

OCO SENT 975 TONNES OF RELIEF

The world is marking the World Humanitarian Day which falls on August 19 each year. The Sultanate of Oman made a great humanitarian effort on the national and global levels through official authorities and civil societies each of which is undertaking its role according to a plan. SEE P2



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SPANISH WALKER MARTIN WINS FIRST GOLD OF BUDAPEST WORLDS



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SEASIDE SCREEN BRINGS BACK MAGIC OF MOVIES TO GAZA



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BIG 1000 MW SOLAR PROJECT PLANNED FOR LAUNCH IN 2029



MUSCAT

MUSCAT, AL BATINAH N TOP IN FIRE MISHAPS

Muscat topped the list of fire incidents in 2022 with 1,307 cases, which is 31.2 per cent of the total incidents reported in the country. According to NCSI, 4,186 cases were reported in the country in 2022, of which 949 were in Al Batinah North, 367 in Al Batinah South, 435 in Al Dakhiliyah and 349 in Dhofar governorate. Incidents reported from household facilities were 32.1 per cent, transportation (22.2 per cent), residues (20 per cent), agriculture (9.8 per cent), and companies and enterprises 7.2 per cent.) SEE P3

AL JABAL AL AKHDAR

OVER 60,000 VISITORS ATTEND FESTIVAL

The second edition of Al Jabal al Akhdar Festival has come to a close, marking the culmination of a series of vibrant events. Organised by the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the festival unfolded from August 3 to August 19. Adventure sports enthusiasts had a series of exhilarating races and events. These included the Al Jabal Al Akhdar Mountain Bike Race, the Tourist Walking Activity, and the Himam Trail Run Race. SEE P4

ISTANBUL

TÜRKIYE SLAMS UN OVER CYPRUS ROW

Türkiye's ruling party spokesman on Saturday criticised UN peacekeepers for blocking the construction of a controversial road in the buffer zone dividing Cyprus, calling their attitude "unacceptable" and "extremely wrong". A confrontation occurred on Friday between Turkish Cypriot forces and UN peacekeepers in Pyla, an ethnically mixed village in the UN-patrolled area between the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus in the south and a breakaway Turkish Cypriot statelet in the north. SEE P5

CHERNIHIV

7 DEAD AFTER RUSSIAN ATTACK IN UKRAINE

A Russian missile strike on Ukraine's northern city of Chernihiv killed seven people and wounded more than 100 on Saturday, in what the UN called a "heinous" attack hours after President Vladimir Putin met Moscow's top army commanders. "It is heinous to attack the main square of a large city, in the morning, while people are out walking, some going to church to celebrate a religious day for many Ukrainians," said Denise Brown, the UN's humanitarian coordinator for Ukraine. "I condemn this repeated pattern of Russian strikes on populated areas of Ukraine." SEE P6

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VISITORS MUST BE CAREFUL AS DHOFAR WADIS REPORT INCREASED WATER LEVELS

Better safe in khareef than sorry

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 19

Incessant rain during the khareef season has led to increased water levels in the wadis of Dhofar Governorate. One such wadi benefitting from the seasonal showers is Wadi Darbat which, along with its splendid waterfalls, has been attracting growing numbers of tourists and visitors. In response to the increased water levels, Dhofar Municipality, the Royal Oman Police, and the Public Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance are continuing their intensive efforts to raise awareness and ensure that everyone follows the safety guidelines at water sites in Dhofar Governorate. These guidelines include swimming only in designated areas, ban on swimming alone, no swimming while under the influence of alcohol or banned substances, no swimming in areas with strong currents or under waterfalls and supervising children closely while they are near water bodies. The authorities are also urging people to follow the latest news and weather updates to stay informed of the conditions in the wadis. The increased water levels are



a reminder of the power of nature and the importance of taking precautions when visiting water bodies. By following the safety guidelines, everyone can enjoy the beauty of the wadis while staying safe. The number of visitors from June 21 to July 31 to experience the khareef season in Dhofar stood at 396,108, up 12.8 per cent compared to the corresponding period in 2022, according to National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) data. According to the NCSI data, the number of Omani visitors this khareef increased 13 per cent to 296,135. A total of 59,555 visitors

from other GCC states arrived this season, compared to 52,807 during the corresponding period in 2022. The number of visitors belonging to other nationalities rose from 35,874 to 40,418 this season. The NCSI data indicates that 305,350 visitors arrived via land checkpoints, while the number of air travellers who arrived in Dhofar was 90,758, registering an increase of 16 per cent over the figures of this segment last year. Monthly distribution of tourists for khareef shows 95 per cent of the arrivals in Dhofar in July (375,362), compared to 20,746 between June 21 and 30.

Baby sea turtles return home thanks to seven Taqah youths

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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Ras al Hadd and Ras al Jinz are two beaches that have made their mark as turtle beaches where watching the turtles nest, make their pit, lay legs and watching the hatchlings emerge have become tourists delight. This week Taqah has come into the spotlight. A flotilla of baby turtles surprised a group of people in Taqah as they made their way which they thought was the right direction. A bale of 50 hatchlings got lost on the beach of the Wilayat of Taqah after they lost their way from their nesting sites because of the artificial lights. That is when seven young men saw them and reported them to the Environmental Control and Emergency Department. They soon started the process of returning them to the beach.



Screen shot from a video tweeted by EA.

Currently, the hatchlings must already be on their first swim and have begun their first journey safely thanks to the seven thoughtful young men. The Environment Authority has thanked them and sent out appreciation to everyone who contributes to preserving wildlife. There are four main sites that have been popular destinations for turtles and they are Ras al Jinz (The Turtle Reserve), Ras al Hadd, Masirah Island and Al Daymaniyat Islands. The turtles that nest in Oman are Green Turtle, Loggerhead Turtle, Hawksbill Turtle and the Oliver Turtle. The most common turtles found in all the places, the beaches and the islands are the green turtles. The baby turtles hatch and work their way up through the sand on their own and are known to follow the light of the moon. But other lights at night can confuse them with their direction.

Oman endorses digital Health at G20 meet

NEW DELHI: During its participation at the G20 Ministers of Health meeting, the Sultanate of Oman affirmed its full support to the proposed framework on the development of the regional network for research in vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics. In a speech delivered by Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, the Sultanate of Oman called for considering preventive medical measures through the scope of One Health for coordinating the proposed medical measures. He referred to the strategic location of the Sultanate of Oman and the political stability it enjoys as well as its preparedness to assume an important role in the production and distribution of medical supplies especially in emergency situations. The minister of health explained that the Sultanate of Oman supports the initiatives set forth by three priority areas stemming from its belief that convergence, strengthening

and creating a healthier future enables the building of more resilient, sustainable and inclusive health systems. He noted that the Sultanate of Oman has good research institutions and capabilities through the scope of One Health, which contributed in the past to research and development of vaccines and could play a key role in future preparedness for emerging diseases and other medical countermeasures. The Minister of Health said that the Sultanate of Oman supports and promotes the use of quality-assured sustainable digital health solutions that are in line with the World Health Organization's global strategy for digital health (2020-2025). At the local level, he said, the Sultanate of Oman is investing in digital health solutions and supports the implementation of the national digital health strategy, which is in line with WHO rules, standards and guidelines. — ONA





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JAAFAR WATERFALLS DAZZLE



Coinciding with the peak of Khareef Dhofar season, rainy conditions and drizzle continued in Dhofar Governorate. As a result, Jaafar waterfalls in Wadi Darbat are flowing profusely adding more charm to the eye-catching sceneries that distinguish Khareef Dhofar. Jaafar waterfalls are a renowned tourist destination and one of the governorate’s most visited sites as no tourist can afford to miss the stunning view of water running down from hilltop painting unique scenes that hold viewers spellbound. Many tourists and locals thronged the site and circulated videos on social media of showing the spectacular waterfalls against green mountains topped with mist. **PHOTOS BY MOHAMMED AL MASHANI**

OCO sends abroad 975 tonnes of relief supplies

MUSCAT: The world is marking the World Humanitarian Day which falls on August 19 each year. Oman made a great humanitarian effort on the national and global levels through official authorities and civil societies each of which is undertaking its role according to a plan.

Among these authorities is the Oman Charitable Organization (OCO) which was established in 1996 as a culmination of civil work carried out by the likes of the Omani Women’s Association and the charitable and humanitarian groups.

Within a short period of time, the OCO managed to expand its local, regional and international activities making many achievements. Since its inception, the OCO constantly carries out its humanitarian role in providing

relief beyond the borders of Oman especially in light of the disasters that strike some countries. This is exactly what Oman is doing according to the vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq which can be translated through the external relief programme implemented by the OCO in many countries.

All the work carried out by the OCO outside the Sultanate of Oman, including relief and aid is in line with the government’s policy and approach and the majority of OCO’s international activities are funded by the government which contributes an estimated 95 per cent of foreign relief.

Oman, this year provided aid to countries exceeding more than 975 tonnes of relief materials, medical supplies and food.

— ONA

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Muscat Municipality has embarked upon an afforestation drive to plant more native trees in public areas like walkways, roadsides, gardens and parks to spread shade and reduce irrigation water during the sweltering months of summer.

This initiative is based on the concept that native shrubs have the ability to withstand drought, high temperatures and require less water.

“We have embarked upon an initiative to plant more local saplings and trees in public areas,” said Khalid al Khanbashi, spokesperson at Muscat Municipality. “The first one being an afforestation drive to offer more areas of tree shade for people and secondly, to plant trees that saves.”

Additionally, a part of



the landscaping works also involves removing harmful and invasive trees that threaten the surroundings draw more water resources. As for sustainability purposes, tree waste are recycled and used in the manufacture of organic fertilisers to be used for plants in the public areas. In this way, this process of preserving the environment and ensuring its sustainability is integrated, as well

as making the city healthy, clean and free of pollutants.

The trees that grow in the arid climate include gray mangrove, small Acacia trees called Simr and shrubs such as Tamarix and Sidr which is also known as Christ’s thorn. Simr is one of the most common trees in Oman and they are found on the coastal regions, foothills and plains. S

Al Shu’a trees are one of the perennial wild plants that grow in the wadis and the foothills of the mountains.

These trees that adorn the mountains and valleys of the Sultanate of Oman, especially in the northern governorate, blossom between March and April especially in the dry season.

Other trees that are being planted include chaste tree, a flowering shrub that thrives in subtropical regions, common bean, desert rose and umbrella thorn acacia.

Wadi Mastal’s pomegranates flourish in ideal climate

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, AUG 19

In the enchanting Wadi Mastal nestled within Nakhl, Al Batinah South Governorate, a scene of agricultural harmony unfolds as the residents of Wakan, Al Qurra, and Hadsh villages prepare for the eagerly anticipated August harvest. The Wadi’s unique geography and climate provide an idyllic setting for the cultivation of pomegranates or Al Muqadhmami for their luscious sweetness.

Wadi Mastal elevation and its sheltered position within the embrace of the surrounding hills create a microclimate that is exceptionally conducive to growing pomegranates. As the sun’s rays playfully dance upon the verdant landscape, a gentle breeze, often laden with the valley’s signature mist, drifts through the orchards, bestowing the fruit-bearing trees with just the right balance of sunlight and moisture. This mist-laden atmosphere imparts a touch of magic to the

growth process, contributing to the development of pomegranates with a remarkably rich, sweet taste.

The intertwining elements of fertile soil, ample sunlight, and the wadi’s characteristic humidity work in harmony to nurture the pomegranate trees. This combination ensures that the fruits thrive and reach their optimal flavour profile. Wadi Mastal’s climate, characterised by mild summer temperatures, culminates in a nurturing environment that



promises a bounty of perfectly ripened pomegranates.

As the villagers prepare to embark on the annual tradition of pomegranate harvesting, Wadi Mastal stands as a

testament to nature’s symphony – a symphony composed of mist-kissed mornings, golden sunlit afternoons, and the gentle embrace of a climate that understands the art of cultivating the finest flavours in each precious pomegranate.

With a keen understanding of the cultural significance of pomegranate and grape harvesting traditions, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism should collaborate closely with the villagers of Wakan, Al Qurra,

and Hadsh to facilitate guided tours that weave through the picturesque orchards, imparting the rich history and heritage of the region’s agriculture.

This collaborative effort also bolsters the local economy and through sustainable tourism. this initiative will provide an opportunity for curious travellers to immerse themselves in the rhythms of harvest, witnessing first-hand the meticulous care that goes into each pomegranate and grape plucked from the vines.



Follow safety at petrol stations, says CDAA

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A seemingly small, reckless motorist's action at a petrol station can result in dangers of great magnitude. Hence, following safety norms is paramount, especially in summer, the Civil Defence and Ambulances Authority (CDAA) urged.

Accordingly, a certain set of practices and guidelines, especially during refuelling, must be followed, and they include reducing speed to 20 km/h when entering the station, remaining inside the vehicle, abstaining from smoking, switching off the engine, and securely closing the fuel tank.

"Safety and security of individual lives and property is a collective responsibility, to be followed by both the motorists and the employees, and adhering to the highest security and safety standards at petrol stations is also of great importance," said a top CDAA official.

The petrol station management carries out regular awareness among gas station users about safety protocols, especially the proper procedures to follow when refuelling.

"However, some behave as if they know the norms. In reality, they don't," said the CDAA personnel.

Additionally, one should make it a point to keep the vehicle safe at petrol stations by switching the engine off, and the staff has a moral responsibility to ask the client to do so in case he forgets.

Children shouldn't be allowed to play outside the car at Petrol stations, and one shouldn't call or answer mobile phones at petrol stations.

One should refrain from smoking within the premises and using a lighter in the car while at the petrol station.

While leaving after refuelling, the driver should ensure the fuel tank is closed.

"Also, one should avoid storing extra fuel inside the vehicle as, at times, it causes incidents, the gravity of which is unimaginable," the CDAA official added.

Muscat, Al Batinah N top in fire cases

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Muscat topped the list of fire incidents in 2022 with 1,307 cases, which is 31.2 per cent of the total incidents reported in the country.

According to National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI), 4,186 cases were reported in the country in 2022, of which 949 were in Al Batinah North, 367 in Al Batinah South, 435 in Al Dakhiliyah and 349 in Dhofar Governorate.

Incidents reported from household facilities were 32.1 per cent, transportation (22.2 per cent), residues (20 per cent), agriculture (9.8 per cent), and companies and enterprises 7.2 per cent.)

Last week, CDAA reported a cooking gas explosion in a restaurant in the South Mabela area of the Wilayat of Al Seeb.

Eighteen people suffered light to moderate injuries, and as search and rescue teams dealt with hazardous materials at the site, CDAA said



buildings in the neighbourhood and vehicles were affected.

According to Lieutenant Ali al Farsi of CDAA, "Cooking gas leak is the cause of the explosion, which requires awareness regarding the use

and dealing with gas cylinders and electrical connections."

