

P9

AL NAHDA
EDGE AL
KHALIDIYA TO
SECURE AFC CUP



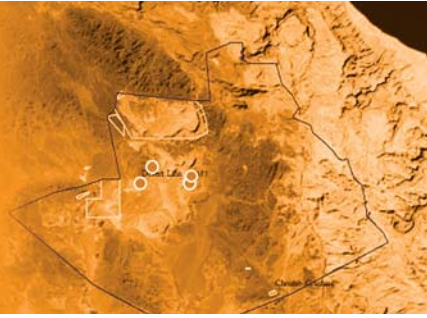
P11

EXPATS
GEAR UP
FOR ONAM
CELEBRATIONS



P13

OMAN NICKEL
MINE COULD RANK
AMONG WORLD'S
LARGEST



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO UKRAINE PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine on his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to President Zelenskyy and the people of Ukraine.

— ONA

INFLATION REACHES 0.41% BY JULY

The annual inflation rate in the Sultanate of Oman reached 0.41 per cent by the end of July, driven by the increase in most main groups that constitute the Consumer Price Index (CPI), according to the data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The group of furniture, household equipment and routine household maintenance came in the forefront with a 2.66-per cent rise. Muscat recorded the highest inflation rate of 0.7 per cent, while the lowest inflation rate was registered by Al Buraimi.

DETAILS ON P2



NOW, DOWNLOAD
OMAN OBSERVER E-PAPER
FROM OUR APP



omanobserver.om

23.5% growth in tourist arrivals



VISITORS
TO TOUCH
3.6 MILLION BY
THE END OF
THIS YEAR

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has made a comprehensive plan to attract 11 million visitors annually by 2040.

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 23

Fitch Solutions has predicted a 23.5-per cent growth in the number of tourists visiting the Sultanate of Oman this year. The fourth quarter report for 2023 issued by BMI, an economic solutions entity affiliated with Fitch Solutions, has revealed that analysts expect the number of visitors to Oman will touch 3.6 million by the end of this year.

The BMI report shows that the total number of international

tourists arriving in Oman in 2023 is likely to reach 3.6 million, up by 23.5 per cent compared to that in 2022.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has made a comprehensive plan to attract 11 million visitors annually by 2040. The plan includes having new tourism and heritage projects that may contribute in raising the volume of total investments in the sector.

The ministry has also emphasised that it closely monitors international indicators

OMAN HAS ACHIEVED
A GROWTH RATE OF

31%

OVER THE MIDDLE
EAST REGION

related to the tourism sector, which helps the ministry to understand market trends and analyse the performance of the tourism sector at the global level and its impact locally.

Bigger investments subsequently contribute to the development and strengthening of a country's economic cycle.

In the tourism sector, the Sultanate of Oman achieved a growth rate of 31 per cent over the second quarter of 2023, ahead of the United Arab Emirates, which achieved a growth of 29 per cent, and Jordan 7 per cent.

Fitch Solutions indicated that expectations indicate growth in the tourism sector in the medium term until 2027 in light of strong

investments being pumped into new tourism projects, and the Tourism Strategy 2040 that is being implemented.

The report indicated that over the next 12 months, there remain some risks that may threaten the growth of the global tourism sector.

According to the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, it plans to attract investments to the tune of RO 3 billion for the period from 2021 to 2023, within the national programme for attracting investments.

Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft lands on moon

BENGALURU: An Indian spacecraft landed on the rugged, unexplored south pole of the moon on Wednesday in a mission seen as crucial to lunar exploration and India's standing as a space power, just days after a similar Russian lander crashed.

"This moment is unforgettable. It is phenomenal. This is a victory cry of a new India," said Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who watched the landing from South Africa where he is attending a BRICS summit.

Scientists and officials clapped, cheered and hugged each other as the spacecraft landed and people across India broke out in celebration, setting off firecrackers and dancing in the streets.

"India is on the moon," said S Somanath, chief of the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO), as the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft landed, making India



ISRO has released images of the Moon taken by the Lander Horizontal Velocity Camera of Chandrayaan 3 during the descent.

the fourth nation to successfully land a spacecraft on the moon after the United States, China and Russia. This was India's second attempt to land a spacecraft on the moon and comes less than a week after Russia's Luna-25 mission

mission successfully deployed an orbiter but its lander crashed.

Russia's space agency Roskosmos congratulated India on the landing. "Roskosmos congratulates Indian colleagues on the successful landing of the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft," it said in a post on its Telegram channel.

"Exploration of the moon is important for all mankind. In the future it may become a platform for deep space exploration."

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov, at the BRICS summit, congratulated his Indian counterpart during their bilateral meeting, a video clip shared by the Russian foreign ministry showed.

The Chandrayaan-3 is expected to remain functional for two weeks, running a series of experiments including a spectrometer analysis of the mineral composition of the lunar surface.

SEE ALSO P6



Scorched Europe battles deadly fires, Turkiye shuts shipping lane

ATHENS: More searing temperatures fuelled wildfires and prompted health warnings across Europe on Wednesday, as a blaze in Turkiye forced the closure of the Dardanelles shipping lane and winds fanned the flames in Greece where 20 people have already been killed.

France, which widened its heatwave red alert in the south of the country, said it would scale back production at a nuclear power plant as high temperatures curbed cooling water supply.

In Greece, firefighters were battling a blaze for a second day close to Athens and the authorities warned that heat and winds risked fuelling more wildfires, a day after 18 bodies, probably migrants, were found in a charred northern forest. A wildfire north Athens that erupted on Tuesday has smothered the capital in smoke and ash, spreading to the town of Menidi, from where about 150 people were evacuated from three nursing homes. Police ordered others to leave as a helicopter clattered overhead to drop water to douse the conflagration.

— Reuters





Need cash?

Transfer money easily from your credit card to your account

2477 5777 | www.maisarah-oman.com

[f /MaisarahOman](#) [@MaisarahIslamic](#) [@Maisarah.Islamic](#)

الخدمات المصرفية الإسلامية
Islamic Banking Services

MAISARAH
للخدمات المصرفية الإسلامية
Islamic Banking Services

GCC seminar focuses on financial integrity

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 23

The State Audit Institution hosted financial and administrative control authorities from the GCC states on a daylong seminar focusing on the goal of strengthening integrity and combating corruption in public sector organisations.

The annual event, held at the Millennium Resort Salalah, underlined the importance of institutional and community partnerships and their role in protecting public money.

The seminar was divided into two sessions. The first session, titled “Strengthening Institutional and Community Bonds in Safeguarding Public Funds,” was led by Senior Supervisory Officer Nasser al Busaidi, Director-General of the General Directorate of Legal Business at Oman’s Financial and Administrative Control Authority. Speakers in this session addressed a variety of topics, including the institutional roles in safeguarding public funds, the legal frameworks governing partnership activities

in protecting public funds, the role of complaints and reports as tools for community partnership in fighting corruption, and the involvement of community institutions in raising awareness about protecting public funds.

The second session, titled “Pioneering Practices and Future Trajectories of Institutional and Community Partnerships,” was moderated by Hisham bin Ali al Rawas, Director of the Department of Control of Government Units.

Speakers in this session shared international experiences in institutional and community partnerships to safeguard public funds and discussed the enhanced value of institutional collaboration in protecting public funds.

The seminar was a valuable opportunity for GCC member states to share knowledge and best practices on how to strengthen integrity and combat corruption through institutional collaboration. The event also highlighted the importance of community participation in the fight against corruption.

INFLATION RATE REACHES 0.41 PER CENT IN JULY

MUSCAT: The annual inflation rate in the Sultanate of Oman reached 0.41 per cent by the end of July 2023, driven by the increase in most main groups that constitute the Consumer Price Index (CPI), according to the data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The group of furniture, household equipment and routine household maintenance came in the forefront with a 2.66-per cent rise. A rise was also recorded in the following main groups: miscellaneous goods and services by 2.51 per cent, tobacco by 2.36 per cent, culture and recreation by 1.59 per cent.

The prices of the main group of food and non-alcoholic beverages went up by 1.36 per cent, as a result of a rise in the prices of most ingredient, namely milk, cheese and eggs by 10.02 per cent, oils and fats by 5.03 per cent, other foods by 4.2 per cent, sugar, jam, honey and sweets by 3.61 per cent, bread and cereals by 2.24 per cent, fish and seafood by 1.57 per cent and non-alcoholic drinks by 0.72



per cent. Meanwhile, a decline was recorded in the prices of the main groups of vegetables by 1.72 per cent, fruits by 2.31 per cent and meats by 0.61 per cent. Moreover, the following main groups registered a rise in price: health by 0.63 per

cent, clothes and footwear by 0.32 per cent, education by 0.05 per cent and housing, water, electricity, gas and other types of fuel by 0.03 per cent.

The prices of the main groups of transport and communications declined by

1.72 per cent and 0.22 per cent, respectively.

In terms of governorates, Muscat recorded the highest inflation rate of 0.7 per cent, while the lowest inflation rate was registered by Al Buraimi (0.5 per cent). — ONA

Geological tour at Oman Across Ages Museum

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@LAKSHMIOMAN

Oman’s distinct landscape with its mountains and valleys is an attraction to visitors throughout the year. It has also been an open lab for international geologists and students.

Explaining the journey of Oman is the Museum of Oman Across Ages. The enchanting experience which is an educational tour begins with an explanation of how Oman’s journey began millions of years ago. It covers Oman’s geological areas such as Precambrian rocks and deposits, Palaeozoic deposits, Mesozoic rocks and Cenozoic deposits.

The museum takes one back to the formation of the land itself, which was formed over hundreds of millions of years.

So how was the crust formed? Was it any different from other lands? Powerful geological forces had compressed Oman’s crust. The movement made the rocks get folded into mountains and the land was repeatedly submerged beneath the sea. While this was happening, dramatic changes occurred in climate.

The museum narrates how new life appeared, and others either adapted or became extinct. The land we see today was shaped by geological factors which continue to influence its culture and economy.

Pressure, heat, erosion and other processes shape the landscapes of Oman and is today



an open geological lab.

The fascination has been because of the tectonic plates moving across the earth’s surface that ended up pushing sections of oceanic crust upward, forming Oman’s dark-shaded mountains of Ophiolite. The museum explains that the limestone slabs

from ancient seabeds were also uplifted in the process, which is why marine fossils have been discovered on the highest mountain peaks of Oman.

Erosion caused by glaziers and rain narrate clear stories along with carved cannons and wadis. Wind erosion played its part in

sculpting the landscape at the same time in depositing sand and creating dunes in the desert region.

Detailed videos educate visitors by providing glimpses of how Oman must have looked under the forest cover and underwater. Giving an insight are tree trunks that are now rocks and on display at the museum.

About 70 million years ago, Oman had dinosaurs and yet another video explains when the Red Sea had begun to open. Giving a realistic perspective is a corner with Majlis al Jinn with a depiction of how it would have been underwater and then the video takes one to the current scenario coming out of its opening on top.

Photos by Shamsa al Harthi

Al Buraimi Science and Innovation Centre construction on track

AL BURAIMI: More than 60 per cent of construction work of Al Buraimi Science and Innovation Centre in Al Buraimi Governorate is complete. The RO 50,000 project is jointly set up by the Ministry of Education, Oman Oil, Orpic Group and Jusoor Foundation to instil the culture of scientific innovation in students as well as furnishing them with computer skills, thus preparing them to cope with the developments in the field of technology.

Awad bin Mohammed al Hinai, head of the innovation and scientific Olympiad department, said: “The total area of the centre is estimated at 1,500 square metres. It will

have labs for robotics and artificial intelligence, science theatre, planetarium and a multi-purpose hall.”

The Ministry of Education had signed two cooperation agreements with Oman Oil and Orpic Group and Jusoor Foundation for financing the establishment of two scientific innovation centres in the governorates of Al Dhahirah and Al Buraimi at a cost of RO 1 million in 2019.

The signing of the agreements comes within the context of the effective social partnership among the Ministry of Education, Oman Oil, Orpic Group and Jusoor Foundation in a number of educational projects. — ONA





Drone flying skills testing begins

MUSCAT: Sultan Qaboos University on Wednesday launched the phase of testing drone flying skills for students contesting in Oman AI-Enhanced Drones Flying Competition, following a training programme.

A programme training the 3rd group of students for the competition is implemented by SQU in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and Ooredoo Oman.

The testing stage comprises three levels: a virtual flight level using a computer simulation programme, a flight demo inside the laboratory and a flight practice in open space outside the laboratory.

The flight mechanism is carried out using manual remote control and automatic controller devices.

The pilot programme of Oman Competition for AI-Enhanced Drones this year targets 120 trainees. In July 2023, the programme received a first batch of 60 students who underwent an intensive two-week training that included a mixture of theoretical and practical sessions.

The programme, which comes under the National Initiative to Qualify Digital Competencies (Makeen), will include workshops and training courses to develop and refine skills of participants.

The best performing



participants will also qualify for the annual competition that will be held in February 2024 at Sultan Qaboos University.

The programme targets students of colleges and universities who are looking to acquire new technical skills – particularly in the field of drones

– that will enable them to actively participate in implementing technical solutions and contribute to building the national economy. It also aims to prepare and support the winning participants to compete in regional and international competitions. The training programme

combines theory and practice with a greater emphasis on practical aspects. The selected students will be divided into six batches, each batch consisting of 20 participants. Each batch will undergo a training programme consisting of four training modules. The candidate must have knowledge of programming, and knowledge of Python language is preferred. The participant must be committed to completing the programme within the specified period, and in the event of unjustified withdrawal, the participant will be excluded from any future programmes offered by the Makeen Initiative or Sultan Qaboos University.

New projects to come up in Al Dakhiliyah

MUSCAT: In a strategic stride to ignite economic growth and foster collaboration between public and private sectors, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate has invited bids to develop and operate one-stop commercial centres and artisanal markets in the wilayats of Bahla and Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, spanning over a gross area of 78,000 square metres.

In a statement, Issa Nasser Al Hadhrami, Director of Planning and Investment, reveals that a prime plot in the Bisyah area in the wilayat of Bahla will host a multifaceted commercial centre and vibrant market space. Stretching over a total investment area of 50,000 m2, the project will encompass essential facilities, including a fuel station and hospitality services.

The project will begin after receiving the approval required from competent authorities. The project's benefits are manifold, catering to changing preferences with several shopping outlets, dining options, cafes, and a

dedicated market for selling fruits, vegetables and foodstuff.

Spreading over an area of 27,873 m2, Hail Al Yemn area in Al Jabal Al Akhdhar, too, is dedicated to a tourism-oriented commercial complex, including a market for local products, commercial stores, recreational zones, and a hotel establishment.

Meanwhile, this space holds immense promise for artisans, entrepreneurs, and small to medium-sized businesses, which ultimately helps leverage the wilayat's vibrant tourism landscape.

The governorate has recently invited bids to develop Nizwa integrated hub for public transportation and taxis. With an investment span of up to 50 years, including a maximum 5-year preparatory phase, the initiative is projected to cover 11,412 sq meter. These visionary projects underscore a commitment to economic growth and dynamic partnerships and epitomize progress, partnership, and community welfare.



