponed a state visit to Germany that was due to begin on Sunday due to the unrest, both countries said.

The interior ministry said that 1,311 people had been arrested

overnight, compared with 875 the previous night, although the violence was "lower in intensity".

Nahel, a 17-year-old of Algerian and Moroccan descent, was shot by a police officer during a traffic stop on Tuesday in the Paris suburb of Nanterre, where buses were halted and the area quiet on a damp Saturday morning after more overnight rioting.

Several hundred people lined up to enter Nanterre's grand mosque, which was guarded by volunteers in yellow vests, while a few dozen bystanders watched from across the street.

Salsabil, a young woman of Arab descent, said that she had come to express support for Nahel's family.

"I think it's important we all stand together," she said.

Marie, 60, said she had lived in Nanterre for 50 years and there had always been problems with the police.

"This absolutely needs to stop. The government is completely disconnected from our reality," she said.

The shooting of the teenager, caught on video, has reignited long-standing complaints by poor and racially mixed urban communities of police violence and racism. Macron had denied there is systemic racism in French law enforcement agencies.

"If you have the wrong skin colour, the police are much more dangerous to you," said a young

man, who declined to be named, adding that he was a friend of Nahel's.

Looters have ransacked dozens of shops and torched 2,000 vehicles since the start of the riots, which have spread to cities such as Marseille, Lyon, Toulouse, Strasbourg and Lille.

More than 200 police officers have been injured, Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin said, adding that the average age of those arrested was 17.

Mayor Benoit Payan called on the government to send extra troops to tackle "pillaging and violence" in Marseille, where three police officers were slightly wounded on Saturday.

— Reuters

Kenya in shock as road crash toll hits 52

NAIROBI: The death toll from a grisly road crash in western Kenya rose to 52 on Saturday, police said, as rescuers worked to clear the wreckage from one of the deadliest traffic accidents in the country in recent years.

A truck carrying a shipping container veered out of control and ploughed into multiple other vehicles and people thronging a busy road junction on Friday evening, plunging the nation into shock and mourning.

"The toll has risen to 52 after three more people succumbed to their injuries in hospital," local police commander Geoffrey Mayek said.

The disaster occurred at Londiani junction on a busy highway between the lakeside town of Nakuru and Kericho, an area known for its lush tea plantations.

Transport Minister Kipchumba Murkomen told reporters during a visit to the site that new safety measures would be introduced after what he described as a "terrible" and "painful" tragedy.

"Investigations have been

launched to establish the cause of this accident but we urge drivers to be cautious and follow the rules," he said, adding that the truck was believed to have been bound for Rwanda.

Rift Valley Regional Commissioner Abdi Hassan said earlier that rescuers had resumed a search for victims believed trapped under the wreckage, but it was not known if the updated toll included bodies recovered from the site.

Hassan added that more than 30 people were injured when the truck rammed into private cars, minibuses, boda bodas (motorcycle taxis) and market stalls at Londiani junction.

Kenyan station Citizen TV said the truck driver had died, but this could not be immediately confirmed independently.

Footage from the scene late on Friday showed the mangled wreckage of multiple vehicles, doors torn off minibuses and motorbikes crushed into chunks of twisted metal, as rescuers worked in the dark under pouring rain.

— AFP



A police officer stands where a lorry veered off the road and ploughed into several vehicles, along the Nakuru-Kericho highway, in Kericho county, Kenya. – Reuters

UN chief arrives in Haiti for 'solidarity' visit: official

PORT-AU-PRINCE: UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres arrived in Haiti on Saturday for a lightning visit aimed at showing "solidarity" with the country's people as it navigates a "tragic cycle" of overlapping security, political and economic woes, his spokesperson said.

For months, the world body's leader has raised the alarm bell about the situation in the Western Hemisphere's poorest country, which has been wracked by gang violence, a worsening public health situation and political instability.

Guterres — making his first visit to Haiti as UN secretary-general — is expected to meet

with Prime Minister Ariel Henry as well as other political leaders and members of civil society, his spokesperson said in announcing his arrival.

Guterres will "reiterate the UN's support for Haiti, his strong appeal for the international community to continue to support Haiti and its humanitarian needs, as well as his call for the immediate deployment of an international force to assist the Haitian National Police," his office said.

Nine months after Guterres first asked the Security Council for such a force, no country has been willing to step forward to lead one, fearing high risks and uncertain success.



William O'Neil, United Nations' independent expert on human rights monitoring in Haiti, speaks during a press conference in Port-au-Prince. – AFP

Canada and Brazil have both been heavily involved in discussions and several Caribbean nations have backed a multinational force.

President Joe Biden has made clear that the United States, which

has a long history of intervention in Haiti, will not lead a force and instead wants to focus on bolstering the fledgling national police.

The United Nations has meanwhile been clear about the nightmare suffered by many Haitians on a daily basis, shootings and kidnappings are frequent.

"Haitians and our team there tell me it's never been worse than it is now," UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) Executive Director Catherine Russell said this week after returning from Port-au-Prince.

Russell highlighted "unprecedented hunger and

malnutrition, grinding poverty, a crippled economy, resurgence of cholera, and a massive insecurity that creates a deadly downward spiral of violence."

Compounding the crises, the flooding and earthquakes which ravage the country "continue to remind us all just how vulnerable Haiti is to climate change and natural disasters," she told a briefing.

Guterres is also planning to "underscore the need for a Haitian-led, inclusive political pathway towards elections and the return of constitutional order in Haiti," his spokesperson said.

— AFP

KYIV

Spain PM to kick off EU presidency

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez arrived in Kyiv on Saturday to signal EU support for Ukraine as the country's commander-in-chief said he was frustrated by the slow deliveries of Western weapons. Sanchez, whose country kicked off its presidency of the European Union, was expected to meet with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky later on Saturday.

His visit also comes ahead of a key Nato summit in Vilnius later this month that is expected to



map out the future relationship.

"In Kyiv already. I wanted the first act of the Spanish presidency of the council of the European Union to be in Ukraine," Sanchez wrote on his official Twitter account, saying he would convey "all of Europe's solidarity." — AFP

TUXTLA GUTIERREZ

16 kidnapped police employees are freed

Sixteen police employees who had been kidnapped in Mexico's southern state of Chiapas have been freed after three days of captivity, Governor Rutilio Escandon said.

Confrontations between criminals and law enforcement have multiplied recently in the area, which is a transit zone for migrants and drug trafficking.

"I want to tell the people of Chiapas and Mexico that the 16 kidnapped colleagues have been released this afternoon," the



governor said. Local television stations aired live footage of the abductees reuniting with their families. The relatives had been staging a sit-in at the Chiapas Security Secretariat, demanding the safe release of their loved ones. — AFP

BEIJING

Military delegation visited UK, France

A Chinese military delegation visited the Britain and France from June 24 to Saturday to discuss the development of bilateral defence relations, China's Ministry of Defence said on Saturday.

The delegation of the People's Liberation Army's defence strategy consultation exchanged in-depth views on international and regional security issues of common concern.

A spokesperson for Britain's Ministry of Defence said



"Discussions covered respective National Defence Strategies; the situation in Ukraine; Security in the Indo-Pacific; Strategic Stability and Proliferation; the South China Sea and Taiwan; and the UK-China military relationship." — Reuters

State Department report on Afghanistan exit urges ‘worst case’ thinking



Michael Crowley

The writer is a diplomatic correspondent in the Washington bureau.

The State Department should plan better for worst-case scenarios, strengthen its crisis-management capabilities and ensure that top officials hear “the broadest possible range of views,” including ones that challenge their assumptions and decisions.

Those were some of the key findings of a State Department review of the US withdrawal from Afghanistan in summer 2021, which contributed to the sudden collapse of the Afghan government and required a massive airlift to rescue roughly 125,000 US citizens and Afghans who had assisted the United States.

The review also portrayed a department that scrambled to respond to the crisis due to unfilled senior positions, unclear leadership on planning efforts and a shortage of seasoned diplomats in Kabul, the capital of Afghanistan.

The document addresses what even many Democrats call a foreign policy debacle for the Biden administration: its failure to more adequately prepare for the abrupt collapse of the Afghan state and avoid days of harrowing chaos in Kabul surrounding an emergency exit that included a terrorist bombing at the city’s airport that killed as many as 170 civilians and 13 US troops.

Biden officials have long said that few envisioned such a rapid Taliban takeover of the country, that exiting under any circumstances would have been difficult and that the United States made the right strategic decision to withdraw.

The report does not pin blame on specific individuals and mentions Secretary of State Antony Blinken only in passing. But it does say that in both the Trump and Biden administrations, “there was insufficient senior-level consideration of worst-case scenarios and how quickly those might follow.”

Even after it became clear that the Taliban would capture Kabul, the report says, the department’s response featured confusion about responsibilities and authorities. Under Blinken, the State Department’s participation in executive branch planning for an evacuation “was hindered by the fact that it was unclear who in the department had the lead,” the report finds.

Another shortcoming: By the time the frantic airlift from Kabul began, top State Department officials “had not made clear decisions” regarding which Afghans would be eligible for evacuation, nor



US Marines guard a wall at an entrance to the international airport in Kabul, Afghanistan, on Aug. 22, 2021.

where they would be taken.

It also says that the department “failed” to establish a broad Afghanistan task force as the situation there deteriorated in late July and early August 2021, and that such a step “would have brought key players together to address issues related to a possible” mass evacuations.

At the same time, the 87-page report — less than half of which was publicly released on Friday because much of it is classified — points to several factors largely beyond the Biden administration’s control to explain the chaos that followed the government’s collapse and does not directly condemn the Biden administration.

It says, as Biden officials have many times before, that the coronavirus pandemic severely limited operations at the US Embassy in the months before the withdrawal, making it difficult to process special visas for Afghans hoping to leave the country before the Taliban’s return. The report also suggests that the Trump administration had committed to withdrawing troops from Afghanistan after a 20-year occupation without planning for how the United States might maintain a diplomatic presence in the country and what to do about the tens of thousands of Afghans who, fearing Taliban reprisals, had applied for those

special visas.

The report says its review team “was struck by the differences in style and decision making” between the Trump and Biden administrations, “most notably the relative lack of an interagency process in the Trump administration and the intense interagency process that characterised the initial period of the Biden administration.”

“This included a particular focus very early in the Biden administration on the fate of those eligible” for American visas and assistance, which the report says led to “successful” early steps to address a huge backlog of Afghans who had begun requesting to leave the country. “That movement, however, was still in its early days as Kabul fell to the Taliban,” the reports finds.

The report repeats assertions made by Blinken and others that few US officials had foreseen how quickly the Afghan military and government would collapse and notes that close observers “apparently including the Taliban itself” agreed.

“That said,” it adds, “as security conditions in Afghanistan deteriorated, some argued for more urgency in planning for a possible collapse.”

In mid-July 2021, nearly two dozen Kabul-based US diplomats sent Blinken a cable through the department’s “dissent” channel urging that evacuation flights

for Afghans begin in two weeks and that the administration move faster to register them for visas.

That cable has become a focal point for congressional Republicans critical of the administration’s handling of the withdrawal. Rep. Michael McCaul, R-Texas, chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, threatened to hold Blinken in contempt of Congress when he initially refused to provide the memo to his committee.

Blinken allowed McCaul to view the document in May but says he will not release it publicly to protect internal discussions within his department. McCaul has said the full committee should be able to see the cable — including the panel’s top Democrat, Rep. Gregory Meeks of New York, who has also asked to read it. The issue remains unresolved.

Responding to a question about the report during an appearance at the White House, President Joe Biden did not address its findings. But he defended his decision to continue the withdrawal initiated by his predecessor.

In a memo to department employees on Friday, Blinken said the report had identified “several areas where we could have done better, and where processes and systems could be improved,” and said he had already acted upon many of its recommendations.

The report repeats assertions made by Blinken and others that few US officials had foreseen how quickly the Afghan military and government would collapse.

Brazil bars Bolsonaro from office for election fraud claims



Jack Nicas

The writer is the Brazil bureau chief for The New York Times

Brazilian election officials on Friday blocked former President Jair Bolsonaro from seeking public office until 2030, removing a top contender from the next presidential contest and dealing a significant blow to the country’s far-right movement.

Brazil’s electoral court ruled that Bolsonaro had violated Brazil’s election laws when, less than three months before last year’s vote, he called diplomats to the presidential palace and made baseless claims that the nation’s voting systems were likely to be rigged against him.

Five of the court’s seven judges voted that Bolsonaro had abused his power as president when he convened the meeting with diplomats and broadcast it on state television. “This response will confirm our faith in the democracy,”

Alexandre de Moraes, a Supreme Court justice who leads the electoral court, said as he cast his vote against Bolsonaro.

The decision is a sharp and swift rebuke of Bolsonaro and his effort to undermine Brazil’s elections. Just six months

ago, Bolsonaro was president of one of the world’s largest democracies. Now his career as a politician is in jeopardy.

Bolsonaro said on Friday that he was not surprised by the 5-2 decision because the court had always been against him. “Come on. We know that since I took office they said I was going to carry out a coup,” he told reporters. “This is not democracy.”

His lawyers had argued that his speech to diplomats was an “act of government” aimed at raising legitimate concerns about election security.

Bolsonaro appeared to accept his fate, saying on Friday that he would focus on campaigning for other right-wing candidates.

Yet he is still expected to appeal the ruling to Brazil’s Supreme Court, although that body acted aggressively to rein in his power during his presidency. He has harshly attacked the high court for years, calling some justices “terrorists” and accusing them of trying to sway the vote against him.

Even if an appeal is successful, Bolsonaro would face an additional 15 cases in the electoral court, including accusations that he improperly used public funds to influence the vote and that his campaign ran a coordinated misinformation campaign. Any of those cases could also block him from seeking the presidency.

He is also linked to several criminal investigations involving whether he provoked his supporters to storm



Judge Alexandre de Moraes, centre, a member of Brazil’s Supreme Court, in Brasilia.

Five of the court’s seven judges voted that Bolsonaro had abused his power as president when he convened the meeting with diplomats.

Brazil’s halls of power on Jan. 8 and whether he was involved in a scheme to falsify his vaccine records. A conviction in any criminal case would also render him ineligible for office, in addition to carrying possible prison time.

Bolsonaro was a shock to Brazil’s politics when he was elected president in 2018. A former army captain and fringe far-right congressman, he rode a populist wave to the presidency on an anti-corruption campaign.

His lone term was marked by controversy from the start, including a sharp rise in deforestation in the Amazon rainforest, a hands-off approach to the pandemic that left nearly 700,000 dead in Brazil and harsh attacks against the press, the judiciary and the left.

But it was his repeated broadsides against Brazil’s voting systems that alarmed many Brazilians, as well as the international community, stoking worries that he might try to hold on to power if he lost last October’s election.

