

P12

SHANKULE DELIVERS ETHIOPIAN MARATHON GOLD, HEAT IS ON IN DECATHLON



P13

NEW E-MARKETPLACE FOR RECYCLABLE WASTE TRADING IN OMAN



P18

EXPLORING OMAN IN 72 HOURS?



**MUSCAT**

**TO COLLECT PLANT GENETIC RESOURCES**

A research team from the Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Centre at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation will launch a project to collect and preserve plant genetic resources in Dhofar from August 27 to September 1. The team will visit Jabal Samhan, Rakhyout, Thamrait, and its neighbouring areas in the governorate to carry out collection in coordination with the Nature Conservation Society and a group of local experts in the governorate.

**DETAILS ON P2**

**SALALAH FREE ZONE ATTRACTS RO 727M**

The Salalah Free Zone, affiliated to Asyad Group, has attracted new project investments totalling RO 727 million during the first half of 2023. Five usufruct agreements were signed so far this year, taking the number of projects to 127 to date, with a cumulative investment volume of RO 4.5 billion.

**DETAILS ON P13**



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**3.9% RISE IN CULTIVATED AREA**



The total cultivated area in the Sultanate of Oman by the end of 2022 increased by 3.9 per cent to reach 276,000 acres, compared to 266,000 acres by the end of 2021, while the total agricultural production stood at 3.5 million tonnes, according to the preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information.

**School bus drivers told to follow rules**

**VINOD NAIR**  
@vinot\_nair

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has stressed the need for bus drivers to be fully prepared and adhere to security and safety requirements during the transportation of students during the new academic year (2023-2024) and to register buses on the ministry's transportation platform.

They should follow the approved technical specifications for school transportation.

The ministry has warned that it would carry out periodic inspection campaigns on school transport buses and continuously throughout the academic year to ensure the safety of students by making sure they commute in a safe manner on buses equipped with advanced safety features.

**SAFE TRANSPORTATION**

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has meanwhile issued guidelines for bus drivers to ensure the safe transportation of students. The instructions are significant because speeding, negligence, bad behaviour and not keeping a safe distance between vehicles are among the main causes of road accidents in the country, according to the latest statistics.

According to an ROP official:

"The police have taken many measures in coordination with the Ministry of Education and in line with the Traffic Law and its executive regulations. The roads will see traffic congestion, especially at peak hours, and therefore, traffic patrols will work to facilitate smooth flow of traffic, and deal with all that obstructs traffic, especially in places with more congestion than others.

"Traffic patrols will facilitate the movement of buses, give them priority in traffic, and monitor the extent to which the bus driver adheres to traffic rules and regulations and the number of children allowed on a bus."

**No respite from scorching heat**

**STAFF REPORTER**  
MUSCAT, AUG 26

There is no respite from the summer heatwave in the Sultanate of Oman, even though August and September generally have moderate temperatures compared to the preceding months.

Last week, Oman Meteorology warned that temperatures will be around mid-forties and above in most parts of the country, except Salalah.

Subsequently, several meteorological stations in Oman, such as Bausher reported 45°C, Maqshan (Dhofar) 45°C, Suhar 44°C, Al Rustaq 44°C, Ibri 44°C, Samayil 44°C, Haima 43°C and Muscat International Airport 41°C on Friday.

While on Saturday, Al Amerat and Al Rustaq had temperatures above 46°C.

**HIGH TEMPERATURES**

Speaking to the Observer, several citizens and residents said that they are used to seeing extremely high temperatures from May to July, but its extension to September (the back-to-school month) is perhaps for the first time in recent years.

According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the average temperature in August 2022 was 32.3, around 32.1 in September, while in July it was 31.8, June

**Temperatures are likely to continue like this for some years unless serious actions are taken to contain global warming and climate change**

**AN OMANI PARENT**

34.3, and 34.2 in May.

With government and private schools opening for the new academic year this week, parents are worried that they have no option but to send their children to schools despite high temperatures.

An Omani parent said, "Temperatures are likely to continue like this for some years unless serious actions are taken to contain global warming and climate change. I hope school authorities take appropriate measures to ensure children are not exposed to extreme heat."

Some parents said that authorities should ensure that air-conditioning is properly working in school buses.

According to health experts, parents and teachers should ensure that students are hydrated adequately with limited exposure to sunlight.

# Scammers target phone users with satellite services

**KABEER YOUSUF**  
@kabeeryousef

Cyber experts have warned of ongoing spam calls with satellite phones, intending to hack the receiver's phone and, undoubtedly, to commit financial fraud, the most modern way of duping using AI.

In the Sultanate of Oman, people are receiving calls/missed calls from numbers starting with +881 (82, 83, 84...) over the past few days, offering them lucrative deals. The callers intend to hack receivers' data and bank details.

Speaking to the Observer, Dr Haitham bin Hilal al Hajri, cybersecurity researcher and expert, sounded caution that in the past couple of years, scammers and malicious actors



have been actively innovative to trick and bait unaware individuals who have little understanding of technology.

**PREMIUM NUMBERS**

"First of all, the +881 and its associated prefix (+882,+883 etc.) are numbers that have been assigned by International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to satellite telephone carriers, also

known as International Networks (Iridium) satellite phone service," he said.

These prefixes are not regular phone numbers and are often used for satellite communication services in remote or difficult-to-reach areas.

Also, it can be used as premium paid numbers for tech support or overseas consultant services, where they charge high fees per minute.

"Scammers and malicious actors abused this functionality and started to offer popular kinds of premium-rate phone service like horoscope and fortune telling spiritual and psychic guidance services along with adult entertainment such as gambling and adult friend finders and chat services," Dr Al Hajri said.

**TURN TO P2**

## NEXT GENERATION SAILORS SHINE



Three days of competition in Ras Al Hadd produced many extraordinary performances as 30 young sailors, aged from 10-18 years, from Oman Sail's Sailing Schools raced in Optimist, ILCA 4 and ILCA 6 classes for the chance to represent the nation in upcoming regattas, both at home and internationally. After nine races in each event, the top three sailors in each class were determined and the top ranked sailors will now take the next step in their journey on the water. A separate competition was held for girls and sailors under the age of 10 in the Optimist class.

**DETAILS ON P10**



# Project to collect plant genetic resources in Dhofar begins today

MUSCAT: A research team from the Oman Animal and Plant Genetic Resources Centre of the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation will start a project on Sunday to collect and preserve plant genetic resources in Dhofar from August 27 to September 1.

The team will visit Jabal Samhan, Rakhyout, Thamrait, and its neighbouring areas in the governorate to carry out collection in coordination with the Nature Conservation Society and a group of local experts in the governorate.

The project aims to collect and preserve local plant genetic resources in the Sultanate of Oman, which are of social and economic importance. The research team carries out collection tasks in various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, according to the priority of plant species identified by researchers at the centre based on the data.

Dr Mohammed bin Nasser al Yahyai, an expert on genetic resources at the Oman Animal and Plant Resources Centre, said:



The Sultanate of Oman contains approximately 1,408 species of local plants. The centre was able to identify about 1,200 plant species of economic and social importance. However, these

numbers change day by day due to the discovery of new types of plants.

He pointed out that medicinal plants were given priority for collection. Some of the plants are important in food and agriculture while others are wild relatives of crops.

He added, “The team has so far carried out 65 missions in more than 29 wilayats in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, where it has collected more than 100 medicinal plants. Those seeds are tested and their data is entered into the Plant Genetic Resources Data Platform.

Al Yahyai explained that this data will be available for researchers through the platform’s website. The collected genetic resources will be preserved and protected from the risks of extinction, as these seeds are preserved in the seed gene bank. The seeds can be protected for more than 100 years in the genetic bank, which has a temperature of -20 degrees Celsius.

— ONA

## Scammers target phone users with satellite services

FROM P1

So the scammers started using tactics like fake advertisements, enticing offers, or misleading messages to get people to call back the intentionally missed call number, so when they call back, they get engaged in long conversations or long answering machine messages so they can charge exorbitant fees that go directly to the scammer via charging the services provider subscriber (victim) phone bill.

Some of the satellite phone services for general reference are: +881: global mobile satellite services (GMSS), +8811: (GMSS), +8812: (GMSS), +8813: (GMSS), +8816: Iridium (satellite services), +8817: Iridium (satellite services), +8818: Globalstar (satellite services), and +8819: Globalstar (satellite services).

“It’s important to be cautious when receiving calls or messages from any unfamiliar numbers, especially when they are of unknown origin or country with unusual prefixes such as “+881.” And its best to avoid responding and consider blocking the number,” added Dr Al Hajri.

## Salalah forum to highlight modern technologies for occupational safety

QASIM AL MAASHANI  
SALALAH, AUG 26

The Ministry of Labour is organising the Gulf Forum for Occupational Safety and Health during August 27-28, in Salalah, under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar. The forum, which will be held at the Millennium Hotel, will focus on the latest technologies in occupational safety and health, as well as ways to promote and disseminate a culture of safety in the workplace.

The event will convene specialists from the Arab

Labour Organization, Gulf Cooperation Council nations, and Oman, fostering discussions on various subjects such as the impact of modern technologies on enhancing occupational safety, effective management of psychological and social workplace risks, the significance of fostering cooperation and partnerships to nurture a safety-oriented culture in society, and the latest advancements in standards and regulations within the domain of occupational safety and health. The forum will also feature working papers from local and international experts.

The forum is in line with the

Ministry of Labour’s efforts to promote a culture of safety in the workplace. Its primary objectives encompass sharing experiences within the occupational safety and health domain, fostering social dialogue and collaboration among the three production sectors to bolster occupational health and safety services, showcasing research papers by local and regional experts, including those from the Arab Labour Organization and the GCC nations, and increasing awareness about the significance of occupational safety and health among workers, employers, and policymakers.



## SQHCCS announces reading competition

MUSCAT: The Sultan Qaboos Higher Center for Culture and Science at the Diwan of the Royal Court will start receiving applications for participation in the 12th reading competition on Sunday until October 19.

The competition is one of the programmes of the cultural initiatives implemented by the centre to promote reading and help develop a knowledge society .

The competition aims to inculcate reading among young people and urge them to go to libraries, learn principles and values of good citizenship, spread the spirit of culture and Omani identity, develop their intellectual, linguistic and communication abilities and productively use free time.

The competition is divided into two levels; in the first level for 4-6 grades the contestant reads three books on topics like Omani personalities, Islamic values and morals, Omani traditions and customs, tourism, or any other topic subject to the terms and condition of the competition.

The contestant will write three summaries on the topic in a form designated for the competition, taking into account several criteria: Arabic grammar, language style, clarity of idea, writing and calligraphy quality.

In the second level for 7-9 grades, the contestant will read four books on self-development, artificial intelligence, science fiction, innovation, social media, the fourth industrial revolution or related topic

The contestant will write four summaries of the selected topics in a form designated for the competition, taking into account several criteria: Arabic grammar, style, linguistic formulation, clarity of idea, writing, and calligraphy quality.

This edition of the competition covers all the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. The competition will be held in 13 centres, namely: the Sultan Qaboos Mosque Library in Khasab in the Musandam Governorate; the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque Library and the Public Knowledge Library in the Muscat Governorate; the Ibra Cultural Center in the Al Sharqiyah North Governorate; the Sultan Qaboos Mosque Library in Sur in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate; Fida Al Ahlia Library in Dhank in Al Dhahirah Governorate; the Sultan Qaboos Mosque Library in Salalah in Dhofar Governorate, Al Wasil Public Library in Al Rustaq in Al Batinah South Governorate; Sultan Qaboos Mosque Library in Suhar in Al Batinah North Governorate; Sultan Qaboos Mosque Library in Nizwa, and Sultan Qaboos Mosque Library in Al Shumukh Fort in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate; the library of the Institute of Islamic Sciences in Al Buraimi in Al Buraimi Governorate; and the General Directorate of Education in Al Wusta Governorate.

Entries can be mailed to rcy@diwan.gov.om or sent to one of the competition centres.

— ONA

## Don’t sacrifice your life just for fun

STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, AUG 26

The Sultanate of Oman is paradise for adventure seekers. Its majestic mountains, lofty heights, vast deserts, breathtaking valleys and coral reefs filled deep seas offer adrenaline pumping activities like climbing, abseiling, diving or swimming. But youths who do this just for fun or social media fame putting themselves in danger, says doctors and experts.

Abdullah bin Said al Jardani said: “The reason for these practices is the pursuit of fame by youths, especially those who spend a long time following and imitating celebrities on social media. I think that official bodies such as the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, or sports clubs should regulate such activities. No doubt, these adventure sports teach youths values of patience, endurance, teamwork, and building a healthy body. Whoever loves such an adventure should practice it in the right places. If one



loves car drifting there should be a dedicated place. Likewise for deep sea diving or mountain climbing. One must train under professionals instead of blind imitation as they cause a lot of risks.”

Khamis bin Said al Dhiyebi said, “ We see through the social media accounts of the security authorities like the Royal Oman Police, and the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority, about rescue of people in different locations, most of

which are caused by recklessness and non-compliance with laws and regulations. It is unfortunate and requires firm action. Most of them are youths who call it an adventure or a challenge as an excuse to take this risk. Some drown in the wadis while others fall from the heights of the mountains during hiking.”

Rawan bint Zayed al Raisi said young people were under the impression that adventure is the only way to happiness and self-

entertainment. They just go for it to enjoy the adrenaline rush. A rapid rise in adrenaline in the blood affects the nervous system and it produces a mixture of feelings of fear and happiness after a dangerous act and surviving from it without harm. However, the adrenaline rush affects the pumping of blood to the heart. It puts pressure on the nervous system and one loses the ability to think things logically, throwing

caution to the wind.

Dr Sulaiman bin Nasser al Hamimi, senior orthopaedic surgeon at Nizwa Hospital, said: “Climbing mountains is one of the wonderful and enjoyable activities. But it is prone to risks of serious physical injury. One must use special climbing shoes, carry water or juice, food and check whether the climate is suitable before embarking on adventure sports.”

Dr Al Hamimi said one must carry a small first aid box in case of emergencies. He also highlighted the importance of doing adventure with a group of people instead of doing solo to avoid accidents or getting lost.

Ruqaya bint Ahmed Beit Amer, a counselling psychologist, said, “ When doing adventure sports, our brain releases dopamine that makes a person feel comfortable and helps him/her overcome fear. It makes him/her pumped up. But along with excitement comes ignorance of dangers and risks associated with extreme sports. One must ensure that they have a safe and enjoyable experience.



# Spartan race returns to Salalah on Sept 16 with Trifecta Weekend

KABEER YOUSUF  
@kabeeryousef

Adding thrills to the Khareef season, the Spartan Salalah, the world's most popular obstacle course racing organisation, is set to make a triumphant return to Salalah this year, bringing with it an even greater challenge — the Trifecta Weekend.

Participants will be captivated by the region's lush greenery and serene waterfalls as the races are happening in the background of the breathtaking beauty of Salalah.

The physical endurance, mental swiftness and overall coordination of the participants will be in for a test.

In three gruelling races — the Spartan, Super, and Beast along with the Kids Race — athletes and thrill-seekers alike will push their limits amidst the stunning landscapes of Salalah, making this event an unforgettable adventure supporting the tourism initiatives of the region.

Those who love a little bit of adventure in life can get themselves prepared to conquer the Trifecta Weekend in Salalah on September 15 and 16, where nature's allure merges seamlessly with Spartan's ultimate test of strength and endurance.



All finishers are in for surprises as they will receive along with medals, a Spartan T-shirt, and every registration comes with access to the Spartan Account to track one's tickets, race results, teams, and challenges.

One can also become part of the Spartan Salalah as a volunteer. Any citizen or resident who is 16-years-old can register online as

a volunteer for the Salalah Trifecta Weekend.

As part of the Spartan Volunteer Team you will be stationed at one of the areas in the festival and out on course to help the core staff and assist participants where needed.

The first in the series of Spartan Salalah was held in 2022 under the auspices of His Highness

Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, where 800 athletes from across the world competed for the top positions. It was organised by Spartan Arabia in cooperation with the Dhofar Municipality and Omran Group. Over 900 athletes tested the limits of their endurance on a gruelling obstacle course adjacent to Al Dahariz Beach.

# Expat killed in a hit-and-run incident

STAFF REPORTER  
MUSCAT, AUG 26

An Asian expatriate was killed in a hit-and-run incident in Muscat on Friday. The Royal Oman Police (ROP) has arrested a citizen on charges of running over an expatriate and fleeing the scene of the accident. "The Muscat Governorate Police Command arrested a citizen on charges of running over an Asian expatriate and escaping from the scene of the accident, causing his death. Legal procedures are being completed against him," a statement said.

As per the new traffic law issued in 2018, leaving the site of an accident without informing the authorities could lead to serious ramifications, according to the Royal Oman Police (ROP).

According to the new

traffic regulations, drivers who leave the accident site before all procedures are completed will be fined RO35 and given two black points. Article 38 says the driver of a vehicle if involved in a traffic accident that causes personal injury or damage to the public or personal property, must stop and immediately report the accident to the nearest police station or ambulance authority.

Article 39 says the owner of the motor vehicle, the licensee, the holder of the car, or the person responsible for it shall be fully responsible for any breach of the provisions of this law or the Regulations thereof unless he proves that he was not the driver of the vehicle when the breach took place, provided that he can provide sufficient information about the person who was driving the vehicle.

# Oman and Vulcan Green Steel: Making History with the World's Largest Green Steel Plant



Oman is on the cusp of making history in the steel industry with the ambitious launch of Vulcan Green Steel in Duqm, a ground-breaking initiative by Jindal Steel Group. This project aligns with Oman's commitment to reaching Net Zero Emissions by 2050 and positions the country as a trailblazer in green steel production.

Scheduled for completion by 2026, the mega green steel project in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) will establish a six million metric tons per annum (6 MTPA) green hydrogen-ready steel plant. This project is estimated to achieve an astounding 12 million tonnes per annum CO2 savings, making a significant positive impact on global emissions reduction. The project represents a marquee initiative in the fight against climate change and marks a new era of large-scale green steel production. Powered entirely by renewable energy and green hydrogen, it is set to become one of the largest green steel investments in the Gulf Co-operation Council (GCC) countries, generating anticipation and excitement worldwide.

In a statement regarding this project, Her Excellency Ibtisam Ahmed Al

Faroojia, the Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion, affirmed, "The Green Steel project, to be carried out by Vulcan Green Steel and Jindal Shaded Iron & Steel in Duqm with investments exceeding 1.3 Billion Omani Rials, represents a pioneering step in Oman's journey to become a global hub for green industries. These industries will benefit from green hydrogen and renewable energy projects. The project will mark the beginning of large-scale industrial projects that will solidify Oman's presence on the world map as an attractive destination for foreign direct investments in this promising sector and its role in providing meaningful employment opportunities for national talent."