The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) said that smoke and gas leakage detectors should be installed in homes and that electrical

Smoke and gas leakage detectors should be installed in homes and that electrical appliances be shut down immediately after use to avoid risks

appliances be shut down immediately after use to avoid risks.

Among the most important reasons that lead to fires in residential facilities are: not closing the gas cylinder after cooking and when leaving the house, children tampering with lighters and matches, loading electrical sockets above their capacity, and leaving electrical devices in operation for an extended period.

When a fire breaks out in the house, it is advised to shut off electricity and gas and remove inflammable materials, evacuate all people, help the elderly, children and people with disabilities to evacuate quickly before the spread of the fire and to call the emergency number 9999 or at 24343666.

A traditional way to dry dates

TEXT & PHOTOS
BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

Every morning during the dates harvest period in 'Al Qhaid' season, the Abu Said family spreads the carpet made of palm leaves to dry fresh dates or Al Ratab, in preparation for storing and using them during winter.

This is 'Al Tasteeh', one among the agricultural traditions, which they have observed for centuries. Although 'Al Qhaid', which usually extends from the end of May to the end of August, coincides with holidays for schools and colleges, most families do not move far from the villages in which they live because of these dates that require care throughout the season.

Dates harvesting goes through several stages, starting with 'Al Hidar' which is pruning to remove the dry fronds around to reduce chances of pest infection. Then comes the stage of Al Tahdeer that involves tying lower leaves to the stem with a rope. This is done to protect the fruits as they gain weight.

Next comes the process of 'Al Kheraf' which is the process of plucking dates by climbing the palm trees at regular intervals. This process lasts for more than four weeks for one type of palm.

'Al Jedad' brings together men, women and children for harvest that embodies social solidarity. They sing folk songs that help to ease the hard labour.

After harvesting, the dates are transported to or placed in open places near the farms. Then they are cleaned and washed and then laid out on a large rug to be dried in the sun. This stage is called 'Al



Tasteeh'. Rotten dates are sorted out and given to animals.

The last stage of harvesting is 'Al kenaz' which is the process of stacking dates on top of each other after purifying and filtering them in fronds, pottery or plastic containers. In the past, dates used to be packed in palm fronds and stacked with vessels under them in dark rooms, which produced date juice called 'Al Dibs.'

In some seasons, 'Al Tasteeh' is affected by rainfall, in which case farmers are forced to extend the drying period of dates. This traditional method is widespread in the northern governorates of the Sultanate of Oman.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhofar Services invites the specialize companies to participate and submit their offers for the below said tender in Dhofar Governorate.

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/2023/132	SUPPLY OF SEWER CLEANING EQUIPMENTS	03/09/2023	25/09/2023	RO. 105.000
DISC/2023/133	SUPPLY OF STANDBY DIESEL GENERATORS	03/09/2023	25/09/2023	RO. 105.000
DISC/2023/134	SUPPLY, TESTING & COMMISSIONING OF DIESEL EMERGENCY SEWAGE / STORM WATER PUMPS	03/09/2023	25/09/2023	RO. 105.000
DISC/2023/135	CONSTRUCTION WATER DISTRIBUTION LINE AT TAOAH PLAIN	03/09/2023	28/09/2023	RO. 26.250
DISC/2023/136	CONSTRUCTION OF WATER NETWORK AT AL MUROOJ	03/09/2023	28/09/2023	RO. 1,575.000
DISC/2023/137	UPGRADE AND IMPROVE THE STORAGE FACILITY AT SANAYA, AWQAD	03/09/2023	28/09/2023	RO. 525.000
DISC/2023/138	UNE-LOT 08 A-2023	03/09/2023	10/09/2023	RO. 52.500

- To view the tender details, you can visit www.dhofarservices.nama.om / scan the QR code
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 3.00pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using "isupplier portal". No hard copies are accepted.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.
- For any clarifications contact us on:
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Over 60,000 visit Al Jabal Al Akhdar fest

AMAL AL RIYAMI
AL JABAL AL AKHDAR, AUG 19

Over 60,000 people attended the second edition of Al Jabal Al Akhdar Festival, which ended on Saturday, marking the culmination of a series of vibrant events. Organised by the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the festival unfolded from August 3 to August 19.

Throughout its duration, the festival drew people from Oman and abroad.

Adventure sports enthusiasts had a series of exhilarating races and events. These included the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar Mountain Bike Race, the Tourist Walking Activity, and the Himam Trail Run Race.

Himam Trail Run Race with its motto 'Run and Explore' attracted around 400 participants of various age groups. The race aimed to promote physical fitness and strength through running.

The organiser of the Himam Trail Run Race, Asim bin Abdullah al Saqri said the race featured two distinct tracks. The first, spanning 10 km, catered to adults and began from the pinnacle of Saiyq village, winding its way through neighbouring villages before culminating at Sayh Qatnah Park. The second track, covering 4 km, was for participants aged 12 to 15, starting from Hayl al Yaman and concluding at Sayh Qatnah Park.

These tracks were thoughtfully crafted to offer participants different facets of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar. The organisers ensured meticulous arrangements, encompassing nutritional support for participants, technical assistance, physical fitness assessments, referee oversight, and medical provisions. Participants were duly honoured with commemorative medals.



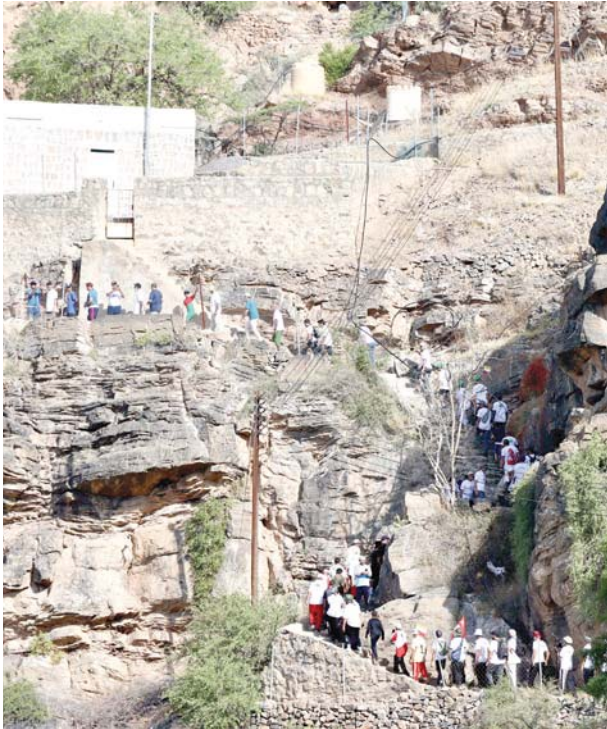
Looking ahead, the fourth edition of the Himam Trail Run Race is scheduled for November 23 to 25 this year. Anticipating runners from over 50 nationalities, the event will encompass distances of 110 km,

55 km, and 25 km. The tracks will span expansive territories, encompassing Nizwa, Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, Al Hamra, and Izki.

Ahmed bin Salim al Tubi, Director-General of Administrative and Financial

Affairs in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, emphasised the festival's pivotal role in promoting tourism. Notably, the festival facilitates the growth of various service and developmental projects within the wilayat of Al

Jabal Al Akhdhar. The Small and Medium Enterprises Authority and numerous productive families and institutions, a total of 34 and 45, respectively, were actively engaged in the festival. Al Tubi underscored the



governorate's commitment to heeding visitor feedback and opinions to enhance services and events in the ensuing years. This approach is poised to elevate the festival's significance as a cornerstone of tourism and economic activity in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar.

Haitham bin Mohammed al Ghassani, Director-General of Tourism Promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, articulated the festival's objectives.

The second edition of the Al Jabal Al Akhdar Festival aimed to beckon visitors and tourists to the region, offering a splendid array of recreational activities, diverse competitions, and immersive tourism experiences. Attendees could relish the ambience of Al Jabal Al Akhdhar and its natural wonders, along with the opportunity to explore ancient villages like Al Soujara. The festival introduced this village, a quintessential example of the Sultanate of Oman's rural heritage, as an alluring tourist destination. Al Soujara thrives on its fusion of mountainous and historical elements, providing an innovative and harmonious tourism model.

Engaging with festival-goers revealed their contentment with various activities, such as the mountain tourist walk that attracted over 125 participants. Other highlights included the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar bicycle race, paragliding, and the Al Jabal Al Akhdhar mountain running race, where over 230 took part.

The festival site featured pavilions and stalls of fruit vendors, productive families, entrepreneurs, and participating institutions. These entities praised the commendable efforts of the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate in hosting festivals that serve as invaluable platforms for showcasing and promoting their projects and products.

MoTCIT decision will help curb illegal transporters and regulate taxi fares

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) announcement for a timetable for taxi owners to join licensed applications will make taxi services, especially those operating in airports, affordable and help curb illegal transporters.

As part of the green incentives, it will also help reduce the number of private cars entering the airport.

Currently, app-based services are not allowed to pick up passengers (only drop-off allowed) from the airport, while licensed airport taxi services are reported to be expensive as they operate from a higher base fare.

Speaking to the Observer, the CEO of a leading app-based taxi company, said, "We have been stopped from picking-up passengers from the airport despite repeated requests. We just hope this is the first step towards change."

MoTCIT has released the timetable for taxi owners to join



the licensed applications. Currently, there are eight app-based services, which include one for women taxi drivers.

The ministry stated that the programme's first phase begins

on October 1, which includes taxi drivers operating at the airports of the Sultanate of Oman, while the second phase will cover tourist complexes, hotels, commercial centres, and ports beginning from November 1.

The third phase will cover white and orange street taxis from January 1. which are currently mandated to operate as per a mobile-based meter.

The fare meter for an airport taxi starts from RO2,500, and each kilometre costs 400 baisas up to 40 km. After that, 200 baisas are charged for every kilometre. App-based services operate from RO1.

Many passengers use services offered by illegal transporters.

The ministry has been cracking down on illegal transportation activities in the capital, including at the airport.

Some airport users complain that they have been fined for ferrying even family members or close relatives while dropping them to the airport or for other purposes, a matter which the ministry has clarified.

A fine of RO200 is imposed on the drivers by the ministry officials if booked for illegal transportation.

An airport taxi operator told the Observer, "We get few passengers from the airport due to illegal services. We are paying fees for the operating card, insurance, parking, and fuel."

Kerala MLA to be the chief guest

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Ramesh Chennithala, Kerala MLA from Kerala's district of Alappuzha will be the chief guest at an event to be held at Al Falaj Hotel on September 28.

Organised by like-minded people from the district under 'Haripad Pravasi Association' which promotes art, culture and charity, the event will also feature a number of artistes who have proven their mettle in their chosen art forms.

"This is the first time that an event of this pomp and glitz is being conducted where the member from the legislative assembly is being honoured. A number of socio-cultural events will follow," Kailash Nair, President of the Group said.

Named 'Mizhiv 2023', the event will also host acclaimed artistes like Abhaya Hiranmayi, Bhagyaraj, Shyam Thrikkunnappuzha, Sumesh Chandran, Rajesh Panavalli who will enthrall the audience with both their music and entertainment shows.

"What makes this event special is that several artistes from Oman will be sharing stage space with those visiting masters of performing art for a unique show experience," the office bearers added. Secretary Bineesh C Babu, Vimal, Treasurer, Aji Harippad, Coordinator, and other members of the group were also present at the press briefing.



Türkiye slams ‘unacceptable’ UN approach to Cyprus row

ISTANBUL: Türkiye’s ruling party spokesman on Saturday criticised UN peacekeepers for blocking the construction of a controversial road in the buffer zone dividing Cyprus, calling their attitude “unacceptable” and “extremely wrong”.

A confrontation occurred on Friday between Turkish Cypriot forces and UN peacekeepers in Pyla, an ethnically mixed village in the UN-patrolled area between the internationally recognised Republic of Cyprus in the south and a breakaway Turkish Cypriot statelet in the north.

The UN mission said its peacekeepers were assaulted as they tried to block the “unauthorised construction work” near Pyla, the only village where Greek Cypriots and Turkish Cypriots live side by side.

“The United Nations Peacekeeping Force in cyprus condemns the assaults against UN peacekeepers and damage to UN vehicles by personnel from the Turkish Cypriot side this morning,” UNFICYP said.

Secretary-General Antonio Guterres said the UN chief “stresses that threats to the safety of UN peacekeepers and damage to UN property are unacceptable and may constitute serious crimes under international law,” said Stephane Dujarric.

European Union member cyprus denounced what it called “organised incidents caused by the Turkish occupying forces... and the unacceptable attack against British and Slovak members of the UN peacekeeping force”.

The EU also condemned the incident, as well as Britain, France and the United States,



Members of the United Nations Peacekeeping Force in Cyprus (UNFICYP) patrol inside the buffer zone that separates the internationally-recognised Republic of Cyprus and the breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC). – **AFP** file photo

who in a joint statement expressed “serious concern at the launch of unauthorised construction” of the road.

Omer Celik, spokesman for Türkiye’s ruling AKP party, defended the construction of the road and slammed the “unacceptable” attitude of the UN peacekeepers.

“The attitude of the UN peacekeeping force serving in Cyprus ... was unacceptable and extremely wrong,” Celik wrote on Twitter, now rebranded as X.

He said that attitude “aimed at pleasing the Greek Cypriot side has damaged the reputation” of the UN mission in Cyprus.

The authorities in the self-proclaimed Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus

(TRNC), which is recognised only by Türkiye, had dismissed the UN mission’s allegations as “baseless”.

They said the project had a “humanitarian objective” that was “aimed at providing ease of access to TRNC territory for our citizens” living in the village.

Celik said on Saturday that Türkiye “fully supports” the TRNC, and called on the UN mission to treat the Turkish Cypriots equally.

Turkish Cypriot leader Ersin Tatar, a protege of Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, has urged the international community to “acknowledge the existence” of two states in Cyprus. — **AFP**

Thai ex-PM Thaksin to return from exile amid political deadlock

BANGKOK: Thailand’s self-exiled former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra plans to return to the country on Tuesday, his daughter said, as the country is struggling to overcome a political deadlock after a May national election.

The former telecommunications tycoon, premier from 2001 until he was ousted in a 2006 coup, lives in self-imposed exile after fleeing Thailand to avoid a jail sentence for graft in 2008. He would still be subject to jail upon a return.

In a social media post on Saturday, Thaksin’s youngest daughter, Paetongtarn Shinawatra, said she would meet her father at Bangkok’s Don Muang Airport on “Tuesday, August 22”.

Also scheduled for Tuesday is another parliamentary vote for prime minister, to be



Thaksin Shinawatra nominated by the Thaksin-backed Pheu Thai Party. Thaksin earlier postponed his return from August 10, citing the need for a medical checkup. He still faces up to 10 years in jail. The 74-year-old would be subject to the judicial

process upon his return, deputy national police chief Surachate Hakpam has said.