Bolsonaro did lose by a slim margin and at first refused to concede. Under pressure from allies and rivals, he eventually agreed to a transition to President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

After listening to Bolsonaro’s false claims for years, many Bolsonaro supporters remained convinced that Lula, a leftist, had stolen the election. On Jan. 8, a week after Lula took office, thousands of people stormed Brazil’s Congress, Supreme Court and presidential offices, hoping to induce the military to take over the government and restore Bolsonaro as president.

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

limiting social interactions to virtual friends or family members.

While there are no clear causes for this phenomenon, it is believed to arise from a combination of social, psychological, and cultural factors. This is often triggered by the relentless pursuit of academic success, rigid societal expectations, and an intensely competitive environment which can overwhelm individuals, leading to a sense of failure, anxiety, and ultimately, withdrawal.

In some cases, family dynamics such as overprotective parents, or lack of emotional support can contribute to 'hikikomori.'

While pre-existing mental health conditions such as depression, anxiety disorders, or social phobia can predispose individuals to 'hikikomori' making it difficult for them to re-engage with the outside world.

Some psychologists believed the recent rise of technology and social media provided an escape for 'hikikomori,' enabling them to create social connections without physically interacting with others.

The consequences of 'hikikomori' impact individuals, families, and society as a whole. The prolonged isolation can exacerbate existing mental health issues and lead to the development of new ones.

Physical health may also suffer due to a sedentary

lifestyle, poor nutrition, and lack of exercise. 'Hikikomori' can also pose a significant economic burden on families, as they may become dependent on financial support from parents or government welfare programmes.

Reintegrating 'hikikomori' individuals into society is a complex and gradual process. The longer the withdrawal period, the more challenging it becomes for them to re-establish social connections, pursue education or employment, and lead fulfilling lives.

So how can governments address 'Hikikomori?' This requires a comprehensive and multi-faceted approach such as enhancing mental health support, investing in mental health resources, counselling services, and awareness campaigns that can help individuals and families recognise the problems and seek professional advice.

Encouraging a more holistic approach to education that places less emphasis on academic performance and offers alternative pathways for success can help alleviate the pressures faced by young individuals.

Support groups also see a role for them in which they can provide safe spaces for socialisation and gradual reintegration into society.

Promoting healthy communication within households is crucial as it helps in resolving conflicts between family members and makes the young person feel more accepted by his family.

FRANKIE TAGGART

A circular portrait of a middle-aged man with short brown hair, glasses, and a light beard. He is wearing a dark suit jacket over a light blue shirt. The background is blurred.

Michael D Shear

The writer is an American journalist who is a White House correspondent for NYT

The Supreme Court's rejection on Friday of President Joe Biden's student debt relief plan instantly unravels one of the president's signature efforts and ratchets up the pressure on him to find a new way to make good on a promise to a key constituency as the 2024 presidential campaign gets underway.

When Biden announced last summer that his government would forgive up to \$20,000 in federal student loan debt, student advocacy groups and many progressives cheered the move, which was projected to help 40 million people and cost \$400 billion.

"People can start finally to climb out from under that mountain of debt," Biden said. His plan, which came after months of agonising about whom it would benefit and whether it was too costly, would have been a centrepiece of his argument to voters that his economic agenda is designed to help low- and middle-income Americans blaze a path to greater prosperity.

Instead, a majority of the justices agreed with critics who said the president's debt relief plan went beyond the president's authority under congressional legislation allowing changes to student loans during a public emergency.

A White House official said on Friday that Biden would soon denounce the court ruling and make it clear that he would continue to fight for debt relief. The official said that the president would "announce new actions to protect student loan borrowers."

The official, who asked for anonymity to discuss strategy before Biden's remarks, said the White House would blame Republicans for being responsible for denying relief to those who have federal student loans.

That challenge for Biden and his advisers is exactly how to respond to the disappointment of millions of his supporters who again face the



A 'cancel student debt' poster on a lectern before demonstrators spoke outside the Supreme Court in Washington.

FOR MUCH OF LAST YEAR,
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PRESIDENT'S PLAN

daunting prospect of paying back tens of thousands of dollars in debt they accumulated for college.

For much of the last year, administration officials have refused to say whether they were working on a “Plan B” in the event the Supreme Court rejected the president’s plan.

Even after several justices expressed deep scepticism during oral argument earlier this year, Biden and his aides continued to insist that they had confidence in the legality of the debt relief plan and would not say whether they were working on an alternative.

In fact, advocates believe there are ways for the federal government to provide debt relief to some students even in the wake of the court’s ruling. The administration has already been offering help to some students using

Public Service Loan Forgiveness, a programme which provides debt relief to people who work full time for state, local, federal or nonprofit organisations.

The administration has already said it will make more use of existing programmes that allow lower-income people to adjust their repayment plans based on their income.

But the existing debt relief programmes are more targeted and affect a far smaller population of people. They are not likely to satisfy the frustrations of tens of millions of people who had expected their financial situation to improve dramatically under Biden's plan.

And millions of people with federal student loans are about to get another financial shock this autumn when the yearslong pause on repayment of existing loans ends.

The federal government, under former President Donald Trump, imposed the pause on repayments at the beginning of the pandemic as businesses shut their doors and millions of people lost their jobs. Biden renewed the pause several times since taking office but has said it will not be renewed again now that the pandemic has largely ended.

— *New York Times*

— New York Times

To comment & email: opinion@omanobserver.om

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I’m not complaining, but...

When it rains we want sunshine. When it’s hot, we want rain. We are so fickle aren’t we? Even though we know it’s the weather, and we are never going to change it. Are we just naturally moaners? Is it something we have had to work on? Or do we just moan because we can’t stand being happy?

Many of us complain about social media, some of the rubbish that’s on it. But we rarely turn it off! What’s that about? I love what Irishman Kevin Barry wrote about getting up in the morning and having a ‘good old moan.’ “I get up, groan, write a bit, moan, eat breakfast, write some more, cycle through the hills, make up some songs as I pedal along, sing them, have lunch, have a nap, moan, groan, write a bit more, cook dinner, feed wifey, open a bottle or several, slump, sleep and snore,” having had a wonderful day.

Some of us are proper challenges aren’t we, as even our faiths don’t prevent us from dissatisfaction, and it takes very little to start us off. Some of us moan about everything, but ironically, will not hear a single complaint about ourselves. I think some people enjoy complaining about everything, almost as much as they enjoy doing nothing about it. They prefer to whine and complain, than to do something about it. So they must get something out of it.

Robin Kowalski, Professor of Psychology at Clemson University says, “It’s just something we do, like breathing, only not quite so often.” “In short,” he said, “Yes, it’s good to complain, yes, it’s bad to complain, and yes, there’s a right way and a wrong way to do it.”

The trick, apparently, is in doing it right, which starts with understanding how ‘complaining’ is often misused to describe a variety of behaviours, with some of those being more harmful, or helpful than others. Achieving



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SOME OF US ARE PROPER CHALLENGES AREN’T WE, AS EVEN OUR FAITHS DON’T PREVENT US FROM DISSATISFACTION, AND IT TAKES VERY LITTLE TO START US OFF. SOME OF US MOAN ABOUT EVERYTHING, BUT IRONICALLY, WILL NOT HEAR A SINGLE COMPLAINT ABOUT OURSELVES

sufficient diversity requires a clear understanding of the exigencies of vocabulary that vacillates between venting, problem solving and ruminating. Knowing which behaviour you are engaged in, with what purpose, can help improve your emotional health and build stronger relationships with the people around you, according to the man in the white coat.

Claudia Schiffer says, “All of my friends are about my age, and we are all ageing at the same time. We talk about it and moan, but it (ageing) doesn’t worry me.” Oh really? Claudia Schiffer... what’s she got to moan about? She’s got an hourglass figure, a wonderful smile, at 52 she looks 32, she’s a supermodel, and Forbes estimates her wealth at around \$55 million dollars.

I do like the Terry Pratchett quote: “Tragic heroes moan when the Gods take an interest in them, yet it’s those who the Gods ignore that I feel sorry for.” However then again, like Pratchett’s writing, as one with limitless imagination and humour. If we were looking for reasons not to moan, complain, or get too serious about ourselves, then his Discworld series is a tongue-in-cheek look at us, and our lives from a different, only similar perspective. His characters have a delightful attitude to moaning and complaining, seeing them as a keen portrayal of character.

My many years have given me just enough wisdom to understand that I don’t have enough patience to hold a grudge, I don’t have sufficient memory to stay mad at someone. Neither do I have enough words left in me to complain about things that I can never change.

Whatever are right and wrong I will debate, but not extensively. I will ponder what is fair, and what is not, what others have and I don’t, but at the end of the day... I’m seriously happy I get to wake up in the mornings... really.

REMEMBERING A TRANSFER



People wave Chinese and Hong Kong flags at an event celebrating the 26th anniversary of the former British colony’s handover to Chinese rule in Hong Kong, China on Saturday. – Reuters

India and the global balance of power

When Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi met with US President

Joe Biden in the White House this month, many observers saw the makings of an evolving alliance against China. But such expectations are overwrought. As Indian Foreign Minister Subrahmanyam Jaishankar has made clear, a formal alliance is not in the cards, even if it is still possible to maintain long-term partnerships in a multipolar world of “frenemies.”

India has a long history of post-colonial mistrust of alliances. But it has also long been preoccupied with China, at least since the Himalayas border war the two countries fought in 1962. While serving in President Jimmy Carter’s administration, I was sent to India to encourage PM Morarji Desai to support a South Asian nuclear-weapons-free zone, lest the burgeoning nuclear race between India and Pakistan get out of hand. As my Indian hosts told me at the time, they wanted to be compared not to Pakistan in South Asia, but to China in East Asia.

After the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, the United States and India began 20 years of annual “Track Two” talks between former diplomats who were still in close



Joseph S. Nye, Jr.

FOLLOWING THE BASIC LOGIC OF BALANCE-OF-POWER POLITICS, INDIA AND THE US SEEM FATED NOT FOR MARRIAGE BUT FOR A LONG-TERM PARTNERSHIP — ONE THAT MIGHT LAST ONLY AS LONG AS BOTH COUNTRIES REMAIN CONCERNED ABOUT CHINA

contact with those in government. The Indian participants shared their US counterparts’ concerns about Al Qaeda and other extremist threats in Afghanistan and Pakistan, but they also made clear that they objected to the Americans’ tendency to think about India and Pakistan as “linked by a hyphen.” The Indians were also concerned about China, but they wanted to maintain the appearance of good relations — and access to the Chinese market. China has long been one of India’s largest trading partners, but its economy has grown much more rapidly than India’s. Using market exchange rates, China represented 3.6 per cent of world GDP by the turn of this century, but India did not reach that level until the 2020s.

In the 2000s, as China’s growth far outpaced theirs, the Indians in the Track Two talks worried not just about China’s support for Pakistan, but also about its increasing global power more broadly. As one Indian strategist put it, “We have decided we dislike you less than we dislike China” — and this was long before the 2020 skirmish on the disputed Himalayan border, where 20 Indian soldiers were killed.

The India-US alignment has since strengthened considerably. A decade ago, the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (“Quad”) meetings between US, Indian, Japanese, and Australian diplomats were downplayed; now, they are loudly publicised and held at the head-of-government level. India today holds more joint military exercises with the US than with any other country.

But this arrangement is a far cry from an alliance. India still imports over half its arms from Russia, is a major buyer of sanctioned Russian oil (alongside China), and frequently votes against the US at the United Nations. Indeed, India has still refused to condemn Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine, just as it failed to condemn the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan in 1979. For all of India’s self-congratulation as the world’s largest democracy, it has not come to the defence of democratic Ukraine. Its top priorities are to maintain its access to arms and oil, and to avoid pushing Russia further into China’s arms.

Though Biden has invited Modi to both of his Summits for Democracy, there is no shortage

of Western and Indian critics who have decried Modi’s illiberal turn towards Hindu nationalism. Recent statements about the two largest democracies’ “shared values” may sound nice, but they, too, do not make an alliance. The key to Indo-US relations is the balance of power with China, and India’s place in it.

In this respect, India’s importance is growing. Earlier this year, it surpassed China as the world’s most populous country. As its population has grown to 1.4 bn, China has been experiencing demographic decline, with a labour force that peaked. Moreover, India’s economy is on track to expand by 6 pc this year — faster than China’s — making it the world’s fifth-largest economy. If it continues at this rate, it could be the same size as the eurozone economy by mid-century.

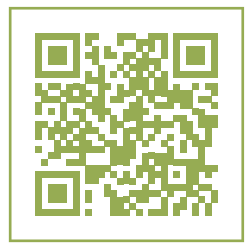
With a huge population, nuclear weapons, a large army, a growing labour force, strong elite education, a culture of entrepreneurialism, and links to a large and influential diaspora, India will remain a significant factor in the global balance of power. But one should not get carried away. India alone cannot

balance China, which got a big head start in its development. China’s economy remains about five times larger, and poverty is still widespread in India. Of India’s 900 million working-age people, only around half are in the labour force, and more than one-third of females are illiterate. For India’s growing population to be an economic asset, rather than a potential liability, it will have to be trained. Though China’s labour force has peaked, it rests on a higher average level of education.

Despite the selective decoupling of trade in key strategic sectors, India still does not want to forego access to the Chinese market. While it participates in the Quad, it also participates in the Shanghai Cooperation Organization and the periodic meetings of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa). Although it no longer speaks of non-alignment, nor is it interested in restrictive alliances. Following the basic logic of balance-of-power politics, India and the US seem fated not for marriage but for a long-term partnership — one that might last only as long as both countries remain concerned about China.

sport

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UAE Team Emirates' British rider Adam Yates cycles to the finish line to win the 1st stage of the 110th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 182 km departing and finishing in Bilbao, in northern Spain, on Saturday. – AFP

ADAM BEATS SIMON IN YATES TWINS ONE-TWO ON TOUR STAGE ONE

BILBAO, Spain: Britain's Adam Yates pipped his own twin brother Simon to claim the opening stage of the Tour de France and don the first yellow jersey of this year's race at the end of a 182.5-km loop around Bilbao on Saturday.

Adam got the better of identical twin Simon to triumph for the first time on a grand tour, while his UAE Emirates team leader Tadej Pogacar finished third, also raising his arms in celebration.

Yates, who had set a devilish pace for Pogacar in the brutal climb shortly before the finish, pushed on in the descent to Bilbao, joined by his brother who

is riding for the Jayco-AlUla team.

Adam was the stronger in the final uphill drag to prevail by four seconds, with Pogacar, who showed great legs in his first stage race since breaking a wrist in April, crossing the line 12 seconds off the pace.

"My brother came across to me and we started working together. At first, I didn't know if I should work with him, so I asked my team on the radio and they said 'Yeah, go for it,'" said Yates after his maiden victory on a grand tour.

