

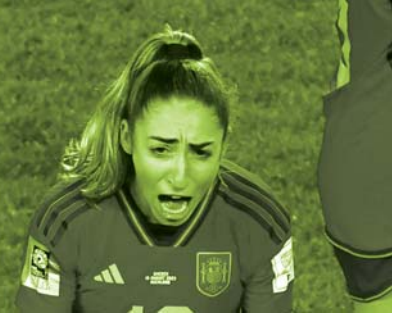
SUDAN ‘SPIRALLING OUT OF CONTROL’

More than one million people have fled Sudan to neighbouring states and people inside the country are running out of food and dying due to lack of healthcare after four months of war, the United Nations warned on Tuesday. Fighting between the Sudanese army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF) has devastated the capital Khartoum and sparked ethnically-driven attacks in Darfur, threatening to plunge Sudan into a protracted civil war and destabilise the region. – AFP



P9

CARMONA'S LATE STUNNER TAKES SPAIN INTO MAIDEN FINAL



P11

DISCOVERING THE ENCHANTING WONDERS OF WADI DAYQAH IN DIMA W'ATTAYEEN



P13

WORLD'S FIRST LIQUID HYDROGEN SHIP ARRIVES IN OMAN



MUSCAT

CRUDE PRICE AT \$87.19 A BARREL

Oman oil price for October delivery on Tuesday reached \$87.19, comprising a drop by 50 cents from the price of Monday which stood at \$87.69. 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. Brent crude futures were 40 cents weaker at \$85.81 per barrel. Gains for the dollar and US Treasuries weighed on gold prices, which dipped to a more than one-month low on Monday. Spot gold prices were last down 0.36 per cent at \$1,906.20 an ounce.

WASHINGTON

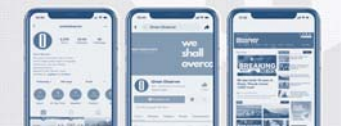
GEORGIA CHARGES TRUMP IN A CASE



Donald Trump faced a new raft of felony charges on Tuesday after a Georgia grand jury used a law developed to take down organised crime gangs to charge the former US president with trying to overturn his 2020 election defeat. The charges, brought late on Monday by Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis, charge Trump, the front-runner in the race for the 2024 Republican nomination and 18 associates for a scheme intended to reverse his loss to Democrat Joe Biden. The sprawling 98-page indictment listed 19 defendants and 41 criminal counts in all. All the defendants were charged with racketeering, which is used to target members of organised crime groups and carries a minimum penalty of 5 years in jail. **DETAILS ON P6**

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CONSERVING THE ECOSYSTEM

The Environment Authority, represented by the Directorate-General of Nature Conservation, is carrying out a new campaign aimed at sowing two million seeds of mangrove trees in the governorates of Al Batinah North, Al Sharqiyah South and Al Wusta. The campaign aims to conserve ecosystem in the coastal wetlands of the Sultanate of Oman and boost their efficiency by implementing several projects for achieving the operational objectives approved by the Environment Authority's plan related to the plantation of one million trees. **DETAILS ON P5**



53 per cent of employment, replacement plan realised

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour on Tuesday announced the realisation of 53 per cent of the Employment and Replacement Plan set for the second quarter of 2023.

By the end of June 2023, the total number of jobs in government and private sector establishments stood at 18,716. Of those, a total of 9,169 jobs were made available in the government sector, against 7,399 jobs in the private sector.

The ministry said that job rotation (those who previously worked for the private sector) stood at 16,486. The ministry said that the volume of first-time employees and those who occupied jobs before stood at 35,202. The number of on-the-job training opportunities associated with the replacement of outgoing employees and employment of fresh employees stood at 611 in the government sector, while the corresponding number of opportunities in the private sector stood at 1,537.

As many as 941 enrolled in the ministry's Self-Employment Initiative, which is a training track that connects job-seekers with a number of training programmes to qualify them to take up opportunities related to self-employment in the local and global market.

— ONA

8% RISE IN DIVORCE CASES

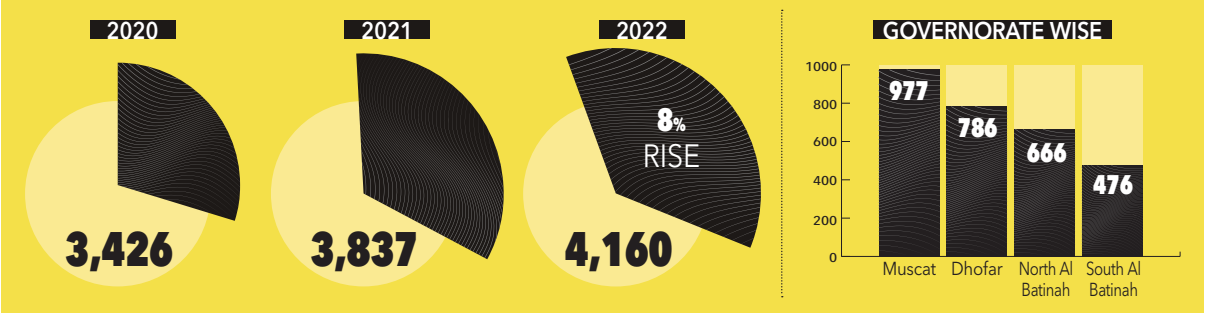
4,160 COUPLES OPTED FOR SEPARATION IN 2022

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, AUG 15

The Sultanate of Oman witnessed a notable 8 per cent rise in divorce cases during 2022, with the total count reaching 4,160. This marks an increase from 3,837 cases reported in 2021 and 3,426 cases in 2020, according to findings from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). This data highlights an ongoing trend of marital dissolution in the country.

An in-depth examination of the distribution across different governorates of Oman reveals that Muscat Governorate recorded the highest number of divorce cases, totalling 977. Following closely were Dhofar with 786 cases, North Al Batinah 666 and South Al Batinah 476 cases. This regional analysis provides valuable insights into the varying divorce rates across different areas within

SURGE IN DIVORCE CASES IN OMAN



the country. In terms of the breakdown by nationality, the data indicates that most of the divorce cases (3,682) were between Omani men and Omani women. In contrast, the least frequent instances of divorce (182) were observed among expatriate couples. Additionally, there were 208 divorce cases involving Omani men and expatriate women. This classification by nationality offers a comprehensive view of divorce trends based on the cultural, legal and social dynamics that

shape different segments of the population.

The surge in divorce cases over the evaluated years can be attributed to many factors, including evolving societal norms, economic stressors, shifting perspectives on marriage and family, and individual motivations for seeking a divorce. It is important to recognise that these statistics serve as a reflection of broader changes within Oman's society, shedding light on transformations in cultural norms, economic

pressures and personal choices.

Analysing these numbers further can facilitate a deeper understanding of the underlying drivers behind divorce rates and potentially guide efforts to address the underlying challenges faced by couples in Oman.

It is worth noting that the previous data on marriage in 2022 reveals the total number of registered marriages in 2021 stood at 19,294, while in 2022, there were 15,400 marriages, thus a decrease of 20 per cent in marriages in 2022 over 2021.

July 2023 is the hottest month on record since 1880

WASHINGTON: July was hotter than any other month in the global temperature record, which dates back to 1880, Nasa said on Tuesday.

Overall, July was 0.24 degrees Celsius warmer than any other July in Nasa's records, according to scientists at Nasa's Goddard Institute for Space Studies (GISS).

July 2023 was 1.18 degrees Celsius warmer than the average July between 1951 and 1980, Nasa said.

"Nasa data confirms what

billions around the world literally felt: temperatures in July 2023 made it the hottest month on record," Nasa Administrator Bill Nelson said. "The science is clear. We must act now to protect our communities and planet; it's the only one we have."

Parts of South America, North Africa, North America, and the Antarctic Peninsula were especially hot, experiencing temperatures increases around 4 degrees Celsius above average, Nasa said.



Children cool themselves with water spray frames set along the central street of the Ukrainian capital of Kyiv during a heatwave on Tuesday. – AFP

According to Nasa data, the five hottest July since 1880 have all happened in the past five years.

GISS director Gavin Schmidt said warming around earth was primarily driven by human-caused greenhouse gas emissions. "And that rise in average temperatures is fuelling dangerous extreme heat that people are experiencing here at home and worldwide."

High sea surface temperatures contributed to July's record warmth with Nasa's analysis

showing especially warm ocean temperatures in the eastern tropical Pacific, evidence of the weather phenomenon known as El Niño that began developing in May.

Phenomena such as El Niño or La Niña, which warm or cool the tropical Pacific Ocean, can contribute a small amount of year-to-year variability in global temperatures. Nasa expects to see the biggest impacts of El Niño in February, March and April 2024. — dpa





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Strict penalties for unauthorised soil and sand transportation in Oman

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, AUG 15

Transporting soil and sand from watercourses, wadis, and beaches without obtaining the required permit from the Environment Authority constitutes a significant breach of environmental regulations, particularly as outlined in Article 21 of the Environmental Protection and Pollution Control Law.

This regulation underscores the crucial importance of preserving natural habitats, preventing ecological degradation, and maintaining the delicate balance of these ecosystems.

The inclusion of such a provision in the law reflects the government's commitment to sustainable environmental practices and the recognition of the potential harm that unrestricted soil and sand removal can cause.

Watercourses, wadis, and beaches serve as essential components of the environment, contributing to the overall health of ecosystems, biodiversity, and natural processes. Indiscriminate



extraction of soil and sand from these areas can lead to severe consequences such as erosion, habitat loss, disruption of aquatic life, and alteration of coastal dynamics.

The penalties associated with violating Article 21 are intentionally designed to be substantial and proportional to the offence. The potential consequences of unauthorised soil and sand transportation are far-reaching, affecting not only the immediate environment but also the long-term stability of these

ecosystems.

By imposing a minimum imprisonment of 10 days and a maximum of three months, the law emphasises the gravity of the offence and aims to deter individuals and entities from engaging in such activities.

Furthermore, the financial penalties outlined in the regulation play a dual role. They act as a punitive measure while also serving as a deterrent against non-compliance. The specified fine range, starting at a minimum of 500 Omani Rials and not

exceeding 5,000 Omani Rials, acknowledges the varying degrees of violation and allows for the imposition of fines commensurate with the severity of the offence.

Majid al Jabri, an individual passionate about environmental matters, expressed, "There is a need for supervisors to oversee these infringements, ongoing patrols to monitor them, and the regulatory body has the added responsibility of educating the community to foster a culture of reporting any environmental violations. Collective cooperation is essential across all fronts."

The situation is such that we frequently witness individuals moving soil during regular hours and in broad daylight. However, the question remains: Are we truly capable of reporting such instances?

It's a common assumption that these individuals possess the necessary permits, but in reality, many of them do not. To address this, it would be beneficial if the relevant authorities established a dedicated hotline specifically for reporting these occurrences.

Oman participates in military technical forum in Russia

MOSCOW: The Sultanate of Oman participated in the official opening of the International Military Technical Forum (Armia 2023), being held in the Russian Federation until August 20.

Oman's delegation was headed by Maj Gen Matar bin

Salim al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman.

The Omani delegation toured the branches of the forum and listened to briefings about defence and strategic industries, artificial intelligence technologies and a broad range of military equipment on show. — ONA



CPA launches programme to offer quality service to consumers

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@Afrahalbalushia

In a bid to make a paradigm shift in the quality of services offered to consumers within the commercial, industrial, and economic goods and services sectors, the Consumer Protection Authority has pioneered the 'Consumer-Friendly Establishments' initiative. The initiative aims to transcend conventional standards and elevate the overall experience for consumers while fostering a spirit of healthy competition among commercial, industrial, and service-oriented enterprises.

Driven by a multifaceted approach, the initiative's primary objectives encompass the elevation of consumer satisfaction, the minimisation of complaints registered with the CPA, and the empowerment of consumers through enhanced awareness of



their rights and the responsibilities of providers. A cornerstone of this effort is to cultivate sustainable strategies that accurately address consumer needs and evolve alongside them.