Some analysts said Thaksin’s return suggests Pheu Thai has reached a deal with political parties on forming a government after gaining support from military-backed parties.

“Thaksin’s return on voting day shows that he is confident that Pheu Thai’s prime ministerial candidate will be elected in one round,” said Thanaporn Sriyakul, chair of the Political Science Association of Kasetsart University.

The second-placed Pheu Thai this month took over efforts to form a government after the leader of the election-winning Move Forward party failed in his bid to become prime minister. — **AFP**

Palestinian dies after shooting

NABLUS: A Palestinian man shot by Israeli forces during a raid this week in the occupied West Bank died on Saturday, the official Palestinian news agency and a health worker said.

Mohammed Abu Asaab was “seriously injured in the head” on Wednesday in Balata refugee camp on the outskirts of the northern West Bank city of Nablus, and on Saturday succumbed to his wounds, news agency Wafa reported.

It said Abu Asaab was hit during clashes that erupted when Israeli “undercover forces” surrounded a house in the camp.

The Israeli army did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

An official at Al Najah hospital in Nablus, speaking on condition of anonymity as they were not authorised to speak to the media, said that Abu Asaab, a resident of Balata, had died “as a result of wounds sustained at dawn last Wednesday during the occupation (Israeli) forces’ storming of the camp”.

Reports in Nablus said Abu Asaab’s death was also announced over mosque loudspeakers throughout the city.

Meanwhile, two Israelis were killed in a suspected shooting attack in the occupied West Bank on Saturday, the army said.

“A suspected shooting attack was carried out at a number of Israeli civilians in the area of the town of Huwara,” an army statement said, adding that two civilians had been killed.

The West Bank has seen a surge in



Israeli security forces inspect a Palestinian Red Crescent ambulance at a checkpoint following a reported attack in the town of Huwara in the occupied West Bank. – **AFP**

violence since early last year, with a string of attacks by Palestinians on Israeli targets, repeated Israeli army raids and violence by Jewish settlers against Palestinian communities.

At least 218 Palestinians have been killed in violence linked to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict this year.

Some 30 Israelis, one Ukrainian and one Italian have also been killed, according to statistics compiled from official sources on

both sides.

They include, on the Palestinian side, combatants as well as civilians and, on the Israeli side, three members of the Arab minority.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since the Six-Day War of 1967 and its forces regularly carry out incursions into areas such as Nablus which are nominally under Palestinian Authority security control.

— **AFP**

West African delegation arrives in coup-hit Niger

NIAMEY: A delegation from West African bloc ECOWAS arrived in Niger on Saturday for talks with the military officers who have seized power, sources close to the organisation and ousted President Mohamed Bazoum told AFP.

The Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) has agreed to activate a “standby force” as a last resort to restore democracy in Niger after generals toppled and detained Bazoum on July 26. But it says it favours dialogue to defuse the crisis.

A plane carrying the delegation landed in the capital Niamey at around 1:00 pm, a day after the bloc’s military chiefs said they were ready to intervene to reinstate Bazoum.

Niger’s governing military council confirmed the arrival of the ECOWAS representatives, headed by former Nigerian leader Abdulsalami Abubakar.

A previous ECOWAS delegation led by Abubakar earlier this month tried and failed to meet Bazoum and the coup leader, General Abdourahamane Tiani.

A source close to the latest delegation said it would send “a message of firmness” to the army officers and meet Bazoum.

ECOWAS defence chiefs met this week in the Ghanaian capital Accra to fine-tune details of a potential military operation to restore Bazoum if ongoing negotiations

with coup leaders fail.

“We are ready to go any time the order is given,” Abdel-Fatau Mousah, an ECOWAS commissioner for political affairs and security said on Friday after the military chiefs’ meeting.

“The D-Day is also decided.”

ECOWAS leaders say they have to act after Niger became the fourth West African nation since 2020 to suffer a coup, following Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso.

The Sahel region is struggling with growing members insurgencies linked to Al-Qaeda and the IS group. Frustration over the violence has in part prompted the military takeovers.

ECOWAS troops have intervened in other emergencies since 1990, including civil wars in Liberia and Sierra Leone. Ivory Coast, Benin and Nigeria are expected to contribute troops to a Niger mission.

The United Nations special envoy for West Africa and the Sahel, Leonardo Santos Simao, met with the junta’s Prime Minister Ali Mahamane Lamine Zeine on Friday. Simao said in comments broadcast on Niger’s state television that he wanted to listen to the junta’s point of view “to study together a way for the country to return as quickly as possible to constitutional normality and legality too. We are convinced that it is always possible with dialogue.” — **Reuters**



Abdel-Fatau Musah, ECOWAS commissioner, briefs the press on plans to deploy its standby force to the Republic of Niger, in Accra, Ghana. – **Reuters**

SULTANATE OF OMAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH (SUHAR HOSPITAL)

NOTICE

(Auction No.1/2023)

The Ministry of Health (Suhar Hospital) would like to invite sealed bids for the Lease for shop of flowers and gifts of Suhar Hospital. Offers should be submitted in sealed envelopes.

Specialized Companies and establishments may collect the documents and specifications of this Auction from the Department of Purchase & Contracts at Suhar Hospital for Fee (25 O.R) between 8:30 am and 12:30 pm during official working hours on or before 30/August/2023.

A Bank Guarantee or a Certified Cheque valid for 90 days issued by a local bank for (500) Oman Rial addressed to Ministry of Health shall be enclosed with the bid as an auction bond that may be reimbursed to unsuccessful bidder. A bid unaccompanied by the auction bond will be rejected.

Offers enclosed in the sealed envelope duly signed and stamped in the original form shall be addressed to department of purchase and contracts providing the title of the auction Viz: “Auction No. 1/2023. Envelopes shall not bear any sign that refers to bidder’s name or identity.

Offers shall be deposited at Department of Purchase and Contracts in Suhar Hospital by on or before 9:00 am on Sunday, the 17/September/2023. Offers submitted after the deadline will not be considered.

The Ministry is not bound to assign any reason for rejected bids.



Biden salutes ‘new era’ of united Japan, S Korea in face of China



US President Joe Biden (C), Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida (R), and South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol speak during a press conference at the Camp David Trilateral Summit at Camp David in Maryland. – AFP

CAMP DAVID: US President Joe Biden and the leaders of Japan and South Korea said they saw a “new chapter” of close three-way security cooperation as the Asian allies joined a first-of-a-kind summit that has already rattled China.

Going tieless at the bucolic Camp David presidential retreat, Biden praised the “political courage” of South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol and Japanese Prime Minister Fumio Kishida in turning the page on historical animosity.

“Your leadership, with the full support of the United States, has brought us here because each of you understands that our world

stands at an inflection point,” Biden told a joint news conference in the wooded hills outside Washington.

The two US allies largely see eye to eye on the world — and together are the base for some 84,500 US troops — but such a summit would have been unthinkable until recently due to the legacy of Japan’s harsh 1910-1945 occupation of the Korean peninsula.

But Yoon has turned the page by resolving a dispute over wartime forced labour, and is now calling Japan a partner at a time of high tensions with both China and North Korea.

Yoon said he hoped to be “forward-looking” and called

the summit a “historic day” in bringing a “firm institutional basis” to the three nations’ joint relationship.

The three leaders also agreed to a multi-year plan of regular exercises in all domains, going beyond one-off drills in response to North Korea, and made a formal “commitment to consult” during crises, with Biden saying they would open a hotline.

Tensions have risen with North Korea, which has launched a volley of missiles in recent months and is feared to respond to the summit with new action.

The leaders’ joint statement renewed a call on North Korea to give up its nuclear weapons

and urged all nations to enforce sanctions.

As the Camp David summit opened, North Korea said it had scrambled jets in response to what it called a US spy plane’s incursion.

Tokyo and Seoul have offered a major boost to Ukraine as major non-Western powers joining pressure against Russia’s attack.

“Due to Russia’s aggression of Ukraine, the international order is shaken from its foundation. The unilateral attempt to change the status quo by force in the East and South China Seas are continuing and the nuclear and missile threats of North Korea are only becoming even greater,” Kishida said. — AFP

UN condemns ‘heinous’ Russian attack on Ukraine city centre, 7 dead

CHERNIHIV: A Russian missile strike on Ukraine’s northern city of Chernihiv killed seven people and wounded more than 100 on Saturday, in what the UN called a “heinous” attack hours after President Vladimir Putin met Moscow’s top army commanders.

“It is heinous to attack the main square of a large city, in the morning, while people are out walking, some going to church to celebrate a religious day for many Ukrainians,” said Denise Brown, the UN’s humanitarian coordinator for Ukraine.

“I condemn this repeated pattern of Russian strikes on populated areas of Ukraine... Attacks directed against civilians or civilian objects are strictly prohibited under international humanitarian law,” she added.

Chernihiv, 150 kilometres north of Kyiv towards Belarus, has been largely spared from major attacks since the first months of Russia’s attack as fierce fighting rages in the east and south.

Saturday’s strike came after Putin held talks with top Russian generals in a rare trip to operational hub Rostov-on-Don.

“As of 3:25 pm, 117 people were injured in the terrorist attack on the centre of Chernihiv, seven of them died,” Oleksandr Lomako, Chernihiv’s acting mayor, said on Telegram.

Viacheslav Chaus, head of the Chernihiv region’s military administration, said on Telegram that a child was among the dead.

Zelensky said the attack hit a square that houses a “polytechnic university, a theatre”. — AFP



A view of a damaged building of the drama theatre at the site of a Russian missile strike, amid Russia’s attack on Ukraine, in Chernihiv, Ukraine. – Reuters

Major hurricane heads toward northwest Mexico, California

CABO SAN LUCAS: Mexico prepared for a powerful Pacific hurricane that triggered a warning of “potentially catastrophic” flooding in a northwestern tourist region and the neighbouring US state of California.

Hurricane Hilary threatened to bring strong winds, flash floods and “life-threatening” surf and rip current conditions, the US National Hurricane Center (NHC) said.

“We’ve already had to live through similar experiences. We know what can happen to us. We must be prepared with food, canned goods and candles,” Marlen Hernandez said, a 30-year-old restaurant worker.

Hilary’s maximum sustained winds reached about 230 kilometres an hour before slowing slightly on Friday, according to the NHC.

It was a Category Four hurricane — the second-most powerful on the Saffir-Simpson scale of one to five.

“Life-threatening and potentially catastrophic flooding” was likely over much of Baja California and southern California this weekend and early next week, the NHC warned.

Residents and workers in Cabo San Lucas put up protective boarding, laid sandbags and stored furniture in preparation, as large waves crashed ashore.



Picture taken at Medano beach as rain and gusts of wind of Hurricane Hilary reach Cabo San Lucas, Baja California State, Mexico. – AFP

Navy personnel were seen patrolling the beach in Cabo San Lucas — a popular destination for both Mexican and foreign tourists.

A hurricane warning was issued for a stretch of coastline in Baja

California from Punta Abreojos to Cabo San Quintin, and a hurricane watch north from there to Ensenada.

Across the border, an unusual tropical storm watch was in effect from the California/Mexico border to Point Mugu in Ventura County, as well as for Catalina Island, according to the NHC.

“Fluctuations in intensity are likely through tonight,” it predicted.

“Weakening is expected to begin by Saturday, but Hilary will still be a hurricane when it approaches the west coast of the Baja California peninsula on Saturday night and Sunday. Hilary is expected to weaken to a tropical storm by late on Sunday before it

reaches southern California,” the NHC added.

The storm brought rain and rough seas to areas along Mexico’s southwestern Pacific coast, including the tourist resort of Acapulco.

In the United States, “rainfall amounts of three to six inches, with isolated amounts of 10 inches, are expected across portions of southern California and southern Nevada. Dangerous to locally catastrophic flooding will be possible,” the NHC said.

Major League Baseball and Major League Soccer have rescheduled games planned for Sunday in the region as the storm nears. — Reuters

SHORT TAKES

QUITO

Ecuador mayor survives assassination attempt

The mayor of an Ecuadorian city said on Saturday he was the victim of an attempted assassination, a day before the country goes to the polls in general elections.

Francisco Tamariz, the mayor of the coastal town of La Libertad, said he escaped unharmed from the Friday evening attack, in which gunmen fired 30 shots at his vehicle. “They tried to kill me,” Tamariz said on X, formerly known as Twitter, adding that more than eight people had witnessed the shooting.

— AFP



Ecuador will hold a presidential election on Sunday after a campaign marked by the murder of a top candidate and vows to tackle the lawlessness that has engulfed the country.

CALGARY

Thousands of evacuees arrive in southern Canada

Calgary’s airport in the neighbouring province of Alberta has become a reception centre for the evacuees, in a massive operation without precedent in the region.

The fire is about 15 kilometres from Yellowknife and could reach the city over the weekend, authorities warned.

Crystal Sangris barely slept for three days as wildfires threatened her hometown in northern Canada.

“I never, never thought



that this day would come,” she said after she left her home in Yellowknife.

Evacuees are registered as soon as they land in Calgary’s domestic flight terminal, some arriving with their pets. — AFP

PARIS

Seine pollution cancels Olympics test events

Pollution levels in the Seine river forced the cancellation of Saturday’s test event for the para-triathlon at the Paris Olympics.

“The laboratory sample had a slightly too high level” of the E. coli bacteria, reported the Paris mayor’s sports assistant Pierre Rabadan. This follows the cancellation a fortnight ago of a test open water swim competition for the 2024 Games due to excessive pollution.

Sunday’s mixed relay triathlon could well suffer the same fate.



As organisers investigated the source of elevated E. coli readings Tony Estanguet, the head of the Paris 2024 organising committee, stressed there was no ‘Plan B’ for next year’s sporting extravaganza. — AFP

We grieve differently



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
@alsinawi

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

Ahmed — not his real name — was in his early forties when he attended therapy. He was married for over fifteen years but every time his wife gets pregnant she has a miscarriage in the first few weeks which made the couple feel frustrated.

The last pregnancy took place a year ago and with the grace of God and the help of doctors the pregnancy was carried to the fifth month.

Ahmed and his wife were very excited and started preparing the room for their baby boy, unfortunately, the wife’s health deteriorated as her blood pressure became very high and no treatment was able to bring it under control. The doctors informed Ahmed that his wife’s life is in danger and the pregnancy must be terminated. The couple were devastated. The wife was given medication to terminate the pregnancy and had to go through the process of giving birth to the dead fetus. Ahmed describes carrying his dead boy saying “ I lost him before even having him”.

The couple went through difficult times and each

ended up grieving in their way. Ahmed spent a long time at work and when at home the couple had very little conversation. Ahmed developed depression and irritability for simple reasons and ended up divorcing his wife. His depression got worse, especially with the loneliness he experienced after his ex-wife left the house.