Tourists in Dhofar well-served with 5G coverage: TRA

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 23

The Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (TRA) has issued a report on the quality of telecommunication services in tourist sites in the Governorate of Dhofar, which was conducted between July 31 and August 3.

These measurements included Attin Square, Ain Hamran, Dahariz Beach, Al Haffa Market, Al Mughsail, Wadi Dabat, Al Haffa Walk and Sha'at.

The highest download speed for data service covered by the 5G network in Attin by Omantel was 263 Mbps, with an average of 95 Mbps.

While the highest download speed for the same service was covered by Ooredoo at 505 Mbps, with an average of 311 Mbps.

In Wadi Dabat, the highest download speed for 5G data service by Omantel was 164 Mbps, with an average of 49 Mbps. The highest download speed covered by the Ooredoo

was 1303 Mbps, with an average of 421 Mbps.

The authority conducts these surveys using specialised measurement tools and approved methodologies that simulate the user's experience, aiming to raise the beneficiaries' awareness level and enhance competition in the sector.

The most important indicators, such as coverage level, data download speed, percentage of successful calls, and other indicators, are measured.

Oman's documentary Al Zeeg wins awards in international film festival

NEW DELHI: Oman's documentary film Al Zeeg, which means sugarcane syrup in Arabic, won awards for Best Cinematography and Best Actor at a Diamond Cut International Film Festival in India.

Al Zeeg, produced by the Omani Film Society, reviews the relationship of the Omani with the cultivation of sugarcane. It also deals with the human, economic and social aspects of this profession. It was filmed in several wilayats of the Sultanate of Oman including Nizwa, Bahla, Al Hamra and Manah. The film won several awards in various Arab and international festivals, and was selected to participate in a number of international and local festivals.

Al Zeeg was selected for the 12th Arab Film Festival organised by the Korean-Arab Society. Al Zeeg was among 10 films, representing nine Arab



nations including Lebanon, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Algeria, Jordan, Egypt, Qatar, Palestine and Oman. It marks a milestone for Omani cinema with Al Zeeg

being the first film from Oman to participate in the festival since its inception in 2008. The film was also screened in Busan and Seoul.

— ONA

SHOP & SHINE

GET GOLD COINS ON EVERY PURCHASE

PROMOTION VALID TILL 4TH SEPTEMBER 2023

PURCHASE GOLD JEWELLERY WORTH
•OMR 500•
GET 1/2 GRAM GOLD COIN FREE

PURCHASE UNCUT/PRECIOUS STONE JEWELLERY WORTH
•OMR 500•
GET 1 GRAM GOLD COIN FREE

PURCHASE DIAMOND JEWELLERY WORTH
•OMR 500•
GET 2 GRAMS GOLD COIN FREE

WWW.KALYANJEWELLERS.NET | FOLLOW US ON @ KALYANJEWELLERSMIDDLEEAST



OVER 4
MILLION
VACCINE
DOSES GIVEN
FOR ANIMALS
IN 2022



MUSCAT: To protect animals from diseases and support cattle breeders, the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources as part of its national immunisation project has administered over 4 million doses of vaccines across governorates in 2022 compared to 3 million doses in 2021.

The national project also aims at protect humans from diseases common to animals as well as to provide cattle feed with high nutritional value that are safe and healthy. It also aims to reduce the cost of treatment services.

Immunisation of sheep, goats and cattle targets a number of diseases. These include sheep and goat pox, plague, foot and mouth disease, rabies and brucellosis.

It is worth noting that all preventive and curative services for the livestock sector are provided through the government sector and private veterinary facilities. The ministry warns livestock breeders that vaccination is not a substitute for good caring of animals. It also urged them to visit veterinary clinics if they notice any change in animal behaviour such as isolation from the herd, or refusal to eat. Breeders must communicate with the vaccination team for the success of the vaccination process. — ONA



Dhofar’s first private museum in Taqah chronicles Oman’s journey through ages

MUSCAT: The Museum of Communications of Generations in the Wilayat of Taqah chronicles Oman journey through centuries. The museum is located in the old neighbourhood near Taqah Fort and Al Askar Tower. It was inaugurated in February.

The old neighbourhood surrounds the fort of Taqah, which was built in the nineteenth century during the reign of Sultan Taimur bin Faisal al Said (1913-1932), and AlAskar Tower, which housed the government’s military to protect and monitor the state in those days. One can also find here the historic Sheikh Al Afif Mosque, where the people of the state used to gather for their religious rituals.

It is the first private museum licensed by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in Dhofar Governorate.

Salim bin Ahmed al Omari, the owner of the private museum, said that he began collecting various archaeological holdings in 1983, explaining that the museum promotes the preservation of authentic Omani heritage among young people.

Al Omari indicated that the



museum’s outer yard contains a wall of palm fronds with the cultivation of some local trees, models of windows and doors of old design, the Ghanja ship, and some types of fishing nets and stones used in construction in the past.

He explained that the reception hall in the museum embodies the Bedouin environment, with its tent woven from animal wool, handicrafts, palm fronds, some cooking tools, Bedouin clothing and musical instruments such as the dargham and the rebab, as well as a miniature cultural library,

in addition to some ancient fossil holdings.

Al Omari explained that the “Umm Salem” hall is for the late craftswoman, Tافل bint Ramadan, which includes antique collections and tools that represent the urban environment and what the bedroom contains, and ancient decorative and cooking tools. This is in addition to wooden chests and handicrafts related to the urban environment, such as the palmetto craft called Al Qaff.

The owner of the private museum also pointed out that



the Great Hall includes two sections: a section for men’s and women’s clothes and jewellery in Dhofar, and the section for the rural environment. He indicated that the section for traditional costumes represents urban, rural and Bedouin environments, in addition to Omani daggers, silverware and incense.

Al Omari pointed out that the section of the rural environment in the Great Hall embodies a rural house consisting of wood, straw, ropes, kitchen utensils, rural clothing for men and women,

leather products, pottery, palm fronds, tools for extracting ghee or Qatamim, and a cradle for the child.

“The monetary hall contains banknotes, coins, and commemorative coins circulated in the past in the Sultanate of Oman, in addition to models of castles, forts, towers and ships.”

Al Omari added that work is underway to develop the museum by adding a new hall dealing with old traditional crafts in Dhofar, used in trade, carpentry, construction and agriculture. — ONA

Right to education in focus as new academic year begins

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

With a week left for the new academic year to begin in the Sultanate of Oman, there is a need to look at the new School Education Law that was promulgated by the Royal Decree No 31/2023 to ensure the right to education for all children in the Sultanate.

It may be noted that there are 2,133 schools in the Sultanate catering to nearly 900,000 students and 72,845 teachers in 35,639 classes.

The new law has 97 articles, and one of the key articles is Article 24, which states that basic education is compulsory for all children who reach the age of six.

The student’s guardian shall abide by it, and the age of acceptance may be lowered according to the rules indicated by the regulations.

Article 26 states that the student’s guardian must enrol him in the first grade of the basic education stage during the specified date when he reaches the age (6 years old) prescribed for admission.

The guardian should follow up on his regularity in the study until the completion of this stage.

Article 30 states that those who have completed the post-basic education stage shall be granted a certificate proving that they passed this stage successfully.

Article 92 states that if the parent fails to register the child as mentioned in Article 26 of this law without an acceptable excuse within 14 days, he shall be punished by imprisonment for a period of no less than a month, and not exceeding three months, and a fine of no less than RO 500.

It does not exceed RO 1,000 or one of these two penalties, and no

penalty shall be imposed if it is due to negligence (unintentional).

The law states that the school administration must notify the student’s guardian of the student’s irregularity in accordance with the procedures in the regulations.

Article 91 states that the members of the educational staff shall notify the school principal or his representative of any crime committed within the scope of the school, who shall report to the nearest police station, in writing, within 24 hours of his knowledge of the occurrence of the incident.

In the event of a violation of the provisions of this Article, the violator shall be punished by imprisonment for a period of no less than 24 hours and not exceeding ten days, and with a fine of no less than RO 200 and not exceeding RO 1,000 or one of these two penalties.





China’s Xi calls for BRICS unity as bloc weighs expansion



Russian President Vladimir Putin speaks at BRICS summit via video link, as members listen, in Johannesburg, South Africa. — Reuters

JOHANNESBURG: China’s President Xi Jinping called for unity among his BRICS counterparts at a summit in South Africa on Wednesday as he pushed the case for expanding the grouping to face a global “period of turbulence and transformation”.

Leaders of the bloc of leading developing nations Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa are meeting in Johannesburg with discussions around establishing a framework and criteria for admitting new members topping the agenda.

While all BRICS members have publicly expressed support for growing the bloc, divisions remain over how much and how quickly.

Bloc heavyweight China has long

pushed for expansion and views its deteriorating relations with Washington as well as heightened global tensions resulting from the Ukraine war as adding urgency to the enlargement project.

“The world is undergoing major shifts, division and regrouping... it has entered a new period of turbulence and transformation,” Xi said.

“We, the BRICS countries, should always bear in mind our founding purpose of strengthening ourselves through unity.”

BRICS group countries have economies that are vastly different in scale and governments that often seem to have few foreign policy goals in common, complicating decision-

making.

Russian President Vladimir Putin sees BRICS membership as a way of showing the West he still has friends.

He did not travel to South Africa but used a video address to attack Western powers.

“I want to note that it was the desire to maintain their hegemony in the world, the desire of some countries to maintain this hegemony that led to the severe crisis in Ukraine,” he said.

South Africa’s President Cyril Ramaphosa said on Tuesday that he and Xi had similar positions on BRICS expansion.

Brazil’s President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva on Tuesday rejected the idea the bloc should seek to rival the United

States and Group of Seven wealthy economies.

Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Wednesday his country, which is wary of Chinese dominance, fully supported expansion.

However, an Indian official familiar with discussions late on Tuesday between the leaders said Modi indicated “there have to be ground rules about how it should happen and who can join”.

More than 40 countries have expressed interest in joining BRICS, say South African officials, 22 of whom have formally asked to be admitted.

Details of criteria for joining could be included in a joint declaration are yet to be finalised. — Reuters

Protests mount in South Korea over Japan’s plan to release Fukushima water

SEOUL: South Korea’s majority opposition party and civic groups around the country stepped up protests on Wednesday against Japan’s plan to release water from the Fukushima nuclear plant a day ahead of the planned start of the discharge.

“We intend to hold the Yoon government responsible for failing to do its duties,” opposition Democratic Party leader Lee Jae-myung said at a party meeting.

Public concern remains high in South Korea over the plan to release more than 1 million metric tonnes of treated radioactive water starting at 1 pm Japan time on Thursday, with a majority of people expressing worry over seafood and ocean contamination, according to surveys.

In a July public survey by the pollster Media Research, 62 per cent of the people said they would cut back or stop consuming seafood once the discharge goes ahead, despite the South Korean government’s assurances to closely monitor the release.

Local governments in South Korea said they would step up radiation tests over seafood to ease consumer concerns. The Seoul metropolitan government said on Wednesday it would carry out daily testing for all seafood at major markets and disclose the results real-time, while South Gyeongsang province plans to livestream its testing.

Democratic Party members and Foreign Minister Park Jin clashed in parliament over the possibility of direct impact to South Korea.

Park said currents will carry the water around the Pacific along the Americas before it reaches South Korea’s shores in four years containing less radioactive tritium than normal sea water.

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



NOTICE

This is to notify that **Mr. Biju Charuparambil Varghese**, bearing **Indian Passport No. V4265294** and formerly serving as Contract Manager, departed the company on Sunday, **20th August 2023**. From that date onward, he no longer represents **APAVE Gulf LLC** in any capacity. We have no affiliations with him, and any engagements with him are at their own risk. **APAVE Gulf LLC** shall not bear any responsibility for any dealings with him.

APAVE Gulf LLC

PO Box: 420, Postal Code: 116, Mina Al Fahal, Sultanate of Oman

Civilians killed in Russia and Ukraine, Moscow hit by more drones

KYIV: Civilians were killed in attacks in both Russia and Ukraine on Wednesday, while Moscow was hit by drones for the sixth night in a row as the war dragged into its 19th month.

Kyiv, which vowed this summer to “return” the war to Russia, has regularly hit Moscow and other cities deep inside Russia with drone attacks.

The latest attacks come as the war grinds on for a year and a half, now bogged down as Kyiv’s troops fight in a counteroffensive.

In the Belgorod region on the border with Ukraine, authorities said three civilians were killed by Kyiv’s forces on Wednesday.

“The Ukrainian forces launched an explosive device through a drone when people were on the street,” Belgorod governor Vyacheslav Gladkov said.

In Moscow, the drone attack caused no casualties, crashing into a skyscraper and smashing a window.

Drones were also downed outside Moscow — in the Mozhaysky and Khimki districts — Russia’s defence ministry said.

The attack on Moscow came hours after Kyiv said Russian artillery hit two villages near the eastern Ukrainian city of Lyman, killing three people and wounding two others.

In the Moscow City district, emergency services vehicles lined up along a street below a cluster of brightly lit skyscrapers.

Air traffic at Moscow’s Vnukovo, Sheremetyevo and Domodedovo airports was briefly halted, the TASS state news



Law enforcement officers stand next to a damaged building of the Moscow International Business Center (Moskva City) following a drone attack in Moscow. — AFP

agency reported, citing the aviation services.

Emergency services were inspecting the area in the business district, Moscow mayor Sergei Sobyanin said.

Addressing the BRICS summit by video-link, President Vladimir Putin again blamed the West for the conflict in Ukraine.

“Our actions in Ukraine are dictated by one thing — to end this war, which was unleashed by the West,” he said.

Kyiv said in the early hours of Wednesday that three people were killed in Torske,

a small village in the east retaken by the Ukrainian army from Russian forces in October last year.

The Donetsk prosecutor’s office said the victims were two women and a man — aged 63 to 88 — who were seated on a bench when shells hit.

Both Russia and Ukraine have also ramped up attacks in the Black Sea since the July collapse of a UN-brokered deal aimed at ensuring safe navigation for civilian grain shipments from Ukraine ports. — AFP



Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agriculture Fisheries
Wealth and Water Resources

GENERAL PROCUREMENT NOTICE

Country: Sultanate of Oman
Project: Rescoped Flood Protection Dams Project
Sector: Water

GENERAL PROCUREMENT NOTICE
Mode of Financing: Installment Sale
Financing No. OMN1024

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources has received financing in the amount of (US\$ 104,000,000/-) equivalent from the Islamic Development Bank toward the cost of the Flood Protection Dams Rescoped Project, and it intends to apply part of the proceeds to payments for goods, works, related services and consulting services to be procured under this project.

