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RENEWABLE ENERGY
BEING EXPLORED FOR
OMAN'S MUSANDAM



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TAEKWONDO
CHAMPS
FLY HIGH



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UGANDA'S KIPLANGAT
WINS MEN'S WORLD
MARATHON TITLE





MUSCAT

DOCUMENTARY
WINS TV AWARD

Oman TV's 'Bawabat Al Jumaa' (Friday Gate) won the Best Documentary Award in joint Arab-European TV production programme titled Between the Banks. The film, authored by director Abeer bint Nasser al Hajriyah, topped the productions of 13 Arab and European TV organisations. The documentary saw the participation of cameraman Mus'ab al Rawahi, assistant director Asaad al Busaidy, aerial photographer Mohammed al Hadhrami and editor Alya al Braiki. Abeer said that the film focused on events at Souq Nizwa on a Friday. **DETAILS ON P3**

OMAN, KOREA MOU
ON GREEN ENERGY

The Sultanate of Oman on Sunday signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with the Republic of Korea in the field of green energy transition. Oman was represented by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, while Korea was represented by the Ministry of Environment. The MoU, signed in Muscat, reflects the advanced status of bilateral relations and the two countries' keenness to consolidate cooperation in green transition. The MoU was signed by Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, and Han Hwa-Jin, Minister of Environment in Korea. **DETAILS ON P13**

Oman took giant strides in streamlining investment climate

NEW DELHI: The Sultanate of Oman, under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan, has made many achievements in various areas of investment, logistics and digital transformation. Oman also took giant strides in streamlining the investment climate by upgrading the legislative system and infrastructure projects.

This was stated by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, as he led the Oman's delegation at the G20 Trade and Investment Ministers' meetings, which took place in Jaipur, India.

Speaking on the occasion, Al Yousef said that the outcome of the meetings would lead

to achieving clear benefits for Omani companies as they enter and expand their operations in global markets.

The meetings discussed issues related to trade and investment, most importantly means of supporting multilateral trade for global growth and prosperity, digitising trade (digital transformation in government services), building comprehensive and flexible trade, benefiting from technology to achieve global growth, managing supply chains, supporting small and medium enterprises and increasing their competitiveness in global trade.

During the meeting, Al Yousef underlined the importance of collective international efforts to achieve sustainable global growth and strengthen global supply chains and e-commerce.

Al Yousef affirmed that Oman looks forward to participating in World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi, the UAE, next February. — ONA **SEE ALSO P13**



FOR A CLEANER ENVIRONMENT

The Environment Authority, represented by the Al Batinah North Department, organised an extensive campaign to clean the coral reefs in the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq, in cooperation with the Sohar Diving Team, and with participation of many government and private agencies, civil associations and volunteer teams. This campaign comes within the programme being implemented by the authority to clean the marine environment and coral reefs in the coastal governorates of the Sultanate of Oman. **DETAILS ON P5**

60,000 TEACHERS MARK BEGINNING OF NEW SCHOOL YEAR

5,693 NEW TEACHERS TO BOOST SCHOOL EDUCATION



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 27

The return to schools for the new academic year (2023/2024) began on Sunday with supervisors, members of the educational and administrative bodies, related positions, and support staff starting their work at various schools of the Sultanate of Oman, as schools will welcome students on Tuesday.

The number of teachers in government schools reached 60,840 this year, with an Omanisation rate of 87.5 per cent, distributed over 1,270 schools. The number of administrators and technicians in government schools reached 11,509 with an Omanisation rate of 99.8 per cent. The number of teachers in special education schools reached 284, with an Omanisation rate of 93.5 per cent, and the total number

of administrators in special education schools stand at 65, with an Omanisation rate of 85.4 per cent.

The Ministry of Education has completed procedures for appointing 5,693 teachers who cleared the written tests and interviews for this academic year, of whom 740 are male teachers, representing 13 per cent, and 4,953 are female teachers (87 per cent) of the total number of those appointed to meet the actual needs of educational institutions in various disciplines.

Dr Sulaiman bin Abdullah al Jamudi, Director-General of the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision, said: "The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision, has adopted several mechanisms to receive new teachers, the most prominent of which is the implementation of the introduction programme for new teachers in areas of current residence. The programme aimed at creating positive attitude towards the teaching profession, empower new teachers, and support their professional growth in learning and teaching processes, in addition to providing new teachers with knowledge, and functional skills to prepare them for practicing the learning and teaching processes."

Dr Intisar Ambosaidi, Director-General of the Specialised Institute for Vocational Training for Teachers, said: "The Specialised Institute for Vocational Training for Teachers, within its training plan for the academic year 2023/2024, is implementing the strategic programme for new Omani teachers." **SEE ALSO P5**

Heatstroke warning as country exposed to unusual heatwave

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The coastal areas of the Sea of Oman spread across the capital, Al Batinah North, and Al Batinah South will be subject to a be a noticeable rise in the apparent temperature due to high humidity levels, which may increase the chances of exhaustion and heatstroke in the wake of direct exposure.

With more people having access to live air temperatures on their mobile phones or vehicle dashboards, Oman Met has clarified the scientific term 'feels-like' temperature.

The 'feels-like' temperature relies on environmental data including the air temperature, relative humidity, and wind speed to determine how weather conditions feel to bare skin. Different combinations of temperature, humidity, and wind speed can increase the sensation

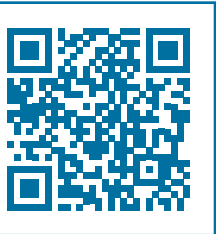


of being hot or cold. For example, a day that is very humid may feel hotter than it really is outside because your body sweat does not evaporate (and thereby cool the body) the way it is intended.

Oman Meteorology said that there is a difference between a perceived (feels-like) temperature and actual recorded temperatures. For example, if the actual Muscat temperature is around 40° the feels-like temperature will be a notch higher at 42°C and 43°C. The recorded temperature is

generally felt to be lower than the temperatures that a person feels.

Oman Met underlines the ability of the human body to adapt to the high air temperature through a self-cooling mechanism like sweat that evaporates and works to lower the body temperature, and the higher the relative humidity, the lower the rate of sweat evaporation, which keeps the body temperature high compared to the actual temperature recorded. following most parts of the country, except Salalah.



Road accidents surge in Oman despite stringent traffic laws

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Collisions between vehicles and crashing against fixed objects are seen as the major cause of accidents in the Sultanate of Oman, according to the National Centre of Statistics and Information (NCSI).

While one of the toughest traffic laws in the region has been place in the Sultanate of Oman, which includes losing a driver's licence if a person accumulates more than 12 black points in a year, there were 76,200 traffic accidents in 2022, including 15,300 and 60,900 minor accidents.

According to experts, overspeeding is the primary cause of traffic accidents and its severe human and material damage.

Studies have found that reducing the speed by 10 km/h reduces the probability of accidents by 20 per cent, the number of injuries by 30 per cent, and deaths by 40 per cent.

As per the Traffic Law of 2018, driving a vehicle without holding the steering wheel, or not sitting properly can lead to a fine of RO35 and two black points.

Penalties worth highlighting are not stopping at a checkpoint (RO50, three black points), Drifting (RO50, three black points), covering the number



plate (RO50, three black points), not stopping for a police officer (RO35, one black point), stopping the vehicle on the side of the road in a position that endangers its users (RO35, 1 black point), using mobile phones or other electronic devices while driving – RO15, two black points.

Penalties for commonly detected offenses are not adhering to the correct path at the traffic lights RO15, 1 black point,

Overspeeding is the primary cause of traffic accidents and its severe human and material damage. Studies have found that reducing the speed by 10 km/h reduces the probability of accidents by 20 per cent

abandoning a vehicle on either side of the road – RO15, distraction with non-driving activities (e.g. reading, tampering with vehicle equipment) – RO10. Exceeding the maximum speeds can lead to fines between RO50 and RO10 and up to three black points. Driving on the yellow line continuously, with the intent to overtake another vehicle can lead to a fine of RO10 and 1 black point.

3rd Gulf forum on family policies opens in Salalah

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 27

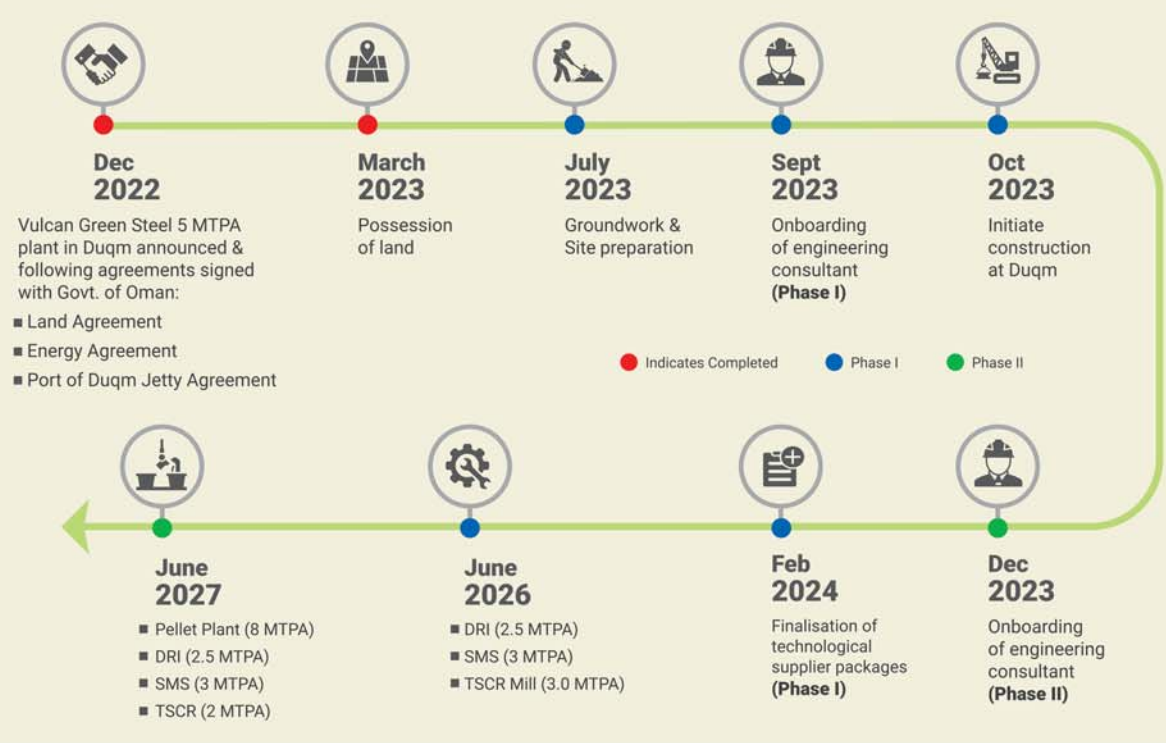
The 3rd Gulf Forum on Family Policies, with the central theme 'Practicing Citizenship and Identity in GCC Countries', will begin in Salalah on Monday. Over the course of 3-day event, the forum will feature presentations by experts from GCC nations, addressing the concept of citizenship, the role of social policies in fostering responsible citizenship, and the profound influence of citizenship and identity on individual growth, societal cohesion, and stability. The forum will delve into the fundamentals of crafting effective family social policies for success. It will also undertake an examination and analysis of notable public and social policies that revolve around citizenship, identity, cohesion, and community stability, within both the Gulf and Arab contexts. Additionally, discussions will encompass challenges unique to the Gulf region, along with initiatives aimed at safeguarding families and advancing citizenship and identity in the era of digital transformation. The forum will draw insights from pertinent national experiences and initiatives. The event is organised by the Omani Ministry of Social Development and the GCC Secretariat-General, signifying the GCC's dedication to propelling social development

and unity in the region. Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, and Oman LNG, are co-sponsoring the forum. As part of the forum agenda, there will be in-depth dialogues on the role of social policies in nurturing responsible citizenship, with a particular emphasis on policies supporting families and children. A comprehensive review will be done of noteworthy public and social policies that address citizenship, identity, cohesion, and community stability across GCC countries. Additionally, there will be discussions about Gulf-specific challenges and forward-thinking endeavours aimed at securing families and promoting citizenship and identity within the digital sphere. Attendees will also hear illuminating presentations on national undertakings and strategies aimed at bolstering citizenship and identity. The forum is poised to yield a set of recommendations tailored for GCC policymakers, aimed at fortifying citizenship and identity, nurturing social cohesion, and safeguarding families. These recommendations encompass: Formulating novel social policies that lend support to families and children; Investment in educational and training initiatives that foster active civic participation; Cultivating an inclusive and tolerant society; and Shielding families from the adverse ramifications of the digital era.

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



On track to ship the first Green Steel Vessel in 2026



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

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

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

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

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



VULCAN GREEN STEEL

PART OF JINDAL STEEL GROUP

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

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

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

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

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

At its core, this ground-breaking initiative supports international efforts to combat climate change by harnessing the power of green hydrogen. By utilising this innovative technology, the project significantly reduces the carbon footprint inherent in steel production, making it an irresistible choice for environmentally conscious industries worldwide. Unlike conventional methods of transporting green hydrogen in the form of green ammonia with minimal value addition, this project will process green hydrogen within Oman to do value addition and make green steel. This strategic approach encourages the creation and development of a robust green hydrogen ecosystem within the nation.

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

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



FORUM ON ‘CULTURE AND GREEN HERITAGE’ TODAY

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 27

A two-day regional forum on culture and green heritage will open on Monday (today) under the auspices of the Eng Ibrahim bin Said al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of

Heritage and Tourism for Heritage.

The forum, titled ‘Culture and Green Heritage: Paving the Path to Sustainability’, is organised by the Ministry of Education, represented by the Omani National Commission for Education, Culture and

Science in Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah.

The forum brings together distinguished experts and specialists in cultural and natural heritage preservation from Oman, the Gulf region, and around the world. Notable

organisations such as the Arab Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organisation (ALECSO), the UNESCO Regional Office for the Arab States of the Gulf and Yemen in Doha, and the Arab Regional Center for World Heritage in the Kingdom of Bahrain are

also participating.

The central goal of the forum is to highlight the potential of artificial intelligence applications in advancing cultural and green heritage practices. Innovative solutions that support the transition of green

heritage to environmental sustainability will be showcased.

The forum will also emphasise exemplary practices in culture and green heritage, underscoring their role in contributing to a sustainable economy.

Oman reviews relations with India, UK



NEW DELHI: Sayyid Said bin Sultan al Busaidy, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture held a meeting with Meenakshi Lekhi, Minister of State for External Affairs and Culture in the Republic of India.

The meeting was held on the sidelines of the G20 Culture Ministers meeting in India.

It discussed aspects of cooperation and means of promoting cultural relations between Oman and India.

Sayyid Al Busaidy also held a meeting with Lord Parkinson, UK Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State of Department for Culture.