The death of a child is considered one of the most traumatic events. For many bereaved parents, the effects of losing a child are long-lasting and can be profoundly debilitating. Many parents experience a variety of psychological struggles, including complicated and unresolved grief that doesn’t go away.

Parents describe feelings of loss that do not improve even after time passes, along with painful emotions that stop them from resuming their own life. Anger is a common emotion experienced by grieving parents. I remember a patient who lost her son saying “ It’s not the natural order when a child dies before the parents”. This anger can be directed toward other people who can move on.

Some parents experience intense guilt when their

THE DEATH OF A CHILD IS CONSIDERED ONE OF THE MOST TRAUMATIC EVENTS. FOR MANY BEREAVED PARENTS, THE EFFECTS OF LOSING A CHILD ARE LONG-LASTING AND CAN BE PROFOUNDLY DEBILITATING

child dies in an accident or if they believe they could have done something to prevent the death, others feel angry and blame themselves or their partner which does not help in the grieving process.

Anxiety is a common feeling experienced by a grieving person as the loss of a child conflicts with their sense of safety and disturbs the core of their family life. So what can help parents grieve well? The first step is to have a friend whom you can trust and feel that you can talk to them without fear of being judged. Sometimes talking to people who went through a similar experience also helps. Prayers and reconnecting with God is very essential as sometimes the feeling of loss can be so intense that it may challenge your faith.

If the person is experiencing some form of mental health problems such as depression, anxiety, or sleep disturbances they need to seek advice from a mental health professional. Remember that your emotions may affect your other children who would be grieving in their way, Losing a child can negatively change your life so stay strong for you and the rest of your family.

Disinformation an ‘easy sell’ in post-coup Niger

TONYE BAKARE

Following a July coup, Niger has become the latest hotbed of disinformation in the troubled Sahel regional as West African powers grapple with crafting a response to the political crisis.

From false rumours and misleading videos to manipulated audio clips, AFP has debunked over a dozen social media claims either backing or discrediting the coup leaders after they toppled President Mohamed Bazoum on July 26.

Soon after his ousting, amateur footage of a large march surfaced online purporting to show a pro-Bazoum rally in Niger’s capital Niamey on August 6. In reality, the clip was filmed on the day of the president’s removal from power.

Another viral video allegedly featured Niger’s deposed finance minister crying after coup leaders gave him an ultimatum to account for missing funds or face death.

But AFP found the clip, from 2021, in fact showed Niger’s former justice minister Marou Amadou expressing his gratitude to ex-president Issoufou Mahamadou.

Misleading reports about foreign interference in the crisis abounded as uncertainty mounted over the possibility of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) using military force to reverse the coup.

The regional bloc, chaired by Nigerian President Bola Tinubu, was quick to condemn Bazoum’s ouster and piled sanctions on Niamey days after the takeover, with Nigeria — Niger’s main electricity provider — cutting off supplies.

There were also false claims about French fighter jets landing in Senegal to support a possible ECOWAS intervention, or about fighters from the Russian mercenary group Wagner and Burkina troops arriving in Niger to support the new leaders. Landlocked Niger joined neighbours Mali and Burkina Faso to become the third Sahel country in three years to experience a coup.

Like elsewhere in the region, anti-French sentiment has been on the rise in Niger. Its new military leaders have the support of fellow ex-French colonies Mali and Burkina Faso, which have turned their backs on Paris in favour of closer Moscow ties.

In May, Bazoum told British newspaper The Independent that Wagner had been sponsoring “disinformation campaigns against us”.

Some analysts, however, said there were few signs of organised, large-scale offensives aimed at spreading false content as seen in other African nations.

— AFP

Rudy Giuliani was always like this

JAMELLE BOUIE

On Monday, Rudy Giuliani was indicted in Georgia for his role in what prosecutors called a conspiracy to overturn the results of the 2020 presidential election in that state.

The district attorney for Fulton County, Fani Willis, charged Giuliani with 13 counts related to election tampering, including “solicitation of violation of oath by public officer” and “conspiracy to commit forgery in the first degree.” The indictment names 18 other defendants, including former president Donald Trump, who have each been charged under Georgia’s Racketeer Influenced and Corrupt Organizations (or RICO) Act. The irony, of course, is that Giuliani made his name as a US attorney using the federal RICO Act to undermine and dismantle the mob.

It is not hard to find commentators asking a simple question about the events of the past few years: What happened to Rudy Giuliani? How did “America’s mayor” — the man who rocketed to national fame after the Sept. 11 attacks — come to disgrace and debase himself in defence of Donald Trump? Why would Giuliani, the archetypal tough-on-crime and law-and-order politician, embrace a lawless effort to “stop the steal”?

It’s an understandable question, but it starts from a mistaken premise. It assumes there’s something different about Giuliani — that there was, at some point, a decisive break in Giuliani’s personality or political beliefs that placed him on his current trajectory. But there wasn’t. The line from “America’s mayor” to indicted co-conspirator is a straight one.

The answer to What happened to Rudy Giuliani? is Nothing happened. He is the same man he’s always been.

The easiest way to establish this is just to look at one of the formative moments of Giuliani’s political career. On Sept. 16, 1992, thousands of off-duty police officers crowded in front of New York’s City Hall to protest against Mayor David Dinkins. “The cops held up several of the most crude drawings of Dinkins, Jimmy Breslin, the Newsday columnist, who was present at the riot, wrote. “Now you got a n***** right



Rudy Giuliani made his name as a US attorney using the federal RICO Act to undermine and dismantle the mob.

inside City Hall,’ one officer reportedly said,” Breslin continued. “How do you like that? A n***** mayor.” Other officers chanted slogans like “Dinkins gotta go!” and “The mayor’s on crack!”

The cops were there to oppose a bill that would have removed the police from the city’s Civilian Complaint Review Board, an oversight body that handled allegations of police misconduct, and, crucially, would have made it independent of the Police Department itself. Faced with the prospect of potentially greater civilian accountability, New York City police officers took their anger to the streets.

Tensions were already high in the city — earlier in the summer, an officer had killed Jose Garcia, a young undocumented immigrant from the Dominican Republic, leading to protests and rioting — and fanning the flames on this particular day was none other than Rudy Giuliani, who had lost to Dinkins in the 1989 New York mayoral election.

Giuliani, the author Andrew Kirtzman recounts in “Giuliani: The Rise and Tragic Fall of America’s Mayor,” “walked to the flatbed truck outside the perimeter of the building, where thousands were gathered, and hopped up to the makeshift stage. After a handful of other politicians delivered their speeches, Giuliani took the mic and the crowd roared. Shedding his suit jacket and rolling up the sleeves of his white button shirt, he ripped into Dinkins.”“The mayor doesn’t know why the morale of the New York City Police Department is so low,” he said, jabbing his finger in the air. “He blames it on me, he blames it on you. The reason the

morale of the Police Department of the City of New York is so low is one reason and one reason alone: David Dinkins!”

Giuliani never acknowledged or condemned the racism of the police riot. And why would he? His performance galvanised supporters and almost certainly contributed to his narrow victory over Dinkins in his rematch with the incumbent mayor in 1993.

What does any of this have to do with the Rudy Giuliani of 2023? Well, if we think of Giuliani as the personification of American resilience in the face of terrorism, then his turn against democracy and the rule of law is bewildering and inexplicable. But if we think of Giuliani as the scowling demagogue who stoked the flames of chauvinism and racial hatred against New York’s first Black mayor for his own gain, then there’s little other than his carefully crafted image in the press that separates the Giuliani of ’92 from the Giuliani of ’23.

It was the press that labelled him “America’s mayor.” That the epithet continued to stick through the subsequent decade, in the face of scandal and political failure, is only a testament to the persistence of myth in American political coverage, because it is only after internalising the myth of Giuliani that anyone could be shocked by his steadfast allegiance to Trump.

If there is a question to ask in the wake of Giuliani’s indictment, it isn’t What happened to Rudy? but rather, why was it so hard for so many people to see the truth of who, and what, he always was?

— The New York Times

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The third world conundrum: Who cares?

We possibly still refer to them as third world, the countries that still face the same enigmas they did more than half a century ago, a maelstrom of poverty, disease, conflict, and hopelessness that characterised much of Africa, the Middle East, South America, and Southeast Asia, of the 1950s.

“Thank goodness,” we can all say, for the bravery and vision of the Saudi Arabian, Emirati, Qatari, and Omani leaders who grasped their opportunities at exactly the right time, to capitalise on the oil and gas resources, while others proved both selfish and profligate given similar opportunities and failed to achieve the independence and upward profiles of their neighbours. How they must look at tiny Oman, and think, “There, by the grace of God we should have gone.” You know, Frenchman Alfred Sauvy was an anthropologist and historian who wrote in 1952, “Three Worlds, One Planet,” in which he theorised that the capitalist world mainly Europe and North America, was the ‘First World,’ Russia and her Eastern Europe Communist allies was the ‘Second World,’ while the “Third World” included Africa, the Middle East, Latin America, and Southeast Asia, many of them former colonies of European powers.

Interestingly, he didn’t believe that population control was the answer to poverty, but the genuine realisation of natural resources for the benefit of the people was the key to a nation’s, and a people’s development. Clearly, some forefathers were intelligent, articulate, and compassionate enough to understand Sauvy’s message, the Sultanate of Oman being a shining example.

Anthropologically, even sociologically, he postulated too that there was a risk of under-population of some countries, and it doesn’t take a rocket scientist to understand that whilst jealously guarding their borders, resource rich countries such as Australia, Canada, and Kazakhstan for example, could possibly be seen as lacking the populations to fully develop and benefit from their resources. It is an interesting thought.



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THIS HANDFUL OF DESERT NATIONS HAVE MANAGED TO USE THEIR RESOURCES WISELY, WITHOUT THE EXCESSES AND CORRUPTION THAT HAVE BESET MUCH OF THE AFRICAN AND SOUTH AMERICAN CONTINENTS, AND PARTS OF ASIA

At the other end of the scale, the United Arab Emirates has established itself as a financial, commerce, and tourism hub, using its resources, and creating an environment where people from all over the world can appreciate that a sustainable, guilt-free, work-life-play balance, is possible in a Middle Eastern metropolis. Qatar, due to its very small size, has relied upon offshore investment, mainly in real estate, though a growing commercial investment is also becoming apparent, while Saudi Arabia has focused on big budget, in-country projects, The Line, or ‘Neom’ the futuristic city, could yet change the way we see our living spaces.

We must though, complement the Omani government on exercising fiscal discretion and control in recent years. From having appeared anything but secure a decade ago, to a situation where a budget surplus could be announced of RO 656 billion, and a reduction in public debt from RO 16.3 billion, to RO 14.8 billion, demonstrates a significantly responsible attitude. Consequently, the standard of living in Oman has risen immeasurably! Looking ahead, and with a continued environmentally sympathetic and socially responsible, balanced attitude to the oil and gas resources, the Sultanate of Oman is a model for sustainability in the Middle East, and the world.

So, this handful of desert nations have managed to use their resources wisely, without the excesses and corruption that have beset much of the African and South American continents, and parts of Asia. They have ensured that all their populations have shared in the prosperity, even if the absolute wealth has not yet reached all equally.

Societal goodwill, education, healthcare, infrastructure, and security are today what could only have been a pipedream once upon a time.

So, what becomes of the ‘third world’ today? Do we just wash our hands of them and say, “tough luck, you had your chance, and you blew it!” Or do we help them out? Sauvy wrote, “this exploited, scorned, ignored, ‘third world,’ wants also, to become something.” This week, I don’t have the solutions... maybe you do?

COLOURS OF FREEDOM



Student takes part in the street culture carnival to celebrate Indonesia’s 78th Independence Day in Banda Aceh on Saturday. – AFP

Sympathy for the oligarch

It may sound strange, but I feel sorry for Petr Aven and Mikhail Fridman, the billionaires behind the Russian financial conglomerate Alfa Group, who were sanctioned by the British government last year and by the United States government last week. Of course, this is nothing compared to the deep sorrow I feel for the innocent Ukrainians who have become victims of Russia’s brutal and unprovoked invasion. Nonetheless, there is something pitiable about pioneers of Russia’s post-Soviet market economy being punished over Soviet-style geopolitics.

Aven and Fridman — possibly more than any other high-profile Russian businessmen — embraced the new economic model introduced in Russia after the collapse of the Soviet planned economy. Exploiting any opportunity they could find, they made large investments — and earned big profits — in oil, telecoms, and finance. If they needed to strongarm others to maximise their returns, so be it. They were textbook capitalists, destroying the old and creating the new.

To appreciate fully what these oligarchs achieved, one must recall the deterioration and ultimate collapse of the planned economy. For years, factories churned out tanks and missiles, while grocery-store shelves grew progressively emptier, until, in 1983, the government began rationing basic foods, such as grains and butter. It also raised food prices



Konstantin Sonin

THERE IS SOMETHING PITIABLE ABOUT PIONEERS OF RUSSIA’S POST-SOVIET MARKET ECONOMY BEING PUNISHED OVER SOVIET-STYLE GEOPOLITICS

sharply, though this failed to spur production. Shortly before the Soviet Union’s collapse in 1991, industrial production plummeted.

What the Soviets left behind was an economy where potentially valuable assets were indistinguishable from worthless ones, with legal and economic institutions that were not suitable for a market economy. As private actors sought to navigate these conditions, they ended up shaping the economy into something far more functional and prosperous.

Russia’s budding oligarchs were far from perfect. At the beginning of the economic transition, there were high hopes that business leaders would provide the political pressure needed to drive institutional progress: an independent judiciary, less corruption in law enforcement, and better regulation. Harvard’s Andrei Shleifer, who advised the Russian government on privatisation, predicted in 1995 that the “transfer of control rights from politicians to private parties” would create “political demand for the protection of property rights.” This is not what happened. Instead of lobbying for the development of stronger state institutions, private actors went to work building their own mechanisms for, say, protecting property rights. Russian oligarchs in the 1990s took on local

criminals themselves, because they could not count on the police to protect their assets.

These figures also encouraged corruption by state officials, because honest officials still followed Soviet blueprints and norms. And they bought members of parliament, because it was the only way to move business-friendly legislation forward. In post-Soviet Russia, businessmen had to be “big,” powerful, and politically connected, because nobody would honour contracts with them otherwise.

This does not, however, mean that all the rumours about figures like Aven and Fridman are true. There is no reason to believe, for example, that Aven handed out favours during his tenure as Minister of Foreign Economic Relations in the reformist

government of Russia’s first post-Soviet prime minister, Yegor Gaidar. He certainly did not help out Fridman, whom he met a year after he left the cabinet. And Alfa Group did not receive any assets via the notorious “loans for shares” privatisation scheme, which delivered the crown jewels of Soviet industry to Boris Yeltsin-era oligarchs in exchange for their political support.