Her Excellency, the Undersecretary, added, "Since its inception in Oman in 2010, Jindal Shaded Company has been actively engaged in the comprehensive development journey of the country and has established itself as a reliable partner and active contributor to this journey. With the completion of the new projects announced by the group, it will contribute to enriching the

national economy and participating in achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040 and the carbon neutrality goals of 2050."

Under the visionary leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Oman fully embraces this transformative initiative as a critical step towards establishing itself as a prominent hub for green industries on the global stage. Decarbonisation is at the core of the Jindal Group's agenda as they proactively reduce the industry's carbon footprint. Their dedication to implementing greener technologies and investing in talent development has earned them recognition as one of

the Gulf region's lowest-emission steel producers.

Aligning with the sentiments expressed by Her Excellency Ibtisam Bint Ahmed Said Al Farooji, Khalid Jashmi, Senior Advisor from the Jindal Steel Group, expressed pride in Oman's pioneering spirit and commitment to a sustainable future. He stated, "The Vulcan Green Steel project is a testament to Oman's pioneering spirit and commitment to a sustainable future. We are proud to be frontrunners in the global Green Steel transition, and we are confident in making the world's one-of-a-kind green steel project a reality. This venture sets a new standard for green energy

to green steel projects, contributing to Oman's journey towards becoming a global hub for green industries."

Duqm's SEZAD is rapidly emerging as a global hub for the supply of green hydrogen, solidifying Oman's position as a pioneer in environmentally sustainable industries. This state-of-the-art Steel facility in Duqm is revolutionising eco-friendly industrial operations and catering to the automotive, wind turbine and consumer goods sectors across the GCC, Europe, and beyond. As Oman aims to cement itself as a worldwide leader in sustainable steel production, the SEZAD project is a significant step towards achieving this goal.

At its core, this ground-breaking initiative supports international efforts to combat climate change by harnessing the power of green hydrogen. By utilising this innovative technology, the project significantly reduces the carbon footprint inherent in steel production, making it an irresistible choice for environmentally conscious industries worldwide. Unlike conventional methods of transporting green hydrogen in the form of green ammonia with minimal value addition, this project will process green

hydrogen within Oman to do value addition and make green steel. This strategic approach encourages the creation and development of a robust green hydrogen ecosystem within the nation.

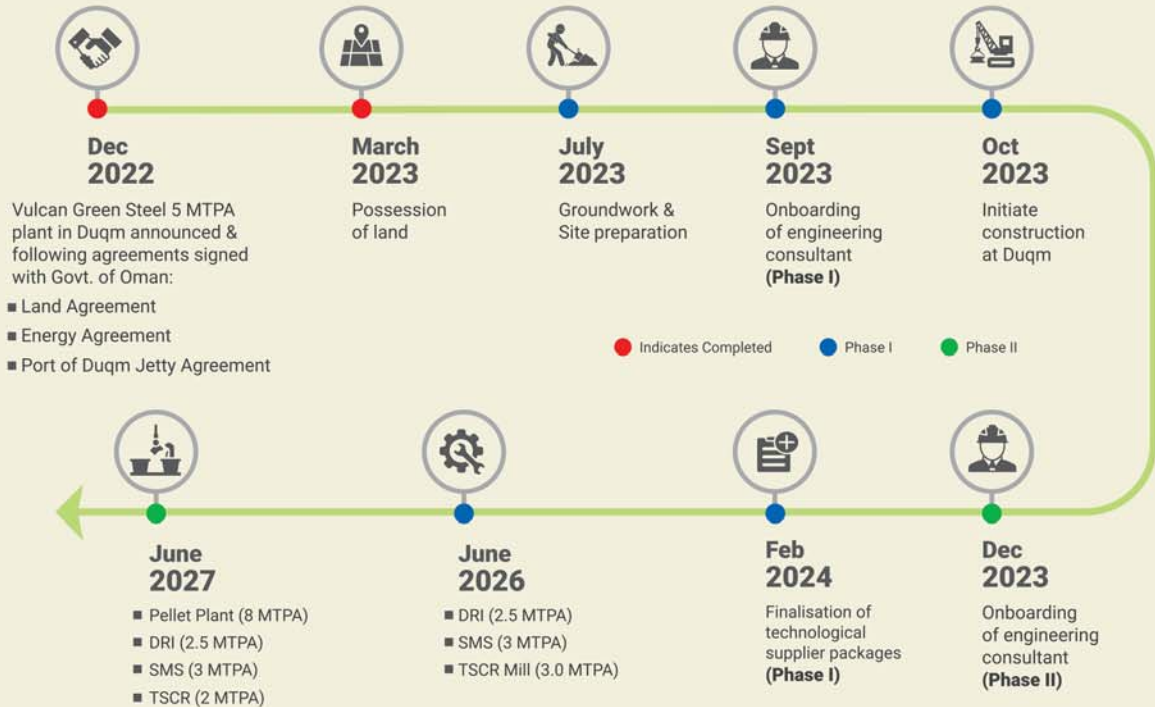
Furthermore, by focusing on in-country value addition, the project takes significant strides in reducing transportation-related carbon emissions while simultaneously supporting the growth of green technology and steelmaking expertise within Oman. This commitment to sustainability and the utilisation of renewable resources serves as a powerful testament to Oman's dedication to becoming a global leader in environmentally responsible practices.

As the SEZAD expands in Duqm, it promises to be a shining example of how industrial development and environmental stewardship can coexist harmoniously. With its cutting-edge facilities and forward-thinking approach, this project positions Oman as a trailblazer in the global steel and automotive industries. It showcases the nation's unwavering commitment to forging a more sustainable future for generations to come.



VULCAN GREEN STEEL  
PART OF JINDAL STEEL GROUP

## On track to ship the first Green Steel Vessel in 2026





# FATTY LIVER

# A SILENT KILLER

NON-ALCOHOLIC  
FATTY LIVER DISEASE  
IN THE MIDDLE EAST IS

32%  
THE HIGHEST  
GLOBALLY

THE  
MAIN REASON  
FOR FATTY LIVER  
AND AVOID



## JUNK FOODS



syndrome,” she said.

Global incidence is around 40 per cent in males and 26 per cent in females. Over the last three decades, the prevalence increased from 25 per cent in 2005 to 38 per cent in 2016, gradually ascending above 40 per cent.

According to Dr Dilip, Specialist, Internal Medicine at Shifa Hospital, a fatty liver is the leading cause of chronic liver disease as, in this case, fat accumulates in the liver over the years.

“NAFLD comprises many entities ranging from simple liver disease (Steatosis) to end-stage disease called cirrhosis and is usually seen in people who are overweight or obese,” says Dr Dilip.

As said earlier, the only way to prevent fatty liver is by maintaining a healthy lifestyle, following a strict diet, engaging in more physical activity and maintaining normal weight.

Mini Padikkal, a Clinical Dietician at NMC, says fatty liver can be cured fully if a set of food habits and lifestyle changes is adopted.

“One should reduce carbs, white rice, and dosa, as carbs are the main reason for fatty liver and avoid junk foods, aerated beverages, alcohol, beer, biscuits, etc. Also, oily food, fried items, and outside foods from restaurants should be reduced. Instead, include homemade foods and fruits and vegetables more,” says Mini.

“One should also include foods rich in fibre, green vegetables and fruits, drink water aplenty, exercise, reduce weight and abdominal fat,” she added.

Dr Viresh Chopra of Oman Dental College says smokers and alcoholics should quit their habits.

“One must stop smoking and avoid alcohol as these two are major villains in one’s life. More importantly, one should exercise regularly and aim for weight loss with a BMI of 18.5 to 24.9. Lastly, have water instead of sweet drinks,” adds Dr Chopra.

**KABEER YOUSUF**  
@kabeeryousef

THE early-stage non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) may not usually cause harm. However, if it worsens, it can lead to severe liver damage, including cirrhosis, as people tend to take fatty liver for granted.

The prevalence of NAFLD is increasing in developed countries with their growing obesity epidemic. As diabetes, NAFLD and type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM) tend to co-exist, the prevalence of NAFLD in GCC is expected to be high.

The estimated global incidence of NAFLD is 47 per 1,000 population and is higher among males than females. The estimated prevalence of NAFLD in the Middle East is 32 per cent, the highest globally. The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) has the largest incidence with rapid development, economic growth, and the accompanying changes in the prevalence of obesity and type 2 diabetes mellitus (T2DM).

For those who have been less active and obese, it pays to make lifestyle changes to prevent the condition from getting worse, as the disease is on the rise and is predicted to reach 55 per cent by 2040.

High liver fat levels are also associated with an increased risk of serious health problems, such as diabetes, high blood pressure and kidney disease. If one already has diabetes, NAFLD increases the chances of developing heart problems. As they say, a stitch in time saves.

Dr Mizun al Rahman, senior consultant family physician, MoH, says NAFLD can lead to fibrosis, cirrhosis, and end-stage liver disease due to the complications associated with often ignored disease.

“By and large, fatty liver is the leading cause of liver transplant worldwide as it is a part of our metabolic



THE ESTIMATED  
GLOBAL  
INCIDENCE OF  
NON-ALCOHOLIC  
FATTY LIVER DISEASE  
(NAFLD)

47  
PER  
1,000  
POPULATION

GLOBAL INCIDENCE  
IS AROUND

40%  
IN MALES AND  
26%  
IN FEMALES



Recall

Recall Date: 27/ 08 / 2023

| Brand of Commodity | Year of Production | Number of Affected Commodities |
|--------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|
| Flying Spur        | 2020 - 2022        | 2"                             |

### Recall consequence

In the unlikely event that the bracket has been installed in the incorrect orientation, there is a risk that the retention of the specific rear entertainment BYOC screen may be compromised if the vehicle is involved in a crash, potentially resulting in an occupant injury.

### Recall Action

Will check the orientation of the retention bracket in both front seats where the screens are fitted. Any seats found to be fitted with the incorrect bracket orientation will be replaced by the retailer to replace the seat shoulder mounting, which contains the retention bracket assembly.

To check the serial Numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website for Recalls & Warnings: <http://recall.pacp.gov.om>



During official working hours:  
2257 9822





## In brief

■ LONDON



### BRITISH MUSEUM DIRECTOR RESIGNS AFTER SPATE OF THEFTS

British Museum director Hartwig Fischer resigned on Friday, admitting the museum did not act “as it should have” on warnings that items had gone missing.

The museum in central London is best known for housing collections that include the Rosetta Stone and the Parthenon Marbles.

It said last week it had dismissed a staff member and alerted the police after artefacts from its collection were found to be “missing, stolen or damaged”.

The items included gold jewellery and gems of semi-precious stones and glass dating from 15th century BC to the 19th century, it said in a statement.

■ MOSCOW



### US REPORTER APPEALS EXTENSION OF DETENTION

US journalist Evan Gershkovich has appealed against the latest extension of his pre-trial detention in Moscow on spying charges that he denies, Russian state media said on Saturday.

TASS news agency quoted a Moscow court as saying it had received the appeal from the defence team of the *Wall Street Journal* reporter.

Gershkovich was arrested on March 29 in the Urals city of Yekaterinburg on spying charges that carry up to 20 years in prison. No date has been set for his trial, and on Thursday his detention in Moscow’s Lefortovo prison was extended by three months to November 30.

■ NEW DELHI



### RUSSIA URGED TO RENEW BLACK SEA GRAIN DEAL

A senior European Union official urged Russia on Saturday to renew a deal to allow the safe export of Ukrainian grain through Black Sea ports, after Russia quit the agreement last month. European Commission Executive Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis said Russian restrictions on shipping of Ukrainian grains via the Black Sea were creating problems not only for Kyiv but for many developing countries as well.

Russia is using “grain as a weapon”, said Dombrovskis, who is in India to participate in a G20 trade ministers’ meeting.

“We support all efforts by United Nations, by Turkiye on Black Sea grain initiative,” he told reporters, adding the bloc was providing alternative trading routes, also called solidarity lanes, to Ukraine for grain and other exports.

# Drought-hit Panama Canal to restrict access for one year



Aerial view of cargo ships waiting at the entrance of the Panama Canal at Panama Bay off Panama City. – AFP

**PANAMA:** The drought-hit Panama Canal will maintain restrictions on the passage of ships for one year, a measure that has already led to a marine traffic jam as boats line up to enter the waterway linking two oceans.

The canal is facing a shortage of rainwater needed to transfer ships through locks that function like water elevators, an engineering marvel that moves six per cent of the world’s maritime commerce up and over the isthmus between the Atlantic and Pacific oceans.

The canal’s sub-administrator Ilya Espino said that unless heavy rains fall in the next three months, “we are looking at a period of one year” of restricted access.

That period will give clients “a year to plan” how to adapt, she said on Thursday. Each ship moving through the canal requires 200 million litres of freshwater to move it through the locks, provided by two artificial lakes fed by rainfall in a surrounding watershed. The lakes also supply drinking water to half the country of about 4.2

million people.

However, Panama is facing a biting drought, made worse by the El Nino warming phenomenon, which has forced canal administrators to restrict the waterway to ships with a maximum draft (water depth) of 13.11 meters (43 feet).

In 2022, an average of 40 ships crossed through the canal a day, a number which has now dropped to 32 to save water.

The measures have caused a back-up of ships waiting to enter the 50-mile (80-kilometre) waterway, which is mainly used by clients from the United States, China, and Japan.

On Thursday, some 130 boats were waiting, compared to around 90 usually in the queue.

Waiting times, usually between three and five days, have gone up to 19 days at times, although they currently stand at around 11 days.

Earlier this month, canal operators said the restrictions were likely to result in a \$200-million drop in earnings in 2024 compared to this year.

To pass through the canal, vessels can reserve a slot in advance, or try and buy one via an auction process. For those unable to secure a slot, there is a long wait.

“We easily handle a queue of 90 ships” waiting, but “130 or 140 ships cause us problems and delays,” said Espino.

This week Panama President Laurentino Cortizo was forced to deny an assertion by his Colombian counterpart Gustavo Petro that the canal was closed.

Mexican President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador also referred this week to the “special” situation facing the waterway.

“We have a restriction in Panama as we have had on other occasions, but it is not true that the Panama Canal is closed,” said Cortizo.

The canal opened in 1914 after a monumental construction project through dense jungles and mountains, with thousands of workers perishing from tropical diseases, intense heat and rain.

Since then, more than a million vessels have transited through

the canal, saving them a lengthy journey around the tip of South America.

“The big disadvantage that the Panama Canal has as a maritime route is that we operate with freshwater, while others use seawater,” canal administrator Ricaurte Vasquez said earlier this month.

“We have to find other solutions to remain a relevant route for international trade. If we don’t adapt, we are going to die.” Due to the draft restrictions, some merchant container ships are forced to unload their cargo and send the lighter vessel through the canal, while the goods traverse Panama by rail before being reloaded.

“Right now I see that the situation is manageable, but we do have to show the industry that we are taking definitive steps to address the water problem,” former canal administrator Jorge Quijano said on Friday.

“That for me is key, because otherwise we will be out of this business.” — AFP

## RED CROSS TO GET GOLD BARS LEFT ON SWISS TRAIN

**GENEVA:** A mysterious stash of 120 gold bars found on a Swiss train is being given to the Red Cross, prosecutors said on Friday, after efforts to trace the owner reached the end of the line.

In October 2019, an attendant found a package on a train travelling from St Gallen to Lucerne, the Lucerne regional public prosecutor’s office said in a statement.

Among the labelling on the package were the words “ICRC valuables”, in an apparent reference to the Geneva-based International Committee of the Red Cross. “The package contained 120 gold bars... which were labelled with a logo and serial numbers,” the statement said, adding the total weight of the stash was 3.7 kilogrammes.

It did not say how much the stash was worth, but 24-carat gold bars are currently selling for around \$60,000 per kilo.

“Despite extensive investigations, the owner of the gold bars could not be determined,” the statement said.

“Thus, neither the owner of the gold nor a connection with a possible property crime could be determined,” with prosecutors closing the case.

“Since the gold was in a package addressed to the ICRC, it can be assumed that the unknown owner wanted to hand over the gold to this organisation. Thus, the find is handed over to the ICRC.”

The ICRC said it had not yet received the gold but intended to sell the bars to help fund its operations worldwide in places affected by violence and conflict.

“We extend our appreciation for this generous contribution to the ICRC, which will play a vital role in sustaining our global humanitarian operations,” the organisation said in a statement.

“The received donation will significantly contribute to financing ICRC’s worldwide operations, dedicated to protecting and assisting the most vulnerable people impacted by war and violence.”

It added that while the organisation valued all support, it called for donations to be made through the regular methods. The ICRC, which has 20,000 staff spread across more than 100 countries, has had to tighten its belt this year.

The organisation, founded 160 years ago, initially appealed to donors for 2.8 billion Swiss francs (\$3.15 billion) for its work in 2023. — AFP

# Nasa and SpaceX crew of four blast off to ISS

**CAPE CANAVERAL:** Nasa and SpaceX’s Dragon spacecraft blasted off on Saturday carrying four astronauts to the International Space Station.

The Crew-7 mission is commanded by American Jasmin Moghbeli and includes Andreas Mogensen of Denmark, Satoshi Furukawa of Japan and Konstantin Borisov of Russia.

The Dragon spacecraft carried by a Falcon 9 rocket lifted off at 3:27 am (0727 GMT) from Launch Complex 39A at Nasa’s Kennedy Space Center in Florida, in front of around 10,000 people gathered to watch the launch.

“We have liftoff!” Nasa said on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Cheers could be heard in the mission control room soon after the Dragon craft separated from the Falcon 9 rocket with the crew in orbit.

“We may have four crew members on board from four different nations... but we’re a united team with a common mission,” Moghbeli said after the



Crew-7 mission launches on a SpaceX Falcon 9 rocket with the company’s Dragon spacecraft from Launch Complex 39A at the Kennedy Space Center in Cape Canaveral on Saturday. – AFP

separation.

The launch was pushed back to Saturday to give engineers an extra day to review a component of the Crew Dragon capsule’s environmental control and life support system, Nasa said in a blog post.

It is the first space mission for both Moghbeli and Borisov.

“This is something I’ve wanted to do for as long as I can remember,” said Moghbeli, a Naval test pilot, during a media call last month.

“One of the things I’m most excited about is looking back at our beautiful planet,” added the 40-year-old American.

“Everyone who I’ve talked to

who has flown already has said that was a life-changing perspective — and also floating around in space, it seems really fun.”

Crew-7 is set to be the seventh routine mission to the orbital platform for Elon Musk’s SpaceX, with the first coming in 2020.

Nasa pays SpaceX for the taxi service as part of a commercial

crew program that it put in place to reduce dependency on Russian rockets for astronaut transport after the space shuttle programme ended in 2011.