The two sides discussed means of promoting cultural cooperation between Oman and the UK, including the participation in book fairs.

— ONA

Unauthorised food trade punishable offence

MUNICIPALITY CALLS ON EATERIES TO FOLLOW HYGIENE STANDARDS



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The Muscat Municipality has unequivocally stated that engaging in the trade of food without a valid licence is a punishable offence, with legal actions to be taken against offenders. The civic authority has issued an urgent call to owners of rented or abandoned properties to diligently verify and prevent any unauthorised activities within their premises that might pose significant risks to public health, the environment, and security. Property owners have been asked to ensure that both residential and commercial spaces under their stewardship adhere to the requisite hygiene standards as mandated by the authorities.

The new directive from the Muscat Municipality followed a recent incident wherein the municipality discovered and subsequently destroyed around 36 kilograms of spoiled meat. Legal procedures have been taken in such cases carried in the past eight months.

Practising a commercial activity without obtaining a licence from the competent authorities will attract a fine of RO 300, according to administrative decision 55/2017 on administrative penalties for violations of Muscat Municipality. Also, if anyone is

involved in making and selling food without the approval of the municipality, a similar fine will be levied upon the offender. The food will then be confiscated and destroyed if proven invalid for human consumption. In case the food was found to be prepared and circulated in unlicensed places is also subject to a fine of RO 300.

As part of regular, random raids at restaurants and other eateries, the civic authority has carried out six raids, issued fines on five of them and certificates of destruction on five of such restaurants which were found to be selling unhealthy food.

Additionally, as many as 118 tools, equipment, utensils and other materials used for making foods too were confiscated for their un-usability and unhygienic nature.

“Violators were also referred to the competent authorities to complete the legal proceedings and legal actions including fine or imprisonment or both depending upon the gravity of the case, were issued by the law implementing authorities,” Khalid al Khanbashi, representative of the Muscat Municipality said.

Muscat Municipality has further called upon the local community to report such unhealthy practices through various social networking sites of the municipality or to call its Call Center at 1111.

Documentary earns Oman Best Arab-European TV Production Award

MUSCAT: Oman TV’s ‘Bawabat Al Jumaa’ (Friday Gate) won the Best Documentary Award in joint Arab-European TV production programme titled Between the Banks.

The film, authored by director Abeer bint Nasser al Hajriyah, topped the productions of 13 Arab and European TV organisations.

The documentary saw the participation of cameraman Mus’ab al Rawahi, assistant director Asaad al Busaidy, aerial photographer Mohammed al Hadhrami and editor Alya al Braiki.

Abeer said that the film focused on events at Souq Nizwa (Nizwa marketplace) on a Friday. The film documented traditional sale activities at the vegetable and fruit market, auctioning at the livestock market, as well as popular folklore and accompanying artisanal activities.



Abeer added that the joint Arab-European production of documentary series titled “Bazaars and People” focused on typical personalities in the market, among them Ibrahim al Amri due to his great attachment to his store, which he inherited from his ancestors in Nizwa market.

During his tenure at the store, Ibrahim learned four languages: “English, German, French, and Italian, mainly through his dealings with tourists from different countries of the world, she explained.

Abeer pointed out that the idea behind choosing Nizwa market as a setting for the documentary was to portray the marketplace’s significance as a social and economic hotspot. The film also demonstrates how traditional markets can serve as grounds for cultural and economic interactions. — ONA

Authority for accreditation meets

MUSCAT: The Board of Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education (OAAAQA) on Sunday held its second meeting of the year under the chair of Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation.

The meeting discussed a set of topics including the ISA 2.0 standards, the estimated budget for 2024, the approval of a number of the Authority’s policies.

It also discussed the Authority’s hosting of the Fifth Regional Conference of the Arab Network for Quality Assurance in Higher Education, due to be held in the forthcoming December. — ONA





INSECT BITES TAKE AWAY THE PLEASURE OF HOLIDAYMAKERS IN DHOFAR



Recall Date: 28-08-2023

Recall KIA SPORTAGE (NQ5E) TELLURIDE (ON)

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
KIA SPORTAGE (NQ5E)	2022-2023	47
KIA TELLURIDE (ON)	2022-2023	18

Recall consequence

Some Sportage (NQ5e) and Telluride (ON) vehicles of 2022-2023MY might face Instrument Cluster booting errors that can cause the instrument cluster screen to become blank resulting in the driver's inability to see the telltales and indicators.

Recall Action

Verify affected vehicles as per the VIN list, Upgrade Software process - Instrument Cluster booting error Logic Improvement, the updated software improves the instrument cluster booting logic error in the affected vehicles. All affected vehicles will be inspected and repaired at no expense to the vehicle owner.

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



Reliable International Automotive LLC
C.R. 1707183
Contact details: Toll free -80073222
Working days: Sunday - Thursday
Working Time: 8:30 -17:30 hrs.



SHADDAD AL MUSALMY
@shadadm

AS khareef season in Dhofar is nearing the end, the problem of insect bites at tourist spots has taken away the pleasure of visitors, as almost all of them are complaining of such a problem once they return.

Everyone who has visited Dhofar during the khareef season returns with bites, itching and redness of the skin in the exposed body parts like hands and legs.

“Dhofar Governorate is so beautiful with a magnificent view of waterfalls, greenery and great weather, but the only problem is the insect bites. They cause itchy papules, the scars of which stay more than two weeks, Saada al Numani, who was in Salalah recently, said.

Hammam al Badi, another visitor, said, “Salalah is a great idea, but during khareef season, you should take some precautions. Salalah was not bad on my first visit. This time, I faced the problem of mosquitoes. Despite government efforts to curb the menace, mosquitoes spread in many places in Salalah.”

“Salalah visitors, however, are taking anti-mosquito sprays to avoid mosquito bites. Mosquito bite jelly helped me recover after I got bitten by mosquitoes. There are some dry places, such as Ittin Plain and others you won't see mosquitoes,” he added.

To some extent, such a situation keeps the general practitioners busy in Salalah hospitals.

“In most cases, mosquito bites are treated with recommended antihistamine. But in some cases, patients come with complaints of fever. If it persists, we prescribe antibiotics,” said one of the general practitioners in Salalah.

According to him, around five patients are coming daily with complaints of insect bites having stereotyped symptoms of itching, redness of the skin and papules in the affected body parts.

“Mostly, those affected are male adults who love to stay outdoors to enjoy green bushes and waterfalls. The victims are generally those adults who visited such places wearing half-sleeve clothes. Generally, their hands and leg parts are affected,” he said.

He added that women are affected less since they keep themselves and their children covered. “I advised every visitor to mountain and spring areas to try covering body parts as much as possible, putting a cap and applying mosquito repellent before going to such places,” he said.

Visitors who have been there suggest some awareness by the civic authorities to enlighten people about the menace.

“Authorities can spread the awareness messages by putting pamphlets in hotels and restaurants telling the visitors about the caution they should keep in mind while visiting various places in Salalah because most of the visitors end up visiting a hospital which spoils the whole holiday mood,” Mohammed al Harthy, another visitor to Salalah said.

EVERY VISITOR TO MOUNTAIN AND SPRING AREAS NEEDS TO COVER BODY AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE, PUT A CAP AND APPLY MOSQUITO REPELLENT BEFORE GOING TO SUCH PLACES

GENERAL PRACTITIONER



GEARING UP FOR NEW ACADEMIC YEAR

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Summer vacations have concluded for students; it is time for a new academic year.

New books, bags, pens and pencils have been sorted, and parents have been equally busy with the preparations. While parents have their aspirations for their children, the students look forward to catching up with classmates and schoolmates to update on their experiences during the summer vacation.

As teachers are all set to receive their students, they have also been busy preparing to receive the children on Tuesday, August 29, while fine-tuning their lesson plans.

More than 5,000 new teachers have joined the force this academic year, and this group has also been waiting in anticipation. Of the total number of new teachers appointed by the Ministry of Education, 13 per cent are male teachers, and 87 per cent are females. These teachers will see their students on Tuesday for the first time and thus begin



their careers, which can be highly significant for young students.

As the parents make last-minute purchases, the shops and hypermarkets have lined up with school stationaries and uniforms of different colours.

For parents sending their young ones to school for the first time, the first week could be with traces of separation anxiety. One of the parents' concerns is transportation.

Ali al Ghafri, a Sheikh Hamdan Government Schoolteacher in Maabela, said the first day was pleasant as teachers met with each other and the Headmaster about the annual plan and the timetable for the teachers.

"We met the new teachers, and we could see the excitement and their enthusiasm. And we are looking forward to meeting the students on August 29. On

Monday, the teachers will prepare for the book distribution, which will be handed over on Tuesday as students arrive for the first day. Students will also be allocated their new classrooms on the first day of school," said Al Ghafri, who has been teaching the English language for 30 years and has also enjoyed the experience of teaching with professionals from different parts of the world.

The teachers also discussed on Sunday with their subject heads which classes they were keen to teach.

"We will take about a month to get the flow going. Our main focus on the first day will be to orient students on identifying their buses depending on their locations. Some parents will also come to check if there is any change in school placements as

students are admitted as per their respective localities. So if any new schools have come up, they would be shifted there to save time and energy." "Plan well from the beginning of the year so they feel good at the end of each semester. Students should make it a habit to consume healthy food. We see them sometimes faint during the assembly, so parents should ensure their children have breakfast. The school is always stressing on nutritious food intake," Al Ghafri pointed out.

He said there is a school canteen, but it is also a good idea to bring food from home.

A factor that is on the mind of the parents and teachers is the safety on the bus.

"Each day, the teachers will take turns to be present for the bus duty to direct the students to be dropped in their homes. This is to ensure everyone is back home." From first to fifth grades, follow the co-educational system, and they can await some special treats and gifts from teachers on Tuesday to make their first day back in school special.

Various programmes to boost school health set

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 27

As students are counting down for the beginning of the new school year, the Ministry of Health (MoH) has made remarkable endeavours to boost and ensure a safe and healthy school environment across all schools of the Sultanate of Oman.

Taking into account that students in the age group of 5-19 constitute 31 per cent of the total population, MoH has set a number of health-oriented programmes and services, prioritising public hygiene at the schools and meeting the students' health



needs.

In a statement, Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, said a total of 732 nurses were disseminated across governorates, ensuring that students should have access to

high-quality healthcare when needed. The ministry has set a number of school-based clinics aimed at helping the students manage their illnesses during the school day. "94 per cent of the Sultanate of Oman's

schools have healthcare units," the minister said.

Dr Al Sabti said the plan for the university and school health prepared for this year includes a number of various programmes and services to cover student segments in various educational grades.

According to MoH, the national plan covers eight parts of school health, namely: school health awareness, school health services, school health environment, nutrition and food safety, physical activity, mental health and counselling, family and community participation, and promoting the health of school workers.

EA launches campaign to clean coral reefs



STAFF REPORTER
AL SUWAIQ, AUG 27

The Environment Authority (EA), represented by the Al Batinah North Department, organised an extensive campaign to clean the coral reefs in the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq, in cooperation with the Sohar Diving Team, and with the participation of many government and private agencies, civil associations and volunteer teams.

This campaign comes within the programme implemented by EA to clean the marine environment and coral reefs of



the coastal governorates of the Sultanate of Oman for the year 2023.

The campaign aims to clean the marine environment and coral reefs from plastic

waste, fishing residues, among others, and through it, the health of the marine ecosystems of coral reefs and their biodiversity is also monitored, and the environment of coral reefs is preserved from pollutants and the remains of fishing tools and equipment.

The campaign also aims to spread environmental awareness among the community, in addition to achieving the participation of community in spreading the culture of preserving Oman's environment clean. The campaign resulted in the recovery of a large amount of plastic and fishing waste estimated at 500-600 kilograms.

OMAN AIR (S.A.O.C)

AUCTION ANNOUNCEMENT

Used Catering Equipment & Related Items are Displayed for Auction

- The items are located in the old catering building of Oman Air next to the old airport.
- Viewing of the items will be during working hours Sunday to Tuesday at 9:00-13:00 Starting From 3rd September to 5th September 2023.
- The Bids Should Be Sent by sealed envelopes by hand to Supply chain Management department Before 12th September 2023 or by Email to SCM.proposals@Omanair.com.
- Successful Bidders will be Contacted by Oman Air's Supply Chain Management to deposit the amount into the dedicated company bank account.
- Removal of the items Should be within 12 working days from the day of payment.
- Removal/shipment/Related logistics/Re installation will be liable to the awarded Bidder.
- For Any queries please send an email to: Intisar.Alharthy@omanair.com

Senior Vice President
Supply Chain Management
Oman Air SAOC
P.O Box: 58, PC: 111,
Sultanate Of Oman



TENDER NOTICE

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries
Wealth and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders:-

Tender No.	Description	Tender documents price (R.O)	Class	Last date for collection of documents	Last date for Submission of documents
671/2023/ MAFWR/ HQ-82	Supply and Installation of Migration & Non-volatile-matter Content Tester	25/-	Specialized	Monday 4/9/2023	Sunday 24/9/2023
694/2023/ MAFWR/ HQ-83	Supply of veterinary Medicines and Equipments for the year 2023	35/-	Specialized	Thursday 7/9/2023	Wednesday 27/9/2023
700/2023/ MAFWR/ HQ-84	Develop and roll out "Risk, Emergency Management and Business Continuity Management Systems" for Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources	25/-	First	Monday 11/9/2023	Monday 2/10/2023
706/2023/ MAFWR/ HQ-85	Consultancy Services for Design Review and Construction Supervision of "Design and Construction" of Fishery Harbour Development at Lakbi and Fish Landing Centres at Haddin, Haramel and Surab	62/5	First	Tuesday 12/9/2023	Monday 2/10/2023
707/2023/ MAFWR/ HQ-86	Supply & Installation of HVAC System and allied Works in Fishery Quality control Center, Al Bustan	50/-	First	Tuesday 12/9/2023	Monday 2/10/2023
316/2022/ MAFWR/ HQ-40- Recall-1	Construction of Central Medicines Store at Duqm	25/-	Fourth	Tuesday 12/9/2023	Monday 2/10/2023

- Interested Companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board (in the above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- Preference will be given to companies whose bid includes the largest percentage of Omanization and possible purchase of national products.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration (regarding the exemption from submitting a bid bond in tenders).
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402200 or etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.

TENDERS COMMITTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources



Japan says seawater radioactivity below limits near Fukushima



Journalists are guided along near tanks containing treated radioactive wastewater during a treated water dilution and discharge facility tour for foreign media, in Okuma town, northeastern Japan. — Reuters

TOKYO: Tests of seawater near Japan's Fukushima nuclear power plant have not detected any radioactivity, the environment ministry said on Sunday, days after authorities began discharging into the sea treated water used to cool damaged reactors.