In any case, much of what oligarchs like Aven and Fridman were criticised for in the 1990s constituted what academic economists call second-best solutions: the best approaches that are feasible under imperfect or distorted economic conditions. In this sense, far from causing the economic upheaval that followed the Soviet Union’s collapse, this first generation of oligarchs were symptoms of Russia’s institutional

weakness. But, given their role in building the alternate systems that made the market economy run, they were also a kind of cure.

The situation changed when Vladimir Putin rose to power a generation ago. As rising global oil prices filled the state’s coffers, the role of oligarchs diminished. But, instead of building effective state institutions — including a credible property-rights regime — Putin created a bloated state that primarily served his interests and those of his cronies.

There was no level playing field in Putin’s Russia. Corruption and political connections were the only ways to win. Aven and Fridman adapted to the change, skillfully navigating the Putin-era markets and maintaining excellent ties with the Kremlin. When Putin told them to sell their oil business to the state-owned firm Rosneft, chaired by his crony Igor Sechin, they obliged — but made sure they got full price for their shares.

As Putin eschewed the free-market ideal, in favour of a heavily regulated economy dominated by state-owned monopolies, Aven and Fridman kept quiet. They knew that Putin was no friend of business. But they assumed that they could do little about it, so they found ways to succeed under the conditions they were given.



Mikhail Fridman and Petr Aven

Sport

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SPANISH WALKER MARTIN WINS FIRST GOLD OF BUDAPEST WORLDS



BUDAPEST: Spain's Alvaro Martin won the men's 20km race walk to claim the first gold of the World Athletics Championships in Budapest on Saturday as a host of hot favourites negotiated their qualifying rounds.

The two-time European champion clocked 1hr 17min 32sec for the victory on the streets of the Hungarian capital in a fast race that saw five of the first six finishers break national records.

"I was fourth at the last Olympic Games, I missed the bronze which motivated me to work hard," Martin said.

"In Tokyo, I felt when I was in the fourth position that I could win a medal. Unfortunately, it did not happen and that is why this gold medal is next step towards

the next Olympic Games" in Paris next year.

The race walk was delayed for two hours because of a heavy storm and the opening day's action at the National Athletics Centre was put back an hour.

Sifan Hassan kicked off her audacious bid for a world treble by safely negotiating the opening round of the 1,500m. The Dutch runner completed an unprecedented triple at the Tokyo Olympics by winning gold medals in both the 5,000m and 10,000m and a bronze in the 1,500m.

She is down to race all three once again in Budapest and will be back in action in the final of the 10,000m later on Saturday.

Also safely through into Sunday's 1,500m semifinal (with

the final on Tuesday) was Faith Kipyegon, who has enjoyed a stunning season in which she has set three world records.

The Kenyan is also entered in the 5,000m, with qualifiers over that distance to be raced on Wednesday and the final set for the penultimate day of action on August 26. Reigning world shot put champion Ryan Crouser, suffering with blood clots in his lower leg, also sailed through qualification, going out to 21.48m on his first attempt.

"The last 20 days have been some of the most frustrating and stressful of my life," he said on Instagram. The final of the shot put will be held at 1835 GMT.

The fancied Polish duo of Pawel Fajdek and Wojciech Nowicki

moved into the final of the men's hammer throw.

Fajdek is seeking a sixth successive world gold that would see him match the record number of titles won in a single event achieved by Sergey Bubka in the pole vault between 1983-97.

But it is Olympic champion Nowicki who is the clear world No1 in the event at the moment.

With double Olympic champion Nafissatou Thiam of Belgium out injured and unable to defend her title, American Anna Hall took charge of the heptathlon after the opening two events, the 100m hurdles and high jump.

Hall clocked 12.97sec in the hurdles and registered a best of 1.83 in the high jump for a total of 2,145 points. — AFP

DHOFAR START BRIGHT, SOHAR SHINE

Salalah giants thrash Al Wehda, Sohar rally past Oman Club

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 19

In a thrilling match at the Sports Complex Stadium in Sur, Dhofar showcased their prowess by triumphing over Al Wehda with a resounding 3-0 victory in the opening round of the Omantel League.

Dhofar Club finished the first half by advancing with two clean goals, Abdullah al Mushrafi found the net in the 24th minute, while Awad al Shehri doubled the lead in the 39th minute.

Moataz Saleh sealed the deal with a third goal in the second half, earning Dhofar their first three points in the league. The intensity of the match was emphasised by two expulsions from Al Wehda, including their captain Faisal Sani and player Ahmed al Araimi.



STUNNING COMEBACK

The Sohar Club displayed exceptional resilience as they rallied back to clinch a remarkable 4-1 victory against Oman Club at the Sohar Complex Stadium.

Oman Club struck first with an early goal by Abdulwahed al Hinai in the fourth minute. However, Sohar swiftly responded, with their professional player Frank equalising in the 31st minute, followed by Abdullah al Shibli securing the lead just before half-time in the 44th minute.

Sohar's momentum persisted in the second half, with Frank William netting his second goal in the 76th minute and Ali al Hashemi sealing the game with the fourth goal in the 91st minute.

BAHLA EDGE AL NASR

At the Al Saada Sports Complex, Bahla managed to

secure a 1-0 win over Al Nasr in the first round.

The first half concluded in a stalemate, despite Al Nasr's relative advantage. Both teams struggled to create significant chances, resulting in a goalless first half.

The second half witnessed increased aggression from both sides, with Bahla eventually breaking the deadlock through a goal by Yemeni professional Anis al Maari. Despite a flurry of attacks from both teams in the latter part of the match, Bahla held onto their lead to claim the victory.

The Ibri versus Al Seeb match was postponed due to Al Seeb's participation in the AFC Champions League play-off. A later date will be announced for the rescheduled match.

EARLY LEAGUE STANDINGS

As the dust settles on the opening round of the Omantel League, Sohar lead the pack on goal difference following their remarkable victory over Oman Club. Dhofar closely trail with a convincing 3-0 win against Al Wehda. Bahla's triumph over Al Nasr secured their spot in the early league standings, providing relief to their fans after concerns about the team's preparation. Al Nahda, Al Shabab, Al Rustaq and Sur shared the points in drawn matches, setting the stage for an exciting season ahead.

Oman beach volleyball team ranked 7th in Asia

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUG 19

The Oman beach volleyball team has been ranked among the top 10 teams in Asia, the Oman Volleyball Association (OVA) announced on their social media platform on Saturday.

The OVA statement in their official social media platform in X, formerly known as Twitter, said: "The Oman beach volleyball team has been ranked in the seventh position of the Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC) monthly ranking for the beach volleyball teams for July."

The Oman beach volleyball teams will take part in the 19th edition of Asian Games in Hangzhou, China, in September. It will be a key event for the team and they will look to shine and grab one of the medals in the Asian showpiece event.

Over the past years, Oman beach volleyball teams had excelled with top performance in all their regional, Arab, continental



and global events. Oman's team of Nouh al Jalboobi and Mazin al Hashmi had claimed the title and won gold medals at the 27th Arab Beach Volleyball Championship in Agadir, Morocco, in 2018. The Oman A team pair of Ahmed al Hosni and Haitham al Shraiqi were the champions at the 28th Arab Beach Volleyball Championship which was hosted in Salalah in 2019.

The national beach volleyball teams (A and B), coached by the national head coach Khalifa

al Jabri, took part in the 2023 Asian Senior Beach Volleyball Championship in Fuzhou, China, which was held last June. The Oman team comprising Ahmed al Hosni and Haitham al Shraiqi had booked a slot in the last 16 round. The Omani pair lost 2-0 against the Australian players in the knockout stage (round 16) to end their campaign in Fuzhou.

The four-day Asian event featured participation of 58 teams from 15 countries including 32 men's teams.



STRONG SHOW

Oman Team A comprising Al Hosni and Al Shraiqi were grouped with Indonesia's Sofyan and Danag, Qatar's Abdullah and M Ihab, the Philippines' Garcia and Burlago in Pool H, while Oman's Team B featuring Al Jalboobi and Al Hashmi were clubbed with New Zealand (Reid and McManaway), Australia (Nicolaidis and Carracher) and Kazakhstan (Kuleshov and Petrossyants) in Pool E.

The Omani duo of Al Hosni

and Al Shraiqi began their matches in the Asian tournament with a 2-1 win over the Philippines with scores 21-15, 22-24 and 11-15. Then, the Oman duo had excelled in a thrilling show against Qatar's pair Abdullah and M Ihab to snatch a 2-0 triumph at 21-14, 21-10.

Later, the Indonesian pair had defeated Oman in the following match by 2-0 (21-18, 21-17). With two victories and one defeat, Oman progressed to round 16 before they went down to a 2-0 (21-19, 21-11) loss against

Australia. The Australian pair of Zach Schubert and Tom Hodges had emerged the 2023 Asian Beach Volleyball Champions after they edged their team-mates Def McHugh/ Burnett 2-0 to win the men's gold medals in the final showdown.

On the other hand, Oman's Team B duo of Nouh al Jalboobi and Mazin al Hashmi had finished their campaign in the group stage. They began the tournament with a 2-0 loss against New Zealand's Reid and McManaway. Then, they registered a 2-0 win over the Kazakhstan pair of Kuleshov and Petrossyants. Later, they received a 2-0 loss against the Australian duo of Nicolaidis and Carracher.

In the last edition of the Asian Senior Beach Volleyball Championship hosted in Bandar Abbas, Iran, last year, Oman's Mazin al Hashmi and Houd al Jalboobi had ended their campaign in fifth place while the Qatari duo of Cherif Younouss and Ahmed Tijan were crowned the champions.

England, Spain eye Women's World Cup summit

SYDNEY: Women's football will crown a first-time champion on Sunday when the ninth Women's World Cup concludes with England and Spain, both proud footballing nations, facing off in an intriguing final in Sydney.

The highly-successful tournament in Australia and New Zealand was destined to have a fresh winner from the quarterfinals when Japan joined the United States, Germany and Norway in making a premature exit.

For all the excitement that accompanied Australia's run to the semifinals and Japan's brilliance in the early rounds, the consensus is that England and Spain are worthy first-time finalists.

"I think it's going to be a brilliant game," England captain Millie Bright enthused on Saturday. The tournament has showcased the development of the women's game but the finalists do present a contrast in styles -- England pragmatic, ruthless, resilient and Spain displaying all the technical skill the country's football is famed for.

Midfield maestro Aitana Bonmati and the fresh young talent of winger Salma Paralluelo have shone brightly for Spain, while Lauren James, before her two-match ban for a red card, and Lauren Hemp have been among England's standouts.

The finalists have had their blips -- Spain thrashed 4-0 by Japan in their last group

game and England taken to penalties by Nigeria in the last 16 -- but both have grown into the tournament and were convincing semi-final winners.

Expectations of a tight final in front of another sellout crowd of 75,000 at Stadium Australia might not be too wide of the mark if England's 2-1 win in the European Championship quarterfinal between the sides last year is any guide.

"This was a game we know we were on top of, but it's the result that counts," said Spain coach Jorge Vilda.

England needed an extra time goal to beat Spain last year and continue their run to their first major title, a campaign on home soil conducted to the strains of 'Football's Coming Home' during which the Lionesses captured the hearts of a nation.

Although they have had their share of injury setbacks this year, they have maintained the self-belief the Euros triumph and their calm Dutch coach Sarina Wiegman has imbued in them.

“We are ready,” Wiegman said on Saturday. “Technically, tactically. We have watched Spain, of course, analysed them with our analysis team, and I think we’re ready.”

For Spain, the defeat in Brighton marked the start of rumblings of discontent in the dressing room which ended in outright mutiny against Vilda earlier this year.

— Reuters



Djokovic eases past Fritz to join Alcaraz in Cincinnati



Carlos Alcaraz plays a shot against Hubert Hurkacz in third round play at Sobey's Stadium.
-USA TODAY Sports

CINCINNATI: Novak Djokovic crushed Taylor Fritz while Carlos Alcaraz had to push hard to get past Max Purcell on Friday as the top two seeds reached the semifinals at the ATP/WTA Cincinnati Open.

Tournament number two Djokovic showed no mercy against Fritz, hammering the top American 6-0, 6-4 to improve to 7-0 against him.

World number one Alcaraz rallied to hold off Australian qualifier Purcell 4-6, 6-3, 6-4. After pocketing the opening set against Fritz in a mere 21 minutes,

two-time tournament winner Djokovic was broken to start the second set as a backhand landed long.

The 23-time Grand Slam champion regained the break in the eighth game when Fritz drove a forehand into the net. Djokovic broke again two games later, securing the match on his first match point after just 62 minutes.

"I managed to get out of the blocks with a flawless start," the Serb star said. "I started the second set poorly, handing him the break. "But from 2-4 down I played four solid games, overall it was

a great performance. I've played three good matches here so far, every day I raise the bar a bit higher. "I'm feeling better on court. I hope the same trajectory can continue," added Djokovic, who next faces German Alexander Zverev.

Zverev, the 2021 Cincy champion, beat France's Adrian Mannarino 6-2, 6-3 to reach his first Masters semifinal since Rome last year -- before a horror ankle injury in Paris ended his 2022 campaign.

Alcaraz, meanwhile, was caught off-guard by 70th-ranked Purcell, dropping the first set in 44 minutes.



Djokovic celebrates the victory over Taylor during the Western and Southern Open
-USA TODAY Sports

Alcaraz steadied the ship to force a third, struggling through an exchange of service breaks before breaking for a 5-4 lead and serving out the victory.

The reigning Wimbledon champion, chasing a seventh title of the season, polished off the win in two and a quarter hours with an ace among his 29 winners.

"It was really tough and tricky today, he serves really well," Alcaraz said. "He played well at the net. I returned well, that was the key to the win."

Alcaraz booked a semifinal clash with Poland's Hubert Hurkacz, who needed seven match points to finally put away Australian Alexei Popyrin 6-1, 7-6 (10/8).

In the WTA draw, top-seeded Iga Swiatek proved to be a quick learner as she ousted Marketa Vondrousova 7-6 (7/3), 6-1 in a battle of Grand Slam champions.

Swiatek, the reigning US Open and French Open champion, said she applied the lessons from her first-set struggles in the second to sweep past Wimbledon

She had lost serve twice in the opening set as she struggled with Vondrousova's lefty game, but broke as the Czech served for the set and eventually won the tiebreaker.

Swiatek dominated the second set to claim the victory in 93 minutes.

"It's not easy to adjust to her spin," Swiatek said. "After the first set, I was determined to fight for every ball."

“I was more focused and I knew what worked,” she added. “I learned from the first set. I knew exactly how I should play.”

