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NEERAJ STRIKES FIRST WORLD GOLD



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OMAN'S FIRST-EVER WASTE-TO-ENERGY PLANT ATTRACTS ENVIRONMENTALLY



P18

A TALE OF SEASONAL MIGRATION IN OMAN



MUSCAT

FISH EXPORTS HIT RO 140M IN 2022

The total fish exports of the Sultanate of Oman by the end of 2022 stood at about 281,601 tonnes, generating RO 140 million and posting a rise of 15.8 per cent compared to 2021. The figures issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information indicated that fish exports to the GCC countries stood at about 74,323 tonnes at the end of last year. As many as 2,372 tonnes of fish were exported to Europe, 18,996 tonnes to America and 185,909 tonnes to other countries. The Sultanate of Oman's fish exports varied between fresh fish (64,545 tonnes), frozen fish (200,763 tonnes), crustaceans and molluscs (15,240 tonnes) and other fish (1,052 tonnes). — ONA

CRUDE PRICE AT \$86.82 A BARREL

Oman oil price for October delivery on Monday reached \$86.82, comprising a rise by 43 cents from the price of last Friday which stood at \$86.39. The average price of Oman oil for August delivery has stabilised at \$74.78 per barrel, thus 16 cents per barrel lower than July delivery. Meanwhile, Brent rose 31 cents to \$84.17 a barrel, while US crude rose 15 cents to \$79.68 per barrel.



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omanobserver.om



1,270 schools to welcome 782,818 students for new academic year

STAFF REPORTER,
MUSCAT, AUG 28

Around 782,818 students are attending schools on Tuesday in various educational directorates across the Sultanate of Oman, with the start of their new academic year (2023/2024). The total number of students in grades (1-4) stood at 304,913, while the total number of students in grades (5-8) was 261,804, the total number of students in grades (9-12) reached 120,101, and the total number of new students in the first grade was 76,724, while the total number of special education students reached 1,769.

These students are attending 1,270 schools, including 356 schools for the first cycle, 68 for the second cycle, 121 in grades 9-12, and 25 in grades 11-12, and 700 operating in the morning

TOTAL NUMBER OF STUDENTS	
GRADES 1-4	304,913
GRADES 5-8	261,804
GRADES 9-12	120,101

and evening shifts, while the total number of schools operating in the evening shift stand at 133, while the total number of new schools stand at 29.

The total number of teachers in government schools for this academic year stand at 60,840, and 11,509 administrators and technicians, while the special education schools have 284 teachers, and the total number

of administrators in special education schools reached 65.

Delivering a message on the occasion, Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, said: "I am pleased to extend my warmest congratulations to our students, and members of the educational staff, wishing them success in this academic year. We also welcome the new teachers who have joined the education system to contribute in building their country and society, and we welcome teachers from sister countries who share this educational message with the Sultanate of Oman, and wishing everyone success."

The minister said: "In the pursuit of the ministry's endeavours to improve education to meet the requirements of the next stage, and thanks to the efforts...

AI and digital media to be focal points in Majlis voting

KABEER YOUSUF
[@kabeeryousef](#)

Preparations are under way for the tenth term of the Majlis Ash'shura elections, where as many as 883 candidates, including 33 women, are running for the council seats for the next four years.

The Ministry of Interior has intensified media campaign, urged citizens to participate in the electoral process, and use electronic applications to facilitate voter registration and stay connected with everything about the Majlis Ash'shura elections.

People with special needs are given additional facilities to make voting hassle-free and less time-consuming. They can use 'Antukhib', a mobile application that emphasises the need to enable people with disabilities to participate in the elections.

'Intekhaab' will also help citizens to discuss all aspects related to elections and to study opinions and proposals among officials, specialists and voters, and to go through the profiles of the candidates before voting.

The Department of Election at the Ministry of Interior is working round-the-clock to ensure a free and fair election. According to the officials, artificial intelligence and

The app's most important feature is the 'Safhatee' (My Page) section. The application contains a discussion feature, which is an electronic window for community participation and to express opinions

MAHA AL WUHAIBI
Director, Department of Election, Ministry of Interior

digital media will help in offering a fruitful election experience.

The voting process will be in electronic mode, where the mobile application called 'Intekhaab' provides a package of electoral services, including primary and final lists of candidates, primary and final lists of voters, verification of registered voters, and follow-up of automated counting indicators on the voting day. Users of the application can also submit feedback and suggestions.

Local content to boost tourism sector

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has adopted a policy which is designed to promote the local content in the heritage and tourism sectors. The policy aims at achieving the goals of sustainability and local content in the heritage and tourism sectors through a set of programmes and initiatives focusing on the continuity of growth in the heritage and tourism sectors and maintaining sustainability of the elements of tourism attraction, as well as maximising the economic value to enhance the local content.

Ruqaya bint Said al Habsiyah, Director of Quality and Sustainability Department at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said that the tourism



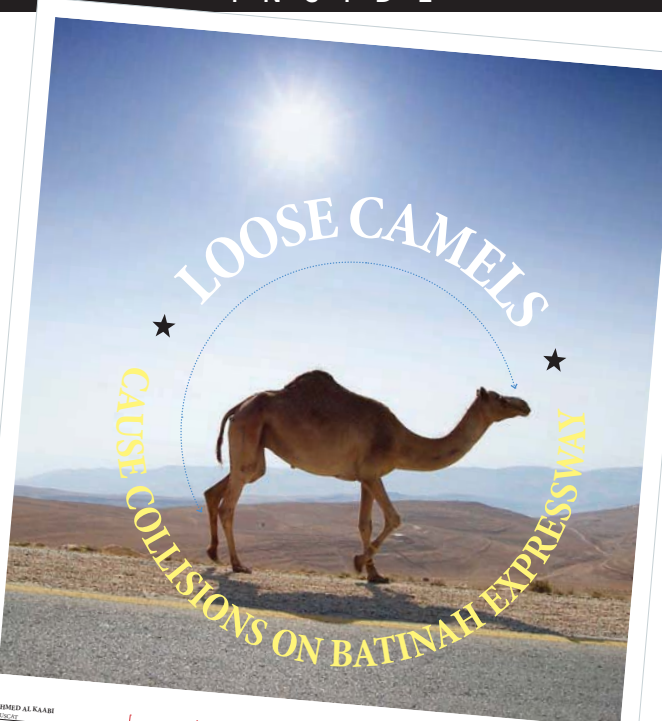
development plan includes many programmes pertaining to quality, sustainability, competitiveness and the local content in line with goals of Oman Vision 2040.

She added that the application of local content contributes to the development of economic sectors, including the heritage and tourism sector, the promotion and

sustainability of local development through the Omanisation of jobs, increasing local purchases and services and developing local companies to raise economic development in the sector, as well as developing the converting sector by increasing local manufacturing opportunities, enhancing the purchasing power of the national product and raising the efficiency of national cadres, in addition to creating job opportunities for citizens and investing in assets.

The concept of sustainability has evolved from being limited to the environment and maintaining the continuity of life depending on natural resources to cover the concept of sustainability for humans...

INSIDE



LOOSE CAMELS
CAUSE COLLISIONS ON BATINAH EXPRESSWAY

SPOTLIGHT

P4



Keep your children safe from heat as schools reopen

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

As around 780,000 students return to their classes today (Tuesday), there is this unusual pressure on parents and teachers to keep their children healthy as temperatures continue to be in the range of mid-thirties to mid-forties.

Oman Meteorology has warned that the feel-like temperature will be higher (compared to the actual temperature) over the coastal areas of the Sea of Oman due to the relatively very high humidity.

Health experts have warned that special care should be taken if the buses for children are not air-conditioned and they can be subject to dehydration and heatstrokes.

Children are more at risk



Health experts have warned that special care should be taken if the buses for children are not air-conditioned

of heat-related illness as they are likely to lose fluid more and more likely to become dehydrated than adults in extreme heat.

Humidity is the main factor in heat-related illness and children should avoid venturing into the direct sun until there is a moderation in temperatures. Outdoor

activities should be engaged only in shaded areas or air-conditioned halls.

Health experts say parents and teachers should monitor closely heat-related illness and necessary measures should be taken immediately.

Indian schools in the Sultanate of Oman that reopened earlier this year

have been taking adequate measures by limiting outdoor activities though temperatures were relatively moderate at the start of this month.

Speaking to the Observer, Fatma al Balushi, a parent said, "September is still a summer month but this year we are facing the impact of global warming. Parents can support their children by providing them with adequate quantities of water and fruits in their lunch boxes. They should also avoid supplying them with fried and salty snacks."

An official at Oman Meteorology said there will be some drop in temperatures in the coming days after this spell of heatwave.



Rusayl-Bidbid road expansion 70% complete

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 28

The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology is implementing several projects that are directly related to the priorities of the Oman Vision 2040.

Dr Saifbin Saeed al Sanani, Director General of Planning at the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT), said that the ministry is implementing 35 projects with the aim of attracting investments in transport, logistics, communications, and information technology sectors.

He pointed out that the projects and initiatives are represented in the establishment of infrastructure in partnership with the private sector in the transport sector, such as the establishment of alternative roads or specialised ports, the operation of existing ports such as the port of Khasab, Shinas, Al Suwaiq and Dhalkut, the review of concession agreements for major ports.

It also aims to develop berthing areas for luxury ships, tugboats, and water taxis. He said the ministry has developed a unified monitoring system to follow up on the

performance of various projects. will be evaluated in the last quarter of this year.

The ministry's strategy for the current five-year plan will focus on completing and starting a number of strategic road projects at a cost of more than RO 890 million to ensure the provision of world-class infrastructure. He stated that in this regard, tenders were issued to complete the Sharqiyah Expressway project, more connectivity to the Al Batinah Expressway, the completion of the Adam-Haima-Thumrait dual carriageway, the Al Abailah-Al Fayadh Road in Al Buraimi Governorate, and a tender for the Rasut-Al-Mughail road duplication in the Dhofar Governorate. He pointed out that the completion rate of the project to add the third and fourth lanes on the Rusayl/Nizwa road (Rusayl - Bidbid) has reached 70 per cent, and it is hoped that its implementation will be completed in the first quarter of next year.

Al Sanani stated that the tender for construction of the Dibba-Khasab road in the Musandam Governorate has been awarded, and that implementation will begin before the end of this year.

Forum looks at reinforcement of corporate citizenship

SALALAH: Activities of the Social Responsibility and Sustainability Partners Forum 2023 kicked off on Monday in Salalah.

Titled 'Principles of the UN Global Accord: Responsibility and Sustainable Development', the two-day forum is organised by Al Roya newspaper and the Regional Network for Social Responsibility.

The event was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar. It was attended by experts, specialists and representatives of UN offices in the Middle East.

HH Sayyid Marwan said that the forum constitutes a worthwhile addition to Khareef Dhofar (monsoon season) events this year. He added that the forum's themes are in line with the priorities and goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Speeches during the forum focused on the significance of companies and institutions' observing the principles of the UN global accord on sustainable development, grooming a generation that is capable of thinking and resolving problems and granting companies an opportunity to develop their competitive advantages.

The participants also outlined a number of social responsibility projects. The first day of the forum elaborated on two themes.

The first theme dealt with practical standards to advance UN principles in the responsibility and sustainability sector, while the second theme evolved around the role of partners of social responsibility and sustainability.

The forum seeks to introduce sustainable practices that reinforce the principle of corporate citizenship so that the business sector becomes part of solutions aimed at realising permanent sustainability that aligns with future visions and plans.

— ONA



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— ONA

Over 2,300 packages of khat seized in Dhofar

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 28

The Royal Oman Police (ROP) arrested a citizen and seized over 2,300 packages of khat in Dhofar Governorate on Monday.

In a statement, ROP said, "The General Directorate for Narcotic Drugs and Psychotropic Substances Control, led by Dhofar Governorate Police, managed to arrest a citizen on charges of possessing narcotic substances with the intention of trafficking. Over 2,300 packages of khat were found in his possession."

'Legal procedures have been taken against them,' it stated.

Meanwhile, several expatriates were arrested for violating Labour Law, the Ministry of Labour (MoL) announced on Monday.

In a statement issued by MoL said, "The office of the Joint Labour Inspection Team, in cooperation with Royal Oman Police, carried out an inspection campaign at a labour gathering site in the Wilayat of Bidiyah, and a number of expatriates were arrested in violation of the provisions of the Labour Law."



Notice and Invitation to Attend the Extra Ordinary General Meeting

The Board of Directors of THE PEARL REIF (the "Company") has the pleasure to invite the shareholders to attend the Extra Ordinary General Meeting , which will be held on Wednesday at 03:00 PM on 13/09/2023, via the electronic platform which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.om) and will be held in this location (electronic platform for general meetings which may be accessed through Muscat Clearing and Depository's website (www.mcd.gov.om). If the quorum requirement for holding the Annual General Meeting is not fulfilled, a second Extra Ordinary General Meeting General Meeting shall be held on Thursday at 03:00 PM on 14/09/2023, via the electronic platform which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (www.mcd.om) and will be held in this location (electronic platform for general meetings which may be accessed through Muscat Clearing and Depository's website (www.mcd.gov.om) to discuss the following agenda:

Extra Ordinary General Meeting Agendas:

- To consider and approve the proposal to increase the issued capital of the Fund from OMR 42,477,021 to OMR 52,477,021.080 by issuing 83,333,334 investment units through private placement at an issue price of 120 Baizas per unit (as per the attached annexure).
 - To authorize the Fund Management Body to take all the necessary actions to execute agenda item (1), including but not limited to, preparing and approving the prospectus in connection with the private placement (if required).
 - To consider and approve the amendments to Articles 5(1) and 50(3) of the Fund's Articles of Association (as per the attached annexure).
- According to the Company's Articles of Association and the controls for holding General Meetings using modern technology issued by the capital market authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:
- Legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on its behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in MCDC.
 - Voting on any of the agenda items begins no more than three days before the date of the General Meeting until the voting process ends on the day of the General Meeting. If the shareholder's shares are increased or decreased, the voting process will be canceled, and the shareholder will have to vote again on the day of the General Meeting.

For further information please contact on telephone No 99382229 or email: kumail.moosa@soharinternational.com

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NEW ACADEMIC YEAR BEGINS

MAKING ALL EFFORTS FOR SAFE TRANSPORTATION OF STUDENTS



VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

With the new academic year to start today (Tuesday), the Royal Oman Police (ROP) has started awareness campaigns to ensure the safe transportation of school students, in addition to educating vehicle drivers and urging them to adhere to traffic regulations for the safety of school students.

ROP has been making efforts to reduce traffic congestion by securing bus lanes, increasing police presence, removing traffic jams, if any, and other measures that ensure safe access for students to and from schools.

The Ministry of Transport,

Communications and Information Technology (MoTCIT) has stressed the need for bus drivers to be fully prepared and adhere to security and safety requirements during the transportation of students in the new academic year 2023-2024, and to register buses on the ministry's transportation platform adding that they should follow the approved technical specifications for school transportation.

The ministry warned that it will carry out periodical inspection campaigns on school transport buses and continuously throughout the academic year to ensure the safety of students by making sure they commute in a

safe manner on buses equipped with advanced safety features.

ROP has issued guidelines for bus drivers to ensure the safe transportation of students. The instructions are significant because speeding, negligence, bad behavior and not keeping a safe distance are among the main causes of traffic accidents in the country, according to the latest statistics.

The police have taken many measures in coordination with the Ministry of Education and in line with the Traffic Law and its executive regulations. The roads will witness traffic congestion, especially at peak times, and therefore traffic patrols will work to facilitate traffic and deal

with all that obstructs traffic, especially in places with more congestion than others.

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

ROP stated that all drivers of public and private school buses must be careful when approaching student gathering places and not move until after making sure that all students have crossed the streets.

They should stop buses in their designated places, whether in front of schools or after work is completed.

TRAFFIC LIKELY TO BE HEAVY ON ROADS

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

Traffic is likely to be heavy on roads as the school students usher in the new academic year on Tuesday after a gap of almost two months.

With the beginning of each new academic year, the Royal Oman Police works well in advance in providing advice and guidance to maintain the safety of students and school bus drivers, in addition to educating vehicle drivers and urging them to cooperate and adhere to traffic regulations for the safety of school students.

The Traffic Safety Institutes had been presenting their daily messages to the bus drivers, educating them on the importance of adhering to traffic rules and regulations. The Traffic Safety Institutes, led by Al Dakhiliyah and Al Batinah North Governorate Police, organised two awareness lectures.

In the interior, the institute also visited a private school in Nizwa and delivered a lecture to school bus drivers and bus supervisors about safe transportation to and from schools.

In North Al Batinah, the Traffic Safety Institute, in cooperation with the Al Jazeera Sports and Cultural Team, organised an awareness meeting about cooperation



with bus drivers while transporting students to their schools or back home.

In Dhofar Governorate, students will begin classes after the holiday and Khareef tourism.

Teachers in public schools have been going through preparatory sessions on Sunday and Monday, preparing the orientation programme for students and their transportation mode to school and home.

But students also have to be cautious, and families must have a dialogue at home on road safety.