Japan started releasing water from the wrecked Fukushima plant into the Pacific Ocean on Thursday, sparking protests in Japan and neighbouring countries, in particular China, which banned aquatic product imports from Japan. Japan and scientific organisations say the water is safe after being filtered to remove most radioactive elements except for tritium, a radioactive isotope of hydrogen.

Because tritium is difficult to separate from water, the Fukushima water is diluted until tritium levels fall below regulatory limits.

The ministry's tests of samples from 11 points near the plant showed concentrations of tritium below the lower limit of detection — 7 to 8 becquerels of tritium per litre, the ministry said, adding that it "would have no adverse impact on human health and the environment".

Monitoring would be carried out "with a high level of objectivity, transparency, and reliability" to prevent adverse impacts on Japan's reputation, Environment Minister Akihiro Nishimura said in a statement.

The ministry would publish test results every week for the next three months at least, an official said.

Japan's fisheries agency said tests of fish from near the plant did not show any abnormalities. Its test on Saturday found no detectable levels of tritium.

Plant operator Tokyo Electric Power Co (Tepco) said seawater near the plant contained less than 10 becquerels of tritium per litre, below its self-imposed limit of 700 becquerels and far below the World Health Organization's limit of 10,000 becquerels for drinking water.

Tepco said on Sunday it had not detected any significant change. Fukushima prefecture also

published tests from nine locations near the plant that showed tritium below limits. Tepco is storing about 1.3 million tonnes of the contaminated water, enough to fill 500 Olympic-sized swimming pools, in tanks on the site.

The release of the first 7,800 cubic metres, equivalent to about three Olympic pools, will take about 17 days. It is estimated it will take about 30 years to release it all.

Japanese offices have received a barrage of telephone calls, apparently from China, complaining about the water release, the foreign ministry said, adding that it had asked the Chinese Embassy in Japan to call on the public in China to remain calm. — Reuters

Hundreds flee floods as super typhoon brushes past Philippines

MANILA: More than a thousand people fled their homes as floods unleashed by Super Typhoon Saola swept through mainly rural villages in the northern Philippines, rescue officials said on Sunday.

Saola brushed past the northeast of the main island of Luzon overnight on Saturday and continued south just off the Pacific coast packing winds of up to 185 kilometres per hour, the state weather bureau said. No casualties or substantial damage have been reported.

Residents of coastal communities vulnerable to high winds and large waves were moved to higher ground on Isabela province's Pacific coast, as were those on the northern tip of Cagayan province to the north and Ilocos Sur province on Luzon's northwest coast, officials said.

"These coastal towns have no protection because they are directly facing the Pacific," said Isabela rescue official Constante Foronda.

"It's raining constantly but the winds are not that strong," he told AFP by telephone, adding: "We got lucky."

The Philippines is hit by an average of 20 major storms each year that kill hundreds of people and keep vast regions in perpetual poverty.

In neighbouring Cagayan, rescue official Ruelie Rapsing told AFP 388 people were evacuated overnight amid flooding on several coastal municipalities on Luzon's northeast tip. There were also widespread electricity cuts across the province of 1.2 million people due to downed power lines, he added.

The provincial government's press office released photos on its Facebook page of knee-deep floodwaters swamping homes in the municipality of Aparri.

The civil defence office in Manila also reported the evacuation of 421 people from four municipalities in Ilocos Sur, which were hit by a landslide, flooding and overflowing rivers.

— Agencies



A man braves heavy showers and winds while inspecting his corn farm as Typhoon Saola brushes past Ilagan City, Isabela Province, north of Manila. — AFP

Mnangagwa hails 'mature democracy' after re-election

HARARE: President Emmerson Mnangagwa on Sunday called Zimbabwe a "mature democracy" after winning a second term in office despite the opposition rejecting the result of a vote that international observers said fell short of democratic standards.

Mnangagwa, 80, won 52.6 per cent of the ballots against 44 per cent for his main challenger, Nelson Chamisa, 45, according to official results announced late on Saturday by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC).

"We have demonstrated that we are a mature democracy," the president said, praising a high turnout. "We take pride in the fact

that we are an independent and sovereign nation."

Zimbabweans voted on Wednesday and Thursday for president and parliament in polling marred by delays that sparked opposition accusations of rigging and voter suppression.

Promise Mkwanzani, a spokesman for Chamisa's Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC), said the party did not sign the final tally, which he described as "false".

The vote has been watched across southern Africa as a test of support for Mnangagwa's ZANU-PF party, whose 43-year rule has been accompanied by a moribund economy and charges of



President of Zimbabwe Emmerson Mnangagwa arrives for a press conference at State House in Harare. — AFP

authoritarianism.

Foreign monitors announced on Friday that the elections had failed to conform to regional and international standards.

Observer missions from the European Union, the Commonwealth and the 16-nation Southern African Development Community (SADC) listed a number of concerns, including the banning of opposition rallies, issues with the voter registration rolls, biased state media coverage and voter intimidation.

That did not stop Mnangagwa from thanking "various election observation missions who have been witnessing our electoral

processes without bias".

"As a sovereign state, we continue to call on all our guests to respect our national institutions," he said.

Nicknamed "The Crocodile", Mnangagwa first came to power after a coup that deposed the late ruler Robert Mugabe in 2017.

A year later, he narrowly beat Chamisa a first time in a vote the opposition leader condemned as fraudulent, and which was followed by a deadly crackdown.

This week, voting was forced to stretch into an unprecedented second day because of delays in printing of ballot papers in some key districts. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

SEOUL

N Korea reopens its borders to citizens

North Korea has allowed citizens stranded abroad by its strict Covid curbs to return home, state media reported on Sunday, as the country moves towards a full reopening after pandemic isolation.

The country had sealed its borders since early 2020 to protect itself from Covid-19, which prevented even its own nationals from returning.

But there have been increasing signs of a shift in border control in recent weeks.



In a statement, the State Emergency Epidemic Prevention Headquarters said North Korean citizens abroad had been allowed to return home in line with "the eased worldwide pandemic situation". — AFP

TEL AVIV

Netanyahu vows to use 'iron fist'

Israel's far-right government is considering allowing authorities to detain suspected criminals in Arab communities in the country without charge, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said on Sunday. The aim in using so-called administrative detention is to take decisive action against organised crime in Arab residential areas of the country.

"We will employ an iron fist, including the consideration of administrative restrictions and detentions in order to stop these



terrible murders," Netanyahu said. Arab residents of Israel have protested over rising crime rates, with some Arab leaders accusing Netanyahu's government of ignoring the problem or stoking divisions. — dpa

AZAZ

US officials visit Syria's pro-Turkish area

Three members of the United States Congress made a rare visit on Sunday to rebel-held territory in northern Syria.

The bipartisan delegation comprising Joe Wilson, Victoria Spartz and Dean Phillips entered Syria from Türkiye through the Bab al-Salama border crossing.

The visit's "purpose is to see the reality of the liberated areas", Yasser el-Hajji, spokesperson for the Türkiye-backed interim government. However, the delegation's visit had to be



curtailed for security reasons.

"To avoid sparking controversy in the US, they ultimately did not proceed towards Jindayris," said Rami Abdel Rahman, who heads the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights. — Reuters



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In brief

■ BUCHAREST



2 DEAD, 56 INJURED IN GAS STATION BLASTS

Two people died and 56 people were injured after two explosions rocked an unlicensed liquefied petroleum gas filling station just north of Romania's capital Bucharest.

Most of the injured were firefighters who rushed to the station to extinguish the blaze from the first explosion before the second occurred.

The two people who died were a couple, emergency department head Raed Arafat told reporters on Sunday.

The man suffered a heart attack, while the woman died after sustaining severe burns.

Among the injured — some with severe burns — were 39 firefighters, two police officers and two gendarmes. — **AFP**

■ KYIV



UKRAINE NAMES PILOTS KILLED IN CRASH

Ukraine on Sunday named all three air force pilots killed in a mid-air collision.

The crash involving two combat training aircraft marks a painful blow for Kyiv, which has been looking to secure advanced F-16 jets to modernise its Soviet-era air force.

The 40th Tactical Aviation Brigade on Sunday named the three dead as Major Vyacheslav Minka, Major Sergiy Prokazin, and Captain Andrii Pilshchikov.

"Pilshchikov was courageous, principled, uncompromising, actively spoke in the Western media, in particular on the issue of providing Ukraine with modern F-16 aircraft," his brigade said. — **AFP**

■ LONDON



LONDON'S MET POLICE ON ALERT AFTER IT 'HACK'

London's Metropolitan Police force said on Sunday it was taking security measures after "unauthorised access to the IT system of one of its suppliers", following data breaches at other forces.

The *Sun* newspaper on Sunday reported that "cyber crooks penetrated the IT systems" of the firm which reportedly prints identity cards and staff passes for the Met.

Scotland Yard said the force was now working with the company to understand if there had been any security breach relating to its data. It was unable to say when the breach occurred or how many personnel might be affected. — **AFP**

US Commerce chief seeks trade, tourism boost in China talks



US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo, shakes hands with Lin Feng, Director General of China Ministry of Commerce as she arrives at the Beijing Capital International Airport in Beijing. — **Reuters**

BEIJING: US Commerce Secretary Gina Raimondo arrived in Beijing late on Sunday for a four-day visit aimed at boosting business ties between the world's two largest economies while declaring American national security trade measures off-limits for debate.

"If you wanted to put a tagline to the trip and the mission, it's protect what we must and promote where we can," Raimondo told reporters on Friday before departing for China. "I'm not going to pull my punches next week when I am there but I intend to be practical."

Relations are tense as the United States works with allies to block China's access to advanced semiconductors, while Beijing is restricting shipments from

prominent chip company Micron Technology and raided and fined US firm Mintz Group \$1.5 million for doing "unapproved statistical work."

Raimondo, who was greeted upon arrival by Chinese Commerce Ministry official Lin Feng, will hold bilateral meetings with Chinese officials on Monday and Tuesday in Beijing before she heads to Shanghai.

Raimondo spoke to President Joe Biden on Thursday about her visit and his message was enhanced dialogue with China can ease tensions.

"We want to have a stable commercial relationship, and core to that is regular communication," Raimondo said. "We need to communicate to avoid conflict."

Republicans in Congress have criticised the possibility Raimondo will establish a working group with China during the visit to discuss US semiconductor export controls.

Raimondo did not confirm plans for any working group but emphasised she would tell Chinese officials "when it comes to national security we don't negotiate. We don't give concessions. We don't compromise."

The United States is using government incentives and tax policy to wean American businesses off Chinese supply chains and ramp up US semiconductor production.

"Just because we're investing in America does not mean at all that we want to decouple from China's

economy," Raimondo said.

China's ambassador to the United States, Xie Feng, who met Raimondo last week, said China seeks "mutual respect, peaceful coexistence and win-win cooperation".

Raimondo, the fourth high-level US official to visit China recently, is the first commerce secretary to make the trip in seven years.

She spoke to more than 100 senior business leaders before the visit and vowed to raise their concerns.

"There are so many challenges to doing business in China and exporting to China and China's unfair trading practices have hurt American workers and companies," Raimondo said. — **Reuters**

THREE US MARINES KILLED DURING DRILLS IN AUSTRALIA

DARWIN: Three US Marines were killed on Sunday when an Osprey aircraft crashed on a remote tropical island during war games north of the Australian mainland, US military officials said.

Rescue workers toiled in fading light to evacuate survivors from the isolated crash site, with US officials saying five crew members had been flown to Royal Darwin Hospital in a "serious condition".

The US Marine Rotational Force in Darwin said there were "a total of 23 personnel on board" at the time of the crash and Australia's military said only Americans were involved.

Rescue efforts were complicated by the location of the crash — the remote and sparsely populated Melville Island about 60 kilometres north of the nearest city, Darwin.

The Osprey — a mix between a helicopter and a plane — was taking part in the Predators Run exercises, a series of warfighting drills involving thousands of soldiers from the US and Australia, as well as other militaries such as Indonesia and the Philippines.

Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and Defence Minister Richard Marles extended their "deepest condolences" to the US military.

"This incident is a reminder of the significance of the service undertaken by our personnel and those of our partner nations," they said in a joint statement.

Albanese earlier described the crash as "tragic" and "regrettable" but stressed that authorities were still trying to piece together what had happened. "We want to make sure that any information that is provided is absolutely accurate," he told reporters. "This is a difficult incident, we are responding fully, and our priority is on providing every assistance possible."

Local authorities said Royal Darwin Hospital had activated its highest emergency alert as intensive care staff braced for the influx of injured crew. — **AFP**



A Care Flight helicopter is seen on the tarmac of the Darwin International Airport in Darwin. — **AFP**

Russia says genetic tests confirm Wagner chief Prigozhin died in plane crash

MOSCOW: Russian investigators said on Sunday that genetic tests had confirmed that Yevgeny Prigozhin, chief of the Wagner mercenary group, was among the 10 people killed in a plane crash last week.

Russia's aviation agency had previously published the names of all 10 people on board the private jet which crashed in the Tver region northwest of Moscow on Wednesday. They included Prigozhin and Dmitry Utkin, his right-hand man who helped found the Wagner group.

"As part of the investigation of the plane crash in the Tver region, molecular-genetic examinations have been completed," Russia's Investigative Committee said in a statement on the Telegram messaging app.

"According to their results,

the identities of all 10 dead were established. They correspond to the list stated in the flight sheet," it said.

There had been some speculation, especially on pro-Wagner Telegram channels, about whether Prigozhin — who was known to take various security precautions in anticipation of a possible attempt on his life — had really been on the doomed flight.

Authorities have yet to say what they believe caused his private jet to fall from the sky.

The crash came two months to the day after Prigozhin and his Wagner mercenaries staged a mutiny against Russian military commanders in which they took control of a southern city, Rostov, and advanced towards Moscow before turning around 200 kilometres from the capital.



A man lays his hat at a makeshift memorial to pay tribute to late head of Wagner paramilitary group, Yevgeny Prigozhin in Moscow. — **Reuters**

Russian President Vladimir Putin described the June 23-24 mutiny as a treacherous "stab in the back", but later met with Prigozhin in the Kremlin. He sent

his condolences on Thursday to the families of those believed to have died in the crash.

Western politicians and commentators have suggested,

without presenting evidence, that Putin ordered Prigozhin to be killed as punishment for the mutiny, which also represented the biggest challenge to Putin's own rule since he came to power in 1999.

Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov said that such suggestions were "an absolute lie". Asked whether Putin might attend Prigozhin's funeral, Peskov said it was too early to say and also noted the president's "busy schedule".

Wagner fighters played a prominent role in the fighting in eastern Ukraine, especially in the months-long siege of the city of Bakhmut, despite Prigozhin's frequent, profanity-laced attacks on Russia's military high command over their conduct of the war that culminated in the failed mutiny.