The Polish star will play for a place in the final against seventh-seeded American Coco Gauff -- who tossed a racquet in anger on the way to a 6-3, 6-2 victory over Italian qualifier Jasmine Paolini.

“Usually they say don’t throw your racquet but I won six games in a row,” Gauff said. “What can you do? At least no one got hurt.”

Second-seeded Aryna Sabalenka beat Ons Jabeur 7-5, 6-3 in 85 minutes.

Sabalenka had nine aces and broke Jabeur nine times as the Tunisian struggled with a foot injury in the second set.

Sabalenko lined up a French Open semifinal rematch against Czech Karolina Muchova, who advanced to the final four as compatriot Marie Bouzkova retired injured after losing all three games they played.

Australian Open champion Sabalenka will be out to turn the tables on Muchova, who saved a match point on the way to her upset win over the world number two in the semis at Roland Garros.

— AFP



DISCOVERY

A replica of a fossil of a new reptile, the Venetoraptor gassenae, printed in 3D, is presented by National Council of Scientific and Technical Investigations (CONICET). — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

Bollywood actor Salman Khan (L) and Indo-Canadian rapper Amritpal Singh Dhillon, aka. AP Dhillon, pose upon their arrival to attend the screening of Prime Video “AP Dhillon” First of a Kind documentary series in Mumbai. — AFP



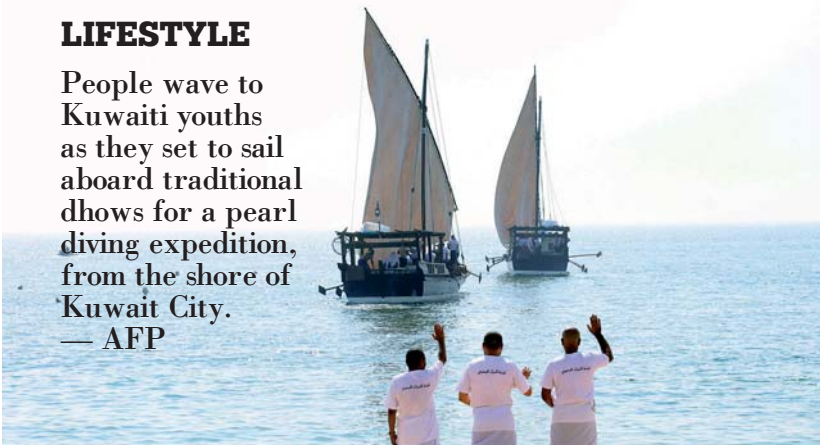
CULTURE

An afrocolombian woman gets her face painted at the Petronio Alvarez Pacific Music Festival in Cali, Colombia. — AFP



NATURE

A view of the sky during the Perseid meteor shower over the historical Phrygian Valley near Ihsaniye, in the Afyonkarahisar district. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

People wave to Kuwaiti youths as they set to sail aboard traditional dhows for a pearl diving expedition, from the shore of Kuwait City. — AFP

art & life

SUNDAY | AUGUST 20, 2023 | SAFAR 3, 1445 AH

OMAN OBSERVER f t i y u w www.omanobserver.om features@omanobserver.om



Wadi Mibam offers perfect escape from scorching heat

BY KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

While the mercury soars up to 47 degrees Celsius across Oman, a wadi not very far from the capital area, surrounded by lush greenery, has been luring people with an abundant, turquoise-coloured waterfall, inviting the visitors to take a dip in it and keep cool away from the hustle and bustle of the city.

Come to Wadi Mibam, a place that caters to everyone out there, whether you're an adventure lover, a naturalist, a hydrophile, or a travel bug — there is something for you in this wadi.

Located far inside the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, Wadi Mibam is more than 160 kilometres away from Muscat and is at the far end of Wadi Tiwi. One will need a four-wheel drive to get to the village, as the journey includes wading through tight, steep roads, date gardens, and rough terrain.

From the Sharqiyah Highway on the way to Sur, one should take the road to Tiwi, two kilometres after crossing Wadi Shab and the second bridge.

Driving for another ten kilometres is required to reach Mibam village from the village in Tiwi.



Over the next 30 minutes, you will be treated to a thrilling ride that offers a panoramic view of the wadi and the raw beauty of Oman's cliffs and wild nature.

"This location called Wadi Mibam is a present surprise for us," said Asif Shah, marketing personnel at Badr al Samaa Hospital who visited Mibam recently.

"We were astonished to see the beauty of Mibam, which is quite unknown to many people. However, it is exploring its full potential now with superfluous attractions," added Asif.

If you haven't been to Mibam yet, get ready to feast your eyes on a sea of green. Wandering around the old village where the wadi got its name, you will be treated to the simple lifestyle of the locals, who mostly rely on farming. From the parking road by Mibam Village, it would take a good 15 minutes to hike down to the first waterfall, a beautiful cascade that feeds the wadi with fresh water all year.

Moving further towards the cliff, there is a rope securely attached to the rocks, and you can use this contraption to guide you as you rappel down the side of the cliff to access the Wadi pools down below.

With a range of stunning waterfalls, a turquoise pool, and

green scenery, Wadi Mibam is one of the most beautiful wadis in Oman. Swimming and bathing in the cool natural pool water will be a blissful experience.

The temperature at Wadi Mibam can get intense, giving you an original taste of what the summer season is like from March to September. The water starts to get colder in the following months. It is almost impossible to swim in the winter. Also, try not to go immediately after heavy rainfall. The road from Wadi Tiwi to Mibam village will be very slippery and dangerous if you go just after a heavy shower.

This place has been pulling a steady stream of visitors like other wadis in Oman, and it gets even packed during holidays. One should avoid off-days if you want to enjoy the beauty on your own.

One can swim for about 80-100 metres near the Mibam waterfall. For those who love to go hiking or trekking through the narrow trail of the village, one can see large boulders and some tricky places on this journey. What makes it even more attractive is the greenery surrounding it.

People of Wadi Mibam are dependent on agriculture here and plenty of dates, palm, citrus, and fruit trees like bananas will be swaying with the wind welcoming you.



INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS

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Scent of luxury:
India's jasmine
infuses global
perfume

HEADY SCENTS fill the air as skilled pickers in India pluck white jasmine before the still fresh buds are rushed for processing into a valuable ingredient for global perfumes.

Jasmine only issues its powerful scent when it blooms at night, and pickers must select only the ones yet to open.

"We know which one to pick," said Malarkodi, who gave only one name, as she snapped her fingers carefully to pluck the buds, tucking into her hair a few flowers that had already bloomed.

"There is no use of these... but I like the smell," she said.

Jasmine's fragrant flowers have been used for millennia in India to honour the gods, and the scent is a key part of world-famous perfumes.

In the ancient city of Madurai in southern India, jasmine is

omnipresent — attracting buyers from some of the world's most recognisable perfumes, including J'adore by Dior and Mon Guerlain by Guerlain.

"It is one of the most expensive oils in the world," said Raja Palaniswamy, a director of Jasmine Concrete, which squeezes vast quantities of jasmine to create a few precious drops of delicious-smelling essence.

The women picking the buds earn around \$150 a day per day for about four to five kilogrammes — with each kilogramme made up of around 4,000 buds.

Once picked, the jasmine is rushed to market, selling for anything between 200 and 2,000 rupees (\$2.40-\$24) a kilogramme on special days.

EXPRESSION OF LOVE

The jasmine of Madurai, an

Asian variety with the scientific name *Jasminum sambac*, was given a "geographical indication" tag from the World Intellectual Property Organization in 2013, which noted its "deep fragrance".

"It is lush, it is rich, it is vibrant," said Thierry Wasser, perfumer and "nose" at French beauty house Guerlain, saying while visiting the jasmine operators.

The jasmine in Madurai has a "smoothness... and something floral which is immutable," Wasser added. Wasser sources the jasmine oil he uses from Palaniswamy's company.

As well as Guerlain, Palaniswamy said his company sells jasmine oil to companies including Bulgari, Dior and Lush.

In Madurai, the bright, white flower can be found in the homes of the city's residents, as strings

fastened by women to their hair — and in the sprawling 14th-century complex of the Hindu goddess Meenakshi, considered the guardian of the city.

Meenakshi is depicted holding a parrot, a bird associated with love.

Every night, people surround a shrine of the goddess with fragrant jasmine flowers as she retires with her husband Shiva in a grand, symbolic ceremony.

"When you understand that the purpose of this flower is the celebration of love and brotherhood and family and friendship; when you smell it, it takes another dimension," Wasser said.

"And to me this flower is the expression of love. Period."

REAL FRAGRANCE

The process to extract the oil requires long hours of labour.



The women who pluck the jasmine — be it for their deity, weddings, funerals or expensive perfumes — have no time to romance its appeal.

In a jasmine field on the outskirts of the ancient city, women tenderly move the branches of the bush, looking for the perfect bud. The processing factory runs around the clock in harvest season, with workers raking out fresh-picked flowers and waiting for the oblong-shaped buds to bloom.

"The minute it starts blooming, it starts emitting its fragrance," Palaniswamy said.

Late in the night, as the jasmine's sweet scent fills the air, workers collect the blooms and load them into extractors.

The freshly picked jasmine is immersed in a solvent to absorb the fragrance molecules to give a

waxy extract called concrete.

The concrete is further processed with alcohol to remove the waxes carefully, which then results in a potent absolute. This absolute becomes the ingredient in perfumes.

Around 700 kilogrammes of fresh jasmine is reduced to just one kilogramme of oil, selling for around \$4,200, Palaniswamy said.

But Amsavalli Karuppuswamy, who runs a stall outside the flower market where she threads flowers into garlands, said the fresh jasmine will always outweigh any oil.

"I will continue to do this job till I die... women like jasmine, so that is why we are doing this," she said.

"The scents are not worth as much as the original jasmine flowers — nothing can match the real fragrance of the jasmine."

— AFP

LIFESTYLE

Seaside
screen brings
magic of
movies to
Gaza years
after cinemas
closed

WITH CAR TYRES, rocks and mounds of sand as seats, Palestinians of all ages have been enjoying a rare trip to the movies at a big-screen event on the Gaza beachfront.

The open-air show - with a playlist including the animated children's comedy "Ferdinand" - was for many viewers a first experience of a projected film since the impoverished enclave's last cinema closed more than three decades ago. Hosted by "The Sea is Ours" cafe, the screenings were designed



to promote issues of culture and history approved by the conservative Islamist Hamas government.

They left some in the audience

longing for more.

"I hope one day there will be a cinema, so I can go to the cinema and eat popcorn," said 13-year-old

Mohammad Zidan as other children lolled in the sand, giggling at the cartoon.

Cinema once flourished in Gaza,



with Palestinians flocking to see Arab, Western and Asian films, but the movie houses were torched in the First Intifada in 1987 and then burned down again in 1996 during a wave of internal violence.

The last cinema, long abandoned, is now a haven for bats.

While Gazans have been able to go to movie screenings which are held from time to time at theatres and other venues, such a full bill of films, being shown over several weeks at the venue, is a rare treat.

"We can get movies on mobile phones, but this is something new and is nice," said 15-year-old Hadeel Hejji.

Ali Mhana, 35, the cafe owner and local playwright, said he had never been to a regular cinema.

"At the sea, you don't need to look for an audience, the sea has its own. People are here all the time, including children, who get attracted by the sound and image and come to watch the movies," Mhana said.

— Reuters



OIA leads sovereign wealth funds returns in 2022

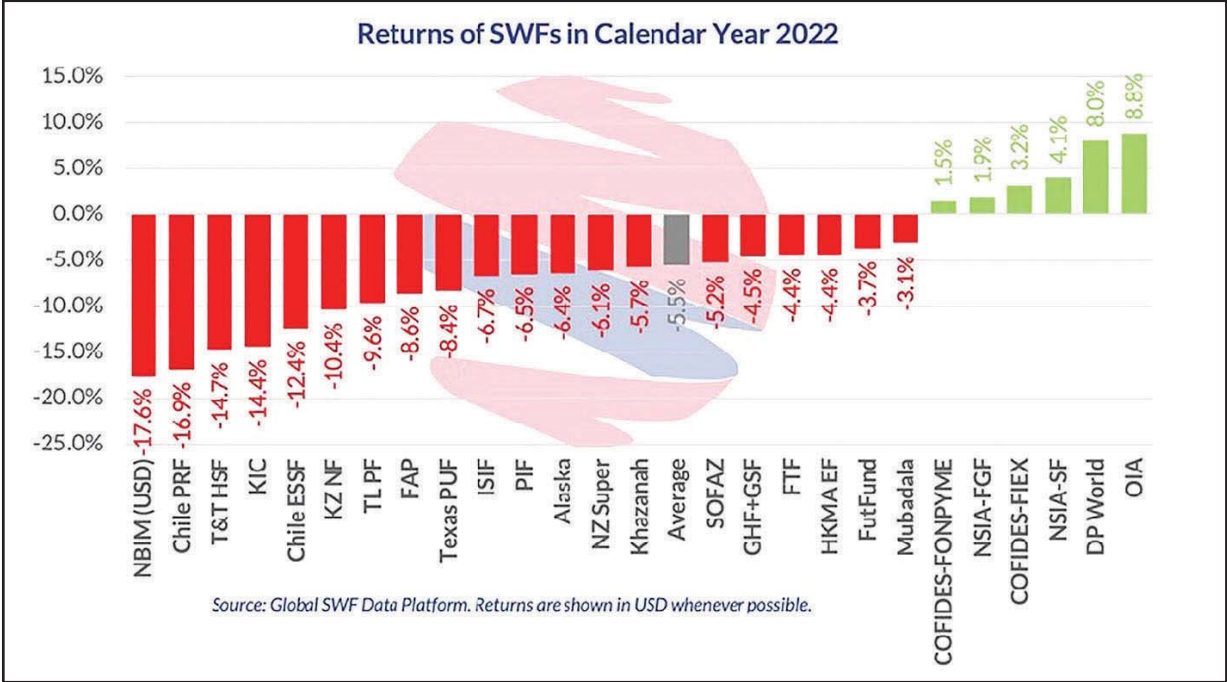
JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, AUG 19

In the highly competitive world of sovereign wealth funds (SWFs), the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) has emerged as the top performer in 2022, reporting a remarkable return of 8.8 per cent on its investments.

This outstanding achievement has been highlighted in the recently published Global SWF Report, which provides comprehensive insights into the performance of SWFs worldwide.

The Global SWF Report, a leading industry publication, has become an influential benchmark for evaluating the success and efficiency of SWFs. In its latest edition, the report analysed the performance of various SWFs, including DP World, Mubadala, and the Public Investment Fund (PIF) of the neighbouring countries.

Notably, the report excluded the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority (ADIA), China Investment Corporation (CIC), National Social Security Fund (NSSF), and Samruk Kazyna from its analysis.