Issa bin Muslim bin Juma al Nabhani, Director of the Department of Studies and Market Research, revealed that this initiative is commencing with a focus on commercial establishments, eventually extending its reach to industrial and service-oriented entities that aspire to deliver exceptional services to Omani consumers and residents within the Sultanate of



Oman. The standards established are rooted in three essential pillars: A steadfast commitment to customer-centric practices, robust mechanisms to gauge customer satisfaction and address their needs, and an unyielding dedication to innovation and service enhancement. These criteria undergo meticulous assessment through phases of registration, evaluation, and in-depth analysis, culminating in the

presentation of comprehensive results.

Forecasts indicate that this initiative will play a pivotal role in nurturing consumer trust and loyalty, propelling businesses towards heightened sustainability, and forging stronger market competitiveness. The ripple effects are poised to cultivate a wholesome and congenial environment for consumers, fostering a culture of mutual respect and reliability.

Furthermore, the initiative is anticipated to stimulate investments by virtue of the reputable certificates awarded and detailed reports provided. These documents encapsulate insights into the market landscape, sector specifics, and institution evaluation. Such accolades and information pave the way for enterprises to thrive on a foundation of best practices, earning the distinction of being responsible and consumer-oriented entities.

A domino effect is expected in the form of amplified consumer loyalty, translating into enhanced revenues. The initiative's arsenal includes a trove of case studies, innovative analytical reports, and market regulations geared towards combatting unfavourable practices. This collective knowledge pool is envisioned to elevate the overall business

environment, especially within Oman's retail and services sector, solidifying the embodiment of social responsibility within enterprises.

Embedded within the Consumer Protection Authority's broader strategic agenda, this initiative echoes the vision articulated in Oman Vision 2040. It embodies a tapestry of efforts aimed at enhancing service efficiency across retail, commercial, industrial, and economic service sectors, aligning seamlessly with existing legislative frameworks and regulatory provisions within the Sultanate of Oman. This endeavour remains steadfast in its commitment to continuous growth, with meticulous evaluations spotlighting both affirmative and rectifiable aspects, thus charting a course towards improved service quality.

Two sentenced, deported for sale of unauthorised commodities

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 15

The Court of First Instance in Duqm issued a ruling against two violators of Consumer Protection Law No. 66/2014 for trading in unauthorised commodities such as non-smoked chewed tobacco. The court convicted the two accused and sentenced them to imprisonment and deportation from the country.

The Consumer Protection



Department in Haima received information about expatriate workers manufacturing and distributing non-smoked chewed tobacco in the Wilayat of Al Duqm.

The department has taken the legal procedures to ensure the validity of the information and coordinated with the Public Prosecution to obtain permissions.

After coordination with the Royal Oman Police, a large amount of non-smoked chewing tobacco that was being prepared was seized. The law enforcement officers also spotted other quantities ready for marketing and sale.

NCSI workshop elaborates on national data strategy

MUSCAT: The National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) on Tuesday organised a workshop on the National Data Strategy (NDS), its objectives and its significance to units of the state's administrative apparatus.

Held at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC), the workshop saw the participation of various government departments concerned. The workshop focused on the objectives of the NDS aimed at developing an integrated regulatory framework to empower data exchange and to develop an appropriate mechanism to raise the productivity of units of the state's administrative apparatus and other legal public entities and government companies.



The workshop introduced the NDS strategy and its importance in maximising the use of data in various sectors and augmenting the level of its reliability, quality and comprehensiveness, thus expanding scopes for appropriate decision-making.

The workshop featured several

presentations, including one by the NCSI that dealt with the definition of the NDS and its role in improving performance, streamlining procedures, cutting costs, minimising the rate of errors and deficiencies and supporting smart city trends, among other goals. — ONA



What does Labour Law say about termination of contracts?

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

Labour law 53/2023, issued in July, has set conditions for the termination of an employee (including without notice) in the wake of poor performance, long absence from work, and misconduct, among others.

In Chapter 3, Article (40) states that the employer may dismiss the worker without prior notification and without an end-of-service gratuity if he impersonates an incorrect person, resorts to forgery to obtain a job, commits a mistake that results in a huge material loss for the employer, provided that the latter informs the competent authority of the incident within 30 working days from the date of his knowledge of its occurrence, If he does not observe the written instructions that must be followed for the safety of the workers and the workplace, despite being warned in writing, and violating them would cause serious damage to the workplace or the workers.

ABSENCE WITHOUT VALID REASONS

An employee can also be terminated if he is absent without an acceptable excuse or reason from his work for more than seven consecutive days or ten separate days for one year, provided that the dismissal is preceded by a written warning from the employer to the worker after his absence five days in the second case.

MISCONDUCT

An employee can also be terminated if he discloses the secrets of the establishment in which he works in a manner other than what is authorised by law, if he has been finally convicted of a felony or crime involving



breach of honour or trust, or a misdemeanour committed in the workplace or during work, if he is found drunk during working hours, under the influence of a narcotic or psychotropic substance, or if he commits an act against public morals.

Also, If, during or because of work, he assaults the employer or his representative, or if he assaults one of his superiors, or if he assaults one of the workers at the work site, which results in illness and unemployment.

The worker can also face termination if he seriously breaches his obligation to perform the work agreed upon in the work contract.

WORKERS CAN LEAVE WITHOUT SERVING A NOTICE PERIOD

Article (41) states that the worker may leave the work without adhering to the notice

period stipulated in Article (38) of this law, or before the end of the contract period if it is for a limited period while retaining all his rights, including the end-of-service gratuity, and without prejudice to his right to compensation, after notifying the employer of that.

The worker can leave the job without service a notice period only if the employer or his representative commits fraud during the contract with the worker. If the employer does not grant the worker his wages for more than two consecutive months or does not fulfil his essential obligations in accordance with the provisions of this law and the work contract, If the employer or his representative commits an act against public morals towards the worker If during or as a result of work, the employer assaults the worker, his representative, or his boss If

there is a danger that threatens the safety or health of the worker, provided that the employer is aware of the existence of this danger and fails to implement the prescribed measures in this regard.

Article (42) states that the contract ends in any of the following cases - expiration of its term or completion of the work agreed upon, termination of the contract by the worker or the employer in accordance with the provisions of this law, the worker's inability to perform his work or his death, the worker fell ill with a disease that necessitated his absence from work for a continuous or separate period of not less than three months within one year, provided that the period of sick leave stipulated in Article (82) of this law and his balance of regular leave has been exhausted.

OLD AGE AND OMANISATION

Article (43) states that the employer may terminate the contract on his part after notifying the worker in the following cases, the worker reaches the old age that necessitates entitlement to a retirement pension under the Social Protection Law unless otherwise agreed, the ending the service of the non-Omani worker in the implementation of the Omanisation plan in the event that he appointed an Omani worker to replace him in the same profession he was occupying, the worker's failure to reach the required level of competence after notifying him of the aspects of incompetence and giving him an appropriate period of no less than six months to reach it. If the worker fails, the employer may terminate the employment contract.

Over 1.6m vehicles registered in Oman by June 2023

MUSCAT: The total number of vehicles registered in the Sultanate of Oman reached 1,625,541 by the end of June 2023, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Vehicles with private registration constituted 79.6 per cent of the total vehicles registered in Oman, to stand at 1,294,252, while the number of vehicles with commercial registration reached 237,621.

Meanwhile, taxi vehicles reached 27,983. The number of rental vehicles reached 30,856. The number of government vehicles stood at 11,832 and motorbikes stood at 6,758.

The number of driving instruction vehicles stood at 5,564 and the number of vehicles with temporary registration (temporary inspection, export and import) stood at 8,556. Moreover, the number of tractors stood at 1,275 and vehicles with diplomatic entity registrations stood at 844.

As for vehicles registered per weight, the number of vehicles weighing less than 3 tons stood at 1,467,675, over 10 tons stood at 71,931, between 3-7 tons stood at 47,865 and between 7-10 tons stood at 38,070. — ONA



Mobile laboratory to ensure food safety during Khareef Dhofar

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@Afrahalbalushia

In a pioneering move, the Dhofar Municipality has unveiled a mobile food laboratory to oversee and regulate food vendors participating in events and activities during the Khareef Dhofar season of 2023. This innovative endeavour aims to ensure the utmost safety of food offerings and their adherence to established specifications and standards, while expediting the process of food and beverage analysis for swift actions.

The mobile food laboratory is a groundbreaking initiative that stands as the first of its kind, reflecting the Dhofar Municipality's commitment to safeguarding public health during the highly anticipated Khareef Dhofar festival. This laboratory will play a pivotal role in swiftly generating examination results, which will empower health inspectors to promptly take the necessary measures in accordance with the prevailing laws and regulations enforced by the



Dhofar Municipality.

Salah bin Salem al Ajili, the Director of the Food and Laboratories Department in Dhofar Municipality, shared insights into this pioneering effort. "This laboratory marks an unprecedented milestone in the Sultanate of Oman, offering a distinctive approach that bolsters the existing municipal laboratory. It equips state inspectors with the ability to take immediate actions without protracted delays in awaiting test results, a critical capability considering the multitude of mobile food vendors operating across the Dhofar Governorate during the 2023 Khareef season," he said.

Al-Ajili further emphasised

the mobile food laboratory's significance in comprehensively assessing various food-related activities, extracting samples for meticulous examination and laboratory analysis. In addition to regulatory oversight, the initiative extends to raising awareness and providing education on the facets of food preservation and safety. To effectively communicate its services, the mobile laboratory will deploy specialised experts who will be in sync with the laboratory's operations throughout its deployment.

The mobile laboratory is an integral facet of the Dhofar Municipality's unwavering commitment to the wellbeing and safety of all festival-goers during the Khareef Dhofar season. The initiative underscores the municipality's determination to proactively address challenges by delivering rapid solutions that cater to the needs of food vendors, ultimately ensuring the health and safety of all visitors through the provision of secure and hygienic culinary offerings.

45 meritorious students feted



KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

Forty five students from different schools who secured 99 per cent in the basic subjects of the General Education Diploma were honoured by Mohammed bin Suleiman al Kindi, Governor of Al Batinah North at a ceremony attended by a number of Walis from the governorate.

In his felicitation speech, Al Kindi emphasised that the ceremony was a manifestation of the governorate's gratitude to the students to keep up their brilliant efforts and consistency in acquiring knowledge and

to become better citizens of tomorrow.

He added that the honour was motivation to the students to grow and take part in the nation-building process and acknowledgement of the efforts and consistency shown by each hard-working future citizen of this country.

These students have already begun their life towards the next level of their journey by acquiring specialised knowledge and wished they should keep up their hard work and persistence to achieve more excellence and distinction in different fields and to be on various national and international

stages of honours.

"My thanks also goes to the Ministry of Education which provides the required care and ingredients of a perfect educational environment for students to take education quality to the next level," he said.

The ceremony showcased a visual presentation on the career guidance for students after their GEd and the best specialised jobs available in the governorate which goes in line with the governorate's needs in various sectors, especially the logistic and industrial sectors that keep up with the future projects of the Sultanate of Oman and Oman Vision 2040.



MIND YOUR VITALS

BEFORE, DURING AND AFTER WORKOUT

KABEER YOUSUF

@kabeeryousef

In the pursuit of a healthy lifestyle, engaging in rigorous exercise has proven benefits, but it also carries potential hazards if precautions are neglected. As fitness enthusiasts strive to enhance their well-being, understanding the crucial steps to safeguard their health during workouts becomes paramount. There are essentials of maintaining vital signs optimising exercise routines.

“From wearing an appropriate pair of clothes to watching out for any pains in the muscles, one needs to be alert during the three stages of the hard work,” says Jason P Mathai (Thomas), a certified fitness trainer from Perfect Fitness who visits gyms in other countries to train the trainers.

“One can have a light meal half an hour before a workout, which may include carbohydrates. A banana or low-fat natural yoghurt, crackers with low-fat soft cheese, a smoothie or a glass of low-fat milk will be sufficient to keep the activities going.

By all means, one should avoid foods high in fat or fibre, as they take longer to digest and may cause stomach discomfort during exercise,” he adds.

Most important is to have a good sleep before the workout, ideally 8 hours rest, but even seven can be accepted, but sleep is a must pre-workout.

“Maintaining good hydration is important during the three stages of workout; even keep sipping during the workout. But

these all start with ensuring proper fitting clothes and shoes as per the exercises, as it will allow you to do the exercises comfortably,” observes Dr Dilip Singhvi, Specialist in Internal Medicine at Shifa Hospital.