— **Reuters**

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Qaboos University

Time management is one of the most important of these skills. Knowing how to prioritise, divide

Critical thinking is another important skill learnt in a higher education setting. This is not always about analysing ideas but just learning to question other people's ideas or thoughts. This

We all learn by making mistakes and university is a wonderful stage to make those mistakes before real life catches on.

A full-page photograph showing two firefighters in red and yellow protective gear. They are using high-pressure water hoses to spray water onto a fire in a wooded area. The firefighter in the foreground is looking towards the camera, while the one in the background is focused on the fire. The scene is smoky and the ground is dark, suggesting a recent fire.

The surface temperature was around 170 degrees Celsius even half an hour after the smouldering barbecue had been removed from the spot. "If you can take a picnic rather than a disposal barbecue, (you) just eliminate that risk... don't have campfires and take all your litter home," Holland said. "That simple messaging can hopefully reduce the risk of wildfires."

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Tribute to messengers of knowledge

The teaching profession stands as one of the most noble and respected jobs worldwide. In the world of letters, a teacher marks the light. A teacher disseminates what he/she has learned. Some teachers are always remembered by students for their exemplary qualities, both in delivering academic and extracurricular activities. What are the combined characteristics that make those teachers excellent and memorable ones among students? Likewise, why do students learn more from some teachers than others? In fact, there are teachers who inspire their students to work harder than what they normally do.

According to William Arthur Ward, one of the most famous American inspiring writers, “The mediocre teacher tells, the good teacher explains, the superior teacher demonstrates, but the great teacher inspires”. A teacher is symbolised as a candle; it consumes itself to light the way for others, especially students. Every child needs and deserves devoted and excellent teachers who are proficient in their subjects and well-trained. Those teachers strive to make learning come alive for students. For students, what the teacher teaches is more important than what he is.

Of course, the teacher should have high moral standards. Like children learn from parents, many students follow teachers as their good models in life.

The teacher’s purpose is not to make students in his own image, but to develop students who can portray their own image and be good citizens. It has been said that a teacher is a compass that activates the magnets of curiosity, knowledge, and wisdom in students.

Actually, it is well-known that education is simply the soul of a society as it passes from one generation to another. Aristotle, the Greek philosopher who made important contributions to logic, metaphysics, mathematics, physics, biology, ethics, politics, agriculture, medicine, dance and theatre, said: “The roots of education are bitter, but the fruit is sweet”. In fact, teaching is not only to teach students how to read



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TEACHING IS THE ESSENTIAL PROFESSION AS IT MAKES ALL OTHER PROFESSIONS POSSIBLE

and write, rather teaching is values and social morals by which students hone their intellectual and social potentials.

Therefore, the real teaching is a process of encouraging students to make a connection between their real-world experiences and the subjects being studied at school. It is important to provide students with practical activities and realistic knowledge in order to make this connection. As it has been described that a teacher’s job is to take a bunch of live wires and see that they are well-grounded.

Teaching is the essential profession as it makes all other professions possible. The well-qualified, caring and committed teachers leave no stone unturned to provide students with quality education and insightful knowledge. Teachers prepare the future-maker men and women. Nobody shall ever forget the good things, which are given by teachers.

By teachers’ efforts, insights and dedication, people will ensure that their children are efficiently prepared for the future challenges and opportunities.

Every day teachers make students excited with the wonders of science, the brilliance of mathematics and make them appreciate the beauty of nature, arts and humanities. Dear teachers, you cannot hold a torch to light another person’s path without brightening your own. The adage holds true, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day; teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

As the Sultanate of Oman observes back to school season, it could be a good time to give a special tribute to all teachers. Parents and students shall express their gratitude, thanks and appreciation to their teachers. At school, teachers dedicate their time and efforts to enlighten us and children alike with up to date information. Sometimes, they sacrifice their precious personal time to be with us in hard times. All teachers should take pride in their profession as society has entrusted them with the most responsible and sensitive job of disseminating knowledge to their students.

Profound gratitude to all teachers for their sacrifice!

A CALL FOR HELP



A man climbs atop a tree and gestures towards a boat, at a flooded area of Burewala, a town of southern Punjab province, Pakistan, on Sunday. – AFP

For whom the BRICS toll

The just-concluded BRICS summit — bringing together the leaders of Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa — was touted as a pivotal event that could change the contours of international relations. Some compared it to the Bandung conference of 1955, which laid the foundation for the Non-Aligned Movement, while others anticipated movement towards an alternate system of global governance fit for a multipolar world. But what the summit showed is that shared grievances do not amount to a shared vision.

The bloc’s decision to admit six new members — Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates — may seem to vindicate predictions that the BRICS will remake the world order. After all, more than 40 countries were allegedly vying for membership, though a formal list was never disclosed.

But the decision to expand — like the push for de-dollarisation — amounts to picking low-hanging fruit. When it comes to the numerous thorny global challenges requiring urgent attention, the summit provided little in the way of solutions. And that



Ana Palacio

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THE GROUP’S LATEST SUMMIT WAS TOUTED AS A PIVOTAL EVENT THAT COULD CHANGE THE CONTOURS OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

can be expected to continue: ultimately, the BRICS has always been more statement than substance, with each member using it as a platform to advance its own ends. A larger, even more heterogeneous membership will impede consensus on all matters of consequence.

NEUTRAL STANCE

Start with South Africa, the summit’s host. Not only was the country excluded from the G7 summit earlier this year; it has also faced criticism for its supposedly neutral stance on the Ukraine war, and the United States has accused it of providing weapons and ammunition to Russia. In a speech last Sunday, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa noted that “some of our detractors prefer overt support for their political and ideological choices,” and vowed not to be “drawn into a contest between global powers.”

Meanwhile, Ramaphosa has taken great pains to emphasise South Africa’s ties with China: the bilateral relationship, he recently noted, is “almost as old as our democracy.” But South Africa’s “largest trading partner” is not

China, as Ramaphosa claims, but the European Union, and South Africa trades more with the EU and the US than it does with the other BRICS. For South Africa, the BRICS is a convenient platform with which to boost its leadership in Africa and globally.

China has always had similar designs for the BRICS: use it as a tool of geopolitical influence, including by advancing an alternative vision of global governance. To this end, this summit holds particular importance. Coming on the heels of the agreement among Japan, South Korea, and the US to expand security and economic

cooperation, the summit offered an opportunity for China to push its vision of the BRICS as a full-scale alternative to the G7, with Chinese President Xi Jinping firmly in the driver’s seat.

BRICS members are likely to embrace some of China’s pet issues, such as countering “unilateral and protectionist measures” like trade sanctions. And even in areas where they disagree, China might be able to use its economic weight — the country accounts for 70 per cent of the bloc’s GDP — to sway them. It was, after all, the principal advocate for expanding the grouping, a move that the

others, except Russia, resisted — until they didn’t.

The Kremlin, for its part, sees the BRICS as a crucial means of countering Russia’s international isolation. Russian President Vladimir Putin — who participated virtually — used his time in the spotlight to attempt to rally support for his Ukraine war narrative. More broadly, Russia — like China — hopes that the BRICS can build alternatives to Western-led initiatives and alliances. Not all BRICS members share this vision. India, which is locked in a prolonged border standoff with China, wants to represent the Global South on the world stage, not least to bolster economic development. But it also wants to maintain an independent foreign policy. This is the same reason why India bristled at the notion of the Quadrilateral Security Dialogue (the Quad) — with Australia, Japan, and the US — mimicking a military alliance. India’s fellow flawed democracy, Brazil, also seems to prefer genuine non-alignment, and has ambitions to act as a diplomatic balancer.

sport

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Dr Shihab appointed as technical monitor for Asian tourney

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUG 27

Oman's Dr Shihab al Riyami was appointed as a technical monitor in the 2023 PPTV 22nd Asian 'Est Cola' Senior Women's Volleyball Championship which will be held in Nakhon Ratchasima, Thailand, during August 30 to September 6.

This selection is followed after a successful participation for Al Riyami in Asian Volleyball Confederation (AVC), the volleyball sport's continental governing body, Challenge Cup which was held last July in Taipei.

The FIVB international coach instructor appreciated the AVC's trust in nominating him for a new AVC Technical Monitor assignment in another senior Asian event.

"The Asian Women's Volleyball Challenge Cup is an international volleyball competition in Asia and Oceania. This event featured the senior women's national teams of the members of AVC. Additionally, this year is very important for all the teams as this edition will act as a qualifier to the Paris Olympic Games 2024. Therefore, I expect tough competition among the participating women teams as every team will vie to secure berths in the Olympic Games including the nominated teams: Japan, China, Thailand, South Korea, Kazakhstan and Australia," he said.

The AVC technical monitor said this is the 20th AVC mission for him as technical monitor since 2012 as AVC Coaches Committee member. "It is my pleasure and privilege to support our AVC family and contribute to volleyball development in Asia. In addition, I highly appreciate the AVC Coaches Committee for nominating me to the one of the biggest AVC events for Asian women's volleyball and the last examination of team performance before Paris 2024. Actually, AVC Senior Women's Cup is considered as the most important women's volleyball event in Asia



Dr. Shihab Al Riyami

and I am extremely satisfied to be chosen again for this tournament."

Shihab concluded his statement by saying that the AVC is making great contributions in Asian volleyball development and enhancing Asian volleyball teams' performance through AVC competitions and events.

"Modern volleyball presents many updating aspects such as technical, physical, mental recreation and tactical areas. Athletes' performance has improved significantly because of the technology, and contributed highly in analysing the game. AVC insists the use of technology has improved volleyball in a variety of ways. I totally believe that FIVB and AVC technology have allowed for increased accuracy in refereeing and performance tracking, in addition to increasing participation in sport with decreasing the risk of athletes' injuries as well. Modern volleyball refers to many aspects, including the technology in game and training which has high efficiency for game performance," he ended.

All the participating 14 teams in 2023 PPTV 22nd Asian 'Est Cola' Senior Women's Volleyball Championship will be distributed into four Pools. The hosts, Thailand, are drawn in Group A alongside Magolia and Australia. Group B comprises India, Iran and Japan. South Korea headed Group C besides Chinese Taipei, Uzbekistan and Vietnam. Kazakhstan will vie for a slot in the next round as they will compete with Hong Kong, China and Philippine teams in Group D.



Oman Club edge Bahla, Al Rustaq hold Sohar

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 27

In a riveting match held at Seeb Sports Stadium on Saturday, Oman Club edged out Bahla 1-0 during the second round of the Omantel League.

The game unfolded with intense first-half action, favouring Oman Club players in the midfield who seized numerous opportunities.

Conversely, Bahla's players adeptly countered Oman's offensive advances while progressively inching closer to Oman's goal. However, their efforts lacked the necessary finesse in front of the net.

The first half concluded with an overall moderate technical performance and a lack of genuine scoring chances.

The second half commenced with notable vigour from both teams, though they struggled to find the final touch for goal-scoring. It was in the 52nd minute that Oman Club's Hosni al Hinai surprised everyone, launching a high ball that eluded Bahla's goalkeeper and secured the sole goal of the match.

Following this pivotal goal, Bahla's coach orchestrated several strategic changes, fostering opportunities that their attackers were unfortunately unable to capitalise on. Later in the match, Oman Club's Omar al Hassani received a red card after his second yellow card, resulting in the game ending with Oman Club's victory, 1-0.

Oman Club clinched their first 3 points in the league, a significant rebound from their 1-4 defeat

to Sohar in the initial round. Meanwhile, Bahla maintained a balance of 3 points, earned from their 1-0 victory over Al Nasr in the first round, although they maintained a superior goal difference compared to Oman.

DEFENSIVE PROWESS

A clash of defensive prowess marked the match between Al Rustaq and Sohar, which ended in a goalless draw during the second round of the Omantel League. The encounter took place at Al Rustaq Complex Stadium on Saturday.

The first half witnessed Al Rustaq's dominance, posing the greater threat in front of goal. Sohar Club's defenders remained vigilant, thwarting Al Rustaq's attempts. After the initial 20 minutes, Sohar Club adapted

their strategy, gaining possession and advancing. However, their endeavours failed to generate substantial scoring opportunities, culminating in a goalless first half.

The second half followed a similar pattern, with both teams prioritising defensive solidity. Despite creating several chances, neither side managed to convert them into goals, leading to the match concluding in a deadlock. The game saw two yellow cards, one for Al Rustaq's Abbas al Hashami and another for Sohar's Mohamed Ayad.

Following the result, Al Rustaq's points tally rose to two, having previously drawn 1-1 against Sur in the initial round. Sohar, on the other hand, accumulated 4 points, following their 4-1 triumph over Oman Club in the previous round.

India edge Thailand to book semis



ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, AUG 27

India outlasted Thailand challenge 5-4 in a crunch match to power into the semifinals by topping the Elite group of the Women's Hockey5s Asia Cup in Salalah on Sunday.

India topped with nine points from three matches while Thailand also progressed to the semifinals with six points, courtesy of their two wins earlier.

Japan, who have three points, and Malaysia with no points in the Elite group will play the crossover matches against Challenger group teams next.

Japan are taking on Challenger group second-placed Indonesia while Malaysia are meeting Challenger toppers Hong Kong.

Earlier, favourites India, back after a 7-1 win against Japan, faced a stiff challenge from the in-

form Thais.

At the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex, India raced to lead when Navjot Kaur struck at the start and Dipi Monika Toppo made it 2-0 in the first minute itself.

Anongnat Piresram pulled one back for Thailand in the third minute with a 'challenge' goal.

Dipi struck again in the seventh minute as India led 3-1.

Next few minutes saw Thailand girls come back through a brace from Natthakarn Aunjai as they made the scores level 3-3 at the break.

In the second-half, Thailand took the lead for the first time in the match with a goal from Suwapat Konthong 4-3.

The goal forced a flurry of moves from India as Mahima Choudhary equalised to make it 4-4. When it seemed the match was heading for a draw, Ajmina Kujur struck the

winner for India in the final minute.

HONG KONG TOP GROUP

Earlier, Hong Kong topped the Challenger group with 15 points from 5 matches. Indonesia came second with 12 points.

Hong Kong beat Bangladesh 10-7 in their last group match, while Indonesia beat Chinese Taipei 6-3 in another match.

Hosts Oman lost all their matches in the group as they lost to Iran 4-1 in their last group match.

Bangladesh were third in the Challenger group with nine points from five matches and Chinese Taipei were fourth with six points.

Iran earned their first points with the win over Oman and took fifth spot while the hosts finished last with no points. Oman will face a repeat match against Iran in the play-off for 9/10 position.

Asensio and Mbappe on target as PSG beat Lens 3-1



Marco Asensio (C) celebrates with Paris Saint-Germain's French forward Kylian Mbappe (R) after scoring Paris Saint-Germain's first goal. — AFP

PARIS: Paris St Germain's Marco Asensio scored his first goal for the club and Kylian Mbappe added two more to guide the Ligue 1 champions to a comprehensive 3-1 victory over Lens in their clash at Parc des Princes on Saturday.