According to Drivergent. Com, "The danger zones extend as much as 30 feet from the front bumper, 10 feet from the left and right sides of the bus and 12 feet behind the rear bumper of the school bus. In addition, the area to the bus' left is always considered dangerous because of passing vehicles."



782,818 students to begin new school year today

FROM P1

...made to expand the preparation of Omani teacher programmes and qualifying them in coordination with the competent authorities, this year the ministry is able to appoint more than 5,700 teachers, with an increase rate up to 41 per cent compared to previous years, bringing the number of Omani teachers to approximately 14,000 appointed during the first three years of the Tenth Five-Year Plan.

"Believing in the importance of professional development for teachers, and its relation to the professional path plans for members of the teaching staff, the ministry continues to prepare qualitative training programmes for teachers to enhance their professional competencies, and to enable them to perform their duties efficiently and competently."

The minister also referred to the issuance of the Royal Decree on the School Education Law, saying: "In continuation of the support enjoyed by the education sector in the Sultanate

of Oman in all its aspects, and to strengthen the governance of the educational system and develop the legislative and organisational structure that guarantees a stimulating and supportive educational environment at the technical and administrative levels, Royal Decree No 31/2023 issued the School Education Law to serve as a legislative framework, and an educational and legal document that organises rights, duties and responsibilities in aspects related to the educational process."

On developing the education system and starting to implement technical and vocational education, the minister said: "In implementation of the Royal directives of His Majesty to develop the school education system, the ministry during this academic year will start applying vocational and technical education in accordance with the best international standards and educational practices in business administration and information technology in the eleventh grade



Dr Madeeha bint Ahmed al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education

in four schools, two schools for boys and two schools for girls in the governorates of Muscat and Al Batinah North. The ministry also intends to offer a number of engineering and industrial specialisations in specific schools in the governorates of Muscat and Al Batinah North at the beginning of the next academic year 2024/2025, in partnership with the energy sector.

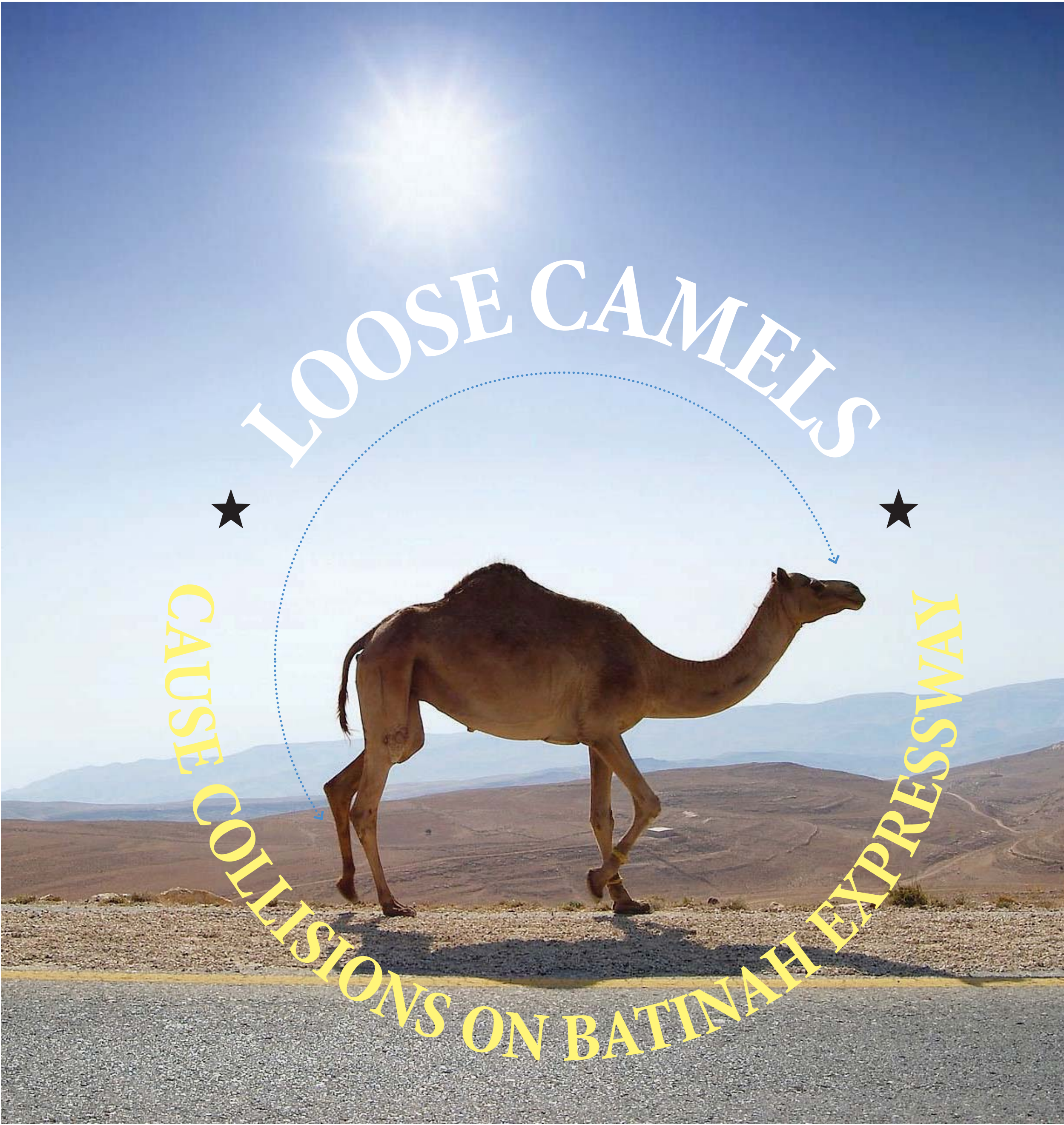
"In continuation of this approach, the ministry will gradually expand the application of vocational and technical education by establishing similar partnerships with the rest of the economic sectors, and increase the number of students, majors, and governorates during the coming academic years."

Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of



the Ministry of Education for Education, on this occasion said: "The ministry seeks to implement a number of educational goals, the most important of which are continuing to update and develop school curricula in line with the requirements of sustainable development and global trends, the achieving of Oman Vision 2040, and empowering new teachers in the teaching and learning processes; through the

implementation of the strategic training programme for them, the establishment of the third forum for school administrations, and the second supervisory forum. The ministry this year will launch, in cooperation with the Omani Indian Fertilizer Company (OMIFCO), the OMIFCO Award for School Creativity, and the launch of the Excellence Award for the Omani Teacher to motivate teachers.



AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT

WHILE encountering human-induced traffic accidents or unexpected obstacles like a wandering pedestrian on a highway might be commonplace, the unsettling norm has shifted to encounters with camels. Whether these encounters transpire under cover of night or in broad daylight, they invariably result in collisions, leaving behind scenes of tragedy.

The Batinah Expressway has become a grim setting for repeated fatal accidents, with scarcely a month passing without reports of collisions involving camels and other similar animals. The pressing reality emphasises the critical necessity of swift measures to avert the recurrence of these tragic “camel accidents.” Those responsible for the unfettered presence of these animals on the road must be held accountable without leniency, given the potential hazards they pose to the safety of commuters. These incidents should serve as a

THE THREATS
LOOMING ON THE
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PERIL POSED BY
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PARTICULARLY
CAMELS, TO THE
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EFFECTIVE
DETERRENCE
MECHANISMS

stern example to others.

The plight of loose camels roaming along the Al Batinah Expressway is distressingly grim, often culminating in fatalities. Just last Saturday, a young man from Shinas lost his life instantly when his vehicle collided with a stray camel on the expressway.

The Al Batinah Expressway now exhibits a recurring spectacle where owners allow their “loose camels” to graze and roam unattended. This scene has transformed into an unsettling fixation that troubles citizens and expatriates. These unexpected apparitions darting across the road bring death in their wake for unsuspecting motorists.

Abdullah al Yahyai has aptly noted the deep distress experienced by drivers on this pivotal road due to the menace of loose camels. A chorus of concerned citizens consistently calls for effective solutions to curb the prevalence of these wandering camels that pose significant peril along the Al Batinah Expressway. The resulting catastrophic accidents, which claim innocent lives, unfold without adequate regulation or control over the road.

Al Yahyai underscores that the core issue

lies with the camel owners who fail to observe right-of-way rules, leaving their animals free to frolic on the road, disregarding the ensuing danger and heightened accident rates. He firmly advocates for resolute legal measures against these owners to curb the spread of this profoundly hazardous phenomenon. In parallel, road users also bear a responsibility to exercise caution, adhere to traffic instructions, and refrain from excessive speeding.

LEGAL PROVISION

Hamad al Zaabi, a dedicated observer of public affairs, cites Article (294/d) of the Omani Penal Code as a legal provision holding those accountable who negligently release animals into the public domain, leading to harm or endangerment. Despite this legal framework, some stray animal owners persistently flout the law, exhibiting scant regard for human life. Al Zaabi stresses that camel owners must be compelled to bear the consequences of their actions or be engaged in education and awareness campaigns.

The threats looming on the road are multifaceted, ranging from the peril posed by

animals, particularly camels, to the absence of effective deterrence mechanisms. Despite the conscientiousness of road users and vehicle owners in adhering to traffic regulations and speed limits, the risks remain.

Al Zaabi notes that while the expressway holds transformative potential for Oman’s road network, its utility is overshadowed by the imminent danger posed by wandering camels, especially during low-light hours. Urgent intervention is called for, as these stray camels on the Batinah Expressway represent a constant menace and immediate peril. They continue to trespass onto high-speed lanes, exposing road users to the possibility of collisions and consequential damages.

In light of these circumstances, Al Zaabi earnestly appeals to relevant authorities to expedite effective solutions to mitigate the threat of stray animals on the Al Batinah Expressway. The unchecked presence of wandering camels remains an unsettling fixation, representing an imminent danger to all road users. Immediate action is imperative to safeguard lives, prevent accidents, and secure the integrity of this vital thoroughfare.



Loan ceiling for SMEs up at RO 20,000

MUSCAT: The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority has raised the loan ceiling to RO 20,000 that will enable entrepreneurs to launch and expand their projects locally and abroad. Earlier the limit was RO 5,000. This will further enhance the contribution of small and medium enterprises in the gross domestic product and the development of the national economy.

It also cancelled Article 14 of the previous regulation, allowing flexibility in financing beneficiaries in projects other than those previously funded in accordance with the plans and programmes drawn up by the Authority.

The regulation defines the roles and responsibilities of each of the Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority and the Oman Development Bank, and defines the conditions that must be met by those applying for financing from entrepreneurs and craftsmen through a dedicated link with the required documents and data attached.

The regulations include the maximum time period



for deciding on financing applications, which is 60 days from the date of completing the application. It also defines the grace period for paying the instalments due for financing, the obligations of the beneficiary applying for financing, the mechanism for disbursing the total amount of financing, and the maximum period for disbursing it.

The Authority approved 170 loan requests worth RO 15,777,431 till August 10 this

year. The financing approvals were distributed among 4 different programmes – RO11,490,905 for financing industrial and service projects; RO 2,877,000 for contract financing; RO 1,339,526 for working capital and fixed assets financing; and RO 70,000 for financing incubated institutions and business accelerators.

The Governorate of Muscat topped list of approved loans worth RO 4,996,762, followed

by Al Batinah North (RO 3,209,869), Al Batinah South (RO 1,667,800), Dhofar (RO 1,280,950), Al Sharqiyah South (RO 1,141,800), Al Dakhiliyah (1,038,000), Al Dhahirah (RO 1,105,250), Al Wusta (RO 258,000), Al Sharqiyah South (RO 414,000), Musandam, (RO 371,000) and Al Buraimi (RO 294,000).

The Small and Medium Enterprises Development Authority launched 7 different financing programmes, namely: the In-Country Value Programme, the Industrial and Service Projects Financing Programme, the Working Capital and Fixed Assets Programme, the Incubated Enterprises and Business Accelerators Financing Programme, and the Handicraft Products, Home and Productive Businesses, and Street Vendors Programme and mobile commercial activities, the contract financing programme, and the financing of small and medium enterprises that have obtained contracts (tenders, purchases, or business opportunities) by subsidiaries of the Oman Investment Authority.

Oman Vision 2040 promotes green culture & heritage



QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, AUG 28

A regional forum in sustainable green heritage opened in Salalah on Monday under the auspices of Eng Ibrahim bin Said bin Khalaf al Kharousi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage.

In a keynote address, Amnat bint Salem al Balushiyyah, Secretary of the Omani National Committee for Education, Culture, and Science, highlighted the importance of culture in sustainable development and human well-being.

She stressed the need for cultural and heritage strategies that promote understanding and peace.

Al Balushi also acknowledged the role of Unesco, ISESCO, and AECISO in supporting cultural initiatives. She commended the efforts of Member States in safeguarding heritage and conserving natural resources.

The highlight was a paper by Eng Faiza bint Mohammed al Harthiyah of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Office, affirming the critical role of the Oman Vision 2040 in providing inspiration for the sustenance of the

nation's green culture and heritage.

"Oman Vision 2040 envisions a future where sustainability is at the forefront, fostering a developed and diversified Sultanate of Oman. Among its cornerstones, the promotion of green culture and heritage stands tall," said the official.

She elaborated, "Green culture embodies the values and practices that advocate for environmental preservation and sustainability. From waste reduction to harnessing renewable resources, green culture encompasses responsible practices. Heritage, in contrast, encapsulates the cultural legacy of a people or place, encompassing traditions, customs, and architectural marvels."

Eng Faiza's comprehensive working paper delved into the profound implications of green culture and heritage for Oman's sustainable future. It underscored the vital role these elements play in realising the vision's objectives.

"By citing instances such as the sustainable falaj irrigation practice, we spotlight the fusion of green culture and sustainable methods. This traditional Omani approach employs gravity to distribute water, bypassing energy-intensive technologies," she noted.

Steps to promote local content in heritage and tourism sectors

FROM PI

... which is defined as a set of operations carried out by people in order to ensure the continuity of generations through the development of means of growth and exploitation of resources, she said, and added that a sustainable tourism is defined in the tourism sector, according to the World Tourism Organization (WTO) as tourism that considers its current and future economic, social and environmental impacts, and meets the needs of visitors, industry, the environment and host communities. She pointed out that the local content means the total expenditure that contributes to strengthening the national economy. It is used to develop local companies and national human resources.

— ONA

AI and digital media to be focal points in Majlis voting

FROM PI

"The app's most important feature is the 'Safhatee' (My Page) section," says Maha al Wuhaibi, Director.

"The application contains a discussion feature, which is an electronic window for community participation, to express opinions and allows discussions on electoral process with specialists, trainers and others according to the points raised in the discussion area", she added.

The 'Safhatee' service, launched by the ministry with the election mobile application and the election website, 'elections.om', allows candidates to post their electoral campaign for the tenth term of the Majlis Ash'shura elections, and enables them to communicate with voters from the same constituency and interact with them directly.

It also allows candidates to post publications and video clips through this service; voters can view the list of candidates, follow up on what the candidate publishes, interact with



Maha al Wuhaibi



Malik al Hinai

and comment on them, and learn about their biographies, social contributions, and academic achievements.

Speaking to the Observer, Malik al Hinai from the Department of Election at the ministry, said that the 'Antukhib' application, equipped with artificial intelligence, is a mobile application dedicated to voting. It is characterised by its ease of use and speed of performance.

"The 'Antukhib' mobile application is considered a quantum leap and a digital transformation in the electoral aspect, as it verifies the voter's data by reading the ID card data from both sides, as well as by near-field communication (NFC)", he said.

The application requires a personal photo of the voter to match with the ID card photo to ensure better safety.

"This is done through facial recognition technology, and it also provides a high level of security and transparency for the electoral process."

Oman Air's plan to cut plastics by up to 21 tonnes per year

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing commitment to sustainability, Oman Air has replaced the plastic used to wrap blankets and mattresses in its premium cabins with an eco-friendlier paper-based alternative.

All duvets and mattresses across the airline's fleet will now be presented to the passengers with slim, branded paper bands, resulting in the reduction of up to 21.6 tonnes of plastic per year.

The initiative is the latest step for Oman Air as it continues to work towards phasing out the use of single-use plastics on board.

Captain Nasser bin Ahmed al Salmi, Acting Chief Executive Officer at Oman Air, said: "In a concerted effort

guided by our in-house experts and bolstered by collaborations with partners and vendors, we have successfully achieved another milestone in our sustainability efforts.

This pivotal step aligns seamlessly with our corporate strategy to reduce waste and choose more environmentally friendly products, reflecting our commitment to national sustainability goals."

Oman Air has been making steadfast strides in reducing its on-board plastic consumption over the last few years, including removing the plastic sleeves used to load cutlery and reducing plastic water bottles and couplets by up to 50 per cent on certain routes.