A light snack before the workout is advisable as it helps replenish carbohydrates and proteins. Also, one needs to warm up before the workout, as it helps raise the body temperature, springs the muscles into action and prepares one for the ahead.

“Conditioning your body before or after exercise is vital for improvement and recovery. One of the best things to do after a workout is a gentle stretch session to prevent muscles from seizing. If you workout before or after work, don’t return immediately to a static position at your desk or in your car. Cool down gently and return your body to its pre-workout state,” says Dr Viresh Chopra.

Eating the right foods before and after exercise will fuel workouts and provide the proper nutrients to repair muscles. Tracking your workouts will highlight any improvements or dips in performance while increasing motivation.

“Most important point to remember is to avoid doing workouts in case of pain, especially in joints or muscles or illness like flu,” added Dr Singhvi.

“Similarly, post-workout, a cool down is required and should be done; mostly, it’s a forgotten phase. Some light stretching is to be done and not to hit the desk, work, or car straight away,” the doctor added.



JAISON MATHAI SUGGESTS SOME DOS AND DON'TS OF PRE-WORKOUT NUTRITION

DO'S



1 EAT CARBS FOR SHORT OR HIGH-INTENSITY WORKOUTS



2 HAVE FATS FOR LONG, MODERATE, OR LOW-INTENSITY WORKOUTS

3



HYDRATE YOURSELF PRIOR TO THE WORKOUT

DON'TS



1 NO HEAVY MEAL

2 SAY 'NO' TO COFFEE OR ANY CAFFEINATED PRODUCT BEFORE HITTING THE GYM



3 DO NOT EAT ANY FOODS THAT CAUSE BLOATING



4 DO NOT BE CARRIED AWAY BY POSTERS OF BODYBUILDERS IN THE GYM. INSTEAD, DEDICATE CONSTANT HARD WORK UNDER PROPER GUIDANCE, CONSISTENCY AND PATIENCE WHICH CAN BRING THE DESIRED RESULTS

5 MAINTAINING A WORKOUT LOG HELPS MAINTAIN THE REQUIRED TIME. THAT HELPS IN MONITORING THE PROGRESS OF ACHIEVING THE GOALS



Indians celebrate Independence Day

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The Indian expatriates in Oman celebrated the 77th Independence Day of India with the flag hoisting ceremony organised on the lawns of the Embassy on Tuesday. Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman Amit Narang hoisted the tricolour, which was followed by singing of the National Anthem. The Indian School Seeb students performed patriotic songs.

While reading excerpts from the President of India's address to the Nation, the ambassador urged everyone to be part of India's growth story and the journey towards self-reliance and propagate the country's message of peace and development.

He also touched upon Mission LiFE, an initiative launched by Prime Minister Narendra Modi, encouraging everyone to make small yet impactful changes in daily lives to safeguard the environment.

Arranged at the ceremony was a special counter showcasing Indian millets commemorating 2023 as the 'International Year of Millets', arranged at the Embassy premises for the occasion. Millets are considered as a solution to the various food security challenges at the same time expected to promote holistic health.

In another event, The students of Indian School Al Ghubra



presented the celebration of India's 77th Independence Day at the school under the auspices of

Ambassador Narang. The Ambassador spoke on the journey of 77 years and the

new inspiring personalities of India who are playing prominent roles in the current world. He pointed out the distinct trait that is imprinted in the DNA of each national — the concept of inclusiveness.

The school band began with the National Anthem and after the official address by the ambassador, the band presented patriotic songs followed by a tableau by students with the theme, 'Future Ready India' looking at developments in technology and resources.

"India is a diverse country with many different languages, culture, traditions and religions. With all the differences we are united in our love for India. The strength of India lies in its 'Unity in Diversity,'" said Rayz Ahmed, President of ISG.

He added, "Oman has been a home for us for many years. Our children have grown up here and we love this country. The values of Oman and India are similar and the bond of friendship continues to grow stronger each year."

Students, who are members of the school's Indian Choir, performed Tribute to the Nation, followed by Indian classical dance performance on Harmony in the Universe, Sargalaya — a rhythmic melange. The programme concluded the performance by the western choir with the title Aspiring for Universal Brotherhood.

Modi says peace returning to strife-torn Manipur



Prime Minister Narendra Modi addresses the nation from the ramparts of the Red Fort during the celebrations to mark country's Independence Day in New Delhi on Tuesday. — AFP

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said on Tuesday peace was returning to the strife-torn northeastern state of Manipur where at least 180 people have been killed and tens of thousands forced from their homes in sectarian clashes since May.

The federal government has deployed security forces to the hilly state bordering Myanmar governed by Modi's nationalist party to quell the violence, which comes as he is looking to secure a third term in a general election due by May next year.

"For some days now, we are getting reports of extended peace. The country is with the people of Manipur. The country wants the people of Manipur to hold on to the peace of the last few days and take it forward," Modi said in an Independence Day speech from the ramparts of New Delhi's Red Fort.

The violence between members of the majority Meitei ethnic group and minority Kuki began over competition for government benefits linked to education, jobs and influence.

Among those killed have been 21 women. Numerous incidents of rape have grabbed global attention and raised questions about the ability of Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) to ensure security.

Modi condemned the sexual assault of women in Manipur and promised tough action but opposition parties accuse his government of dividing the state and not doing enough to end the clashes.

The government rejects those accusations and defeated an opposition vote of no-confidence motion over the handling of the conflict last Thursday.

"The state and federal governments are working very hard and will continue to work hard to resolve this peacefully," Modi said.

Civil rights group in Manipur say thousands of people who have fled from their homes are too scared to return and the restoration of normalcy requires financial aid and legal support. Manipur state chief minister hoisted India's tricolour flag in the capital city of Imphal to commemorate Independence Day and there were no immediate reports of violence, officials said.

In his address, Modi listed the social, economic and pro-poor policies implemented during his nine years of rule and said his commitment to growth and making India an economic powerhouse would be sustained after securing a third term.

Leaders from Indian opposition parties' alliance called "INDIA" said Modi's Independence Day speech will be his last as his party will be routed in the general elections.

"Modi's failure in last nine years can be categorised under bad policies, injustice and perhaps most importantly ill intention," said Jairam Ramesh, a federal lawmaker from the opposition Congress party.

— Reuters

EA launches campaign to plant 2m mangrove trees

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority, represented by the Directorate-General of Nature Conservation, is carrying out a new campaign aimed at sowing 2 million seeds of mangrove trees in the governorates of Al Batinah North, Al Sharqiyah South and Al Wusta.

The campaign aims to conserve ecosystems in the coastal wetlands of the Sultanate of Oman and boost their efficiency by implementing several projects for achieving the operational objectives approved by the Environment Authority's plan related to the plantation of 1 million trees.

Badr bin Saif al Busaidy, Acting director of the department of wetlands at the Environment Authority, said the campaign is divided into two phases the first of which is the seed collecting



from the Qurum Natural Reserve in Muscat Governorate and lasts for 14 days. The seeds were then transferred to the target sites through controlled methods and were kept in air-conditioned milieus at a temperature ranging between 23 and 26 degrees to avoid damage. Mangrove seeds

were sowed in 4 select sites with a total area of 90 hectares (900,000 sq metres). It took the field teams 17 days to complete the task due to the sea tide with the planting operations carried out only during reflux periods.

Al Busaidy noted that the studies indicated the ability of mangrove

trees to adapt and grow in the selected sites. A total of 800,000 seeds were sowed in in Khor Shinas in Wilayat of Shinas, 100,000 seeds in Khor Al Har in the Wilayat of Masirah in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate and 1.1 million seeds in in the Wilayat of Al Jazir in Al Wusta Governorate. — ONA

Mentoring programme for young Omani women

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The 'Tamkeen', a mentoring programme of the British Embassy has been evoking great response as 46 phenomenal women came together in a spirit of shared learning and collective growth in early June.

These women represent the 23 mentor and mentee pairs participating in Phase 1 of the initiative launched on International Women's Day in March 2023 amidst a gathering of key dignitaries and high-profile guests.

Working in collaboration with UK delivery partners Mowgli Mentoring, Tamkeen provides one-to-one mentoring between experienced women leaders and Omani women who are early in



their career.

"Each Tamkeen phase lasts 6 months, alongside a robust series of workshops and networking events to bolster the benefits and opportunities for participants," a spokesperson from the embassy said.

Tamkeen builds on the British Embassy 'Lift as You Grow' mentoring programme, which supported 25 pairs in 2021 and 45 in 2022. Phase 2 of Tamkeen will launch in January 2024, expanding the mentoring support outside of Muscat to deliver a tailored programme for women in Nizwa and Suhar.

The British Embassy continues to actively champion and promote the valuable role women play in supporting the labour market and growth of Oman's economy.

There is resounding evidence

that women's economic empowerment requires due consideration to enable sustainable economic growth. The Sultanate of Oman has many skilled women, with 73 per cent educated to secondary level. The Embassy will continue to champion this incredible talent pipeline of women to reach their full employment potential.

The Tamkeen programme aligns with Oman Vision 2040's ambitions on equal opportunities, which pave the way for Oman's international rankings for women and gender equality to be enhanced even further.

The British Embassy organised an event focusing on women entrepreneurship, possibilities and challenges at the embassy premises on the International Women's Day.

Trump, advisers charged in Georgia

WASHINGTON: Former US President Donald Trump was hit with a fourth set of criminal charges when a Georgia grand jury issued a sweeping indictment accusing him of trying to overturn his 2020 election loss to Democrat Joe Biden.

The charges, brought late on Monday by Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis and which Trump called a “witch hunt”, add to the legal woes facing the former president, the front-runner in the race for the Republican nomination for the 2024 election.

The sprawling 98-page indictment listed 19 defendants and 41 criminal counts in all. All of the defendants were charged with racketeering, which is used to target members of organized crime groups and carries a penalty of up to 20 years in prison.

Mark Meadows, Trump’s former White House chief of staff, and lawyers Rudy Giuliani and John Eastman were among those charged.

“Rather than abide by Georgia’s legal process for election challenges, the defendants engaged in a criminal, racketeering enterprise to overturn Georgia’s presidential election result,” Willis said at a press conference.

Trump and the other defendants have until noon EDT (16:00 GMT) on Friday, August 25, to surrender voluntarily, rather than face arrest, Willis said. She said she intends to try all 19 defendants together.

“This one-sided grand jury presentation relied on witnesses who harbour their own personal and political interests,” Trump



lawyers Drew Findling, Jennifer Little and Marissa Goldberg said in a statement.

“We look forward to a detailed review of this indictment, which is undoubtedly just as flawed and unconstitutional as this entire process has been,” Trump lawyers added.

Trump, in a social media post overnight, repeated his verbal attacks against Willis and called the indictment a “witch hunt” as he seeks the White House a third time: “Why didn’t they Indict 2.5 years ago? Because they wanted to do it right in the middle of my political campaign.”

The 13 felony charges against Trump matched those listed on a document that was briefly posted

on the court website earlier in the day and reported by Reuters before it disappeared. Lawyers for those named either declined to comment or did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

In a Jan. 2, 2021, phone call, Trump urged Georgia’s top election official, Brad Raffensperger, to “find” enough votes to reverse his narrow loss in the state. Raffensperger declined to do so.

Trump’s supporters stormed the US Capitol four days later in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent lawmakers from certifying Biden’s victory.

The indictment cites a number of crimes that Trump or his associates allegedly committed from before the November 3, 2020, election

until September 2022, including falsely testifying to lawmakers that election fraud had occurred and urging state officials to alter the results. It says the defendants tried to subvert the US electoral process by submitting false slates of electors, people who make up the Electoral College that elects the president and vice president.

It alleges that defendants breached voting equipment in a rural Georgia county, including personal voter information and images of ballots.

Prosecutors also said the defendants harassed an election worker who became the focus of conspiracy theories.

The indictment reaches across state lines, saying that Giuliani, Meadows and others called officials in Arizona, Pennsylvania and elsewhere to urge them to change the outcome in those states. The indictment mentions 30 other co-conspirators, though they were not named or charged.

Trump has denied any wrongdoing, and has pleaded not guilty in three other criminal cases.