"We're really close. To share this experience with him is really nice - but I wish he would pull a



UAE Team Emirates' British rider Adam Yates celebrates on the podium with the overall leader's yellow jersey after the 1st stage of the 110th edition of the Tour de France cycling race, 182 km departing and finishing in Bilbao, in northern Spain, on Saturday. – AFP

little bit easier because he almost dropped me one moment! I'm super happy, I just want to keep my feet on the ground."

Overall, Yates leads his brother by eight seconds after picking up 10 seconds for the stage win, while Pogacar is 18 seconds off the pace. Pogacar took a four-second bonus for his third place to take a slight advantage over defending champion Jonas Vingegaard, who was the only main contender to follow the Slovenian when he attacked on the Cote de Pike, 10 km from the finish.

Earlier, Spain's Enric Mas became the first of the 176 riders

to abandon the race, quitting after crashing heavily on a descent some 22 kilometres from the line.

The Movistar leader, a three-time Vuelta a Espana runner-up who finished fifth overall on the Tour in 2020, fell off his bike alongside Ecuador's Richard Carapaz, one of the other podium contenders.

Carapaz of the EF Education team climbed back on his bike after being attended to by race doctors and was hovering more than 10 minutes behind the leading bunch, eventually rolling over the line a hefty 15:24 off the pace. — Reuters

Oman Olympic teams to compete in Arabian Sports Games in Algeria

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, JULY 1

Oman's athletes will aim for medals at the Arabian Sports Games which will be held in Algeria during July 5 to 15. The official delegation arrived recently to Algeria city by beside the football team while the other sporting teams including athletics, sailing, weightlifting and para-athletics will travel according to their dates of the competition.

Oman's chances are high in all the above five competitions despite the expected tough competition.

Oman Olympic football team will commence the Sultanate of Oman's participation in the Arabian event as they will take on the hosts Algeria in the opener for group A matches. The match will start at 12:00 am (Monday – Oman time) at the 19th May in Annaba city. Football and some other sports competitions will start ahead of official opening of the event. Oman team, lead by the national head coach, Akram Habreesh, will aim for a winning



Start which will encourage the team to show their better in the upcoming games. Oman will meet Lebanon in the following fixture on Wednesday before concluding their group matches against Sudan on Saturday.

The athletics competition will take place during July 4 to 7. Oman's athletes are in good shape after the intensive camp in Türkiye and Morocco.

Recently, Oman's athletes claimed five medals including two gold in the Arabian Athletics Championship in Marrakesh. Oman finished fifth place in

the overall medal tally. Oman sprinter Mohammed al Saadi managed to clinch the silver medal in the men's 200 meter race as he clocked 20.62 seconds. Top long jumper Salim bin Saleh al Yarubi bagged two gold medals in long jump competition and in the triple jump competitions. Oman's 4X400 meter relay team comprising Mohammed al Mabsali, Othman al Busaidi, Hamza al Jabi and Ahmed al Saadi emerged with the bronze medal after finishing the race within a timing of 3.14.25 minutes. The first Omani

medal registered in the Arabian meet was by Oman's Fatik Abdulghafoor who claimed the medal in high jump competition as he registered a jump with a mark of 2.15 meters.

Eng Ibrahim al Mahdawi, Chairman of Oman Volleyball Association and OOC board member will lead Oman's delegation in this event, while Ahmed al Jahdhami will be the chief de mission. Badar Awlad Thani will be the assistant chief de mission. Other delegates include Moosa al Hinai, Fahad al Zuhaimi and Ahmed al Farsi.

Windies fail to qualify for WC for first time

HARARE: Two-time winners West Indies will not play in the 50-over Cricket World Cup for the first time after a comprehensive seven-wicket loss to Scotland in their Super Six clash at the qualification tournament in Zimbabwe on Saturday.

Scotland won the toss and elected to bat, restricting West Indies to 181 all out in 43.5 overs. Brandon McMullen was the pick of the bowlers with 3-32 in nine overs. Scotland chased down their target with ease, reaching 185 for three in 43.3 overs as McMullen struck 69 and opener Matthew Cross was unbeaten on 74. West Indies have no points from their three games in the Super Six stage and cannot overhaul Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe, who have six points each from their three fixtures.

Scotland's win moves them to four points and they remain in contention with fixtures against Zimbabwe and Netherlands to come. West Indies, who have lost to Scotland in 50-over cricket for the first time, had been criticised by their own coach Daren Sammy, who said they were the worst fielding team in



the qualifiers and they were poor again on Saturday.

"We need to look at all areas. We have let ourselves down at this tournament. We have to go one way from here and that is up," captain Shai Hope said at the post-match presentation.

"I don't think we gave that 100 per cent effort every single time. We only did it in patches"

— Reuters

Khawaja and Smith fall as England rally in Ashes

ANDY JALIL
LORD'S, JULY 1

Usman Khawaja's brilliant form continues in this series as he took Australia to 130 for two before rain brought an end to the third day's play in the second Test. Following his scores of 141 and 65 in the previous Test, he was unbeaten with another excellent innings of 58 with Australia on an overall lead of 221 and eight wickets remaining.

The tourists were given a fine start to their second innings with Khawaja and Warner putting on 63 for the first wicket. Both batsmen settled in playing watchfully. England, however, got the breakthrough in the 25th over soon after Josh Tongue was brought on. Warner on 25 was trapped in front of the stumps with the ball coming into the left hander. The batsman reviewed the decision unsuccessfully.

Khawaja progressed well picking up the runs. Having got into the forties, he played two lovely strokes for four, both of Stuart Broad. For the first he went on the back foot to square cut and then a square drive. His partner



Australia's Usman Khawaja celebrates after reaching his half century with Marnus Labuschagne. – Reuters

Marnus Labuschagne survived two confident appeals by Broad for lbw and a snick behind. He was on 3 and on 8 at the time.

At tea, Australia were 81 for one with Khawaja on 45. After the break, on 49, he straight drove a full toss from Broad to bring up his 23rd Test half century. Labuschagne then survived another confident appeal for lbw, replays showed he was fortunate that a review was not requested by England.

He took his score to 30 with a chipped four behind square leg followed by a single before cutting James Anderson into the hands of backward point and Australia were 123 for two. Seven runs later rain



England's Stuart Broad celebrates with Ben Stokes after taking the wicket of Australia's Usman Khawaja caught by Matthew Potts. – Reuters

stopped play at 5.10 pm local time, with Khawaja on 58 from 123 balls with 40 of his runs coming from boundaries and Steve Smith on 6.

Eventually, 35 minutes later, the umpires decided that conditions were too wet for any further play.

Earlier, Australia could hardly have wished for a better start to the third day's play as the second ball of the day removed the England captain after his side had resumed their first innings on 278 for four. Ben Stokes was 17 overnight with Harry Brooks on 45 and England were trailing by 138 runs.

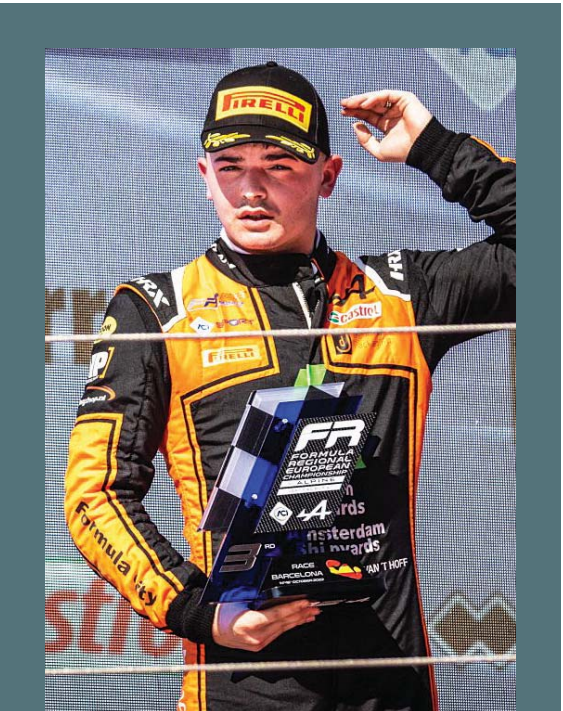
Stokes got a leading edge to the first ball he faced from Mitchell Starc which was angled in and

straightened on him and Cameron Green held a sharp catch at third slip.

Harry Brooks needing five for his fourth Test half century got to it after six further overs before driving a catch to covers off Starc and that was 293 for six. The first bowling change soon accounted for Jonny Bairstow who chipped Josh Hazlewood for a catch at mid-on for 16 and 13 runs later off-spinner Travis Head had Ollie Robinson held behind for 9 to reduce England to 324 for eight.

With Nathan Lyon ruled out for the rest of the match and possibly for the rest of the series with a calf injury sustained on the second day, Head now had the spinner's role which he fulfilled well with two for 17 from his seven overs. His second victim was Broad whom he trapped leg before wicket for 12 on 325.

Finally, on the same total Cummins wrapped up the innings having Tongue held for one in his first Ashes innings having made his England Test debut in the previous Test against Ireland four weeks earlier. England had conceded a 91-run first innings lead to Australia.



Dutch teenager van't Hoff dies in crash at Spa

BELGIUM: Dutch teenager Dilano van't Hoff died in an accident during a wet Formula Regional European Championship race at Belgium's Spa-Francorchamps circuit on Saturday, his team said.

The 18-year-old, who won the 2021 Spanish F4 championship, was racing for the Dutch MP Motorsport outfit at the Belgian Grand Prix circuit.

"MP Motorsport is deeply saddened to confirm that our driver, Dilano van't Hoff has passed away as a result of a crash during the second race of the Formula Regional European Championship by Alpine at Spa Francorchamps," they said.

The race, in wet conditions with heavy spray, was on the support programme for the 24 Hours of Spa endurance race.

Formula Two teams and drivers competing at the Austrian Grand Prix held a minute's silence.

"Dilano died in pursuit of his dream to reach the pinnacle of motorsport. Along with the entire motorsport community, our thoughts are with his family and loved ones," said Formula One chief executive Stefano Domenicali.

French racer Anthoine Hubert died four years ago in an F2 race at Spa-Francorchamps.

Media reports said van't Hoff was caught up in a multi-car collision during a late restart. — Reuters

Ingebrigtsen, Aregawi shine at Lausanne Diamond League

LAUSANNE: Norwegian Jakob Ingebrigtsen stormed to an impressive victory in the men's 1,500m over Ethiopian challenger Lamecha Girma at the Lausanne Diamond League meet on Friday.

Ingebrigtsen clocked 3min 28.72sec for a new meet record at the Stade de la Pontaise in unseasonably chilly conditions at the sixth of the season's 14 meets in track and field's elite circuit.

Girma had set a new world record in the 3,000m steeplechase in Paris earlier this month, on the same night that Ingebrigtsen broke the rarely-run 2 miles record.

But the Norwegian made



Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen celebrates winning Men's 1,500m event during the IAAF Diamond League "Athletissima" athletics meeting in Lausanne, on Friday. – AFP

no mistake in Lausanne with a masterful display, Girma having to content himself with second place in an Ethiopian record of 3:29.51.

"I have had to make some adjustments with my strategy, I have been putting in extra

miles in the last couple of weeks," said Ingebrigtsen.

"It's all to get myself in the best shape possible for the worlds" in Budapest in August, said the Norwegian, who was left bitterly disappointed in Eugene last year after being outsprung by Briton Jack Wightman for world 1,500m gold.

Girma's team-mate Beriha Aregawi, 22, became the fifth fastest runner ever over the 5,000m when he soared to a win in 12:40.45, another meet record -- and also a personal best and the world's fastest time this season.

With temperatures hovering around 17 degrees

Celsius (64F), Aregawi, who was fourth in the 10,000m at the Tokyo Olympics, launched into an impressive solo assault that saw Uganda's world record holder Joshua Cheptegei finish second (12:41.61).

"I am delighted to be here and to win against Joshua," beamed Aregawi.

Cheptegei added: "My goal is to get back to the form I was before, getting faster race by race and tonight is the proof of that."

"I still have a lot to improve on, a lot to work on, but if I believe in myself, I will reach my objectives."

— AFP

Verstappen leads Red Bull one-two on Sprint grid

SPIELBERG: Formula One leader Max Verstappen was almost half a second quicker than team-mate Sergio Perez as he led a Red Bull one-two in the pole shootout for Saturday's standalone sprint race at the Austrian Grand Prix.

The double world champion lapped his team's home Red Bull Ring with a fastest time of one minute 04.440 seconds on a drying track to complete a qualifying double after securing pole on Friday for Sunday's main grand prix.

Perez, a disappointing 15th on Friday, is Verstappen's closest title rival but a massive 69 points behind after eight races so far this season.

Red Bull have won all of them, Verstappen six.

"The track was drying out so lap after lap you were improving, you had to be on track at the right time," said the Dutch driver.

"I think we did well. The car was in a good window, good balance. Very happy of course to be first.



"Yesterday was a shame for the team so it was good to have both cars up there today."

Perez, who needs a strong result after four races in a row without finishing on the podium, said it was good to show what he was capable of.

"It's nice to have a lockout in the Red Bull Ring for the team," said the Mexican, who

Red Bull's Max Verstappen celebrates after qualifying in pole position. – Reuters



was 0.493 slower than his team-mate. "It will be nice to get back to the victory."

McLaren's Lando Norris will line up in third place for the sprint with Haas driver Nico Hulkenberg fourth.

Ferrari's Carlos Sainz was fifth but team-mate Charles Leclerc, sixth fastest at the chequered flag, was handed a three-place grid drop to ninth for impeding McLaren's Australian rookie Oscar Piastri.

Sainz was in danger of being out in the first phase after a brake-by-wire problem but then went fastest of all with his sole flying lap.

Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso and Lance Stroll moved up to sixth and seventh.

Mercedes had a difficult shootout, with seven-time world champion Lewis Hamilton out in the first phase and set to start in 18th place, while George Russell starts 15th after an hydraulic problem kept him in the garage.

— Reuters



US player Madison Keys holds aloft the winner's trophy after winning against Russia's Daria Kasatkina during their women's singles final tennis match at the Rothesay Eastbourne International tennis tournament in Eastbourne, southern England, on Saturday. — AFP

KEYS LIFTS EASTBOURNE TITLE FOR SECOND TIME

EASTBOURNE, United Kingdom: Madison Keys claimed the Eastbourne International for the second time on Saturday after holding off a fightback by Daria Kasatkina to win 6-2, 7-6 (15/13).

The American appeared to be cruising towards her third grass court title as she raced through the first set and led 4-1 in the second.

Kasatkina was battling the blustery conditions and a series of net cords that went in Keys' favour but found her stride to take five of the next six games.

However, the Russian, who will enter the world's top 10 next week, was broken when serving to take the second set.

Instead a marathon tie-break ensued as Kasatkina again battled back from 5-2 down to have four set points.