Boeing is the other contracted private partner, but its programme remains mired in delays and technical difficulties. It has not yet flown any crew.

Borisov will be the third Russian to fly on a SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule, fixed atop a Falcon 9 rocket.

Space remains a rare area of cooperation between the United States and Russia despite Moscow’s war of Ukraine, with Americans also continuing to fly aboard Russian Soyuz rockets that launch from Kazakhstan.

The crew will spend six months aboard the ISS, where they will carry out science experiments including collecting samples during a spacewalk to determine whether the station releases microorganisms through its life-support system vents.

— AFP



Bhutan cuts tourist fee by half to lure more visitors



A monk makes his way from the Punakha Dzong, Bhutan. — Reuters file photo

**KATHMANDU:** The Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan is to halve the \$200 daily fee it charges tourists in an effort to boost a sector still struggling to recover a year after the end of Covid-19 restrictions.

Bhutan raised its “Sustainable Development Fee” to \$200 per visitor per night, from \$65, when it ended two years of Covid restrictions in September last year saying the money would go to off-set the carbon generated by visitors.

The new rate of \$100 per night would come into effect from September and last for four years, the government said in a statement late on Friday.

“This is in view of the important role of the tourism sector in generating employment, earning foreign exchange... and in boosting overall economic growth,” it said.

Isolated for generations, Bhutan opened to tourists in 1974 when it received 300 visitors. The number soared to 315,600 in 2019, up 15.1 per cent from a year earlier, official data showed.

Bhutan has always been wary of the impact of mass tourism and it bans mountain climbing to preserve the sanctity of its peaks. The tourist fee has limited arrivals to bigger spenders who make up a fraction of the numbers that visit nearby Nepal.

Nevertheless, Bhutan hopes to raise the contribution of tourism to its \$3 billion economy to 20 per cent, from about 5 per cent. — **Reuters**

PUTIN ORDERS WAGNER FIGHTERS TO SIGN OATH OF ALLEGIANCE

Ukraine will speed up advance on southern front: Official

**ORIKHIV AREA, Ukraine:** Ukrainian forces believe they have broken through the most difficult line of Russian defences in the south and will now be able to advance more quickly, a commander fighting in the south said.

Ukraine launched a counteroffensive in June, but well-prepared Russian defence lines reinforced by minefields have slowed their southward advance towards the Sea of Azov.

Ukrainian forces said on Wednesday they had raised the national flag in the settlement of Robotyne in the southern Zaporizhzhia region, about 10 km south of the frontline town of Orikhiv.

“We don’t stop here,” said a commander who led some of the troops into Robotyne and who uses the call sign “Skala,” eponymous with the battalion which he leads.

“Next we have (the town of) Berdiansk, and then more. I made it clear to my fighters at once: our goal is not Robotyne, our goal is (the Sea of) Azov.”

Robotyne is about 100 km from Berdiansk, a port on the shores of the Sea of Azov, and 85 km from the strategic city of Melitopol. Both are occupied by Russian forces following Moscow’s full-scale war in February last year. Moscow has not confirmed that Ukraine has advanced into Robotyne.

A US official said last week that Ukrainian forces did not appear



Ukrainian soldiers participate in a blank fire exercise, together with instructors from the Norwegian Home Guard 12th District Company ‘Hegra’, part of Operation Gungne, north of Trondheim, Norway. — AFP

likely to be able to reach and retake Melitopol in their counteroffensive, intended to split Russian forces in the south.

Defending Ukraine’s strategy last week, President Volodymyr Zelenskiy dismissed suggestions that his country’s troops were spread too thinly and repeated his belief that Kyiv would regain all Ukrainian territory that has been seized by Moscow. “We have passed the main roads that were mined. We are coming to those lines where we can go (forward). I’m sure we’ll go faster from here,” Skala said.

He said two houses were still under Russian control in

Robotyne: “We’re fighting for them, and then we’ll have full control (of Robotyne).”

Skala said Ukrainian troops had now entered territories where there were only “Russian logistics” groups, and where he made clear he did not expect Russian defences to be as difficult to break through.

“We are moving on to liberate all our territories,” he said.

**OATH OF ALLEGIANCE**

President Vladimir Putin has ordered Wagner fighters to sign an oath of allegiance to the Russian state after a deadly plane crash believed to have killed Yevgeny Prigozhin, the volatile chief of the

mercenary group.

Putin signed the decree bringing in the change with immediate effect on Friday after the Kremlin said that Western suggestions that Prigozhin had been killed on its orders were an “absolute lie”. The Kremlin declined to definitively confirm his death, citing the need to wait for test results.

Russia’s aviation authority has said that Prigozhin was on board a private jet which crashed on Wednesday evening northwest of Moscow with no survivors exactly two months after he led a failed mutiny against army chiefs. — **Agencies**

Cable car incident highlights school accessibility crisis

**BATTAGRAM:** Ibrar Ahmed is relieved to be alive after being stuck on a cable car high over a river in northern Pakistan for 16 hours last week, but now the student wonders how he will make the arduous trek to class each day.

“God willing, I am going to continue with my studies, but the way to our school is so long,” he said after last Tuesday’s ordeal, which grabbed global attention.

“Sometimes... I get late for school because it opens at 8:30 am and the road is so perilous,” said Ahmed, in his first year of high school at Batungi Pashto Government School. “The (chair)lift is necessary, but now we are terrified of it.”

Seven children and one man were rescued by Pakistan’s military and civilians from the flimsy cable car after a cable broke, dangling them 183 metres high in

mountainous Battagram district north of Islamabad.

The harrowing ordeal highlights a crisis of school accessibility for many in Pakistan, with few high schools, poor roads, poverty and extreme weather hampering students’ ability to get to class.

That is a major reason Pakistan has the world’s second-lowest rate of school attendance. Some 23 million, or 44 per cent, of Pakistani children aged four to 16 are out of school and the situation is worse for girls, according to government figures and the World Bank.

Given Pakistan’s huge youth population, boosting education rates is vital for economic sustainability and to mitigate the security concerns that plague the South Asian country, exacerbated by the lure of militant groups in impoverished rural areas, analysts



A view of a suspended chairlift in Battagram, Pakistan. — Reuters

and economists say.

“Long distances and travel times, few transportation options and costs are some of the barriers to access education, particularly for girls who are often not allowed to travel long distances alone,” said Ellen Van Kalmthout, chief of education at Unicef Pakistan.

Ahmed wants “a proper road” and a high school near his village.

Batungi Pashto High School head teacher Ali Asghar Khan links long commutes to high dropout rates.

“Most boys who come from far-off villages try their best to continue but they often face problems in travelling back and forth, either because they are too young or not strong enough or sick, so they definitely leave their studies,” Khan said. “The ratio of dropouts is high here.” — **Reuters**

LIBREVILLE

Gabon’s Bongo seeks third term

Voters in Gabon headed to the polls on Saturday for a triple election in which President Ali Bongo Ondimba, scion of a family that has ruled for 55 years, is seeking victory over a belatedly-united opposition.

Bongo and his main rival Albert Ondo Ossa lead a race of 14 candidates vying for the top job in the small oil-rich central African state. Dozens of people waited at voting stations in the centre of Libreville just before midday, though most streets, decked



out in the colours of Bongo’s governing party, were unusually empty for a Saturday, an AFP journalist saw. The 64-year-old incumbent took office in 2009, succeeding his father Omar, who died after more than 41 years in power.

VATICAN CITY

Pope calls disinformation ‘first sin’

Pope Francis on Saturday denounced “disinformation” and fake news spread in an effort to influence public opinion as journalism’s principal offence.

“Disinformation is the first of the sins, the mistakes — let’s say — of journalism,” Francis told Italian journalists at a Vatican gathering to bestow a journalism prize. Widely considered a savvy communicator himself, the pontiff returned to the term “sins” to list what he called the four misdeeds of the media, according to the



Vatican’s translated statement of his comments. “Disinformation, when journalism does not inform or informs badly; slander (sometimes this is used); defamation, which is different from slander but destroys; and the fourth is... the love of scandal.”

OTTAWA

Canadian minister on rare China trip

Canada’s Environment Minister Steven Guilbeault on Saturday leaves for Beijing to join talks on fighting climate change and preserving biodiversity, the first Canadian minister to go to China in four years.

A month ago, US climate envoy John Kerry visited China for similar discussions. Other G7 countries including France and Germany have also sent climate representatives since Covid-19 travel restrictions were lifted.

“I’m hoping that we can have



open and frank conversations about a number of issues relating to climate change,” Guilbeault said on Friday. Both Canada and China are large emitters and “maybe there are ways we can cooperate,” he said.

# John Warnock, inventor of PDF, dies at 82

CLAY RISEN

JOHN WARNOCK, a founder of Adobe Systems whose innovations in computer graphics, including the ubiquitous PDF, made possible today’s visually rich digital experiences, died on Saturday at his home in Los Altos, California. He was 82.

The cause was pancreatic cancer, Adobe, which Warnock started in 1982 with Chuck Geschke, said in a statement.

Until Warnock and Adobe came along, desktop printing was an arduous, expensive and unsatisfying endeavour. Users relied on either a screechy dot-matrix printer, with its pixilated text, or a specialised typesetting machine, which could cost \$10,000 and take up most of a room.

Warnock developed protocols that came loaded into desktop printers themselves, and that accurately rendered what a computer sent them. Adobe’s first such protocol, PostScript, went into Apple’s revolutionary LaserWriter, released in 1985, and within a few years it was the industry standard. PostScript, licensed to hundreds of software and hardware companies, helped make Adobe rich. But the company was largely unknown to the public until 1993, when it released Acrobat, a programme designed to render and read files in what it called a Portable Document Format, or PDF. The PDF was the result of Warnock’s abiding obsession since graduate school: finding a way to ensure that the graphics displayed on one computer — whether words or images — looked the exact same on another computer, or on a page from a printer, regardless of the manufacturer.

“It had been a holy grail in computer science to figure out how to communicate documents,” he said in a 2019 interview with Oxford University.

Acrobat and the PDF were not immediately successful, even after Adobe made its Acrobat Reader free to download. The company’s board wanted to retire them, but Warnock persisted.

“I think the crossover point is if I can go to General Motors and say, ‘I can deliver your information more quickly and more cheaply than you can on paper,’” he told *The New York Times* in 1991. “You’re talking about savings of tens of millions of dollars.”

The PDF eventually became standard, as the ease of sharing crisp, accurate documents across computer systems made the long-envisioned paperless office a reality.

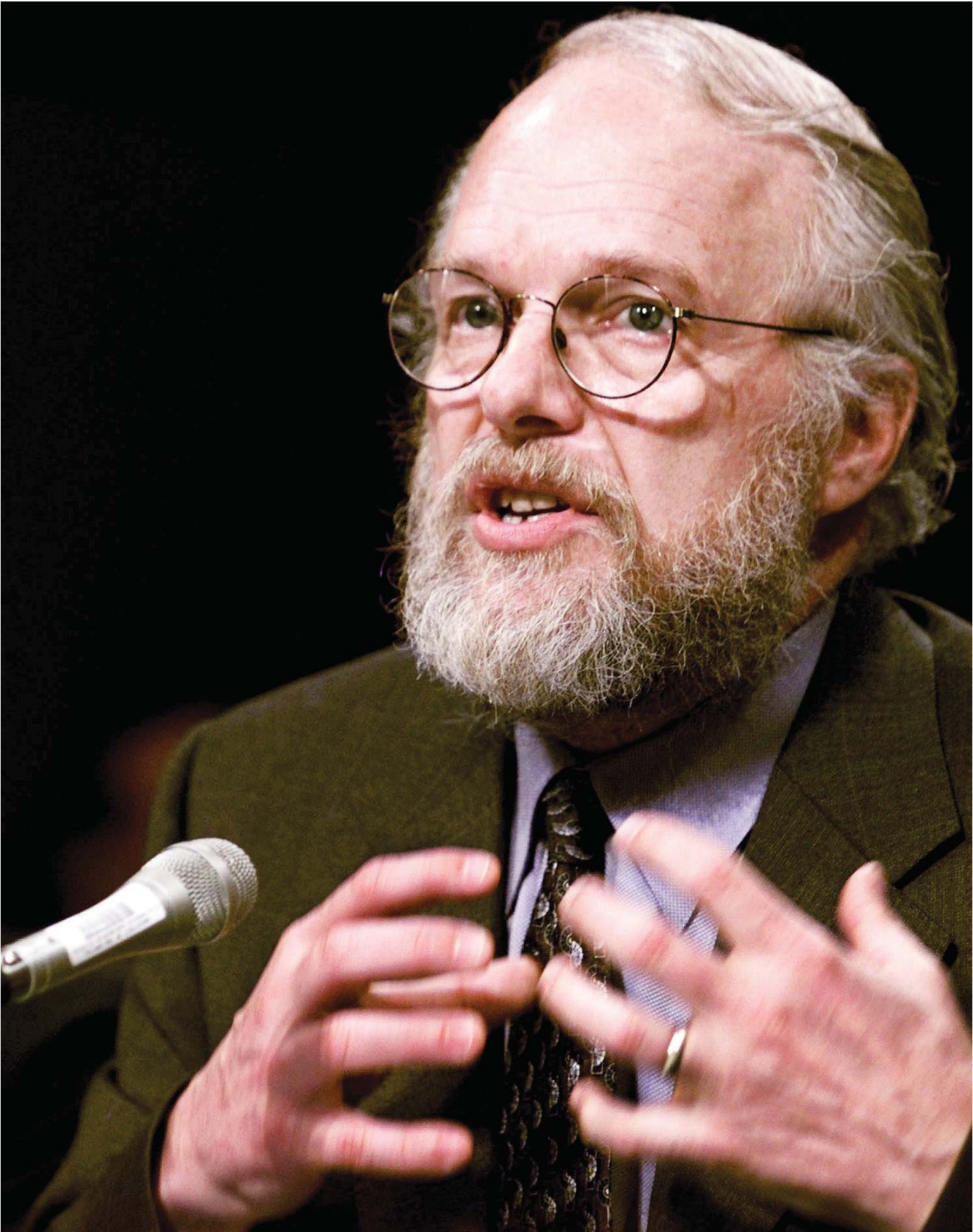
Though Adobe is best known for the PDF, it owes its dominance in the software industry to a whole suite of design programmes championed by Warnock over the years, including InDesign, Photoshop and Illustrator.

Taken together, these programmes helped make the modern personal computing experience what it is, turning what had been a soup of obscure commands and monochromatic images into an engaging aesthetic experience.

“Making the computer into a machine that we can use to produce visual and print culture, that wasn’t foreordained,” David Brock, the director of curatorial affairs at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, California, said in a phone interview. “That’s where he was really instrumental.”

John Edward Warnock was born on October 6, 1940, in Holladay, Utah, a suburb of Salt Lake City. His father, Clarence, was a lawyer; his mother, Dorothy (Van Dyke) Warnock, was a homemaker.

Warnock was an admittedly average high school student who managed to flunk algebra in ninth grade. Nevertheless, he studied mathematics at the University of



Dr John Warnock testifies before the US Senate Joint Economics Committee hearing on Capitol Hill on June 6, 2000. – Reuters file photo

Utah, receiving his undergraduate degree in 1961 and a master’s in the same subject in 1964.

He did not initially plan to go into technology. But a grueling summer job during graduate school spent recapping tires persuaded him to apply to IBM, which was recruiting mathematicians.

He returned to Utah to pursue a doctorate in mathematics, but after a few years he switched to electrical engineering, which at the time encompassed computer science. The university had recently received an enormous influx of money and resources from the Department of Defence to work on computer graphics, a field that had captured his interest. He was especially captivated by the question of how to render a three-dimensional image in

two dimensions. The result was the Warnock algorithm, a major step forward in computer graphics and the basis for some of his later work at Adobe.

He married Marva Mullins in 1965. She survives him, as do his daughter, Alyssa; his sons, Christopher and Jeffrey; and four grandchildren.

Warnock received his doctorate in 1969 and then moved to the San Francisco Bay Area to work for a company founded by two of his mentors at Utah, David C. Evans and Ivan Sutherland. After they asked him to transfer to the company’s Salt Lake City office he decided to stay in California instead and went to work for Xerox, whose Palo Alto Research Center was then pioneering the first personal computers.

# Low sea ice robbed some Penguins of breeding grounds

DELGER ERDENESANAA

FOUR out of five emperor penguin colonies in Antarctica’s Bellingshausen Sea region very likely lost their chicks late last year because of disappearing sea ice underneath their breeding grounds, according to a new study. Parts of this coastal region had lost all of their sea ice by November, which was probably before penguin chicks had grown waterproof adult feathers and learned to swim. It’s the first time scientists have seen a widespread failure across multiple penguin colonies in a region, researchers said.

“At the moment, we’re not sure if this is just a blip,” said Norman Ratcliffe, a seabird ecologist with the British Antarctic Survey and one of the authors of the new study. “But if this becomes a consistent phenomena in the longer term, clearly it’s going to have repercussions for the species.” Sea ice levels around Antarctica in 2023 are likely to reach record low levels by a wide margin. This sudden drop has alarmed scientists and has some speculating that Antarctic sea ice is entering a new, unstable state.

“Events like this may become more common in the future,” Ratcliffe said, referring to the early loss of sea ice and penguins’ subsequent breeding failures. “So we may be looking at a harbinger of a future Antarctica.” The Bellingshausen Sea region of Antarctica is extremely

remote, so the researchers observed the penguin colonies using satellite images to track their excrement, called guano, which leaves a distinct reddish-brown trace on the snow and ice.

Emperor penguins depend on sea ice stuck to the edge of the Antarctic continent as a habitat to lay eggs and raise their young until they can swim and fend for themselves.

After remaining stable and even increasing for many years despite climate change, Antarctic sea ice began to decline around 2016. The extent of sea ice around the continent hit a record low in 2022. The Bellingshausen Sea, the area along the west side of the Antarctic Peninsula where the five penguin colonies were located, was the worst-affected region last year.

Emperor penguins sometimes pick new breeding grounds when previous sites have failed, and some have joined other colonies. But scientists have only seen them move short distances, and as more and more sea ice melts, whole regions of the coast may become inhospitable.

Scientists estimate there are around 600,000 emperor penguins in the wild, across 61 known colonies. In 2022, the United States listed the species as threatened under the Endangered Species Act. Although these penguins don’t live in the United States, the listing encourages international cooperation to protect the animals and requires the government to consider them when



Penguins at the Antarctic Peninsula. – AFP file photo

Helpless emperor penguin chicks perished at multiple breeding grounds in West Antarctica late last year, drowning or freezing to death when sea ice eroded by global warming gave way under their tiny feet

evaluating federal projects that emit greenhouse gases. Besides human-caused climate change, the past three years’ natural La Niña climate phenomenon in the Pacific Ocean likely contributed to the Bellingshausen Sea having especially little sea ice. A flip to El Niño conditions this year could help that particular region.