He faces a New York state trial in March 2024 involving a hush money payment to a porn star, and a federal trial beginning in May in Florida for allegedly mishandling federal classified documents. In both cases Trump pleaded not guilty.

A third indictment, in Washington federal court, accuses him of illegally seeking to overturn his 2020 election defeat. Trump denies wrongdoing in this case as well, and a trial date has yet to be set. — AFP

N Korea’s Kim, Russia’s Putin exchange letters vowing stronger ties



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un shakes hands with Russian President Vladimir Putin in Vladivostok. – Reuters file photo

SEOUL: North Korea leader Kim Jong Un and Russian President Vladimir Putin exchanged letters on Tuesday pledging to develop their ties into what Kim called a “long-standing strategic relationship,” Pyongyang’s state media KCNA said.

In his letter to Putin, Kim said the two countries’ friendship was forged in World War II with victory over Japan and is now “fully demonstrating their invincibility and might in the struggle to smash the imperialists’ arbitrary practices and hegemony,” KCNA said.

“I am firmly convinced that the friendship and solidarity ... will be further developed into a long-standing strategic relationship in conformity with the demand of the new era,” Kim was quoted as saying in the letter.

“The two countries will always emerge victorious, strongly supporting and cooperating with each other in the course of achieving their common goal and cause.”

The United States has accused North Korea of providing weapons to Russia for its war in Ukraine, including artillery shells, shoulder-fired rockets and missiles. Pyongyang and Moscow have denied any arms transactions.

Last month, Russia’s defence minister stood shoulder to shoulder with Kim as they reviewed North Korea’s newest nuclear-capable missiles and attack drones at a military parade in Pyongyang.

Putin, in his message to Kim, also pledged to bolster bilateral ties. — Reuters

Clashes in Libya capital kill two and shut airport

TRIPOLI: Gunfighting between the two leading armed groups in Tripoli killed two people and forced the closure of the Libyan capital’s only civilian airport, officials said on Tuesday.

The clashes between the influential 444 Brigade and the Al-Radaa Force, or Special Deterrence Force, erupted on Monday night and carried over into Tuesday, an interior ministry official said.

“Tensions arose” soon after it was announced “the Al-Radaa Force had arrested the head of the 444 Brigade, without explaining whether this was on judicial orders or for other reasons”, the official said.

So far, two people had been killed and more than 30 wounded in the violence, a hospital source said, as the fighting showed no signs of abating.

The United Nations Support Mission in Libya said in a statement it was “following with concern” the security deterioration in the Libyan capital and its impact on civilians.

“Violence is not an acceptable means to resolve disagreements,” UNSMIL said.

“All parties must preserve the security gains achieved in recent years and address differences through dialogue,” it added.

Images on late Monday showed armoured vehicles and armed pickups in the east and south of Tripoli after the arrest of 444 Brigade commander Mahmud Hamza at Mitiga airport.

Plumes of smoke were seen in Tripoli and gunfire was heard in the densely populated suburb of Ain Zara before it spread to areas near the airport and Tripoli



Smoke billows amid clashes between armed groups affiliated with Libya’s Tripoli-based Government of National Unity (GNU). – AFP

University, which announced the suspension of classes.

The fighting was still underway

on Tuesday and had forced “the closure of roads around Mitiga airport”, according to the official.

Air traffic was stopped, flights were diverted to Misrata about 180 kilometres to the east, and

planes that had been parked on the tarmac were moved away.

The health ministry called for blood donations and the establishment of a safe corridors to evacuate families trapped in the fighting.

The 444 Brigade is affiliated with Libya’s defence ministry and is reputed to be the North African country’s most disciplined.

It controls the southern suburbs of Tripoli as well as the cities of Tarhuna and Bani Walid, securing roads linking the capital to the south of the country.

The Al-Radaa Force, commanded by Abdel Rauf Karah, positions itself as independent of the interior and defence ministries, and it controls central and eastern Tripoli and Mitiga air base, the civilian airport and a prison.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

TOKYO

Over 180,000 residents to seek shelter

More than 180,000 residents in a western Japanese city were urged to seek shelter on Tuesday as a tropical storm hit, swelling rivers and triggering landslide warnings.

Tottori city issued its top-level evacuation warning to around 182,000 residents late in the afternoon, as the weather agency warned of “unprecedented” heavy rain in the region.

“Lives are in danger. The residents are in a situation where immediate personal



security needs to be ensured,” Satoshi Sugimoto from the Japan Meteorological Agency told reporters.

Sugimoto urged people in the region to seek shelter on higher ground due to the risk of flooding. — AFP

YANGON

25 dead after jade mine landslide

Rescuers have recovered 25 bodies while 14 people remain missing after a landslide at an unregulated jade mine in a remote region of Myanmar, emergency workers said on Tuesday.

“We found 25 dead bodies in total today,” a rescue worker said on Tuesday, adding that 14 people were still missing and the recovery effort would continue on Wednesday. A massive pile of earth about 150-180 metres high left behind by mining excavations was loosened by the intense



rainfall and collapsed, according to rescuers.

The mine’s operations had been suspended during the rainy season, but those caught in the landslide were believed to be locals hoping to find something valuable in the mud. — AFP

ISTANBUL

Oppn mayor says ‘setting out’ for March vote

Istanbul’s popular opposition mayor on Tuesday said his CHP party should stop internal conflicts and focus on the local elections next year. Ekrem Imamoglu has become one of President Recep Tayyip Erdogan’s main rivals since winning Istanbul in the 2019 electoral race.

At Tuesday’s conference, Imamoglu did not clearly say he would be running as a candidate for Istanbul in the March local elections but said winning Istanbul was tantamount to



winning Türkiye. “I am setting out once again to defend Istanbul. I am setting out to create a prosperous city,” he said.

“The fates of Istanbul and Türkiye are sealed. Therefore, I consider myself sealed with Istanbul,” he added. — AFP

Ensuring food security...

Exacerbated by multiple blows from the increasing frequency and severity of climate change and environmental shocks and the Covid-19 pandemic, food security has been at the top of the agenda of most governments in the world in recent years. Adding fuel to the fire is the unending war between Russia and Ukraine.

Though market conditions improved in recent months, food prices continue to be high above the 2021 levels with the expectations of no imminent relief as the outlook remains challenging.

Fertiliser remains expensive on a historical basis, and farmers have been using less to conserve costs; that could reduce crop yields in upcoming harvests. Russia accounts for 14 per cent of global fertiliser supplies.

Before the war, Ukraine was the fourth largest global exporter of cereals before the invasion. Combined, Russia and Ukraine exported around 28 per cent of the world's wheat and 15 per cent of its maize in 2019. The world's population is snowballing. It is estimated that by 2050, 9.3 billion people will be living on this planet and they will all need access to sufficient food.

The Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) expects the world food import bill to reach a new record this year, though it is predicted to grow at a much slower pace compared to last year, as rising world prices, especially in the most economically vulnerable countries.

“Notwithstanding this generally positive outlook, the global food production systems remain vulnerable to shocks, stemming from extreme weather events, geopolitical tensions, policy changes and developments in other commodity markets, with the potential to tip the delicate demand-supply balances and impacting prices and world food security”, the latest report from FAO warns.

Amidst these challenges, global food security is probably the most important problem. Countries are resorting to the tried and tested method of export bans and are stockpiling wheat and other grains to minimise the impact on domestic consumers. Many countries of the Middle East and North Africa have been directly affected because of their



Samuel Kutty
@samkuttyvp

The writer is author, senior journalist and policy analyst with nearly four decades of experience in editing and reporting for newspapers and magazines in India and the Gulf region

FOR THE SULTANATE OF OMAN, WITH ITS GROWING POPULATION AND RISING CONSUMPTION NEEDS, FOOD SECURITY HAS BEEN AT THE HEART OF ITS AGRICULTURAL POLICY

high dependence on food imports from Russia and Ukraine, but thanks to their comprehensive agricultural policies, some of them could resist the “food shocks” to a large extent.

However, food experts opine that improving grain storage, particularly in countries highly reliant on imports, and helping those countries grow more staple food at home could help survive the situation to a large extent.

For the Sultanate of Oman, with its growing population and rising consumption needs, food security has been at the heart of its agricultural policy. This focus has seen the government increase domestic production and thereby reduce its reliance on imports.

For example, is the recent increase in areas for wheat cultivation and its high yield in recent months. Wheat is a staple food in Oman and it has been a major crop in the farming systems of Oman.

The high output has contributed to the Oman government circumventing the wheat shortage following the export ban imposed by many countries. The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources distributes wheat seeds to farmers every season, and provides harvesters during the wheat harvest, in addition to technical supervision.

The country has the potential to increase the production of wheat, as it has past experience in wheat cultivation, the right climate and reasonably high average yields, subject to resource availability, particularly water. Domestic cultivation of wheat may be considered a minimal strategic measure to assure food security.

The 2040 Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development Strategy in Oman aims to promote agricultural sector sustainability through investments, increase economic revenues, create job opportunities for nationals, support rural communities, and limit structural imbalances in the agricultural sector.

The plan seeks to make agriculture, forestry and fishery more productive and sustainable. To this end, the programme will support projects that increase competitiveness in the crop and livestock sectors. Oman is one of the world's top 10 producers of dates, growing about 400,000 tonnes per year.

COOLING OFF!



People swim in a makeshift pool amid soaring temperatures in a camp for the internally displaced in Zaradna in Syria's rebel-held northwestern Idlib province, on Tuesday. – AFP

Trump uses indictments to fund campaign

Each time Donald Trump is indicted — and that has now happened four times since March, with the latest election interference charges in Georgia — he raises serious campaign cash and gets a bump in opinion polls.

Instead of damaging the former president's image, his legal troubles for now offer him valuable political capital in a country where winning the White House costs billions of dollars.

On Sunday, even before charges were formalised in Georgia against the 77-year-old Republican, he fired out an email to his supporters, inviting them to fight back... by reaching for their wallets.

“The Biden Department of Justice is trying to JAIL ME FOR LIFE,” he said, before asking his fellow “patriots” to give from \$24 to \$1,000 to his bid to be the Republican Party's candidate in 2024. “Our Republic is hanging by a thread, and America needs you right now.”

Since he was first charged with criminal wrongdoing in New York, the feisty onetime reality television star has inundated his backers with text messages and e-mails of a similar ilk, always peppered with inflammatory



CAMILLE CAMDESSUS

INSTEAD OF DAMAGING THE FORMER PRESIDENT'S IMAGE, HIS LEGAL TROUBLES FOR NOW OFFER HIM VALUABLE POLITICAL CAPITAL

language. Criminal charges against him? All “witch hunts.” Democratic President Joe Biden? A “crooked” leader of a “tin-pot dictatorship” whose government is conspiring to “eliminate their leading opponent.”

So far, the strategy is working: the Republican's campaign team announced they had raised more than \$4 million in 24 hours after his first indictment in March in New York, over hush money payments made to star Stormy Daniels.

Team Trump also boasted about raising nearly \$7 million after he was charged in federal court in Florida in June over his handling of top secret classified documents — the first time a sitting or former commander-in-chief has ever faced federal charges.

In a sign of the influence that the real estate tycoon still wields over his conservative base, thousands of Americans heeded the call to donate.

One of them is Jim Wood, a retiree first encountered by AFP in Washington on January 6,

2021, the day of the deadly assault on the US Capitol by Trump's supporters.

Since the Republican billionaire's first indictment, Wood has donated nearly \$400 to his campaign, according to publicly available campaign finance data.

The 60-something from New Hampshire says he is convinced that Trump is the victim of political persecution.

“Even if he's in jail, I'll still send him money,” he said.

Trump's campaign war chest and the engagement of his supporters are even more spectacular given that his fundraising efforts before his legal woes intensified were not as successful.

With each new investigation, the Republican has benefitted from what analysts have called an “indictment bump.”

A similar boost has been seen in the polls — since the New York charges were laid, the former president has gained nine

percentage points in the race for the Republican nomination, according to polling data aggregator RealClearPolitics.

“Any time they file an indictment, we go way up in the polls,” Trump said earlier this month.

“We need one more indictment to close out this election.”

Even if Trump and his entourage are happy to brag about their fundraising successes on the back of his mounting legal problems, these cases are a double-edged sword.