Keys' booming forehands though dug the world number 25 out of trouble and she eventually took the title on her fifth match point.

"It feels like home," said Keys of backing up her first ever WTA title at Eastbourne in 2014.

"Being able to win the title here twice now makes me have very fond memories of Eastbourne."

Keys will now turn her attention to Wimbledon, where she faces British wildcard Sonay Kartal in the first round on Tuesday.

Kasatkina is in action at the All England Club on Monday against American Caroline Dolehide. — AFP

“
It feels like home. Being able to win the title here twice now makes me have very fond memories of Eastbourne

MADISON KEYS
American professional tennis player

Djokovic eyes eighth Wimbledon title and 24th Slam crown

LONDON: Novak Djokovic has Roger Federer's record of eight Wimbledon titles and a 24th major in his sights as he closes in on a first calendar Grand Slam in 54 years.

Fresh from breaking out of a tie with Rafael Nadal for 23 Slams at the French Open, the 36-year-old Djokovic will comfortably be the overwhelming favourite at the All England Club when he starts his title defence on Monday.

With a 10th Australian Open and third Roland Garros already wrapped up this season, an eighth Wimbledon triumph would leave Djokovic needing just the US Open in September to emulate Rod Laver's sweep of all four majors in 1969.

"He takes your legs, then he takes your soul, then he digs your grave and you have a funeral and

you're dead. Bye-bye. Thank you for coming," said coach Goran Ivanisevic when asked to caption the Serb's Grand Slam mindset.

Djokovic has won the title on his last four visits to Wimbledon and has not lost on Centre Court since the 2013 final.

His 86 match wins are only bettered by the now retired Federer and are more than the rest of the current top 20 put together.

Of those players, only two -- Cameron Norrie and Hubert Hurkacz -- have made the semi-finals of Wimbledon.

Amongst his top five rivals, not one has got beyond the last 16 while two-time champion Nadal is sitting out the rest of the year through injury.

A 24th major for Djokovic would take him level with Margaret Court for the most



Serbia's Novak Djokovic in action during practice. — Reuters

Grand Slam titles won by one player. World number one Carlos Alcaraz will be Djokovic's biggest threat, especially as the young Spaniard now has a maiden grass-court title in his collection thanks to his win at Queen's last weekend.

However, Alcaraz conceded key ground by admitting that the stress and tension of facing Djokovic in the semi-final at the French Open caused the cramping that sparked his defeat.

Ivanisevic described Djokovic as "unbelievable".

"He's still moving like a cat on the court. He's there. Like a Ninja, he's everywhere. He's going to find some kind of motivation to win 24, maybe 25, who knows where is the end."

Not surprisingly, Alcaraz has attempted to shift all the focus onto Djokovic.

"I saw that Djokovic has never lost a match on Centre Court since 2013 when he lost against Andy Murray -- so it's 10 years, it's crazy," said Alcaraz who made the last 16 in 2022 before falling to Jannik Sinner.

"But I hope to have the crowd behind me to change that stat."

Moscow-born Elena Rybakina was the shock women's champion in 2022.

Her decision to switch allegiance to Kazakhstan in 2018 proved to be a wise move when all Russian players were banned last year.

However, her chances of successfully defending her title have suffered a setback by her failure to shake off a virus which forced an early withdrawal from the French Open.

— AFP



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Oman’s
GDP at
constant
prices tops
RO 8.7bn



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman’s gross domestic product (GDP) at constant prices at the end of Q1 2023 increased by 4.7 per cent to reach RO 8.700 billion, compared to RO 8.306 billion at the end of Q1 2022, according to the preliminary data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

This increase is mainly attributed to the growth of non-oil activities by 4.6 per cent, as it increased from RO 5.807 billion at the end of Q1 2022 to RO 6.761 billion at the end of Q1 2023.

The total service activities recorded a growth of 4.5 per cent to reach RO 4.124 billion, compared to RO 3.947 billion at the end of Q1 2022.

Agriculture, forestry, fishing and industrial activities also increased by 10.1 per cent and 4.4 per cent, respectively.

Oil activities recorded a growth of 3.5 per cent at the end of Q1 2023, recording RO 2.829 billion compared to RO 2.732 billion at the end of Q1 2022. — ONA

New initiatives push MSX to
record best monthly rise in 2023



MUSCAT: The initiatives announced by the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) in cooperation with the National Programme for Financial Sustainability and the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) have restored optimism to the MSX to record its best monthly rise in 2023, up 141 points, including 86 points in the last four days of last month’s trading, and the MSX index ended its trading at 4,768 points, recording its best level since April 17.

On June 21, MSX, in cooperation with the National Programme for Financial Sustainability, announced six initiatives to enhance the position of the stock exchange and attract investments, including initiatives related to the market maker, lending and borrowing of securities, and the liquidity fund.

This is in addition to the OIA’s announcement of allocating RO 100 million to support liquidity in the stock exchange through the “liquidity fund” initiative launched by the agency in cooperation with

MSX, IN COOPERATION WITH THE NATIONAL PROGRAMME FOR FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY, ANNOUNCED SIX INITIATIVES TO ENHANCE THE POSITION OF THE STOCK EXCHANGE AND ATTRACT INVESTMENTS, INCLUDING INITIATIVES RELATED TO THE MARKET MAKER, LENDING AND BORROWING OF SECURITIES, AND THE LIQUIDITY FUND

National Programme for Financial Sustainability and Financial Sector Development.

The OIA said the ‘liquidity fund’ initiative includes a portfolio valued at RO 100 million riyals to support the initiatives of the market maker and liquidity provider on the MSX saying that the portfolio will constitute a percentage of the daily trading volume on the stock exchange.

The agency also affirmed its readiness to cooperate with companies that will operate in market making in the field of attracting new investments and liquidity to the MSX.

It is expected that this positive atmosphere will be reflected in the trading of the MSX for July, at a time when the public shareholding companies will announce their

financial results for the first half of this year.

The initiatives came at a time when the national economy is witnessing good growth with high government revenues and increased government spending, which is expected to reflect positively on the public shareholding companies listed on the stock exchange.

The MSX last month benefited from the positive disclosures on the expected mergers and the entry of strategic investors in some listed companies, so that the stock market witnessed an increase in the prices of 43 securities compared to 26 securities whose prices fell and 25 securities that stabilised at their previous levels.

The sectoral indices recorded an increase, except for the service

sector index, which declined by 6 points, while the financial sector index recorded the highest growth, up 271 points, the industrial sector index rose 155 points, and the Sharia index rose to 478 points, up 12 points.

The trading value decline last June to RO 52.8 million, compared to RO 59.6 million in May and RO 122.4 million in April. The number of executed deals decreased to 8,308, compared to about 14,000 in May and 11,000 deals April.

This decline is due to the decline in the number of trading days in June to 18 days, compared to 23 days in May. This is also due to the fact that most of the subscribers from the category of small shareholders in Abraj Energy Services Company sold their shares.

There is also to the fluctuation in the trading value in which June 14 saw the highest trading value at RO 7.3 million, while June 12 it recorded the lowest trading value during the month at RO 1.1 million. — ONA

Growth in
money supply
in Oman

MUSCAT: The money supply in the Sultanate of Oman experienced a notable expansion with the broad money supply (M2) increased by 1.8 per cent year-on-year, to reach RO 21.1 billion by the end of April 2023.

While cash in the narrow sense decreased by 0.9 per cent, the increase in cash in the broad sense was attributed to the increase in quasi-cash by 2.8 per cent, which consists of the sum of savings deposits and time deposits in Omani Riyals plus certificates of deposit issued by banks, in addition to collateral margin accounts.

All deposits in foreign currency with the banking sector.

During the same period, cash with the public decreased by 5.3 per cent, while demand deposits increased by 0.4 per cent.

With regard to the interest rate structure of conventional commercial banks, the weighted average interest rate on deposits in Omani riyals increased from 1.891 per cent in April 2022 to 2.192 per cent in April 2023, and the weighted average interest rate on loans in Omani riyals decreased from 5.366 per cent to 5.469 per cent during the same period.

As for the average interest rates in the inter-bank lending market for one night, it recorded an increase of 5.147 per cent in April 2023, compared to 0.630 per cent in April of 2022.

This came as a result of the increase in the weighted average interest rate on repurchase operations to reach 5.50 per cent, compared to 0.5 per cent during the same period last year, in line with the policies of the US Federal Reserve. — ONA

Growth risks to restrain oil prices this year

WASHINGTON: Oil prices will struggle for traction this year as global economic headwinds stymie gains that could be fuelled by a rebound in China and Opec+ cuts, a poll showed.

The survey of 37 economists and analysts forecast Brent crude would average \$83.03 a barrel in 2023, versus the \$84.73 consensus in May.

The global benchmark, now trading around \$75 a barrel after having shed about 13% thus far in 2023, was seen averaging \$83.28 in the third quarter before popping above the \$86

mark in the next two quarters. Forecasts for US crude were also scaled back to \$78.38 a barrel in 2023 from last month’s \$79.20.

The third quarter will be a “make-or-break quarter ahead as lofty demand growth expectations from Opec and IEA need to come to fruition to avoid additional downward pressure on prices,” said Ole Hansen, Saxo Bank’s head of commodity strategy.

Goldman Sachs said this week that rising interest rates would remain a “persistent drag” on oil. But while the rising rates and weaker economic readings from



A view shows oil pump jacks outside Almetevsk in Tatarstan, Russia. — Reuters

China have weighed on oil markets, some analysts saw prices getting a small fillip from stimulus measures and Opec+ supply curtailments led by Saudi Arabia.

Earlier this month, the International Energy Agency (IEA) said the Opec+ output deal sharply increases prospects of higher prices, while Saudi Aramco predicted demand from China and India would offset recession risks in developed countries.

“There’s been little sign of weakness in China’s oil demand even if the general reopening boost has disappointed some

investors. China’s refineries produced at record levels over the first five months this year,” said Ian Moore, senior research associate at Bernstein.

“Further growth should come as economic activity continues to expand, albeit at a slower rate.”

The deficit would come even as Russia’s seaborne oil exports hit a 4-year record in May, data showed, as Moscow caters to demand from India, China and Turkey. “Once these deficits become visible in on-land oil inventories, we expect prices to trend higher.

— Reuters

In brief

MUSCAT



OMAN'S ISLAMIC BANKS
TOTAL ASSETS REACH
RO 6.7 BILLION

The total assets of banks and Islamic windows combined in the Sultanate of Oman increased by the end of April 2023 to about RO 6.7 billion, or 9.8 per cent of the total assets of the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman, registering an increase of 16.6 per cent, compared to the same period of last year.

The data issued by the Central Bank of Oman indicated that the total balance of financing granted by these units increased by 13.3 per cent, to reach about RO 5.6 billion.

Deposits with Islamic banks and windows increased by 11 per cent to reach about RO 5 billion by the end of April 2023.

MUSCAT



OMAN CRUDE FUTURES
CONTRACT FOR AUGUST
2023 SETTLES AT \$74.78

The average monthly price for Oman crude oil futures contract for August 2023 settles at \$74.78, according to the Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME).

DME, partly owned by Oman Investment Authority (OIA), is a leading international energy futures exchange that also lists the Oman Crude Oil Futures Contract (DME Oman) as its flagship physically settled contract — a key benchmark of Middle East crude pricing.

The average monthly price, which is used as a benchmark for Oman crude oil, provides market participants with a reference point for pricing and hedging purposes. The average monthly price for Oman crude oil futures contract for July 2023 was \$74.94 per barrel.

NEW DELHI



WB PROVIDES \$1.5 BN TO
SUPPORT GREEN ENERGY
PROJECTS IN INDIA

The World Bank (WB) intends to provide loans and facilities worth \$1.5 billion to contribute to financing environmentally friendly energy projects in India.

August Tanu Kwame, Head of the World Bank Mission in India, said: The bank's programme aims to support the implementation of the green hydrogen production programme in India, which aims to attract investments from the private sector worth \$100 billion by 2030.

The production of green hydrogen is carried out through the electrolysis of water to separate hydrogen from oxygen, and the exhaust is water vapour.

India is the fourth largest emitter of greenhouse gases in the world after the US, China and the EU.

— ONA

Climate change can worsen challenges for water-stressed GCC states: Report

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT, JULY 1

The Sultanate of Oman and fellow member states of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) must take decisive steps to secure their water requirements against the perils of climate change, a new report has warned.

Titled, 'GCC's Water Security in the Era of Climate Change: Adapting to Rising Temperatures and Scarce Resource', the report cautions that global warming has the potential to take a significant environmental, political and socioeconomic toll on the region.

The outlook for water security is even worse once climate impacts in the form of shrinking resources, increased salinity, variable rainfall and evaporation begin to exacerbate existing water-related challenges, it points out.

"The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, already battling water scarcity and desertification due to its hot and arid climate, faces heightened threats from climate change.

Compounded by industrialisation and urbanisation, the situation has led to rising pollution levels. Extreme climatic events, like high temperatures, floods, and tropical storms, are increasingly visible.

The future may pose further challenges, especially related to water resources," the author, Wafa



al Maamari, stated in her article published by Fanack Water, a Dutch-based think-tank.

The report goes on to cite the grim predictions spelt out in the recently published Fifth Assessment Report (AR5) of Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), forecasting significant climatic impacts in the GCC region.

Those dire warnings include a forecasted temperature increase of 1-2°C by 2050 and up to 4-6°C by 2100, and a potential sea-level rise of up to 1 metre by 2100, resulting in flooding and coastal erosion.

Also envisioned are extreme weather events and severe heatwaves that could contribute to extensive damage and loss of life.

Furthermore, increased water scarcity and drought conditions could also negatively impact agriculture and food security, the IPCC assessment warns.

The challenge for GCC governments, according to Fanack Water's article, is to balance the potable water requirements of growing and rapidly urbanisation populations with the need to mitigate the impacts of climate change on the region's limited

water resources.

Water demand in the GCC region is projected to grow exponentially on the back of population growth, urban expansion, and agricultural and industrial development, according to the report.

It climbed from around 6 billion cubic metres per year in the 1980s to 36 billion m3 in 2018 — a 6-fold jump. The solution, the report points out, lies in the need for GCC countries to adopt sustainable water management, invest in new water sources, and reduce water waste.

For example, investments in infrastructure like dams and reservoirs can help boost storage capacity and mitigate supply shortfalls in times of water scarcity.

Equally far-reaching are water conservation measures such as metering, pricing, and leak reduction.

Likewise, the increasing use of renewable electricity in place of fossil fuel for water desalination, and the wide-scale promotion of water recycling and reuse are helpful steps as well, according to the report.

Fanack Water also recommends the use of innovative approaches in strengthening water security in the era of climate change.

The roll-out, for example, of green desalination — centring on the use of energy-efficient, eco-friendly desalination technologies for water production — can contribute to the decarbonisation of the sector.