The continent is just beginning to emerge from its long polar night, when emperor penguin colonies aren’t visible in the darkness to satellites. As they become visible again, the British Antarctic Survey and researchers from other countries are continuing to monitor each colony. They expect newer satellites — which are starting to track the penguins rather than just their guano — to help improve estimates of populations.

While the latest study, published on Thursday in the journal *Communications Earth & Environment*, focused on the Bellingshausen Sea, Ratcliffe said that the breeding failure rates last year were higher than expected all around Antarctica.

Annie Schmidt, an ecologist and Antarctica programme director at the consultancy Point Blue Conservation Science, said this study yielded an important observation of regionwide breeding failure. Schmidt was not involved in this research, but has studied emperor penguin colonies.

“It’s a first warning that this is starting to happen,” she said.



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

I wasn't sure if the writers of this movie intended to add some comedy to what was supposed to be a thriller, but they certainly got the portrayal of the psychiatrist wrong. Despite our intention of helping people recover, one cannot be available 24/7 to answer patients' inquiries, let alone give advice when the person is being shot at. There's something called therapeutic boundaries that are essential in the doctor-patient relationship. In fact, without such boundaries, the psychiatrist is going to experience

Having worked in healthcare for the past twenty-eight years, I have come across colleagues from other branches of medicine who experienced burnout, yet they were unable to seek help. I recently read a book by Dr Omar Reda, a psychiatrist of Libyan origin

In my opinion, a good therapist would not say, “Call me anytime,” but rather, “Come and see me during your appointment, and if you need emergency care, here are the names of emergency departments you can attend.”



— *The New York Times*

# Democracy is very much on a knife edge

Global societies must look at the Sultanate of Oman's leadership and governance model, with its blend of hierarchical leadership and the social-democratic model of the Majlis Ashshura, with so much admiration, than even 20 years ago. Why? Because the ancient, Greeco-Roman inspired democratic model has gone the same way as one of its most famous orators, Julius Caesar, and been struck down, stabbed in the back, by those it sought to protect.

How? Because the marginal sections of society now have reached a pinnacle, where they, the 'vocal minority,' are now inflicting, and being allowed to inflict their influences, lifestyles, and opinions, on the more passive, majority. By those very definitions, each section of society is not only defined, but emboldened, or conversely made fearful, by the demeanour of the other... the vocal get louder, and the quiet go silent. In a workplace it would be called out as bullying and harassment, yet, in the streets, its allowed, and often condoned by weak administrations.

Minority groups have become so active, so aggressive, and so oppressive, that politicians and political parties have become intimidated by them, and scared of losing their constituencies,



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POLITICIANS HAVE FORGOTTEN WHO THEY SERVE, AND THAT EVERY ONE OF THEM WAS ELECTED TO IMPLEMENT THE VOTER'S WILL

therefore their power, capitulate way too easily. In doing so, they have betrayed, 'et tu Brutus,' the voters, 'you too,' that put them into parliament and power, or in other societies, senate, and power. Politicians have forgotten who they serve, and that every one of them was elected to implement the voter's will, and not to do what their own will and judgement dictate, but to serve.

Pseudo-political and pseudo-social minorities clearly see themselves as victims, when really, they are victims only because they choose to be, and because it suits their purpose to be.

Ideologies range from the sublime to the ridiculous, and clearly need conversations, in the same way everything other candidate for social change does. What's the indecent haste? Usually, haste is an indication of a lack of confidence in the wisdom and strength of one's advocacy, no? Remember, it took centuries for the poor, and eventually women, to achieve voting rights.

And must everything be 'protest-able?' The Carnegie Endowment for International Peace has catalogued global protests for the last 20 years, and if we look at protest-centric groups, and their 'peak size' statistics, society's conscience groups like Black Lives Matter

## CROSSING FOR LIFE!



Migrants climb over a barbed wire fence after crossing the Rio Grande into US from Mexico, in Eagle Pass, Texas, on Saturday. – AFP

# What motivates killer nurses?

Recently convicted of murdering seven babies and attempting to kill six others at the Countess of Chester Hospital between June 2015 and June 2016, neonatal nurse Lucy Letby has the grisly distinction of being the United Kingdom's most prolific child serial killer. Over the course of Letby's ten-month trial, believed to be the longest murder trial in UK history, prosecutors detailed how she had harmed the infants in her care by injecting air and insulin into their bloodstreams, infusing air into their abdomens, and dislodging their breathing tubes.

What would provoke a nurse — a caregiver by profession — to inflict such terrible suffering? Even after covering the trial and spending months in Letby's presence, BBC journalist Judith Moritz struggled to understand her motivations. One text message hints at a possible god complex: "...sometimes I think, how do such sick babies get through & others just die so suddenly & unexpectedly?" Letby wrote. "Guess it's how it's meant to be." But, in Moritz's view, this does not provide a satisfying answer.

An examination of similar cases could offer insights into Letby's psychological state. Serial-killer nurses, it turns out, are more common than many would like to believe. Consider Niels Högel, who admitted to killing 43 people while working as a nurse at two clinics in the northern German cities of Oldenburg and Delmenhorst between 2000 and 2005.

Högel, the most prolific serial killer in postwar Germany, embodies the gravity of the danger posed by a disturbed healthcare professional. Officials suspect that as many as 300 patients may have died by his hand.

As a psychologist explained during the trial, Högel did not seem to enjoy killing, nor did he do it for financial gain. Rather, Högel admitted to acting out of boredom, as well as a deep yearning to flaunt his superior resuscitation skills. After misusing medication to trigger cardiac arrest, reviving a patient was an act



RAJ PERSAUD

The writer is a psychiatrist and author of The Mental Vaccine for Covid-19

BRITISH NEONATAL NURSE LUCY LETBY WAS RECENTLY CONVICTED OF MURDERING SEVEN BABIES, IN A YEARS-LONG CASE THAT HAS HORRIFIED THE UNITED KINGDOM

of personal aggrandizement — he was even nicknamed "Resuscitation Rambo" by admiring colleagues.

In his ruling, the judge cited a psychologist's assessment that the former nurse was a narcissist who liked to portray himself as a hero. While Högel relished the excitement of resuscitation, and sometimes even succeeded in reviving patients, at least 87 died. Likewise, when Letby was on duty, infants in the Countess of Chester Hospital often inexplicably required emergency resuscitation.

Serial-killer nurses tend to use injectable medications like insulin, opioids, and potassium chloride because they can be difficult to identify after death, as most healthcare professionals would know. Beverley Allitt, for example, killed at least two babies by administering large doses of insulin while working as a nurse at Grantham and Kesteven Hospital in Lincolnshire,

England, between February and April 1991. She was ultimately convicted of murdering four infants in total, attempting to murder another three, and causing grievous bodily harm to six more.

One theory invoked in the Allitt case is that she suffered from Munchausen syndrome by proxy, a rare and controversial diagnosis in which a caregiver inflicts harm on a child to gain personal sympathy. It is similar to one of the possible motivations that the prosecution in the Letby case identified: the nurse was attacking babies to attract the attention of a doctor with whom it is alleged she had become infatuated.

Insulin injections were also Ontario nurse Elizabeth Wettlaufer's weapon of choice. In September 2016, Wettlaufer admitted to killing eight long-term care residents and attempting to murder six others. Wettlaufer's crimes were uncovered only because she spontaneously

confessed while receiving drug-addiction treatment. She had never been under any suspicion, and it would have likely remained that way had she not implicated herself.

Wettlaufer may also have admitted the truth to a childhood friend, telling him: "A lot of what I've done has been triggered by my anger issues." But how could killing people under your care become a means of acting out anger issues? Who hasn't experienced homicidal urges against frustrating colleagues, or maybe undeserving patients blocking your precious beds, if you are a clinician struggling to run an under-resourced service?

The nature of their jobs put these healthcare professionals in closer proximity to death than most ordinary people; regularly dealing with mortality could have warped their perspective. Or perhaps they were always drawn to the emotional intensity, and heightened bonding, produced

in any team confronted with the ultimate crisis. In any event, because psychological screenings are secondary to technical skills when hiring in medical fields, and all these serial-killer nurses seemed to excel technically, dangerous pathology likely would not have been flagged when it's often difficult to find the basically clinically competent.

None of the experts giving evidence during the Letby trial presented a coherent theory explaining her motivation; maybe even expert clinicians remain in denial about the demons in their midst. Although other "angels of death" can provide clues about what gives rise to such evil, the most worrying implication of the "god complex" explanation is that the next "angel" more likely will be found among the better, or even the best, nurses. And it will always be counterintuitive to search for a killer among the healers you most rely on in an emergency.

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What would provoke a nurse – a caregiver by profession.

# Sport

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## Oman boys get ready for Arab school tourney in Egypt

ADIL AL BALUSHI  
MUSCAT, AUG 26

Oman under-16 football team concluded their third warm-up camp in Muscat on Saturday after eight days of training sessions and several local friendly matches.

The main goals of these short camps were reformation of the team and finalising the squad ahead of the forthcoming key events. The closest assignment for Oman junior boys will be taking part in the Arab School Football Championship in Egypt in November.

Oman team will attend this key event under an umbrella of Oman Schools Sports Association (OSSA) as this championship is dedicated for the schools. The following participation for the team will be in the West Asian Championship in December.

The eight-day preparatory gathering featured two warm-up domestic matches. In the last match for the U16 team, they suffered a 5-0 loss against Seeb under-19 team on Friday. The Oman boys beat Fanja under-19 team 2-0 recently and Oman's goals were scored by Ahmed al Jabri. During the previous camps, the Oman team went down 3-1 against Samayil club under-19 team.

The Oman U16 boys registered their first win in the recent short



camps against Muscat club U19 team by 2-0.

Despite the difference in the results of the friendly matches, Anwar al Habsi, head coach of the national team, noted all the technical points relevant to the player's individual performance and their weak areas.

It is expected the team will continue their preparatory programme ahead of their Arab assignment in Cairo city and the upcoming camps will shape their readiness.

The first camp for the side took place between July 24 to 30 in Bidiya with participation of 50

players and they were filtered to 26 players in the following short camp which took place from August 5 to 14.

Many of the players who entered the team were from the Omantel League for Schools as Oman School Sports Association (OSSA) had concluded the tournament a few months ago. The league featured attendance of all the education directorates across the Sultanate of Oman. The national team coaching staff were monitoring this event and some names in the national team squad were selected from the tournament.

**OMAN U16 SQUAD**

Qais Ameen, Qusai al Mashakhi, Fahad al Mashakhi, Ziyad al Mattani, Hassan al Hinai, Ali al Owaini, Ibrahim al Tamimi, Ibrahim al Shamsi, Rashid al Sulaimi, Abdul Malik al Rahbi, Al Hassan al Qasmi, Waqas al Izki, Faisal al AbdulSalam, Ahmed al Jabri, Mohammed al Salhi, Firas al Saadi, Hassan al Saadi, Al Waleed al Buraidi, Yazeed al Mushefri, Ahmed al Omrani, Al Motasim al Maqbali, Abdulaziz al Oraimi, Mohammed al Mashakhi, Ahmed al Hinai, Suleiman al Kharousi and Ahmed al Rawahi.



## Sur stun Dhofar, Ibri upset Al Shabab

AHMED AL KAABI  
MUSCAT, AUG 26

In a surprising turn of events, Sur team emerged victorious against their hosts Dhofar with a close score of 1-0 during a heated match at Al Saada Complex on Friday. This clash marked the start of the second round of the Omantel League.

During the first half of the game, both teams had equal level performance, resulting in a deadlock. Notably, Sur missed a golden opportunity to take the lead when they were awarded a penalty kick in the 31st minute. Mohammad al Mukhaini failed to capitalise on this chance as Dhofar goalkeeper Mazen al Kasbi skillfully thwarted his attempt.

The intensity persisted into the second half, with both teams maintaining their competitive spirit. Sur endured until the 67th minute when Ahed al Hudaifi of Sur managed to break the deadlock with a decisive goal. Despite subsequent efforts from both sides, neither team managed to find the back of the net again. Consequently, the match concluded with Sur securing a 1-0 victory.

Sur's total points tally increased to 4, following their earlier draw against Al Rustaq in the opening round. Meanwhile, Dhofar's score remained at 3 points, acquired from their victory against the promoted Al Wehda team from the first division.

**FIRST WIN FOR IBRI**

Debutants Ibri Club demonstrated their prowess by clinching a 1-0 victory over Al Shabab at the Ibri Complex on Friday.

The match kicked off with the Al Shabab team maintaining ball possession, while Ibri strategically adopted a defensive stance and capitalised on counterattacks.

The initial half-hour of the game passed without any notable chances for either side. However, a pivotal moment arrived in the 33rd minute when Ibri's Youssef al Ghafri orchestrated a remarkable pass, leading to a goal by the club's professional player Bruno. This breakthrough set the stage for Ibri's continued pressure, with Bruno missing several subsequent opportunities to widen the lead before the close of the first half.

The second half witnessed an improved performance from the Al Shabab, who managed to create multiple scoring opportunities. Nonetheless, these efforts failed to yield an equaliser. On the flip side, Ibri maintained their defensive strategy, relying on well-timed counter-attacks to maintain a clean sheet. Ultimately, the match concluded with Ibri securing a 1-0 victory.

Thus, Ibri scored the first 3 points in the league campaign, as their first match against Al Seeb was postponed, due to the latter's participation in the preliminary round of the AFC Champions League. Al Shabab remained at one point from their first-round tie against defending champions Al Nahda.

The action-packed second round continues on Saturday with a match between Al Rustaq and Sohar at Al Rustaq Complex Stadium and Oman Club meet Bahla at Al Seeb Stadium.



## Next generation shine at Oman Sailing Championship in Ras Al Hadd

**MUSCAT:** Three days of competition in Ras Al Hadd produced many extraordinary performances as 30 young sailors, aged from 10-18 years of age, from Oman Sail's Sailing Schools raced in Optimist, ILCA 4 and ILCA 6 classes for the chance to represent the nation in upcoming regattas, both at home and internationally.

After nine races in each event, the top three sailors in each class were determined and the top ranked sailors will now take the next step in their journey on the water. A separate competition was held for girls and sailors under the age of 10 in the Optimist class.

In the Optimist overall rankings, Firas al Nabhani notched four wins and always finished within the top three of each race to take first place ahead of Tamim al Balushi who also scored four wins but finished just three points behind. Abdul Rahman al Hadi finished in the top three in five of the nine races to secure third place.

The Optimist Girls race was won by Tarteel al Hasani after six successive race victories. She finished four points ahead of Hadeel al Meshafri. In the under-10 category, Habib al Hasini won seven of the nine races to claim victory by five points over Harib al Busaidi. Both competitors



showed excellent sailing skills at such a young age and will be considered ones to watch in the coming years.

The ILCA 4 fleet, the largest of the competition featuring 14 sailors, was won by Hatem al Araimi with six wins and an eight point lead over Elyas al Adawi in second and Faisal al Adawi a further three points back. Between the three sailors they scored eight wins, seven second places and three third places, which underlined the quality of sailing on show. Visiting sailor Sultan al Owais from the United Arab Emirates took a narrow victory in the ILCA 6 class. Salah al Mabsali finished third.

The medallists received their prizes at the closing ceremony, held at Ras Al Hadd Castle. Dr Hashil bin Obaid al Mahrouqi, CEO of OMRAN Group, was the guest of honour.

Dr Khamis al Jabri, CEO of Oman Sail, said, "The skill on show over the past three days was incredibly impressive for such young sailors. We have high hopes for the future of sailing in Oman, and the young team will play an integral part in achieving our goals and realising our ambitions as part of a national programme to develop the sport. Oman Sail will now work closely with the athletes to prepare them for upcoming races as they join

our Performance Pathway and represent our nation proudly around the world."

The sailors have been selected from Oman Sail's Sailing Schools at Al Mouj Muscat, Barceló Mussanah Resort and Sur. Five sailors from Al Hamriyah Sailing Team in the United Arab Emirates were also invited to compete as part of their own preparations for the upcoming season.

Optimist, ILCA 4, ILCA 6 and ILCA 7 sailors had been based in Ras Al Hadd for a summer-long training camp where they had been taking part in daily fitness sessions with Oman Sail coaches and completing courses on nutrition and boat safety.

# THAILAND ROMP TO SECOND WIN IN ASIA CUP



ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH  
MUSCAT, AUG 26

Thailand romped to their second win with an 8-1 thumping of Malaysia in an Elite group clash of the Women's Asia Cup Hockey5s 2023 in Salalah on Saturday.

The Thai women had posted a 5-1 win against Japan on Friday in their opening match of the tournament, which acts as the qualifiers for the first ever Hockey5s World Cup to be hosted by Muscat in January 2024.

At the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex hockey turf in Salalah, the result handed Malaysia their second straight defeat after a 7-2 loss against India on Friday.

For Thailand, Natthakarn Aunjai, Sudarat Noo-keaw and Kornkanok Sanpoung scored two goals each. Kunjira Inpa and Anongnat Piresram also found targets for Thailand.

Zafirah Aziz netted the lone goal for Malaysia.



Thailand moved top of the Elite group with six points from two matches.

India are second with three points from their opening win over Malaysia.

In a later match, India take on Japan in their second match.

Japan are third and Malaysia are

last in the group with no points.

## OMAN SUFFER DEFEATS

Hosts Oman suffered their fourth straight defeat in the Challenger group when they went down 9-2 against Bangladesh on Saturday.

Though the Omani women's

hockey5s team showed improved performance compared to the opening 16-0 drubbing of Hong Kong, it was not enough.

On Friday, Oman lost to Indonesia 6-2 in their second match.

In an earlier match on Saturday, Chinese Taipei thrashed Oman 11-1.

In other matches of the Challenger group, Hong Kong beat Indonesia 5-3 and later edged out Chinese Taipei 8-6 to top the group with 12 points from four matches.

Bangladesh smashed Iran 9-3 and thumped Oman 9-2 to take second spot with nine points from four matches.

Indonesia are third in the group with nine points but less goal average compared to Bangladesh.

Indonesia thrashed Iran 10-3 to earn vital three points.

Chinese Taipei are fourth with six points. Iran are fifth and Oman are last with no points.



## Oman to take part in the World Taekwondo Championship in Bosnia

MUSCAT: The Oman Taekwondo Team will participate in the World Taekwondo Championship in Bosnia and Herzegovina from August 27 to September 3.

The Oman team includes seven Omani players and coaches. Dr Talal bin Mohammed al Balushi, head of the delegation, explained that "The World Taekwondo Championship is one of the most important international competitions that work to refine the players' skills and provide them with the necessary expertise and capabilities to be among the world's players."