The candidate has had no choice but to dip into the campaign coffers to pay millions of dollars in legal fees linked to the indictments — money that could have otherwise been used for television ads, rallies or campaign swings nationwide. “His legal expenses are through the roof. Trump has already spent a large percentage of his contributions on legal expenses,” Larry Sabato, a political scientist at the University of Virginia, said.

“And those expenses will only go up for months and months, maybe years, to come.” — AFP



This combination of pictures shows Donald Trump and Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis in Atlanta, Georgia. – AFP



CARMONA'S LATE STUNNER TAKES SPAIN INTO MAIDEN FINAL

AUCKLAND: Olga Carmona's stunning 89th-minute strike gave Spain a 2-1 win over Sweden on Tuesday to propel them into the Women's World Cup final for the first time in their history.

Spain's thrilling victory at Eden Park sets up a showdown in Sydney on Sunday with either Australia or England, who meet in the other semifinal on Wednesday.

The last-four clash in Auckland seemed to be drifting towards extra-time before suddenly bursting to life when substitute Salma Paralluelo put Spain ahead with nine minutes left.

Rebecka Blomqvist equalised for Sweden in the 88th minute only for full-back Carmona, Spain's captain, to score with a superb shot in off the underside of the crossbar from the edge of the box 60 seconds later.

"We are so proud of everything we have done and for getting to the final because now we are one small step away from glory," said Paralluelo.

It has been a remarkable run for a nation who had never previously gone beyond the last 16 at a Women's World Cup, and for a team who had been in disarray in the months leading up to the tournament.

Fifteen Spanish players told their federation last September that they no longer wished to be considered for selection, mainly out of unhappiness with coach Jorge Vilda, and only three of them returned for this World Cup run.

While their dream of World Cup glory

remains alive, Sweden are left with a familiar feeling after going so far at another major tournament before falling short.

This is the third time in four World Cups that they have reached the semifinals, only to lose on each occasion.

Peter Gerhardsson's side also lost in the last four at the European Championship last year, having been beaten in the final of the Tokyo Olympics on penalties against Canada in 2021.

"Everyone just feels sadness and huge disappointment," said Gerhardsson, whose team had been so impressive in beating Japan 2-1 in the last eight. "We were up against an excellent Spanish side and they were able to disrupt us a lot more than Japan did."

SUPER-SUB PARALLUELO

Vilda decided against handing a start to Paralluelo, after she came off the bench to score the winner in the quarterfinal against the Netherlands.

Instead he recalled Alexia Putellas and the reigning Ballon d'Or winner started for the first time since Spain were walloped 4-0 by Japan in the group phase.

The plan was clearly to dominate possession and make a more physically imposing Sweden do the chasing.

Spain had far more of the ball in the first half but the closest they came to breaking the deadlock was from long range when Jennifer Hermoso laid the ball back to Carmona, whose shot whistled wide.

Sweden had taken the game to Japan in the quarterfinals but they offered next to nothing here until suddenly they almost struck three minutes before half-time.

Nathalie Bjorn sent a hanging cross from the right to the back post for Fridolina Rolfo — facing seven of her Barcelona club colleagues in the Spain starting line-up — but her side-foot volley was saved by Cata Coll.

Vilda's plan was clearly to save the pacy Paralluelo for when the Swedish defence was tiring, and it was just before the hour mark that he turned to the former athlete.

Paralluelo replaced Putellas, who has still not completed 90 minutes at this World Cup as she continues to recover full fitness following a serious knee injury.

The substitute's persistence almost brought the opener for Spain with 20 minutes left as she stretched to keep the ball in play, but Alba Redondo turned her cutback wide.

Paralluelo then struck with nine minutes of normal time remaining, showing a killer instinct to lash a shot low into the corner.

Sweden drew level in the 88th minute thanks to two substitutes of their own.

Lina Hurtig had only just come on when she nodded down a cross for Blomqvist to fire home, raising the spectre of extra time.

But Carmona, the Real Madrid left-back, had other ideas as she clinched victory for Spain in style.

— AFP

STEPHENS BEATS COCCIARETTO AT CINCINNATI

Williams upsets Kudermetova

CINCINNATI: Venus Williams upset 16th-ranked Veronika Kudermetova 6-4, 7-5 at the Cincinnati Open on Monday, as her unseeded American compatriot Sloane Stephens overcame a sluggish start to beat Italy's Elisabetta Cocciaretto 7-5, 6-2.

Williams had not beaten a top-20 opponent in four years but used all of her veteran composure as she overcame deficits in both sets and converted six of nine break points.

The 43-year-old Williams initially appeared outmatched at the hard court tournament as Kudermetova broke in the first and fifth games but mounted an extraordinary comeback to win the final five games in a row to claim the first set.

Kudermetova flipped the momentum as she won the next four straight and nearly closed out the second set in the eighth game but instead helped Williams to break with a double fault and a pair of unforced errors.

The Russian missed another opportunity to win the second set when Williams fended off a break point in the ninth game with an unreturnable serve.

The seven-time Grand Slam winner had the momentum as she converted a break point in the 10th game and a demoralised Kudermetova handed her the match with a pair of double faults - out of nine across the entire match - in the final game.

Stephens, who along with Cocciaretto was unable to get a full warm-up due to rain that delayed the start of the match, broke the Italian five times and saved three of five break points en route to sealing the win in 76 minutes.

She will next face French defending champion Caroline Garcia in the second round.

"I felt like when I came out here I was a little bit slow and obviously she didn't get to do her full warm-up, and our warm-up it was raining at the end," Stephens, world number 38, said in her on-court interview. "So a lot drama but happy to be through after a slow start."

EARLY CONTROL

Cocciaretto took control early on and built a 5-2 lead that gave



Venus Williams concentrates on her shot as she faces Veronika Kudermetova during round one of the Western & Southern Open at the Lindner Family Tennis Centre in Mason. – USA Today Sports



Sloane Stephens returns a serve from Elisabetta Cocciaretto on Center Court during the first round of the Western & Southern Open at the Lindner Family Tennis Center in Mason. – USA Today Sports

her two chances to serve out the set. But Stephens dialed up the pace and broke to love on each occasion as she used a five-game winning streak to wrap up the opening set.

In the second, Stephens kept her foot on the gas as she consolidated an early break with a hold to love for a 3-0 lead before going on to end the encounter with another service break.

Stephens can expect a tougher test against sixth seed Garcia, who is 4-2 all-time versus the American including a pair of first-round wins at the Cincinnati Open. Stephens won their most recent encounter at Guadalajara in 2022.

Ukrainian Elina Svitolina was forced to withdraw ahead of her anticipated showdown with Caroline Wozniacki due to foot

pain she has been experiencing since her run to the semi-finals at Wimbledon last month.

"I am really disappointed to pull out anywhere but I love the fans in Cincy and love playing in front of them which makes it extra hard but I have to take the medical advice I have been given," she wrote on social media.

"I will do my best to rest and recover in time for the US Open now."

Wozniacki, who returned to competitive tennis this month after a more than three year break to start a family, is now scheduled to play lucky loser Varvara Gracheva in the night session.

— Reuters

WTA Cincinnati Open Results First round

Venus Williams (USA) bt Veronika Kudermetova (RUS x16) 6-4, 7-5; Anastasia Potapova (RUS) bt Celine Naef (SUI) 1-6, 6-4, 7-5; Sloane Stephens (USA) bt Elisabetta Cocciaretto (ITA) 7-5, 6-2; Jasmine Paolini (ITA) bt Marta Kostyuk (UKR) 6-2, 6-1; Anhelina Kalinina (UKR) bt Zhu Lin (CHN) 6-3, 7-5

Omantel League to kick off tommorrow with new features

ADIL AL BALUSHI

MUSCAT, AUG 15

The 2023-24 Omantel League will kick off on Thursday with 12 clubs taking part in this season after withdrawal of some domestic clubs. The launch of the top flight league took place recently at the headquarters of Omantel in presence of OFA and Omantel officials besides attendance of the domestic clubs representatives.

This season will see difference in the cash prizes of the league as the winners will receive RO 50,000 while the runners up will be awarded RO 30,000. The third-placed team will collect RO 20,000 while the team which will finish in fourth will take home RO 15,000. The fifth and sixth placed teams will get RO 10,000 and RO 5,000 respectively.

The new season of Omantel League will move a step ahead as the Video Assistant Referee (VAR) will be implemented in different phases. This year the VAR will be treated as a trial run ahead of expected full implementation in the forthcoming seasons. The officials at OFA focused on the fans attendance in the league matches as they unveiled during the launch of the league that 12 cars will be distributed to the spectators over the season in a raffle draw besides other

attractive prizes.

The opening round of the top-tier league will feature defending champions Al Nahda meet the promoted club from first division league Al Shabab at Al Rustaq Sports Complex while Sur will play against Al Rustaq at the latter's home in Sur Sports Complex. Both matches will be held on Thursday. The matches of the first week will be followed on Friday as Salalah giants Dhofar take on Al Wahda at Sur Sports Complex while Al Nasr will host Bahla at Al Saada Sports Complex. Oman Club will meet Sohar while Seeb's match against the champion of first division league Ibri is postponed due to Seeb's participation in the preliminary round of the AFC Champions League.

Among the 12 clubs in Omantel League this season, six clubs managed to earn the title before including: Al Nahda, Dhofar, Seeb, Oman Club, Al Nasr and Sur while the others namely Al Rustaq, Bahla, Sohar, Ibri, Al Wahda and Al Shabab will chase a maiden title. Many of the domestic clubs equipped their squads with some new names and extended the contract of the key players. It is expected to be a different season as all the clubs completed their technical preparation and in good shape and readiness ahead of start of the league.



Shotokan open karate on October 13-14

MUSCAT: The ninth Open Shotokan Karate Centre Championship will be organised on October 13-14 in Muscat Governorate, the organisers announced on Tuesday.

A large number of karate clubs, academies and centres from within the Sultanate of Oman are expected to participate, as well as many clubs from Arab and foreign countries.

The eighth edition in the past year witnessed a great turnout from karate clubs, centres and academies from inside and outside of the Sultanate of Oman. As many as 27 clubs participated along with centres and academies from seven participating countries to deliver a well-contested and highly competitive championship. The players' skills and expertise on the developments in international arbitration laws of karate were fully tested in the event.



Sub-committees discuss regulations of joint GCC action

MUSCAT: During the past two days, the first meeting of the Sub-Committees of the GCC National Olympic Committees was held in the Saudi Arabian capital of Riyadh. Recently the NOCs had formed Women's Sports Committee, Athletes Committee, Paralympic Committee and the Sports Committee.

The Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) was represented in the meetings by Sayyidah Sana bint Hamad al Busaidiyah, Chairwoman of Oman Women's Sports and Gender Equality Committee, and Dr Mansour bin Sultan al Touqi, OOC Board Member and Chairman of Oman Paralympic Committee, Asaad bin Mubarak al Hasani, Chairman of Oman Athletes Committee, and Dr Amer bin Humaid al Touqi, Director of the Sports Bodies Department at the Ministry of Culture, Sports



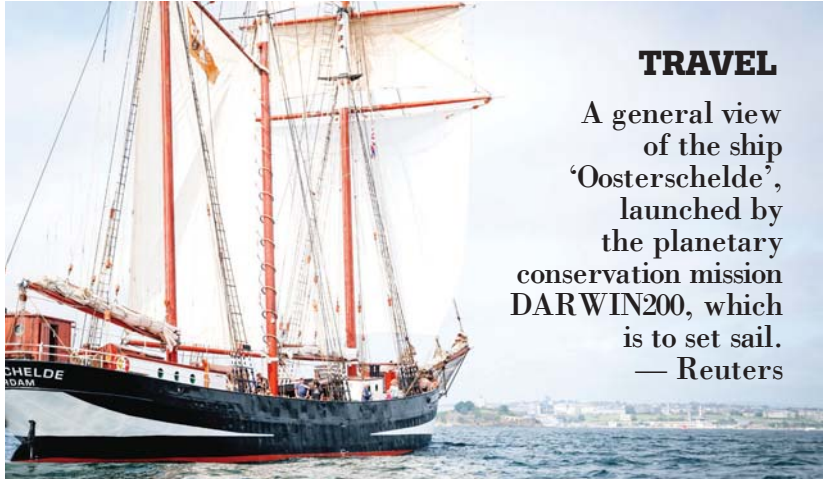
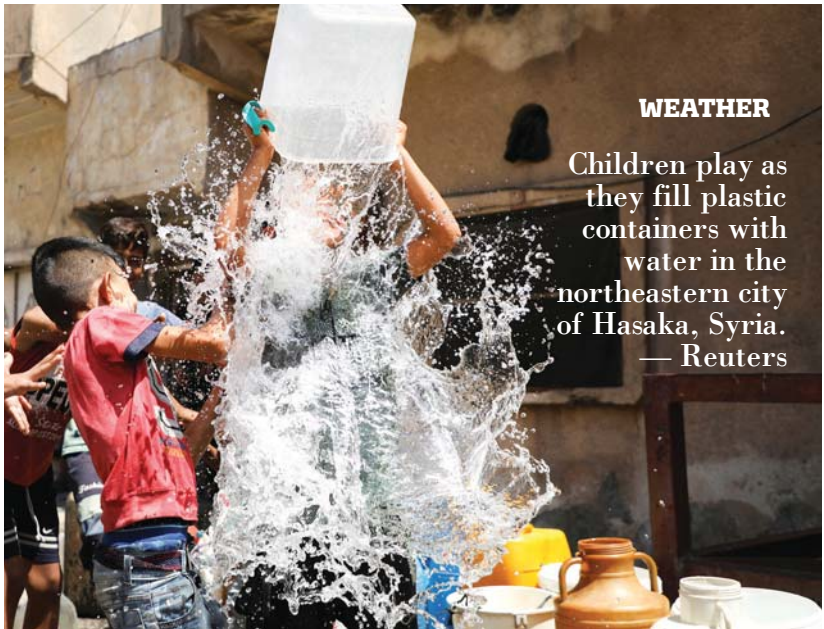
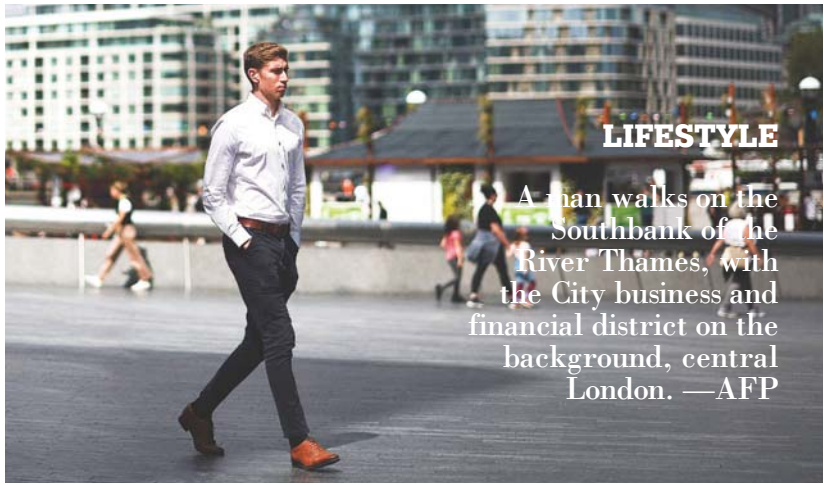
and Youth, Member of the Sports Committee.

During the meetings, decisions to form the four sub-committees related to organising and following-up joint sports work were reviewed, and the organisational structure and internal system of the joint work bodies in the sports

field was reviewed, which clarifies the progress of work in implementing the plans, goals and policies set by the heads of GCC NOCs. These bodies are the ministerial committees, the under-secretaries committee, the technical committees, the Sports Arbitration Committees and the General Secretariat.

The tasks of the sub-committees issued by the Executive Office were reviewed, their terms of reference were discussed, and some observations were submitted to the office for study, opinion and approval, in addition to reviewing the regulations for joint work in the sports field and discussing some parts related to the regulations of the sports tournament.

The Council of GCC NOCs heads adopted in its 34th meeting held last October the decision to dissolve the organising committees, and to form 4 sub-committees for organising and following up the joint sports action, represented by Sports Committee, Women's Sports Committee, Athletes' Committee and the Paralympic Committee, provided that it is linked directly to the Executive Office.



art & life

WEDNESDAY | AUGUST 16, 2023 | MUHARRAM 29, 1445 AH

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

Discovering the Enchanting Wonders of Wadi Dayqah in Dima W'attayeen

BY MOHAMMED SAID AL BUSAFI
PHOTOS BY AHMED AL MAAMARI

Travelling to Wadi Dayqah requires a sturdy vehicle, primarily because the way to some of its hidden gems is unpaved and rugged at times. Set amidst remarkable gorges, the landscape has been sculpted over millennia by the winding flow of water and the patient caress of time.

Located in the Al Sharqiyah North Governorate in the Wilayat of Dima W'attayen in Ghubrat Al Tam, Wadi Dayqah is about an hour and a half drive from Muscat.

From Mehlah, the centre of the wilayat, the wadi's winding road and the Ghubrat Al Tam Park are about 20 km away, and it is here where the real adventure begins.

Wadi Dayqah is the gathering point of water in the wilayat. Water from wadis like Dima, Imdah and Tmah all collectively head towards Dayqah and one of the reasons why the wadi consistently have flowing water throughout the year.

To enjoy the awe-inspiring sights of turquoise waters surrounded by towering cliffs, one must hike deeper into the wadi. A leisurely stroll alongside the meandering stream leads to lush date palm groves, where the sound of rustling leaves harmonises with the gentle babble of water. Furthermore, one will be greeted by hidden pools and cascading waterfalls, an amazing feature that has endeared this place to the locals who live in the area.

Whenever it rains around the area,



the top of the mountains gets flooded, causing seasonal waterfalls that flow in every nook and cranny and eventually spill over to the many pools of Wadi Dayqah.

As the water from different wadis collides, it flows with mighty force until it finally reaches the Dayqah Dam located in Qurayat.

Many of the locals who have gotten familiar with the unique features of its cascading flow, usually bring with them tyre tubes and use them as floaters that take them from one end to the other end of the flowing wadi. Wadi tubing is an adventure that definitely everyone visiting Oman must try.

Wadi Dayqah can only be reached by four-wheel drive vehicles. Tourists ought to have 4WD cars to drive on unpaved surfaces, stones, and streams till they get to Dayqah. If you want to see the best of what the wadi can offer, hiking is necessary.

The hospitality and friendliness of Omanis in the area boast tourism in Dayqah. Tourists always feel welcome and never encounter any kind of disturbance.

Wadi Dayqah is definitely a place worth exploring. It has recently become a popular tourist destination, especially for those who admire swimming, hiking, mountain climbing, and camping. It



is indeed a good choice for adventure and enjoying the natural views.

CAPTURING THE MOMENT: TIPS FOR THE ULTIMATE TRIP

TIMING IS KEY: The best time to visit Wadi Dayqah is during the cooler months, from October to April when the temperatures are more comforta-

PACK ESSENTIALS: Load up on sunscreen, a wide-brimmed hat, comfortable hiking shoes, and plenty of water. The Omani sun can be intense, even in the cooler months.

CULTURAL SENSITIVITY: Remember that you're exploring a place with deep

cultural significance. Dress modestly, and always be respectful of the local customs and traditions.

LOCAL CUISINE: Don't miss the opportunity to savour traditional Omani dishes. Seek out local eateries along the way to truly immerse yourself in the culinary delights of the region.



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TRAVEL

Japan ready to impose crowd control on Mount Fuji

JAPANESE AUTHORITIES ARE gearing up to impose crowd control measures for the first time on Mount Fuji this weekend for an expected holiday rush by thousands of sometimes ill-prepared trekkers, officials said on Thursday.

Japan's famous snow-capped volcano outside Tokyo is open to climbers from July to September, drawing hundreds of thousands who often trek through the night to see the sunrise.

Combined with the return of foreign tourists after pandemic restrictions were lifted, this holiday weekend is expected to see a surge, with buses, trains and hotels booked up weeks in advance.

Crowds climbing the 3,776-metre (12,388-foot) active volcano could be also larger than usual due to the 10th anniversary of the peak's designation as a Unesco World Heritage Site.

Authorities said the planned measures — a first for Mount Fuji — wouldn't amount to an outright entry ban, but are meant to "guide" hikers on the trails, including temporarily halting their progress.

Under the policy, local police will be alerted and urged to weigh in if trails get busy enough to "heighten the risk of rocks falling and hikers tripping," local authorities from the Yamanashi region said in a statement.

Last month, around 65,000 hikers climbed the mountain, an increase of roughly 17 per cent from the 2019 pre-pandemic level, official data shows.

Mount Fuji straddles Japan's central Yamanashi and Shizuoka regions and the starting-off point for climbers is about two hours from central Tokyo by train.

But it can be seen for miles around, and has been immortalised in countless Japanese artworks, including Hokusai's famous "Great Wave" painting. — **AFP**

DISCOVERY



Egypt dig unearths 41mn-year-old whale in desert

PALAEONTOLOGISTS IN EGYPT have unearthed an extinct species of whale that lived 41 million years ago when whale ancestors were just completing their move from land to sea.

The team has dubbed the species "Tutcet" after the Egyptian boy king Tutankhamun and the Wadi El-Rayan Protected Area in Egypt's Fayoum Oasis where the type specimen was found.

With an estimated length of 2.5 metres (eight feet) and a body mass of approximately 187 kilograms (410 pounds), Tutcet is the smallest species so far found from the basilosaurids, the oldest known whales that lived exclusively in the water.

Team leader Hesham Sallam, of the American University in Cairo (AUC), said it was a "remarkable discovery that documents one of the first phases of the transition to a fully aquatic lifestyle".

Basilosaurids "developed fish-like characteristics, such as a streamlined body, a strong tail, flippers and a tail fin, and had the last hind limbs visible enough to be recognised as 'legs', which were not used for walking but possibly for mating," Sallam said in an AUC statement.

Erik Seiffert of the University of Southern California, a co-author of the team's findings published in the review Communications Biology, said the Eocene fossil sites of Egypt's Western Desert have long been the world's most important for understanding the early evolution of whales and their transition to a fully aquatic existence.

Fayoum Oasis, some 150 kilometres (90 miles) southwest of Cairo, boasts Wadi al-Hitan, the Valley of the Whales, a Unesco World Heritage Site that has turned up hundreds of fossils of some of the earliest forms of whale.

Now an oasis in the Western Desert, Fayoum lay under a tropical sea in the Eocene period 56 to 34 million years ago. — **AFP**

LIFETSYLE

Graffiti artists tag Milan's famed Galleria arcade

GRAFFITI ARTISTS HAVE scaled and tagged the soaring stone entrance to Milan's Galleria Vittorio Emanuele II, the prestigious shopping arcade at the heart of the city.

Video posted online showed three figures in black spraying a green inscription as they edged around an upper ledge of the four-storey edifice, watched by tourists below in the square that faces Milan's cathedral.

Local police said the group were spotted around 10:20 pm (2020 GMT) on Monday night but disappeared before officers could catch them.

An investigation was underway to try to identify the group and assess how they could have accessed the top of the facade, which is meant to be out of bounds, police added.



The 19th century Galleria is home to shops, restaurants and hotels that could have been used to gain access to the site.

The tagging appeared to be the work of graffiti writers rather than politically-motivated groups or the environmental protesters who have targeted Italian museums and architectural treasures in recent months.

The stunt angered deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini who said the perpetrators should be "taught a lesson they will never forget," with prison sentences, fines or community service. — **Reuters**



World’s first liquid hydrogen ship arrives in Oman

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, AUG 15

Suiso Frontier — the world’s first successful liquid hydrogen ship — is making a landmark stop at the Sultan Qaboos Port in Muscat.

The ship was built by Japanese Kawasaki Heavy Industries (KHI) in 2020 in collaboration with the Japanese Government in aim of enabling the transport of large amounts of liquid hydrogen, a previously challenging task due to the extremely low boiling point of hydrogen and its need for energy-intensive cooling.

However, the 8000-tonne vessel was able to successfully transport 1,250 cubic metres of liquid hydrogen from Australia to Japan, as part of a joint \$355 million venture between the two countries known as the Hydrogen Energy Supply Chain (HESC).