The project will include the following components:

1. Construction of Flood Protection Dam (Z4C) in Wadi Zyhim, Wilayat Liwa North Al-Batina Governorate, using ICB procurement method.
2. Construction of Wadi Tahwa Flood Protection Dam (S04) in Wilayat Kamil Wal Wafi South of Al Sharqiyah Governorate, using ICB procurement method.
3. Construction of Wadi Al-Ansab Flood Protection Dams (ANS02 & ANS03) in Wilayat Bawsher, Muscat Governorate, using ICB procurement method.
4. Consultancy Services for the Design review and Construction Supervision of Wadi Tahwa Flood Protection Dam (S04) in Wilayat Kamil Wal Wafi South of Al Sharqiyah Governorate, using QCBS procurement method among a Member Country (MC) shortlist of Consulting Firms.

Procurement of contracts financed by the Islamic Development Bank will be conducted through the procedures as specified in the Guidelines for Procurement of Goods, Works and related services under Islamic Development Bank Project Financing (April 2019, revised Feb. 2023), and is open to all eligible bidders as defined in the guidelines. Consulting services will be selected in accordance with the Guidelines for the Procurement of Consultant Services under Islamic Development Bank Project Financing (April 2019, revised Feb. 2023).

Specific procurement notices for contracts to be bid under the Islamic Development Bank’s international competitive bidding (ICB) or international competitive bidding – member countries (ICB/MC) procedures and for contracts for consultancy services will be announced, as they become available, in [IsDB website](#), [E-Tendering website](#) and official newspaper.

Interested eligible firms and individuals who would wish to be considered for the provision of goods, works and consulting services for the above mentioned project, or those requiring additional information, should contact the Beneficiary at the address below:

Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources,
Department of Dams, Eng. Yousuf Al Manthari,
Al-Khuwair, Muscat, Sultanate of Oman Tel: +968 2495 2292
Email: director.dams@mawr.gov.om



India becomes first nation to land spacecraft near moon’s south pole

BENGALURU: India on Wednesday became the first nation to land a craft near the moon’s south pole, a historic triumph for the world’s most populous nation and its ambitious, cut-price space programme.

The unmanned Chandrayaan-3, which means “mooncraft” in Sanskrit, touched down at 6:04 pm India time as mission control technicians cheered wildly and embraced their colleagues.

Its landing comes days after a Russian probe crashed in the same region and four years since the previous Indian attempt failed at the last moment.

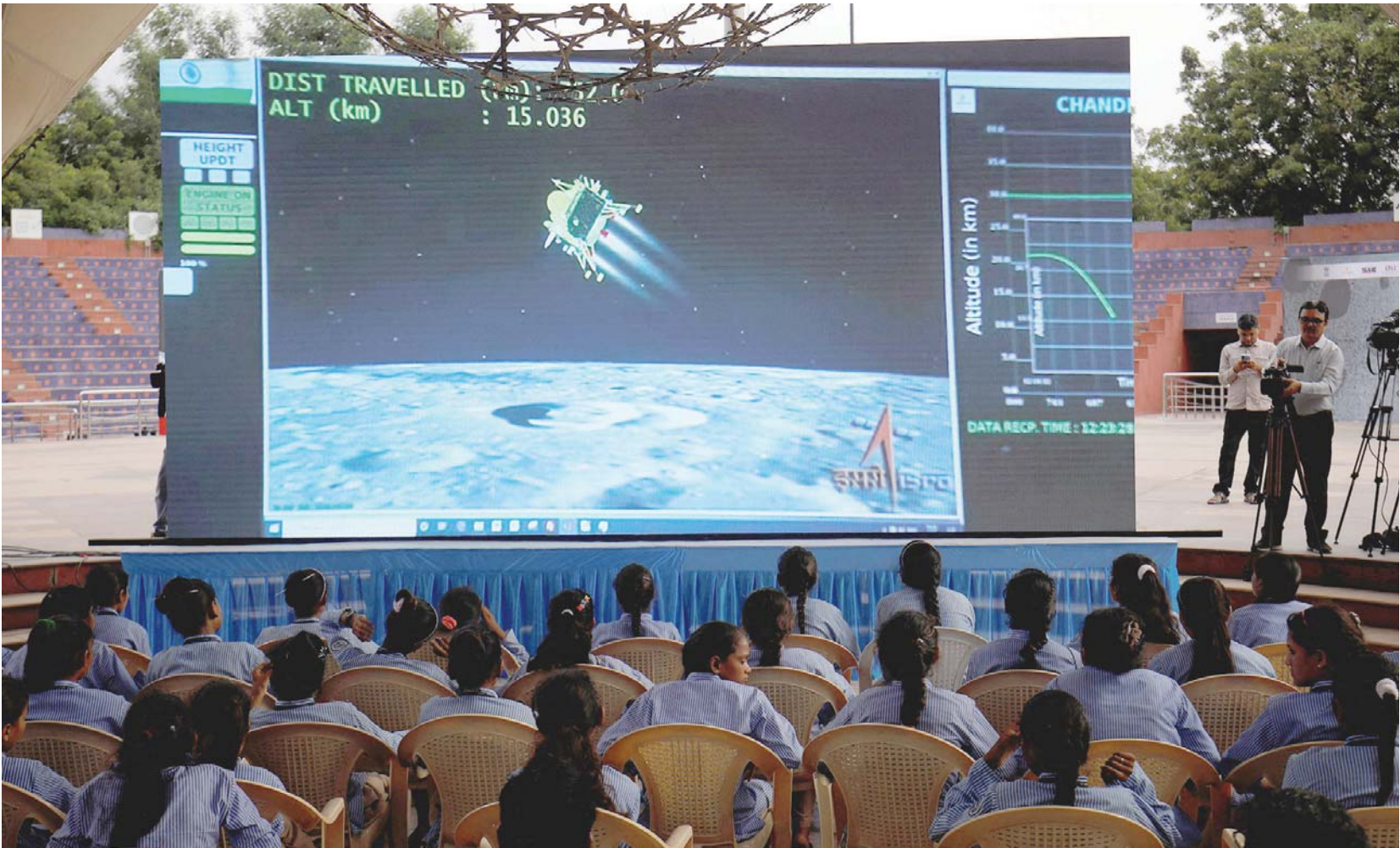
Prime Minister Narendra Modi smiled broadly and waved an Indian flag on a live broadcast to announce the mission’s success as a triumph that extended beyond his country’s borders.

“On this joyous occasion I would like to address the people of the world,” said Modi from the sidelines of the BRICS diplomatic summit in South Africa.

“India’s successful moon mission is not just India’s alone,” he added. “This success belongs to all of humanity.”

The Chandrayaan-3 mission has captivated public attention since launching nearly six weeks ago in front of thousands of cheering spectators.

Politicians staged Hindu prayer rituals to wish for the mission’s success and schoolchildren followed the final moments of the landing from live broadcasts in classrooms. Chandrayaan-3 took much longer to reach the moon than the Apollo missions in the 1960s and 1970s, which arrived in a matter of days.



India used rockets much less powerful than the ones the United States used back then, meaning the probe had to orbit the Earth



several times to gain speed before embarking on its month-long journey. The lander, Vikram, which

means “valour” in Sanskrit, detached from its propulsion module last week and has been sending images of the moon’s

surface since entering lunar orbit on August 5. Now that Vikram has landed, a solar-powered rover will explore

the surface and transmit data to Earth over its two-week lifespan.

India is closing in on milestones set by global space powers such as the United States and Russia, conducting many of its missions at much lower price tags.

The South Asian nation has a comparatively low-budget space programme, but one that has grown considerably in size and momentum since it first sent a probe to orbit the moon in 2008.

The latest mission has a cost of \$74.6 million — far lower than those of other countries, and a testament to India’s frugal space engineering.

Experts say India can keep costs low by copying and adapting existing technology, and thanks to an abundance of highly skilled engineers who earn a fraction of their foreign counterparts’ wages.

In 2014, India became the first Asian nation to put a craft into orbit around Mars and is slated to launch a three-day crewed mission into Earth’s orbit by next year.

Wednesday’s landing had been eagerly awaited by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) after the frustrating failure of its previous mission at the last hurdle in 2019. Back then, mission control lost contact with the Chandrayaan-2 lunar module moments before its slated landing.

Former ISRO chief K Sivan said that India’s efforts to explore the relatively unmapped lunar south pole would make a “very, very important” contribution to scientific knowledge.

Only Russia, the United States and China have previously achieved controlled landings on the moon. — AFP

Zimbabwe votes in high-stake poll as president seeks new term

HARARE: Zimbabweans voted in closely-watched elections in which President Emmerson Mnangagwa is seeking a second term after a campaign tainted by a crackdown on the opposition, fears of vote rigging and public anger at the economic crisis.

President Emmerson Mnangagwa, 80, who came to power after a coup that deposed late ruler Robert Mugabe in 2017, squares off against Nelson Chamisa, 45, who leads the yellow-coloured Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) party.

Casting his ballot in his home town of Kwekwe, central Zimbabwe, a confident Mnangagwa told journalists: “If I think I’m not going to take it, then I will be foolish.”

“Everyone who contests should go into the race to win”, he added, sporting his trademark multicoloured scarf.

The opposition is hoping to ride a wave of discontent over the southern African country’s economic woes that include graft, high inflation, unemployment and widespread poverty.

But delays in opening some polling stations, especially in the capital, an opposition stronghold, raised opposition concerns.



Voters queue to cast their ballots at a polling station during Zimbabwe’s presidential and legislative elections in Kwekwe. — AFP

Talk of change or a better tomorrow are often associated with support for Chamisa, who few would openly say they support. But the odds are stacked against the opposition.

Chamisa, a lawyer and pastor, has promised a new Zimbabwe “for everyone” and pledged to tackle corruption, relaunch the economy, and pull the country out of international isolation.

Yet, in a nation with a history of tainted elections, few believe he will emerge the outright winner.

His party has complained about being unfairly targeted by authorities, its members have been arrested, dozens of its events blocked, and little or no air time has been allotted to it on national

television.

But the deputy chairman of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission, Rodney Kiwa, dismissed concerns about irregularities in the voters roll as “the product of creative imagination”.

He narrowly lost to Mnangagwa in 2018, a poll he condemned as fraudulent. It was tainted by a deadly crackdown on post-election protests.

At least 6.6 million people are registered to vote.

Late deployment of voting material led to delays in polls opening in parts of the country, with just a quarter of stations opening on time in the capital Harare, according to the electoral commission. — AFP

Macron mulls referendums to break political deadlock

PARIS: French President Emmanuel Macron told his government on Wednesday he was considering referendums to pass legislation and break the political deadlock caused by the country’s hung parliament.

Macron told cabinet members he would hold talks with all rival political leaders next week with a view to drawing up “draft legislation but also referendums”, the sources said on condition of anonymity, without giving further details.

The 45-year-old leader announced in early August that he was planning a “major political initiative” after his summer holidays.

The government has succeeded in negotiating some new laws with the support of opposition parties, but Macron’s flagship pension reform earlier this year had to be rammed through using emergency executive powers — outraging many voters.

Macron, who likes to claim reforming France is part of his political DNA, is desperate to relaunch his second and final term in office, which has been bogged down following his failure to



French President Emmanuel Macron delivers a speech during a ceremony to commemorate the 79th anniversary of the liberation of the village Bornes-les-Mimosas, south-eastern France. — AFP

secure a majority in parliamentary elections in June 2022.

Rumours about referendums have swirled before during his six years in power, notably after the so-called “Yellow Vest” anti-government protests in 2018-2019 when the centrist wanted to reduce the number of national lawmakers.

Under France’s fifth republic, which began in 1958, the president is able to call national referendums, but the power has been used only nine times since then.

It was last invoked in 2005 for a referendum on a new

European constitution, which the government of then president Jacques Chirac lost in a shock setback.

Talks next week will see Macron convene all the leaders of opposition political parties, including Marine Le Pen from the far-right National Rally — with whom the president has previously refused to negotiate.

The government’s immediate priorities include passing legislation to tackle illegal immigration and crime, while it is also expected to face severe difficulties in securing a majority for its 2023/24 budget. — AFP

Climate change could bring more heatwaves

NINA LARSON

As Europe and other regions swelter, a UN researcher cautioned that climate change was enabling increasingly intense and long-lasting heatwaves, which in some areas could soon begin to hit year-round.

Extreme heat has dominated the headlines in recent weeks, from the current “heat dome” cooking much of Europe, to heat-fuelled wildfires raging in Greece, Spain, Canada and Hawaii, and soaring temperatures in the middle of the South American winter.

Heatwaves are beginning earlier, lasting longer and becoming more intense, John Nairn, a senior extreme heat advisor at the UN’s World Meteorological Organization (WMO), said in an interview.

“It’s the most rapidly emerging consequence of global warming that we are seeing in the weather systems,” he said, stressing that this was in line with scientific predictions.

“People are far too relaxed about the signs,” he

lamented.

“The science has been saying this is coming your way. And this is not where it stops. It will only get more intense and more frequent.”

One reason, he explained, was that global warming appears to be leading to a weakening of the global jet streams — air that flows high in the Earth’s atmosphere.

As the jet stream waves grow slower and wavier, they allow weather systems to “become parked” in one spot for longer.

“You can get a summertime situation where you get persistent heatwaves, and the heat just builds and builds and builds, because the wave is not moving on,” Nairn said.

If you look at the planet as a whole, he said you could see that “these heatwaves are appearing in each of those same wavelengths around the globe.”

“The slowing down and parking of the weather patterns is setting us up so that North America, parts of the Atlantic ocean, Europe and Asia are simultaneously sitting in the (wave) ridges, getting caught.” Heatwaves are among the deadliest natural hazards, with hundreds of thousands of people dying

THERE SHOULD BE FAR MORE FOCUS ON RISING OVERNIGHT MINIMUM TEMPERATURES THAN ON THE MAXIMUM DAY TEMPERATURES THAT GRAB HEADLINES

from preventable heat-related causes each year.

Nairn called for the conversation around heat to become “smarter”. Among other things, he said, there should be far more focus on rising overnight minimum temperatures than on the maximum day temperatures that grab headlines.

Repeated high nighttime temperatures are particularly dangerous for human health, since the body is unable to recover from the heat it suffers through during the day.

Higher overnight temperatures also mean that the energy accumulated during the day has nowhere to go, pushing temperatures even higher the next day.

The fact that minimum temperatures are rising faster than maximums is thus pushing excess energy “into longer periods of higher temperatures”, Nairn said. “It’s cumulative... So heatwaves are becoming much more dangerous.” And as the climate continues to change, the situation is due to get worse, Nairn said. He voiced particular concern over the situation in the tropics and subtropics, pointing to the record heat seen in South America, with temperatures up towards 40 degrees Celsius in the middle of what is supposed to be their winter.

— AFP

Russia’s ‘General Armageddon’ falls from grace

Nicknamed “General Armageddon” for his ruthless methods, Sergei Surovikin was one of the leading commanders of Russia’s military campaign in Ukraine until his sacking which was announced on Wednesday.

His good relations with the discredited Wagner mercenary group and its leader Yevgeny Prigozhin proved to be his downfall after Wagner staged a rebellion in June and tried to topple Russia’s military command.

Surovikin vanished from public view, prompting furious speculation about his whereabouts.

And on Wednesday, after months of speculation, state media reported that he had been removed from post.

The 56-year-old — a veteran of Moscow’s wars starting with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan — had long been seen as Wagner’s friend in the defence ministry.