The national team coach, Waleed bin Yousef al Balushi, said, "The Omani players need to come into contact with

international expertise and get used to the atmosphere of international tournaments."

While the coach Mohammed bin Sultan al Mahrouqi indicated that "The Oman Taekwondo Committee contributes effectively to creating a promising generation of players who will undoubtedly contribute to spreading the sport of Taekwondo in the Sultanate."

The World Taekwondo Championship is held every two years. It should be noted that this championship is one of the tournaments included in the international calendar of the Omani Taekwondo Committee for the year 2023, which includes a number of participations at various local, regional and international levels.

## Saudi club Al Ahli sign Spain's Veiga from Celta



RIYADH: Al Ahli have signed Spain Under-21 international Gabri Veiga from LaLiga side Celta Vigo on a three-year deal, the Saudi Pro League club said on Saturday, the latest in a slew of signings this summer by Saudi Arabian clubs.

Veiga, a product of Celta's academy, scored 11 league goals for the Spanish side last season, including a brace on the final day of the campaign in a 2-1 win over champions Barcelona — which helped his side avoid relegation.

The 21-year-old, who has played eight times for Spain's Under-21 team and was part of the squad which finished runners-up at the U21 European Championship last month, has attracted interest from several clubs in the transfer window including Chelsea, Liverpool and Napoli.

"The jewel of Spain will chant

our anthem," Al Ahli posted on messaging platform X, previously known as Twitter.

Veiga is the latest addition to Al Ahli's squad after the signings of Riyadh Mahrez, Roberto Firmino, goalkeeper Edouard Mendy, Alain Saint-Maximin, Merih Demiral, Franck Kessie and Roger Ibanez.

Al Ahli, who have returned to the Pro league following a season in the second division, have enjoyed a great start to the season with three wins from three games.

The Saudi Public Investment Fund (PIF) has announced a Sports Clubs Investment and Privatisation Project involving league champions Al Ittihad, Al Ahli, Al Nassr and Al Hilal.

PIF owns 75 per cent of each of the four clubs, while their respective non-profit foundations own 25 per cent of each of them.

— Reuters

# Verstappen fastest in final red-flagged Dutch GP practice

ZANDVOORT, Netherlands: Red Bull's Max Verstappen was fastest in a wet and three-times red-flagged final free practice for his home Dutch Grand Prix at Zandvoort on Saturday.

The double Formula One world champion, who will be chasing a record-equalling ninth win in a row on Sunday, lapped the seaside circuit with a best time of one minute 21.631 seconds on a drying track at the end of the session.

Verstappen has won his home race from pole position each time since its return to the calendar in 2021 and is favourite to complete his hat-trick and stretch his lead over team-mate Sergio Perez from a current 125 points.

Mercedes' George Russell was second fastest for Mercedes with a lap 0.379 slower, while Perez was third and a second off the pace. A string of drivers, including Verstappen, ran wide in tricky conditions before the rain eased off.

Kevin Magnussen brought



Red Bull Racing's Dutch driver Max Verstappen drives during the third practice session at The Circuit Zandvoort, ahead of the Dutch Formula One Grand Prix, in Zandvoort on Saturday. — AFP

proceedings to a halt after 10 minutes when he spun his Haas at turn three and ended up stranded on track with a damaged front left suspension.

Alfa Romeo's Guanyu Zhou beached his car in the gravel at

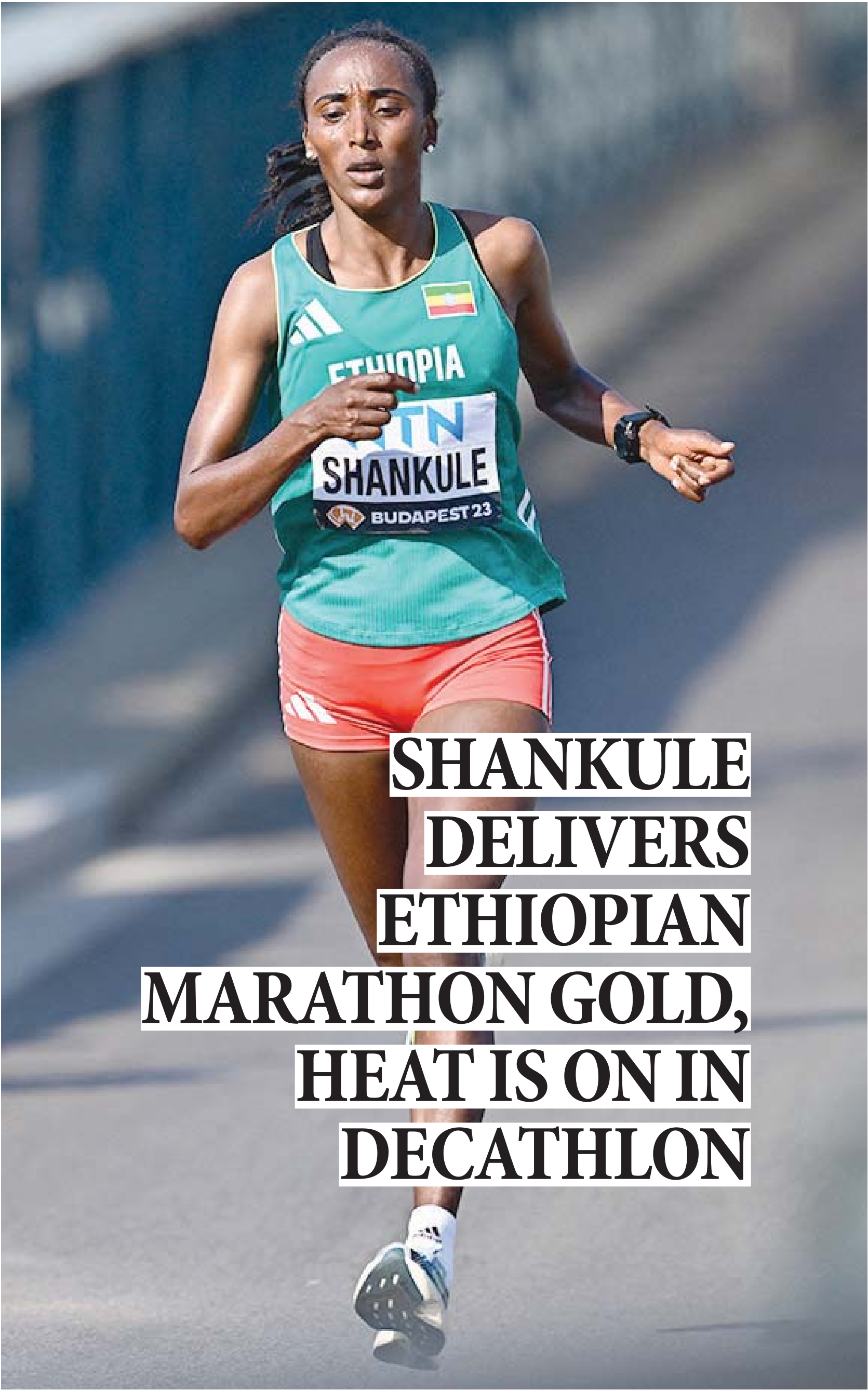
the penultimate corner with 35 minutes to go, bringing out red flags again.

AlphaTauri debutant Liam Lawson then halted the track action when he spun with 12 minutes remaining and was left

facing the wrong way.

The New Zealander, replacing Daniel Ricciardo after the Australian broke his hand in a crash on Friday, got the car going again and ended up 18th.

— Reuters



Ethiopia's Amane Beriso Shankule in action during the women's marathon final. – Reuters

# SHANKULE DELIVERS ETHIOPIAN MARATHON GOLD, HEAT IS ON IN DECATHLON

**BUDAPEST:** Amane Beriso Shankule beat defending champion and compatriot Gotytom Gebreslase to give Ethiopia their third women's marathon title in the past five editions of the World Athletics Championships on Saturday.

The runners had to brave scorching and humid conditions in Budapest with temperatures hitting 29 degrees Celsius (84 degrees Fahrenheit) by the time the race finished.

However, conditions became even more challenging for the decathletes, female shot putters and spectators in the stadium.

Some revelled in it but others like decathlon overnight leader Leo Neugebauer of Germany wilted at the start of day two, the 23-year-old slipping to fourth after the first two events of the day. Canada's world silver medallist Pierce LePage topped the standings going into the morning's final event, the pole vault.

Whoever prevails will be a new world champion as France's titleholder Kevin Mayer withdrew with an injury on Friday.

**ETHIOPIA'S MARATHON TEAM EFFORT**

Shankule, whose victory at last year's Valencia marathon put her third on the world all-time list, timed 2hr 24min 23sec to win gold on the streets of the Hungarian capital.

Defending champion Gotytom Gebreslase claimed silver, 11sec behind, with Morocco's Fatima Ezzahra Gardadi taking bronze in 2:25.17.

"We knew if we worked together we could get a better result, and we worked well as a team today," Shankule said of the Ethiopian quartet's race strategy.

Germany, once an athletics powerhouse, are still awaiting their first medal of these championships.

Their hopes were raised by Neugebauer, the world leader this year, holding a 30-point overnight lead over LePage.

However, he dropped to third after a disappointing performance in the opening event on Saturday, the 110m hurdles.

The 23-year-old was given a warning and seemed disconcerted by that, knocking over the first three hurdles to finish in 14.75sec, accruing just 880 points.

Both LePage and his teammate, Olympic champion Damian Warner, passed him in the overall standings as they put on a fine display of high hurdling. LePage led Warner

by 18 points with Neugebauer almost 100 points down on the leader.

**EXPECTATIONS ARE HIGH**

LePage had come out all guns blazing on Saturday, turning up the pressure on Neugebauer in the following discipline, the discus.

The 27-year-old's first effort flew out to 50.98m whilst Neugebauer posted a modest 45.26m — 10m off his personal best.

He managed a slight improvement on his third and final effort of 47.63m which gave him a morale boost ahead of the pole vault.

Neugebauer slipped out of the medal positions altogether after a remarkable three throws by Grenada's two-time Commonwealth Games champion Lindon Victor.

The 30-year-old warmed up with a 51.48m first effort then improved on that with a world-best discus throw in a decathlon of 54.64m to move into bronze position.

He then set the seal on his performance with a 54.97m effort, raising his arms in the circle in appreciation of the applause from the decent-sized crowd.

Just 15 of the 24 who started out remained in competition following the pole vault.

Six failed to make it past the first day and three no-heighted in the pole vault. Neugebauer battled his way back into second after a spirited pole vault display with a 5.10m clearance. However, he only holds a 22 point lead over Warner with Victor a further 46 points adrift going into the final two events, the javelin and the 1,500m.

LePage is a relatively comfortable 195 points clear of Neugebauer, 7,477 points to 7,282.

Should Neugebauer fail to deliver, the Germans will entertain hopes of a medal in the women's shot.

Two of their contenders, Yemisi Ogundeye and Sara Gambetta, reached the final later on Saturday. Ogundeye posted the third best throw in qualification, 19.44m, but it was the Netherlands' European champion Jessica Schilder, who topped it with 19.64m.

"I came here to Budapest as European champion and a world championships bronze medallist," said Schilder.

"The expectations are high and I have to cope with the pressure while I would like to just enjoy competing."

— AFP

## Jude Bellingham scores again to secure 1-0 win at Celta

**VIGO, Spain:** Real Madrid's new signing Jude Bellingham scored in the second half to earn his side a third straight win as they beat Celta Vigo 1-0 in LaLiga on Friday to maintain a perfect start.

The 20-year-old once again led the Spanish giants' attack, scoring for the fourth time in his first three league games following Rodrygo's missed penalty earlier in the second half.

Real were dealt an early blow as Brazilian forward Vinicius Jr was forced off with a leg problem after 15 minutes, a notable loss for Carlo Ancelotti's side that comes on top of goalkeeper Thibaut Courtois and defender Eder Militao's injuries.

Celta were also forced into a substitution due to Franco Cervi's injury shortly before half-time.

The visitors had already come under fire in the opening seconds as Celta thought they had taken the lead only for VAR to rule out Jorgen Larsen's effort for a foul on goalkeeper Kepa Arrizabalaga, making his debut following his loan from Chelsea.

"Kepa has played well, a clean sheet is a good sign," said Ancelotti. "He deserved to play, I have said in these games that the goal is well covered, both with Kepa and (Andriy) Lunin."

Rodrygo then had a golden chance to earn Real the lead in the 68th minute with a penalty after keeper Ivan Villar tripped him in the box. However, Villar redeemed himself as he dived to his right to keep out the Brazilian forward's spot kick.

"I told (Real midfielder Fede) Valverde that Luka (Modric) had to take the penalty,

I don't know what happened between them that they chose Rodrygo," Ancelotti said. "I am a bit upset that Luka didn't take the penalty."

However, England midfielder Bellingham put La Liga leaders Real in front 10 minutes from time with a header from Joselu's touch off a corner to maintain his impressive start.

"Bellingham is doing very well, he keeps scoring. He's doing it because he's moving very well without the ball" Ancelotti said. "He's intelligent, he arrives at the right moment."

After three away matches, high-flying Real will play their first home game next Saturday against Getafe as renovations at the Santiago Bernabeu Stadium are completed. — Reuters

Jude Bellingham celebrates his goal with Joselu during the Spanish Liga football match between RC Celta de Vigo and Real Madrid CF at the Balaídos stadium. – AFP





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New e-marketplace  
for recyclable waste  
trading in Oman

CONRAD PRABHU  
MUSCAT, AUG 26

Plans for the establishment of a first-ever Waste Trading Platform are being firmed up in the Sultanate of Oman — a move that will impart strong impetus to the commercialisation of recyclable waste and the growth of a new economy around this sector.

The initiative is being spearheaded by Oman Environmental Holding Services Co (be'ah) — part of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) — which is overseeing the management of solid waste in the country, with a mandate to harness the economic potential of this sector.

Last week, be'ah floated a tender for the design, development, installation and maintenance of an e-platform to support the collection of, and trade in, recyclable waste streams. Interested bidders have until September 18, 2023 to submit their offers.

This initiative is in “fulfilment of be'ah's strategic goals, which include the development of waste streams and recover lost value from waste on a commercial basis,” the company noted in a brief introduction.

“The development of this platform will support the promotion of the recycling industry in Oman, leading to an increase in Oman's recycling rate and ensure maximising waste value retention and in-country value.”

Studies have pointed to a proliferation of Omani small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) operating in the collection, segregation, recycling and export of products and commodities emerging from the country's nascent circular economy.

In addition to players specialising in the collection and



recycling of paper and cardboard waste, scrap metal, plastics and lead acid batteries (LABs), several new investors have ventured into used cooking oil (UCO) and waste tyre recycling as well.

According to be'ah, the platform aims to facilitate and streamline transactions in recyclable materials in the local market. Modelled as an online marketplace for auctions, it will link auctions to approved live pricing indexes.

Consequently, market players encompassing waste generators, recyclers, traders and others will be able to post and bid on live auctions to conduct deals in a competitive and transparent manner.

Furthermore, in designing the platform, the successful bidder is required to offer integrated services including estimation services, online payment through integration with bank gateways, and monitoring of waste-flow post transactions, said be'ah. Notably, the operator of the e-platform will be able to charge subscriptions, as well as fees per transaction in line with a business model to help fund the initiative.

Additionally, the platform will offer collection services for major generators of special waste streams, enabling the safe movement of the waste from the generation point to the designated areas per stipulated procedures.

Other services provided via the platform include monitoring and tracking the movement of recyclables along with the associated financial flow.

Salalah Free Zone in H1 attracts  
investments worth RO 727 million



**SALALAH:** The Salalah Free Zone, affiliated to Asyad Group, has attracted new project investments totalling RO 727 million during the first half of 2023. Five usufruct agreements were signed so far this year, taking the number of projects to 127 to date, with a cumulative investment volume of RO 4.5 billion.

Dr Ali bin Mohammed Tabuk (pictured), CEO of Salalah Free Zone Company, said in a statement to the Oman News Agency (ONA), “The new agreements in the first half of this year include the project to establish a powder and detergent production plant, another for the manufacture of ferrous alloys and packaging paper, as well as a textile manufacturing and plastic packaging plant for healthcare, as well as a urea and ammonia production project, and an Exahertz project in the field of data hosting and processing.”

He stressed the interest of the Salalah Free Zone in attracting private investment in the



technical sector and the digital economy.

Through the opening of a data hosting and crypto mining project in mid-August for Exahertz Global, the construction of the Blockchain Data Centre is an important milestone indicating the success of the Free Zone by attracting domestic and international investment and strengthening the technical sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

He explained that the Salalah Free Zone supports its modern

facilities and logistics potential investments in the third-generation Internet technology sector and 4th Industrial Revolution technologies, to serve as a pillar and starting point for expanding computing capabilities in the Sultanate of Oman for blockchain technology.

This will open up new horizons for innovation and the growth of Oman's digital economy, leveraging its strategic position alongside submarine cable landings in Salalah.

The free zone also provides a highly efficient energy grid suited to the needs of large-scale technical projects, as well as taking advantage of the moderate climate in Dhofar Governorate, and the possibility of using cold sea water in sophisticated cooling systems, which contributes to reducing energy consumption and enhancing the efficiency of air conditioning and ventilation systems that are key to ensuring the safety of devices in big data centres.

The Salalah Free Zone is a leading hub for high-quality industrial and logistics activities. It offers many economic incentives, benefits and facilities to investors, most notably tax exemptions, full foreign ownership of investment projects, as well as a strategic location adjacent to the Port of Salalah bordering the trajectory of the world's most prominent navigation lines, which has the infrastructure and equipment to place among the world's elite commercial ports. — ONA

OQ Gas Networks announces stock split ahead of planned IPO

QASIM AL MAASHANI  
MUSCAT, AUG 26

OQ Gas Networks Co (OQGN), the exclusive owner and operator of the natural gas transportation network in the Sultanate of Oman, has announced a stock split — a precursor to a keenly anticipated public offering and eventual listing by the company, wholly owned by OQ Group.

The stock split, disclosed by the MSX on Thursday, is effective on

August 22, 2023. This means that for every 10 shares of OQ Gas Networks stock that a shareholder owns, they will receive an additional 9 shares. The total number of shares outstanding will increase from 433,062,392 to 4,330,623,920.

According to market experts, the stock split is intended to make the shares more affordable for investors and to increase liquidity. A lower share price can make it easier for investors to buy and sell



shares, which can increase trading volume and make the stock more liquid.

The stock split is also seen as a positive signal by the market, as it suggests that the company is confident in its future prospects. A company that is confident in

its future prospects is more likely to be successful, which can lead to higher share prices in the long run.