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/ 2023/113	SUPPLY OF VEHICLE MOUNTED GENERATORS	12/09/2023	27/09/2023	RO. 52.500
DISC/ 2023/126	11 KV & LV NETWORK IMPROVEMENT WORKS- 2023 (Lot-03)	12/09/2023	20/09/2023	RO. 105.000
DISC/ 2023/147	11 KV & LV NETWORK IMPROVEMENT WORKS- 2023 (Lot-04)	12/09/2023	20/09/2023	RO. 105.000

- To view the tender details, you can visit www.dhofarservices.nama.om / scan the QR code
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 3.00pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using "isupplier portal". No hard copies are accepted.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.
- For any clarifications contact us on:
Tel No. 23232554
email: purchase@dhofarservices.nama.om



Dhofar Integrated Services Company s.a.o.c.
CR Number: 2185229, PO Box 2609
PC 211, Salalah, Sultanate of Oman
Phone Number 23232523, Fax 23261183
www.dhofarservices.nama.om



OMAN AIR (S.A.O.C)

AUCTION ANNOUNCEMENT

Used Catering Equipment & Related Items are Displayed for Auction

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

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





Libyan PM sacks FM over Israel meeting

TRIPOLI/TEL AVIV: Libya's prime minister sacked the foreign minister on Monday in an effort to contain a growing furore over her meeting with her Israeli counterpart last week, which prompted protests overnight in several Libyan cities.

Najla Mangoush had said her meeting with Israeli Foreign Minister Eli Cohen in Rome was unplanned and informal, but an Israeli official told Reuters it had lasted two hours and was approved "at the highest levels in Libya".

The meeting is contentious because Libya does not formally recognise Israel and there is widespread public support across the Libyan political spectrum for the Palestinian cause. Palestinians seek to establish an independent state in territories Israel captured in the 1967 Middle East war.

The dispute over the meeting has fed into Libya's internal political crisis, giving ammunition to Prime Minister Abdulhamid al-Dbeibah's internal critics at a moment when the future of his interim government was already in question. Protesters demonstrated in front of Libya's Foreign Ministry late on Sunday, causing some damage outside the building, where a large security presence was visible early on Monday. Protests took place in other parts of Tripoli, as well as other cities.

Burning tyres blocked some major roads in Tripoli on Monday but there was no sign of violence.

Mangoush's office tried to quell the anger late on Sunday, saying she had rejected a request for



Libyans burn tyres as they protest in Tripoli on Monday, following a meeting between the country's foreign minister Najla al Mangoush (inset) and her Israeli counterpart.

an official meeting with Cohen, but that they had met during an unplanned encounter while she was meeting Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani.

The Israeli official disputed that account. "The meeting was coordinated at the highest levels in Libya and lasted almost two hours. The Libya prime minister sees Israel as a possible bridge to the West and the US administration,"

the official said.

Since 2020 Israel has normalised relations with the United Arab Emirates, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan through the so-called "Abraham Accords" brokered by the United States, which sees further agreements as a key regional goal.

Dbeibah's Government of National Unity (GNU), which was installed in early 2021 through a

UN-backed process, has pushed for stronger ties with all countries involved in Libya, including the UAE and Israel's main ally the US.

Libya has had little peace or internal unity since a 2011 NATO-backed uprising, and the GNU's legitimacy is contested by major factions outside Tripoli including the eastern-based parliament.

The parliament said on Sunday it would hold hearings into the

meeting. The Tripoli-based Presidency Council has asked Dbeibah for clarification on the meeting and the High State Council, another important body, condemned it.

After fighting in Tripoli this month, many Libyans will be watching whether armed factions opposed to Dbeibah use the dispute as a pretext to move against him. — Agencies

Ukraine cargo ship safely docks at Istanbul

ISTANBUL: A second civilian cargo ship to sail from Ukraine since Russia withdrew from a UN-backed Black Sea grain export agreement safely reached Istanbul on Monday, marine traffic monitors said.

The Liberian-flagged bulk carrier Primus hugged the coasts of NATO members Romania and Bulgaria after departing Odesa on Sunday in defiance of a Russian blockade.

Moscow warned that it may considered any ships in the Black Sea as military target and began bombing Ukrainian port infrastructure after withdrawing from the UN and Turkey-mediated deal last month.

The Russian navy fired on and briefly boarded a Turkish-owned vessel that entered the Black Sea earlier this month.

A major grain and seed oil exporter, Ukraine is trying to establish a new route that its ships can use without Russia's involvement in time for the autumn harvest.

Ukraine now depends on land routes and a shallow river port that severely limits its grain export volumes. Turkey has been trying to revive the original agreement, hoping to use it as springboard for broader peace talks between Kyiv and Moscow. — AFP

Pakistan court quashes sedition case against Imran Khan

ISLAMABAD: A Pakistani court on Monday quashed a sedition case against former Prime Minister Imran Khan on Monday, providing some relief for the cricket hero turned politician who was jailed on corruption charges earlier this month.

The case against Khan, 70, had been registered in March in the southwestern city of Quetta, the capital of Balochistan province, based on an allegation that one of his speeches was seditious.

Following an appeal by Khan, the Balochistan High Court said prosecutors had failed to obtain the required consent from the federal or provincial government to lodge sedition charges.

The charges are "without lawful authority and are of no legal effect," the court ruled, throwing out the case.

"God be praised," Khan's lawyer Naeem Panjutha said in a jubilant post on X, the messaging platform formerly known as Twitter.

The sedition case was among dozens of cases brought against Khan since he lost power after being defeated in a parliamentary



Former Pakistani Prime Minister Imran Khan. — Reuters file photo

confidence vote in April, 2022.

Later on Monday, a high court in Islamabad is expected to rule on Khan's appeal to suspend his conviction and three-year jail sentence for corruption.

Khan lost power after falling out with Pakistan's influential military, and his attempts to rally popular support have stirred political turmoil in a country already struggling through one of its worst economic crises.

A general election was expected in November, though it is likely to be delayed until at least early next year.

Khan cannot contest and has been barred from holding political office for five years. — AFP

PARIS: Paris will on Friday become the first European capital to ban floating electric scooters from its streets, leaving fans desolate but relieving those who loathed their "nuisance" factor.

Residents voted by almost 90 per cent in an April referendum to ban the scooters — celebrated as a win for direct democracy by mayor Anne Hidalgo even though turnout was just 7.5 per cent.

The ban applies to rental scooters which have been offered by several operators since 2018, although people will still be able to whizz through Paris on privately-owned contraptions.

With complaints of users jostling through pedestrians on pavements or dumping their rides awkwardly at intersections, the city's 15,000 two-wheeled machines from providers Tier, Lime and Dott had turned into "nuisances" for many Parisians,



An employee loads electric scooters in a van in Paris. — AFP

Hidalgo said at the time.

But "so many people were sad" at the decision, said Paris-based American influencer Amanda Rollins, 33, who often gets around by scooter — one of 400,000 people to do so in 2022, according to figures from the operators.

"They're just so much fun!" she added, while noting that being able

to just pick one up offers "a really reliable way to get home... like a safety net" on nights when the metro closes before the capital's bars.

The day scooters arrived in Paris in 2018 was "like Christmas... it was like Santa came overnight," she recalled, praising their use for tours of the city with friends and

their practicality when stopping for a swift Instagram photoshoot.

Paris "is a unique case" said Clement Pette, head of Tier's operations in France. By Friday, the Berlin-based firm had collected 3,000 of its 5,000 scooters, with growing red areas on its application's map showing parking forbidden in more and more of Paris each night as it loaded them into vans. Only a small zone in central Paris will have scooters available until the wheels finally come off.

Like other operators, Tier's freshly-serviced machines will be heading to other cities where it offers scooter service.

Some Tier machines will remain in Paris, with most returning to Germany or Warsaw, while Lime ships them to Lille, London, Copenhagen and German cities and Dott is set to send some as far away as Tel Aviv. — AFP

SHORT TAKES

TOKYO

Japan PM condemns China over stone-throwing

Japan's prime minister hit out at Beijing on Monday over what he said were instances of stones being thrown at diplomatic missions and schools in China, following the release of wastewater from the Fukushima nuclear plant.

Last week, China banned all seafood imports from its neighbour after Japan began releasing cooling water from the stricken Fukushima plant in an operation that Tokyo and the UN's nuclear watchdog have said



is safe.

Since then, Japanese businesses ranging from bakeries to aquariums have received reportedly thousands of sometimes abusive crank calls from Chinese numbers.

PARIS

'French envoy still in Niger despite ultimatum'

France's ambassador to Niger is still in the coup-hit Sahel country despite an ultimatum from the new army leaders to leave his post, French President Emmanuel Macron said on Monday.

During a major foreign policy speech to ambassadors in Paris, Macron confirmed that French envoy Sylvain Itte was listening in from Niger capital Niamey despite being given a 48-hour deadline to leave the country last Friday.

"France and its diplomats have faced particularly difficult



situations in some countries in recent months, from Sudan, where France has been exemplary, to Niger at this very moment and I applaud your colleague and your colleagues who are listening from their posts," he said.

BLD

EU should be ready for new members by 2030

The European Union should get ready to admit new members from eastern Europe and the Balkans by 2030, EU chief Charles Michel argued on Monday. The Russian invasion of Ukraine has focused minds in Brussels on the need for a new political momentum to support the European ambition of several membership candidates.

But, with fighting still raging in Ukraine and Moldova's pro-Western government scrambling to reform, senior officials have



previously been reluctant to offer precise timetables.

"To be credible, I believe we must talk about timing and homework," Michel said, addressing the Bled Strategic Forum in Slovenia.



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In brief

NEW DELHI



AFTER MOON LANDING, INDIA EYES THE SUN

Days after becoming the first nation to land a craft near the Moon's largely unexplored south pole, India's space agency said on Monday it will launch a satellite to survey the Sun.

"The launch of Aditya-L1, the first space-based Indian observatory to study the Sun, is scheduled for September 2," the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) said on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Aditya, meaning "sun" in Hindi, will be fired into a halo orbit in a region of space about 1.5 million kilometres (930,000 miles) from Earth, providing the craft with a continuous clear view of the Sun.

PARIS



FRANCE TO BAN ABAYA IN STATE SCHOOLS

France will ban children from wearing the abaya, the loose-fitting, full-length robes worn by some Muslim women, in state-run schools, its education minister (pictured) said on Sunday ahead of the back-to-school season.

France, which has enforced a strict ban on religious signs in state schools since 19th century laws removed any traditional Catholic influence from public education, has struggled to update guidelines to deal with a growing Muslim minority.

In 2004, it banned headscarves in schools and passed a ban on full face veils in public in 2010, angering some in its five million-strong Muslim community.

JERUSALEM



ISRAELI FINANCE MINISTER TO RENEW FUNDS TO ARABS

Israeli Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich said on Monday his ministry would unblock funds for Arab communities that he suspended saying the money was fuelling crime, triggering outrage from Arab mayors and some Arab and Jewish lawmakers.

Smotrich, a member of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's nationalist-religious government, said this month that some of the budget funds meant for Arab local councils were a political pay-off by the previous cabinet that could end up in the hands of "criminals and terrorists".

Italy struggles with spike in migrant arrivals



Newly arrived migrants wait to embark on a ferry to the mainland, in the Sicilian island of Lampedusa on Sunday. — Reuters

ROME: Italy was struggling on Monday to accommodate arrivals from North Africa and the Balkans as the country's Red Cross called for more international efforts against migration "chaos".

On Lampedusa island, Italy's southernmost outpost, more than 4,200 people landed over the weekend, local police chief Emanuele Ricifari said.

He said that despite the "record numbers" the authorities were in control of the situation.

In Trieste, near the border with Slovenia, Mayor Roberto Dipiazza was less sanguine as he complained to the *Corriere della Sera* daily about an unprecedented "invasion of migrants".

"I have been dealing with problems related to migrants since the 1990s, I have seen everything and more, but I could not imagine such a thing. The city is in an

emergency," he said.

Italy has recorded more than 107,500 sea arrivals in the year to date, compared with around 53,000 in the same period last year.

The spike has partly been driven by an increase in the ranks of unaccompanied minors making the perilous sea journey to Italy. More than 12,000 have arrived since January 1.

In Lampedusa, incoming sea migrants are crammed in a so-called "hotspot" with an official capacity of a few hundred places, before being transferred to the larger island of Sicily.

The facility is routinely overcrowded, with Italian news agencies reporting on Monday that it was hosting nearly 3,600 migrants.

The Italian Red Cross (CRI) took over the running of the facility

on June 1, replacing a cooperative that had been criticised for failing to provide adequate care.

CRI President Rosario Valastro called on Facebook for "a different way of welcoming and different migration policies".

"I hope that not only Italy but the whole European and international community will be able to respond effectively and not give in to chaos," he said.

The Italian government has vowed to go after human smugglers and has restricted the activities of charity rescue ships, impounding three of their vessels last week.

But with the country facing a shrinking population and labour force shortages, it has also raised entry quotas for non-EU migrant workers to 452,000 for 2023-2025 from around 83,000 in 2022.

— Reuters

British minister defends migration boat

LONDON: British Home Secretary Suella Braverman has insisted that the *Bibby Stockholm* barge is safe after firefighters raised the possibility of legal action over concerns about the safety of those on board.

It comes as the Home Secretary declined to rule out reports the Home Office is considering fitting asylum seekers arriving in the UK via unauthorised means with electronic tags.

The Fire Brigades Union (FBU) has sent a "pre-action protocol letter" to Braverman outlining its concerns over safety aboard the vessel moored in Dorset's Portland Port.

The union previously branded the giant barge, initially designed for about 200 people but modified to house 500 migrants, a "potential death trap".

The first asylum seekers placed on board *Bibby Stockholm* earlier this month were removed days later after tests revealed Legionella — the bacteria which can cause the potentially fatal Legionnaires' disease.

The FBU is demanding a response to its legal letter by Thursday.

"Let me be clear that I'm confident barges are safe," Braverman told BBC Breakfast.

"This barge has accommodated people in the past — asylum seekers, oil rig workers and barges of this kind have been used to accommodate asylum seekers, for example in Scotland, so I'm very confident that this barge is

safe for human habitation.

"We followed all of the advice and protocols in anticipation of embarkation."

She accused the trade union of launching a "political attack" on the government but was unable to say when asylum seekers would be returning to the barge.

The Home Secretary also said ministers were considering all options after *The Times* said officials are mulling electronic tagging as a way to prevent migrants who cannot be housed in limited detention sites from absconding.

The Illegal Migration Act places a legal duty on the government to detain and remove those arriving in the UK illegally, either to Rwanda or another "safe" third country.

However, as spaces in Home Office accommodation are in short supply, officials have been tasked with a "deep dive" into alternatives, according to the newspaper.

While the preferred solution is to increase the number of detention places, electronic tagging has been mooted, as has cutting off financial allowances to someone who fails to report regularly to the Home Office.

Braverman told Sky News: "We've just enacted a landmark piece of legislation in the form of our Illegal Migration Act. That empowers us to detain those who arrive here illegally and thereafter to swiftly remove them to a safe country like Rwanda." — dpa



Japan defers moon mission over winds

TOKYO: Japan's space agency suspended a planned launch on Monday of rocket carrying what would be the country's first spacecraft to land on the moon, with operator Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI) citing high winds.

Although the H-IIA rocket, the Japanese flagship launch vehicle, has a 98 per cent launch success rate, unsuitable wind conditions in the upper atmosphere forced a suspension 27 minutes before the planned liftoff.

"High-altitude winds hit our constraint for a launch... which had been set to ensure no impact from debris falling outside of pre-warned areas," said MHI H-IIA launch unit chief Tatsuru Tokunaga.

Strong winds of nearly 108 kmph (67 mph) were observed at an altitude of 5,000-15,000 metres (16,400-49,200 ft), Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA) safety manager Michio Kawakami said. Multiple typhoons around Japan could have affected the wind conditions, he added.

The new launch date has not been decided, but will be no sooner than Thursday because of necessary processes such as re-fuelling, Tokunaga said. MHI and JAXA have said a



H-IIA launch vehicle number 47 is seen on the launching pad at Tanegashima Space Center on the southwestern island of Tanegashima on Monday. — Reuters

launch could take place as late as September 15.

The rocket was to be launched from JAXA's Tanegashima Space Center in southern Japan on Monday morning; it had already been postponed twice since last week because of bad weather. It will mark the 47th H-IIA Japan has launched.

The rocket is carrying JAXA's Smart Lander for Investigating Moon (SLIM), which would be the first Japanese spacecraft to land on the moon. Tokyo-based startup ispace's Hakuto-R Mission

1 lander crashed on the lunar surface in April.

JAXA was planning to start SLIM's landing from lunar orbit in January-February 2024 after Monday's launch, aiming to follow the success of India's Chandrayaan-3 moon exploration mission this month.

Dubbed the "moon sniper", the SLIM mission seeks to achieve a high-precision landing within 100 metres of its target on the moon's surface — a technological leap from conventional lunar-landing accuracy of several kilometres,

according to JAXA.

The rocket is also carrying an X-Ray Imaging and Spectroscopy Mission (XRISM) satellite, a joint project of JAXA, Nasa and the European Space Agency.

H-IIA, jointly developed by JAXA and MHI, has been Japan's flagship space launch vehicle, with 45 successful launches in 46 tries since 2001. However, after JAXA's new medium-lift H3 rocket failed on its debut in March, the agency postponed the launch of H-IIA No. 47 for several months to investigate the cause.

— AFP

UK AIR TRAFFIC SNAG CAUSES DELAYS ACROSS EUROPE

LONDON: Britain's National Air Traffic Service (NATS) was forced to restrict the flow of aircraft on Monday due to a technical issue, it said, with passengers stuck in planes on the tarmac and airlines and airports warning of delays and cancellations.