Also promising is climate-smart agriculture, advocating crop diversification techniques, the use of drought-resistant crops, water-efficient irrigation systems, and soil conservation to increase productivity and decrease water use.

Furthermore, the deployment of cloud-seeding to increase rainfall occurrences, among other geoengineering practices, should be explored as well, the report adds.

OETC holds voluntary initiative at SQUH

MUSCAT: Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC), a member of Nama Group (NG), organised a voluntary initiative to visit the children at the Sultan Qaboos University Hospital (SQUH).

The initiative targeted 100 children from different sections at SQUH with the participation of a few of the company's employees from various departments.

It translates the social responsibility commitment and achieves the social sustainability goals of NG. Besides, it aims to involve and encourage the employees to participate in various social initiatives and activities, as well as empower the community service and volunteerism values in them and enhance their engagement with the local community.

OETC organises and participates in different voluntary and social initiatives and activities in response to the local and international communities' needs in various areas.

Such activities and initiatives include blood donation campaigns, and environmental campaigns and initiatives including beach cleaning, tree planting, participating in the World Earth Hour, and reducing the usage of one-time plastic products to name a few.

Communication and Sustainability Department Manager at OETC, Samira bint Salim al Mughairiyah, affirmed the continuous efforts and plan placed by the company for sustainability and social responsibility purposes. She emphasised the company's ongoing efforts and solutions provided for the society which aim to develop the local community.

She added, "There are different current plans undertaken by the company in the areas of sustainability and social responsibility. Additionally, there are various projects which were done previously along with other futuristic projects which will be announced later".



SalamAir launches direct flights to Turkish city of Rize



MUSCAT: Salam Air, the first economic carrier in the Sultanate of Oman, yesterday inaugurated its direct flights to the Turkish city of Rize, with its latest Airbus aircraft. SalamAir is one of the first international airlines to operate direct flights to Rize, every Saturday and Tuesday.

Captain Mohammed Ahmed, CEO of SalamAir, said that by operating these direct flights from Muscat to the city of Rize, it makes SalamAir a new bridge to connect the Turkish city of Rize with many local and international markets in the Middle East, saying that this brings the total number of flights operated by the company to the Republic of Türkiye at 18 with weekly flights to Istanbul, Trabzon and Rize.

He added to Oman News Agency that this new destination comes within the framework of the vision of SalamAir, which aims to reach new tourist destinations that were not previously available to travellers, and to expand the scope of its operations. By adding this

destination to the company's list of destinations, it gives passengers on board SalamAir more travel options at the best prices, with its focus on the quality of service.

For his part, Mehmet Hakimoglu, Ambassador of the Republic of Türkiye to the Sultanate of Oman, said: The launch of flights between Muscat and Rize will add a new type of Turkish tourism that has been going on for years, maintain its diversity and contribute to the development of the economy of the two friendly countries, through the development of its tourism activities and its direct financial impact on many different commercial sectors, such as airlines, car rental companies, travel agencies, hotels and restaurants, while providing job opportunities for citizens of both countries.

Hakimoglu said the increase in flight routes between the two countries will continuously enhance bilateral trade relation, and increase the proportion of

tourism and commercial visits from Türkiye to Oman.

This will provide many investment and joint business opportunities in the future. SalamAir was the first to operate direct flights between the Sultanate of Oman and Trabzon, to follow the example of many other airlines to operate this destination, and thus proves its success in reaching new destinations, thus enhancing regional interdependence in the region.

SalamAir operates in 39 local, regional and international destinations including: Muscat, Salalah, Suhar, Duqm, and Masirah, in addition to its international destinations to Dubai, Fujairah, Doha, Bahrain, Kuwait, Dammam, Riyadh, Jeddah, Medina, Shiraz, Tehran, Mashhad, Istanbul, Rize, Trabzon, Alexandria, Beirut, Almaty, Baku, Kuala Lumpur, Prague, Sarajevo, Bangkok, Phuket, Chattogram, Dhaka, Colombo, Jaipur, Karachi, Kathmandu, Lucknow, Multan, Sialkot and Trivandrum. — ONA



Apple's market value ends above \$3 trillion for first time

NEW YORK: Apple Inc's stock market value ended a trading session above \$3 trillion for the first time on Friday, lifted by signs of improving inflation and bets that the iPhone maker will successfully expand into new markets.

Shares of the world's most valuable company jumped 2.3 per cent to \$193.97, giving it a market capitalisation of \$3.05 trillion, Refinitiv data showed. It was Apple's fourth straight record high close.

The Cupertino, California company's market capitalisation briefly peaked above \$3 trillion in intraday trading on January 3, 2022 before closing the session just below that mark.

Heavyweight growth stocks including Apple, Nvidia Corp and Tesla Inc rose sharply after a Commerce Department report showed the Personal Consumption Expenditure price index advanced less in May than in April, reflecting progress in the Federal Reserve's fight against inflation.

Apple has surged 49 per cent so far in 2023 in a rally by several of Wall Street's most valuable companies, fueled by bets that the Fed is nearing the end of its campaign of interest rate hikes, and by optimism about the potential for artificial intelligence.

Apple's most recent quarterly report in May showed revenue and profits fell but still beat analysts' expectations. Along with a steady track record of stock buybacks, the financial results

reinforced its reputation as a safe investment at a time of global economic uncertainty. "It's a testament to one of the greatest publicly traded companies that's ever existed.

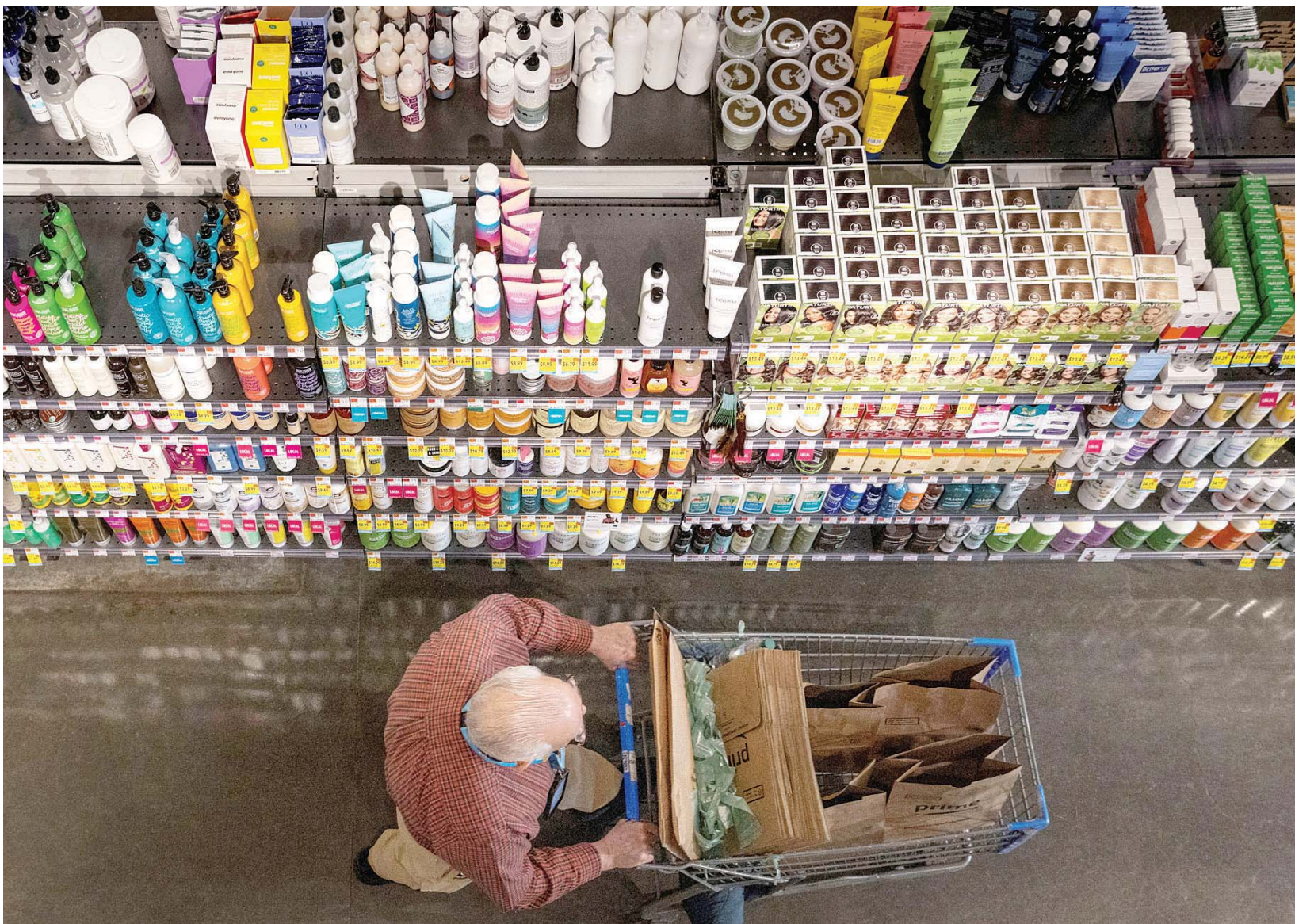
"It continues to grow and diversify its revenue streams, has shareholder-friendly management, buys back shares, throws off a dividend and has a fortress balance sheet with strong and defensible cash flows," said Art Hogan, chief market strategist at B. Riley Wealth.

Apple's \$3 trillion milestone follows the June 5 launch of a pricey augmented-reality headset, its riskiest bet since the introduction of the iPhone more than a decade ago. The stock has climbed about 7 per cent since then, compared to the S&P 500's 4 per cent rise.

Recent gains in Apple's shares have outpaced analysts' estimates for the company's future earnings. It is now trading at over 29 times expected earnings, its highest since January 2022, according to Refinitiv data. That compares to a median PE ratio of about 13 for the S&P 500 technology index.

Four other US companies have valuations of more than \$1 trillion — Alphabet Inc, Amazon.com Inc, Nvidia and Microsoft Corp, which follows Apple with a market value of \$2.5 trillion.

Shares of Tesla and Meta Platforms Inc have more than doubled this year, while a 190-per cent gain in shares of Nvidia has catapulted the chipmaker into the trillion-dollar club. — **Reuters**



A person pushes a shopping cart in a supermarket in Manhattan, New York City. — Reuters

US consumer spending hits speed bump; inflation picture mixed

WASHINGTON: US consumer spending fizzled in May as households cut back on purchases of new light trucks and other long-lasting manufactured goods amid higher borrowing costs, suggesting the economy lost some speed in the second quarter.

While the Commerce Department's report on Friday showed annual inflation rising last month at its slowest pace in more than two years, underlying price pressures remained too strong to discourage the Federal Reserve from returning to its strategy of raising interest rates in July, economists said.

Inflation is by far still outpacing the US central bank's 2 per cent target.

The soft consumer spending took some shine off a raft of upbeat data on the labour and housing markets this month, which had painted a picture of a resilient economy.

"The recent stalling of consumer spending and somewhat better inflation news validate the Fed's decision to skip a meeting this month, though continued stickiness in core prices likely warrant another tap on the brakes in July," said Sal Guatieri, a senior economist at BMO Capital Markets in Toronto.

THE STAGNATION IN REAL CONSUMER SPENDING LAST MONTH AND THE DOWNWARD REVISION TO APRIL'S DATA IMPLIED THAT CONSUMER SPENDING GROWTH SLOWED TO AROUND A 1.0 PER CENT ANNUALIZED RATE IN THE SECOND QUARTER, ECONOMISTS ESTIMATED, AFTER RISING AT A 4.2 PER CENT RATE IN THE JANUARY-MARCH PERIOD, THE FASTEST IN NEARLY TWO YEARS.

Consumer spending edged up 0.1 per cent last month. Data for April was revised lower to show spending accelerating 0.6 per cent instead of 0.8 per cent as previously reported. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of US economic activity, rising 0.2 per cent.

Spending on goods, which are typically bought on credit dropped 0.5 per cent, with motor vehicle outlays plunging 23.3 per cent. Spending on gasoline and other energy goods tumbled 23.4 per cent. Goods spending increased 0.9 in April.

Outlays on services rose 0.4 per cent, lifted by healthcare, transportation, housing and utilities, as well as financial services and insurance. Services outlays gained 0.5 per cent in April.

When adjusted for inflation, consumer spending was unchanged. Data for April was revised lower to show the so-called real consumer spending rising

only 0.2 per cent instead of 0.5 per cent as previously reported.

The stagnation in real consumer spending last month and the downward revision to April's data implied that consumer spending growth slowed to around a 1.0-per cent annualised rate in the second quarter, economists estimated, after rising at a 4.2-per cent rate in the January-March period, the fastest in nearly two years.

Robust consumer spending accounted for the economy's 2.0 per cent growth pace last quarter, defying fears of a recession because of the Fed's hefty rate hikes.

Nevertheless, the economy likely continued to chug along this quarter, with job gains, housing starts, orders for durable goods all strong and the goods trade deficit narrowing in May. Growth estimates for the second quarter range from as low as a 0.5-per cent rate to as high as a 2.3-per cent pace.

Stocks on Wall Street were trading higher.

The dollar fell against a basket of

currencies. US Treasury prices rose. Consumer spending remains underpinned by strong wage gains in a tight labour market. Personal income rose 0.4 per cent last month, with wages increasing 0.5 per cent. Slowing inflation is raising consumers' purchasing power, with real disposable income rebounding 0.3 per cent. The saving rate climbed to 4.6 per cent from 4.3 per cent in April, which could provide some cushion in the event of a recession.

But the outlook is less favourable.

Most lower-income households are believed to have depleted savings accumulated during the Covid-19 pandemic.

The Supreme Court on Friday blocked President Joe Biden's plan to cancel \$430 billion in student loan debt, which had been intended to benefit up to 43 million Americans.

"We've seen evidence that middle to lower income consumers are cutting back on discretionary spending," said Mike Graziano, consumer products senior analyst at RSM US in New York. "Given the student loan relief plan was aimed at this customer cohort, any additional fixed monthly costs will result in additional financial pressure." — **Reuters**



Workers fix the lightings of a new Apple store in Hangzhou, China. — AFP

EU countries fail again to reach deal on power-market reform

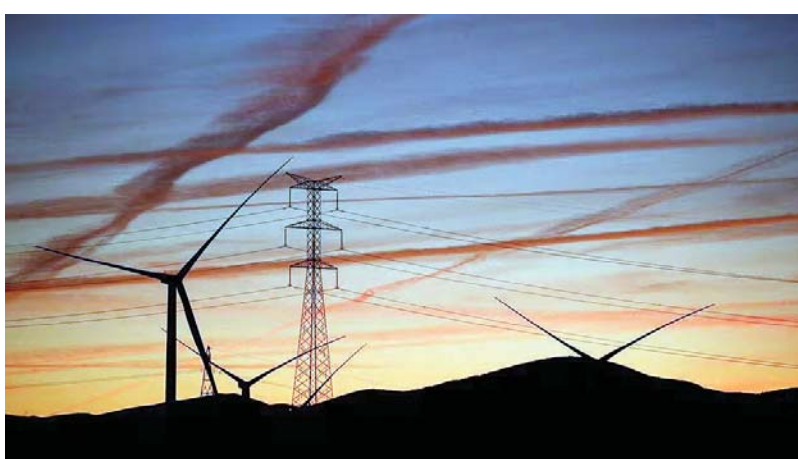
BRUSSELS: European Union countries failed again to strike a deal on the reform of Europe's electricity market on Friday, with states still at odds over potential new state aid for power plants, diplomatic sources said.