Asensio fired his side ahead moments before half-time from outside the box following a quick break, opening his account for his new club following a close-season transfer from Real Madrid.

PSG were not at their best but never looked troubled as Mbappe doubled the advantage in the second half when he rocketed a 20-metre shot into the back of the net. The France forward scored again late on for his third goal in two Ligue 1 games, an impressive start to the campaign despite being frozen out of the squad for weeks in pre-season amid an ongoing contract stand-off.

Lens grabbed a consolation goal when Morgan Guilavogui scored with virtually the last kick of the game.

PSG move up to fourth in the

table with five points from three games, while Lens, who finished second last season, one point behind PSG, have started the new campaign with only a draw from their opening three games. Marseille eased to a 2-0 victory at home to Brest, ending the visitors' 100% start to the Ligue 1 season.

It was a gritty performance and enough for three points as Chancel Mbemba headed in a free-kick inside four minutes.

Home defender Jonathan Clauss cleared off the line from Jeremy Le Douaron after that, before Marseille doubled their advantage midway through the second period.

Ismaila Sarr scored his first goal for the club following his move from Watford, turning in the rebound after Brest goalkeeper Marco Bizot spilled a cross. Marseille move up to second place, level on seven points with leaders AS Monaco. Brest won their opening two games of the season for the first time in their history and remain third. — Reuters



Carlos Alcaraz, of Spain, looks over at his coach after defeating Hubert Hurkacz. — USA TODAY Sports



Novak Djokovic reacts after a play against Taylor Fritz.

— USA TODAY Sports

Djokovic, Alcaraz poised for US Open collision

NEW YORK: Novak Djokovic and Carlos Alcaraz are on a US Open collision course as the final Grand Slam tournament of season gets under way on Monday with American teenager Coco Gauff chasing a breakthrough first major title.

A little more than six weeks after world number one Alcaraz defeated Djokovic in an enthralling finale to the Wimbledon championships, the two men could meet again at Flushing Meadows if the seedings go to play over the next fortnight.

Djokovic and Alcaraz whetted the tennis world's appetite for another blockbuster showdown

at the Cincinnati Open last week, with 23-time Grand Slam singles winner Djokovic downing the 20-year-old Spaniard in a four-hour classic.

Djokovic, 36, is making a long-awaited return to the US Open this year after his refusal to be vaccinated against Covid-19 meant he was unable to gain entry to the United States.

In Djokovic's absence at last year's tournament, Alcaraz announced his arrival on the world stage with a brilliant run to his first US Open crown.

Second seed Djokovic, who opens his campaign on the Arthur Ashe main arena against

France's Alexandre Muller on Monday, says Alcaraz's relentless, swashbuckling style is reminiscent of Rafael Nadal, the 22-time Grand Slam singles champion who misses this year's US Open due to injury.

"Each point is a hustle. Each point is a battle. You feel like you're not going to get maybe in total five free points in the entire match," Djokovic said of Alcaraz. "You've got to basically earn every single point, every single shot, regardless of the conditions."

Alcaraz, who faces Germany's Dominik Koepfer in the first round on Tuesday, said

he is flattered by the Nadal comparison.

"It's great that he knows that every time he's going to play against me, it reminds him playing against Rafa or against the best ones because that means we are in a good path," he said.

Djokovic will reclaim the world number one ranking with a victory over Muller on Monday, regardless of how Alcaraz performs in the tournament.

The Spaniard, meanwhile, must navigate a tricky route to the final that could include 2021 US Open champion Daniil Medvedev and Italy's Jannik Sinner. — AFP

Chelsea sign goalkeeper Petrovic from New England Revolution

LONDON: Chelsea have signed goalkeeper Djordje Petrovic from MLS side New England Revolution for an undisclosed fee on a seven-year contract with an option for an extra year, the Premier League club said on Saturday.

The 23-year-old Serbian international arrives at Stamford Bridge following the departures of Edouard Mendy, who joined Al-Ahli, and Kepa Arrizabalaga, who moved to Real Madrid on loan.

He will compete for a starting berth with Spain's

Robert Sanchez, who moved to Stamford Bridge earlier this month from Brighton & Hove Albion. "I have always dreamed of joining one of the biggest clubs in the world. Today I have achieved that goal and I am very happy," Petrovic said in a statement.

Petrovic left Serbian side Cukaricki for New England Revolution in April 2022 and made 48 appearances. He was nominated for the MLS Newcomer of the Year Award and MLS Goalkeeper of the Year Award. — Reuters



Djordje Petrovic (99) grabs the ball during the second half against the Queretaro FC at Gillette Stadium. — USA TODAY Sports

Pakistan whitewash Afghanistan 3-0 to top ODI rankings

COLOMBO: Pakistan rose to the top of the one-day international rankings with a 59-run win against Afghanistan in the third and final match in Colombo on Saturday, claiming a 3-0 series whitewash.

Pakistan were helped to 268-8 in 50 overs by a solid 79-ball 67 from Mohammed Rizwan and an 86-ball innings of 60 from skipper Babar Azam.

They then dismissed their opponents for 209 in 48.4 overs with number nine Mujeeb Ur Rahman top-scoring for Afghanistan with a 37-ball 64 for his maiden half century.

Rahman smashed five sixes and as many boundaries, racing

to a new Afghan record for the fastest ODI fifty off just 26 balls before he stepped on to his stump and was out hit wicket off Shaheen Shah Afridi.

Rashid Khan was the previous record holder for Afghanistan with a 27-ball fifty against Ireland in Abu Dhabi last year.

Rahman and Shahidullah Kamal (37 off 65 balls) shared a valiant stand of 57 for the eighth wicket to give some respectability to the total after their team were reeling at 97-7.

Rahman also added 45 for the ninth wicket with Fareed Ahmad Malik who scored 17.

Pakistan won the first match by 142 runs and by one wicket in the



Pakistan's players celebrate after winning the third and final one-day international (ODI). — AFP

second -- both games played in Hambantota.

Pakistan had been at number two in the International Cricket Council ODI rankings before the series but the 3-0 triumph lifted them above Australia.

Pakistan were briefly number one earlier this year.

Pakistan medium pacer Faheem Ashraf removed Rahmanullah Gurbaz, who made a century in the last game, for five and Ibrahim Zadran for an 11-ball duck to finish with 2-43.

Pakistan rested frontline bowlers Haris Rauf and Naseem Shah in four changes but they were still good enough with the ball as spinners Shadab Khan

(3-42) and Mohammed Nawaz (2-45) shared five wickets.

"Yes, we are number one," said Azam, who is also the number one batsman in the ODI rankings.

"All credit to boys. We have worked hard for the last of couple of months and it has taken us to this point, so I am really happy."

Afghanistan skipper Hashmatullah Shahidi admitted his team was not up to the mark.

"We didn't apply ourselves," said Shahidi. "We are disappointed with the performance but there is a lot of learning." It was Rizwan and Azam who anchored Pakistan's innings after they won the toss and batted. — AFP



When I reached 30 km I knew I felt strong and decided to push. I had great energy and that allowed me to go. Then at 35 km I could surge again. That was always my plan and I managed to do it. The pace was high but I had more to give. It was tough but I always felt I had the power.

VICTOR KIPLANGAT



UGANDA’S KIPLANGAT WINS MEN’S WORLD MARATHON TITLE

BUDAPEST: Ugandan Victor Kiplangat won the men’s marathon at the World Athletics Championships in Budapest on Sunday after producing a devastating final third to leave his rivals trailing in his wake.

The Commonwealth champion clocked a winning time of 2hr 08min 53sec on the streets of the Hungarian capital after breaking free in the last 15 kilometres.

Israel’s Ethiopian-born Maru Teferi followed up on his European silver last year with second place in 2:09.12, while Ethiopian Leul Gebresilase took bronze (2:09.19).

“This has been my dream and it has come true at last,” said Kiplangat.

“Last year I was Commonwealth Games champion and that made me think this year I must become world champion. Now my prayers have been answered and hopefully next year in Paris I will become Olympic champion too.”

Kiplangat added: “It was hard today because it was so hot but I felt comfortable because I prepared well for this weather. I knew it was possible because I had trained well.”

WELL-TIMED SURGE

Kiplangat and teammate Stephen Kissa, along with Ethiopians Gebresilase, Tsegaye Getachew and Tamirat Tola, and Kenya’s Timothy Kiplagat went through the 30 km mark in a tight grouping in 1hr 32.

Kissa then took a tumble after catching Kiplagat’s heel, leaving Kiplangat to move clear with Gebresilase.

Over the next 5 km, Kiplangat, 23, surged to successfully drop the lead pack, Gebresilase falling 15sec behind.

“When I reached 30 km I knew I felt strong and decided to push,” said Kiplangat. “I had great energy and that allowed me to go. Then at 35 km I could surge again.

“That was always my plan and I managed to do it. The pace was high but I had more to give. It was tough but I always felt I had the power.”

Teferi moved up through the field for silver, while reigning world champion Tola, who set a championship record when winning in Eugene last year, dropped out.

Kissa did well to recover from his fall to finish fifth, just behind Tebello Ramakongoana of Lesotho.

Teferi, who was left with a torn running top after also taking a tumble around the 30 km mark, said sweltering weather conditions had made it “very hard for everybody”.

“I am grateful I managed to finish with the silver,” he said. “I wanted to get the best out of me and this competition was my biggest target. I am glad I managed to fulfil my dream.”

Ethiopia’s defending champ Tola said he pulled out because of stomach pains.

“I was trying my best. I was feeling good until 30 km,” he said. “But after that, I started to have a bad feeling in my stomach.

“I did not sleep the whole night because I had a problem with my stomach and I was about to puke but nothing came out because I ate rice with a lot of salt.” — AFP

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ALO lauds health and safety provisions in Oman's New Labour Law



QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 27

The Director General of the Arab Labour Organization (ALO), Fayez Ali al Mutairi, has called for safe and healthy workplaces for all workers in the Arab world. Al Mutairi made the call in a speech at a forum on occupational health and safety in Salalah on Sunday. He said that the ALO is committed to achieving social justice and improving working conditions for all workers. He pointed to the ALO's 19 conventions and 9 recommendations on occupational health and safety, which he said promote the principles of decent work, reduce inequalities, and guarantee a minimum level of social insurance.

Al Mutairi also commended the Sultanate of Oman for its efforts to improve occupational health and safety. He noted that the recent Labour Law, promulgated by Royal Decree 53/2023, includes a number of important provisions to protect the health and safety of workers. "The right to a safe and healthy work environment is a fundamental human right," Al Mutairi said. "I call on all stakeholders to work together to ensure that all workers in the Arab world have access to safe and healthy workplaces."

The forum was organised by the ALO and the Ministry of Labour with the support of Oman Chamber of Commerce,

and Huawei. It brought together representatives from government, employers, and workers to discuss ways to improve occupational health and safety in the Arab world.

In addition to Al Mutairi, other speakers at the forum included the Minister of Labour of the Sultanate of Oman, Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain, and the Director of the ALO's Arab Institute for Occupational Health and Safety, Rania Rushdie.

The forum was divided into two dialogue sessions. The first session, titled "Occupational Safety and Health Standards and Their Role in Achieving the Eighth Goal of the Sustainable Development Plan 2030", was chaired by Nasser bin Salim al Hadhrami.

The speakers discussed the importance of occupational safety and health standards in achieving the eighth goal of the Sustainable Development Plan 2030, which is to promote inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment, and decent work for all. They also discussed the experience of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia in achieving the requirements of the Sustainable Development Goals 2030 related to occupational safety and health.

The second session, titled "Innovation and New Technologies in the Fields of Occupational Safety and Health", was chaired by Eng Humaid bin Mohammed al Balushi.

G20 trade decisions to benefit Oman's business sector: Al Yousef

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 27

The G20 Trade & Investment Ministers' Meeting (TIMM) held in the vibrant city of Jaipur in India, was attended by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef (pictured, left side), Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, along with senior officials.

It concluded on August 25 with a groundbreaking consensus on five concrete and action-oriented deliverables on the digitalisation of trade documents; enhanced access to information for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs); a G20 Generic Mapping Framework for global value chains (GVCs) containing key building blocks of data, analysis and representation of GVC data; the voluntary sharing of best practices on Mutual Recognition Agreements (MRAs) for professional services; and the introduction of a 2023 G20 Standards dialogue.

These have now been adopted in the 'Outcome Document' of the Trade & Investment Ministerial Meeting.

Welcoming the results of this high-level meeting, Al Yousef stated: "With discussions



focused on issues related to a fair, sustainable and transparent multilateral trading system, this G20 meeting was highly productive.

Collective international efforts such as this are indispensable in ensuring this is achieved. I was proud of the Omani delegation's interventions over the two days, in particular with regards to WTO reforms, the strengthening of global supply chains and paperless trade.

Indeed, I fully expect the outcomes to be beneficial for Omani businesses as they enter and expand their operations in the global markets."

Al Yousef went on to highlight how "Oman looks forward to joining G20 members at the 13th World Trade Organisation (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Abu Dhabi next year and to the introduction of new measures that will safeguard the future of the WTO as the custodian of the

multilateral trading system."

Attended by trade ministers from G20 countries and guest including the US, UK, China, Canada, Indonesia, Japan, EU, Republic of Korea, Türkiye, Saudi Arabia, France, Bangladesh, Egypt, Netherlands, Singapore and the UAE, the Jaipur meeting provided an important opportunity for the Omani Delegation to further trade and investment discussions with key trading partners.

Omani rial index rate rises 1.6 per cent

MUSCAT: The actual exchange rate index for the Omani rial increased by the end of June 2023 by 1.6 per cent, recording 115.3 points, compared to 113.5 points at the end of June 2022, according to preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The total foreign assets of the Central Bank of Oman increased by 3 per cent by end-June, to reach of RO 6.586 billion, compared to the same period in 2022, which



amounted to RO 6.392 billion.

The statistics indicated that the domestic liquidity amounted to RO 21.479 billion at end of H1, an increase of 3.4 per cent compared to the same period in 2022.

The total cash issued increased

by 1.9 per cent, to reach about RO 1.765 billion, compared to RO 1.733 billion last year.

The money supply in its narrow sense, which consists of total cash outside the banking system, in addition to current accounts and demand deposits in local currency, decreased by 4.6 per cent, recording RO 5.786 billion

On the other hand, private sector deposits in commercial banks and Islamic windows at the end of last June amounted to about

RO 17.999 billion, an increase of 2.7 per cent compared to the same period of 2022, which amounted to RO 17.524 billion.