"We are currently experiencing a technical issue and have applied traffic flow restrictions to maintain safety. Engineers are working to find and fix the fault," a spokesperson said, adding that UK airspace was not closed. Irish air traffic control provider AirNav Ireland said the issue was resulting in "significant delays for flights across Europe that are travelling to, from or through UK airspace".

A spokesperson for Heathrow, the busiest hub in western Europe, said the airport was working with NATS and other airport partners to minimise the impact on passengers.

Earlier Scottish airline Loganair said on social media site X, previously known as Twitter, that there had been a network-wide failure of UK air traffic control computer systems, warning international flights may face delays. Airports including London Luton and Birmingham said they were working to understand the impact and the timescale in which normal operations could resume, while British Airways also said it was working closely with NATS to understand the impact.

— Reuters

Kids entitled to clean, healthy environment: UN

NINA LARSON

All children are entitled to a clean and healthy environment, a UN committee said for the first time on Monday, bolstering young people’s arguments for suing authorities over the ravages of climate change.

Issuing a fresh interpretation of an important international rights treaty, the United Nations watchdog determined that it guarantees children the right to a healthy environment.

And this, it said, means countries are obliged to combat things like pollution and climate change.

“States must ensure a clean, healthy and sustainable environment in order to respect, protect and fulfil children’s rights,” the Committee on the Rights of the Child said.

“Environmental degradation, including the consequences of the climate crisis, adversely affects the enjoyment of these rights.” Tasked with monitoring implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the panel’s 18 independent

experts provided a new interpretation of the treaty, which counts nearly all the world’s countries as parties. The fresh analysis comes just weeks after a landmark court ruling in Montana in favour of a group of youths who accused the western US state of breaching their rights to a clean environment.

The ruling found that a state law preventing consideration of greenhouse gas impacts when issuing fossil fuel development permits violated those rights.

That followed several other recent high-profile lawsuits, including the youngsters who won a case against the Colombian government over deforestation, and the children who secured a ruling ordering a strengthening of Germany’s carbon emissions law.

And the UN committee itself heard a case in 2021 brought by Greta Thunberg and 15 other young climate activists, in which it determined that countries bear cross-border responsibility for the harmful impact of climate change.

The new analysis could provide a new and powerful tool for young people seeking to bring such cases, committee chair Ann Skelton said.

THE FRESH ANALYSIS COMES JUST WEEKS AFTER A LANDMARK COURT RULING IN MONTANA IN FAVOUR OF A GROUP OF YOUTHS WHO ACCUSED THE WESTERN US STATE OF BREACHING THEIR RIGHTS TO A CLEAN ENVIRONMENT.

“Children themselves can use this instrument to encourage states to do the right thing, and ultimately to help to hold them accountable,” she said.

The new guidance, she said, “is of great and far-reaching legal significance”.

The 1989 convention does not explicitly spell out the rights of children to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment — but the committee argued the right was implicit and directly linked to a long line of guaranteed rights, including the right to life, survival and development.

“The extent and magnitude of the triple planetary crisis, comprising the climate emergency, the collapse of biodiversity and pervasive pollution, is an urgent and systemic threat to children’s rights globally,” the UN committee said in its so-called general comment.

To reach its conclusions, the panel said it had consulted with governments, civil society and especially children.

More than 16,000 children of all ages across 121 countries provided comments, describing the negative effects of environmental degradation and climate change on their lives and communities. — AFP

Mexican textbooks spark row over ideology, taboos

JEAN ARCE

New school textbooks promoted by the Mexican government have sparked a battle between the leftist president and opponents who have burned them and taken the case to the highest court.

Critics allege that the books promote communism, homosexuality and contain factual errors.

They want the government to refrain from distributing the materials from Monday, when millions of students will start a new school year in the Latin American nation.

One of the most radical protests took place in the southern state of Chiapas, where parents in an Indigenous neighborhood set fire to books they said were the work of “the devil.”

The president of the conservative opposition National Action Party (PAN), Marko Cortes, called on parents to “destroy (the books) in their entirety.”

Speaking against the backdrop of campaigning to choose candidates for the 2024 presidential election, Cortes alleged that the texts seek to “indoctrinate” students.

President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, a leftwing populist, has described the row as “politicking” stirred up by conservative opponents.

He frequently attacks what he calls his opponents’ “neoliberal” economic model favoring free markets and privatisation, and vowed to overturn it when he came to power in 2018.

The Mexican leader criticised a decision by the Supreme Court to suspend the distribution of the books in the northern states of Chihuahua and Coahuila. “It’s medieval,” Lopez Obrador said of the book burning, likening it to something “from the Inquisition.”

His government says the new materials recognise the country’s diversity and put the community at the heart of education.

Authorities in at least eight of Mexico’s 32 states have refused to distribute the books.

Although it has granted two injunctions, the Supreme Court has yet to rule on the merits of the matter.

In the opposition-governed central state of Aguascalientes, thousands of people marched in protest at what they called “Marxist ideologies” spread by the new books.

Education Minister Leticia Ramirez has defended the new teaching materials, which she said promoted values such as solidarity, honesty, respect and social justice. — AFP



Nicholas Kristof

IF MUCH OF MODERN LIFE IS EXEMPLIFIED BY WHAT WE DO ON OUR SCREENS THEN WILDERNESS OFFERS AN ANTIDOTE. IT IS SOOTHING. THE ANTONYM OF X IS WILDERNESS

One of the paradoxes of urban America is that millions of people speak reverently about wilderness but are much less eager to venture into it and risk real bites from actual mosquitoes.

I’ve been musing about this while backpacking with family on the Pacific Northwest Trail, sometimes known as “America’s wildest trail,” on the Canada-US border in Washington state. It’s stunning, mountainous country, right at timberline in the Pasayten Wilderness — yet we have it pretty much to ourselves (along with the bears, lynxes and mountain goats).

Perhaps I’m running away from home, for this is a dispiriting time in America: A former president has not only been indicted four times but may actually also be reelected, our life expectancy is among the worst in the rich world, and large majorities of adults polled say our country is on the wrong track.

Yet there’s something still spectacularly right about the United States: our wild spaces. Some 40 per cent of America is public land — a credit to our forebears — and we haven’t screwed that up yet (although climate change-related fires endanger it).

I’m hiking with my daughter and her boyfriend, and it’s cathartic. We get up in the morning with the sun, drink from creeks, rest on logs, eat from our packs when hungry. And at dusk, we find some flat ground, roll out a ground sheet, unfurl pads and sleeping bags and then fall asleep under the stars to the melody of owl hoots.

For me, wilderness backpacking is a profoundly healing experience. It restores my soul.

If much of modern life is exemplified by what we do on our screens — firing off intemperate and shallow salvos on the platform X, formerly known as Twitter — then wilderness offers an antidote. It is deep. It is enduring. It is soothing. The antonym of X is wilderness.

The best parenting I ever did was on the trails. Beginning when she was 14, my daughter and I hiked the entire 2,650-mile Pacific Crest Trail



The Pacific Crest Trail winds by an alpine lake in central California. — NYT

from Mexico to Canada, over six years. In that brief window in which she was strong enough and I was not yet decrepit, together we sweated, bathed in rivers, lost toenails, dodged 14 rattlesnakes and a cougar, and were drenched in freezing rains. No better way to share companionship!

It’s a spiritual experience to hike through the cathedral of wilderness, whether alone or with a family member or friend; the mountains and rivers generate a quasi-religious awe and put us humans in our place. I understand Baruch Spinoza best not in the library but in the mountains.

That is not to diminish the significance of humans; on the contrary, wilderness is an example of the importance of public policy. The architects of our land policies were leaders like Theodore Roosevelt and his friend Gifford Pinchot (the first head of the US Forest Service), who were personally wealthy and could afford their own country estates but deeply believed that working-class Americans should also have access to nature. Hence the drive for public lands.

When Congress rebelled at their conservation efforts and in 1907 made it harder to create new national forests, Roosevelt and Pinchot hurriedly preserved an additional 16 million acres — so-called midnight forests,

because they were created just before the deadline.

We’re all beneficiaries of their vision, for wild places provide a rare zone of equality in an unequal nation. There are few places in America where a billionaire and a welder are on equal footing, but a wilderness trail is one; no one can pull rank on you, except a large bear.

As I see it, the purpose of our extraordinary American inheritance of public lands is to go out in them, to experience that healing power of nature. Yet perhaps three-quarters of Americans don’t set foot on national forest trails at all.

Many children in particular seem to suffer from what writer Richard Louv has called “nature-deficit disorder.” That’s the alienation from the natural world that arises when kids no longer tramp through the mud chasing tadpoles and garter snakes.

Perhaps we parents are overprotective, fearing that mud might be quicksand or that garter snakes might be rattlesnakes. And modern life feels increasingly sedentary and pampered: On a baking summer day, kids no longer cool off in a swimming hole, but rather stay inside air-conditioned rooms playing video games, oblivious to their deprivation.

— The New York Times

To comment & email: opinion@omanobserver.om

Ministry of Information
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School bell is ringing

How many times have you woken from sleep, jumping out of your bed hearing the school bell ringing and you are late only to realise that it was just a dream.

A dream — when ever we go through hardship we often think why wouldn't someone wake us up out of the nightmare. But our realistic perception tells us, that is our logic nudges us by reminding us that this is just our subconscious mind still carrying out the scenes and experiences that left such deep impression on us.

In our school days we would often envy others in the family who did not have the responsibility of attending school, study and write the exams and get stressed out marks.

Little did we know our teachers were shaping our minds and we were shaping our future.

The beginning of new academic year is just not about new books and new uniforms, it is also about meeting new teachers and making new friends.

In adulthood we see new faces so frequently but in school the new faces were equivalent to new books.

How often do we recollect the corridors that led to the school library or the path to the playground? The hours we spent playing and the amount of water we could gulp down our throat straight from the running tap. We did not shun the sun then. It was part of our childhood.

A sun flower had taught me the journey of the sun. This was way before even attending the school, when my grandfather had explained why the sunflower in the garden changed its directions. It was fascinating to outline the shadow of the trees that was cast by the sun. As a child falling asleep in the car, I was



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

THE BEGINNING OF NEW ACADEMIC YEAR IS JUST NOT ABOUT NEW BOOKS AND NEW UNIFORMS, IT IS ALSO ABOUT MEETING NEW TEACHERS AND MAKING NEW FRIENDS

under the impression that the moon was running along with us. It stopped when we stopped and continued when we started again. Sometimes it hid behind clouds and just when I thought it has gone, it rushed out and we continued the chase all over again.

The journey we begin on the first day of school will continue year after year from school to college to work and the only difference is the missing teachers after years of education. The education continues but now we have to find our own mentors. There is no one assigned for us. We have to focus on self development on our own. The wisdom we now learn is from life's lessons.

There is no one to grade us we think, oh but we do. The only difference is that the evaluation is not just by an educator but the whole society. Exams will continue, but there is no one to explain about the exam portions in advance and how to prepare it. Most of these are surprise exams. No one had taught us the theory for the practicals.

Maybe we should reflect more on case studies and reflect on possibilities and potentials and most importantly prepare and safeguard with plan B and Plan C.

Whatever said and done, the days of education are some of the most beautiful years of life. Let us not waste time by comparing ourselves to others, instead let us spend time on finding and knowing ourselves and understanding the career path we want to take in our life.

Of course there would be time in life when one would have to reinvent life, but now the young students have the comfort of parents, the elders and the teachers to groom and guide them. The journey need not be smooth, but if it were to be, we wouldn't learn much.

A CHARIOT-CAR!



A man drives a motorised cart, decorated like a chariot, through the streets of Mumbai, India, on Monday. – AFP

Biden back to school as Republicans fight education culture war

President Joe Biden will spotlight efforts to combat cratering US student performance since the Covid-19 pandemic, as Republicans work to feature the emotionally charged issue of education in the 2024 campaign.

Biden, who returned on Saturday from a week-long vacation, will mark the time of year when US parents send children back to school with his own trip to Washington's Eliot-Hine Middle School.

The Capitol Hill area school for children aged 11 to 13 is working to boost its predominantly low-income students' arithmetic with a tutoring programme in partnership with George Washington University.

The Biden administration has pushed Congress to hike funding for public schools, including those that hire mental health professionals, through a bipartisan gun safety law last year.

Biden has also been directing more money into after-school programmes, teacher apprenticeships, schools serving low-income students and public-private partnerships that bring tutors into classrooms.

"Since day one, President Biden has worked to help every school open safely for in-person instruction, accelerate academic achievement, and build communities where all students feel they belong," the White House said in a memo on Monday.

Public education is largely funded and run locally in the United States



Trevor Hunnicutt

The writer is a journalist who works for Reuters

PUBLIC EDUCATION IS LARGELY FUNDED AND RUN LOCALLY IN THE US AND TYPICALLY TAKES A BACK SEAT IN THE PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

and typically takes a back seat in the presidential campaign to jobs and prices at the gas pump.

But Republicans, including Florida Governor Ron DeSantis, looking to elevate hot-button issues in the presidential campaign have made children's education a key focus.

This effort has included attempts to restrict trans athletes competing in school sports and campaigning to ban ideologically inflected "woke" books.

Former President Donald Trump and several of his rivals for the Republican nomination have suggested eliminating the federal Department of Education, a step that would require an unlikely act of Congress.

The Covid pandemic caused lengthy school closures, sent teachers fleeing the profession and frayed children's mental health, reasons cited for sharp declines in US reading and mathematics test scores since 2020.

Biden aides, who see this learning decline as a threat to long-term economic growth, hired an academic focused on the issue as an adviser to Biden this month.

Biden, 80, is seeking another four-year term in the 2024 election. The largest US labour union, the National Education Association, a group of public school teachers numbering 3 million, endorsed him just a day

after he announced his re-election bid.

Republicans are closely tied to efforts to steer more public education funding to parochial institutions and independently run charter schools.

Meanwhile, Biden condemned a racist attack in which a white man shot and killed three Black people at a Jacksonville store on Saturday — the same day the country reflected on the 60th anniversary of the March on Washington.

"Even as we continue

searching for answers, we must say clearly and forcefully that white supremacy has no place in America," Biden said on Sunday in a statement. "We must refuse to live in a country where Black families going to the store or Black students going to school live in fear of being gunned down because of the colour of their skin."

Law enforcement, Biden said, are treating the shooting as a possible hate crime and act of domestic terrorism. They're also opening a federal civil rights

investigation.

"Hate must have no safe harbor," Biden added. "Silence is complicity and we must not remain silent."

His comments came a day after a white man shot to death three Black people inside a Dollar General store in Jacksonville.

The shooting happened just before 2 pm, less than 1.6 km from Edward Waters University, a small historically Black university. The shooter, who had also posted racist writings, later killed himself.



US President Joe Biden departs Holy Trinity Catholic Church in Washington on Sunday. – Reuters

sport

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Indian women storm to Asian title

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, AUG 28

India smashed Thailand 7-2 in the final to clinch the first Women's Hockey5s Asia Cup in Salalah on Monday.

India led their rivals 4-2 at the half-time.

In the semifinals, India beat Malaysia 9-5 while Thailand got the better of Indonesia 5-2.

Both India and Thailand along with third-placed Indonesia booked their slots in the Hockey5s World Cup to be hosted by Muscat's Al Amerat Stadium from January 24 to 31, 2024.

Black horses Indonesia were rewarded for their great performance in the tournament as they edged out Elite team Malaysia 2-1 in penalty shoot-out after a 4-4 draw at the regulation time in the play-off for the third place.

At the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex courts, India struck the first goal in the final when Mariana Kujur scored in the second minute.

The Thai girls quickly recovered and threatened Indian goalmouth.

Kunjira Inpa scored the equaliser in the fifth minute and Kornkanok Sanpoung's 'Challenge goal' put them in lead 2-1.



Crowd cheering during the Women's Hockey5s Asia Cup final in Salalah. – Pics by Abdulwahid al Hamadani

India, backed by a sizeable supporters in the Salalah stadium, attacked with purpose and Dipi Monika Toppo found the equaliser in the seventh minute.

Mariana Kujur netted her second goal as India retook lead in the next minute. A good goal by Jyoti raised India's lead to 4-2 in the 10th minute.

In the second-half, India maintained control of the match as

Thailand were denied possession.

Navjot Kaur made it 5-2 in the 23rd minute. Jyoti found her second goal in the 27th minute as India led 6-2.

Mahima Choudhary completed the 7-2 scoreline with a good strike one minute before time.

JAPAN FIFTH

Japan finished fifth when they beat Hong Kong 5-3 in the play-off for

fifth-sixth position.

Chinese Taipei thrashed Bangladesh 8-5 to take the seventh spot. The scores were level at 4-4 at half-time.

Iran repeated a win against hosts Oman by 6-1 to end at ninth putting Oman last.

In the cross-over matches late on Sunday, Malaysia beat Hong Kong 5-3 while Indonesia upset Japan 2-1 to earn their semifinal spots.

Nunez nets last-gasp winner for Liverpool

ANDY JALIL
NEWCASTLE, AUG 28

Two late goals by substitute Darwin Nunez, just as the match seemed to be slipping away from them, gave Liverpool a thrilling win over Newcastle despite being reduced to 10 men within half-an-hour of the start.