The 27 EU countries are seeking a joint position on planned reforms to the EU's power market, but countries including Germany and France have struggled to agree on elements including rules on state aid for power plants.

EU countries' ambassadors failed to agree to a new compromise

proposal on Friday, EU diplomats said. Some complained they had not had enough time to analyse the text, which was sent to countries on Thursday evening by Sweden, which holds the EU's rotating presidency.

Responsibility for sealing a deal will now pass to Spain, which takes on the EU presidency from July until the end of the year. The planned electricity market reform aims to make Europe's power prices more stable, and avoid a repeat of last year's energy crisis when record-high gas prices



High-voltage power lines, an electricity pylon and wind turbines are seen near Pedrola, Spain. — Reuters

left consumers with soaring bills.

But the hunt for a deal has been hampered by disagreements over how far countries can subsidise existing plants using new, fixed-price power contracts with the state.

Germany, Austria and Luxembourg have warned this could distort the EU market by giving some states a competitive edge — a concern EU diplomats said centred around the potential use of these subsidies for French nuclear plants.

France, which had supported

the subsidy proposal, has said restricting the use of such subsidies risked undermining energy security and efforts to protect consumers from volatile power prices.

The latest compromise proposal, which countries considered but did not back on Friday, would have placed tighter conditions on which power plants could receive the state support.

Brussels is racing to find a deal on the final law before EU Parliament elections next year.

— **Reuters**

India’s push to democratise credit tests limits

SHRITAMA BOSE

India is shaping its digital payments system into a credit engine. It wants banks to offer small loans through the channel residents use to transfer money via their mobile phones. But while the latest official effort to accelerate financial inclusion is gaining traction and will finally allow banks to monetise the homegrown system, it will test the safe limits of growing lending fast. The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) is used by 300 million Indians and facilitates 9 billion consumer transactions worth \$180 billion per month. Instead

of using cash or swiping a debit card to buy vegetables, a Starbucks coffee or an airline ticket, Indians use UPI apps powered by Alphabet’s Google and Walmart’s PhonePe at zero cost. UPI is an obvious rail to transmit credit. Its users are mostly smartphone owners, and therefore aspirational. Yet barely half of them have active loans and only up to 10% have a credit card. That’s why the regulator is allowing the use of RuPay credit cards, the country’s low-cost answer to Mastercard and Visa, for UPI payments. Merchants don’t pay a fee on RuPay card transactions worth less than 2000 rupees (\$24.40), and fees are capped at 2%, rather than up to 3% global card operators charge. The one-year-old initiative is now gaining traction. At least seven banks including HDFC Bank, Axis Bank, Kotak Mahindra Bank and Punjab National Bank have gone live with the feature. In April the regulator went further, enabling banks to offer pre-approved overdraft accounts via UPI. It’s a fillip to RuPay, which accounts for a quarter of all new credit cards issued, though Visa and Mastercard will remain more popular with higher spenders who want plastic that works seamlessly overseas. One97 Communications’ Paytm will also benefit as its network of merchants means it is the largest recipient bank for UPI payments. Pushing credit on UPI will allow merchants to save on the cost of owning a point of sales terminal. And it adheres to the Reserve Bank of India’s preference for consumer loans to sit within banks, rather than with third-party applications; the regulator’s crackdown last year on prepaid credit facilities issued by wallet providers hurt Tiger Global- Yet, the blistering pace of growth in unsecured loans raises concerns. Credit card receivables

and lending for purchases of appliances both grew around 30% year on year in April – nearly twice the rate of overall bank loan growth. Delinquencies in unsecured loans were higher in December 2022 than before the pandemic, per TransUnion Cibil. Fast growth in the financial industry may be a natural byproduct of deepening credit uptake in a quickly expanding economy, as analysts at Bernstein point out. But the regulator is both seeking to support official goals of democratising credit while also warning lenders against “over-aggressive growth”. It muddies both worthy messages. — Reuters

Offshore wind in Europe needs urgent factory aid to hit targets



NEIL FORD

The author provides news and analysis to a number of energy and African business publications. He also writes reports on Africa for the United Nations and the African Development Bank.

for developers that commit to European technology and include cyber security and due diligence requirements, the industry group said. We can’t be sourcing kit from places with questionable human rights records, or loose standards on labour and environmental protection,” it said. A long period of intense competition has driven down offshore wind prices and seen manufacturers diversify their supply chains. More sourcing of European components will come at a price, Siemens Gamesa warned. “More sustainability, innovation and energy sovereignty don’t come for free,” the spokesperson said. Developers are seeking larger turbine capacities to optimise costs, increasing the challenge of building out new manufacturing capacity. Many developers are now planning to install 15 MW turbines with a height of 280 metres and rotor diameter of 240 metres. Urgent investments are required across the offshore wind value chain, market analysts at Rystad Energy said in a report in April. To meet Europe’s targets, manufacturing investment decisions for offshore turbines greater than 12 MW must be taken by 2024, alongside decisions on floating wind foundations, Rystad said. Announced expansions include Siemens Gamesa’s Hull factory extension that is planned to be completed this year and Vestas’ Szczecin nacelle base in Poland due to start up in 2024. In addition, blade supplier TPI Composite aims to build a new factory in Izmir, Türkiye that would start producing in 2026, although the project is not definite. By 2024-2025, investments must also be made in new wind turbine installation vessels and monopile facilities, as well as turbine tower factories, Rystad said. Without urgent investments, there will be a shortage of turbines larger than 12 MW and the wind turbine installation vessels and monopiles needed to support them, Alex Flotre, Vice President, Offshore Wind at market analysts Rystad Energy, said.— Reuters

Europe’s commitment to accelerate renewable energy deployment and strengthen energy security presents significant supply chain challenges in the coming years. In April, European leaders pledged to install 120 GW of offshore wind capacity in northern sea areas by 2030, more than quadruple current capacity. By 2040, the European Union targets over 215 GW, alongside ambitious UK goals. Europe hosts just 7 GW per year of offshore wind manufacturing capacity and suppliers will require policy support from governments to meet its objectives, renewable energy companies warned in a joint declaration. US offshore wind developers will also seek European components while domestic supply chains are built up. Europe’s supply chains will be misaligned without direct financial support for manufacturing and port capacity, a spokesperson for turbine supplier Siemens Gamesa said. “Without direct financial support...we risk missing the 2030 targets, the spokesperson said. The EU has pledged to match the funding offered to US companies under President Biden’s Inflation Reduction Act and has proposed a Net-Zero Industry Act that targets 36 GW/ year of manufacturing capacity by 2030 and 40% of renewable energy components from local factories. The EU must improve the net-zero act or risk importing more components from China, WindEurope said. The act should provide stronger support

Türkiye’s economic U-turn?



SELVA DEMIRALP

The author, Professor of Economics and Chair of Yapi Kredi Economic Research at Koc University, is Director of the Koc University-TUSIAD economic research forum.

Despite facing his greatest electoral challenge in more than two decades in power, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan won another five-year term in a run-off vote in May, while his Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its allies maintained their parliamentary majority. The contest was closely watched in part because the outcome would shape the direction of the country’s troubled economy. When Erdogan, who campaigned on a promise to maintain low interest rates, reappointed Mehmet Simsek, a widely respected champion of economic orthodoxy, as minister of treasury and finance, it signaled a shift from his unsustainable growth-oriented policies. The question is whether this apparent return to “rational ground,” as Simsek put it, is here to stay. The deterioration of Türkiye’s economic environment began in 2018, triggered by a currency crisis that made it more expensive for Turkish companies – many of which had grown dependent on foreign lending – to repay their dollar-denominated debt. The crisis deepened in September 2021, when the government implemented the unorthodox New Economy Programme (NEP). Reflecting Erdogan’s economic mantra that high interest rates cause high inflation, the plan called for aggressive rate cuts to trigger a depreciation of the Turkish lira, which would, in turn, increase exports. An export boom would then strengthen the lira, in turn reducing inflationary pressures and replenishing the central bank’s foreign reserves. None of these goals have been met. The nominal exchange rate never appreciated, even with huge interventions by the central



A man is seen at a fish market at Karakoy district in Istanbul, Türkiye. – Reuters

TÜRKİYE’S CENTRAL BANK HAS FINALLY ENDED ITS ERA OF EASY MONETARY POLICY, WHICH HAD REFLECTED PRESIDENT RECEP TAYYIP ERDOGAN’S UNORTHODOX THEORY THAT LOWER INTEREST RATES WILL REDUCE INFLATION. BUT POLICYMAKERS STILL NEED TO CONVINCE MARKETS THAT ERDOGAN’S NEW ECONOMY PROGRAMME WILL NEVER BE RESURRECTED. bank. Instead, the dollar exchange rate slid from 8.5 Turkish lira in September 2021 to 26Turkish lira as of this writing. Inflation soared, reaching a peak of 85.5% in November 2022, and, last month, the central bank’s net foreign reserves turned negative for the first time since 2002. The government refused to abandon its unconventional approach, even though the NEP failed to achieve its aims. Instead, the central bank – strong-armed by Erdogan – and the Banking Regulation and Supervision Agency (BRSA) implemented more than 250 rules and regulations to prop up the low-interest-rate policy long after it had reached its limits. Showing no intention of changing course during the campaign (even going so far as to construe the AKP’s success in the parliamentary elections as an endorsement of his approach, Erdogan now confronts an economy on the brink of crisis. His appointment of Simsek, viewed favorably by international investors for respecting central-bank independence and advocating fiscal discipline, indicates a new willingness to ease his grip on monetary policy. Whether Simsek can execute a major U-turn depends on his ability to convince investors that the NEP is dead and buried, never to be resurrected. This will be a challenging task, given that a similar return

to orthodox policies in late 2020 lasted less than five months. Just because Erdogan currently supports a more conventional approach does not mean he will fully abandon his views on interest rates. It is promising that Hafize Gaye Erkan, previously managing director at Goldman Sachs and former president of First Republic Bank, has replaced Sahap Kavcioglu, who, as central bank governor, oversaw a series of sharp rate cuts at Erdogan’s behest. Despite her lack of experience in central banking, Erkan’s professional background suggests that she will pursue orthodox monetary policy. In fact, the central bank, under Erkan’s leadership, raised interest rates by 6.5 percentage points on June 22. But given that inflation in Türkiye is nearly 40%, a rate hike of this size looks more like a detour to prevent an imminent balance-of-payments crisis, rather than a U-turn. A frontloaded interest-rate increase, coupled with a candid and thorough evaluation of the NEP by Simsek, would have convinced the markets of a long-term transition to orthodox policies. Lacking that, it is difficult to have confidence in the country’s commitment to monetary tightening. Equally worrisome is the appointment of Kavcioglu to the BRSA, where he will likely act as a counterbalance to the contractionary impact of increasing borrowing costs. Erdogan’s speech on June 14, in which he approved of Simsek’s policies but reiterated his belief in lowering interest rates to reduce inflation, supports this hunch. So far, there has been no discussion about how the costs of a tightening cycle – no matter how small or temporary – will be distributed (the AKP’s election manifesto did not anticipate this “bitter medicine”). If low-income households, which already suffer the most from inflation, bear the brunt of these efforts, the social backlash could pressure the central bank to ease prematurely. A tightening cycle will also impose costs on the banking system beyond the usual duration risk. In an effort to keep lending rates low, policymakers asked Turkish banks to hold fixed-rate government bonds as part of their required reserves during the NEP. Rate hikes imply a capital loss on these bonds unless the banks hold them until maturity. While the overall size of fixed-rate bonds is about 10% of bank balance sheets and is not expected to cause systemic risk, the government should still consider swapping these bonds to limit capital loss. Before Simsek and Erkan can turn around the economy, the Turkish government must reckon with its own disastrous policies to gain credibility. Otherwise, any tightening will fail to attract foreign capital or bring runaway inflation under control. © Project Syndicate, 2023

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HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Dr. Saad bin Khalfalla al Butaidi, and Chairman of Administrative Judiciary Court Sheikh Al Mubtar bin Abdullah bin Ismael al Hartthy took the oath of office at Al Nakhla Palace on Thursday. SEE ALSO P2

UN HAILS OMAN'S SUPPORT FOR PEACE IN YEMEN

NEW YORK: Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has commended the role of the Sultanate in supporting international efforts to establish security and peace in Yemen. In a virtual video call to countries backing the global ceasefire initiative, Guterres said that the international community is grateful to the Sultanate of Oman for its crucial role in enhancing efforts aimed at establishing peace and security in Yemen. "The United Nations values this vital and positive role," he said. Guterres added that the Sultanate represents a unique model, not only in the Middle East, but also in the world. "He urged other countries to follow the example of the Sultanate in advocating and supporting peace and stability." — ONA

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

MUSCAT: To mark the 50th anniversary of the Omani Renaissance and to commemorate the memory of its founder late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) issued a sixth series of new RO 50 banknote, which will begin circulation this month. CBO will also issue new banknotes for all other denominations during the last quarter of 2020. TURN TO P4

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

SAMUEL RUTY

MUSCAT: The frequent orders and fervent appeals by the authorities to follow social distancing guidelines are falling on deaf ears. A drive around the downtown Muscat and its adjoining areas reveals how recklessly people crowd at different corners and walk shoulder-to-shoulder. While most people across the country are following the guidelines that health authorities say are necessary to keep the coronavirus from spreading, many are not. "In these critical moments of uncertainty with both physical and mental strain, we should discipline ourselves," said Rutty. "While expressing his awe, Rutty said, 'The attitude of some people is not acceptable that they pave the way for the spread of the infection. Even if we do not have the authority to lay charges on the offenders, at least we can secure them away.'" he told the Observer. TURN TO P4

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

and in some cases, it is necessary to police the behaviour of other people as well," said Rutty. He also said that he was not happy to see people who were not following the guidelines.