THE ROBUST PERFORMANCE OF THE OIA CAN BE ATTRIBUTED TO ITS DIVERSIFIED INVESTMENT PORTFOLIO, WHICH SPANS VARIOUS ASSET CLASSES AND SECTORS GLOBALLY. THE FUND'S PRUDENT INVESTMENT STRATEGY, COMBINED WITH ITS ABILITY TO IDENTIFY AND CAPITALISE ON EMERGING MARKET TRENDS, HAS PLAYED A PIVOTAL ROLE IN DELIVERING IMPRESSIVE RETURNS.

The Oman Investment Authority's exceptional 8.8 per cent returns in 2022 surprised many industry experts and solidified its position as a leading player in the global investment landscape.

This accomplishment is a

testament to the OIA's investment strategy and prudent decision-making, which have allowed it to navigate through challenging market conditions successfully.

The OIA, the country's sovereign wealth fund responsible

for managing and diversifying the Sultanate of Oman's vast wealth, achieved this outstanding performance against a backdrop of global economic challenges and market volatility.

This accomplishment highlights

the expertise and strategic decision-making abilities of the OIA's investment team.

The robust performance of the OIA can be attributed to its diversified investment portfolio, which spans various asset classes and sectors globally. The fund's prudent investment strategy, combined with its ability to identify and capitalise on emerging market trends, has played a pivotal role in delivering impressive returns.

Earlier this month, OIA announced a substantial increase in the size of its assets, reaching approximately RO 18 billion, following a remarkable 8.8 per cent return on investments in 2022. This achievement underscores OIA's effective investment strategies and prudent decision-making, despite the challenging global economic landscape.

In addition to its financial accomplishments, OIA has remained committed to supporting the state's general budget. Since 2016 and up until the end of 2022, the Authority has contributed dividends amounting to RO 5.6 billion.

This financial support has

played a crucial role in meeting the government's fiscal requirements and promoting economic stability.

OIA's dedication to promoting job opportunities for Omani nationals has also been commendable. Over the past year, the authority and its affiliated companies created more than 800 job opportunities for Omanis. This initiative aligns with the government's vision of fostering sustainable economic growth and reducing unemployment rates by prioritising the employment of its citizens.

Furthermore, OIA has actively supported small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) by awarding tenders and contracts worth approximately RO 190 million.

These collaborations with SMEs not only stimulate entrepreneurship and innovation but also contribute to the diversification and development of the national economy. OIA's ongoing efforts to empower and uplift SMEs reflect its pivotal role in driving economic growth and fostering a vibrant business ecosystem.

Oman's real estate general index up by 6.2 per cent



MUSCAT: Residential land prices led the general index of real estate prices in Oman, registering an increase of 6.2 per cent in the second quarter of this year, at a value of RO 182.4 million, according to the residential real estate price index report issued by the National Center for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The residential land price index recorded a growth of 14.8 per cent, to a value of RO 128.6 million, while the apartment price index decreased by 15.2 per cent, to a value of RO 19.2 million. The villa price index also decreased by 6.2 per cent, to RO 27.6 million, and other homes by 12.3 per cent, recording a value of RO 7 million.

On the other hand, the general index for residential real estate prices recorded an increase of 3.2 per cent compared to the first quarter of this year. Residential land prices increased by 3.9 per cent, apartment prices increased by 1.7 per cent, villas increased by 1.6 per cent, and other homes increased by 1.1 per cent.

The statistics showed that the number of transactions for selling residential real estate at the end of the second quarter of 2023 decreased by 6.6 per cent compared to the same quarter of last year.

Residential lands accounted for 87.6 per cent of real estate sales transactions, compared to 5.2 per cent for apartments, 4.1 per cent for villas, and 3.1 per cent for other homes. — ONA

Oman's next big 1000 MW solar project planned for launch in 2029

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUG 19

Nama Power & Water Procurement Company (Nama PWP), the sole buyer of power and water output in the Sultanate of Oman, has identified for procurement a new large-scale solar PV based Independent Power Project (IPP) with a launch date pencilled in for 2029.

The proposed mega-scale venture, provisionally labelled 'Solar PV IPPs 2029', will boast an aggregate capacity of 1000 MW comprising of two IPPs of 500 MW apiece.

The procurement strategy for the project will mirror the approach applied by PWP in the award recently of the Manah I & II Solar PV IPPs to two different consortiums each securing a 500 MW capacity share for simultaneous implementation at a site in the Wilayat of Manah.

"This project is a single procurement process, in which there will be separate single awards for each site, to different developers.

Each project will have contracted maximum offtake capacity of around 500 MW using PV technology," PWP stated in its newly published 7-Year Statement covering the electricity demand outlook for the 2023-2029 timeframe.

Significantly, 'Solar PV IPPs 2029' will be the sixth utility-scale solar PV project slated for implementation in Oman as part of PWP's strategy to secure 30 per cent of the country's power needs from renewables by 2030.

Preceding its procurement and implementation is 'MIS Solar IPP 2027' – a 500 MW utility-scale



solar PV provisionally planned for development at a site within Al Wusta Governorate. Procurement activities related to this project – the fifth solar PV scheme in PWP's renewable energy programme – will likely commence only in 2025, with commercial launch targeted during 2027.

The fourth in the series is 'Ibri III Solar IPP', a 500 MW scheme planned for development alongside Ibri II Solar IPP, which came into operation early in 2021. The latter – also a 500 MW project – is Oman's first utility-scale solar PV scheme.

Rounding off the series are Manah I and Manah II Solar PV IPPs, which are currently under implementation at adjoining sites in Manah. Both schemes are scheduled for commercial

launch in Q1 2025 and Q2 2025 respectively.

By 2029, generation capacity based on solar PV technology is projected to total around 3,500 MW. This capacity will be supplemented by an estimated 800 MW of wind-based generation – the aggregate of as many as five new wind farm projects planned in the governorates of Al Sharqiyah South, Al Wusta and Dhofar.

Wind IPPs envisioned for procurement in the coming years include:

- Duqm Wind IPP: A 200-300 MW project planned in Duqm for launch in Q3 2026.

- JBB Wind IPP: A 100 MW project to be developed in Jaalan Bani Bu Ali in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate and slated for launch in Q3 2026.

- Dhofar II Wind IPP: A 100 MW plant to be built at Harweel, close to Dhofar I Wind IPP launched in 2019.

- Ras Madrakah Wind IPP: A 200 – 300 MW scheme to be established about 60 km from Duqm City with commercial operation set for 2027.

- Wind IPP 2029: A 200 MW scheme to be established in an area served by the Main Interconnected System (MIS) and planned for launch in 2029.

Taken together, Oman's solar and wind based generation capacity is projected to rise to around 4,300 MW by 2029, with a further boost of around 140 MW coming from a proposed Waste to Energy (WTE) project due to come into operation at Barka in 2028.

Deposits with commercial banks in Oman reach RO 22.2 bn

MUSCAT: The total deposits with conventional commercial banks in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 3.1 per cent to reach RO 22.2 billion by the end of June 2023.

Government deposits with commercial banks increased by 7.7 per cent to about RO 5.4 billion. As for deposits of public sector institutions, it increased by 1.6 per cent to about RO 1.6 billion during the same period.

As for private sector deposits, it increased by 2.1 per cent to reach RO 14.8 billion in June 2023, constituting 66.4 per cent of total deposits with conventional commercial banks.

The monthly bulletin of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) indicated that the total credit balance granted by conventional commercial banks recorded an increase of 5.1 per cent by the end of June 2023, while credit extended to the private sector increased by 5.4 per cent to reach RO 20.2 billion.

The total investment of traditional commercial banks in securities decreased by 5.9 per cent, to about RO 4.6 billion at the end of June 2023, while investment in government development bonds decreased by 5.1 per cent compared to the same period in 2022, to reach RO 2.1 billion.

As for their investments in securities, foreign finance increased by 90.8 per cent to reach RO 1.3 billion. — ONA

Tejarah Talks: Web 3.0 — opportunity unchained

MUSCAT: Today, we dive into the world of Web 3.0 with Maymuna al Adawi, organiser of Tejarah Talks. She talks blockchain, NFTs, cryptocurrency, the metaverse and edge computing, explaining their significance for local businesses. Join us as we explore this new digital frontier and discover the transformative opportunities it offers.

Q: First off, could you tell us a little about why Tejarah Talks is hosting the Web 3.0: Opportunity Unchained session on September 13?

A: Absolutely. At its core, September's Tejarah Talks is about making Web 3.0 accessible. In fact, as technology advances, we've noticed a widening gap between what's possible and what's known, especially for smaller companies. We aim to close that gap. The September 13 session will, I hope, connect local experts and businesses, demystifying Web 3.0. It's all about empowerment and ensuring our business community is primed for the future.

Q: Who's on the September 13

panel?

A: We've a fantastic line-up. Moderated by Jamal al Asmi, Executive Producer, RealityCG, our panellists are Ghada al Kharusi, Manager, Innovation Department, Central Bank of Oman; Azzan al Kindi, CEO and Co-founder, Rihla Data Migration & Services; Thuraya al Harthy, Acting Director, Government Digital Services Unified Portal, Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; and Saud al Zakwani, Head, Digital Transformation, Petroleum Development Oman. And it's important to mention we couldn't be doing any of this without the support of our sponsors Jindal Shadeed, Sustainable City, Yiti, Nortal, Omantel and OmanFM.

Q: We hear a lot about Web 3.0, but what's it really about? And what's in it for smaller Omani businesses?

A: Web 3.0 is a shift from centralised to decentralised. While Web 2.0 was social and interactive, Web 3.0 hands power back to users through blockchain



Jamal al Asmi, Executive Producer, RealityCG - Moderator of the September 13 session

tech. Here's the thing, Web 3.0 has levelled the playing field. Folk get more control over their data, direct transactions without middlemen and freedom from tech giants. It's all about giving businesses back their autonomy in the digital realm.

Q: And the role of blockchain? How does it reshape business dynamics?

A: Imagine a transparent, ultra-secure digital ledger that everyone can trust but no one

controls. That's blockchain. For businesses, especially small ones, it's transformative. You can verify product origins, simplify and secure transactions and build a transparent relationship with customers. It's like having a trust seal on every aspect of your business.

Q: Cryptocurrencies have been all the rage. How can small businesses ride this wave?

A: Beyond the hype, and there's been a lot, cryptocurrencies are a tool — and a powerful one. For example, they eliminate international transactional barriers and hefty bank fees. By accepting digital currencies, companies can appeal to a tech-savvy and younger demographic, setting themselves apart as forward-thinking and innovative.

And as the financial ecosystem evolves, there's potential for small businesses to access decentralised finance platforms, offering more flexible borrowing, lending and investment opportunities.

Q: NFTs are popular too. How can the average small business

leverage them?

A: In simple terms NFTs are digital authenticity tokens. For small businesses, they're a way to create a unique digital stamp, be it for a product, service, or even branding. If you will, it's a new form of IP — like having a unique, undeniable signature on the digital canvas.

For retail businesses, NFTs can be used as limited edition digital collectibles, enhancing brand value and customer loyalty. Think of them as modern-day trading cards or stamps, but with a digital twist.

On a more practical level, small businesses can use NFTs for digital licenses, event tickets, or even memberships, ensuring both transferability and verification.

Q: The metaverse — is it just a fantasy or a real opportunity for small businesses?

A: The metaverse presents an exciting opportunity for Oman's small business community. Much like how the Internet opened global marketplaces, the metaverse takes it a step further,

offering immersive experiences and deeper customer engagement.

Small Omani businesses can now operate virtual storefronts, host 3D product demos, or even organise interactive events — all without the constraints of physical space.

And as global boundaries blur in the metaverse, it's a place for even the smallest brands to gain global recognition. In essence, it's the next frontier in digital entrepreneurship, levelling the playing field in new and exciting ways.

Q: Any final thoughts for small Omani businesses eyeing the opportunities of Web 3.0?

A: Embrace change, never stop learning. Web 3.0 isn't just an upgrade it's a paradigm shift. For Oman's small businesses, it's an invitation to innovate. Buy the ticket and take that ride. And of course we look forward to welcoming everyone who's interested in this exciting topic to Tejarah Talks, 7:30pm Wednesday, September 13 at Omantel's Head Office in Airport Heights.

Redtag announces fun-filled back-to-school extravaganza in Oman

MUSCAT: Redtag, the Middle East's leading value-fashion and homeware brand, has announced a fun-filled extravaganza in Oman to celebrate and embrace going back to school for the new academic year. The free-entry event includes magic shows, face painting for kids, goodie bags and mascots, along with a limited-period 40% discount on the specialised 'Back to School' collection launched in July.

Parents and children can attend the Back-to-School (BTS) event in Oman on August 24 between 7:00-10:00 pm at the Redtag outlet on Al Khuwair Street, Muscat.

The events have been scheduled strategically to maximise access to shoppers of all age groups, noted Shehbaz Shaikh, Chief Retail Officer, Redtag. "Going back to school has always been a bittersweet feeling, with



an uneven mixture of curiosity, a desire for newness, and despair over concluding holidays.

By launching fun apparel and accessories, Redtag aspires to beat those blues and add to the reasons to go back to school with joy. As the summer break enters its final leg, we wanted to sweeten the pot further. That idea has resulted in an attractive discount on the BTS collection and our biggest-ever

extravaganza," Shehbaz added.

Redtag launched purpose-designed apparel, character-wear, and accessories in its latest BTS collection. In line with its "Let's Play" theme, the Back to School ensemble included wide-ranging character-wear with impressions of Barbie, Batman, Spider-Man, CoComelon, Sonic the Hedgehog, and more on tees, shirts, and co-ord sets for boys and girls.

For seniors, Redtag embraced "quiet fashion", designing neutral graphics and prints from popular shows such as Friends. On the accessories front, the BTS collection was dominated by eye-catching character backpacks, especially trolleys.

The backpack bundles with matching lunch boxes, pouches, lunch bags, and water bottles, in sets of three, four and five, struck a chord with BTS shoppers.

OHEC 2023: Pioneering healthcare advancements for holistic wellbeing

MUSCAT: In alignment with the Oman Vision 2040 strategy that identifies the healthcare sector as a pivotal industry for progression, the Oman Health Exhibition and Conference (OHEC) is all set to, once again, drive advancements, foster collaboration, and catalyse innovation within the sector.

Revered as the Sultanate of Oman's leading international event dedicated to the healthcare and medical industry, OHEC is scheduled to take place on September 18-20, 2023 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre in Hall Number 3.

Organised by CONNECT (Oman Exhibitions Organizing Company LLC) and conducted in strategic partnership with Oman's esteemed Ministry of Health (MoH), the event is supported by the Directorate General of Pharmaceutical Affairs and



Drug Control (PADC), the Directorate General of Quality Assurance Center (DGQAC) and the Directorate of Private Health Establishment.