A relieved Liverpool manager, Jurgen Klopp said: "In my 1,000 games as a coach, I've never had a game like this. With 10 men in an atmosphere like this, against an opponent like this, I am pretty sure it never happened. These moments are rare and super special. I said at half-time that this (could be) something we can tell our grandkids. I will see mine in 10 days and I will tell them."

On match-winner (substitute) Nunez, Klopp said the Uruguayan was fired up after not starting games and used this to his advantage to prove the boss wrong. "I just gave him a hug and encourage him to try for the team. He is not happy about not starting but you cannot have more than 11 players playing so you have to have stability."

Newcastle took the lead after 25 minutes when Trent Alexander Arnold made the mistake of letting a pass from Mo Salah go under his foot and Anthony Gordon sped away to get inside the area and slot the ball between Alisson's legs.

Just three minutes later, Liverpool were down to 10 players with the captain Virgil Van Dijk shown the red card. He brought down Alexander Isak on the edge of the area when the player had a clear opportunity of scoring. Van Dijk was straightaway given marching orders and he might be given further punishment for confronting the referee and his foul-mouthed outburst at the fourth official.

Newcastle were denied a second goal by a superb save by Alisson when he pushed a shot from Sandro Tonali on to the bar and then palming the ball away as it fell in front of the goal. Klopp made three substitutions and that seemed to lift Liverpool's confidence. Meanwhile Miguel Almiron was unlucky to strike a post with a powerful drive which would have brought a second goal for the hosts.

With nine minutes remaining of normal time, Sven Botman's mistake gave the visitors the equaliser. He failed to cut out Diogo Jota's pass to Nunez who drove his shot in first time off the inside of the post and that further lifted the spirit of Liverpool as they went on into the attack.

Three minutes into added-on time came Liverpool's winning goal with Salah's pass beating Dan Burn and Nunez raced ahead to put his shot into the net for a memorable win.

An annoyed Newcastle manager, Eddie Howe, said: "Today is a tough one. I thought we were excellent. I want them (his players) to be hurting. We pride ourselves on trying to win and if we can't then we do everything to draw the game. This is a game we shouldn't have lost. This is as painful as (last minute loss) at Liverpool last year."



Liverpool's Darwin Nunez celebrates scoring their first goal. – Reuters

Al Nahda power past Al Wahda, Seeb blank Al Nasr

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, AUG 28

Defending champions Al Nahda tasted their first victory in the 2023-24 Omantel League after they blanked new arrivals Al Wahda 2-0 at Al Buraimi Sports Complex late on Sunday for the second week matches of the top-tier Oman football league.

After their successful win over Bahrain's Al Khadiya SC in the AFC Cup play-off last week, coach Hamed al Azni's Men began the match against Al Wahda strongly as they were looking for their opening triumph in the league.

The new striker of Al Nahda, Salah al Yahyaei, was very close to break the deadlock in the 48th minute as his free kick ball hit the bar. After few missing scoring attempts from Issam al Subhi and

Salah al Yahyaei, Hamood al Saadi managed to put Al Nahda in the lead as he netted the opening goal in the 66th minute through header after a cross ball from Mohammed al Shmoosi.

Al Wahda played with 10 players from the 61st minute after the main referee showed a red card to Al Wahda's player Harmoon after his tough interface with Al Nahda's Ali Moosa. Later, Al Nahda's players pressed hard to guarantee their victory and before the match end they doubled as Issam al Subhi struck the second goal in the dying minutes from a penalty kick.

The triumph raised the credit of Al Nahda to four points after their draw against Al Shabab in the opening round, while Al Wahda are placed in the 12th position with no points.

SEEB'S OPENING VICTORY

Seeb, coached by Brazilian Jorvan Vieira, began their campaign in 2023-24 Omantel League on a winning note after they blanked Al Nasr 1-0 at the Seeb Stadium. The only goal in the match was scored by Seeb striker Marwan Taeab al Siyabi in the 73rd minute after a perfect cross from Abdulaziz al Maqbali was headed in by Marwan.

The victory meant that the Muscat-based team snatched their first winning points with one match to be played later as Seeb could not take on Ibri in the opening round due to their play-off match in preliminary round of AFC Champions League.

Seeb are currently placed fifth with three points while Al Nasr are in the 11th position with no points.



VERSTAPPEN ROMPS TO NINTH STRAIGHT WIN

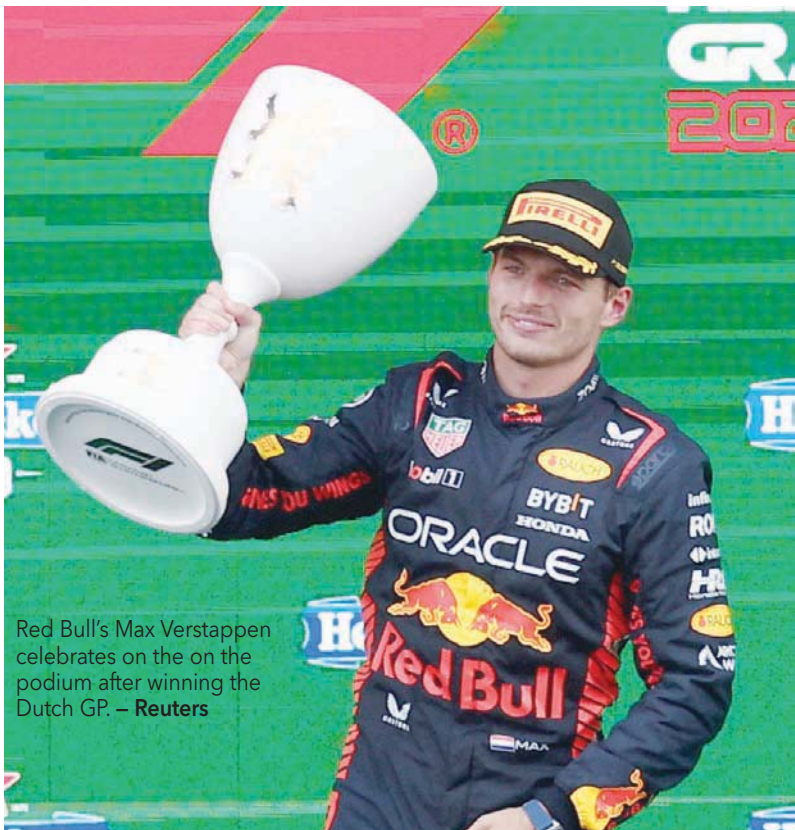
- Verstappen equals Vettel's 2013 record streak
- Third home win in a row for double world champion
- Alonso back on the podium in second place
- Gasly third after Perez demoted

ZANDVOORT, Netherlands: Runaway Formula One leader Max Verstappen celebrated a record-equaling ninth successive victory after winning a rain-hit and red-flagged Dutch Grand Prix on Sunday for the third year in a row.

The Red Bull driver's home triumph from pole position at a soggy Zandvoort equalled now-retired four-time world champion Sebastian Vettel's 2013 run of success with the same team.

It was Red Bull's 14th consecutive triumph and 13th of the season, with the Italian Grand Prix at Monza following next weekend.

Rain brought chaos at the end of lap one, with a further dry



Red Bull's Max Verstappen celebrates on the on the podium after winning the Dutch GP. — Reuters

period followed by a downpour that swept in from the North Sea to halt proceedings for 40 minutes on the 65th of 72 laps with cars skidding off.

Fernando Alonso put Aston Martin back on the podium with second place and a bonus point for fastest lap after the eventual rolling re-start behind the safety car led to a thrilling final chase at the seaside circuit.

Pierre Gasly was third, his first podium finish since he joined Renault-owned Alpine, as Red Bull's Sergio Perez collected a five-second post-race penalty for speeding in the pit lane and dropped to fourth.

Verstappen now leads Perez, his closest rival, by a mighty 138 points with nine races remaining.

Red Bull lead Mercedes by 285 points with Aston Martin 40

FORMULA 1

14. Dutch Grand Prix

Zandvoort circuit

F1

23

Aug 27

1

Max Verstappen (NED)

2:24:04.411

Red Bull

2

Fernando Alonso (ESP)

at 3.744

Aston Martin

3

Pierre Gasly (FRA)

at 7.058

Alpine Renault

4

Sergio Perez (MEX)

at 10.068

Red Bull

5

Carlos Sainz (ESP)

at 12.541

Ferrari

Driver standings

Max Verstappen (NED)

339

Sergio Perez (MEX)

201

Fernando Alonso (ESP)

168

Lewis Hamilton (GBR)

156

Carlos Sainz (ESP)

102

Teams

Red Bull

540

Mercedes

255

Aston Martin

215

AFP

Source: formula1.com

points further back and 14 ahead of Ferrari.

"Incredible. They didn't make it easy for us with the weather to make all the right calls," said Verstappen as his army of fans prepared to party into the night.

"I already had goosebumps when they were playing the national anthem before the start," added the 25-year-old, who chatted happily with the Dutch king and queen before the podium ceremonies.

"Even with all the bad weather, the rain, the fans are still going at it. So an incredible atmosphere."

Verstappen's 11th victory of the season, and 46th of his career, provided another big push towards clinching a third title well before the end of the season.

Ferrari's Carlos Sainz finished fifth with Lewis Hamilton

South Sudan stun China for first-ever WC win

MANILA: South Sudan head coach Royal Ivey said his team "played with fire" after stunning China to claim their first-ever win at the Basketball World Cup on Monday.

The world's number 62-ranked team scored 15 three-point shots on their way to an 89-69 victory in Manila, keeping their hopes of a second-round place alive in their World Cup debut.

South Sudan became an independent country in 2011 and played their first official international basketball game only six years ago.

But Ivey said their win over world number 27-ranked China was fully deserved, as his players "stuck to the game plan from the opening tip to the closing horn".

"They were resilient, persistent, they had laser-like focus, they followed the game plan and competed at the highest level," he said.



"They played with emotion, they played with fight, they played with fire. We competed all 40 minutes and we came out with the victory."

South Sudan led for most of their opening game at the tournament against Puerto Rico on Saturday before losing 101-96 in overtime.

Carlík Jones, who scored 35 points against Puerto Rico, had 21 against China to lead South Sudan in scoring.

Forward Nuni Omot said the win was "a dream come true". — AFP

Champions crowned at Girls Basketball Championship

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, AUG 28

The inaugural championship for girls' basketball preparation centres witnessed exhilarating competitions culminating in victory for the Wolf and Spark teams in the junior and general categories respectively. Held at the sub-hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex, this championship marked a pioneering endeavour for girls basketball in Oman.

The event was graced by the presence of, Dr Siham bint Mohammed bin Abdullah al Shaibaniyah, advisor at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, and Eng Khalfan bin Saleh al Naabi, Chairman of the Oman Basketball Association, among others from the Oman Basketball Association.

A total of 60 players across 8 teams competed in the junior and women's categories. The matches showcased a diverse range of performances, reflecting the dynamic nature of the sport and the talent of the participants.

Post the riveting matches, Dr Siham al Shaibani, took the



stage to bestow honour upon the victorious teams in the first championship for girls' basketball preparation centres.

The Wolves team secured the top position in the junior

sixth for Mercedes and fellow-Briton Lando Norris seventh for McLaren. Alex Albon collected more precious points for Williams in eighth, ahead of McLaren's Oscar Piastri and Esteban Ocon 10th for Alpine.

New Zealander Liam Lawson finished 13th, and ahead of teammate Yuki Tsunoda, on his Formula One debut as a replacement for injured Daniel Ricciardo at AlphaTauri.

Lawson overtook Charles Leclerc on lap 41, before the Ferrari driver retired with a damaged floor, but also collected a 10-second penalty for impeding in the pitlane.

Verstappen led cleanly away at the start with Alonso seizing third place.

Only Hamilton, starting a lowly 13th on the grid, lined up on medium tyres with everyone else on softs but all strategies were soon shredded as the skies opened.

Perez, seventh on the grid and everything to gain, pitted immediately for intermediates along with six others as the leaders stayed out. The move paid off for him, but not for Ferrari who had Leclerc come in only to find no tyres ready and mechanics scurrying to bring them.

— Reuters

Asia's cricket giants square up ahead of World Cup

COLOMBO: Asia's cricket giants India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka will get a final chance to size each other up before October's 50-over World Cup when the Asia Cup begins on Wednesday.

Fiery rivals India and Pakistan could clash as many as three times if they go all the way in the six-nation continental championship.

Pakistan and Sri Lanka are co-hosts, a hybrid model agreed after World Cup hosts India refused to tour Pakistan, with the final on September 17 in Colombo.

Babar Azam's Pakistan, who became the world's top-ranked ODI team after last week's 3-0

series sweep against Afghanistan, open their campaign at home on Wednesday against Asia Cup debutants Nepal in Multan.

Azam, who scored 113 runs in the Afghanistan series, leads a side containing a triple-pronged fast bowling attack in Shaheen Shah Afridi, Naseem Shah and Haris Rauf.

World Cup hosts India, led by Rohit Sharma, will open their campaign against Pakistan in a hotly anticipated clash on Saturday in Pallekele.

India and Pakistan, who only play against each other in international tournaments due



to the countries' long-standing political tensions, are expected to meet again in the Super Four stage and could face off for a third time in the final. "It's not just Pakistan, there are other teams," Rohit

said of the hype surrounding the Pakistan clashes, with the rivals also scheduled to meet in the 50-over World Cup in Ahmedabad on October 14. "Sri Lanka won the Asia Cup last year. So there are other teams who are playing good cricket and will challenge us."

TEST OURSELVES

Rohit said the Asia Cup was the perfect place to "test ourselves, try and put ourselves under pressure and respond to that pressure."

India's batting has been boosted by the return of KL Rahul and Shreyas Iyer alongside Virat Kohli, Shubman Gill and Rohit.

The 50-over World Cup begins on October 5 in India.

Sri Lanka, who won the Asia Cup last year in Dubai when it was played as a Twenty20 tournament, have been hit by injuries ahead of their opener against Bangladesh in Kandy on Thursday.

Fast bowler Dushmantha Chameera is all but out of the tournament with a shoulder injury and leg-spinner Wanindu Hasaranga is doubtful for at least the group matches having missed the Lanka Premier League final eight days ago with a thigh strain.

Bangladesh veteran all-rounder Shakib Al Hasan has

been reappointed captain through to the end of the World Cup. He previously led Bangladesh for 50 ODIs between 2009 and 2017.

Afghanistan, despite their recent loss to Pakistan, can pose problems with their potent spin attack of Rashid Khan, Mujeeb Ur Rahman and Mohammad Nabi.

Minnows Nepal could be in for a baptism of fire having been clubbed with India and Pakistan in Group A. Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and Afghanistan make up Group B. The top two teams from each group advance to the Super Four with the leading two in the standings contesting the final. — AFP

NEERAJ STRIKES FIRST WORLD GOLD



India's Neeraj Chopra competes in the men's javelin throw final during the World Athletics Championships at the National Athletics Centre in Budapest. — AFP



Norway's Jakob Ingebrigtsen crosses the finish line to win the men's 5,000m final.

Ukraine's Yaroslava Mahuchikh wears a tiara as she celebrates with the gold medal after winning the women's high jump final. — Reuters



BUDAPEST: Neeraj Chopra created history when he claimed India's first-ever gold medal in the World Athletics Championships even as Yaroslava Mahuchikh delivered an emotional end to the event by securing war-afflicted Ukraine's first gold whilst Jakob Ingebrigtsen showed huge character to retain his 5000m title.

An engrossing final night in Budapest also saw Mary Moraa of Kenya end American Athing Mu's run of global titles in the women's 800m.

Just as Ingebrigtsen showed mettle after the crushing disappointment of being pipped to silver in the 1,500m for the second world championships in a row, so did the Netherlands' Femke Bol.

Just over a week after she fell with the line and gold beckoning in the mixed 4x400m relay, she produced a jaw-dropping final leg to pass the British and Jamaican runners and secure the title for the Dutch women's 4x400m team. In the field events, India's Neeraj Chopra took men's javelin honours to add the world crown to his Olympic title.

The flamboyant Chopra, wearing a bandana, said it was the fulfilment of a dream to have added the world title to his Olympic crown after winning with a best throw of 88.17m.

He said he expected to see a new surge of interest in India — he already has 6.3 million Instagram followers — even though he admitted "I don't use social media much."

"There are so many people in India I think after this triumph there will be more following me."

Chopra won Olympic gold in Tokyo but managed only a silver at the worlds in Eugene last year. The only other Indian to win a medal at the worlds was Anju Bobby George, who took bronze in the women's long jump in 2003 in Paris.

Pakistan's Nadeem, coming back from elbow surgery and a knee injury, produced his season's best effort of 87.82 on his third attempt to win the silver medal, while the Czech Republic's Jakub Vadlejch took the bronze with 86.67.

"This was great. After the Olympic gold I really wanted to win the world championships. I just wanted to throw further. This is brilliant for the national team but it was my dream to win gold at the world championships," Chopra said.