Total loans and financing in commercial banks and Islamic windows increased by the end of last June, by 6.5 per cent, to reach RO 30.272 billion, compared to RO 28.416 billion in the same period last year, while the average interest rate on total loans decreased by 1.2 per cent, to reach 5.435 per cent at the end of June. — ONA

Oman, Korea ink MoU to support green transformation

MUSCAT: Oman's Ministry of Energy and Minerals signed an MoU with the Republic of Korea represented by the Ministry of Environment to collaborate in the field of green transformation and energy sustainability.

Signing on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman was Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, and on the Korean side, by Han Hwa-Jin, Minister of Environment.

The two countries pledged

to support global efforts to accelerate cooperation in the field of green transformation policies and technologies between them.

The MoU urges the two sides to cooperate in the areas, policies and programmes of green transformation and sustainable technologies for the environment in the production, storage, delivery and use of green energy, capacity building to respond to the climate crisis, industries that contribute to green



transformation, research and development activities between the competent authorities in the two countries, education and awareness about green transformation.

Oman has adopted a strategy to reduce carbon emissions, achieve a balance between sustainable development, limit the repercussions of climate change, benefit from clean technology and diversify energy sources, in line with the steps

taken to achieve zero-carbon neutrality in 2050.

The Ministry of Energy and Minerals is working to establish local and international partnerships that contribute to achieving its orientations towards green energy according to the national strategy for an orderly transition to the zero-neutrality plan, and has actually started working on green energy projects by launching green hydrogen investment packages. — ONA

OQ wins ICF Coaching Impact Award

MUSCAT: OQ, the global integrated energy group, has been honoured with the prestigious ICF Coaching Impact Award by the International Coaching Federation (ICF). The award recognises OQ's exceptional use of coaching to enhance organisational culture, attain remarkable objectives, empower staff, and drive national progress. Presented biennially to the foremost emerging organisation, the award signifies the highest global coaching standards.

OQ's recognition applauds its dedication to human development, emphasising staff qualification and societal support through personal coaching.

The group's executive management plays a pivotal role, fostering these initiatives to strengthen coaching programmes.

From 2021 to 2023, OQ coached 530 employees, trained 80 leaders to coach teams, and achieved a return on investment in coaching of around \$500,000. With 1,775 coaching hours



completed and 49 coaches trained, 6 are internationally accredited.

The positive impact of coaching and employment extended to the public and private sectors through the coaching programmes.

OQ triumphed over a competitive field of over 100 international companies to secure the ICF Coaching Impact Award.

Out of the 46 finalists, OQ emerged as the global leader in

this category. OQ's culture of continuous growth has thrived in partnership with Takatuf, its development collaborator.

This collaboration has empowered leaders, trained employee cohorts, and guided fresh graduates towards International Coaching Federation accreditation.

Olivia al Farsi, Vice President People and Culture said:

“Coaching is vital in Oman's evolving landscape and a crucial skill. At OQ, we invest in cultivating coaching expertise to reshape our culture, elevate business results, and strengthen adaptability.

This milestone prompts us to extend coaching to teams for stronger internal and external ties, and to individuals to enhance career and family well-being.”

OTE holds Isuzu customer meet in Salalah

SALALAH: Owners of Isuzu trucks in Salalah turned out in sizable numbers for a ‘Customer Meet’ that underscored the robust popularity of the globally renowned commercial vehicle brand in the city.

Organised by OTE Group, exclusive distributors of Isuzu trucks in the Sultanate of Oman, the event drew representatives from a wide cross section of companies operating in the transport, retail, consumer and distribution sectors. It was held at a prestigious city hotel against the backdrop of Salalah's festive khareef holiday season.

While the attendees received OTE Group's unstinting kudos for their staunch patronage of Isuzu trucks, special praise was reserved for a local contracting firm for its



outstanding support to the brand.

Salalah-based Alpha Electric & Contracting Co had recently purchased 19 Isuzu D-Max pick-up trucks in a robust demonstration of its faith in the iconic brand. An excellent-grade contractor for OETC, the national power transmission operator, among other players in the electricity sector, Alpha Electric

& Contracting's operational performance is predicated on, among other factors, the availability of sturdy, dependable and efficient pick-up trucks to haul personnel and hardware to remote sites across inhospitable terrain.

Speaking at the event, Eng Mousa al Aqtesh, Chief Engineer — Alpha Electric & Contracting Co, said the company was extremely pleased with its decision to acquire an all D-Max fleet to bolster its transportation capabilities.

With its stylish design, sturdy build and leading-edge safety features, it is the vehicle of choice for businesses seeking a combination of power and efficiency, he noted.

The attendees were also invited

to participate in an ongoing raffle scheme, offering Isuzu customers the opportunity to win from an exciting array of prizes, including a Hyundai Accent and LG LED TV sets. OTE executives also shared insights on the latest offerings from Isuzu D-Max and the popular N-Series of trucks, representative models of which were on display at the venue.

From its trademark durability to powerful performance, the all-new Isuzu D-Max is more capable than ever before — the result of the brand's unparalleled experience in creating the world's finest commercial vehicles. Just as popular are Isuzu's N Series trucks, which come in an unequalled number of variants, including crew cabs, tippers and 4x4s.

Code with Vodafone successfully concludes first phase of programme

MUSCAT: Code with Vodafone, the programme that aims to enable the rise of a new coder generation, has successfully completed its first phase and is now looking to the future with the second phase set to include 200 students from across Oman.

Designed and executed in partnership with Code Academy, the upcoming phase will continue the student's leaning journey through online workshops running until July 2024.

The first phase of Code with Vodafone has already borne exciting fruit as students were required to work on individual assignments, applying their leanings from the programme to develop web base or app base projects.

The top three concepts received special recognition from Vodafone and included a recycling app, an educational game on outer space as well as creative hotel website.

Sayyid Fahad bin Abdulaziz bin Saud al Busaidy, Chief Corporate Affairs Officer at Vodafone Oman,



said: “We are extremely excited to see the progress that has already been made by our aspiring tech whizzes thanks to Code with Vodafone.

The ideas produced in Phase 1 reached a very high standard and proved how much talent there is across Oman waiting to be tapped into.

The hundreds of students set to take part in Phase 2 will no doubt similarly exceed our expectations and push Code with Vodafone towards realising its ultimate goal and build the foundations for a new vocational career path in

Oman.”

The young minds between the ages 10-13 were trained in problem solving and programming in the Python language, building smartphone apps and designing websites. In the area of web design, they delved into the basics of WordPress, gaining useful insights on the ins of creating a website. The students also learnt to create webpages, design logos for their websites, and add photos and videos.

When it came to smartphone Apps, they gained valuable knowledge on building mobile

games using Thinkable, where they were able to design and create interactive applications without the need to use code.

The students further built their skills in basic programming, effective planning, and methods of solving programming problems.

Dr Sultan al Yahyai, the Training & Outreach Director, said: “Our students' learning journey may have only just begun thanks to Code with Vodafone, but the future is already looking bright judging by the fantastic levels of innovation and creativity shown during Phase 1 of the programme.

In addition to the problem-solving and programming skills that have already been tackled in Phase 1, our students will now be educated on fast-moving sectors including cyber security and emerging technologies such as data science and AI, in addition to soft skills and innovation, with guest speakers to inspire them along the way on their empowering learning experience.”



MCBS celebrates graduation of students from BTEC programme

MUSCAT: Under the auspices of Jamal bin Ahmed al Abri, Head of the Education and Research Committee of the Shura Council, and in the presence of Dr Moosa bin Abdullah al Kindi, Dean of the Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS), and parents, the Modern College of Business and Science celebrated on Saturday morning, August 26, 2023 at the Intercity Hotel in Al Khuwair, the graduation of a new batch of students from the international (BTEC) programme, majoring in business administration and information technology. Modern College of Business and Science is the only institution in Oman to offer BTEC Level III programme.

In his opening speech, Dr Moosa bin Abdullah al Kindi, Dean of the College, referred to the originality of this international (BTEC) programme in terms of its efficiency in professional preparation for its students and providing them with competencies for employability after graduation, and the ability of this type of education to contribute to achieving what Oman Vision 2040 is.

In his speech, the Dean of the College called on the students to benefit from the skills and knowledge they acquired from the programme and consider it as a starting point for a successful practical life and to efficiently assume the expected national responsibilities.

Jamal bin Ahmed al Abri, the patron of the ceremony, pointed out the economic importance of the presence of various educational programmes in the Sultanate of Oman, such as this international programme that attracts Omani students as well as international students, which embodies two fundamental issues in the education file, namely, the international cooperation and benefiting from international experiences efficiently on the one hand, and improving the indicator of attracting international students to the Sultanate of Oman so that Oman is an educational destination for students from different countries of the world.

NBO's Muzn wins best Islamic banking window 2023 award



MUSCAT: Muzn, National Bank of Oman's (NBO) Islamic banking window, has been named the 'Best Islamic Window 2023' by the World Business Outlook. This remarkable achievement stands as a testament to the bank's unwavering leadership and exceptional performance in the Islamic finance industry.

Marking its 10-year anniversary this year, Muzn Islamic Banking has consistently demonstrated growth since its inception.

The bank remains steadfast in its commitment to fostering the growth of Oman's Islamic Finance sector by offering customers Sharia-compliant services that align with their beliefs.

Commenting on the achievement, Salima al Marzouqi, Assistant General Manager and Chief Islamic Banking Officer, said, “We are pleased to receive this prestigious award.

As the first licensed Islamic banking window in Oman, we hold a constant commitment to deliver innovative, competitive and quality Sharia compliant products and services that cater to the needs of our customers.

This award joins a series of accolades we have received, solidifying our dedication to providing an uncompromising banking experience. It serves as motivation to continue our contributions to Islamic banking

in Oman.” Driven by a customer-centric approach, Muzn Islamic Banking has introduced an array of new products and invested in cutting-edge technology to ensure utmost customer satisfaction. The bank's diverse offerings include a range of Sharia-compliant retail and corporate banking products and services.

Among its recent product launches, Muzn introduced the Kids Wakala account with tiered profit rates and free takaful cover, catering to the younger generation.

Additionally, the bank extended its investment products to support endowments, mosques and Quran schools through the Muzn Tijarh Account, further enhancing its commitment to various segments of society.

Complementing these endeavours, Muzn provides a highly secure service that encompasses a diverse array of cutting-edge digital solutions. These solutions empower customers to effortlessly oversee, govern, and automate their payment processes.

Notably, Muzn offers two pivotal tools: the Muzn Mobile App and the Corporate Internet Banking platform. These services have been thoughtfully designed to cater to the distinct needs of all customers, irrespective of their age or whether they are individuals or businesses.



OETC achieves major milestone in RO 180m 'Rabt' phase 1 project

JOMAR MENDOZA

MUSCAT, AUG 27

In a significant development for Oman's electricity infrastructure, the Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) — a part of Nama Group — has successfully achieved a remarkable progress percentage of 98.55 per cent in Phase 1 of its national strategic project, 'Rabt'.

This initiative aims to connect the electricity network between the northern and southern governorates of the country, promoting enhanced power transmission and fostering economic growth.

With a total investment of RO 180 million, Phase 1 of the 'Rabt' project marks a critical step towards strengthening Oman's power transmission capabilities.

The successful completion of this phase is a testament to the OETC's commitment to modernise and expand the country's electrical infrastructure.

The primary objective of the 'Rabt' project is to establish a robust and reliable electricity network that will ensure a seamless flow of power between the northern and southern governorates of Oman.

The completion of Phase 1 brings Oman closer to achieving this goal, as it entails the construction of vital overhead transmission lines (OHL) spanning a length of over 669 kilometres. The project has also prioritised safety, with



over 15 million safe man-hours dedicated to its implementation. This underscores the OETC's commitment to maintaining the highest standards of safety for its workforce and the communities it serves. By connecting the electricity networks of the northern and southern governorates, the 'Rabt' project will significantly improve the stability, reliability, and efficiency of Oman's power transmission infrastructure. This, in turn, will contribute to the country's economic growth by facilitating the development of industries, businesses, and residential areas across the nation.

The successful completion of Phase 1 has set the stage for subsequent phases of the 'Rabt' project, which will further expand and optimise Oman's electricity transmission capabilities.

Upon its full completion, the project will enable the seamless exchange of power across different governorates of the country, reducing dependency on localised power sources and enhancing overall energy security.

In the subsequent stage, the interconnector is planned to extend southward for an additional distance of approximately 502 kilometres, starting from Duqm and reaching

all the way to Thamrait, where it will connect with the Dhofar System. The estimated investment for Phase 2 amounts to around RO 190 million.

By the year 2025, upon achieving full operational status, the Rabt Interconnector Project will establish a unified national grid that will efficiently distribute competitively-priced electricity to a significant portion of consumers. This development will eliminate the need for diesel-powered generation in most areas of the country and will facilitate the integration of solar and wind-based power generation technologies.



Agreement signed to establish industrial and medical gases manufacturing unit in SOHAR Freezone

MUSCAT: SOHAR Port and Freezone announced yesterday the signing of a land lease agreement with Air Care Systems Company (FZC) LLC for the production of industrial and medical gases unit in SOHAR Freezone.

Under the terms of this agreement, Air Care Systems Company is set to manufacture crucial gases, including Liquid Oxygen, Liquid Nitrogen, and Liquid Argon.

This advanced production unit will be empowered by Air Separation Unit (ASU) technology, ensuring top-tier quality and efficiency. With Pak Oman Investment Company the structural and financial advisor for the project.

The signing ceremony took place in the presence of HH Sayyid Juland bin Jaifar bin Salim al Said, Chairman — Pak Oman Investment Company and Imran Chaudry, Ambassador of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan to the Sultanate of Oman, along with executive management of SOHAR Port and Freezone and Air Care Systems Company.

Covering a land area of 15,000 sqm, this project is a convergence of Chinese and European technologies, backed by a robust \$10 million investment.

Leveraging natural air

as a feedstock, the ASU project manages power and fuel resources strategically for optimal production efficiency.

With a target of daily production capacity of 110 tonnes per day, the project aims to extend its market reach across the GCC, Yemen, and the MENA region, positioning Oman as a key player in the gas manufacturing industry.

Ahmed Ali Babar, Director of Air Care Systems stated: "Choosing SOHAR Freezone to anchor this project was a strategic decision driven by the unparalleled opportunities it offers to investors.

By leveraging the strategic advantages provided by SOHAR Freezone and its proximity to key markets, this signing aligns with our vision to enhance the availability of critical gases locally, benefiting healthcare and industries."

The primary objective of this project is to cater for the escalating regional demand for industrial and medical gases while simultaneously reinforcing the self-reliance of the healthcare sector.

The project aligns with several objectives, including fostering industrial growth, supplying local contractors with essential gases, and promoting technological advancement.

OHB disburses housing loans to 2,000 families in H1

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, AUG 27

In the first half of 2023, Oman Housing Bank (OHB) has approved subsidised housing loans totalling more than RO 86 million, benefiting over 2,000 families across the Sultanate of Oman.