When Surovikin was named commander of Russia’s forces in Ukraine in October 2022, Prigozhin and Chechen leader Ramzan Kadyrov warmly welcomed the news.

In May, when Prigozhin furiously accused Russian military leaders of failing to provide him with sufficient ammunition, Surovikin was officially named as an intermediary between Wagner and the army.

Burning tensions between Wagner and the defence ministry came to a head on the night of June 23 to 24, when Prigozhin called for the toppling of Russia’s military command and sent an armoured column towards Moscow.

Surovikin then made a highly unusual video appeal. Unshaven, scowling and with one hand resting on his right thigh, he slowly enunciated a call for Prigozhin to stop.

“We are one blood. We are fighters. I urge you to stop,” he said in military uniform, staring down the camera. “Before it’s too late, you have to obey the will and orders of the elected president of Russia. Stop the armoured columns, return to your bases and settle any problems peacefully,” he said. Less than 24 hours later, Prigozhin had turned his forces back and agreed a deal with the Kremlin to be exiled to Belarus.

But Surovikin made no further public appearances.

Surovikin’s time commanding Moscow’s forces in Ukraine was tumultuous and short-lived — after just three months in the role he was replaced by chief of staff Valery Gerasimov, a nomination seen as a victory for the military’s top brass against Prigozhin.

— AFP



Azby Brown

The author is lead researcher for the environmental monitoring group Safecast and a longtime Japan resident, wrote from Yokohama.

Radioactive waste heads to ocean

This week Japan will begin releasing more than a million tonnes of treated radioactive water, now stored at the disabled Fukushima Daiichi Nuclear Power Plant, into the Pacific Ocean.

It is expected to take decades to release all of the water at the plant, which was devastated in 2011 by a tsunami generated by the powerful Tohoku earthquake. Tokyo Electric Power Company, or Tepco, which operates the facility, and the International Atomic Energy Agency both say the radiation to be released will be of such low concentrations that it will have a negligible radiological impact on people and the environment.

That may turn out to be true, if everything goes according to Tepco’s plans, consistently and without major mishap, for at least the next 30 years. Only time will tell. But the most important questions here may not be the technical, scientific and radiological ones, but about the example being set.

The Japanese government and Tepco made the decision to release the water after a process that has been neither fully transparent nor adequately inclusive of important stakeholders, both in Japan and abroad. This plants the seeds for what could be decades of mistrust and contention.

But perhaps even more worrying, Japan is setting a precedent for other governments that might be even less transparent. This is dangerous, particularly in Asia, where more than 140 nuclear power reactors are already in operation and, led by growth in China and India, dozens more are either being built, are in the planning stages or have been proposed. If Japan, a globally respected cultural and economic force, can get away with dumping radioactive water, what’s to stop other countries? There’s no denying that Japan and Tepco are in a bind over what to do with the byproducts of the world’s worst nuclear accident since Chernobyl in 1986.

Melted nuclear fuel debris inside the damaged reactors is being cooled by pumped-in water, which comes into contact with a toxic cocktail of radioactive substances known as radionuclides. To this is added approximately 100 tonnes of



Fukushima Daiichi Power Plant in Okuma, Fukushima prefecture, Japan. – NYT file photo

groundwater and rainwater, which leak into the reactor buildings each day and also become contaminated. All of the water is sent through a powerful filtration system to remove much of the radioactivity and is stored on-site in more than 1,000 giant steel tanks. But the amount of water is constantly growing, and Tepco has repeatedly warned that it is running out of storage space at Fukushima.

I have researched or written about Fukushima and affected communities ever since the disaster and have closely followed the official response. As early as 2013, the I.A.E.A. began advising Tepco to consider discharging the water into the sea. The government also looked at other options, such as releasing the water into the air as vapour or injecting it deep underground. But numerous experts and environmental groups have complained that there has been a consistent lack of sufficient public input and that some viable alternatives, such as long-term storage in more robust tanks, were not seriously evaluated. Despite opposition from many Japanese citizens, the country’s fisheries association, and neighbours like South Korea and China, the government announced in April 2021 that it had decided on releasing the water into the ocean.

Fukushima’s water was a golden opportunity for Japan to not only match those successes, but also to set a new global model for addressing the difficulty of nuclear waste disposal with transparency and inclusion. Instead, the decision was essentially made by the government, announced and then vigorously defended.

All of this might have been fine except that Tepco and the Japanese government suffer from a severe trust deficit on Fukushima. During the 2011 disaster, they repeatedly minimised the risks, withheld crucial information on threats to public Countries like South Korea, China and some Pacific Island nations have been particularly critical, with Seoul complaining of a lack of consultation by Tokyo. Following recent Japanese diplomatic efforts, South Korea and Micronesia have lifted their opposition. China, however, has redoubled its criticism, accusing Japan of treating the ocean like a “private sewer.” The Pacific Islands Forum, which represents 18 nations — some of which are acutely aware of the legacy of American nuclear testing — remains opposed. At this stage, it looks unlikely that Japan will change course. The country’s bureaucratic and corporate culture is notoriously complex and slow-moving, and major decisions like this are nearly impossible to reverse.

But it’s not too late to improve on public trust. Japan has invited the I.A.E.A. to help monitor the release, and this is welcome. But many Japanese, accustomed to obfuscation and a lack of transparency on Fukushima, simply no longer trust official assurances. Only a truly independent, international and participatory monitoring regime — with the close involvement of those most likely to be affected — will be sufficient to make sure that the release of the water is being done safely and responsibly.

With that, a bad precedent could be transformed into a globally admired one.

— *The New York Times*

To comment & email: opinion@omanobserver.om

Marching ahead in tourism market

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, took a significant step when it announced its official partnership with the ITB Berlin (Internationale Tourismus-Börse Berlin) 2024, which is the world's largest tourism fair, with over 190 countries participating, 5,000 exhibitors in attendance, and over 120,000 visitors annually.

This partnership supports the ministry's efforts to promote the country's tourism potential by utilising a variety of promotional techniques and tools to attract as many visitors as possible.

The participation was part of the ministry's attempts to reflect Oman's tourist and cultural capabilities, as well as the cultural richness that our country possesses. This participation also aims to quadruple the number of tourists in the following years, as part of a well-planned step towards achieving the Oman Vision 2040 targets.

According to recent data, the number of visitors and tourists visiting the country in 2022 has reached 2.9 million, with 1.6 million staying in 4-5-star hotels. As a result, the partnership with the world's largest tourism fair represents a paradigm shift. As this action would aid at marketing tourism in Oman in the global tourist sector. Such initiatives are pleasing to Omanis since they are partners in raising the profile of our country in the world and encouraging tourists to visit the country.

Realistically, Oman's selection by the ITB Berlin as a partner in 2024 is noteworthy, highlighting our active presence on international tourist map. This did not come out of nowhere as this organisation is responsible for hosting the world's largest tourist stock exchange. Rather, it stemmed from Oman's perception that it had satisfied a number of international requirements in this area. This selection also supports the ministry's ongoing efforts to improve the industry and the success that this sector is making, highlighting its relevance in promoting the government's development and economic diversification goals.

We must not ignore the reality that strategic alliances are assessed using a range of criteria and standards, such as tolerance and acceptance of others, attitudes towards global concerns,



Ali Al Matani
alimatani2@gmail.com

THE PARTNERSHIP WITH ITB BERLIN IS AN EXCELLENT CHANCE FOR IMPROVING OMAN'S POSITION ON THE GLOBAL TOURISM MAP

position in the international arena, and reputation among world countries. All these, and other considerations, play an important role in the selection process. This institution is eager to apply a variety of criteria to retain its global reputation as the world's tourism fair, and its entry into new partnerships is subject to standards that contribute in the enhancement of its brand.

The Sultanate of Oman will be a guest of honour at the ITB Berlin, gaining access to a variety of benefits as a consequence of its participation. These benefits include an opportunity to make a speech at the fair's opening ceremony, which will be attended by delegates from 190 countries, as well as other events and a press conference on the margins of the event, in addition to the activities scheduled throughout the exhibition days.

There will be broadcast of advertisements at all the exhibition halls, as well as on its official channels and accounts on social media platforms. This presence has a tremendous promotional value that will increase visitor traffic to the nation, and we must prepare accordingly from now on.

The relationship with ITB Berlin is a significant step in global marketing and growing awareness of this country. This partnership is also a tremendous push for the country's tourism industry, as well as an affirmation of our goal to improve the tourism sector and strengthen our position as a global tourist destination in a world full of severe competition to attract the largest proportion of travellers. Today, a global footprint is required if we were to get a foothold on the global tourist map, highlighting the crucial role that this sector plays in income diversification programmes and the success of economic diversification projects.

Investing in promotion is the best method to attract as many tourists as possible, stay up to date on tourism trends, and reap the benefits from the efforts taken to expand economic sectors in accordance with Oman Vision 2040.

This collaboration is an excellent chance to promote the tourism ingredients, goods, services and experiences that our country has to offer. This global event offers a variety of investment opportunities within the context of the tourism strategy to satisfy the investment objectives of the sector.

RISING FROM THE WRECK



An aerial view shows a tree and brush growing up out of the remains of the shipwrecked Yawah, just one of more than 200 ships in the Ghost Fleet at the Mallows Bay Park in Nanjemoy, Maryland. The Yawah ventured to Europe and back until being caught up in the Great Ship Tie-up of 1920 in the James River, and was brought to Mallows Bay, the home of the largest number of visible historic shipwrecks in the Western Hemisphere. — AFP

Advancing environmental justice with AI

Climate change is undoubtedly the defining challenge of our time, but its effects are not equally distributed.

In both developed and developing countries, environmental degradation disproportionately affects communities marginalised because of race, ethnicity, religion and poverty. More often than not, these communities are already confronting systemic inequalities such as water scarcity and greater exposure to pollution and extreme weather events — all of which are exacerbated by the climate crisis.

It is a reality with which I am intimately familiar. As a child, my family had a farm on Dominica, a small Caribbean island state that faces the threat of hurricanes each year. One tropical storm could knock out power grids and wipe out entire harvests, destroying local livelihoods.

According to the World Bank, climate-related disasters push 26 million people into poverty annually. And because the world's poorest people often depend on agriculture — a sector highly dependent on favourable weather conditions — to support themselves, they urgently need access to technical, financial and institutional resources to prepare for and respond



Justina Nixon-Saintil

The writer is Vice-President and Chief Impact Officer at IBM

TOOLS POWERED BY ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE, IN PARTICULAR, COULD HAVE AN OUTSIZE IMPACT, ENABLING PEOPLE TO LEARN FROM AND ADAPT TO CLIMATE CHALLENGES IN REAL TIME

to ever more frequent and intense extreme weather events.

Given its capacity to innovate climate solutions, the technology sector could provide the tools we need to understand, mitigate, and even reverse the damaging effects of global warming. In fact, addressing longstanding environmental injustices requires these companies to put the newest and most effective technologies into the hands of those on the front lines of the climate crisis.

Tools that harness the power of artificial intelligence, in particular, could offer unprecedented access to accurate information and prediction, enabling communities to learn from and adapt to climate challenges in real time. The IBM Sustainability Accelerator, which we launched in 2022, is at the forefront of this effort, supporting the development and scaling of projects such as the Deltares Aquality App, an AI-powered tool that helps farmers assess and improve water quality. As a result, farmers can grow crops more sustainably, prevent runoff pollution and protect biodiversity.

Consider also the challenges that smallholder farmers

face, such as rising costs, the difficulty of competing with larger producers that have better tools and technology, and, of course, the devastating effects of climate change on biodiversity and weather patterns. Accurate information, especially about soil conditions and water availability, can help them address these issues, but has historically been hard to obtain.

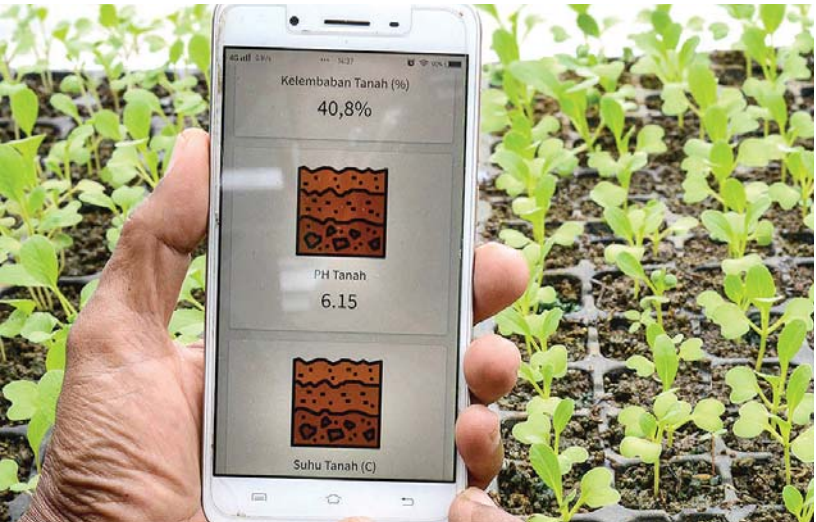
One could imagine regional officials in a developing country deploying a machine learning algorithm to forecast future population growth and

corresponding change in energy demand using temporal and spatial data. With this forecasting model, policymakers could optimise the country's energy network, redirecting supply to where it will be needed most. That is also something that we are supporting today.

Developing AI-powered mobile apps and virtual assistants, and making them widely available, promotes equitable access to data and technical insights. With highly accurate weather forecasting, advanced agronomy techniques, and carbon-footprint calculations,

as well as other predictions generated by AI, smallholder farmers can build greater climate resilience and boost both production and income by adapting to changing conditions more quickly and managing crops more sustainably.

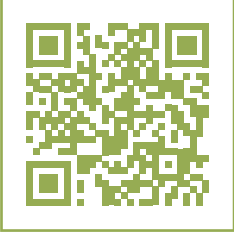
At the same time, simply handing over these tools to disadvantaged communities will not solve the problem — apps alone are not an antidote to climate injustice. To implement AI-based technology successfully, tech companies must be willing to share knowledge with users, including instructions on how to take measurements that will yield data. They must build in the ability for users to collaborate independently with one another, and solicit feedback from farmers and other users. To that end, an AI chatbot that automates question-and-answer exchanges could help minimise user-training challenges while democratising access to information. As companies develop AI solutions, we also need to support local tech firms and app developers, as they are best positioned to put these tools to use. © Project Syndicate, 2023



Climate-related disasters push 26 million people into poverty annually.

Sport

Follow us on
omanobserver.om/sports



Salalah to stage draw for FIH Hockey5s World Cup

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, AUG 23

Oman's spectacular Salalah city will host the draw determining the pools of the first ever FIH Hockey5s World Cup Oman on September 3 at 7 pm.

The Hockey5s World Cup will be staged in Muscat's Al Amerat Stadium from January 24 to 31, 2024.

The draw will be held one day after the conclusion of the last qualifiers for this World Cup — Asian qualifiers — also to be staged at the same venue. FIH President Tayyab Ikram will attend the draw ceremony.