Amor bin Ahmed al Maashani, Head of Brokerage, Ahli Bank, commented: “OQ Gas Networks announced the

split of its share price ahead of the company's expected listing on the Muscat Stock Exchange MSX next October. In this way, the company can offer its IPO at an affordable price to investors of all categories.”

He further added: “The success of Oman Investment Authority's (OIA) recent listed company Abraj Energy Services SAOG will reflect positively on the coming IPO, as many investors are waiting for the announcement of the detailed

prospectus. Also the possible discount rate for retail investors and the discount to fair price offered to the rest of categories should result in many times of oversubscription.”

“With such size of IPO, this also should reflect on the average daily trading volume on the Muscat Stock Exchange, as well as the amount of capital that will be available for direct investment in the Sultanate of Oman,” Al Maashani stated.

# OAB’s Tumouhi set to boost SME growth in Oman

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB) has further strengthened its support to the pivotal role of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Oman with the announcement of Tumouhi.

Launched under the auspices of Dr Nasser bin Rashid al Maawali, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Economy, the programme is targeted towards helping the nation's SMEs thrive in a sector already enjoying vibrant growth in the country.

Tumouhi customers will have access to comprehensive solutions and financial services, including a suite of offers and discounts with various strategic partners across telecommunications, legal, transport, accounting and cybersecurity industries.

It will also unlock a range of exclusive benefits to create a



comprehensive ecosystem for SMEs, with waived fees for online banking and cheque books, competitive rates on car loans

and POS machines as well as a complimentary Advantage Debit Card for business owners.

In addition, through tie ups

with subject matter experts and specialists, the SMEs will benefit from a variety of free workshops on how to run a successful enterprise.

Topics include financial literacy, entrepreneurship training, governance and compliance and business communications.

Sulaiman al Hinai, General Manager of Wholesale Banking Group at Oman Arab Bank, said: “SMEs are the lifeblood of any healthy economy and they have long been a priority in OAB’s operations across the Sultanate. With Tumouhi, OAB aims to further support SMEs growth by streamlining their experience and establishing a strong reputation as a pivotal partner thanks to the suite of benefits available. SMEs represent a crucial component on our road towards realising the bold blueprint of Oman Vision 2040, which gives even more importance to this initiative as a vital development on this journey.”

He added, “Tumouhi is a

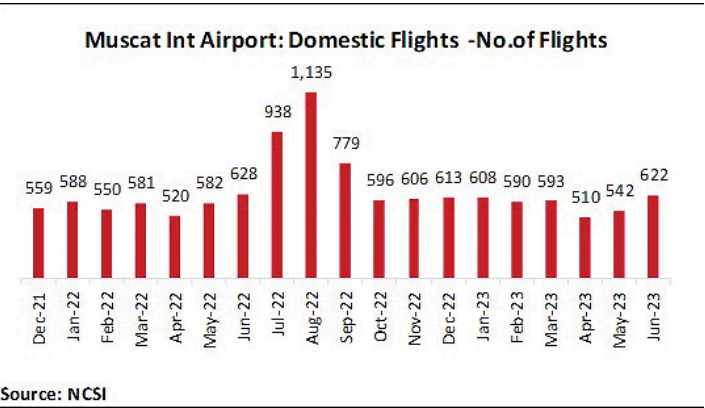
testament to our dedication to nurturing and cultivating the advancement of SMEs.”

In addition, strategic and key partners have also come on board to provide services and products for SMEs to foster their growth and facilitate their business operations.

These include Oman Academy for SMEs, Omantel, National Life and General Insurance, Talal Abu Ghazaleh Global, Asia Solutions, Corwe Oman, Dalili, Global College of Engineering and Technology, Hamdan Al Sadi Law Firm, Rajab Al Kathiri & Partners Law Firm, OSOS, and Tatweer Cyber Security.

SMEs can open a Tumouhi account at their nearest OAB branch. For more information, please visit <https://www.oman-arabbank.com/tumouhi>.

## MSX 30 index closes week lower by 0.19%



MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange 30 index closed last week at 4775.96 points, down by 9.3 points and 0.19 per cent low from the previous trading session, which stood at 4785.26 points. All major sector indices fell, except for the Financial Index, which rose by 0.07 per cent.

The Industrial Index decreased by 0.10 per cent, The Services Index was down by 0.56 per cent, and the Shariah Index fell by 0.81 per cent.

HSBC Oman has now merged with and into Sohar International and all of HSBC Oman’s rights, obligations, assets (including contracts and employees) and liabilities have transferred to Sohar International by operation of law (as a going concern).

HSBC Oman has been delisted from MSX pursuant to MSX Administrative Decision (85/2023); its commercial registration maintained with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has been cancelled; its separate corporate existence and distinct legal personality has now ceased to exist; and all its shares have been cancelled.

Sohar International received a confirmation from Muscat Clearing and Depository that all the shareholders of HSBC Oman have received their full consideration for the Merger, either in the form of cash, fully paid-up shares in Sohar International, or a combination of the two, in accordance with the terms of the merger agreement dated on November 15, 2022.

Salalah Beach Resort’ Board of Directors on August 16, 2023 received a written notice of a cash only takeover offer to acquire 34,91 per cent of the share capital of Salalah Beach Resort SAOG pursuant to the Takeover and Acquisition Regulations (ChM Decision 2/2019) from Golden Sands Hotel Co LLC.

The Board of Directors of SBR awaits the receipt of Offer Document from the Offeror, which is subject to the approval of concerned regulatory bodies. Oman Arab Bank announced EGM resolutions: Approval to issue Basel III compliant additional tier 1 capital securities to be commenced at any time over the next two years (subject to prevailing market conditions) for an amount not exceeding RO 100 million, subject to obtaining the necessary approval from the regulatory authorities.

According to the NCSI, the number of international flights via Muscat International Airport saw a 36.3-per cent increase to 7,254 flights by the end of June 2023, compared to 5,322 flights in the corresponding period in 2022.

Domestic flights saw decrease by 1 per cent reaching about 622 flights compared to 628 flights in the same period in 2022. The international and domestic flights through Muscat International Airport climbed by 32.4 per cent YoY to reach 7,876 flights, carrying as many as 995,638 passengers on board.

(Courtesy: U-Capital)

## Bluelake Technologies felicitates Al Raud Trading

MUSCAT: Bluelake Technologies LLC, the authorised distributor of Haier products in Oman, is pleased to announce its partnership with Khemo Khanwani of Al Raud Trading Co LLC and extend its heartfelt appreciation for their exceptional performance in the first half of 2023.

To commemorate this achievement, Ali Mohd Akbar Khan, the General Manager of Bluelake Technologies, presented a trophy to Khemo Khanwani at Al Raud office.

Ali Mohd Akbar Khan expressed his gratitude, stating, “The best partnerships are not solely based on a common goal but on a shared path of success, equality and passion.”

He acknowledged Khemo Khanwani’s invaluable support during the first half of the year and expressed confidence in both partners’ ability to reach their desired goals for 2023.

In response, Khemo



Khanwani, the owner of Al Raud Trading Co LLC, expressed his optimism about the future of the Haier brand, stating, “Haier is a strong brand, and I foresee a great future ahead. I appreciate all the support provided by Bluelake Technologies LLC, and I assure you that Al Raud Trading Co

LLC will achieve our targets for 2023. I will strive to make Haier the top brand in Salalah.”

In addition to the trophy, Ali Mohd Akbar Khan presented a photo frame capturing memories from the six-month journey, symbolising the shared achievements and milestones

reached by both companies.

Bluelake Technologies LLC looks forward to continuing its successful partnership with Al Raud Trading Co LLC and aims to strengthen the Haier brand’s presence in Salalah, providing exceptional products and services to customers in the region.

## Bank Nizwa holds Islamic finance knowledge series in Salalah

MUSCAT: Bank Nizwa, the leading and most trusted Islamic bank in Oman, held the latest edition of its Islamic Finance Knowledge Series (IFKS) in Salalah. The insightful session was led by Shaikh Dr Ali bin Sulaiman al Jahdhami, esteemed member of the Shariah Board at Bank Nizwa.

Shaikh Dr Ali engaged the staff of the General Directorate of Awqaf and Religious Affairs in Dhofar Governorate with an enlightening session, discussing the fundamentals of Islamic finance and its impact on the banking landscape in the Sultanate of Oman.

The audience received a wealth of information about Shariah compliant banking principles, the importance of financial literacy, the growth, and flourishing of the Islamic banking sector.

Commenting on the success of Bank Nizwa’s Islamic Finance Knowledge Series and the latest session in Salalah, Shaikh Dr Ali al Jahdhami, said, “At Bank



Nizwa, we continue to foster economic stability and social welfare through our ethical and sustainable Islamic banking practices. It is our dedication to raise awareness across the country that has brought about the success of the IFKS sessions.

“We are proud of this initiative, and our efforts to integrate Shariah compliant principles with modern banking practices to offer innovative products and services.”

As the most trusted bank in the Islamic finance sector, Bank Nizwa has contributed to the growth of Islamic banking. Over the past months, the Bank has conducted IFKS sessions in different parts of the country, reaching diverse communities across Oman, in line with their mission to foster a true understanding of Islamic finance among the public and to cultivate a healthy financial outlook among communities.

The IFKS sessions have been instrumental in promoting the importance of making well-informed financial decisions in order to achieve one’s financial aspirations aligned with one’s beliefs. Since its establishment a decade ago, Bank Nizwa has been actively working towards the innovation, creation and development of fully Shariah compliant products and services as alternatives to those offered in conventional banking.

As the leading Islamic bank in the Sultanate, Bank Nizwa is committed to maintaining its position as trusted partner to the community, and to its mission to serve its customers with products and services to cater to their every banking need.

The Bank recognises that raising awareness about Islamic finance across communities is paramount to sustaining Oman’s overall economic stability and welfare.



## Study conducted on the possibility of creating domestic demand for green hydrogen in Oman



**MUSCAT:** A number of energy analysts confirmed that green hydrogen would contribute significantly to mitigating global climate change and shifting towards a sustainable green economy rather than fossil fuels used in heavy industries.

This will open up great potential for industrial development, particularly in countries with abundant sources of renewable energy.

Dr Abdullah bin Suleiman al Abri (**pictured**), Adviser and Representative of the Sultanate of Oman at the International Energy Agency, said that Oman aspires to develop the hydrogen economy.

Hence, an analytical study on the possibility of creating domestic hydrogen demand was undertaken to support zero neutrality in 2050 and revitalise local industries and economic competitiveness.

Al Abri reviewed the detailed study to assess the possible replacement of natural gas used to provide heat to current industrial processes and raw materials, taking advantage of Oman's existing industrial and export infrastructure, noting that the study covered the technical and economic aspects of five industrial areas: Suhar,

Muscat, Sur, Duqm and Salalah.

The study included technical assessment, cost and projected revenue from sales of hydrogen, oxygen and natural gas, in addition to the financial recovery period and the expected impact in terms of reducing emissions, quantity of natural gas and land space required for solar fields.

Meanwhile, Maria bint Zaher al Tubiya, an industrial energy analyst, explained that the study was conducted on the assumption that each project's life cycle was 25 years and production would begin in early 2027.

The study showed that the total projected demand for hydrogen was 8,846 tonnes per day, and the highest demand was recorded in Suhar at 45 per cent, followed by Duqm at 28 per cent, Salalah at 14 per cent, and 9 per cent in Sur, and the lowest in Muscat at 4 per cent.

Al Tubiya indicated that the expected demand for hydrogen comes to provide heat for high-temperature industrial processes in various industries, including cement, copper, aluminium, chemicals and petrochemicals, in addition to being a clean energy carrier.

— ONA

## Oman emerges as MENA leader in prospective solar farm capacity

JOMAR MENDOZA  
MUSCAT, AUG 27

Oman has secured its position as the leading country in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region in terms of prospective solar farm capacity, according to the latest data released by the Global Solar Power Tracker.

The report, which provides insights into solar farm projects with a capacity of 20 MW and greater, reveals that Oman ranks 1st in MENA region and eleventh worldwide with an impressive prospective capacity of 18,349 megawatts (MW), accounting for 1.55% of the global total capacity.

The Global Solar Power Tracker's data highlights Oman's significant commitment to renewable energy and its ambition to diversify its energy mix.

With its vast desert landscapes and abundant sunlight, Oman has tapped into its solar potential, propelling the country to the forefront of the MENA region's solar revolution.

The prospective capacity includes the sum of solar farm projects in various stages, such as those in the construction phase, pre-construction phase, and those already announced.

This indicates that Oman's solar industry is poised for substantial growth in the coming years. The report not only underscores Oman's commitment to renewable energy but also reveals the country's impressive progress in implementing solar farm projects.

Currently, Oman has four operating solar farms, three under construction, twelve in the pre-construction stage, and two announced projects.



CURRENTLY, OMAN HAS FOUR OPERATING SOLAR FARMS, THREE UNDER CONSTRUCTION, TWELVE IN THE PRE-CONSTRUCTION STAGE, AND TWO ANNOUNCED PROJECTS. THESE DEVELOPMENTS INDICATE A VIBRANT AND RAPIDLY GROWING SOLAR INDUSTRY IN THE COUNTRY.

These developments indicate a vibrant and rapidly growing solar industry in the country.

Oman's flagship renewable energy project is the 500 MW Ibri Solar Power Complex, one of the largest solar installations in the region.

Situated in Al Dhahirah Governorate, the project powers approximately 33,000 homes and offsets millions of tonnes of carbon emissions annually.

Currently under implementation is a pair of IPPs at Manah that will add 1,000 MW of new solar capacity when operational in 2025.

Just recently, Nama Power & Water Procurement Company (Nama PWP), which is responsible for purchasing power and water in Oman, has announced plans to procure a new large-scale solar photovoltaic (PV) Independent Power Project (IPP) by 2029. The project, tentatively named 'Solar PV IPPs 2029', will have a combined capacity of 1,000 MW, consisting of two IPPs with 500 MW each.

The report also sheds light on the overall solar farm landscape globally, revealing a staggering total prospective capacity of 1,184,296 MW.

This underscores the increasing

global emphasis on renewable energy as countries strive to reduce carbon emissions and mitigate the impacts of climate change. Top 5 in the list include China, the United States, Spain, Australia and India.

In the MENA region, Oman tops the list at number 11 followed by Egypt (12th with 17,094 MW), Morocco (15th with 13,538 MW), Saudi Arabia (17th with 9,051 MW), Iraq (18th with 8,385 MW) and Kuwait (19th with 7,970 MW).

Oman's achievement in securing the eleventh position globally is a significant milestone for the country and the wider MENA region. It highlights the region's vast potential for solar energy generation and its ability to contribute significantly to global renewable energy targets.

## Local sales and exports secured by Credit Oman reach RO 161 million

**MUSCAT:** The total volume of secured sales of local sales and Oman exports at Credit Oman during the first half of this year saw a growth of 5 per cent with a total value of RO 161.150 million compared to the same period in 2022 of RO 153.404 million.

Shaikh Khalil bin Ahmed al Harthy (**pictured**), Chief Executive Officer of Credit Oman, explained that domestic sales during the first half of this year saw a 8 per cent increase in total value of RO 64.511 million compared to the same period last year of about RO 59.773 million.

Secured export sales from the



Sultanate of Oman to countries around the world grew by 3 per cent with a total value of RO 96.672 million compared to the same period last year of RO 93.630 million.

Al Harthy told the Oman News Agency (ONA), "The



petrochemical and plastic sector has experienced a 161 per cent growth in export secured sales. With a total value of RO 6.842 million, secured domestic sales of

the same sector recorded growth of 546 per cent with a total value of RO 6.729 million compared to RO 1.041 million in the same period of 2022, noting that the materials

related to this sector were polypropylene used in the various plastics industries and urea used in the industrial fertiliser industry.

He added: "The mining sector registered growth during the first half of this year with a total value of RO 2.191 million, an increase of 133 per cent compared to the corresponding period in 2022 of RO 940,151.

He noted that the garment sector recorded a 36 per cent decline in the value of secured sales during the first half of this year valued at RO 807,541 compared to the same period last year of RO 1.264 million.

The food and consumer sector also saw a decline of 5 per cent to the value of secured sales of RO 73.079 million compared to RO 76.837 million in the same period last year.

Al Harthy stressed that this growth was the result of continued efforts to promote Omani exports and local sales and to stand with Omani manufacturers through innovative insurance services and solutions provided by Credit Oman according to their needs and support for sale and entry into new and promising markets around the world.

— ONA

### SHORT TAKES

#### NEW DELHI

##### Oil giant BP urges more oil, gas investment

Global oil major BP said the world must invest in the production of oil and gas to avoid to sharp price spikes while accelerating the energy transition to combat greenhouse gas emissions.

Global gas prices surged seven-fold last year as 3% of global gas supplies were hit following Russia's invasion of Ukraine, forcing countries to boost energy spending and shift to coal, BP Chief Executive Officer Bernard Looney said in New Delhi.



"We need to do both. We need to invest in today's energy system responsibly and, at the same time, we must invest in accelerating energy transition," Looney told the Business 20 (B20) conference. — Reuters

#### WYOMING

##### No appetite at Fed, ECB for changing inflation goal

Any thoughts that the 2% inflation goal long sought by the US Federal Reserve and the European Central Bank might possibly be in for a tweaking were dashed on Friday by the chiefs of the two institutions.

Gathering in Jackson Hole, Wyoming for the annual Federal Reserve Bank of Kansas City economic symposium, both Fed Chair Jerome Powell (**pictured**) and ECB President Christine Lagarde made plain their views: There will be no change to



central bankers' shared objective of getting inflation back down to 2%.

"Two per cent is and will remain our inflation target," Powell said in his keynote address. — Reuters

#### DUBAI

##### DP World to invest \$510m in India's Gujarat state

Dubai-owned ports giant DP World will invest around \$510 million to build a new container terminal at the Kandla port in the Indian state of Gujarat, its group chairman said on Friday.

"It will enable the delivery of trade opportunities by connecting northern, western and central India with global markets," Sultan Ahmed Bin Sulayem, who is also DP World's CEO, said after the signing of an agreement between the Deendayal Port Authority and



DP World officials.

The Indian government earlier this year approved a plan by Hindustan Infralog Private Limited to develop the terminal on a Build-Operate-Transfer (BOT) basis. — Reuters

# Republican hopefuls’ deficit goals are all talk

BEN WINCK

Republicans jockeying for a presidential nomination want to have their fiscal cake and eat it too. Participants in the party’s first debate for the 2024 election on Wednesday night promised to shrink the government’s budget shortfall. Yet Republicans have a bad track record for cutting federal debt, and some candidates are already touting pricey projects and tax cuts. With US finances under pressure, their plans for responsibility ring hollow.