The efforts were widespread, with the Muscat branch granting 502 loans, the Salalah branch approving 92 loans, and the Suhar branch supporting 276 loans.

Other branches also played a crucial role: the Sur branch facilitated 115 loans, the Nizwa

branch 267, the Khasab branch 17, the Al Buraimi branch 147, and the Ibra branch 89.

The Al Rustaq branch stood out with an impressive 515 loan approvals. Moosa bin Masoud al Jadidi, CEO — OHB, expressed his thoughts on the banks performance in the first half of the year: "Urban development embodies a holistic journey towards progress. The expansion of Oman's housing sector perfectly harmonises with our nation's strategies and aspirations, nurturing a path to sustainable growth echoing one of the key

principles of Oman Vision 2040, with a primary goal of establishing modern urban communities and enriching the lives of Omanis throughout the nation." Al Jadidi emphasised, "Enhancing living standards for everyone is one of the government's core mandates. As OHB we are working to play our part in this vision by prioritise the development of the housing sector through subsidised housing loans to eligible citizens.

Looking at our track record, since our inception in 1977 up until the end of 2022, we've extended an impressive 52,000 loans totalling

over RO 1.4 billion." OHB is diligently crafting a comprehensive national programme to expedite housing loan applications and reduce wait times for those seeking subsidised housing.

This strategic move aligns with the bank's goal of promoting urbanisation while ensuring eligibility criteria are met and citizen expectations are fulfilled.

Al Jadidi added, "This programme will also help us better understand the needs of our beneficiaries, particularly when it comes to subsidised housing loans."

Renewable energy being explored for Oman's Musandam

CONRAD PRABHU

MUSCAT, AUG 27

In line with the government's Net-Zero commitments, Oman's power authorities are studying the potential to harness solar and wind resources to meet electricity demand growth in Musandam Governorate — a strategically vital Omani enclave overlooking the Strait of Hormuz.

Infrastructure and economic development in the governorate has, of late, been on the upswing as the government seeks to leverage Musandam's strategic location, distinctive geography and natural wealth to drive investment in tourism, livestock, fisheries, light manufacturing and mining, among other economic activities.

Meeting the governorate's

future energy growth demands amid the current transition away from fossil fuel powered generation is a significant challenge for authorities, primarily because Musandam is presently served by local standalone systems unconnected to the national grid.

But to address this challenge, Nama Power and Water Procurement Company (PWP) — the sole national buyer of power and water output — is weighing two notable options. The first centres on opportunities to connect Musandam's Power System with the networks of a neighbouring country (the only practical option in this case being the United Arab Emirates, which borders the governorate).

Harnessing renewable energy resources is the other option.

"PWP is exploring several sites within Musandam Governorate to develop wind and/or solar projects," the company — part of Nama Group — noted in its recent 7-Year Outlook Statement.

"PWP will continue exploring and investigating the availability of sites and potential of wind and solar in Musandam (Governorate)," it added. Musandam's local economy and its population of around 54,000 people currently receive their power needs from two sets of supplies.

The first comprises a network of diesel powered generators owned and operated by Tanweer (a subsidiary of Nama Group). Total generation capacity of these plants, located in Khasab and Dibba, is about 92 MW.



Supplementing supplies from Tanweer is the relatively new Musandam Independent Power Project (IPP) with a capacity of

123 MW powered primarily by natural gas.

Under PWP's energy demand growth projections, peak demand

in the governorate is expected to grow from 80 MW in 2022 to 104 MW in 2029, an average increase of 4 per cent per year.

In the high case scenario, peak demand is projected to grow by an average 6 per cent per annum to reach 119 MW in 2029, fuelled by expectations of increased tourism, fishery and other economic developmental activities.

With diesel-based generation from Tanweer scheduled to fall out of contract by the end of 2026, alternative generation capacity — potentially renewables-based — will have to be explored, says PPP, adding that it plans to study suitable alternatives in collaboration with stakeholders such as Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) and OQ Group.

Marketing strategies for a competitive edge



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The author is a renowned coach, trainer and consultant.

Assalaam-Alaikum, have you ever wondered why some startups succeed while others fail despite having a great product? The answer often lies in the marketing strategies they employ.

In today's fast-paced world, having a great product is not enough. You need to market it effectively to stand out from the crowd and attract customers. In this article, we will discuss some essential marketing strategies that can give your startup a competitive edge.

1. Understand your target audience: The first step in any marketing strategy is to understand your target audience. Who are they? What are their needs and pain points? What channels do they use to consume information?

Conducting market research will help you answer these questions and tailor your marketing efforts accordingly.

2. Develop a unique value proposition (UVP): Your UVP is what sets you apart from your competitors. It is the reason why customers should choose your product or service over others. Make sure your UVP is clear, compelling, and communicated consistently across all marketing channels.

3. Optimise your online presence: In today's digital age, your online presence is crucial. Ensure your website is user-friendly, mobile-optimised, and contains relevant content. Utilise social media platforms to engage with your audience and share valuable content.

4. Content marketing: Create and share valuable, relevant

content that addresses your target audience's needs and pain points. This not only helps in attracting and retaining customers but also positions your startup as an authority in your niche.

5. Email marketing: Email marketing is one of the most cost-effective marketing strategies. Build an email list and send regular updates, offers, and valuable content to your subscribers. Make sure your emails are personalised and engaging.

6. Search engine optimisation (SEO): Optimise your website and content for search engines to increase your visibility and attract organic traffic. Use relevant keywords, create high-quality content, and get backlinks from authoritative sites.

7. Pay-per-click advertising (PPC): PPC advertising allows you to reach your target audience

quickly by placing ads on search engines or social media platforms. Be sure to optimise your ad copy, keywords, and targeting to get the best results.

8. Social media marketing: Use social media platforms to engage with your audience, share valuable content, and promote your products or services. Make sure your social media strategy is aligned with your overall marketing strategy.

9. Influencer marketing: Collaborate with influencers who have a strong following in your niche. This can help you reach a broader audience and build trust and credibility for your brand.

10. Analyse and optimise: Regularly analyse the performance of your marketing strategies and optimise them for better results. Use analytics tools to track key metrics like traffic, conversion

rate, and customer acquisition cost.

Remember, there is no one-size-fits-all marketing strategy. What works for one startup may not work for another. It is essential to test different strategies, analyse the results, and optimise your efforts for the best results.

As the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "The strong is not the one who overcomes the people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger." Similarly, a strong marketing strategy is not about overpowering your competitors but about controlling your message and delivering it effectively to your target audience.

Stay tuned for our next article, where we will discuss "The Power of Branding in Startup Success." Ma'as salama!

Is Japan-style deflation coming to China?



TAKATOSHI ITO

The author, a former Japanese deputy vice minister of finance, is a professor at the School of International and Public Affairs at Columbia University and a senior professor at the National Graduate Institute for Policy Studies in Tokyo.



Workers are seen at a construction site in Tianjin, China. – Reuters

Recent economic news from China has triggered the same helpless, sinking feeling that gripped me when Japan's property bubble collapsed in 1991-92. Will this sense of déjà vu continue, with China apparently heading down the same path of deflation and stagnation on which Japan embarked three decades ago?

Earlier this month, Evergrande — the massive Chinese real-estate developer that defaulted on its debt in 2021 — filed for Chapter 15 bankruptcy protection in the United States in the hopes of restructuring its dollar-denominated debts.

(Chapter 15 allows a US court to intervene in an insolvency case involving another country.)

And now the property developer Country Garden has missed \$22.5 million in payments for offshore bonds and suspended trading in 11 onshore bonds, raising the prospect of a default.

These are hardly isolated incidents. China's real-estate sector — long a leading engine of GDP growth — is buckling under the weight of falling prices, a huge and growing inventory of unsold housing and office buildings, and highly indebted developers. A property-bubble collapse seems likelier every day.

The implications for growth could be dire. Annual Japanese GDP growth amounted to 4-5 per cent, on average, from the mid-1970s through the 1980s. After the property bubble burst, that rate sank to 0-2 per cent. To this day, Japan's economy has not recaptured its pre-bubble dynamism.

China is already experiencing a sharp growth slowdown. While it is perfectly normal for a fast-growing emerging-market economy to slow as income per capita increases, the scale of China's slowdown in 2022 and 2023 is notable. In the second quarter of this year, quarterly GDP grew by just 0.8 per cent, compared to 2.2 per cent in the first quarter.

To be sure, second-quarter growth amounted to 6.3 per cent in year-on-year terms, and the government's annual growth target of 5 per cent may yet be achieved. Nonetheless, China's economic prospects appear to be dimming rapidly. Falling

inflation — the consumer price index declined last month by 0.3 per cent year on year — further darkens the outlook, as it points to possible deflation.

While China's travails can be blamed partly on its delayed exit from its zero-Covid policy, weaker investment slowdown has played a major role. Foreign portfolio investors are pulling out of Chinese capital markets, and inward foreign direct investment is declining fast.

This is partly the result of the US-China decoupling. But it is also a reaction to China's anti-espionage law, under which foreign businesses have been prosecuted for activities that are normal everywhere else in the world.

It was under that law, for example, that a Japanese employee of the drug-maker Astellas was detained in March (he has yet to be released). Not surprisingly, foreign companies are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit employees willing to work in China.

The manipulation and obfuscation of data by Chinese authorities offers yet more reason for pessimism. China's recent announcement that it would no longer disclose youth

unemployment figures suggests that the level of joblessness among young Chinese people is truly dire. With even official data showing that China's population began to decline last year, growing unemployment (and underemployment) can mean only one thing: the economy as a whole is weakening fast.

China's demographic decline is its own cause for concern. As Japan can attest, a shrinking working-age population stokes powerful social and fiscal pressures, not least ballooning pension costs and worker shortages in labour-intensive industries, including medical and long-term care.

Given decades of fertility-control policies, China will confront a much faster demographic transition than Japan did. And while it has expanded social-security protections in recent years, much more must be done to meet the demographic challenge ahead.

Two factors unique to China will affect how any economic crisis unfolds. First, because a large share of real-estate investment is carried out through so-called local government financing vehicles, the sector's performance has a direct impact on public balance sheets. Debt held by

LGFVs reached an estimated 57 trillion (\$7.8 trillion) — or 42 per cent of GDP — at the end of last year.

Given this, if a property bubble bursts, local governments will suffer severe debt distress, and may even default, potentially delivering a sharp blow to both domestic and international investors.

To help mitigate the risks, the central government has authorised local governments to issue their own bonds, revenues from which can be used to repay LGFV debts. But, while this would improve balance-sheet transparency, it is ultimately just substituting one form of debt for another.

The second factor unique to China is that its biggest four banks are state-owned, so the central bank and the government can always step in to provide needed capital and avert a banking crisis. Repeated capital injections might be viewed as a sign of moral hazard.

But only 20 per cent of non-performing loans (NPLs) in China are the result of risk-management failures by banks; the rest are loans that were directed by the government or issued to distressed state-

owned enterprises (SOEs). So, any bailout is ultimately just a case of the government taking responsibility for the lending it directed.

If the property bubble bursts, China's banks and government must avoid the mistakes Japan made three decades ago. For starters, full and timely disclosure of NPLs is essential.

Chinese banks must not succumb to the "evergreening" temptation and extend new loans to insolvent "zombie" borrowers so that they appear healthy. And where capital injections are needed, they must be delivered quickly.

Likewise, China's government should be taking steps to stop the evergreening of SOEs and real-estate companies, and ensure that banks and LGFVs pursue debt restructuring, supported by capital injections if needed. Local governments should also be allowed to raise taxes, so that they can use the added revenues to pay down their debts.

If China fails to address the risks that are piling up in its economy, a Japan-style period of stagnation and deflation will become inevitable. And this time the entire world will suffer.

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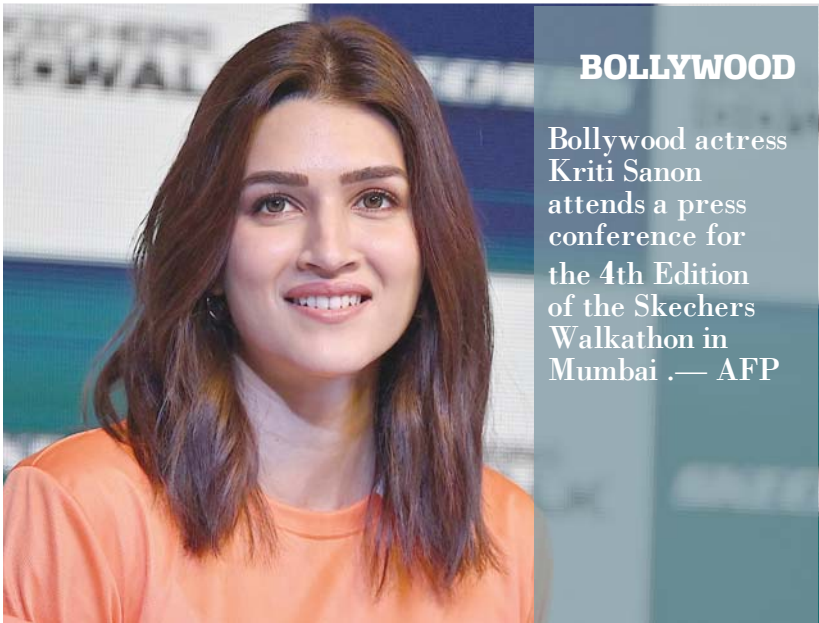
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FILM

French actor Matthieu Kassovitz and French director Yann Gozlan pose during a photocall for the film 'Visions' during the 16th Francophone Angoulême film festival in Angoulême, western France.—AFP



BOLLYWOOD

Bollywood actress Kriti Sanon attends a press conference for the 4th Edition of the Skechers Walkathon in Mumbai .— AFP



MUSIC

Norwegian singer Marie Ulven Ringheim aka “Girl in Red” performs on stage during the 20th edition of the Rock en Seine music festival in Saint-Cloud, southwestern Paris. —AFP



LIFESTYLE

Children pose for a picture as people attend an event for the anniversary of Ukraine's Independence Day in Warsaw, Poland.—Reuters



FOOD

Sushi chef Jasy Choi prepares seafood in a kitchen he runs for takeaway Japanese food in Hong Kong. —AFP

art & life

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Taekwondo champs fly high

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Oman's martial arts champs made their country proud by bringing home gold, silver and bronze medals at the recently held Fujairah International Taekwondo Training Camp and Competition, where 350 players and coaches from seven countries brushed their skills.

For the first time, teams comprising around 80 coaches and players participated in the annual speed, flexibility, mobility and physical fitness test. Teams from Oman bagged 38 gold medals, 16 silver and ten bronze medals in various categories.