As many as 16 teams will be competing in both men's and women's tournaments at the World Cup. Thirteen teams have already made it to the finals with the qualifiers completed except for Asia.

Hockey5s is an exciting and fast-paced shorter version of hockey with five players each on both sides.

In the women's competition, Namibia, South Africa and Zambia (Africa), USA, Uruguay



and Paraguay (Pan America), Netherlands, Poland and Ukraine (Europe), Australia, New Zealand and Fiji (Oceania) have qualified for the World Cup.

In the men's competition, the participating teams include the Netherlands, Poland and Switzerland (Europe), Egypt, Kenya and Nigeria (Africa), USA, Trinidad & Tobago and Jamaica (Pan America), Australia, New Zealand and Fiji (Oceania).

Alongside hosts Oman, the

additional three teams from Asia will qualify through the upcoming Asian Hockey5s Qualifiers taking place from August 25 to September 2 in Salalah.

The group stage will consist of four pools of four teams each.

The Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex will stage the Asian qualifiers.

WOMEN'S QUALIFIERS

Higher ranked India, Japan, Malaysia and Thailand are placed

in the Elite group of the women's Asian Hockey5s Qualifiers.

Six teams including hosts Oman are placed in the Challenger group. The other teams are Bangladesh, Chinese Taipei, Hong Kong, Indonesia and Iran.

On the opening day of competition on August 25, all 10 teams are taking to the ground, with hosts Oman and other teams in Challenger group twice in action.

Indonesia meet Bangladesh in

the tournament opener.

The Omani women open campaign with a match against Hong Kong and return later to meet Indonesia.

In the first match of the Elite group, India take on Malaysia. In the last match of the day, Japan play Thailand in the same group.

The semifinals and final will be held on August 28.

The Omani women have already qualified to the World Cup as the tournament hosts.

11 TEAMS

In the men's Asian World Cup Qualifiers, 11 teams are in fray for the three spots available for the World Cup.

Favourites India, Malaysia, Pakistan, Japan, Bangladesh, Oman, Kazakhstan, Indonesia, Iran, Afghanistan and Hong Kong will compete to decide the three qualifiers from Asia. Hosts Oman are assured of a place in the World Cup. The men's qualifiers are slated from August 29 to September 2.

Al Nahda edge Al Khalidiya to secure AFC Cup spot

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 23

In a thrilling encounter held at Sheikh Ali bin Mohammed Al Khalifa Stadium, Al Nahda Club secured their spot in the prestigious AFC Cup 2023-2024 group stage after a hard-fought 3-2 victory over Bahrain's Al Khalidiya. This win came during the preliminary round of the competition.

From the opening moments, Al Nahda demonstrated their prowess through the strategic formation and gameplay, seizing control of the midfield and artfully maintaining possession. The breakthrough came in the seventh minute when Salah al Yahyai's exquisite pass found Omar al Maliki, who then deftly set up Essam al Subhi to clinically slot the ball past Al Khalidiya's goalkeeper Ammar Mohammad. This brilliant opening goal set the tone for Al Nahda's ascendancy in the match, and they managed to preserve their lead until half-time.

The second half saw Al Khalidiya launching a spirited offensive to level the score, creating several opportunities that were brilliantly thwarted by Al Nahda goalkeeper Ibrahim al Mukhaini. Al Nahda, however, was not to be contained, with Salah al Yahyai setting the stage for Omar al Maliki's goal in the 55th minute, extending their lead to 2-0.

Al Khalidiya displayed their determination with Ismail Abdel-Latif's goal in the 69th minute, but Samir al Sunaidi's successful strike in the 77th minute widened the gap in favour of Al Nahda. Although Al Khalidiya managed a late goal by defender Sedina Sabo in the 84th minute, it

wasn't enough to alter the



outcome.

With this victory Al Nahda Club moved into the AFC Cup group stage, marking their fifth appearance in the competition.

Looking forward, the official draw for the group stage will take place at the Asian Football Confederation's headquarters in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, on Thursday, heralding the commencement of the 2023-2024 AFC Cup. The 19th edition of this tournament, now held in an autumn-to-spring format, will feature 36 clubs from across the five AFC regions, competing across nine groups. Match-ups are slated to unfold from September 2023 to May 2024.



TAMBERI WINS HIGH JUMP GOLD IN THRILLING CONTEST

Kipyegon, Barshim make history at worlds

BUDAPEST: Kenya's Faith Kipyegon won a historic third world 1,500m gold on Tuesday and although Qatari high jumper Mutaz Essa Barshim missed out on a fourth crown, he became the first man to win five medals in the event.

Kipyegon produced an imperious front-running performance to add to her 2017 and 2022 titles, her face creasing in joy as realisation of her feat struck home.

Sifan Hassan never landed a punch and once again, as at the Tokyo Olympics, had to make do with bronze.

For Kipyegon, 29, it crowned an annus mirabilis having already broken three world records.

"I told myself, 'You are the strongest and just keep going,'" said Kipyegon.

"I was chasing history today and I was chasing this title. I have done it."

Barshim tried to rouse the crowd at the National Athletics Centre as he went for his third and final attempt at 2.36m as the women's 1,500m final reached its final stages.

But just as the women's race was a bit flat due to Kipyegon's sublime brilliance so Barshim's challenge for a fourth successive world crown ended as a damp squib, the Qatari bowing out at 2.33m.

He took bronze whilst victory instead went to the man with whom he shared Olympic gold in Tokyo, Italy's Gianmarco Tamberi (2.36m). "I consider this bronze as history," Barshim said.

"In any competition, our ambition is gold and victory, but this is sport.

"With this bronze, I became the only athlete in the history of the high jump to win five medals in the world championships and I am very proud."

There was a repeat victory in the men's steeplechase.

Morocco's Soufiane El Bakkali left Ethiopia's world record holder Lamecha Girma trailing as the 27-year-old champion crossed the line in 8min 03.53sec.

Kipyegon, Tamberi and El



Kenya's Faith Kipyegon celebrates winning the women's 1,500m final during the World Athletics Championships at the National Athletics Centre in Budapest.



Italy's Gianmarco Tamberi competes in the men's high jump final during the World Athletics Championships at the National Athletics Centre in Budapest. — AFP



(From L) Men's high jump gold medalist Italy's Gianmarco Tamberi, men's 3,000m steeplechase gold medalist Morocco's Soufiane El Bakkali and bronze medalist Kenya's Abraham Kibiwot celebrate in the steeplechase water jump. — AFP

Bakkali then all celebrated by jumping into the steeplechase water jump, something to be envied by the spectators who sat in sweltering heat throughout the evening.

Another Olympic champion, American Valarie Allman, looked downcast as her less celebrated team-mate Lauauga Tausaga improved her personal best by more than four metres to win with 69.49m. Allman improved from her bronze last year to silver but

the look on her face suggested it was little consolation.

"I don't know if I have a fairy godmother or something, or my ancestors had some say in it, but I was able to do something tonight that I didn't think was possible yet," said 25-year-old Tausaga.

BOL FAVOURITE

Femke Bol looks in the form to replace the absent Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone as 400m hurdles world champion,

sauntering through to Thursday's final (1950GMT).

A victory would see the 23-year-old Dutch hurdler complete a full set of medals having taken Olympic bronze and world silver last year.

The final, though, will be missing 2016 Olympic and 2019 world champion Dalilah Muhammad, who finished third behind Bol and failed to go through as one of the two fastest losers. "In the last 100 metres



Gold medalist Italy's Gianmarco Tamberi celebrates winning the final alongside bronze medalist Qatar's Mutaz Essa Barshim. — Reuters

I gave it my all but I knew it wasn't going to be enough," said Muhammad.

"It hasn't really hit me yet that I won't make the final but it was all a bit of a Hail Mary to be honest," added the 33-year-old.

A similar fate befell another former world champion, Steven Gardiner, in the 400m, the 27-year-old Olympic gold medalist crashing to the track and eventually escorted off in a wheelchair. Gardiner's predecessor

as Olympic champion, Wayde Van Niekerk, only just scraped into the final as one of the two fastest losers.

Van Niekerk said he was disappointed by his performance but his thoughts were with Gardiner as he knows how tough it is to cope with injury having suffered a serious one himself.

"It is not so nice to see somebody finishing a competition injured like that," said the 31-year-old South African. — AFP

Ministry's competition for Sports Projects launched

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUG 23

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth launched on Tuesday the inaugural edition of the Ministry's competition for the Sports Projects during a press meeting at the Youth Centre in Muscat. The competition, under the theme of 'Share the Change', focused on the physical activity and sports projects that aimed at changing the behaviour of society members towards a healthy lifestyle.

HH Sayyida Hujaiba bint Jaifer al Said, Mohammed al Amri, General Manager of Sports Activities, and adviser Khalifa al Issaei were present along with other officials.

Mohammed al Amri said that the competition is an initiative supervised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and supported by many other governmental entities and funded by the Ministry of Economy.

"A healthy life would produce clear results in the society. Also the



successful projects and initiatives will be sponsored by the Ministry in this competition and to be implemented on the ground," he added.

Ibrahim al Shibli, the chairman of the competition, presented the details of the competition to the audience. Competition-related objectives, participating groups/ the procedural definition of the groups, competition-related areas, general terms and conditions and the mechanism of differentiation among the projects were explained.

Later, Khalifa al Issaei elaborated on the evaluation criteria



namely: Project methodology, creativity and innovation, project management efficiency, the added value to the project, the sustainability and future plans and the social impact.

The competition will be open for all non-governmental teams including: various sports teams and committees of the sports clubs

or sports centres, to which they have actual and effective affiliation. Also, the Civil Society Institutions which have voluntary organisations that seek to provide services for themselves and society without charge and Small and Medium Enterprises which are approved and registered enterprises with the Authority of Small and Medium

Enterprises Development (SMEs Development Authority) can take part.

The competition will also aim to encourage all members of society to create projects that will ensure living a more healthy and vibrant life by activating physical activity and making it a lifestyle. Also, to cultivate a culture of initiative,

creativity and innovation. Moreover, raising the level of physical activity in the society and engaging all segments of society, including individuals, teams and institutions, in sports projects aimed at the society. Besides that, the competition targeted to create sustainable sports projects that will contribute to advancing the process of economic development.

The competition began receiving the projects and initiatives through online platform since August 22 and the deadline to receive the project is scheduled on October 6, 2023 while the filtration process of the winning projects will be during October 8 to 23 and the final ceremony during November and December.

The winning project will get cash prize of RO 5,000 while the second-place project will receive RO 4,000 and the third best project will be awarded RO 3,000. The fourth and fifth place projects will receive RO 2,000 and RO 1,000 respectively.

ENVIRONMENT

Vegetation is seen on cracked land at Khabour River during drought in the town of Tel Tamer, in northeast Syria. — Reuters



MUSIC

French singer Julien Clerc addresses the audience as he pays tribute to his half-brother Gerard Leclerc, during the Dryadestivales Music Festival. Julien Clerc's half-brother, French TV journalist Gerard Leclerc, passed away two days ago after a tourist plane crashed on the Loire River. — AFP



WEATHER

A pigeon drinks at a public fountain during a heatwave, in Mulhouse, eastern France. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

Women carry loads of firewood in Macheke, Zimbabwe. — Reuters



ENTERTAINMENT

People enjoy the water of the Somes River on a hot day in the Ticau village near Ulmeni, in the northern Transylvanian region of Romania. — AFP



art & life

THURSDAY | AUGUST 24, 2023 | SAFAR 7, 1445 AH

OMAN OBSERVER f x @ www.omanobserver.om features@omanobserver.om



Expats gear up for Onam celebrations

KABEER YOUSUF @kabeeryousef

AS THE ONAM festival approaches, a large number of expatriates from the subcontinent are eagerly preparing to curate a diverse array of socio-cultural and gastronomic events throughout September and October this year. Onam is a festival observed primarily by Kerala's Hindu community. Its appeal is so vast that it ignites a sense of enthusiasm among the expatriate population, who are dedicated to showcasing the vibrancy of their heritage through an assortment of engaging activities, reflecting the essence of Onam and fostering a strong sense of community and tradition.

Hundreds of people, men, women and children, gather at hotels, homes and other places to participate in activities commemorating the festival season, culminating in a sumptuous feast called 'sadya', a several-course dish almost every weekend through these three months.

A series of events have already been announced since the beginning of the month by regional wings and groups of people under the Indian Social Club, the only authorised body with the Ministry of Social Development.

While the celebrations of the 'Palakkad Association', a group of people from this Valluvanadan district is



scheduled to be held on September 1 and 2 at Al Falaj Hotel hosting acclaimed classical dancer Methil Devika, the Kairali Seeb Kootayma too is hosting hundreds of visitors on the same day, September 1, along with another group of people called Kodungallur Kootayma on the same day.

The Kerala Wing, a regional wing under the Indian Social Club, is hosting their well-wishers on September 8 and 9 at Al Falaj Hotel, while the NSS (Nair Service Society) events are scheduled to be held on September 15, hosting

more than 1,500 guests to their celebrations on September 14 and 15 where Saiju Kurup, acclaimed film actor from Kerala, will be the chief guest.

Malayalam Wing will celebrate Onam on September 22 and 23 at Al Falaj with India's 'Dialysis Man' Ananda Kumar, who has successfully helped hundreds of thousands of dialysis sessions for the needy, in attendance.

The World Malayali Federation (WMF) will host all who wish to experience Onam celebrations with Maryam al Zadjali, Chair, Omani Women's



Association, as the chief guest at the College of Banking and Financial Studies on October 7. SNDP, another group of people, has preparations for a September 29 celebration with their leader, Vellappalli Nateshan, in attendance in Bausher, while Snehatheeram Onam is scheduled for October 1. Muscat Moms, a group of mothers in Muscat, will share the joy of Onam on September 8 at Avenues Mall as Harippad Kootayma, a group of people from the district of Alappuzha, is charted to be on October 6.

"These celebrations are directly supporting the economy in a desirable scale as hundreds of people gather, dine together, and celebrate in a grand manner the cost of which will run several thousands of rials as they source local products and services," opines Davis Kallukkaran, Managing Partner at E&Y Oman Audit Firm.

Unlike other years, the beginning of the festivities was marked at RJ's Music and Dance Institute last weekend with pomp and glitter, where scores of families took part. Usually, Onam celebra-

tions begin towards the 'Atham' 10 and after, which falls on 29.