Eight candidates decried mounting government debt just minutes after taking the stage in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Florida governor Ron DeSantis vowed to “reverse Bidenomics,” adding that the US “cannot succeed when Congress spends trillions and trillions of dollars.” The Republican party faced critique as well, with former South Carolina governor Nikki Haley calling out the \$8 trillion added to national debt under former President Donald Trump. Calls for responsible budgeting recall a bygone era of conservative

policy. The last Republican president to run a budget surplus was George W Bush in 2001, but even that year was partly influenced by the cost-cutting measures put in place by his Democratic predecessor. Bush shrank the budget shortfall from 2004 to 2007, but ran a then-record deficit in 2008, according to the US Office of Management and Budget. While nearly all candidates pushed for debt reduction, several backed policies that would force further borrowing. Former New Jersey governor Chris Christie and former Arkansas

governor Asa Hutchinson both touted their efforts to cut state taxes. Former Vice President Mike Pence vowed to extend the Tax Cuts and Jobs Act of 2017, which is estimated by the Congressional Budget Office to add nearly \$2 trillion to the federal deficit, and lower taxes beyond that. South Carolina Senator Tim Scott urged the US spend \$10 billion to finish building a wall at the country’s southern border, a project the right-leaning think-tank Cato Institute says “didn’t work.” Higher interest rates make it even harder to balance the budget. Interest

payments on the federal debt will total \$640 billion this year and grow to \$1.4 trillion in 2033, the CBO said in February. Meantime, the increasingly large deficit prompted Standard & Poor’s to cut the country’s previously perfect credit rating in 2011, and sparked another downgrade from Fitch earlier this month. Shrinking it will require a mix of sweeping spending cuts and higher taxes. With Congress balking at such a combinations, Republican candidates’ plans are all talk, little hope of action. — Reuters

## Navigating risks and rewards in the world of digital assets (Part 3)



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

Continuing from our previous columns about crypto assets, their risk and rewards: **KYC and crypto asset provenance: Unmasking identities**

The realm of crypto assets operates on cryptographic addresses rather than conventional names or account numbers. This poses a unique challenge to Know-Your-Customer (KYC) programmes. Establishing the origin of crypto assets and constructing an effective KYC programme to prevent transactions involving politically exposed persons (PEPs) and countries under OFAC sanctions is no small feat. Striking this balance between privacy and compliance is an ongoing endeavour for crypto businesses. **Accounting and tax quandaries: Calculating the unknown** Crypto assets disrupt the conventions of traditional financial reporting, with no universally accepted accounting principles tailored to them. Their classification, often as indefinite-lived intangible assets, raises questions about carrying values and impairment evaluations. Tax implications add another layer of complexity, given that selling or using crypto assets triggers taxable events, unlike regular currencies. Navigating this fog of accounting and tax challenges requires vigilant attention and strategic planning. **Fork management and governance: Charting uncharted territory** In the crypto world, forks are more than just cutlery concerns. They signify critical junctures where the blockchain protocol undergoes significant changes, leading to a division into two separate chains. The impact of forks on crypto businesses is substantial, raising questions about acceptance strategies and post-fork operational efficacy. Tackling the multifaceted implications of forks requires a delicate balance between

technological preparedness, financial resilience, and maintaining strong customer relationships. In summary, the realm of crypto assets presents a landscape teeming with abundant potential, yet equally laden with intricate and multifaceted risks. This juxtaposition underscores the imperative for companies to adopt a comprehensive approach when venturing into the crypto sphere. The conventional risk management practices, while valuable, must undergo a strategic transformation to align with the unique and evolving attributes of the crypto landscape.

Essentially, a two-fold strategy emerges as the beacon to navigate this uncharted territory. First and foremost, companies should capitalise on established risk management methodologies, adapting them to the idiosyncrasies of crypto assets. While these practices have been honed through years of experience in conventional markets, the nuances of the crypto world necessitate innovative customisation. The crypto universe is characterised by swift shifts and intricacies that can confound even the most seasoned market analysts. Staying attuned to these ebbs and flows is more than an advantage; it’s a prerequisite. By vigilantly monitoring market trends, capitalising on patterns, and gauging investor sentiment, companies can refine their strategies, capitalise on fleeting opportunities, and shield themselves from potential pitfalls. The regulatory landscape, marked by continual evolution and regional disparities, introduces a layer of intricacy that requires constant attention. Companies must proactively track regulatory shifts, adapting their practices to ensure compliance, mitigate legal risks, and establish a solid ethical foundation. The convergence of steadfast risk management practices, market acumen, and regulatory vigilance charts a course for companies to traverse the crypto landscape with confidence. As the proverbial seas of crypto assets grow both calmer and stormier by turns, this strategic triad serves as the navigational compass. In doing so, companies can embark on a journey that not only safeguards their interests but also capitalises on the transformative potential that the world of crypto assets offers. This journey, though fraught with complexity, can yield substantial rewards for those who dare to embark with prudence and foresight.



SERGEI GURIEV  
The author, Provost and Professor of Economics at Sciences Po, is the co-author (with Daniel Treisman) of Spin Dictators: The Changing Face of Tyranny in the 21st Century (Princeton University Press, 2022).

Within days of Russian President Vladimir Putin’s full-scale invasion of Ukraine 18 months ago, the West imposed unprecedented sanctions on Russia’s central bank, freezing hundreds of billions of dollars of its assets. The rouble plummeted, reaching a record low of 136 to the US dollar a week after the invasion. But after the central bank imposed currency and capital controls, the rouble bounced back, strengthening to 51.5 rouble/dollar – a recovery that the Kremlin eagerly touted. Russia’s leaders have less to celebrate today. The rouble exchange rate offers the most visible indication of Russia’s economic performance, at least for Russian households. So, the currency’s recent dip below the politically important threshold of 100 rouble/dollar has made the Kremlin nervous. And it has put the central bank – which, over the last year, has loosened or removed many of its capital controls – under fire. Putin’s economic aide, Maxim Oreshkin, has usually criticised the central bank for being overly hawkish. But after the rouble’s latest tumble, he wrote an op-ed blaming policymakers for being too “soft” and allowing excessive credit growth. The central bank immediately called an extraordinary board meeting, where it decided to hike interest rates by a whopping 3.5 percentage points, and signalled that more hikes are likely to come as early as next month. Additional currency controls also appear to be on the table. Meanwhile, Finance Minister Anton Siluanov reportedly advocates forcing Russian exporters to repatriate their dollar revenues and sell them to the central bank. To be sure, there is no reason to think that



WHILE THERE IS NO REASON TO THINK THAT RUSSIA’S ECONOMY IS ON THE BRINK OF COLLAPSE, THE ROUBLE’S RECENT DEPRECIATION HAS HIGHLIGHTED JUST HOW MUCH PRESSURE THE WAR – AND THE SANCTIONS IMPOSED IN RESPONSE TO IT – HAS PLACED ON RUSSIA’S ECONOMY. NOW, THE WEST MUST GO EVEN FURTHER Russia’s economy is on the brink of collapse. There is nothing magical about the 100 rouble threshold. And the recent rate hike is a textbook reaction to rising inflation; Western central bankers would do the same. Nonetheless, the depreciation has highlighted just how much pressure the war – and the sanctions imposed in response to it – has placed on Russia’s economy. In April 2022, I wrote that Putin should not celebrate the rouble’s rally, which reflected two developments that would ultimately prove bad for Russia’s economy. First, imports had declined as a result of Western sanctions, resulting in lost access to imported consumer goods and intermediate inputs, thereby constraining Russia’s manufacturing capacity. Second, oil-export revenues had increased – a development that would motivate Western governments to impose an oil embargo and a price cap on Russian crude. That is exactly what happened. In May 2022, Europe announced that an embargo on about 90% of Russian oil imports would take effect within the subsequent 6-8 months. Not long after, the G7 countries agreed to a price cap. The delayed introduction of these policies allowed Putin to rake in huge revenues. Though the West had frozen about \$300 billion of the Russian central bank’s reserves, Russia’s record current-account surplus in 2022, at \$227 billion, almost made up for it. But this bonanza is well and truly over: in the first half of this year, Russia’s oil and gas revenues fell almost by half, causing the budget deficit to grow to 2% of annual GDP. The oil embargo and price cap also caused Russia’s total exports to plummet by one-third year on year in January-July 2023. As a result, Russia’s trade surplus shrank from \$204 billion to \$64 billion, and its current-account surplus declined by a factor of six, from \$165 billion to just \$25 billion. Predictably, the sharp decline in revenue from hydrocarbon exports has fuelled rapid deterioration in Russia’s fiscal position. For a while, Russia’s leaders appeared unfazed: the country still holds substantial renminbi reserves, so it can afford its budget deficit. And the war in Ukraine remains the Kremlin’s top priority: in the first half of this year alone, Russia’s military spending was 12% higher than the amount budgeted for the entire year. Beyond funding the war, Russia’s government hoped that continued spending would give the economy a Keynesian boost. But these hopes have not materialised, precisely because trade sanctions have undermined Russia’s productive capacity. Isolated from the West and having lost hundreds of thousands of workers to the war and emigration, Russia’s economy simply cannot produce as much as Putin wants. With Russia’s economy overheating, higher government

spending simply fuelled inflation. Add to that continued capital outflows – which accelerated after Wagner Group boss Yevgeny Prigozhin’s aborted mutiny in June – and the rouble’s recent depreciation was to be expected. Nor should anyone be surprised by the central bank’s decision to pump the brakes, despite the likely impact of higher interest rates on output growth. Bloomberg now puts the probability of recession in Russia in the next six months at 21%, compared to 6% before the rate hike. The sanctions are clearly working. But Putin’s continued ability to fund his war in Ukraine shows that more must be done. In light of the elaborate methods companies have devised to circumvent the oil embargo and price cap, the West now must work to close sanctions loopholes, while lowering the oil-price cap from \$60 per barrel today to \$50-55 per barrel, or even less. The other important takeaway from the rouble’s recent fall is that Putin is managing to circumvent trade sanctions. The rouble is cheaper because Russia needs US dollars to pay its import bill, which grew by one-third year on year – from \$57 billion to \$76 billion – in the second quarter of 2023. This increase partly reflects the rising costs of bypassing sanctions, which are compounding the pressure on Russia’s budget and currency. By tightening the enforcement of export controls, the West can raise these costs further, putting Russia’s budget – and thus its criminal war effort – in a choke hold. © Project Syndicate, 2023

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# Observer

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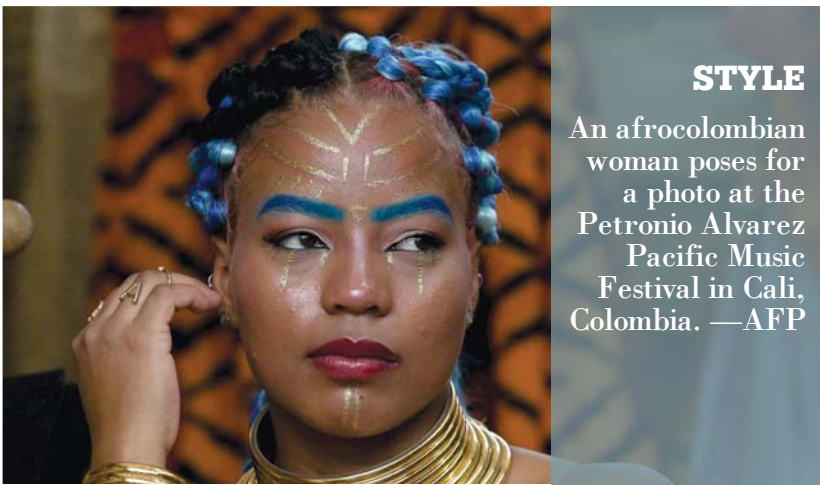
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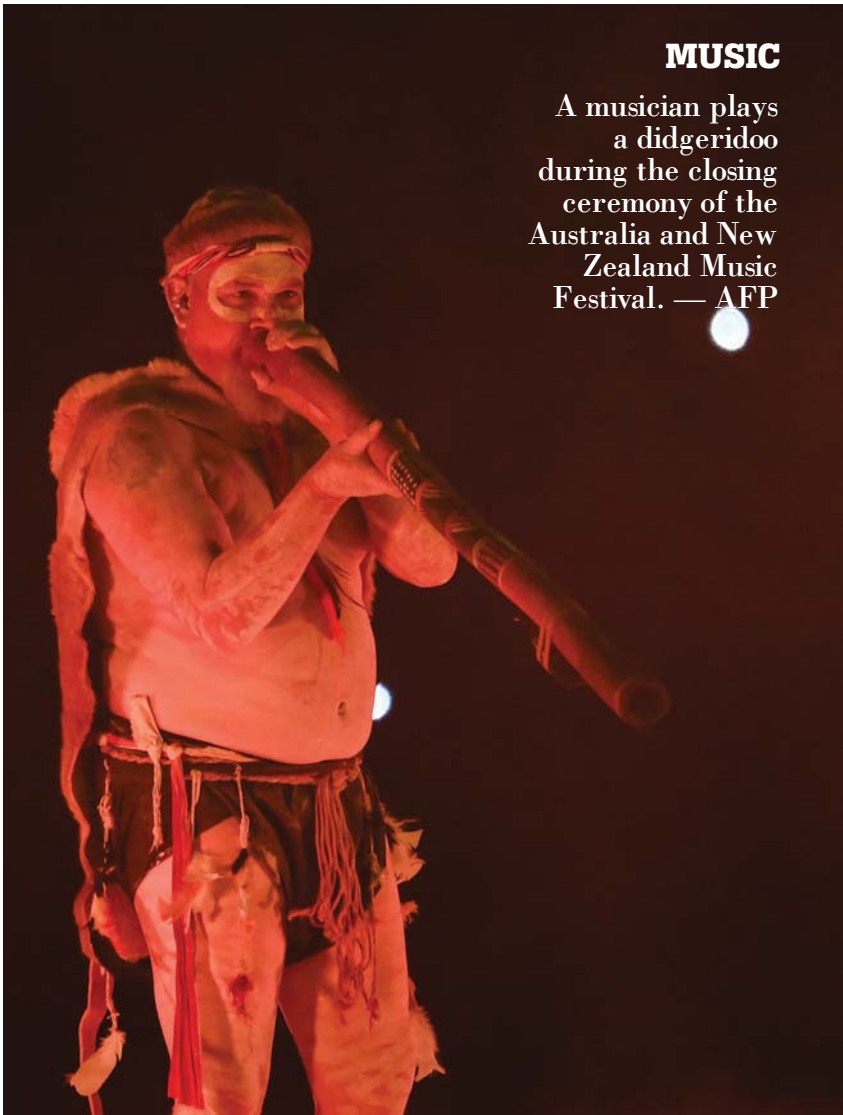
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**STYLE**  
An afrocolombian woman poses for a photo at the Petronio Alvarez Pacific Music Festival in Cali, Colombia. —AFP



**MUSIC**  
A musician plays a didgeridoo during the closing ceremony of the Australia and New Zealand Music Festival. — AFP



**FILM**  
French actor Raphael Quenard poses during a photocall of jury members during the 16th Francophone Angouleme film festival in Angouleme, western France. — AFP



**LIFE STYLE**  
Women wearing rented hats ride on a rented bicycle at the Fatahillah Square, the centre of Jakarta's old town. —AFP



**FOOD**  
Fish are displayed for sale in a seafood stall at a wet market in Hong Kong. —AFP

# art & life

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## Exploring Oman in 72 hours?

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH

**THERE IS A LOT** to learn from a tourist. Follow a tourist you will learn about their preferences, as tourism attractions vary from one individual to another.

For Abdulwahab Badje, a tourist from Paris, it was an invitation to Nepal that made him look through the route as he was to be on transit via Muscat while flying to Nepal.

He had watched a video on the Sultanate of Oman and now if he is going to be this close, he is going to step out and experience Oman.

With just three days in hand, his attention was on what he could manage experiencing Oman in just 72 hours.

"Looking back what comes in my memories is about Muscat and its neighbourhood and how Oman is different from other Gulf states because of its strong traditions and an economy that is



not based exclusively on hydrocarbon," said Abdulwahab.

During his research he had come across camels and barbecues.

He was all set for Friday experience. "I went to a neigh-



bourhood mosque on Friday. I also went to Muttrah Souq and enjoyed a walk along the Sea Road. The visit to Sultan Qaboos Mosque was very much in the itinerary. Took a boat excursion to watch the dolphins and do some snorkeling," he reflected.

"I wanted to explore the Omani street food and I discovered Mishqaq on the web. Got into a taxi and checked out the Mishqaq. I heard about camel meat, but was not keen on that. I also enjoyed the chicken Kabouli rice at an Omani traditional restaurant. At the same time, I also went to a big mall. Had lots of 'O' taxi travels because the application is easy to use. The drivers were patient and the fares are less compared to that in Paris," he said.

Even though he was comfortable with the public transportation, he opted for walking in the August summer.

He chose to walk by day and night even when the tem-

perature was high compared to what he was used to.

"It was respirable due to pollution-free environment. Yes, I was a little scared to come in August, but I had no choice due to my work and the distance. So for me it was hot but doable for few days.

"I had not taken real holidays for a while because of my type of job contract. This year was the first time since many years I took two weeks off. I was going to Nepal to see my friends and when I saw my trip was passing through Oman as a transit I told myself, why not try to stay few days in Oman on my way back."

He pointed out that Oman had been in his shortlist for a while. "It is an Islamic country with an economy that does not depend on petrol alone, and it is still not into mass tourism. Oman has a big cultural identity. I also wanted to explore the IT sector, but I did not have time to check this."



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## INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



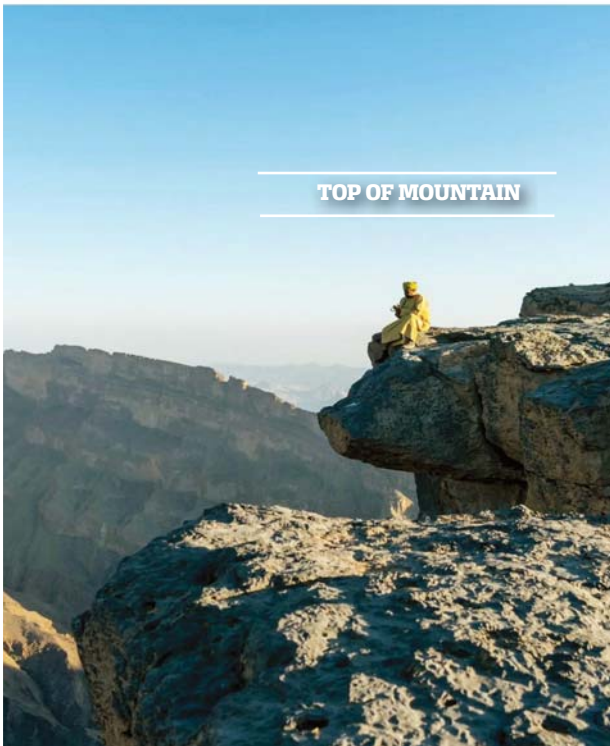
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## The Met announces Harlem Renaissance Exhibition for 2024

**EVEN BEFORE JOINING** the Metropolitan Museum of Art, curator Denise Murrell was dreaming up an exhibition dedicated to the Harlem Renaissance — one that would unite Black artists dedicated to “radical modernity,” as she described it, from New York to Paris and beyond.