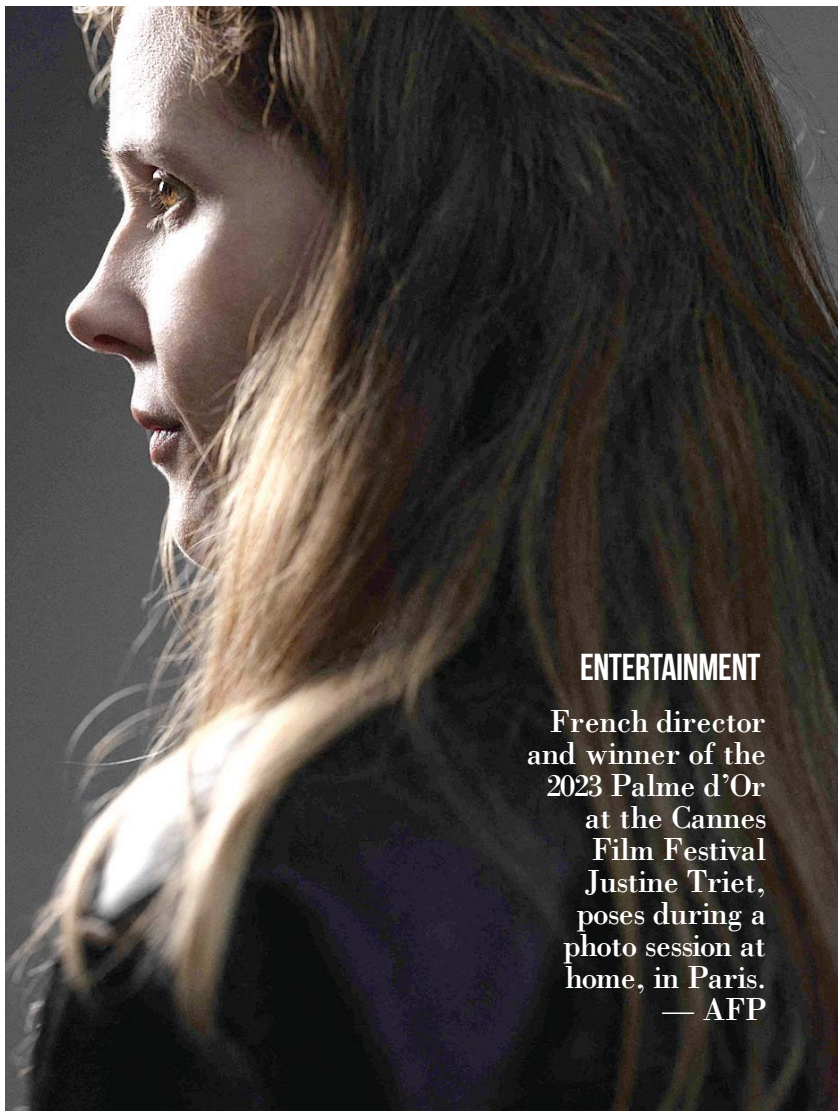


LIFESTYLE

A herder is seen with his sheep in Sewekhaye, one of the country's main livestock markets. — AFP

SCIENCE

Antarctic spiders and sea urchins are placed in a container for analyses during a visit of the British Antarctic Survey's headquarters in Cambridge for the launch of the new 10-year BAS science strategy Polar region of Polar Science for a Sustainable Planet.
— AFP

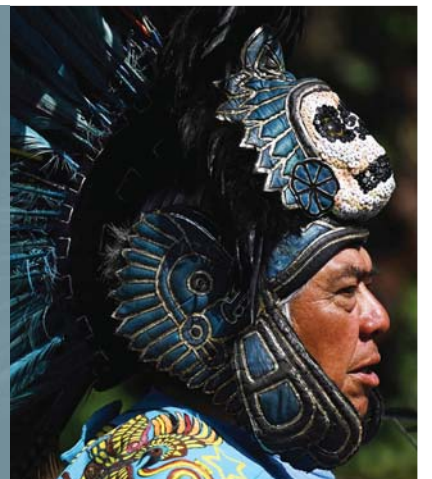
**ENTERTAINMENT**

French director
and winner of the
2023 Palme d'Or
at the Cannes
Film Festival
Justine Triet,
poses during a
photo session at
home, in Paris.
— AFP



DINING

The Peruvian restaurant Central, owned by chefs Virgilio Martinez and Pia Leon, was awarded the title of “best restaurant in the world” on June 20, 2023, by Restaurant magazine’s influential “World’s 50 Best Restaurants” ranking. — AFP



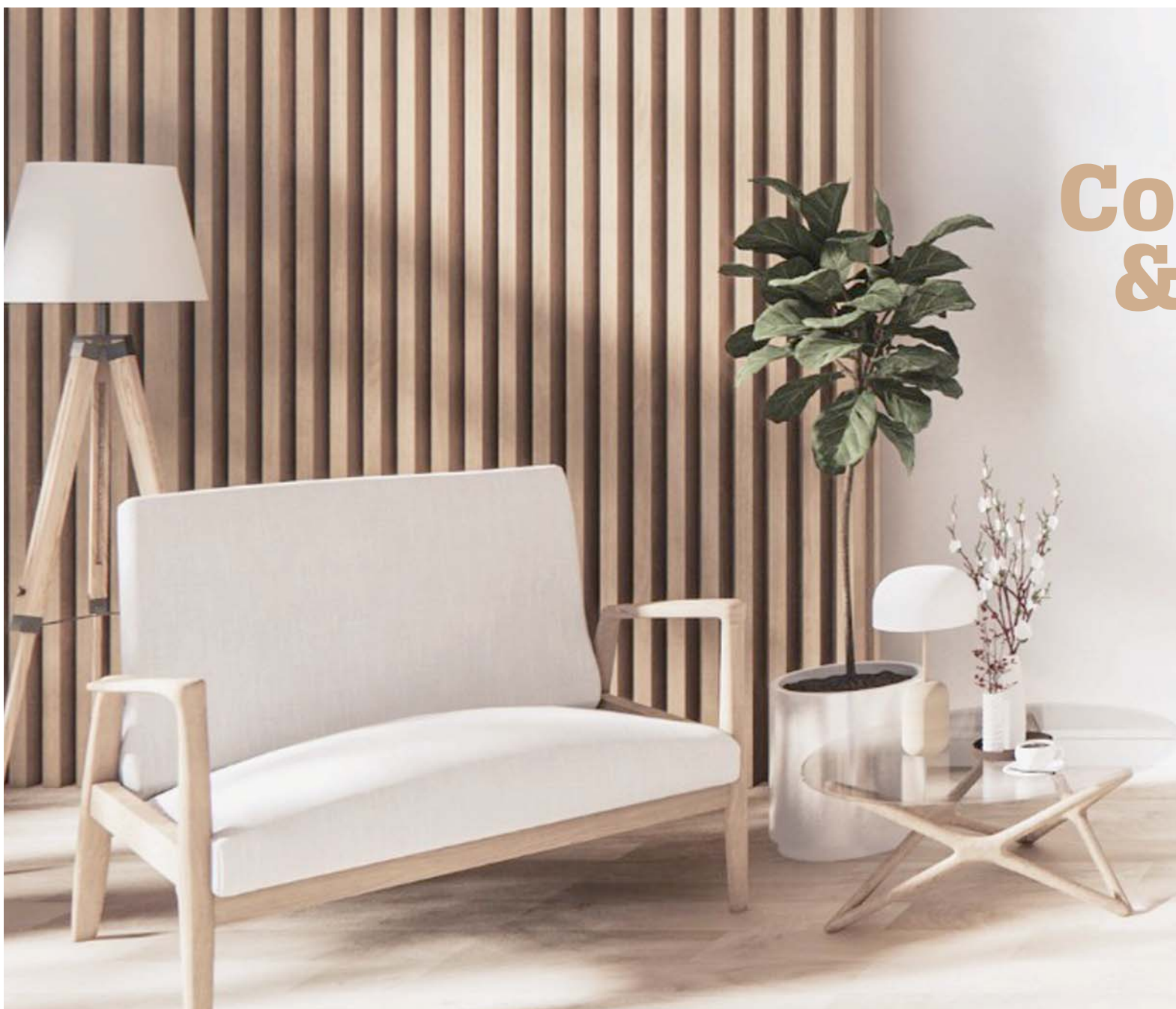
CULTURE

A member of an indigenous tribe from Mexico is pictured in the Woodsies area on the first day of the Glastonbury festival in the village of Pilton, in Somerset, southwest England earlier this month. — AFP

art & life

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Contemporary & chic trends in interior design this 2023

Staying up-to-date with the latest interior design trends is essential if you want to create a space that's both stylish and functional. From bold colours and patterns to sustainable materials, there are plenty of exciting new trends to explore in 2023. We talked to an Omani interior designer to share insight about the popular trends for this year

LIFESTYLE

Prestigious rose breeder names its new bloom for a black gardener

FOR MORE THAN 60 YEARS, David Austin Roses has bred the world's most prestigious blooms. They are the Air Jordans, the Birkin bags, the Steinway pianos of roses, and have become what we know, smell and delight in as the modern English rose.

And every year for more than 60 years, David Austin Roses

has named one or two new varieties after historical British figures, including Queen Elizabeth II, Emily Brontë, Roald Dahl and Charles Darwin. Until this year, those people have all been white.

Take a deep whiff of the Dannahue.

At the Chelsea Flower Show in London last month, David Austin



Roses introduced the Dannahue, an apricot-coloured English shrub rose named after Danny Clarke, a gardener known to his social media followers and to television viewers in Britain as the Black Gardener. The shrub is currently available only in Britain but will be available to American gardeners next year.

Clarke, whose full given name is Dannahue, went from relative obscurity to a BBC gardening star on "The Instant Gardener" nearly a decade ago, and has since become a leading voice for expanding accessibility to green spaces. In addition to running a private garden design company, Clarke is a designer for Grow To Know, which teaches young people in disadvantaged communities how to garden.

"Everybody can garden," Clarke said in an interview from his garden in Bromley, a borough in southeastern London.

"It's something that's intrinsic." Now Clarke hopes that the rose named in his honour will help give other gardeners of colour the confidence to connect to nature in a setting they may have otherwise felt was off limits

"If they see me with an accolade like this, and they see me getting my hands in the soil and maybe visiting fabulous gardens and being a part of the countryside," Clarke said, "they think, if he can do it, why can't I do it?"

The Dannahue has been in development for 12 years, the average length of breeding for David Austin Roses.

David Austin released his first rose, Constance Spry, named for a British writer and society floral designer, in 1961. He went on to become one of the world's leading rose breeders, developing more than 200 varieties of his English Roses over the course of his lifetime. His son David Austin Jr. now runs David Austin Roses.

Clarke was selected to have a rose variety named in his honour after David Austin Jr. saw Clarke's display at the Chelsea Flower Show in 2022. With Tayshan Hayden-Smith, founder of Grow To Know, Clarke had designed a garden inspired by global deforestation and social injustice. The two took home the silver medal. — **NYT**

Instagram Top Picks



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SHARE A SLICE OF YOUR LIFE

0

We select three photos daily for our Instagram Top Picks of the Day. The rules are simple. Follow us on Instagram. Upload your photos. Tag us and use **#OmanObserver** and **#BeAnObserver**.

By Mai al Abri

Interior design has always been an important aspect of creating a welcoming and comfortable living space. With the ever-changing nature of design, it's important to stay up-to-date with the latest trends to ensure your home is not only stylish but also functional.

For interior designer Arwa al Saadi, it is important to follow trends that are practical and tend to become classic. That way, you don't have to change home interiors often, as designs definitely come and go.

"When thinking of interior design, one should follow the maxim 'Less is More,'" Arwa shared.

This maxim usually leads to people favouring more modern designs because they are comfortable and usually remains fresh and chic.

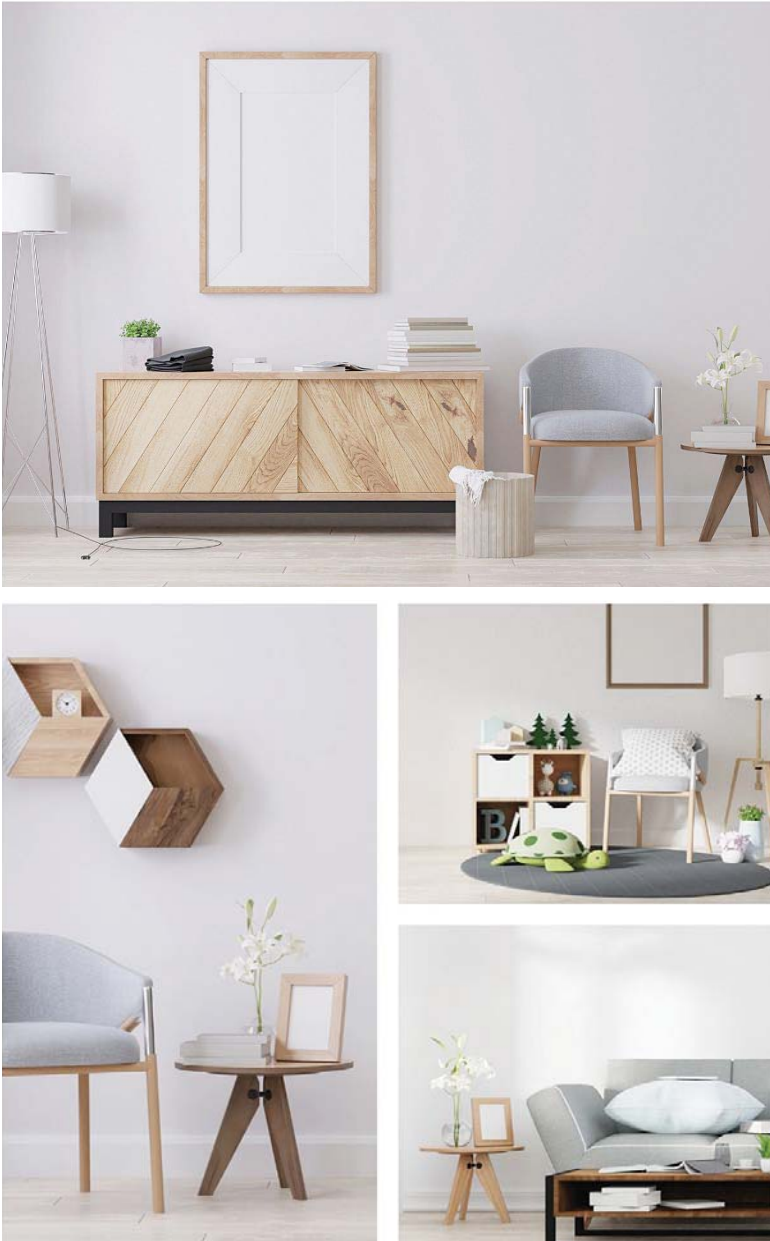
Arwa explained that in 2023, there will probably be more of a focus on sustainable and eco-friendly designs as environmental concerns continue to rise. Using natural materials like wood and stone, as well as energy-saving lighting and appliances, could be examples of this. Designers will continue to create serene and restful spaces using plants, natural light, and organic shapes and textures.