"This has been a great championships for India and I am proud to bring another title to my country. I don't think I am the best thrower here. I wanted to throw more tonight. I wanted to throw more than 90m tonight but it needs all parts of the puzzle to be there. I couldn't put it all together this evening. Maybe next time."

Chopra needed only one attempt in the qualification round to lead the field with a season-best 88.77 metres.

But the Indian was unhappy with his first effort in the final, deliberately stepping over the line for a foul.

Under pressure, the 25-year-old then soared into the lead on his second

attempt, turning his back and celebrating in trademark fashion with his arms aloft while pointing at the sky immediately after his throw, knowing it was good.

FOR MY COUNTRY

Mahuchikh cleared a winning height of 2.01m as Australia's defending champion Eleanor Patterson finished second.

Although it was not the greatest of finals, there was potent symbolism in Mahuchikh taking gold with Russian soldiers still on her country's territory over a year and a half after they invaded.

Her teammate Maryna Bekh-Romanchuk had been deprived of gold in the triple jump earlier in the championships when Venezuela's Yulimar Rojas produced an astonishing last effort.

"I (had) to win this gold for my country and all Ukrainian people who are still fighting for peace in Ukraine and for our independence," said Mahuchikh.

"Thanks to them we have this unique possibility to compete at the international arena and to rise our flag."

JAKOB IS JAKOB

In the 5,000m, Ingebrigtsen had to battle hard to get past Spaniard Mohamed Katir but once he crossed the line he punched the air and put a finger to his temple.

"This title means a lot to me after losing again in the 1500m," the Norwegian said.

"I haven't been at my best but I had the motivation and I had great support. It is a bit bitter sweet this week overall. I am not happy to have been ill, of course, I haven't experienced that before, but this is a good way to end."

Katir took his last-gasp defeat well, as he improved on his bronze last year.

"I gave it all today. I gave all that I have," he said. "But you know, Jakob is Jakob."

While Ingebrigtsen's celebrations were muted, Moraa skipped over the line in pure joy after she ended Olympic champion Mu's reign in the two-lap event.

Britain's Keely Hodgkinson — second to Moraa in the Commonwealth Games last year — once again had to make do with silver just as she did in the Tokyo Olympics and last year's world final. "After bronze last year I wanted to improve and I have," said Moraa.

Bol had bounced back from the mixed relay disappointment with individual gold in the 400m hurdles but the look of glee on her face when she crossed the line suggested this meant more.

Bahrain's Kenya-born Winfred Mutile Yavi cantered to victory in the women's 3000m steeplechase, beating two of her former compatriots.

The USA wrapped up their championships with men's relay 4x400m gold, their table-topping 12th of the championships.

However, it was the French team that celebrated hardest as a silver medal ensured next year's Olympic hosts got their only medal in Budapest.

— Agencies



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Strategy launched for Omanisation of logistics sector

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUG 28

The National Employment Programme (NEP) held a workshop in cooperation with government agencies and the private sector to develop an Omanisation strategy for the logistics sector. The workshop aims to enhance Omanisation opportunities in the sector, develop a competency framework for specialised professions, and study challenges facing the sector.

In his opening speech, Engineer Azhar bin Ahmed al Kindi, Technical Director of the NEP, said that the workshop is part of an initiative by the NEP to implement a project to develop and prepare



a competency framework for logistics professions in the sector. The project is being implemented by WPS Corporation and Investment Company, and

will focus on the most important jobs and professions related to the sector. Al Kindi said that the project is one of the most important

national projects that will contribute to linking education and training institutions with the labour market. It will also help to provide the sector with the

national workforce it needs. During the workshop, participants discussed the proposed Omanisation strategy for the logistics sector. The strategy includes three stages: (i) Data analysis: This stage will involve collecting data on the current state of Omanisation in the sector, as well as the skills and competencies required for the various jobs; (ii) Gap analysis: This stage will identify the gaps between the current state of Omanisation and the desired state; and (iii) Action plan: This stage will develop a plan to close the gaps and achieve the desired state of Omanisation. The workshop also discussed the challenges facing the logistics

sector, such as the lack of skilled workers and the high cost of labour. Participants discussed ways to overcome these challenges, such as developing training programmes and providing financial incentives to employers. The workshop concluded with a call for action to implement the Omanisation strategy and to develop the logistics sector. The NEP is committed to working with all stakeholders to achieve the goals of the Omanisation strategy and to develop the logistics sector. The NEP believes that the logistics sector has the potential to create jobs and contribute to the economic development of the Sultanate of Oman.

Key workshop explores potential of Oman’s exhibitions sector



HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, AUG 28

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion held a workshop yesterday to explore the potential of the exhibition sector in the Sultanate of Oman. The event was attended by the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, while several representatives from the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry and a number of companies specialised in the exhibition sector, and various government bodies, participated in the workshop. Speaking to the *Observer*, the Director General of Commerce at the Ministry, Mubarak bin Mohammed al Dohani, explained the importance of the industry. “The exhibition sector is considered among the promising sectors. A very significant proportion of companies operating in the exhibition sector fall under the category of small and medium-sized enterprises.” “Additionally, most of the young individuals working in the exhibition sector are also Omani youth who are fully dedicated to managing such projects. Therefore, now is the time to

support this sector.” However, Al Dohani shared that the sector is yet to make a significant contribution to the GDP. “The contribution percentage of the exhibition sector is quite modest. It remains a percentage that does not yet reach a level worth mentioning as a contribution to the gross domestic product.” Similarly, Naji El Haddad, Regional Director at the Global Association of the Exhibition Industry UFI, shared that it is a common trend with the Middle East. “Globally, the exhibition industry contributes to the GDP by over \$200 billion. While when it comes to the Middle East, the number is very small compared to the global figures.” El Haddad attributes this to the premature state of the exhibition industry in the region, and possibly due to the absence of international standards training. However, he believes that the industry’s infancy reflects a significant amount of potential. According to data from UFI, the exhibition sector generated approximately \$1.5 billion in direct business sales and contributed to \$0.8 billion to the GDP in the Middle East in 2019.

Oman’s first-ever waste-to-energy plant attracts environmentally conscious investors

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, AUG 28

The first-ever Waste-to-Energy (WtE) plant planned in the Sultanate of Oman presents a significant opportunity to attract environmentally conscious investors. A top official at be’ah (Oman Environmental Services Holding Company) believes that this project aligns with global sustainability goals and will encourage the implementation of more green initiatives. The official expressed optimism about the potential of the WtE plant to draw interest from international companies and banks that are increasingly focusing on sustainable projects. With a growing emphasis on resource conservation and the reduction of pollution and emissions, many organisations are actively seeking investments in environmentally friendly ventures. Kumayl al Lawati, VP-Business Development at be’ah at an interview at *Doha News* stated, “Several international companies and banks are heading towards more sustainable projects which require conserving resources and focuses on reducing pollution and emissions. It is expected that the WtE would also attract green investment and encourage more green projects to see the light.” The WtE plant aims to support Oman Vision 2040 goals, which include diverting 80% of municipal solid waste (MSW) from landfills. The facility is designed to treat approximately 4,500 tonnes of MSW per day, producing an estimated electricity output of 130 to 150 megawatt hour. By adopting WtE technology,



(Picture for illustration only © be’ah)

Oman seeks to address the challenges posed by increasing waste generation while simultaneously generating renewable energy. The plant will convert waste materials into electricity through a highly efficient and environmentally friendly combustion process. The establishment of the WtE plant is a significant step forward in Oman’s efforts to achieve sustainable waste management practices. It will contribute to the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and the conservation of valuable resources. Moreover, the project’s potential to attract environmentally conscious investors is a testament to the growing interest and commitment to sustainable development in the

business community. Investors increasingly recognise the importance of supporting projects that align with environmental goals and contribute to a greener future. be’ah, a part of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), has formed a partnership with Nama Power and Water Procurement Co (Nama PWP), the exclusive national purchaser of power and water, to execute the project. It will be structured as an Independent Power Project (IPP), but it will be developed, financed, and operated by the private sector through a long-term power purchase agreement. Over a period of 35 years (equivalent to 1.3 million tonnes per year), the plant is projected to reduce carbon emissions from

landfills by 50 million tonnes, which accounts for 30% of the current total carbon dioxide emissions produced by landfill operations. Nama PWP, which is a component of Nama Group, recently announced its intention to initiate the competitive process in 2023, after facing challenges during the global economic downturn and the pandemic. The plant, expected to have a capacity ranging from 130 to 150 MW, will receive its source material from be’ah in the form of municipal waste collected from the Muscat and Al Batinah South governorates. The planned location for the plant is Barka in Al Batinah South, and is scheduled to begin commercial operations in 2028.

ahlibank holds summer camp for employees' children

MUSCAT: As part of its endeavours to support a healthy work-life balance for its employees, ahlibank held a summer camp initiative for its employees' children. This is in line with the bank's efforts to engage its staff and their families in joyous and meaningful activities, thereby keeping them motivated.

Recognising the need to utilise the summer school holidays in an effective way, ahlibank implemented such initiatives — like the Summer Camp — to provide engaging fun and educational activities for employees' children.

Such Summer camps aim to offer a chance for children to stay active in safe environments, urge them to be creative, as well as engage and spend quality time with their parents. Such initiatives fall in line with the bank's commitment to nurturing a positive and stress-free environment for its employees.

Most parents look for productive ways to keep their child busy during long holidays and by offering them an option of a summer camp at work, ahlibank has gone a step ahead in maintaining a stress free and highly driven environment for its employees who are parents.

ahlibank's summer camp targeted children of different ages, with plenty of edutainment activities.

While it is fun, it is also project based and about collaborative effort. It offered a wide array of activities that children took part in.

Over 100 Omani innovators join OQ's digital sustainability hackathon

MUSCAT: The Digital Sustainability Hackathon organised by OQ, the global integrated energy group, brought together more than 100 young Omani innovators who competed to find innovative solutions for societal and organisational challenges in the fields of energy, health, safety, decarbonisation and environment conservation.

Those innovators employed modern technologies, waste management techniques, energy consumption optimization, eco-friendly transportation and construction, in addition to safety uniforms leveraging the Internet of Things (IoT).

The hackathon was organised as part of OQ's endeavours to meld the potential of modern technology with the passion of forward-thinking innovators, producing solutions that champion sustainability and resilience in line with Oman's Vision 2040.

It embodies OQ's commitment to the broader goals of the Sultanate of Oman, seeking to address environmental challenges while promoting economic and social prosperity.

Engineer Khalid al Asmi, Acting Managing Director - OQ Salalah Cluster, said: "The Digital Sustainability Hackathon is more



than just a competition.

We view it as a beacon, drawing inspiration from the guiding principles of Vision 2040.

It is our open call to all visionaries, prompting them to ideate and create digital strategies that resonate with Oman's overarching ambitions."

He added: "This platform also

spurs a paradigm shift in how we interact, as a society, with sustainability.

By facilitating this integration of creativity and purpose, we aim to empower a generation of young problem solvers who work towards promoting diversity, sustainability and prosperity in Oman in the years to come." It is worth noting that the Hackathon

is a competition-based event for 48 hours to innovate solutions for specified challenges.

It seeks to build an effective and innovative society, in addition to empowering the youth in innovation and sustainability.

The hackathon also aims to generate innovative ideas to address the current challenges in the sustainable energy sector.

Make city drives fun with the compact Kia Sonet

MUSCAT: Kia Sonet raises the bar on exciting city drives with its compact size, space, power, fuel-efficiency and features. The Sonet SUV makes daily driving fun especially with family with its powerful and fuel-efficient 1.5L engine that is paired to a CVT transmission offering an exceptional mileage of 17.5 kmpl.

The Sonet makes journeys fun with its impressive interior environment that is well laid-out along with an intuitive infotainment and cluster interface which is in place to enhance the end user's experience. The Sonet is available with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay feature, Audio Remote Control, Bluetooth, USB charger. Harboursing functional qualities in every inch of its ergonomic space.



Highlighting the Sonet's SUV stance are a range of features including body colour outside mirror, 2-tone bumper, power outside mirror, body colour door

handles, side repeater lamps in outside mirror, 16" alloy wheels, chrome radiator grille, rear fog lamps, LED front fog lamps, roof rack, LED headlamps, LED

daytime running lamps and more.

For families looking forward to light moments on the road, the Sonet is equipped with an 8" Audio Display along with other smart features such as remote engine start, auto cruise control and more.

Adding to increased levels of convenience are features like keyless entry system, smart key with button start, central door lock and more.

Kia has ensured that every drive with the Sonet is as hassle free and safe as possible, thanks to a rigorous set of measures created in line with Kia's pillars of safety.

Among the Sonet's key safety features are driver and front passenger airbags, ABS (anti-lock braking system), ESC (Electronic Stability Control), Rear parking

assist system, Rear view camera, tyre pressure monitoring system (TPMS) and ISOFIX child-seat anchoring points.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers.

Excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities easily ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way.

No wonder then that Reliable International Automotive has been ranked amongst the top Kia distributors worldwide and has been honoured with prestigious accolades including the 'Good Partnership award', 'Family Like Care' Service award', and 'Kia 'Distributor of Distinction' award.

Food and Hospitality Oman 2023 set to begin



MUSCAT: With the local government playing a proactive role in boosting the tourism landscape, the hospitality domain has gained heightened prominence in Oman. This strategic emphasis aligns with the sector's anticipations of substantial expansion.

Highlighting the immense potential within Oman's dynamic food and hospitality industry, the Sultanate of Oman is poised to host the much-anticipated annual event, the 16th edition of the Food and Hospitality Oman (FHO).

Organised by CONNECT (Oman Exhibitions Organizing Company LLC), the upcoming FHO event is scheduled to take place in Hall 4 at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC).

The three-day event spans from September 18 to 20, 2023 from 10 AM to 7 PM daily. With a convergence of more than 150 local and global exhibitors and 14 participating countries, FHO is anticipating a footfall of over 5000 attendees.

The event will be inaugurated under the auspices of Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources of Oman.

It will also host venerable delegates from different ministries, industry veterans, and high-ranking dignitaries hailing from distinguished companies. Organised under the auspices of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, Oman Air Catering is on board as the host organisation for FHO; and the event is supported by A'Saffa Foods SAOG as Poultry Sponsor.

Make the most of luxury with the Lincoln Navigator

MUSCAT: The large and impressive Lincoln Navigator makes more than just a lasting impression with its bold stance, sheer size, thoughtful attention to luxury details and a range of features that make the Navigator stand out in its category.

The Navigator is powered by a twin-turbo V6, 3.5L engine with auto start-stop technology, that produces and thrilling 440 horsepower delivered through a 10-speed automatic transmission with SelectShift paddle activation. Highlights the Navigator's distinctive looks are adaptive pixel projector LED headlamps with signature lighting, predictive curve lighting and sign-based lighting.

Adding to its allure are panoramic vista roof with power

sunshade and Lincoln Embrace: LED-illuminated exterior door handle pockets, Lincoln approach detection system, Lincoln logo illuminated mats and Lincoln signature lighting with fade on/off.

The Navigator is equipped with 1st-row passenger seat memory, 3rd-row PowerFold 60/40 split bench seat with power recline, 12" configurable LCD instrument cluster, Head-up Display, ambient lighting-LED, enhanced active noise control, wireless charging pad and more.

Enhancing interior experiences are an available Revel Ultima 3D audio system with 28 speakers that work in concert with Navigator's interior design and acoustics. Standard SYNC 4 enables clients to manage audio,



phone, navigation and more from the vehicle touch screen or steering wheel-mounted controls.

Promoting fun experiences

that last longer are adaptive cruise control with stop-and-go and lane centring assist, auto high-beam headlamps, blind

spot information system with cross-traffic alert and trailer coverage, evasive steering assist, lane-keeping system with blind-

spot assist which includes lane-keeping aid, lane-keeping alert, driver alert system and a pre-collision assist.

The Navigator is also equipped with driver and front passenger-dual-stage front airbags, front-seat side airbags, safety canopy side-curtain airbags with rollover sensor, AdvanceTrac with RSC (Roll Stability Control), MyKey technology and SecuriCode invisible keypad.

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Oman-owned OQ Chemicals' revenues climb to €1.9 bn in 2022

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUG 28

Global oxo-chemicals producer OQ Chemicals – wholly owned by OQ Group of the Sultanate of Oman – has recorded a significant uptick in net revenues at €1.931 billion for fiscal 2022, up from €1.730 billion a year earlier.

However, net income slumped to €44.7 million during 2022, down from €122.5 million a year earlier. EBIDTA (earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation) declined to €222.8 million, down from €311.7 million in 2021. Cost of sales was higher at €1.741 billion, up from €1.456 billion in 2021.

Company officials attributed the figures to a “turbulent fiscal 2022” characterised by the effects of the Ukraine War resulting in high energy prices and raw material costs, disruption of global supply chains, and extreme weather events, particularly in Europe, where OQ Chemicals has a number of plants.

OQ Chemicals (previously known as Oxa) was acquired by OQ Group (then known as Oman Oil Company), in December 2013. Headquartered in Germany, the company operates a global



network of plants in the United States and Europe, offering a total production capacity of over 1.7 million tonnes per annum of oxo chemicals — intermediate and derivative chemical compounds used in the manufacture and processing of numerous products of everyday use.