During which, hydrogen produced by reacting coal with oxygen under high pressure and temperature was transported to a liquifying plant, where it was loaded onto the ship

for export on a two-week journey.

The journey marked the first of its kind, and according to a spokesperson, the ship’s visit intends to establish global large-scale liquid hydrogens supply chains while promoting global cooperation and the transfer of clean energy technology.

The vessel is 116 metres long and 19 metres wide and utilises a “a vacuum-insulated double-wall structure” to retain and maintain hydrogen at a temperature of -253 degrees Celsius.

According to a recent assessment by the International Energy Agency (IEA), the Sultanate of Oman is well positioned to become the sixth largest exporter of hydrogen in the world by 2030, with a set target of producing 1 million tonnes of renewable hydrogen per year.

However, due to a lack of appropriate infrastructure for handling and transporting liquid hydrogen in bulk, exports are expected to be transported in the form of ammonia until the end of the decade.

Salalah project heralds Oman’s bid to become Mideast blockchain hub

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 15

Exahertz, a Muscat-based start-up, has made significant strides in Oman’s blockchain industry as it secures government approval for its massive blockchain data centre project in Salalah.

With the backing of Axeron Capital Holding Ltd, Moonwalk Systems FZCO, and Shumookh Investment and Services, Exahertz aims to establish Oman as a leading blockchain hub in the Middle East, alongside its neighbouring countries.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, along with the Authority for Public Services Regulations (APSR), is providing support for this ambitious venture, highlighting Oman’s commitment to infrastructure development and job creation across various sectors.

The government is actively working with Exahertz and other stakeholders to attract foreign investments and leverage submarine cables to propel Oman’s digital economy.

Eng Said bin Hamoud al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology said that the “Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology seeks to build cooperative partnerships with leading local and international private sector entities in the various types of digital technologies, as the Ministry works to attract foreign investments in this ever-developing industry.”

Moreover, he added that “This effort will fulfil our expectations and goals for bolstering the Sultanate of Oman’s digital economy and making full use of



submarine cables that connect the Sultanate of Oman to the rest of the continents digitally.”

“Through our project, we aspire to shape the future of software-defined data centres, paving the way for flexible applications that seamlessly adapt to the ever-evolving computing landscape,” emphasised Jad Kharma, the Founder of Axeron and CEO of Exahertz.

“It is with great conviction that I underscore the immense significance of blockchain computing as the bedrock of the digital economy. This technology empowers us to make further investments in Web 3.0, Industry 4.0, and AI infrastructure, propelling us into a new era of innovation and growth.”

Jad Kharma further expressed his pride in Exahertz’s collaboration with industry leaders and visionaries, stating, “At Exahertz, we take immense pride in partnering with esteemed

individuals who share our vision, as we collectively design the next generation of software and hardware solutions. “These advancements will play a pivotal role in supporting Oman’s future growth and solidifying its position as a tech-forward nation.”

Reflecting on the interconnected nature of blockchain and hyperscale data centres, Jad Kharma added, “Blockchain, hyperscale and energy are becoming synonymous. Building an adequate and efficient infrastructure is the key to unlocking success in this convergence.

“We must prioritise the establishment of a robust framework that harmoniously integrates these elements to drive unparalleled progress.”

Shaikh Dr Mansour bin Talib al Hinai, Chairman of Oman’s Authority for Public Services Regulations, expressed excitement about the commencement of such

projects in Oman.

Al Hinai emphasised the authority’s commitment to modernising Oman’s business diversification and technology industry, showcasing their support for Exahertz and its contribution to future capabilities.

Exahertz plans to expand rapidly by investing substantial capital and debt to build cutting-edge infrastructure sourced from national factories.

Their strategic partnerships and focus on hydro and immersion cooling mining technologies will help control power costs and ensure operational efficiency.

Notably, Exahertz has garnered support from key industry players, positioning itself as one of the leading Bitcoin mining firms in the region.

Renowned blockchain heavyweight Bitmain is collaborating with Exahertz to operate and supply mining equipment.

TURN TO P16

Oman’s tallest dam project set for July 2024 completion

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, AUG 15

Work on a major flood protection scheme is making headway overlooking Salalah City in Dhofar Governorate.

When completed by around July 2024, the soaring dam structure will help secure key economic installations, notably the Port of Salalah, Salalah Free Zone and Raysut Industrial City, from severe flooding of the kind that ravaged parts of the governorate in recent years.

Well-known civil construction firm AZ Engineers & Partners LLC is constructing the project at a cost of RO 23.903 million on behalf of the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The centrepiece is a 386-metre-long dam structure that spans Wadi Adawnib, the biggest of three wadis that crisscross the Salalah Plain before flowing into the Arabian Sea.



An award for the construction of Al Adawnib Flood Protection System was announced in 2020, two years after Mekunu — one of the deadliest tropical cyclones to sweep over southern Oman and neighbouring Yemen — devastated swathes of Dhofar Governorate.

Besides wrecking roads, civil infrastructure, hotels and farms, a deluge of floodwater and silt also left operations at Port of Salalah impacted for several months.

Significantly, Wadi Adawnib Dam will rank among the largest dam structures in the Sultanate of Oman when it is fully operational

next year.

In terms of its height however, it will surpass Wadi Daqyah Dam in Muscat Governorate — presently the nation’s largest dam in terms of reservoir capacity.

“The intake tower of the Wadi Adawnib Dam will be the second tallest concrete

structure in the Sultanate of Oman, the tallest structure currently being the minarets of the Sultan Qaboos Grand Mosque in Muscat, which stand at an imposing 70 metres,” said Syed Azhar Ali, Director of AZ Engineers & Partners LLC.

Also as part of the project scope, AZ Engineers is constructing a control room, spillway and an over 300m long diversion culvert. Given the site’s proximity to Salalah City, the reservoir is expected to become a tourist attraction.

To this end, the contractor will develop a public garden setting, while Dhofar Municipality mulls other initiatives to enhance the site’s overall appeal.

Separately, another Omani contractor is undertaking the construction of a flood protection dam spanning Wadi Annar that also cuts through Salalah en route to the sea.

As part of its remit, the contractor is also streamlining

the route of the wadi with the goal to divert floodwaters away from vital economic infrastructure.

Functioning in conjunction, the two flood protection systems spanning Wadi Adawnib and Annar will help mitigate runoffs downstream and steer floodwaters away from the port and other projects nearby.

An excellent grade contractor in Oman for over 20 years, AZ Engineers has undertaken a sizable portfolio of prestigious civilian projects in the Sultanate of Oman and elsewhere in the region including Bahrain, Iraq and Libya.

They have completed over 100 projects including a total of over 70 bridge structures, several Integrated Tourism Complexes, and road projects, notably the Bidbid-Sur Expressway project as a structures expert subcontractor, covering all four sections of Oman’s biggest infrastructure project to date.

Businesses hail trade deals as boost for UK



ANDY JALIL
andyjalil@aol.com

The writer is our foreign correspondent based in the UK

Business groups have hailed the UK's membership of an Indo-Pacific trade bloc as a boost despite analysis showing a meagre growth bump from the deal over the long term.

Business and trade secretary Kemi Badenoch formally signed a treaty in New Zealand for the UK to join the CPTPP, originally agreed in 2018 between eleven countries.

Membership strips back trade barriers and comes amid a push from the government to forge stronger trade ties with the region.

The deal was hailed as a "great achievement" by lobby group The City UK, which said the pact will deliver a boost to the UK's financial and professional services sector.

The bloc has swelled to a scale of £12 trillion but analysis given to the government suggests the deal will boost UK exports by just £1.7 billion, imports to the UK by £1.6 billion and GDP by £1.8 billion in the long term.

The UK has bilateral trading terms with nine of the eleven members – so Malaysia and Brunei will be of "particular interest," noted William Bain, head of policy at the British Chamber of Commerce.

The UK is also set to pursue a new trade deal with Turkey in an effort to deepen relations with the country, the government has announced.

Negotiations on an updated free trade agreement are expected to begin in 2024 after the two countries agreed there was scope to improve the existing deal.

Britain's trade with Turkey was worth £23.5 billion in 2022, but heavily favoured Turkey with the UK importing £6.5 billion more than it exported, according to government figures.

The current settlement, which was rolled over after Brexit, is restricted to trade in goods. UK negotiators will attempt to expand the relationship to cover digital trade and services, reflecting Britain's status as a predominantly service economy.

Business and trade secretary Kemi Badenoch said: "Turkey is an important

THE BLOC HAS SWELLED TO A SCALE OF £12 TRILLION BUT ANALYSIS GIVEN TO THE GOVERNMENT SUGGESTS THE DEAL WILL BOOST UK EXPORTS BY JUST £1.7 BILLION, IMPORTS TO THE UK BY £1.6 BILLION AND GDP BY £1.8 BILLION IN THE LONG TERM.

trading partner for the UK. This deal is the latest example of how we are using our status as an independent trading nation post-Brexit to negotiate deals that are tailored to the UK's economic strengths.

Turkish exports to the UK include vehicles, clothes and electric machinery, while the UK sells power generators and metals to Turkey. Exports minister Lord Offord has discussed other potential trade opportunities with Turkey.

Meanwhile, trade talks with the US are still to make much progress. Foreign minister James Cleverly talked down hopes of a UK-US trade deal during a recent visit to Washington DC. Speaking there, Cleverly, said the government was not "prioritising" a free trade agreement (FTA) but aiming for "real economic coordination" with the superpower.

His comments came at a press conference held with US secretary of state Anthony Blinken. Cleverly told reporters: "I know FTAs are often used as a shorthand for closer economic partnerships. We are not prioritising an FTA with the US because there are many areas where we can work more closely, more collaboratively, have real economic coordination that does not require the traditional kind of tariff-reducing elements of an FTA."

Blinken was also asked about concerns allies might feel the US's Inflation Reduction Act is "protectionist" – the 2022 federal legislative package aims to cut rising prices by reducing the deficit and investing in domestic energy production and clean energy.

Blinken responded that the law marked a "historic commitment" to tackling climate issues, and housed an intent to work with international players to "build the strongest possible collective infrastructure, supply chains, and ecosystem to produce (new) technologies. These are profound benefits for many of our partners around the world," he said.

Negotiations on an FTA with the US began back in May 2020, but the House of Commons says there is no current deal and "an agreement is not expected soon".

ISWA 2023 World Congress in Muscat to lead Mena waste management revolution

MUSCAT: The ISWA World Congress organised by the International Solid Waste Association, and hosted by Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah), scheduled to take place in Muscat from October 30 to November 1, in the Convection and Exhibition Centre, marks a significant leap forward in the field of waste management within the MENA (Middle East and North Africa) region.

With its central theme focused on "Global Action Towards a Net-Zero Future" and its incorporation of circular economy and sustainable resource management principles, the 2023 congress is positioned as a trailblazer in an effort to mold a more sustainable and environmentally resilient future.

Being the first-ever ISWA World Congress to be hosted in the MENA region, this event presents a unique and noteworthy platform for the exchange of expertise and the sharing of best practices in the domains of circular economy and sustainable resource management. Attendees can expect to be engrossed in an immersive and educationally enriching environment that highlights ingenious solutions pertaining to waste prevention, recycling methodologies, and



resource recovery techniques.

The congress agenda is set to include thought-provoking discussions, enlightening presentations, and interactive workshops facilitated by experts hailing from diverse sectors. All these sessions will be centred-around the core themes of circular economy and sustainable resource management strategies. This comprehensive lineup will allow participants to delve into cutting-edge technologies, explore innovative policy frameworks, and gain insights from successful case studies that effectively showcase the immense potential of adopting a circular

economy approach in the realm of waste management.

Through its deliberate emphasis on the principles of circular economy and sustainable resource management, the congress carries a fundamental objective of inspiring and bolstering the transition towards a future characterised by enhanced resource efficiency and sustainability. Attendees stand to acquire valuable and actionable insights into the integration of circularity principles within their own waste management practices, ultimately leading to reductions in waste generation, the elevation of recycling rates,

and the conservation of invaluable resources.

The forthcoming ISWA 2023 World Congress in Muscat holds an undeniable significance for individuals and organisations alike who are deeply committed to advancing the ideals of circular economy and sustainable resource management within the MENA region and on a global scale.