A greater emphasis on flexibility and adaptability in interior design is also likely as more people work from home and live in smaller spaces, according to Arwa. Furniture with multiple uses and design layouts that are simple to modify to suit changing needs could be examples.

As a result of its compatibility with the Omani environment and way of life, the traditional style will remain to be popular among the locals. However, as the field of interior design grows, people will eventually opt and embrace modernity.

TRADITIONAL VS CLASSIC DESIGNS

The traditional style mimics the Omani environment and values originality and sophistication. It conveys a sense of elegance and simplicity. This model stands out from others thanks to its raw materials—for instance, the quality of the wood used in the castles and forts and the engravings on the wood. It imparts a genuine, opulent, and distinctly individual style. Additionally, carpets and furniture play a part in tra-



ditional design.

Regarding the classic style, it has been utilised for many years and is still in demand today. The materials that stand out the most are furniture, wood, and marble. They are muted beige or gray shades in terms of colour. The majority of characters tend to be modern and classic, though there is a category that designs a contemporary traditional character.

HOW DOES LIGHTING AFFECT A PERSON'S MOOD?

One of the most important aspects of interior design is lighting, which has a significant impact.

"The presence of lighting creates a sense of balance and enhances the beauty of the design," Arwa explained.

Whether it is an interior space for a home, office, or even a restaurant, lighting is not only an effective factor in interior design; it also influences the psychological factor and gives a feeling of comfort. The distribution of lighting,



WHAT SHADE OF LIGHTING IS ADVISED?

Depending on the intended functional area, White lighting is preferred when designing an office because it promotes focus. For instance, some restaurants favour the colour yellow. The natural colour, which is a blend of yellow and white, is preferred by the majority of people. Most people advise using it in particular rooms of the house. But as I said, that depends on the location's purpose.

WHAT ABOUT THE USE OF WOOD? IS IT ALWAYS APPLICABLE?

The majority of people prefer wood because, among other reasons, it complements the majority of designs, whether classic or modern. Given that wood comes in a variety of colours, shapes, and types, using it creates an atmosphere of sophistication, luxury, and a connection to nature.

As opposed to the majority of trends, which become outmoded over time, using wooden decorations in the home assures people of a pattern or style that will endure. In order to convey elegance and renewal, wood is being used in interior design more and more. Additionally, wood improves the aesthetics of furniture.

According to my interior design experience, most people tend to incorporate wooden elements into the required design spaces.

COOKING

Recipe: Rhubarb roasted salmon

IN THIS SPEEDY, ROSY weeknight dinner, a tart ginger-rhubarb sauce lends brightness to rich, buttery roasted salmon fillets. It's used in two ways here. First, it's spooned over the fillets before roasting, allowing the bits of rhubarb to singe and caramelise in the oven's high heat. Then, more sauce is served alongside for a fresher, zippier bite. To balance the rhubarb's astringency, a few tablespoons of sugar are stirred into the sauce, but feel free to adjust the amount to taste. It should strike a balance between tangy and sweet. For the pinkest, prettiest sauce, seek out the reddest rhubarb stalks you can find.

Yield: 4 servings
Total time: 25 minutes



INGREDIENTS:
3 scallions, thinly sliced
2 tablespoons granulated sugar, more to taste
1 tablespoon rice vinegar, more for serving
1/2 teaspoon grated fresh ginger, more to taste
Salt
6 ounces rhubarb, trimmed and sliced 1 inch thick (1 1/3 cups)
4 (6- to 8-ounce) skin-on salmon fillets
Freshly ground black pepper
3 tablespoons unsalted butter, cubed

Red-pepper flakes, for serving

PREPARATION:

1. Heat oven to 350 degrees. Line a rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper, if you like, for easier cleanup.
2. Set aside about 2 tablespoons of the scallion greens for serving. In a medium saucepan, combine remaining scallions, sugar, vinegar, ginger and a pinch of salt. Bring to a simmer over medium heat and simmer until the sugar has dissolved.
3. Add the rhubarb. Cover pan and cook, stirring occasionally, until the rhubarb is just tender, about 5 minutes. Remove pan from heat and, using a spoon or fork, mash the mixture until it falls apart into a chunky purée. Taste and add more sugar, vinegar, ginger and salt if needed. It should taste balanced between sweet, tangy and salty.
4. Arrange salmon skin-side-down on the prepared baking sheet. Season lightly with salt and pepper. Spread half of the rhubarb mixture on top of the fillets (save remaining rhubarb for serving). Top fillets evenly with cubed butter. Roast for 8 to 13 minutes or until the salmon is just cooked through.
5. Garnish the fillets with the reserved scallions, red-pepper flakes (if using) and, if you like, a drizzle of rice wine vinegar. Serve with the remaining rhubarb sauce. — **NYT**

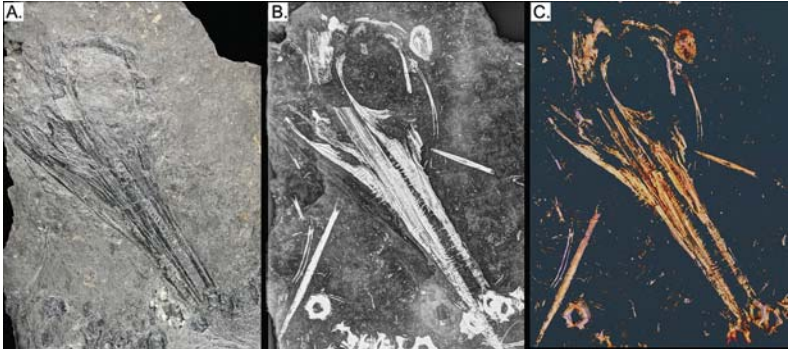
SCIENCE

X-Ray vision brings new life to a fossil flattened by time

WHILE EXPLORING AN Arctic mountaintop in 2008, paleontologists unearthed a small skeleton that resembled a coiled sea serpent imprinted into a slab of 240-million-year-old rock. The remarkably complete skeleton, nicknamed Oda, was deposited in the collection of the University of Oslo's Natural History Museum.

It was clear that Oda was an ichthyosaur, but no one could say if it was a known species of the marine reptiles, which were like a mashup of a crocodile and a dolphin. While most of its skeleton remained, eons under a muddy seafloor had squeezed Oda into a two-dimensional jumble of bones.

To identify the reptile, paleontologists stuck the fossil under an X-ray



machine. In a new paper, the researchers described the anatomical details they had gleaned from the ghostly glow of Oda's X-rayed bones. "The contrast of these bones are bright as day," said Neil Kelley, a Vanderbilt University paleontologist who was not involved in the new study.

The findings, he added, show the potential of the technique to add new dimensions to mysteries in the fossil record flattened by the passage of time.

Victoria Sjöholt Engelschön, a doctoral researcher at the Natural History Museum in Oslo, came across bits of bluish ichthyosaur bones when she was making tomography scans of fossilised clams from the area. A colleague recommended scanning Oda for identifying clues.

Because Oda's bones were stamped

into the rock, Engelschön and her colleagues opted to shoot X-rays through the fossil to render two-dimensional images.

Oda's fossilised bones leaped off the X-rays. This contrast was a result in part of the fact that the material inside the animal's bones had been entirely replaced by barite, a sulfate mineral now used as a radiographic contrast agent for medical exams.

The team found that the animal's alligator-like skull was considerably longer than previously thought and also pinpointed previously invisible limb bones and vertebrae. The X-rays showed that Oda's larger teeth had grooves in them that were reminiscent of teeth found in the jaws of Phalarodon atavus, a small ichthyosaur that has been found in Europe and China. — **JACK TAMISIEA / NYT**



TRAVEL TALES

A walk in Zadar: A loop through history

A NEARLY 2-MILE walk circumnavigating Zadar's Old Town is a journey across a timeline that spans nearly every stage of Croatian history. And it's a long history, dating back to the 9th century B.C., when the Liburnians first settled this peninsular spit of land on Croatia's spectacular Dalmatian coast.

Start your stroll on the northwest corner of the peninsula at the Morske Orgulje, or Sea Organ: a set of 35 pipes spread under a 230-foot section of the city's seaside prome-

shuttling passengers to nearby islands, for a local Garden IPA (3.50 euros, or about \$3.75), then walk along the walls until you reach the City Bridge on your left. Take a right through the Nova Vrata, or New Gate — an archway built during Italy's pre-World War II occupation — and into the pedestrian-only Old Town.

Make your way to People's Square. The city's cafe-strewn main piazza is the site of Town Hall and is defined, on its western edge, by the



nade, known as the Riva. Awarded the 2006 European Prize for Urban Public Space, the Morske Orgulje plays beautifully discordant melodies as the Adriatic laps the stone and pushes air through the pipes beneath — converting the walkway into an invisible, ethereal orchestra.

After the tidal concert, continue past the "Greeting to the Sun" installation (you'll have a chance to linger there at the end of your walk) and around the Old Town's northeast corner.

Continue southeast, walking along Zadar's harbour-facing walls, constructed and reinforced between the 12th and 17th centuries as part of the Venetian Republic's Adriatic defence network.

Before moving on, stop at the Garden Lounge, which sits atop the fortifications with views of ferries

street known locally as Kalelarga, Zadar's main thoroughfare since the Romans laid its grid in the first century B.C.

Hang a left on the ancient avenue's southern extension, Elizabete Kotromanić Street, which changes names three times as you pass the coral-coloured Baroque Church of St. Simeon, walk under a solitary pillar from Zadar's Roman Forum, and cross the expansive Petar Zoranić Square, where you can view layers of history — Roman and medieval — frozen in time under glass.

Go right onto Trg Pet Bunara Street, which leads to Five Wells Square. Guarded by the 85-foot Kapetanova Kula (Captain's Tower), the wells provided the city water during a 16th-century, Ottoman Empire siege. Climb the stairs to the tranquil Queen Jelena Madijevska



and a glass of local white pošip wine (7 euros) will provide fuel for your journey's final stretch.

At the harbor's end, turn north to walk the length of the 19th-century Riva, the city's seaside esplanade. "The Riva is where friends and family meet," said Iva Bencun, the managing director of Zadar Outdoor Festival, which hosts activities both here and on the island of Ugljan, a 25-minute ferry ride across the channel. "This is also where we find peace and realize our troubles are not that big after all."

As daylight wanes, find your own peace near the Riva's pier to witness the city's famous



Park, established in the early 1800s as one of the region's first public parks. From this elevated vantage, you'll look south over tiny Foša Harbour and your next two stops.

The first is the monumental Land Gate, the most ornate of the wall entrances, built in 1543 with carvings of Venice's winged lion and Zadar's patron saint, Chrysogonus. Then walk halfway down the harbour, where it opens to the sea, and take a waterside table at Restaurant Foša. The grilled sea bass with sunchoke purée and vegetables (34.51 euros)

sunset, which Alfred Hitchcock once called "the world's most beautiful." With the scattered ruins of the Roman Forum, dating to the first century B.C., and the cylindrical, ninth-century Church of St. Donat behind you, follow the sun's last flash into the sea. Then, finish your loop, appropriately, at "Greeting to the Sun," a circle of nearly 4,100 square feet of solar panels embedded in the promenade that absorb energy all day and provide a pulsing light show all night. — NYT

LIFESTYLE



How to exercise when it's humid

ANYONE WHO has gone for a jog on a hot, muggy day knows how miserable it can be — not only because your shirt is glued to your back, experts say, but also because humidity makes exercise much more challenging.

This is because the sweat on your skin doesn't easily evaporate, said JohnEric Smith, an associate professor of exercise physiology at Mississippi State University. Sweat itself doesn't cool you, he said, but rather the evaporation of sweat. When the air is already thick with water vapour, however, "there's nowhere for the moisture on our skin to go," he said.

As a result, humid air makes it harder for your body to cool down. This can cause the cardiovascular system to become stressed, reducing blood flow to the muscles, and tires us more quickly than in drier climates. While there isn't much independent research on how humidity affects the body, small studies on the topic have consistently found that athletes begin to tire more quickly once the relative humidity reaches around 60%.

But this doesn't mean you have to move all of your workouts inside if you live in an area that feels like a sauna from June to September. Here are four things you can do to stay cooler in the sticky summer months ahead.



GIVE YOUR BODY A COUPLE WEEKS TO ADJUST.

The more you exercise in both heat and humidity, the more your body will adapt and improve its ability to cool itself, Smith said. (The same is true, only reversed, for cold weather.) But because exercising in hot, humid weather is more taxing on the body than doing so in drier conditions, it's vital to give yourself time to adjust so you can prevent overheating and exhaustion.

In just a few days, your body will begin to sweat more and sooner, which will help it regulate its temperature, Smith said. You'll even start to see an increase in blood volume, which benefits your heart and circulation.

KEEP YOUR SKIN COOL.

Because humidity can raise your body temperature more than dry heat, it's that much more important to keep your skin cool while exercising, said Ahmad Munir Che Muhamed, an associate professor of exercise physiology at the Science University of Malaysia who studies how heat and humidity influence athletic performance.

Keep as much skin exposed to the air as possible while exercising, making it easier for sweat to evaporate. (Make sure to wear sunscreen to prevent sun damage.) You should also avoid wearing cotton clothing, he said, which holds moisture, creating a layer of insulation around your body. Instead, wear clothes described as fast-drying or moisture-wicking.

Drying your skin with a towel or wiping sweat with your wet T-shirt may make you more comfortable in the moment, but it's actually interrupting the evaporation process, as it's removing moisture from your skin, Smith said. You may be better off letting the sweat drip off you, as long as it's not getting in your eyes.

HYDRATE, BUT DON'T OVERDO IT.

Humid air can lead to dehydration. The less your sweat evaporates, the hotter you get and the more you sweat, all of which depletes vital fluids and electrolytes such as sodium and potassium, said Ronald Maughan, a visiting professor of exercise science at the University of St. Andrews in Scotland.

Make sure to hydrate before you exercise, so you're not going into a workout dehydrated. The American Council on Exercise recommends drinking two to three cups of water a few hours before you work out.

Once you're moving, the Mayo Clinic recommends sipping fluids throughout, but ultimately "drinking to thirst" to avoid overhydrating, which can dilute the sodium in your blood and damage your kidneys.

THINK ABOUT WHEN AND WHERE TO EXERCISE.

Humidity is highest in the morning in most places, before the sun dries out moisture in the atmosphere. Start regularly checking the humidity level in your area at various times throughout the day, and plan your workouts accordingly. Smith recommends The Weather Channel's app.

And when you can, choose a shady spot or path to exercise, Maughan said. When your body is already working hard to not overheat in high humidity, exercising in direct sunlight is like adding fuel to the fire. The heat, humidity, sun's outdoors and even wind all influence how you feel outside, he said. "All of these different factors interact." — NYT