Co-located at the exhibition will be the Oman Health Conference that is organised

under the patronage of the MoH and is accredited by CPD certification.

While the exhibition timings extend from 9:00 am to 8:00 pm, the conference will follow a predefined agenda from 9:00 am to 5 pm on all three days.

Make journeys memorable with the Lexus NX

MUSCAT: The Lexus NX makes a fine mark with its sleek and distinctive design that makes it stand out instantly. Adding to this dynamic design is the NX's hallmark spindle grille. The front design features 3-eye LED headlights incorporating Lexus' first slim Adaptive High-beam System (AHS).

In contrast, the L-shaped daytime running lights positioned above the headlights have a fade-in function when the driver activates the indicators. On the tailgate, the Lexus emblem has been replaced with the 'Lexus' name to create a modern, simple look that further strengthens the vehicle's visual identity.

The NX also features Lexus' Tazuna concept for the driver's cockpit. Tazuna focuses on delivering direct, intuitive control of the vehicle by following the principle of 'hands on the wheel, eyes on the road.'

For comfortable and fun



journeys, the NX's interior includes a new 14-inch touchscreen multimedia system — a Lexus first — that is compatible with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto, a 7-inch colour multi-information display (MID), a wireless charging system for smartphones, and a Climate Concierge to ensure the cabin temperature is precisely adjusted to suit each occupant.

The NX also offers SmartAccess

with a push-button start, a 10-speaker premium surround sound system, a panoramic roof with movable outer sliding glass for the front section, and an extended rear section to provide more light for rear-seat passengers.

Additionally, the 2022 Lexus NX adds the convenience of a hands-free electrically powered backdoor, which is activated via a foot-operated system

that can be used when the user's hands or arms are full. The NX is equipped with two powertrain options.

A newly developed inline 4-cylinder, 2.4L turbocharged engine that produces 275 hp and 430 nm of torque and is mated to a new 8-speed Direct-Shift automatic transmission (8AT).

Meanwhile, the new hybrid-electric system combines two

power sources consisting of a 2.5-litre petrol engine and two electric motors producing 240 hp. The hybrid-electric system is also mated to a Direct Shift Continuously Variable Transmission (CVT). As with any Lexus vehicle, safety is a top priority for the Lexus NX.

Drivers can enjoy complete peace of mind, thanks to the Lexus Safety System+, which is an advanced safety and driver assistance system that includes a Pre-Collision System (PCS) with new features and expanded detection range, Automatic Emergency Braking (AEB), Emergency Steering Assist (ESA), and Daytime Pedestrian Detection (DPD).

The system also includes all-speed range Dynamic Radar Cruise Control (DRCC) with two new features, namely the Inter-linked Control that makes highway overtaking safer and smoother by providing an initial

increase in acceleration when the driver has engaged the turn signal, and the Curve Speed Reduction (CSR) that suppresses vehicle speed when entering a bend and offers additional acceleration upon exiting the bend.

Drivers also benefit from Lane Tracing Alert (LTA), Lane Departure Alert (LDA), Advanced Driver Assistance (ADAS), and Adaptive High-beam System (AHB). In another world-first, the new Safe Exit Assist (SEA) feature uses the Lexus-first e-latch system combined with a Blind Spot Monitor (BSM) to help prevent accidents.

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HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

MUSCAT: Before His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries Dr. Saad bin Ahmad al Habsi (pictured), Chairman of the Supreme Court Sayyid Khalifa bin Ahmad al Habsi (pictured), and his Abdullatif bin Issa al Harthy, took the oath of office at Al Barakah Palace on Thursday. SEE ALSO P2

UN HAILS OMAN'S SUPPORT FOR PEACE IN YEMEN

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

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

SAMUEL KUTTY
MUSCAT: The frequent orders and fervent appeals by the authorities to follow social distancing guidelines are failing on deaf ears. A drive around the downtown Muscat and its adjoining areas reveals how recklessly people crowd at different corners and walk shoulder-to-shoulder. While most people across the country are following the guidelines that health authorities say are necessary to keep the coronavirus from spreading, many are not. "In these critical moments of uncertainty with both physical and mental strain, we should discipline ourselves. enough times that social distancing is the best way to slow the spread of COVID-19," while expressing his appreciation for the Sultanate's efforts, he said. "The attitude of some people is not acceptance that they paved the way for the spread of the infection. Even if we do not have the authority to lay charges on the offenders, at least we can ensure them away," he told the Observer. TURN TO P4

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



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



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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:

Beyond the internal considerations, crypto businesses must also factor in market dynamics to effectively manage risks. In the KPMG's Technology Risk Insights there are 4 main areas of concern listed:

Public network implications:

The dynamics of the crypto market are intricately intertwined with the underlying public networks that power these digital assets.

Changes in liquidity, transaction fees, and on-chain events can exert significant influence over the valuation and trading patterns of various cryptocurrencies. As market participants strive to optimise their trading strategies, the ability to monitor network activity emerges as a pivotal factor. By closely observing network metrics and trends, traders and businesses can make informed decisions, anticipate market shifts, and strategically position themselves to leverage favourable conditions.

Thus, the monitoring of public network implications transcends being merely important; it evolves into a fundamental practice for participants seeking to harness the volatile yet promising realm of crypto trading.

Counterparty risk:

Within the intricate ecosystem of crypto trading, the concept of counterparty risk assumes paramount importance. This risk encapsulates vulnerabilities emanating from trading infrastructure and the custody of private keys.

To ensure the integrity of transactions and the security of assets, the conventional practice of diversification is heightened.

Alongside this, due diligence emerges as an essential checkpoint. Through rigorous examination and evaluation of counterparties, trading partners, and platforms, market participants can mitigate the risks associated with faulty infrastructure or compromised security.

Moreover, the adoption of

multi-signature transaction requirements adds an extra layer of protection, requiring multiple cryptographic signatures for transaction approval. By diligently addressing counterparty risk, traders and businesses establish a fortified foundation that safeguards their involvement in the dynamic crypto landscape.

Asset volatility:

Volatility stands as an inherent characteristic of crypto assets, presenting both opportunities and challenges for market participants. The value of cryptocurrencies can experience rapid fluctuations triggered by a multitude of factors, including external events, on-chain developments, and the whims of noise traders.

By maintaining a skilled team equipped with comprehensive market insights, trading strategies can be adjusted swiftly in response to unexpected fluctuations, minimising potential losses and capitalising on favourable market movements.

Additionally, the strategic deployment of algorithmic trading plays a crucial role in managing asset volatility. Automation algorithms are programmed to execute trades based on predefined criteria, ensuring swift responses to market changes and reducing the impact of emotional decision-making.

In the realm of crypto, the capacity to manage and exploit asset volatility becomes an indispensable skill for those aiming to thrive in this dynamic environment.

Global nature of crypto:

The decentralised and borderless nature of cryptocurrencies results in a 24/7 global market that operates without interruption. This constant activity presents both opportunities and challenges for market participants.

To effectively maximise gains and manage risks, market players must allocate sufficient resources to sustain operations around the clock.

This not only encompasses human resources but also technological infrastructure capable of handling the demands of continuous trading and market monitoring.

The global reach of cryptocurrencies necessitates thorough jurisdictional due diligence.

Regulatory climates can vary significantly from one country to another, and understanding these nuances is crucial for compliant and risk-mitigated trading activities.

Market participants must meticulously assess regulatory frameworks, compliance obligations, and potential country-specific risks to establish a resilient presence in the global crypto market.

Broad money supply in Oman tops RO 21.4 billion

MUSCAT: The money supply in Oman its broad sense grew by 2.8 per cent year-on-year, to reach RO 21.4 billion by the end of June 2023, while cash in its narrow sense decreased by 4.8 per cent.

The rise in cash in a broad sense was attributed to the increase in quasi-money by 5.9 per cent, which consists of the sum of savings deposits, term deposits in Omani rials and certificates of deposit issued by banks, in addition to margin accounts and all deposits in foreign currency with the banking sector.

Cash with the public increased during the same period by 2.5 per cent, while demand deposits decreased by 6.9 per cent.

With regard to the interest rate structure of conventional commercial banks, the weighted average interest rate on deposits in Omani rial increased from



1.870 per cent in June 2022 to 2.313 per cent in June 2023, while the weighted average interest rate on loans in Omani rials decreased from 5.502 per cent to 5.434 per cent during the same period in 2022.

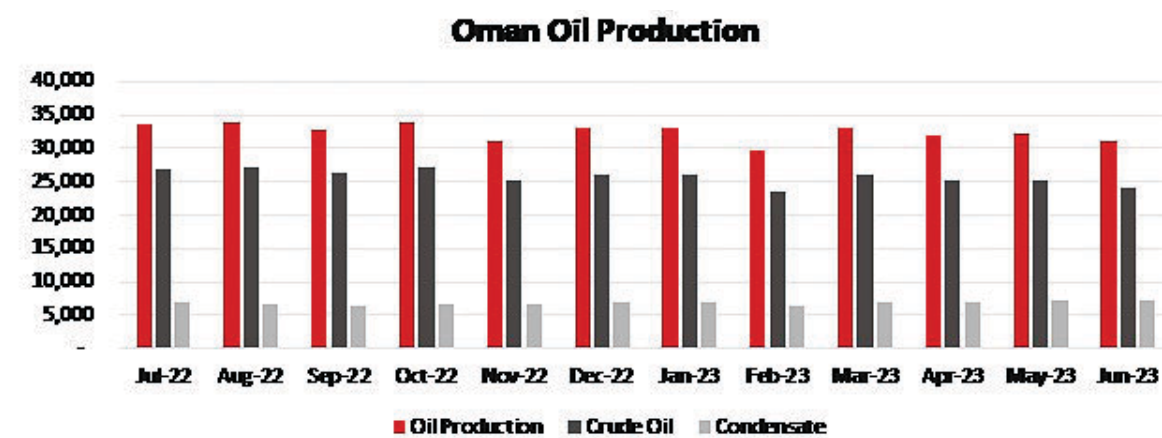
As for the average interest rates in the inter-bank lending market for one night, it recorded an increase of 5.350 per cent in June 2023, compared to 1.450 per cent in June 2022.

This came as a result of the

increase in the weighted average interest rate on repurchases to 5.750 per cent compared to 1.875 per cent during the same period last year, in line with the policies of the US Federal Reserve.

— ONA

MSX 30 Index closes week higher by 28 points



Source: NCSI

MUSCAT: The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) 30 Index closed last week at 4785.26 points, down by 28.05 points and 0.59% high from the previous trading session, which stood at 4757.21 points.

The MSX Shariah Index closed higher by 0.05% while the Financial Index also closed higher by 0.35%. The Services Index, however, closed down at 0.8%. The Industrial Index also decreased by 1.8%

HSBC Oman announced that 172 shareholders of HSBC Oman have elected to receive cash consideration.

The Cash Option Shareholders represent 96% of the total shareholding of HSBC Oman as of the record date of August 3, 2023 since the Cash Option Shareholders represent more than 70% of the total shareholding of HSBC Oman as of the Record Date, in accordance with the terms and conditions of the Merger approved by the Extraordinary General Meetings of HSBC Oman and Sohar International, each Cash Option Shareholder will receive 73% of their consideration in cash in the ratio of RO 0.177 per eligible HSBC Oman share.

Their remaining consideration will be issued as a whole number of shares of Sohar International calculated in the ratio of 1.467 Sohar International shares for every remaining 1 HSBC Oman share plus a pro-rata amount for any remaining fraction of an HSBC Oman share (rounded down to the nearest share).

HSBC Oman shareholders

THE AVERAGE PRICE OF OMANI CRUDE OIL DECREASED BY 19 % IN JUNE 2023, TO REACH \$83 PER BARREL, COMPARED TO \$102 PER BARREL IN JUNE 2022. AT THE SAME TIME, THE AVERAGE DAILY OIL PRODUCTION OF THE SULTANATE OF OMAN DECREASED BY 3% IN JUNE, COMPARED TO THE SAME PERIOD IN 2022.

who did not elect or were not eligible to receive cash consideration will be issued a whole number of shares of Sohar International calculated in the ratio of 1.467 Sohar International shares for every 1 HSBC Oman share (rounded down to the nearest share).

Oman's production of crude oil and condensate oil decreased by 3% YoY to reach 31,205 million barrels in June '23 compared to June '22, which amounted to 32,091 million barrels, according to NCSI data.

Crude oil production alone decreased by 6 %, while oil condensate production increased by 10 % in June 2023 compared to the same period in 2022.

The average price of Omani crude oil decreased by 19 % in June '23, to reach \$83 per barrel, compared to \$102 per barrel in June '22. At the same time, the average daily oil production of the Sultanate of Oman decreased by 3% in June, compared to the same period in 2022.

The State's General Budget registered a surplus of RO 656 million by the end of the first half

of 2023, compared to a surplus of RO 784 million achieved over the same period in 2022. According to the Fiscal Performance Bulletin issued by the Ministry of Finance, public revenue of the State Budget at the end of the first half of 2023 amounted to RO 6,342 million, down by 6% compared to RO 6,725 million registered over the same period in 2022.

At the end of the first half of 2023, net oil revenue amounted to RO 3,257 million, up by 2% when compared to RO 3,187 million registered over the same period in 2022.

The average oil prices amounted to \$83 per barrel while average oil production reached 1,061,000 barrels per day.

Galfar Engineering & Contracting Company, the largest contracting and construction firm in Oman, announced that its project pipeline grew to RO 644 million by the end of June 2023, supported by major project awards worth RO 323 million during the first half of this year.

The company's financial position continued to be positive, supported by a robust order backlog with stable operating profit, Galfar said in its financial report submitted to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

"The parent company continues to sustain a positive margin due to various initiatives taken by the company as part of its turnaround strategy to reorganise and improve the projects' performance and implement stringent cost controls," Galfar said. (Courtesy: U-Capital)



SMEDA launches 7th edition of 'Inspiration and Success' mentoring programme

MUSCAT: The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority (SMEDA) announced the launch of the mentoring programme in its seventh edition, 'Inspiration and Success', with the participation of 50 owners of small and medium enterprises and startups.

The authority stated that the mentoring programme is a fundamental pillar of the mentoring programmes provided by the authority to entrepreneurs and owners of small and medium enterprises and startups to enable them and develop their managerial, strategic and leadership skills through seven training seminars, in addition to spreading the culture of entrepreneurship in the Sultanate of Oman.

The authority indicated that each business owner will be allocated a mentor from business management experts for a full year according to a clear map based on the business model of the enterprise and the project, and graduates will be awarded a certificate in managing small and medium enterprises from the Royal Society of Management accredited in the United Kingdom.

The mentoring programme targets two categories of entrepreneurs: small and medium enterprises and startups, and it also targets the mentors category in which the programme is looking for experienced businessmen to support small and medium enterprises. — ONA