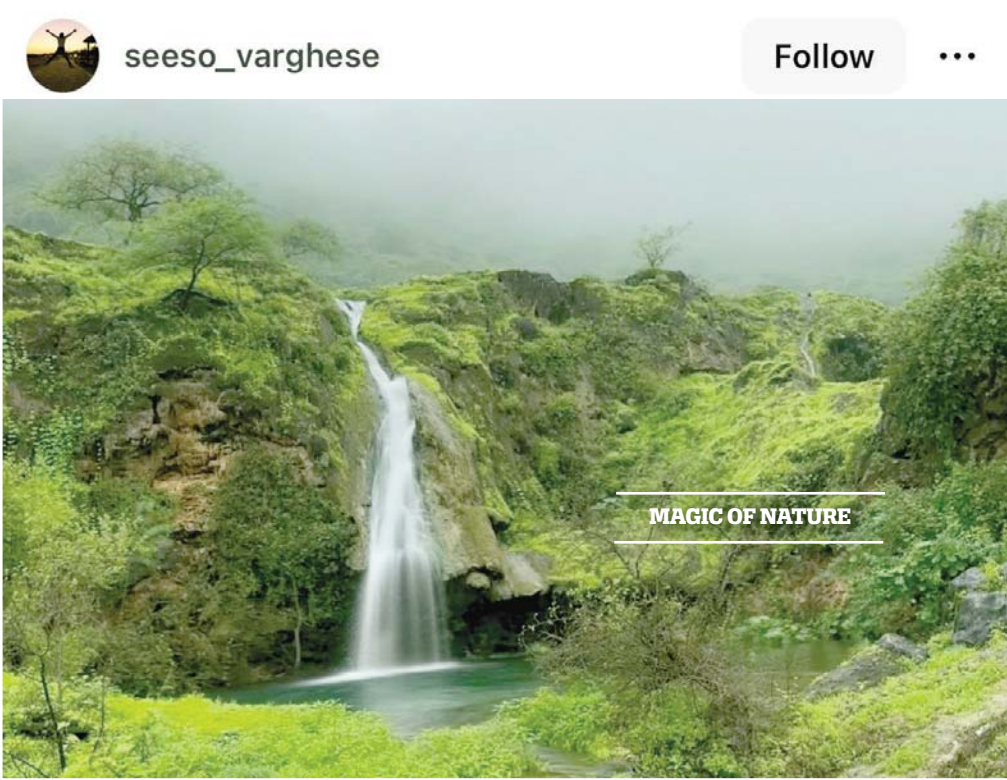
To tap this opportunity, shopping malls and hypermarket chains have devised plans to keep their customers entertained and celebrate Onam together. KM Trading, one of the leading hypermarkets in Oman, has announced that it is hosting Onam celebrations with melodious songs by 'Sing and Win', allowing customers to cherish their favourite music and celebrate together by sending their music tracks.

A 'feast of payasam', a chilled South Asian dessert made from slow-cooked rice, milk and sugar, will be conducted for those yearning customers who celebrate Onam on August 31.

"Onam celebrations are all the more vibrant this year as many took a break and travelled home last year during the first post-Covid festival season," admits Jayakumar Vallickavu, an entrepreneur and media person. "This year, most of them opted to stay back and retrieve the charm they lost last year and make the most of the season," he adds.

Onam, a major annual event for Keralites, commemorates King Mahabali and Vamana. Onam is also the official festival of the state and includes a spectrum of cultural events. And with all the mass feasts and shopping, the festivities are no doubt to create a ripple effect in the socio-economic scenario of the country.

INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



The Woman Behind the ‘Hot Girl Summer’ Necklace

BY DAY, TAYLOR SADE, 24, is a marketing manager. But after work hours, she hand-strings beads and stones on her bed in her Lower East Side apartment, cradled next to her two Himalayan cats. Those creations eventually add up to Vertigo, the buzzy brand behind the accessory draping the necks and waists of many young women this summer. “I’ve always loved solitary activities,” Sade said in an interview from her studio, pointing to a stack of puzzles and knitting equipment sandwiched between tattered books in her living room. That do-it-yourself quality applies more broadly to the bohemian appeal of Vertigo. The brand sells a collection of chokers, pendants and belts made of oversize beads that look as if they were plucked from the sand. The accessories, which cost \$120 to \$380, are often dark-hued but also glint in brighter colours, and they’ve shown up on many bikini-clad beachgoers — an embodiment of a self-assurance often associated with a “Hot Girl Summer.” Gabriella Karefa-Johnson, a contributing editor at Vogue, said Vertigo inspired a feeling of nostalgia and evoked a bygone era that’s hard to place. A Vertigo girl is someone who “didn’t shop at Hollister and might not have been popular because of it, but she



knew what was cool decades before the rest of us,” Karefa-Johnson said. Sade said she had never strung a bead before starting the company in summer 2021. At the time, she was searching for a creative

respite from her full-time job and recalled watching videos about how to string necklaces. “I literally just went onto YouTube one day — it sounds so silly,” she said. For the first six months,

Sade sourced materials from Phoenix, where she is from and where her family lives. Her mother would video chat her daughter as she visited local jewellers in her stead. “I’d be like, ‘I want this jade, not that one!’” Sade said. “Then she’d ship over a

box, and I’d Venmo her.” No pieces look exactly the same, because each stone, bead and jewel varies in colour and shape. “The styles are one-of-a-kind and made in very limited quantities, adding a sense of individualism,” said Brandon Tan, a



stylist and fashion editor for GQ. “These days in the fashion landscape, that’s extremely desirable.” This quality has helped land Vertigo in Sports Illustrated, a Victoria’s Secret ad and a Frankies Bikini billboard in SoHo. In a shoot in May for Mirror Palais, a womenswear company, Emily Ratajkowski wore one of the pendants, featuring a large lapis doughnut-shaped stone tied as a choker. The campaign garnered millions of views on Mirror Palais’ Instagram account, which helped put Vertigo on the map, Sade said. Vertigo has also caught the eye of several celebrity stylists, who have requested accessories for their clients like model Gigi Hadid and TikTok influencer Alix Earle. Sade keeps her opera-



tions relatively modest, although she no longer relies on her mother for help. Instead she negotiates with Arizona-based lapidaries via email and over the phone, accumulating one box at a time in her studio apartment (which is all she has space for, she noted). Recently, she started sourcing more ornate options like fossilised coral, opal eye and green jade from Indonesia. While hesitant to expand the company, Sade said she hired an intern in April to help her string beads. “My problem is, I don’t trust anybody else to execute my vision,” she said. Sade oversees the entire process of creating a Vertigo accessory and attributes the brand’s success to her attention to detail, down to the very last moment the product ships from her home to the next. “I have people directly messaging me, ‘This is the most beautiful package I’ve ever received,’” she said. “And it literally sounds like a joke, but it’s because I spent five minutes wrapping your suede cord into a bow!” —NYT

TECHNOLOGY

Elon Musk arrives in Japan for first visit since 2014



ELON MUSK WAS in Japan on Friday, prompting social media speculation on the purpose of his first known trip to the country in nine years. “Just arrived in amazing Japan,” the billionaire said late on Thursday on X, the platform formerly known as Twitter that he bought last year. In 2014, the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX visited Japan for a ceremony marking his electric car-making company’s full-scale entry to the country’s market. During that trip, he briefly met with then prime minister Shinzo Abe, who was gunned down last year. Japanese carmakers are seen by analysts as having fallen behind in the race to develop electric vehicles. On Friday, Musk also posted videos of what appeared to be an exhibi-

tion by prominent Japanese art collective teamLab, which is known for combining projections, sound and carefully designed spaces. Users on X posted comments asking why Musk was in Japan, with some speculating he had come to see musician Grimes, with whom he has two children, perform at a music festival near Tokyo this weekend. Since buying Twitter last year for \$44 billion, Musk has fired thousands of employees and has erected a payroll on the site, charging users \$8 a month to access certain features and get a blue checkmark “verified” account. Musk visited China in late May, meeting several government officials and declaring he would expand his business in the world’s largest market for electric vehicles. —AFP

MUSIC

Rihanna a mom again



RIHANNA HAS GIVEN BIRTH to a baby boy, her second child with rapper ASAP Rocky, a report said on Monday. The music megastar and beauty entrepreneur became a mother for the second time at the start of month, entertainment outlet TMZ said. “Sources with direct knowledge tell us the baby arrived August 3rd in Los Angeles,” TMZ said. “We don’t yet know the kid-do’s name, but we do know it starts with ‘R’ and it’s a boy.” The “Lift me up” singer welcomed her first child, a son, in May last year. And she wordlessly

announced her second pregnancy at this year’s Super Bowl in Arizona, proudly displaying her baby bump to a global audiences of hundreds of millions. Since releasing “Anti” in early 2016, Robyn Rihanna Fenty has taken a break from recording but has by no means taken it easy: she’s become a billionaire, parlaying her music achievements into successful makeup, lingerie and high-fashion brands. Since her last album, Rihanna has performed occasional features and more recently recorded music for the “Black Panther: Wakanda Forever” soundtrack. —AFP

OPERA



Italian opera soprano Renata Scotto dies aged 89

ITALIAN SOPRANO RENATA Scotto has died aged 89, the mayor of her hometown said on Wednesday, as fellow musicians paid tribute to “one of the greatest opera singers of all time.” “A unique singer, a great musician, a great artist, a great woman has died,” the mayor of Savona, Marco Russo, wrote on Facebook, praising Scotto as “cultured, refined, generous, simple”. She died at her home in New York, the ANSA news agency said. Born on February 24, 1934, in

northwest Italy, Scotto studied singing in Milan and began her career in 1952 in Savona in Giuseppe Verdi’s opera La Traviata. She would go on to grace the world’s greatest opera houses, from Milan to London and New York. “I am heartbroken by the death of Renata Scotto, one of the greatest opera singers of all time and a dedicated teacher of young singers,” tenor Plácido Domingo said on social media. —AFP



Oman to attend G20 trade and investment ministerial meeting

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUG 23

Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef (pictured), Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, is heading the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman to the G20 Ministerial Meeting on Trade and Investment, which takes place in the Indian city of Jaipur during August 23-25, 2023.

The meeting will discuss a number of topics related to trade and investment, including supporting multilateral trade for



global growth and prosperity, building inclusive and flexible trade and leveraging technology for global growth.

The ministerial meeting will also deliberate on supply

chain management, support for small and medium enterprises and efforts to increase their competitiveness.

G20 ministers will also discuss the importance of international trade, innovation and development as an engine of growth and building a more resilient global economy, in addition to the importance of renewable energy sources and the transition to a green economy, the importance of logistics in trade, and consensus on issues related to global trade and investment.

During the visit, Al Yousef will

also meet with a number with officials to strengthen relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the countries of the world and explore potential investment opportunities for cooperation in various sectors.

The minister will also head the delegation of the Sultanate of Oman at the G20 Business Forum, which represents the global business community (B20) with the participation of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and a number of private sector institutions in New Delhi during August 25-27, 2023.



(L to R) Fadi Dahlan, Phoenix Group Chairman; Hisham Malak, Chairman of ADX - the Abu Dhabi Stock Exchange as well as Phoenix Group Board Member; Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology; and Olivier Ohnheiser, Green Data City CEO.

Pact signed for new \$300 million crypto mining farm in Oman

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 23

Reinforcing Oman's appeal as a destination for data centre and cryptocurrency mining services, Muscat-based Green Data City and Abu Dhabi-headquartered Phoenix Group have signed an agreement to develop a 150MW crypto-mining farm in Oman.

The agreement was formalised at a ceremony held recently in the presence of Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Hisham Malak, Board Member of Phoenix and Under-Secretary of the Department of Finance of Abu Dhabi.

The new farm will be installed in Green Data City and should be fully operational by Q2, 2024, becoming one of the largest crypto-mining data centres in the region. Phoenix Group is a regional leader of mining equipment backed by MicroBT, with strong expertise in mining operations in the Middle-East.

The signatories of the agreement have chosen the Sultanate of Oman due to the long-term security provided by the Green Data City mining licence, the common vision to develop cryptocurrencies mining and AI applications

with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and the cooler weather in Oman, in particular in the Governorate of Dhofar, which reduces the cooling energy consumption to a minimum, making Oman one the most sustainable destinations for mining in the region.

Environmental and social responsibility being at the top of the mission statement, the developers will build the \$300-million farm with modular units to reduce the impact on the land, install solar shades and employ specialised technicians from the local community.

Younger students and graduates will be able to get acquainted with the mining operations through a partnership with universities in Oman, in a long-term vision to strengthen the country's capabilities on cryptocurrencies, next generation finance, and IT innovation.

GDC has already completed the proof-of-concept phase started in November 2022, with 4 mining companies on site (four miners from Oman and one international), and with the most advanced immersion cooling systems to avoid consuming water.

TURN TO P16

Oman tops Asia in quality of life index

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, AUG 23

In a recent mid-year assessment conducted by Numbeo, Oman has emerged as the top-ranked country in Asia for quality of life, securing the 7th position globally.

The Quality of Life Index provides a comprehensive evaluation of various factors that contribute to the overall well-being and living standards of individuals residing in a particular country or city.

Scoring an impressive 184.8 points on the index, Oman has outperformed other Asian nations, reinforcing its reputation as a desirable destination for residents and expatriates alike.

The country's high ranking can be attributed to several elements that significantly impact the quality of life, including purchasing power, pollution levels, housing affordability, cost of living, safety, healthcare quality, commute times and climate conditions.

Leading the pack globally are Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Iceland, Denmark, Finland, and Switzerland, occupying the top six positions, respectively.

These nations have long



been lauded for their robust social welfare systems, strong economies, and high standards of living.

Oman's remarkable achievement in securing the 7th position reflects its continuous efforts to improve the well-being of its citizens and residents.

The Quality of Life Index serves as a valuable tool for individuals, businesses, and policymakers seeking comparative insights into various countries and cities.

A higher index value signifies a better quality of life, indicating that Oman boasts favourable conditions across multiple parameters.

The Sultanate of Oman has consistently invested in infrastructure development, healthcare and education, which has contributed to its rise in the Quality of Life Index.

The country's strong purchasing power, coupled with affordable housing options and a low crime rate, has made it an attractive destination for individuals looking to settle down or establish businesses.

Furthermore, Oman's commitment to environmental conservation and sustainable development has resulted in relatively low pollution levels, offering its residents cleaner air

and a healthier environment.

The provision of high-quality healthcare services and the presence of state-of-the-art medical facilities have further bolstered Oman's position on the index.

In comparison to its regional counterparts, Oman has outperformed the United Arab Emirates (UAE), which secured a spot in the top 15 (173.8 points), Qatar at 19th position (166.6 points), Saudi Arabia at 32nd (150.7 points), and Kuwait at 45th (129.7 points).

This achievement not only reflects Oman's commitment to enhancing the well-being of its citizens, but also underscores its competitiveness in the region.

As Oman continues to focus on diversifying its economy and promoting sustainable growth, this recognition is expected to attract further investments and bolster the country's standing on the global stage.

The government's continued efforts to improve infrastructure, promote entrepreneurship and enhance social welfare programmes are likely to contribute to the country's future success and advancement in the Quality of Life Index.

Oman nickel mine could rank among world's largest

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUG 23

A nickel-laterite mine awarded earlier this year for development could rank among the largest in the world, potentially positioning the Sultanate of Oman as a world-scale producer of nickel — a critical mineral at the heart of the current global transition to clean energy.

In March this year, UK-based strategic minerals miner Knights Bay was awarded a mining concession for Block 21 in the Wilayat of Ibra in North Al Sharqiyah Governorate.

Covering an area of 1,444 sq kilometres, the nickel laterite mine is also believed to hold rich deposits of strategic minerals including cobalt, chrome and iron ore, besides nickel.