Those who are keen on playing a significant part in the worldwide effort to achieve a net-zero future are encouraged to participate. This objective will be realised by embracing innovative and transformative waste management approaches.

Sohar International Bank wins best wealth management services in Oman 2023 award

MUSCAT: Testament to its unwavering commitment in providing excellence to customers, *Global Business Magazine* recently awarded Sohar International the esteemed title of 'Best Wealth Management Services in Oman 2023'.

The bank received this prestigious award following a rigorous evaluation process encompassing various aspects, including the bank's prominent position in wealth management, its ability to provide highly

customised financial products and services, expanding base of loyal customers and remarkable growth trajectory.

Commenting on having received the award, Khalil bin Salim al Hedaifi, Chief Retail Banking Officer at Sohar International, stated, "We are honoured to receive this award, as it reflects our dedication to providing personalised financial services that cater to our customers' evolving needs.

At Sohar International, we



take great pride in our wealth management services, led by an exceptionally capable team. Our customers have placed their

trust in us, knowing that we are committed to empowering individuals to achieve success in their unique journeys. Our paramount objective revolves around offering guidance and unwavering support, ensuring the financial well-being of our customers and guiding them towards a prosperous and secure future.

This recognition serves as an inspiration to continue pushing boundaries and establishing new benchmarks."

Bank Nizwa continues to invest in Omani talent

MUSCAT: Recognising high performance, potential, and capabilities, Bank Nizwa recently announced the promotion of three of its senior retail staff members to higher positions.

This strategic decision underscores the bank's unwavering dedication to providing career advancement opportunities and empowering local talents by enabling them to take on elevated roles and responsibilities.

Backed by years of experience and an inherent zeal to achieve the broader goals of



the bank, Jassim al Hajri was appointed as Regional Manager for the governorates of Muscat and Al Batinah South, Musallam al Busaidy as

Regional Manager for the governorates of Al Dakhiliyah, Al Sharqiyah North, Al Dhahirah and Al Buraimi, and Abdulwahhab al Rawahi

as Regional Manager for the governorates of Al Batinah North and Al Sharqiyah South, where the regional managers will perform their duties under the supervision of the Head of Branches, Talib bin Salam al Yaarubi.

Khaled al Kayed, Chief Executive Officer at Bank Nizwa stated, "A fundamental aspect of any thriving organisation is the value it accords to nurturing its employees.

It is due to the efforts of the team that we have successfully been driving innovation and customer satisfaction while achieving operational

efficiency and excellence. As a people-centric bank, we are invested in our people; we foster a dynamic work culture that promotes creative thinking and encourages individuals to take on leadership roles.

Moreover, as we generate opportunities for career advancement within our organisation, we contribute to the development of a skilled workforce for the nation. By empowering nationals to take on key roles, we also help in the creation of a more resilient, independent, and sustainable economy."

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 m.alrahdi86@yahoo.com

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

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Salalah Office

Bakhit Al Shihri
92998577
 bakhit.omandaily@gmail.com

Nizwa Office

Abdullah Al Abri
99429094
 nizwaofc@omandaily.net.om

Suham Office

Musalam Al Saidi
99429192
 sohardaily@outlook.com

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ESTABLISHED IN 1981 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: ABDULLAH BIN SALIM AL SHAHELI VOL. 39 NO. 233 | PAGES 16

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

UN HAILS OMAN'S SUPPORT FOR PEACE IN YEMEN

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

SOME PEOPLE NOT FOLLOWING SOCIAL DISTANCING NORMS

Hidden trade: New curbs on proceeds from sales of bullion, precious stones

QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, AUG 15

The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has issued Ministerial Decision No. 2023/425, which regulates monetary transactions for those engaged in the sale or purchase of precious metals and valuable stones.

This decision is a continuation of two previous decisions: Ministerial Decision No.

386/2022 on providing electronic payment service to consumers and Ministerial Decision No. 412/2023 on combating hidden trade.

The purpose of this decision is to legalise monetary transactions and raise the quality of service to consumers. Electronic payments are more convenient and faster than traditional payment methods, as they can be made using a variety of technologies such as phones and smart



devices.

This reduces the risk of carrying cash, which may be

subject to theft. It also makes it easier to track transactions and combat financial crimes.

The national risk assessment has identified the precious metals and gemstones trading sector as a high-risk sector due to the sector's use of cash.

This decision will help to reduce this risk by encouraging the use of electronic payments. It will also help to reduce customs evasion.

Commercial companies that violate the decision to regulate cash transactions for the sale and purchase of precious metals

and valuable stones may be subject to one of the following administrative sanctions: Written warnings; Penalties not exceeding RO 500; and Suspension of the commercial register for a period not exceeding 3 months.

This decision is an important step in modernising the precious metals and gemstones trading sector in Oman. It will make the sector more transparent and efficient, and it will help to protect consumers and businesses.

Salalah project heralds Oman's bid to become Mideast blockchain hub

FROM PAGE 13

Despite recent fluctuations in Bitcoin prices, Exahertz and Moonwalk Systems are delighted to announce the successful operation of their testing facility in SFZ since March 2023.

The facility has provided valuable data and insights that have played a pivotal role in shaping the understanding of challenges and solutions in the blockchain space and the harsh conditions of the region.

This achievement has reaffirmed and confirmed Exahertz's ambitious goal of deploying additional 50,000 operational devices and servers across Oman by mid to end of 2024, equating to approximately 10 Exahash in computing capabilities across various types of technologies and cooling solutions.

District Cooling provider Tabreed-Oman has taken on the critical task of providing sustainable cooling solutions for the data centre, ensuring energy-efficient operations.

Said bin Abdullah al Hinai, CEO of Tabreed Oman, expresses enthusiasm for their role in sustainable cooling infrastructure and the adoption of advanced technologies in the industry.

Sam Ferdows serves as the CEO of Moonwalk Systems, a prominent strategic partner and primary supporter of Exahertz, highlights their commitment to creating state-of-the-art blockchain data centres using the latest cutting-edge technology.

He states, "We are focused on making our sites in Oman the benchmark for blockchain data centres in the Middle East with enhanced and sustainable solutions."

With a strong emphasis on operational efficiency and boosting computational power, Moonwalk Systems aims to optimise performance and contribute to the advancement of blockchain technology.

Ferdows adds, "We are determined to drive innovation in the industry and make a lasting impact in the Middle East's blockchain ecosystem."

Sam added, "Earlier this year, we embarked on our journey with our pilot project, 'Area 51,' in Salalah. In just three weeks, we managed to develop and bring our first computers online."

OETC expands electricity transmission network with ten 400 kV grid stations

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, AUG 15

Oman Electricity Transmission Company (OETC) — a member of Nama Group — has celebrated a momentous achievement in its efforts to enhance the country's electricity transmission network.

In 2022, the total number of 400 kV grid stations operated by OETC reached a remarkable milestone of 10 grid stations, compared to none in 2005.

This significant expansion is part of OETC's ongoing commitment to empower the electricity transmission network, enhancing its reliability, safety, and sustainability throughout Oman.

Over the years, Oman's grid operator, OETC, has been at the forefront of strengthening the country's power infrastructure. The addition of these 400 kV grid stations represents a substantial leap forward in the country's electricity transmission capabilities. The increased capacity and coverage provided by these stations will enable OETC to meet the growing demand for electricity and support the nation's economic development.

By strategically locating the 400 kV grid stations across Oman, OETC aims to improve the efficiency and reliability of electricity transmission. These grid stations serve as important



hubs that connect various regions, facilitating the smooth flow of electricity across the country.

The enhanced transmission network will not only benefit major cities but also remote areas, enabling access to reliable and uninterrupted power supply.

Just recently, OETC is on the verge of completing the construction of 400kV overhead lines between Barik and Suwayhat grid stations, with progress reaching an impressive 99 per cent.

The company has announced its plans to finalise the remaining tasks and energise the Suwayhat

grid station by the end of this month.

Also, the construction of the Al Rustaq 400/132 kV grid station and associated 400 kV overhead lines is another milestone in OETC's ongoing projects. With an estimated cost of RO 49 million, this project has made significant progress, with completion reaching over 78 per cent.

Currently, 152 towers have been completed, covering a total overhead line length of 162.2 km. The project has also achieved an impressive record of 3 million safe manhours, prioritising the safety of the workforce.

The Al Rustaq 400/132 kV grid station will play a crucial role in expanding the transmission capacity in Al Batinah South Governorate. It will strengthen the electrical infrastructure, ensuring a steady supply of electricity to meet the growing demand.

Additionally, the associated 400 kV overhead lines from Rustaq 400 kV GS to Ibri 400 kV GS will further connect the transmission network, enhancing the overall system's efficiency.

Meanwhile, OETC has experienced a remarkable increase in peak gross load over the years, reflecting the nation's growing

demand for electricity. From 2005 to 2022, OETC witnessed a substantial rise in peak gross load, highlighting the country's expanding power requirements.

In 2005, OETC's peak gross load stood at 2,495 megawatts, indicating the electricity demand at that time.

However, the subsequent years saw a significant surge in power consumption, driven by economic growth, urbanisation, and an increasing population.

By 2013, Oman's peak gross load had soared to 4,634 megawatts, representing a substantial jump in electricity demand within a relatively short period.

The year 2022 marked another milestone for OETC as the peak gross load reached an impressive 7,440 megawatts. This substantial increase is a testament to Oman's rapid development and the rising need for electricity across various sectors.

To meet this growing electricity demand, OETC has been actively expanding and strengthening the country's power transmission network. The establishment of new 400 kV grid stations and the development of associated infrastructure play a crucial role in accommodating the increasing load requirements.

By enhancing the transmission capacity, OETC strives to ensure a stable and uninterrupted power supply to meet the nation's needs.

Oman makes robust commitment to green hydrogen

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, AUG 15

The Sultanate of Oman is dedicating an area the size of Slovakia to solar power projects to produce green hydrogen – gas produced entirely from renewable sources, according to a report by AGBI.

On June 1 Eng Salim bin Nasser al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, signed \$20 billion of contracts with partners including BP, Shell and the newly formed Hydrogen Oman (Hydrom) to produce 500,000 tonnes of green hydrogen each year.

By July 28 Hydrom announced that "solidified commitments" to initiatives in the sultanate of Oman had risen to \$30 billion.

Production targets are 1 million tonnes by 2030, 3.75 million tonnes by 2040 and 8.5 million tonnes by 2050. This should make the sultanate of Oman the world's



sixth largest exporter of hydrogen by 2030.

By 2040, those exports are projected to be worth 80 per cent of Oman's current exports of liquefied natural gas (LNG), according to the International Energy Agency.

By 2050 they may be worth twice as much as the sultanate of Oman's

current overseas LNG sales. Yet hydrogen is not without challenges. Technical issues limit long-distance transportation of the gas, while regulations and international markets are also still being worked out.

"There's a lot to do before hydrogen will be up and running and delivering," Charles Dolphin,

a partner in Muscat law firm CMS, told AGBI.

This uncertainty is reflected in the wide range of approaches that have been taken to the gas in the Gulf.

"Other Gulf states are taking a more private sector approach," said Dolphin. "The UAE and Saudi Arabia aren't seeing so much government involvement, except for some gearing up of renewable energy projects to supply the electrolyzers making the hydrogen."

Oman's decision to go for green is partly explained by the fact that it has some of the world's leading renewable energy resources, according to S&P.

Oman enjoys high irradiance – the power per unit area received from the sun – a good wind profile and a strategic location, according to global energy transition reporter James Burgess.

Combined with large amounts

of available and unused land, it is therefore perfect for green hydrogen production.

The relatively high price of the gas compared to the huge quantities of cheap renewable energy that are set to become available – plus Oman's relatively small population and economy – means the bulk of the hydrogen generated will be for export.

This means getting to grips with the problem of transportation. Converting it into hydrogen-heavy ammonia for shipping on tankers is one possible solution. It is then converted back into hydrogen at its destination.

Yet, "while ammonia is definitely seen as the vector for transport at the moment, there are conversion losses at every step of this process," said Burgess. Plus, pricing on a global market scale is also still evolving. "It could evolve like the early LNG market," said Burgess. "