On Tuesday, the museum announced an exhibition, “The Harlem Renaissance and Transatlantic Modernism.” It will open on February 25, run through July 28 and include a trove of paintings from historically Black colleges and universities around the country. The Met said it would be New York’s first major survey in nearly 40 years dedicated to one of the most influential artistic movements to have originated in the United States during the early 20th century.

“Becoming painters of modern life within their own communities was key to what the Harlem artists were attempting,” said Murrell, who joined the Met in 2020 and is now its curator at large. “It was an act of radical modernity, for example, to make portraits of an elder Black woman who would have been born into enslavement. And to make them in such a dignified way — those images simply did not exist in previous periods.”

Major museums, for the most part, did not begin collecting such works until decades after the Harlem Renaissance, which spanned roughly two decades, from 1918 to 1937. Met officials said the museum’s own collection was spotty, with some acquisitions occurring in the 1940s and again within the past 15 years, though it includes masterpieces by Samuel Joseph Brown Jr. and Charles Henry Alston. Instead, many of these cultural gems went to private collections and to historically Black colleges and universities.

Murrell spent the past two years

working with those institutions on conservation and archival research projects; in exchange, significant loans are coming to the “Harlem Renaissance” exhibition from places like Howard University, Fisk University, Hampton University and Clark Atlanta University.

About a half-dozen artworks are currently in the Met’s conservation studio, and in preparation for the show, the museum sent photographers around the world to take new pictures of artworks from collections in cities like London and Chicago. That includes significant works by overlooked female artists like Laura Wheeler Waring, whose portraits of women cast their deep interior lives onto canvas.

One standout in the exhibition is the 1943 painting “Woman in Blue” by William H. Johnson, who spent the 1920s and 1930s in Europe learning the techniques of modernism. He headed back to New York in 1947 after having a mental breakdown following his wife’s death in Denmark. He was confined in Central Islip State Hospital on Long Island, unable to paint, until his death in 1970.

Murrell said the portrait of a woman sitting sideways, with one arm draped over the chair, staring pensively, was rarely exhibited, although an earlier study of the picture is at the Smithsonian American Art Museum. The painting will be the exhibition’s signature image.

“The colours are striking,” said Danille K. Taylor, director of the Clark Atlanta University Art Museum, which has contributed five paintings to the exhibition, including the Johnson painting. “It’s the angle that she looks at you. The colours and texture give it a three-dimensional quality.”

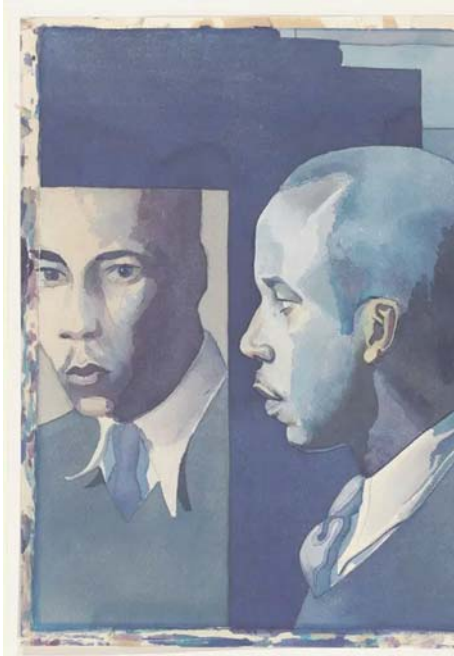
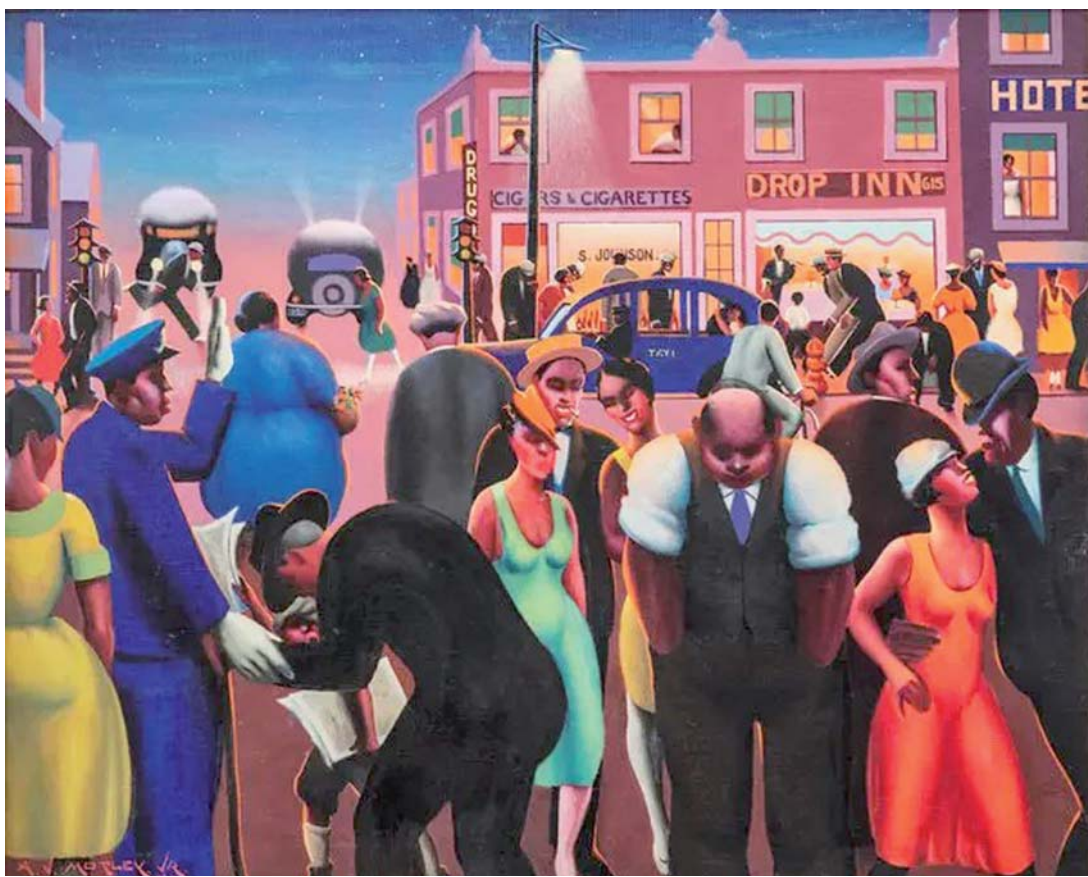
Until recently, the painting had large cracks across its surface and

was in desperate need of restoration; the Met financed the portrait’s conservation, allowing it to travel outside the university.

Murrell said she hoped “Harlem Renaissance” would be the start of long-term partnerships among the Met and historically Black colleges and universities to help preserve and exhibit their collections on a national scale.

But the exhibition also comes with some extra baggage at the Met, whose 1969 exhibition “Harlem on My Mind” drew angry protests because of its exclusion of Black painters and sculptors in favour of newspaper clippings and documentary photography that captured the predominantly Black and Latino neighbourhood.

While the new exhibi-



tion is not a direct response to that show, Murrell said she would address its legacy by including work from James Van Der Zee, a leading photographer of the Harlem Renaissance whose pictures were included in the



1969 show. Many of the photographs come from an archive that the Met and the Studio Museum in Harlem acquired from the artist’s widow in 2021.

The curator also pointed out that the exhibition would focus on painting and sculpture, mediums that had previously been excluded. That includes sculptor Augusta Savage, who opened the Savage Studio of Arts and Crafts in 1931, which trained more than 1,500 students including Charles Alston, Jacob Lawrence and Gwendolyn Knight Lawrence.

According to the museum, this is New York’s first major survey of the Harlem Renaissance since 1987, when the Studio Museum in Harlem staged its own exhibition.

“We want to show the full breadth of thinking,” Murrell said. “In terms of historical context, this is the first time in art history where we have a cohort of African American artists depicting modern Black life in a modern way. These artists decided to commit their artistic careers to representing modern Black life in the absence of institutional or market support.” — NYT

### TECHNOLOGY

## YouTube Improperly Used Targeted Ads on Children's Videos, Watchdogs Say

**AFTER A RESEARCH REPORT** last week found that YouTube’s advertising practices had the potential to undercut the privacy of children watching children’s videos, the company said it limited the collection of viewer data and did not serve targeted ads on such videos.

These types of personalised ads, which use data to tailor marketing to users’ online activities and interests, can be effective for finding the right consumers. Under a federal privacy law, however, children’s online services must obtain parental consent before collecting personal information from users younger than 13 to target them with ads — a commitment YouTube extended to anyone



watching a children’s video.

Now Fairplay, a prominent children’s group, is challenging the company’s privacy statements. The group said it had used advertising placement tools from YouTube’s parent company, Google, to run a \$10 ad campaign this month targeted at different groups of adults, exclusively on children’s video channels.

The ads were shown to users in consumer segments selected by the children’s group — including motorcycle enthusiasts, high-end computer aficionados and avid investors — on popular channels including “Cocomelon Nursery Rhymes,” “Talking Tom” and “Like Nastya,” according to a placement report Fairplay received from Google. In total, the group’s ads were placed 1,446 times on YouTube children’s video channels.

Adalytics, the company that published the research first reported on by The New York Times last week, said it

had analysed similar ad campaigns on children’s channels from several other media buyers.

On Wednesday morning, Fairplay, the Center for Digital Democracy and two other nonprofit groups lodged a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission, asking the agency to investigate Google and YouTube’s data and advertising practices on videos made for children.

In a letter to Lina Khan, the FTC chair, the groups said the new research “raises serious questions” about whether Google had violated federal children’s privacy rules.

Michael Aciman, a Google spokesperson, said: “The conclusions in this report point to a fundamental misunderstanding of how advertising works on made-for-kids content. We do not allow ads personalisation on made-for-kids content, and we do not allow advertisers to

target children with ads across any of our products.”

Google said it continued to abide by child privacy commitments it made to the FTC. It added that some YouTube channels feature a mix of videos for children and adults and that, as a result, it was possible that Fairplay had received audience segment reports for ads appearing on videos that were not made for children.

This is not the first time that Fairplay and the Center for Digital Democracy have pressed the FTC to investigate Google and YouTube over children’s privacy. In a complaint to the agency in 2018, the two organisations, along with 21 other groups, accused the company of improperly collecting data from children who watched children’s videos.

In 2019, the FTC and the state of New York found that the company had illegally collected personal information from children watching children’s channels. Regulators said the company had profited from using children’s data to target them with ads.

Google and YouTube agreed to pay a record \$170 million to settle regulators’ accusations.

“There are very few legal protections for children online,” said Josh Golin, the executive director of Fairplay. “One of the few obligations that platforms like YouTube have is to not use children’s personal information to track them or serve personalised ads.” — NYT

### FILM

## Miyazaki's final film to open San Sebastian festival

**OSCAR-WINNING JAPANESE** animator Hayao Miyazaki’s final film, “The Boy and the Heron,” will open Spain’s San Sebastian film festival next month, organisers said on Thursday.

The animated fantasy epic, which Miyazaki has said will be his last, will screen on September 22 in what will be the film’s European premiere.

The screening will come just two weeks after the film opens the Toronto film festival on September 7, a rare double opening for two film festivals.

The film tells the story of a grieving boy who discovers an abandoned tower in his new town and enters a fantastical world with a talking grey heron.

Known for vivid colours and loving depictions of landscapes, the 82-year-old’s films still rely primari-



ly on hand-drawing each frame.

His “Spirited Away” won the Academy Award for Best Animated Feature of 2002 and was a huge hit internationally.

Miyazaki received an honorary Oscar for his lifetime achievements in film in 2014.

Spanish movie star Javier Bardem will receive a lifetime achievement award at the opening gala of the festival, which runs until September 30.

Originally intended to honour Spanish language films, San Sebastian has established itself as one of the world’s top movie festivals. — AFP



# Scaling the Sky Ladder of Upper Austria

By Rumpa Mitra  
Instagram: @rumpa\_mitra

If you are looking for a real adrenaline rush, the Sky Ladder or Ladder of Heaven located in the Gosau Region of Upper Austria is something you should add to your list.

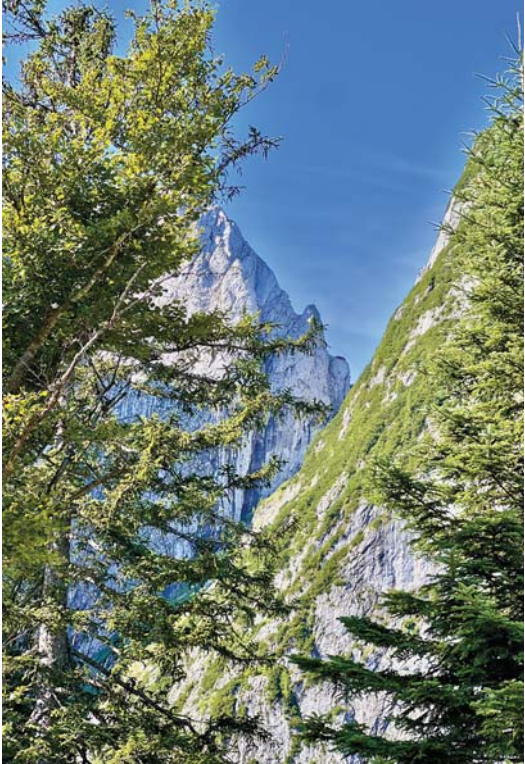
Known as Intersport Klettersteig Donnerkogel in Europe, this via ferrata or iron path in English connects two giant gorges on the Grosser Donnerkogel summit. The entire via ferrata route offers a breathtaking panoramic view of the Alps especially the Inner Salzkammergut, including Dachstein, and the stunning Lake Gosausee. The Ladder of Heaven promises thrill seekers a classic climbing route that is over 400m to the peak of Donnerkogel.

To venture into this adrenaline-pumping route, one has to go to Gosausee Lake after which taking a cable car from Gosaukamm. After reaching the cable car station, a five-minute walk leads towards Gablonzer Hütte. As soon as you get off the cable car, you will be able to see the Sky Ladder between the two mountain peaks.

After reaching the hut, turning left would lead to trail 611. A 10-minute hike with allow visitors to reach the upper Törlegg saddle. From here, take a left that leads to the beginning of the via ferrata route.

It is always better to catch the first cable car from Gosaukamm. It is also recommended to stay at Gablonzer Hütte the night before to start via ferrata in the early morning. This will make sure an uninterrupted path is on via ferrata and allows you more time to take pictures and videos on the sky ladder.

The Donnerkogel via ferrata can be divided into four parts. In the early part of the hike, you will be crossing easier paths but will be thrown a curve ball of Level D paths in between. The second part of the hike includes crossing the Sky Ladder itself, which is categorised as Level B when it comes to difficulty. Despite its B rating, it is important to note that in reality, this can be difficult for some compared to the other sections of the climb, and the challenge usually escalates when you have unforeseen circumstances like heavy winds. The third part follows after the sky ladder and from my experience, this level cannot be underestimated as it poses its unique challenges. While doing this part of the trail, one will need to climb the ridge of the steep mountain at 2,000m altitude with 360-degree open surroundings until one



reaches the summit. This part of the Donnerkogel via ferrata can easily switch difficulties but one thing is certain, you would mental fortitude and physical fitness to cross it successfully.

Once you are at the summit, you will be rewarded with a beautiful, dramatic view and from experience, you would definitely need a good camera to capture what you've worked on to see.

After completing part 3, the next



part provides one an option to skip the remaining part otherwise, hiking back to Gablonzer Hütte is now part of the fourth part of the trail.

The return trail is opposite to where you came from. The sections can be tricky with steep downhill paths. Make sure to watch your steps along the way.

The view at the summit is spectacular. On a non-cloudy day, one can witness the breathtaking peaks covered with snow. The view

of Gosausee lake is worth all the effort to climb up to the summit.

## IMPORTANT POINTS

Donnerkogel Klettersteig Facts Officially, the trail name is called Intersport Klettersteig

Donnerkogel with the starting and ending point going back to Gablonzer Hütte. The level of difficulties varies but has been classi-



fied as level A, B, C & D as per the Austrian Via Ferrata rating. The full trail can take around 4.5 hours for experts with the climb up lasting 3 hours while the hike down takes almost 1.5 hours. The elevation of the ladder is 470 metres with the Donnerkogel elevation pegged at 2,054m. The opening

months are between May to October ( based on the snow and weather condition.) It is important to note that timing hours for completing the trail may vary on several factors including fitness and speed.

## HIKING PACKING LIST

It is important to know the weather condition on the day of your visits so dress up accordingly. Make sure to pack some hiking shorts or pants including mid-layer fleece, and easy-to-carry rain jackets. For your footwear, make sure to select shoes with the proper grip and avoid using shoes that were not tested and worn before. For gears, it is mandatory to have a climbing harness, via Ferrata lanyard with two carabiners and a matching helmet and gloves. Bring a comfortable backpack and limit the things you bring to essentials including drinking water, energy bars, portable charger and action camera and phone and sunglasses.

## WEATHER CHECK

Weather plays a very important role while doing any trial. Officially, the Donnerkogel Klettersteig is open starting around May and closes around October. This will all be based on how fast the snow melts from the previous winter and when the snow begins to fall again. It is simply not safe enough to attempt the route when the mountain has snow cover, so it will only be open in the summer and surrounding months. In addition, during the heavy rain, attempting this via ferrata may not appear as wise decision, unless you consider yourself as an expert on via ferrata techniques.

## CABLE CAR

The round trip on the Gosaukammbahn Cable Car costs 21 Euro and the services start from 8:15 and the last cable car is at 5:50 pm sharp.

Where to stay near Donnerkogel From the logistics perspective, the nearest option is renting a place at the Gablonzer Hütte, which is situated 10 minutes walking distance from the starting point. This will enable you to start your hike very early. Also, you may choose so many other options in the Gosau area.

## CAVEAT

This via ferrata is not suggested for beginners. If you want to take this path and you're a beginner, make sure to take short courses. Do not attempt this unless you are fully sure of your mental strength along with your physical capabilities.