In a fresh update on Block 21's

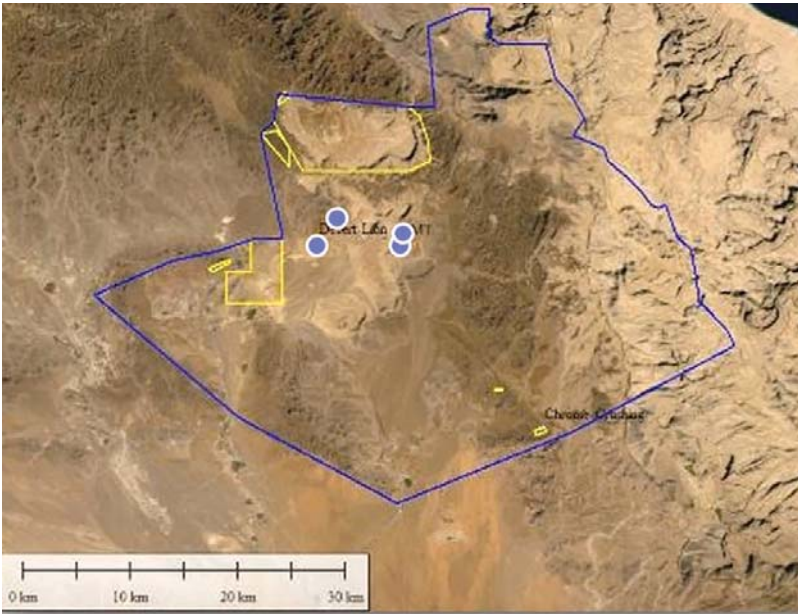
promising mineral potential, a top official has revealed that the mine could become a major source of nickel for the world's booming clean technology industry.

"This project has the potential to be the second and possibly even the largest nickel-mine in the world," said Max Beck, Director of Investor Relations for Knight's Bay.

"Our plan sees full production of 200,000 tonnes per annum starting in 2030-31 and has an estimated life of mine of over 100 years."

Beck shared the new insights in a recent presentation outlining details of a private placement of a small number of shares available to Knights Bay executives before the company targets larger investors.

"We're in talks with several investors, two of which have the



potential to fund the rest of this project with an outright estimated \$5.5 billion and are supportive of our plans for the project," said Beck, adding: "Well, in the words

of one of our larger potential investors when we presented the project to them, they commented that this is a behemoth of a project and indeed it is." Describing Block

21 as an "exceptional find", the official said the Ibra concession also holds 135 kilometres of nickel laterite outcropping that is "easily traceable and largely visible to the eye".

Samples obtained from the site have also confirmed the presence of 1 per cent grade nickel, which is middle of the grade range of other nickel mines around the world, he noted. "We've estimated from the limited data a realistically achievable global exploration target of 11 billion tonnes of nickel laterite.

"This target should convert to reporting code NI 43 101 for reporting resources and reserves," the official stated. Importantly, the presence of iron ore, cobalt and chrome credits in the ore promise to add a further 20 per cent to gross revenues,

said Beck. Some small mines currently being exploited provide high iron ore material suitable for the cement industry, he stated. Further, in keeping with its commitment to producing net zero carbon nickel (effectively green nickel), Knights Bay plans to harness solar energy for its electricity needs.

For the ore reduction process, reformed gas with carbon capture technology will be deployed.

As for water, the requirement is expected to be minimal due to the company's plan to adopt dry process primary processing technologies, he said.

"We will however use industrial water from desalination plants in an existing industrial area for refining the nickel to electric vehicle battery quality," he pointed out.

Water regulation forum concludes in Salalah

BUSINESS REPORTER
SALALAH, AUG 23

The Independent Water Regulation Forum, organised by the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR) in cooperation with the General Secretariat of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the Gulf, stressed the importance of raising the efficiency and performance of the water sector in the GCC countries, the need to find the best ways for sustainable water management in line with global developments in this sector, and the importance of updating legislation and laws in line with international best practice.

The forum, which concluded at the Millennium Salalah Hotel in Dhofar Governorate, was held with the participation of Dr Mansoor bin Talib al Hinai, APSR Chairman; and Dr Mohammed bin Falah al Rashidi, Director of the Energy Department of the General



Secretariat of the Cooperation Council for the Arab States of the GCC.

Presentations on the second day focused on sustainable water management and raising the

efficiency and performance of the water sector. There were six working papers,

which reviewed some experiences of civil sector institutions in the water sector, scientific methods of the uses of treated water in agricultural production, the mechanism of implementing and raising the efficiency of water and sanitation projects, and the impact of the green tide phenomenon.

Qatar also presented its successful experience in dealing with water losses, in which it achieved a reduction of 10 per cent within three years.

Nama Water Services reviewed its experience in implementing water-related projects, represented in the challenges faced by these projects and the rugged terrain in the governorates of Oman.

During the two-day forum, speakers discussed regulation of the water sector in the GCC countries, quality management, raising efficiency, sustainable water management, in addition to innovative methods and techniques to reduce waste.

Make the most of every drive in the powerful Ford Taurus



MUSCAT: Ford’s spacious and powerful Taurus makes a fine impression with its stylish design, powerful performance and inspiring comfort. The Taurus has over the years become a family sedan offering some of the finest journeys.

Powering the Ford Taurus is a proven 2.0-litre EcoBoost engine which is paired to an eight-speed automatic transmission, producing 232 Hp and 388 Nm of torque. Offered with front-wheel drive and three driving modes – Normal, Sport, and Eco – the Blue Oval’s flagship sedan enjoys an impressive economy of as much as 15.3 km/l.

The Taurus exudes refinement with numerous premium touches. It is equipped with 19-inch, 10-spoke polished alloy wheels, a new flatter streamlined hood and a power-deployable door handle.

A dynamic shield-like, clipped trapezoidal grille with active shutter, black mesh and chrome surrounds hint at the power contained within, with a dual exhaust adding a strong sense of style and substance.

Auto high beams and a full LED two-piece headlamp design guarantee Taurus is always seen in the best light. The Taurus interior is impressive and features uncompromised quality. 10-way power driver, six-way power passenger seats and seven ambient colours – including a light interior colour palette.

The Taurus also features extensive use of sound-deadening materials, advanced technologies and precise engineering, as well as cooling dual zone auto AC, ensure that whether in the front or rear seats, all occupants are treated to an exceptionally quiet cabin matched by a smooth and comfortable ride, and an incredible view from the expansive dual panel panoramic moon roof.

At the heart of Taurus’ connective experience is the large, best-in-class, multi-function 13.2-inch centre touchscreen – complementing the big 8-inch digital instrument panel cluster – loaded with Ford’s intuitive SYNC4 technology, which comes customer-ready with its voice-activated communications, entertainment and information systems.

In Oman, Ford vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co. LLC. Please log on to www.fordoman.com, or www.facebook.com/FordOman or www.youtube.com/FordOmanChannel or www.instagram.com/ford_oman for the latest news, test drive requests and the latest press releases.

AL MOUJ WALK

Perfecting the business of oceanfront culinary experiences

MUSCAT: With close to five million people now visiting Al Mouj Muscat every year, we take a closer look at Al Mouj Walk and what makes this beautiful oceanfront dining and shopping precinct the ideal environment for retailing from the people who know it best – its retailers.

As Oman’s first Integrated Tourism Complex, now a thriving lifestyle and leisure destination, Al Mouj Muscat was designed to attract a mix of leisure, dining and shopping operators for visitors, tourists and residents to enjoy.

To help understand just how it is has created and sustained an environment where retailers can prosper, we spoke to three of its operators to find out more.

A win-win location

Elegant eatery Shakespeare & Co serves over five million customers a year from its 40 outlets at various locations throughout the region and its spokesperson

explains why it chose Al Mouj Muscat for its first and only base in Oman: “The global positioning and state-of-the-art facilities at Al Mouj attract the crème de la crème of visitors from within and outside the country. “This offered Shakespeare an ideal space to present itself before such an upscale clientele and this association has been a perfect win-win for Shakespeare & Co and Al Mouj.”

For over a decade, Shakespeare has delighted its guests with delicious classic and contemporary dishes served within a gorgeous interior, and it knows exactly what extra ingredients are needed to bring in the crowds day after day. “The beaches, the marina, the promenade, the cosmopolitan crowd - all of these make Al Mouj the best place in Muscat to live, work and relax.”

Set for success

As any satisfied audience



member appreciates, the most successful productions require a huge amount of work offstage if they are to truly impress and the same dynamic is at play at Al Mouj Muscat.

The popular B+F Roadside Diner tell us: “I love how focused Al Mouj management are on the design, layout and position of each

retailer, so that they maintain the highest quality and appearance, helping to provide a memorable experience for visitors.

A spokesperson from the chic and popular restaurant Huqqa echoes these sentiments: “My experience as a retailer at Al Mouj Muscat has been nothing short of exceptional.

Malabar Gold & Diamonds launches its first jewellery manufacturing unit in West Bengal

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer in the world with over 325 showrooms in 11 countries, has launched its first state-of-the-art jewellery manufacturing facility in West Bengal, India.

The manufacturing unit, built with an investment of \$18 million, was inaugurated by Dr Shashi Panja, Honourable Minister-Of-State, (IC), Industries, Commerce & Enterprises, Child Development and Women Development & Social Welfare Department, Government of West Bengal, in the presence of Malabar Group Chairman M P Ahammed, Malabar Gold & Diamonds India Operations Managing Director O Asher, Malabar Group Executive Director Nishad A K, other senior Malabar Gold & Diamonds team members, dignitaries and well-wishers.



Located at Gems and Jewellery Park, Ankurhati in Howrah district and spread over 50,000 sq ft, the manufacturing unit employs over 850 people to produce a varied range of exquisitely crafted jewellery including gold, diamonds and precious gemstones. Equipped

with advanced technology and unparalleled workmanship, the unit has an annual manufacturing capacity of 4 tonnes of jewellery and 36,000 ct. of diamond studded jewellery.

The first-of-its-kind manufacturing unit has been

designed keeping in mind the ESG goals of the company and comfort of the artisans.

Malabar Gems & Jewellery Manufacturing Pvt Ltd is equipped with the latest technology-enabled machines and collaboration with industry experts from Italy, USA and Germany. Setting up of the Ankurhati facility is in line with Malabar Gold & Diamonds’ plan to further enhance its manufacturing capabilities to meet the growing customer demand and facilitate its retail operations expansion activities.

Commenting on the inauguration of the Ankurhati unit, M P Ahammed, Chairman, Malabar Group said, “West Bengal is one of the major jewellery manufacturing hubs and the state has a deep-rooted tradition of excellent workmanship.

“The state boasts of the largest

number of skilled artisans and goldsmiths in India. We are pleased to open our first manufacturing unit in the state to be a part of the valuable tradition of jewellery making. We are grateful to the Government of West Bengal for supporting us to set up the manufacturing unit.

“The unit will play a key role in our mission, ‘Make in India. Market to the World.’ Our goal is to build an indisputable design leadership of India across the world, continue to cater to the evolving customer demand, surpass their expectations and offer high-quality craftsmanship to our customers a world-class shopping experience.”

With the establishment of the Ankurhati unit, Malabar Gold & Diamonds has a total 10 manufacturing units across India which employ more than 4000 artisans.

WJ Towell Group Company



Quality car rentals at competitive prices.

Muscat 9014 6672, 9679 0684
Sohar 9731 6218 Salalah 9429 9325
www.orbit-oman.com

• Fleet of 2,000 vehicles
• Choose from a wide range of brands & models
• PDO, OXY and BP spec vehicles available
• Attractive rates for short-term & long-term lease

أوربيت ORBIT
Car Rental & Lease

Classifieds



To receive news updates from OMAN OBSERVER,

WhatsApp
 <your name> to
96473232

THURSDAY

AUGUST 24, 2023 | SAFAR 7, 1445 AH

OMAN OBSERVER
Observer Classified Section

Mohammed al Rashdi: 99841230
 m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Ali al Maashari: 99639264
 ali.almashari@omandaily.om

Saada al Rashdi
 95919344

94501166
 24649593
 24649595



النماني للشحن
AL NAMANI CARGO
 DOOR TO DOOR AIR AND SEA CARGO WORLD WIDE

DOOR TO DOOR CARGO



INDIA BANGLADESH NEPAL PHILIPPINES UAE INDONESIA EUROPE UK CANADA USA

WHATSAPP
96353654

TOLL FREE NUMBER
80066766

Follow us :  www.alnamanicargo.com

Driving School

Special offers for those wishing to learn driving in (Aziba - Khwair Qurum - Ruwi Al Amirat)

Contact No: 99074072

AUDIT, ACCOUNTING, VAT, TAXATION

Contact: **97239696**
95355638

Gulf Center Consultancy & Audit
 Muscat, Sohar, Salalah, Sur

EAGLE FREIGHT EXPRESS
 DOOR TO DOOR COURIER SERVICES
 INDIA | NEPAL | BANGLADESH

WORLD WIDE CARGO SERVICE Tel.: 99432926, 78211708, 92319472, 93350126
 Head Office (H.O.) Room No.: 218, 1st Floor, Aircargo Complex, Branch Al-Hail, Email: eaglefreightexpress@gmail.com

25 YEARS OF EXPERIENCE FAST DELIVERY EXCELLENT SERVICES

ATR & SEA CARGO FREE PICKUP 24/7 SERVICE

HAVE A PROPERTY FOR RENT?

Advertise with us.

Contact us on: 99639264

Urgent Requirement for Power Plant at Sohar Port

AL RAI TECHNICAL SERVICES

• **Senior Mechanical Engineer**

Graduate Engineer with minimum 12 to 15 years' experience required to extend technical support to the maintenance and project team to maximize the reliability, availability and performance of the power plant mechanical systems and equipment

Send CV to: vap1oman@gmail.com / hr@alraioman.com

ROYAL CARGO

ALL OVER INDIA INDONESIA NEPAL AIR EXPORT (Port to Port) SEA EXPORT (Container Booking)

SERVICES BY AIR & SEA

DOOR TO DOOR CARGO

PICK UP FREE ANYWHERE IN MUSCAT **93213206**

FOR MORE INFORMATION JUST DIAL CUSTOMER CARE **93213207**

FLAT FOR RENT

FLATS and offices for rent in Muscat. 96379095, 98403020

IN Darsait, 5 bedrooms, 4 bathrooms, kitchen, store, with A.C and balcony sea view, near the Indian school. 275 monthly only. Contact: 99315986

PEST CONTROL OMAN CO. L.L.C.