OQ Chemicals' portfolio includes over 70 products used in the production of, among other products, coating resins, synthetic esters, cosmetics and printing inks.

Supplied globally, these products find application in

various industry segments, such as paints and coatings, lubricants and functional fluids, personal care, flexible packaging, and others.

In line with a commitment to achieve carbon neutrality by 2050, OQ Chemicals has also embarked on a 'REDUCE' programme encompassing a comprehensive strategy to slash greenhouse gas emissions across its global operations.

The first milestone in its multi-year strategy was achieved last year, with the company delivery on its flare optimisation goals, while some plants in the US switched

to renewable electricity for their energy needs. By 2030, OQ Chemicals plans to be connected to renewable energy supplies across its global network.

In other highlights during the year, OQ Chemicals broke ground on a new methyl methacrylate (MMA) plant at its Bay City complex in the United States last October.

It also expanded the capacity of its Oberhausen plant in Germany to enhance the production of 'TCD Alcohol DM', which is used in exterior coatings, as well as in 3D printing.

Salalah forum appeals for GCC-wide roadmap to enhance workplace safety



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUG 28

The GCC Forum on Occupational Safety and Health concluded in Salalah here on August 28 with delegates calling for, among other objectives, a collaborative roadmap to enhance occupational safety and health within the Gulf countries.

The two-day forum, hosted by Oman's Ministry of Labour, opened on Sunday under the auspices of His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar. The forum focused on modern technologies for occupational safety and health, as well as the promotion of a safety culture in workplaces.

Distinguished experts from the Arab Labour Organisation, Gulf Cooperation Council nations, and Oman convened at the Millennium Hotel for discussions encompassing the impact of contemporary technologies on occupational safety, strategies for addressing psychological and social workplace risks, the significance of cooperative partnerships for safety-oriented cultures, and advancements in safety standards and regulations.

The forum featured working papers from local and international experts and sought to share insights, promote cooperation,

and raise awareness about occupational safety.

In other recommendations, the delegates urged the Arab Labour Organisation to create a comprehensive guide outlining essential indicators for measuring occupational health and safety performance (KPIs) and promoting their use across Arab nations.

They advocated for joint collaboration among Gulf countries' labour ministries to develop a robust training methodology for inspection teams and health and safety officials. The forum proposed mutual field visits among Gulf countries to sectors tied to occupational health and safety, fostering knowledge sharing and learning, especially within sectors like oil.

It highlighted the importance of extending insurance protection to GCC citizens working in non-GCC countries against work-related injuries and diseases.

Attendees emphasised the need for nurturing a safety culture in both public and private sectors, where occupational safety takes precedence, informed by scientific and practical knowledge.

Additionally, the Forum called for active engagement in international organisations and the establishment of dedicated associations for advancing occupational safety.

OMAN, S KOREA SIGN PACT TO ACHIEVE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT



MUSCAT: Dr Saud bin Hamoud al Habsi, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources received at his office yesterday, Han Hwa-Jin, Minister of Environment of the Republic of Korea and her accompanying delegation who are currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman. During the meeting, matters of mutual interest were discussed and directions for cooperation between the two countries in the areas of sustainable development and innovative solutions for the implementation of environmentally friendly agricultural practices and renewable energy. A work programme was signed between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, and the Korean Institute for Environmental Industries and Technology, and the Korean agency to promote commercial investment in Muscat. The programme primarily aims to implement research activities and capacity building activities by the parties to achieve environmental sustainable development goals in the fields of agriculture, fisheries and water resources in the Sultanate of Oman.

Oman's fish exports reach RO 140 m in 2022

MUSCAT: The total fish exports of the Sultanate of Oman by the end of 2022 amounted to about 281,601.6 tonnes, at a value of RO 140.893 million, with an increase in value of 15.8 per cent compared to 2021.

Data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information indicated that Omani fish exports to the GCC reached 74,323.5 tonnes at the end of 2022, while to Europe it reached 2,372.9 tonnes, and to America 18,996.1 tonnes. The total amount of exports to other countries reached 185,909.1 tonnes.

The Sultanate of Oman's fish exports varied between fresh fish, which amounted to 64,545.2 tonnes, frozen fish with 200,763.6 tonnes, crustaceans and molluscs with 15,240.8 tonnes, while the total amount of other fish amounted to 1,052.1 tonnes. — **ONA**

Nama Holding roadshow spotlights ICV performance

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 28

As part of its endeavour to enhance its contribution to the national GDP and economic growth, the In-Country Value team of Nama Holding organised a series of workshops on the ICV performance and indicators of the Group companies.

These workshops targeted senior management, executive management, and technical teams in the Group companies to discuss the latest updates and current performance of the Group related ICV projects and initiatives, as well as to highlight the significance of reinforcing the role of small and medium-sized enterprises to contribute to executing the Group's businesses.

The ICV roadshow began with a workshop with Nama Supply's top management, which was followed by sessions with the concerned teams of other companies within the Group to discuss the scale of businesses and projects given to local enterprises and SMEs.

Several themes were covered at the seminars, including the main issues and obstacles that businesses experience while implementing the ICV policy and the unified operating model, as well as how to turn them into opportunities.

The ICV team extends its efforts to conduct these workshops for Group companies within the agreed-upon programme and timeframe.

Saleh al Salmani, Senior Manager Group Financial Service and Procurement, said: “We



remain committed to adopting the ICV policy and its standards in Nama Group, and the team is diligently working to implement the operating model of the Group that was issued by the Oman Investment Authority effectively.

Through organising these workshops, we aim to evaluate the ICV's performance and measure the current indicators of the implementation of the unified operating model by the Group companies.

This step will certainly create a paradigm shift in successfully adopting ICV initiatives and projects by the Group companies, thus contributing to enhancing the vital role of the sector in supporting the national economy.”

“To further enhance synergies and purchasing operations

among the Group companies and associated institutions with the Oman Investment Authority, we have formed a full team from each Group company that is specialised in defining business opportunities available to be allocated to the local SMEs and companies,” he added.

Positioning itself as a key player in stimulating the national economy, Nama Group is planning to schedule meetings with local SMEs, vendors, and suppliers during the last quarter of this year, to present and discuss potential projects and business opportunities.

Nama Group has been at the forefront of adopting the strategic ICV framework in its core operations, and it is constantly working on maximising local procurements.

Indian interlopers can disrupt global mining M&A



PRANAV KIRAN

The author is an editorial assistant for Reuters Breakingviews, based in Bangalore.

An Indian tycoon has a powerful motive to throw himself into some global mining M&A. Sajjan Jindal is looking to pull together a consortium to take a 75 per cent stake in the coal unit of Canadian miner Teck Resources, according to Bloomberg. Such a move would pit his \$23 billion Mumbai-listed JSW Steel against a rival \$8 billion bid by Swiss commodities giant Glencore. As geopolitics heats up and the global energy transition gathers pace, industrialists sitting in the world's fastest growing market for the alloy are anxious to secure supplies.

India will need a lot of steel. Per capita consumption of the finished metal is only 81 kilogrammes, less than half the world average in 2022. The government aims to nearly double annual domestic production capacity to 300 million tonnes by 2030, and Jindal at the helm of the country's largest steelmaker by market capitalisation wants to grab a bigger piece of the industry. That points towards JSW and other domestic champions including Tata Steel and state-owned Steel Authority of India setting up large plants that will need a lot of coal, much of which will need to be imported. Some 95 per cent of metallurgical coal that India digs up contains a very high

THE GOVERNMENT AIMS TO NEARLY DOUBLE ANNUAL DOMESTIC PRODUCTION CAPACITY TO 300 MILLION TONNES BY 2030, AND JINDAL AT THE HELM OF THE COUNTRY'S LARGEST STEELMAKER BY MARKET CAPITALISATION WANTS TO GRAB A BIGGER PIECE OF THE INDUSTRY.

ash content making it less desirable and as much as 70 per cent of India's coking coal imports come from Australia, leaving the South Asian nation highly dependent on one country for a critical raw material. Acquiring coal mines is one way for steelmakers to reduce their exposure to potential supply shocks. High input costs following Russia's attack of Ukraine led to a halving of JSW's EBITDA margin in the year to the end of March 2023. Volatility is a problem because of geopolitics. The problem may persist too as countries rush to lower emissions and adopt cleaner fuels, raising the prospects of further mismatches of demand and supply. In North America, JSW already has steel

plants in Ohio and Texas, and coal mining facilities in West Virginia. Jindal could dig deep to bid outright for the Teck unit. An \$8 billion purchase entirely financed by borrowings would lower the enlarged JSW's ratio of net debt, and keep it below a stated limit of 3.75 times EBITDA. Yet, like other tycoons scarred by the country's recent bad debt crisis, he is wary of leverage. The deal would also amount to more than India has spent on outbound M&A in any year since 2018, per Dealogic. Anchoring a consortium bid makes sense but if push comes to shove, Indian tycoons can afford to be aggressive interlopers. — Reuters

A crisis of confidence is gripping China's economy

Earlier this year, David Yang was brimming with confidence about the prospects for his perfume factory in eastern China. After nearly three years of paralysing Covid lockdowns, China had lifted its restrictions in late 2022. The economy seemed destined to roar back to life. Yang and his two business partners invested more than \$60,000 in March to expand production capacity at the factory, expecting a wave of growth.



DAISUKE WAKABAYASHI

The author is Asia business correspondent for *The New York Times*, based in Seoul. He covers a wide range of subjects from the Chinese economy to corporate news across the region.

But the new business never materialised. In fact, it's worse. People are not spending, he said, and orders are one-third of what they were five years ago. "It is disheartening," Yang said. "The economy is really going downhill right now." For much of the past four decades, China's economy seemed like an unstoppable force, the engine behind the country's rise to a global superpower. But the economy is now plagued by a series of crises.



CLAIRE FU

The author covers news in mainland China for *The New York Times* in Seoul. She joined *The Times* in 2018.

A real estate crisis born from years of overbuilding and excessive borrowing is running alongside a larger debt crisis, while young people are struggling with record joblessness. And amid the drip feed of bad economic news, a new crisis is emerging: a crisis of confidence. A growing lack of faith in the future of the Chinese economy is verging on despair. Consumers are holding back on spending. Businesses are reluctant to invest and create jobs. And would-be entrepreneurs are not starting new businesses. "Low confidence is a major issue in the Chinese economy now," said Larry Hu, chief China economist for Macquarie Group, an Australian financial services firm. Hu said the erosion of confidence was fuelling a downward spiral that fed on itself. Chinese consumers aren't spending because they are worried about job prospects, while companies are cutting costs and holding back on hiring because consumers aren't spending. In the past few weeks, investors have pulled more than \$10 billion out of China's stock markets. On Thursday, China's top securities regulator summoned executives at the country's national pension funds, top banks and insurers to pressure them to invest more in Chinese stocks, according to *Caixin*, an economics magazine. Last week, stocks in Hong Kong



Discontinued construction is seen at an amusement park in Nantong, China. — The New York Times

fell into a bear market, down more than 20 per cent from their high in January. From its resilience to past challenges, China forged a deep belief in its economy and its state-controlled model. It rebounded quickly in 2009 from the global financial meltdown, and in spectacular fashion. It weathered a Trump administration trade war and proved its indispensability. When the pandemic dragged down the rest of the world, China's economy bounced back with vigour. *The Global Times*, a mouthpiece for the Chinese Communist Party, declared in 2022 that China was the "unstoppable miracle." One factor contributing to the current confidence deficit is the prospect that China's policymakers have fewer good options to fight the downturn than in the past. In 2018, with the economy in a trade war with the United States and its stock market nose-diving, Xi Jinping, China's leader, gave a rousing speech. Xi was addressing an international trade fair in Shanghai and sought to quell the uncertainty: No one should ever waver in their confidence about the Chinese economy, despite some ups and downs, he said. "The Chinese economy is not a pond, but an ocean," Xi said. "The ocean may have its calm days, but big winds and storms are only to be expected.

Without them, the ocean wouldn't be what it is. Big winds and storms may upset a pond, but never an ocean. When you talk about the future of the Chinese economy, you have every reason to be confident." But in recent months, Xi has said little about the economy. Unlike past crises that were international in nature, China is confronted by a convergence of long-simmering domestic problems — some a result of policy changes carried out by Xi's government. After the 2008 financial crisis, China unleashed a huge stimulus package to get the economy moving again. In 2015, when its real estate market was teetering, Beijing handed out cash to consumers to replace run-down shacks with new apartments as part of an urban redevelopment plan that gave rise to another building boom in smaller Chinese cities. Now policymakers are confronting a far different landscape, forcing them to rethink the usual playbook. Local governments and businesses are saddled with more debt and less leeway to borrow heavily and spend liberally. And after decades of infrastructure investments, there isn't as much need for another airport or bridge — the types of big projects that would spur the economy. China's policymakers are also handcuffed because they

introduced many of the measures that precipitated the economic problems. The 'zero Covid' lockdowns brought the economy to a standstill. The real estate market is reeling from the government's measures from three years ago to curb heavy borrowing by developers, while crackdowns on the fast-growing technology industry prompted many tech firms to scale back their ambitions and the size of their workforces. When China's top leaders gathered in July to discuss the rapidly deteriorating economy, they did not deliver a bazooka-style spending programme as some had anticipated. Coming out of the meeting, the Political Bureau of the Chinese Communist Party presented a laundry list of pronouncements — many rehashed from previous statements — without any new announcements. It focused, however, on the need to "boost confidence," without detailing the measures that showed policymakers were ready to do that. "Whether you have confidence in the Chinese economy is actually whether you have confidence in the Chinese government," said Kim Yuan, who lost his job in the home decoration industry last year. He has struggled to find another job, but he said the economy was unlikely to worsen significantly as long as the government maintained control.

Confronted with dwindling confidence, the government has fallen back on a familiar pattern and stopped announcing troubling economic data. This month, China's National Bureau of Statistics said it would stop releasing youth unemployment figures, a closely watched indicator of the country's economic troubles. After six straight months of rising joblessness among the country's 16-to-24-year-olds, the agency said the collection of those figures needed "to be further improved and optimised." The bureau this year also stopped releasing surveys of consumer confidence, among the best barometers of households' willingness to spend. Confidence rebounded modestly at the start of the year but started to plummet in the spring. The government's statistics office last announced the survey results for April, discontinuing a series it began 33 years ago. Instead of giving people less to worry about, the sudden removal of closely followed data has left some on Chinese social media wondering what they might be missing. For Laurence Pan, 27, he noticed that something was beginning to go awry in 2018 when customers at the international advertising agency in Beijing where he worked at the time started to scale back budgets. — The New York Times

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CARNIVAL TIME

A reveller takes part in the Notting Hill Carnival, in London, Britain, on Monday. — Reuters



FOOD

A boy eats a piece of watermelon during a sabre-cutting competition in the village of Novosvetlovsky, Rostov region. —AFP



FASHION

Bollywood actress Deepti Naval poses upon her arrival for the screening of their Indian drama film “Goldfish” in Mumbai. —AFP



MUSIC

Swedish singer Karin Dreijer aka “Fever Ray” performs on stage during the 20th edition of the Rock en Seine music festival in Saint-Cloud, southwestern Paris. —AFP



CULTURE

Dancers help each other put their regalia on during the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nations’ Schemitzun. —AFP

art & life

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A tale of seasonal migration

KHALID AL BALUSHI

In response to the annual climate changes in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate every May, residents like Jameel bin Saleem al Kasbi from Al Jawabi observe a transformation in the sea's behaviour. He described how the waves rise from May until the beginning of September, altering the sea's scent and colour to green, a season they call Al kharf. During this period, people avoid swimming in the sea due to the heavy humidity, despite the cool breeze, says Ahmed al Ghailani from Asilah.

This change has triggered a long-standing migration trend, with people leaving coastal areas like Al Ashkharah, Asilah, Swaih, and those living near the sea in places like Al Jawabi, Khwaimah, and Qrun. They are often referred to as "Bedouin" as they move from their villages to areas like Jaalan Bani Bu Ali and Jaalan Bani Bu Hassan in search of alternative livelihoods.

During this time, the sea-dependent residents switch to inland agricultural areas to assist farmers during what they call the "summer season." In return, they receive



financial rewards or dates, which they take back to their villages after the season ends. Some even rent palm trees from farmers and harvest them with their children, a practice known as "Al Tana."

Faced with these challenges, more coastal residents are choosing to temporarily leave their homes for the safety and economic opportunities offered by nearby cities. Al Ghailani mentioned, "Nowadays, people own homes in the cities, some still rent when they travel, and others have purchased palm trees due to improved economic conditions." Al Kasbi recalled how life used to be tougher, travelling on camels to the interior areas and returning with essential supplies to survive for four months without much food and water, a situation that continued until the 1970s. With the introduction of jeeps during Sultan Qaboos rule, transportation became more accessible and convenient, enhancing their quality of life. However, it's important to note that when these coastal residents move to the inland villages, they take all their daily necessities with them. Their limited financial means make it impossible for them to afford duplicate sets of electronic devices

and mattresses for both their coastal and inland residences. Thus, they carefully pack and transport all they need, ensuring they can maintain their daily lives in the new environment without added expenses.