"We are truly proud to have achieved these many medals representing the



Sultanate of Oman, and it is the result of dedication, commitment and perseverance of all our Taekwondo champs," said Reza Yaghoubi.

He further said that the teams from Oman had a tough time facing champi-

ons who have already proved their skills in the game that has been part of the Olympics since 2000. Oman faced Canada, Netherlands, Iran, Egypt and Tunisia, besides the host country, the UAE.

Major clubs that partici-

pated in the Championship are CTC Club, Majan Club, Silla Club, Pro Academy, Ittihad Club, Seeb Star Club, and Gold Club. CTC Club and FMAC Club created the group.

The biggest training camp held for the first



time in the GCC was for three days, out of which one day was set aside for various competitions.

Earlier this year, Oman won four medals at the Arab Taekwondo Championship held in Fujairah, where 740 male

and female players of different age groups representing more than 20 countries participated in the championship.

Omani team, led by coach Harib bin Khalfan al Abdali, bagged four medals in different categories.



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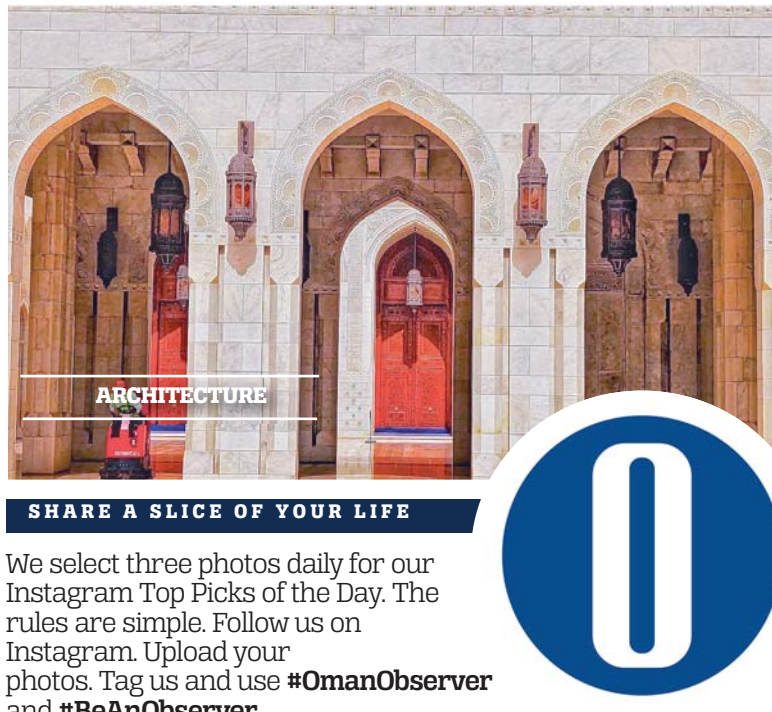
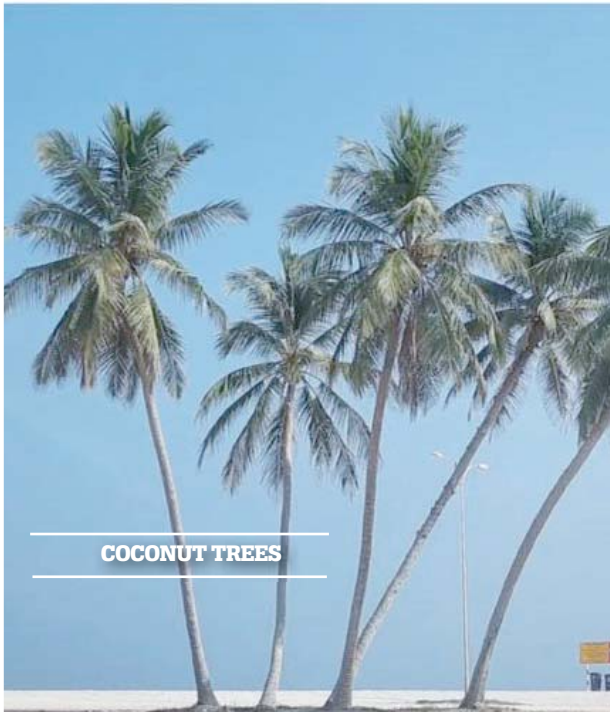


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'Nothing like peace': Tigrayans celebrate festival after war hiatus

IN THE HEART OF ETHIOPIA'S capital, a group of women danced while brandishing a flag bearing the insignia of the war-scarred Tigray region — a scene that would have been unimaginable a year earlier.

The two-year conflict that pitted Ethiopia's federal government against the Tigray People's Liberation Front sparked accounts of widespread rights abuses, including rapes by both sides and arbitrary mass detentions of ethnic Tigrayans in Addis Ababa and elsewhere.

While the northern region endured a massive humanitarian crisis due to a lack of food, fuel, cash and medicines, Tigrayans living in other parts of Ethiopia were forced to keep a low profile to avoid becoming the targets of ethnic profiling.

But the signing of a peace deal last November raised cautious hopes among the community, whose female members gathered to mark the traditional festival of Ashenda in Addis Ababa for the first time since 2020.

"We did not celebrate (Ashenda) in this country for the last three years, because our Tigrayan people were... in a war," said Selam Haile, 15.

"It was so bad for us," the teenager told AFP.

The festival, which ends on Saturday, honours girls and women.

They showed up for the celebration in traditional embroidered dresses and gold jewellery, their hair twisted into elaborate braids and curls, with beaded headbands across their foreheads and henna patterns adorning their hands.

"On this day we wear a special dress and traditionally decorate our

hair and we keep our traditions alive while we are celebrating," said Dina Mohammed, 17.

The young woman told AFP she was "very happy" to showcase her culture after a long hiatus, echoing the joy expressed by others at the gathering hosted at a venue in Addis Ababa.

'LOVE AND UNITY'

Originally a Christian festival marking the end of a 15-day fast commemorating the Assumption of Mary, Ashenda has evolved into a celebration that transcends religion.

Its roots lie in Tigray but it is also celebrated in the neighbouring Amhara region and in Eritrea.

Men don't usually participate in the festival, which is focused on



women and girls, who were in high spirits and filming selfies during the celebrations.

"It means a lot to us because Ashenda is freedom for girls," said

Selam.

Others voiced their relief at finally being able to express their pride in their culture and share it publicly without shame or fear.

"We didn't celebrate (Ashenda) for a long time... But after all, all came back to love and unity and celebrating together. That makes it so special," said Danawit Tesfaye, 23.

Rebeka Seyum, 38, told AFP she did not know "how to explain my happiness."

"There is nothing like peace," she said finally. — **AFP**

TOURISM

Rome moves to clear rats out of Colosseum area

ROME'S CITY GOVERNMENT said on Saturday it was taking action to tackle an infestation of rats around the Colosseum after tourists posted photos on social media of the rodents roaming in areas close to the ancient amphitheatre.

The city's head of garbage collection Sabrina Alfonsi told Adnkronos news agency a "special intervention" was launched on Friday night and early on Saturday to

ensure people could pass safely around one of Italy's most visited tourist sites.

The operation will continue next week, the city government said in a statement, cleaning up the green areas surrounding the Colosseum, the drains where the rats are commonplace, and laying traps.

There are around 7 million rats in the city, the statement said, or 2.5 for every inhabitant.

Alfonsi said a surge in



tourists flocking to the Eternal City this summer, coupled with a heat-wave, had led to an increase in rubbish which had favoured the proliferation of the rodents.

City hall issued photos of cleaning staff collecting heaps of plastic water bottles, drink cans and other debris against the backdrop of an illuminated Colosseum.

Rome has struggled with a simmering garbage crisis for many years, with piles of trash frequently dumped on the streets beside overflowing bins.

Built 2,000 years ago, the Colosseum was the biggest amphitheatre in the Roman empire and was used to host gladiator fights, executions and animal hunts

— **Reuters**



TRAVEL

Six Ways to Enjoy Your Time in Amsterdam



AMSTERDAM DOESN'T KNOW a low season. There's the perpetual high season, and then there are two highest seasons: April (tulips!) and July (summer!). Despite the city pulling out all the stops in recent years to limit the number of tourists, the Dutch capital continues to lure visitors by the millions. And understandably so — you're meandering along the canals one minute, mingling with a Vincent van Gogh the next. It's all fun and games, until you're elbowing your way through Dam Square.

Looking for a little latitude in Amsterdam is far from impossible — it just takes a bit of strategy. Here are six ways to start.

BE YOUR OWN CAPTAIN

The best way to enjoy Amsterdam is, quite undeniably, from the water. More often than not, a canal tour makes for the first stop on the itinerary. But instead of embarking on a tour boat that fits close to 100 people, why not be your own captain instead? All over the city, there are stations where you can rent small electric boats that suit the size of your group. Take Sloepdelen (70 euros per hour, or about \$77), whose boats fit up to 12 people, or Mokumboot (95 euros for two hours), with boats for up to six people. No license needed, as long as you're older than 18 and stay sober. Not only is it just you, the canals and the Amstel River, but a small boat allows you to explore the tinier, more quaint canals big tour boats cannot reach. Or, alternatively, hop in at night right when the sun sets, as the bridges and streetlights light up the dark city.

Really want the water all to

yourself? Motor a little outside the city, to say, Ouderkerk aan de Amstel — a small town on the Amstel River, about six miles south of Amsterdam — where it's wonderfully serene.

EXPLORE THE ANNE FRANK HOUSE

It's not unusual for people to travel to Amsterdam for one reason, and one reason only: the Anne Frank House. As impressive as the experience is, it books up months in advance.

There are ways well beyond the Anne Frank House to explore Amsterdam's incredibly rich World War II history. Explore the Jewish Quarter, which remains filled with Jewish history and culture. The organisation Joods Cultureel Kwartier creates custom walking tours (90 euros per guide, with a maximum of 15 people) through the district to suit your interests.

Alternatively, be your own tour guide. Explore sights like the Portuguese Synagogue (adult entry: 18 euros), the Resistance Museum (adult entry: 14 euros), or the National Holocaust Names Memorial, unveiled in 2021 (free admission). It's a neighbourhood filled with history, culture and stories — just with a lot fewer tourists.

SKIP THE TIKTOK LINE

Since spring 2023, the Negen Straatjes neighbourhood has been characterised by seemingly endless lines of people. The culprit? TikTok. Certain food spots — whether it be Japanese sandwiches, loaded fries or specific chocolate cookies — have gone viral. So viral, in fact, that the venues have been forced to hire crowd managers to oversee the phenomenon that was

quickly named "TikTok lines." There are plenty of perfectly fantastic alternatives to settle your cravings that don't require a 90-minute wait. Stop by Zero on de Nieuwe Spiegelstraat, which serves decadent, homemade schiacciata, a Tuscan bread similar to focaccia. For a more lavish meal, sit down at Pulitzer Garden, the secluded courtyard at the Pulitzer Hotel, along the Prinsengracht canal. Or go for an Amsterdam classic: an order of bitterballen, the Dutch fried meatballs, and an Amsterdam-brewed beer at Café Luxembourg at 't Spui square.

FIND BRIGHT FLOWERS AND GREEN CHEER AT AMSTELVELD

Few places in Amsterdam get as crowded with tourists as the floating flower market on Singel does. Cute, sure, but instead you might want to check out a little-known square called Amstelveld for green-thumb tourism.

In the heart of the city centre, Amstelveld is taken over by a plant and flower market every Monday. Quiet, relatively depleted of tourists and surrounded by quaint canals, Amstelveld is beloved by local residents.

Amstelveld is also the home of some fine spots for al fresco dining, such as Brasserie Nel and the smaller Café Marcella, whether you're in for a full meal or just a quick cup of coffee.

EXPLORE THE NORTH

There is a small body of water, the IJ, that divides Amsterdam's city centre from its most northern neighbourhood, Amsterdam-Noord. From the rear of the main train station, Amsterdam Centraal, one

can take a free ferry to cross the water. Once there, the rush of the city centre fades, almost making it feel like another city entirely.

It makes for a perfect quick hideaway from the hustle and bustle of central Amsterdam. Explore this area with a rented bicycle (10 euros for three hours), roam through street art and vintage halls at the NDSM site, or simply relax at one of the many cafes along the water. Enjoy Café de Ceuveel, for example, or the restaurant of the Eye Film Museum, which, at the edge of Noord, offers a stunning view of the IJ and the city.

LEAVE TOWN FOR THE DAY

When you take a country as small as the Netherlands and add a good railroad system, the whole country is yours to roam. There are plenty of beautiful smaller cities that are a lot more manageable than Amsterdam, both in terms of size and the number of tourists.

Only 30 minutes by train is Utrecht (8.80 euros), with its picturesque Dom Tower — the highest church tower in the country — and the Oudegracht, the canal that stretches out over the entire city.

Or explore Haarlem, the small city that is less than 20 minutes from Amsterdam by train (adults: 4.90 euros). Visit the Frans Hals Museum (adults: 16 euros) and revel in the art of the Dutch master, or roam through the city's many secluded courtyards. And from Haarlem, even the beach is within reach. Reaching Bloemendaal aan Zee takes just 20 minutes by bus. Alternatively, the coastal haunt Zandvoort aan Zee is just a 10-minute train ride away (adult and children: 2.60 euros). — **NYT**



British Museum missing 2,000 artefacts after police called in



THE NUMBER OF artefacts that have disappeared from the British Museum is estimated at 2,000, chairman of trustees George Osborne said on Saturday, admitting the collection did not have a complete catalogue.

The UK's former chancellor described the missing pieces as "small items of jewellery, gems, bits of gold that were not on public display".

He told BBC radio it was still not clear exactly how many items had gone astray.

"I will give you an estimate of around 2,000. But I have to say that's a very provisional figure," Osborne said.

"We have started to recover some of the stolen items, which is a silver lining to a dark cloud."

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

The central London museum said last week it had dismissed a staff member and alerted the police after artefacts were found to be "missing, stolen or damaged".

One of the British capital's biggest tourist draws, the museum is best known for housing collections that include the Rosetta Stone and the Parthenon

Marbles.

Osborne attributed management's failure to act on warnings to "group-think" that "just couldn't believe that an insider was stealing things, couldn't believe that one of the members of staff were doing this".

"We believe we've been the victim of thefts over a long period of time and, frankly, more could have been done to prevent them," he said, adding that security at the museum had been tightened.

The antiquarian community was cooperating with the museum to help return some of the missing pieces, he said.

The Metropolitan Police confirmed on Thursday that a man had been interviewed in connection with alleged thefts.

The force said no arrests had been made and it would continue to work "closely" with the British Museum as inquiries continue.

Fischer, a German art historian, said he would step down with immediate effect because of lapses in procedures that allowed the items to be taken.

"It is evident that the British Museum did not respond as comprehensively as it should have in response to the warnings in 2021, and to the problem that has now fully emerged," he said — **AFP**