Supply of Pesticides, Gel (crocroaches), Public Health chemicals, Agriculture chemicals, Snake repellent, Rodent baits and other insect repellent from UK & USA

PROFESSIONALS in Pest Control Service, Bedbug Treatment, Rodent Treatment, Snake Treatment and Termite Treatment [Pre & Post Construction]

Tel: 24787606, 24787503
Direct Line: 24786077
GSM: 99382355, 99172309

pcomctom@omantel.net.om
 P.O. Box 565, Al Wadi Al Kabir 117, Sultanate of Oman

SKT سماء الخضراء للتجارة
SAMA AL KHADRA TRADING

SERVICES:

PIPING SYSTEMS VALVES
 DRAINS INTERCEPTORS

Tel: 24501568, 24502479 • Fax: 24503566
 Email: sales@samaalkhadra.com
 Website: www.samaalkhadratradingco.com

To advertise on our social media platforms and website

Please Contact our Team
95210257

OMAN OBSERVER
www.omanobserver.com

 @omanobserver



Job Vacancy **قائمة وظائف MAJAN HALL**

Majan Hall is looking for an energetic, self-motivated, experienced, creative, innovative individual for the following position:

F&B MANAGER

Required:

1. Bachelor degree in business or related.
2. 10 years min experience in F&B Management.
3. Oman Driving license holder.

Interested candidates pls forward your CV's to infomajanhall@gmail.com

FOR SALE

Restaurant equipment:
 - Oven combi
 - Electric fryer
 - Banquet trolley and many more.
 Contact: 77260040

SIT. WANTED

INDIAN male 30 years, accountant with 4 years experience, currently in Oman on a visit, Looking for a suitable opportunity.
 Contact: 91923112

INDIAN female homeopathic doctor, currently on a family visa in Oman, seeking excellent opportunities in the insurance or medical-related sector.
 Contact: 97541038, email: bindyabaalan@gmail.com

ACCOUNTANT with 4 years of experience in accounts payable, receivables, financial reporting, VAT, payroll and dispute resolution. Actively seeking new opportunities. Contact: 78851023, email: emraanadam19@gmail.com

SUDANESE lawyer and legal adviser, with more than 30 years of experience in Sudanese courts of all levels and types. Available in Muscat, Tel: 79121176, Yasir. Elmahi@hotmail.com

ACCOUNTS/ Finance, Qualified Female, M.com, MBA 2 year working Experience in auditing firm (KPMG) looking for a suitable position. Contact: 94562018 shalusebastianjmj@gmail.com

INDIAN male 34yrs, MBA-Marketing. 12yrs Oman Exp, looking for a job. Experience in sales, operations and project. Presently working as operation manager. Driving licence. Contact: 98469481

SIT. VACANT

LOOKING for Omani system admin with knowledge of VM ware, linux machines management. Contact: innovativetse@omantel.net.om



OMAN **عمان** DAILY

Observer

For Advertisements

Please Contact with our Team:

Head Office

Mohd Al Rashdi
99841230
m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

Ali Al Maashari
99639264
wadialmeeh@yahoo.com

Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suhar Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
sohardaily@outlook.com

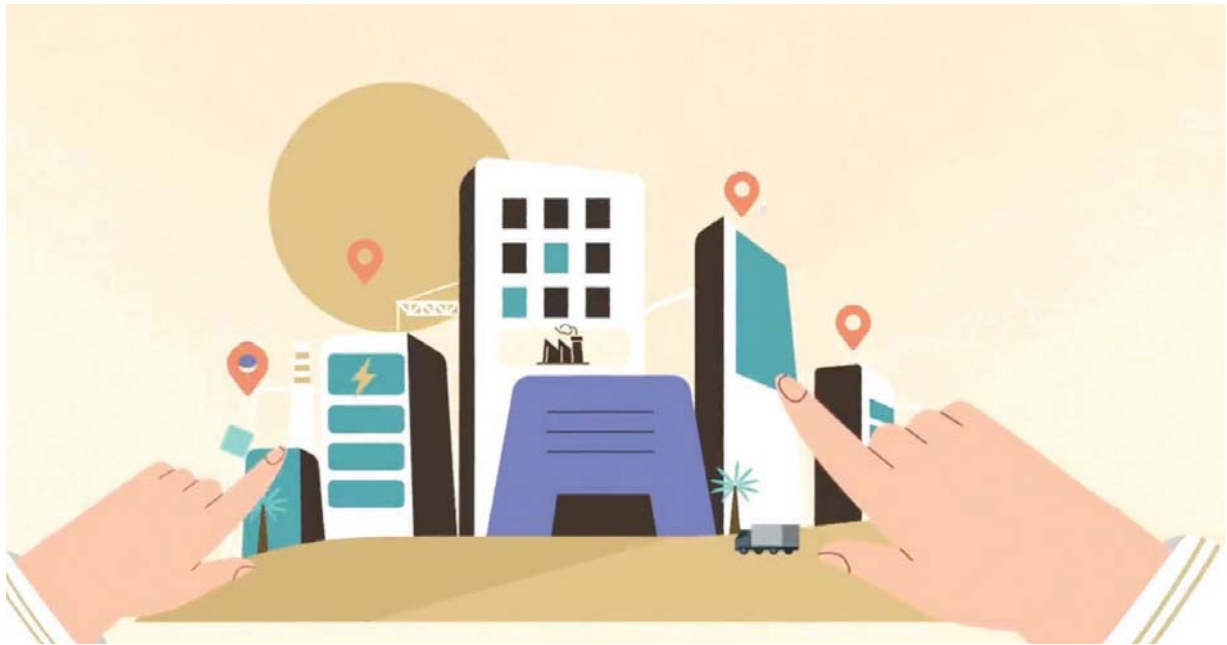
OIA achieves remarkable progress in debt reduction

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, AUG 23

In a strategic move aimed at promoting growth, improving credit ratings, and driving profitability, the Oman Investment Authority (OIA) — the integrated sovereign wealth fund of the Sultanate of Oman — has successfully restructured and reduced the debts of its national companies. Following the transfer of ownership to the OIA, this initiative has yielded significant positive outcomes, positioning the companies for future success.

In a post, the OIA, over a span of two years, has achieved a remarkable 23.4 per cent reduction in corporate debt. This reduction demonstrates the Authority's commitment to financial stability and long-term sustainability.

By addressing and resolving outstanding debts, the OIA has



created a solid foundation for its companies to thrive and attract investment opportunities.

As part of the debt reduction strategy, a total of RO 3 billion in debt has been paid off, including

the prepayment of RO 600 million. This proactive approach not only improves the financial standing of the companies, but also enhances their creditworthiness, enabling them to access favourable

financing options for future growth and expansion.

Looking ahead, the OIA has set ambitious goals for debt repayment in 2023. A staggering RO 900 million in debt is scheduled to

be paid ahead of their due dates, demonstrating the Authority's commitment to meeting financial obligations promptly.

By proactively managing and reducing debts, the OIA is ensuring the financial health and stability of its portfolio companies, fostering an environment conducive to sustainable growth.

Moreover, as part of the debt restructuring efforts, the OIA has successfully secured the release of a government guarantee worth RO 231 million on a loan for one of its companies.

This achievement not only reduces the financial burden on the company, but also instils confidence in potential investors and stakeholders. The release of the government guarantee reflects the OIA's commitment to facilitating a favourable business environment and supporting the growth aspirations of its companies.

The successful debt reduction and restructuring initiatives undertaken by the OIA have far-reaching implications for Oman's economy. By improving the financial health of its companies, the OIA is fostering an environment that encourages investment, entrepreneurship and innovation.

As a result, the companies under OIA's ownership are better positioned to seize growth opportunities, create employment and contribute to the overall economic development of the country.

In its latest annual report, OIA posted a remarkable return of 8.8 per cent on its investments. It also noted that it provided RO 5.6 billion to the state general budget over the past seven years (2016-2022), which averages to around RO 800 million (\$2.1 billion) annually.

Are we on the verge of another pandemic wave?



HAIDER AL LAWATI
haiderdawood@hotmail.com

The author is a Muscat-based economic analyst who previously worked for the CBO and OCCI

The international media has begun to warn governments of the need to prevent the next pandemic by urging people to wear face mask.

The British newspaper, *Independent*, quoted some experts on the need to take the necessary precautions to prevent an outbreak by a new variant of the coronavirus.

Of course, sceptics have cautioned that such warnings are designed to help certain pharmaceutical companies and vaccine manufacturers to further enrich themselves.

According to the *Independent*, hospital admissions linked to Covid-19 infections have risen, while other reports out of the US indicate that around 3,000 people had died during the past three weeks due to the spread of the new variant of the coronavirus. This uptrend in fatalities, it appears, coincided with the decline in the efficacy of the vaccines that people had previously been mandated to take.

The emergence of the new variant, coupled with media reporting of its spread, only works to spread anxiety, fear and terror among the masses, governments

and health organisations.

Conversely, inadequate vaccines at healthcare institutions means potentially more chaos especially as we are approaching the winter period, which is conducive to the spread of infection. More precautions are necessary to monitor the new variant, support coordination between stakeholder institutions, and to stock up on the requisite emergency supplies, such as respirators.

Undoubtedly, the dissemination of news about this epidemic in various media means will inevitably lead to governments taking decisions to safeguard their populations from exposure, and to limit any outbreak's impact on daily life.

The British newspaper indicates that the number of people infected with Covid-19 in Britain increased by about 200,000 during the month of July, which confirms that the issue really needs attention and follow-up to determine whether it is a fabricated crisis or a new variant.

The WHO and US health authorities recently announced that they are closely monitoring a new variant of Covid-19, which has been detected in some countries, including the US and Denmark. The new variant of Covid-19 has increased the number of infections globally, but nowhere near the peaks of the past years.

The WHO issued a statement indicating that more than 1.4 million new cases of Covid-19 were recorded, with over 2,300 fatalities — numbers that worry governments and peoples. Is the world ready for a new pandemic or is just another health crisis of the kind that surfaces from time to time?

Financial manager programme to empower new generation of Omani business leaders

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUG 23

In a strategic partnership, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the Muscat Chapter of the Institute of Chartered Accountants of India (ICAI) are poised to unveil the transformative Oman Financial Manager Programme. The inauguration is scheduled for Thursday, August 24, 2023, at OCCI's Salalah headquarters.

The initiative seeks to advance Omani professionals across both public and private sectors. Focusing on nurturing strategic leadership capabilities, the programme is designed to

equip participants with the skills required to take on influential leadership roles within various institutions.

Labour Minister Dr Mahad bin Said Baowain will join government officials, prominent business leaders, and representatives from ICAI and the Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA) at the opening.

It marks the start of a two-month programme crafted for Omani nationals holding relevant bachelor's degrees.

Eligible candidates should possess a minimum of two years' experience in financial or accounting roles.

The programme aims to

FOCUSING ON NURTURING STRATEGIC LEADERSHIP CAPABILITIES, THE PROGRAMME IS DESIGNED TO EQUIP PARTICIPANTS WITH THE SKILLS REQUIRED TO TAKE ON INFLUENTIAL LEADERSHIP ROLES WITHIN VARIOUS INSTITUTIONS

empower Omani professionals across diverse institutions, cultivate strategic leadership capabilities among Omani talent, attract and foster a new cohort of Omani leaders.

Supporting the initiative is the Financial Services Regulatory Authority (FSRA)'s Credit

Bureau. FSRA's objectives are to contribute to economic diversification, reduce reliance on traditional sectors and nurture emerging industries.

The Omani CFO programme offers pathways for professional growth and instilling heightened confidence in standards, elevating the landscape of business, investment and driving professional development. It also augments the efficiency of accounting professionals.

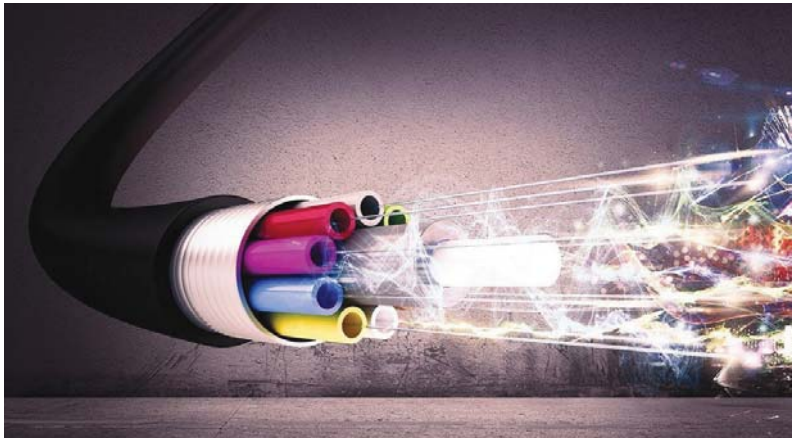
Core topics encompass operations and finance management, resource allocation, sector revitalisation, investment strategies, budgeting, strategic planning and risk management.

Fibre optic network subscribers exceed 250,000

MUSCAT: The number of subscribers to the fibre optic network in the Oman Broadband Company exceeded the quarter-million barrier until the end of July 2023 with 250,046 subscribers, while the total units covered in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman reached about 697,527 units.

Engineer Sultan bin Ahmed al Wahaibi (pictured), CEO of the Oman Broadband Company, said the total subscribers to the optical fibre service in the Dhofar Governorate until the end of July of this year reached 14,585 subscribers, while the total units covered reached 65,615 units, indicating that the sites of the extension of the network were viewed. Optical fibres and new sites are planned to be included in the expansion plan in Dhofar Governorate.

Al Wahaibi confirmed that the



company's work team continues its efforts to expand in the various governorates of the Sultanate of Oman, so that the expansion plan for the fibre optic network will reach the areas of Awtab and Suwaihra in the Wilayat of Suhar, and Al Khashd and Hilla during the coming phase.

Al Rawashid, Majz Al Sughra, Abu Al Darous, Al Ghuwaisa, Sour Al Shiadi and Al Qasha' in



the Wilayat of Saham, in addition to Al Amrah and Al Rumais in the Wilayat of Barka, and a number of areas in Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, and

the Rusayl, Muscat Governorate, and others.

He pointed out that the company seeks, through the work team, to activate the partnership model with the governorates in providing broadband infrastructure.

The company aims at providing and improving Internet services, supporting the economic system, and broader and faster coverage of high-speed home Internet networks, in addition to providing jobs in the field of information technology in various governorates.

He added that the partnership model with the governorates will contribute to finding investment opportunities for the governorates in line with the national broadband strategy and benefit from strengthening the education, health and other sectors. — ONA

Pact signed for new \$300 million crypto mining farm in Oman

FROM PAGE 13

Green Data City will continue to allocate mining capacities, under the leadership of the MoTCIT, and to provide a stable eco-system for crypto infrastructure, with power consumption reduction,

renewable electricity, and long-term contracts for miners.

Green Data City LLC operates the first licence for sustainable crypto-mining in Oman since 2022.

International mining companies can register and

operate in Green Data City with long term agreements.

The first phase of development consists of 200MW of mining capacity, the second phase will reach 400MW hyperscale data centre capacity with natural cooling, renewable energies and

downstream applications.

Real estate and hospitality investments will join the development of the new eco-system, and create the next generation data and blockchain eco-system in the region.

Founded in 2016, the Phoenix

Group manages 725MW across global mining facilities, with a presence spanning Canada, North America, CIS and the UAE.

With a strong international presence, the Group operates diverse locations and employs over 177 professionals from 16

different nationalities. Services provided encompass mining, hosting, and cooling, alongside investments in web3 technologies and regulated digital asset exchanges. It has recently added systematic trading to its diverse portfolio of businesses.