They would return home in late August when their children's school year began, but "Al kharf" would still persist. September

On an economic level, both coastal and inland residents benefited from the Al Qaidh season. Farmers struggling with the heat and heavy workload found help in harvesting dates, while inland residents rented out their homes, lands, palm trees, and farms to coastal dwellers. The coastal residents also profited by selling salted fish, as



Jameel al Kasbi



Ahmed al Ghailani

marked the start of squid hunting season, prompting people to return to the coast to collect their livelihood, a tradition they were accustomed to.

refrigeration wasn't available, preserving their catch with salt to sell in agricultural villages upon their return, thus boosting the local economy.



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INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Why are people still pressing flowers? It's a form of storytelling

MY COMPULSION TO GARDEN vividly and expressively comes from Grandma Marion, who always made room for masses of marigolds and zinnias that echoed the colours of the Fiesta ware on her pantry shelves. But she also handed down an appreciation for dried, pressed plants, which have a special kind of enduring beauty, faded though they may be.

Two of what she called her "pressed-flower pictures" — pieces of her beloved garden arranged artfully on fabric under glass — hang in my upstairs hall. Lately, I've begun to feel that these mementos of a long-ago spring are trying to tell me something. Setting an example for aging gracefully, perhaps, although I doubt that was Grandma's intention.

She wanted to pass along the spirit of the garden, to honour its importance in her life by making some of her little ephemeral darlings permanent, an enduring message of connection. It stuck.

So it's no surprise that I feel a kinship with modern-day plant pressers such as Linda P. J. Lipsen, the author of a new how-to guide, "Pressed Plants: Making a Herbarium."

Lipsen, a botanist, got her start volunteering some 30 years ago at a community college in Oregon, helping to mount pressed specimens for the herbarium. Today, she is a curator at the University of British Columbia Herbarium in Vancouver, founded in 1912.

She and such institutions are part of a 500-year-old tradition of documenting the natural world by using pressed plants as a tool for understanding. Comparing modern-day specimens to historical ones can reveal much about plants' shifting geographic ranges in a changing climate, for instance, or document the arrival of an invasive species.

For Lacie RZ Porta, another enthusiast, the catalyst to press plants was the urge to preserve her own wedding flowers. At the end of the celebratory weekend, she got panicky.

"I can't throw them out," she recalled thinking. "I need them." So she scrambled to find a way to preserve the rite of passage they embodied.

Before long, she was taking a yearlong

sabbatical from teaching preschool and renting a studio. In 2017, she founded Framed Florals in Greenpoint, in the Brooklyn borough of New York City, specialising in artfully preserving brides' bouquets between double panes of glass and selling a range of dried floral creations.

There is no hard line between art and science for either of them. "Specimens that don't work out become cards," Lipsen said with a laugh.

Some of Porta's pieces include a formal nod to scientific techniques, although customers may not get the reference. One asked why a bit of narrow tape was added across the pressed plant's stem on a place card, although the stem was already glued down.

That's how herbarium specimens, particularly those with bulky or woody stems, have historically been finished to make them more secure.

"If you don't have the back story, and an appreciation for the tradition of pressing, you might ask that," Porta said.

No matter the end goal, the maker behind any finished pressing assumes the role of storyteller. Are you ready to join the ranks of these storytellers and answer the call to exorcise (the insider's word for drying)?

CREATIVE LIBERTIES VS. SCIENTIFIC PROTOCOL

As similar as the two women's processes are, there are differences — the main one being artistic license versus scientific protocol.

In a herbarium, a mounted specimen must bear the plant's Latin name and the name of its collector, the collection date and details of where it was found. It also needs to include all of the plant's parts, arranged so

we can count its reproductive portions (the pistils and stamens inside a flower, for instance) or see other distinguishing elements, such as its root system.

Pretty isn't the primary goal; accurate reference is. Although, as Lipsen pointed out, herbarium masters manage to incorporate both science and art in their mounted pressings.

There are no plant names on Grandma's pictures, but I recognise lily of the valley, pansies and roses (thorns and all) among them. Twenty years ago, I added 14 vintage pressings of seaweed — or, botanically speaking, macroalgae, one of Lipsen's specialties — to my walls. Each was labeled with a Latin name and carefully numbered, as if it was part of a series, but the collector's name and location remain mysteries.

Crafters including Porta enjoy taking creative liberties — removing the extra-thick centre of a rose or coneflower that holds moisture and won't flatten easily, for example, and instead drying just the petals and arranging them in a design.

"For their craft, they often need to take everything apart and almost put it back together like a puzzle, where we really need to try to keep everything," Lipsen said. "That's why ours are not always as pretty."

Another important difference: The ethics involved in collecting samples in the field don't come into play when the plants are from a flower farm or your own garden. These include the matter of gaining permissions and considerations of minimising the effect of gathering on a particular plant population.

When Lipsen is out collecting, she brings along sealable plastic bags (one per specimen, so plant parts don't get mixed up). Porta's on-the-go tool of choice: a small notebook held closed with rubber bands, like a miniature press, which she will weigh down under something heavy once she gets home.

INTO THE PRESS IT ALL GOES

At Grandma's, an old wooden contraption held her gatherings between layers of cardboard and paper, clamped down tight with dowels and rope. Other plants began their transition to the afterlife in a hefty, old-fashioned phone book, an absorbent mass of paper that any modern plant preserver would envy.

Porta and Lipsen do their drying inside simple presses, too, layered with corrugated cardboard for ventilation and newspaper for absorption. Porta's is homemade from two pieces of plywood, with long bolts and wing nuts to secure what goes inside. Lipsen's is from a herbarium supply store, with lattice backings on top and bottom, and straps that have locking closures.

One point of agreement: Skip the glossy paper, which is less absorbent, and anything with coloured ink, which could discolor a pressing.

Porta doesn't use newsprint in the layer closest to her plants; she prefers unbleached craft paper or another plain paper. Lipsen's ideal for the layer that rests against the specimens is blotter paper, which is reusable.

But there's a reality acknowledged by field botanists who collect thousands of specimens and need enough paper to fill many presses: Newspaper is almost universally available, and it's usually free.

So Lipsen uses it, but with a caveat: When you're working with extra-sticky plants, it can backfire. In those cases, she surrounds the plants with wax paper or parchment paper.

"We have bulbs and algae on which you can actually read the newspaper it came from," she said. "It's pretty funny when you see it."

As Porta put plants in the press, she gently manipulates them so that they're "more gestural, to remind you of nature," she said. That could mean putting a curve in certain stems, "to add organic movement." But once they are dried, she said, you cannot manipulate them at all.

Lipsen, who needs to preserve every part of the plant, gets a little rougher.

Plants, which are filled with water, have turgor pressure that makes them stiff. So "when I put them in the press, I'll literally lean on it, and I'll hear this crushing sound," she said. "And then I open it up just to see if there's anything I want to rearrange. Then I

close it back up and let it relax, and go through some cell death."

After a day or two, when the plants are more malleable, she opens the press for a final adjustment, to make sure each key part is clearly displayed.

THEN THE DRYING BEGINS.

This is best accomplished in a warm, well-ventilated space. Both presses periodically replace any papers that feel moist during the process, which Porta tells brides will take at least a month. Lipsen, who dries each specimen on a separate sheet in a room at 75 to 80 degrees, with a fan running, expects most to dry within a week.

When it comes time for mounting, skip the Krazy Glue and the glue gun, Porta said: Use "just the teeniest amount of any basic, non-toxic glue."

Lipsen uses an archival PVC glue from Herbarium Supply Co. that dries clear.

Whatever you use, be warned: The wrong



glue can backfire — especially with large leaves.

A plant's cells, and even the paper it's glued to, will continue reacting to humidity changes over time. "And if the glue doesn't stretch, it will stretch that specimen to the point where it breaks," Lipsen said, something that can be seen in very old mounted pressings.

Someone who loved Grandma Marion before I did apparently knew her weakness for pressed flowers. One of more than 130 letters from her fiancé, Harold Kinney, who was stationed in France during World War I, contained a pressing.

"I'm sending you a flower I picked in a churchyard a few days ago," he wrote in his formal cursive to the woman he called Snooks, on Feb. 17, 1918. "The church and the graves were all torn to pieces by shellfire. This flower was growing from the moss on the debris, in February."

He was killed that year, just before the end of the war, but his letters — and that flower, pressed within its pages — have endured, handed down to keep a moment alive.—**NYT**

TECHNOLOGY

Five things to know about British chip champion Arm

HERE ARE FIVE things to know about British chip designing giant Arm, which has launched what could be the biggest US share offering in years.

The company, which plans to list on the New York stock exchange, says in its prospectus it is valued by Japanese parent SoftBank at \$64 billion.

NEARLY ALL SMARTPHONES

Rather than making chips itself, Arm licenses designs for the essential component that enables devices to function.

Founded in 1990, it dominates the global market for chips for smartphones. Its processors were found in more than 99 per cent of all the world's smartphones in 2022.

Arm technology is also found in the majority of tablets and digital TV screens, as well as sensors, cloud

services and chips with integrated processors.

About 70 per cent of the global population uses products based on Arm technology, according to the company's own estimates.

More than 30 billion chips with Arm design were shipped in the financial year to March 31, an increase of around 70 per cent since 2016.

Arm earns royalties for nearly all the chips designed and produced using its technology.

FAILED MEGA TAKEOVER

In February, US chip giant Nvidia scrapped a blockbuster \$40-billion takeover of Arm, following regulatory objections.

The planned takeover by Nvidia collapsed in the face of competition investigations by watchdogs in Britain, the European Union and the United States.

They had voiced concerns about the key position the acquisition would have given Nvidia in the strategic chip sector. The US firm is known for graphics cards favoured in the video game industry and the leader in processors used for developing artificial intelligence applications.

The UK government was particularly alarmed by the takeover bid, given what it said was Arm's vital role in Britain's technology sector and its overall economy.

The failure of the bid was a financial blow for SoftBank, which had purchased Arm in 2016 for \$32 billion.

Its starting price for Arm was \$40 billion. The value of the acquisition then shot up because part of that price was to be paid in Nvidia shares, which had soared on the stock market.

DEPENDENCE ON CHINA

Nearly 25 per cent of Arm's turnover is generated by a single client — Arm China.

Despite its name, the latter is neither controlled by Arm nor by SoftBank, which indirectly owns a minority share.

"We depend on our commercial relationship with Arm China to access the (Chinese) market," said Arm in its prep-IPO documents.

"If that commercial relationship no longer existed or deteriorates, our ability to compete in the (Chinese) market could be materially and adversely affected," it warned.

The company is particularly susceptible to the rising international tensions around the strategic chip sector, particularly between the United States and China.

Artificial intelligence

Arm hopes to play a strategic role in generative artificial intelligence (AI),



which is capable of learning from data to create new content such as text, music, speech, video and code.

The company says its microprocessors already make modern smartphones compatible with AI and machine learning.

In the future, new generations of Arm chips will need to contribute to the emergence of algorithms for use in new applications, particularly in AI.

Otherwise, they will be overtaken by events, according to Arm, which says it is working on the issue with Google parent company Alphabet, General Motors' self-driving car subsidiary Cruise, Mercedes-Benz, Facebook parent Meta and Nvidia.

—AFP

FILM

Prominent Iran film-maker Ebrahim Golestan dies at 100

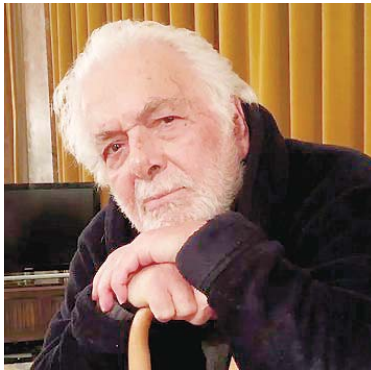
PROMINENT IRANIAN FILM-MAKER and writer Ebrahim Golestan has died in Britain, his family said. He was 100.

Golestan was an influential figure in Iran during the 20th century who was widely celebrated as a pioneer of modern Iranian cinema.

"Father, you're gone. Goodbye!" his daughter Lily said in an Instagram post late on Wednesday.

Golestan was born in October 1922 in the southern city of Shiraz. He set up Iran's first film studio in 1957 where he shot his first feature film "Brick and Mirror", an epic indictment of Iranian society.

In 1974, he presented his movie "The Ghost Valley's Treasure Mysteries" based on a novel he wrote criticising rapid modernisation under the shah's rule.



Throughout his career, he published several novels and short stories which were often influenced by the works of US writers including Ernest Hemingway and William Faulkner.

Golestan moved to England shortly after the 1979 Islamic Revolution in which Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi was overthrown.

He appeared in a 2022 documentary "See you Friday, Robinson" with French movie director Jean-Luc Godard discussing their views on the film-making industry.

His son Kaveh was a prominent photojournalist who was killed in a landmine explosion in northern Iraq in 2003.—**AFP**



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TRAVEL

Travel Photography: How to Make the Most of Your Cellphone Camera



CELLPHONE ALLOWS TRAVELERS to have a camera always at the ready. The latest phones offer multiple lenses with better resolution and enhanced macro and telephoto capabilities, enabling virtually every moment to be captured for posterity. This can be both a blessing and a curse. When should we be taking a photograph and when should we simply be taking the time to look and wonder at the world around us? Here are a few tips on when and what to shoot, and how to better frame what we see when we travel.

IMAGINE YOUR PHOTOS AS AN ALBUM

Try to capture a wide variety of images. While it is important to concentrate on classic landscape shots and portraits, also search for photographs with arresting colours and shapes, as well as the details of objects, works of art and food — the things that flavour a place and weave its visual tapestry. Imagine each picture as a jigsaw piece needed to complete an

album's puzzle. It's useful to arrange these images in a separate folder on your phone, making one album for your favourites and another for the rest. That way you'll be in better shape when it comes to the important task of editing.

FIND YOUR HORIZON

Steven Spielberg ends his autobiographical film, "The Fabelmans," with a meeting with the legendary director John Ford. Ford's main piece of advice? Place the horizon toward the top or bottom of the picture because the middle is "boring." This idea — also known as the rule of thirds — divides the frame into thirds, horizontally and vertically. The concept is to find a more dynamic angle by visualising the scene or subject not centred, but rather a third of the way up or down (or across) the frame. On most cellphones, you can set up a three-by-three grid for the screen in the camera settings.

LAYER YOUR PICTURE WITH DETAILS

Successful landscape shots



draw the eye across the whole frame, and for that you need to search for points of interest in the foreground, middle ground and

distance. Find a vantage point that lets you see the different layers of a scene. Test different compositions by turning your cellphone both vertically and horizontally, and, if you have a choice of lenses, decide if the scene is best framed tightly or wide. Another way to enrich the landscape is to spot a person or an object and place them carefully in the frame as a focal point. It could be someone walking alone along a beach, or a tree on a hillside, or a horse in a field or a bicycle leaning against a wall. But look for something that catches the eye, giving scale and contrast to the scene.



FOR PORTRAITS, FIND THE RIGHT BACKDROP

Look for a clean background — a natural canvas with relatively solid colouring or shape, like a wall, open sky or foliage. If that's not possible, move around the subject to find a backdrop that is less cluttered. Also, check that there are no upright objects, such as street lamps or thin trees

directly behind people's heads, or other unwanted items in the background that will distract from the subject.

WORK THE FRAME

It's often helpful to have a portrait shopping list: headshot, half-body and full body frames (make sure not to cut off people's feet), as well as horizontal and vertical ones. Having these frames in mind will help you choose the best shot. Many of the latest Apple and Android phones offer a choice of inbuilt lenses with different focal lengths, which help you do this quickly. You can also use the portrait mode on your cellphone's camera, which shortens the depth of field, blurring the background and giving a portrait style that is similar to what you would get when using wide-open apertures on longer camera lenses.

EDIT YOUR PHOTOGRAPHS MORE THAN ONCE

Choosing the best pictures is just as important as taking them. If you have been making a separate album of your favourites, you already have a base from which to start. Nonetheless, take your time and go through all the photographs you have taken, scrolling through the images at least twice. If possible, leave a day between doing so. The eye can get overwhelmed when looking at a large number of images, and it's easy to overlook a good picture.

GO EASY ON POSTPRODUCTION

Phone cameras, just like regular cameras, are not always able to read the light correctly. Often one needs to adjust a photograph's exposure, shadows or colour temperature. A lot of this can be easily done with a phone's inbuilt software — though there are also plenty of specialist applications like Snapseed or Adobe Photoshop Express. What you can or should do is a personal decision. But, in general, spend as little time as possible working on a picture, and concentrate on balancing tone and lighting across your selection of images so they feel cohesive in style.

HAVE A HUNGRY EYE

Eve Arnold, the wonderful Magnum photographer, used to recount a story about walking with Henri Cartier-Bresson from the Magnum office in Paris to have lunch at his apartment on the Rue de Rivoli. During the 15-minute stroll home, as he kept telling her that he was no longer interested in photography, only drawing, he took three rolls of film on his Leica. The great photographers have an insatiable eye for images, and a cellphone allows one to be ready for everything. But it's also necessary to understand the moment clearly. Everyone wants their memories of a journey to be captured so they can reminisce later. But it's also important to see the world without feeling the obligation to take a photograph. Sometimes the eye just needs the pleasure of looking.—NYT