

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR 'SOROUH' PROJECT

The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has announced through its platform 'Tatweer' two investment opportunities for the project of national initiative or integrated residential quarters 'Sorouh' in the Governorate of Al Dakhilyah. **>A3**



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HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN GREETES PRESIDENT OF EGYPT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Abdel Fattah El Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt on the occasion of the 6th of October Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments to President El Sisi and the people of Egypt. — **ONA**



Founded 1975 · Volume 48 No. 154 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group

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FOREIGN MINISTRY

Oman calls on Palestinians, Israelis to exercise restraint



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has been following with great concern the ongoing escalation between the Palestinian and Israeli sides as a result of continued illegal Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and the constant Israeli aggressions in Palestinian cities and villages, which portend serious repercussions and an escalation in intensity of violence.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry on Saturday, Oman calls on both parties to exercise utmost levels of restraint, stressing the importance of protecting civil-

ians. Oman also affirms that the international community and the parties backing efforts to resume the peace process must intervene immediately to stop the ongoing escalation and resort to the rules of international law, while reiterating the strategic necessity to find a just, comprehensive and lasting solution to the Palestinian cause on the basis of the two-state solution and the right of self-determination for the Palestinian people to establish their independent state with East Jerusalem as its capital. —**ONA**



Sayyid Theyazin visits Riyadh Book Fair

A4

OIA TO INVEST IN GREEN HYDROGEN PRODUCTION

The technology from Electric Hydrogen will help produce up to 50 tonnes of green hydrogen per day at a low cost



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Oman Investment Authority (OIA), the country's integrated wealth fund, has announced plans to invest in the American company Electric Hydrogen, a leading manufacturer of electrolyser system. The US-based company specialises in developing and making electrolyzers using proton exchange membrane technology that a very critical component of producing green hydrogen.

This investment is part of OIA's portfolio of sustainable investments in line with the company's green hydrogen strategy. The investment further showcases OIA's commitment to achieve global leadership in its transition to

clean energy sector besides contributing a pivotal role in the value chain associated with hydrogen.

The electrolyzers developed by Electric Hydrogen produce green hydrogen using renewable energy sources. Green hydrogen is a very critical and necessary element for reducing carbon emissions from some vital industrial processes. The transition from fossil fuel-based energy sources to energy based on renewable green hydrogen has been expensive and difficult to implement on a large scale.

Electric Hydrogen's technology will allow the manufacture and operation of electrolyzers with an operating capacity of up to 100 megawatts, each of which can produce up to 50 tonnes of green hydrogen per day at a low

cost, which will help the company's customers achieve their goals related to reducing carbon emissions.

Alwaleed bin Saeed Al Shukaili, Senior Director of Economic Diversification Investments at the Oman Investment Authority, said: "At a time when the Sultanate of Oman is taking its first steps in its journey to produce green hydrogen, we believe that it is necessary to establish strategic partnerships with partners who have experience and advanced technical capabilities in this field."

"Our investment in this company reflects our interest in supporting the development of the green hydrogen sector in the Sultanate of Oman," he further added.

GLORY

Best ever medal haul for Oman at Hangzhou Asian Games

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As the curtains come down on the 19th Asian Games in the Chinese city of Hangzhou on Sunday, Oman sporting fraternity can rejoice on their athletes' performances with the Sultanate recording their best ever medals haul in the Asian Games history.

The two medals that Oman won included a silver for the first time and a bronze. The sailing duo of Musab Al Hadi and Waleed Al Kindi brought home the shining silver medals as they finished second in the highly-competitive men's skiff 49er event while Husain Al Farsi claimed the first medal for Oman in the 800m track discipline.

Oman had sent a delegation of 44 athletes to compete in seven disciplines and on Friday, the national hockey squad concluded their campaign with a seventh-place finish.



In the classification match for the seventh place, Oman got the better of Bangladesh 4-3 to match their best finish in the Asian Games since making their debut at the 1982 Asiad in New Delhi.

It was a spirited comeback by Siegfried Aikman's team who tasted their biggest defeat at the Games on October 2 when eventual bronze medallists South Korea drubbed Oman 16-2 in the concluding Pool B game. The fighting spirit was evident as Oman clawed their way back from 0-2 down at interval to

win the seven-goal thriller.

Rashad Al Fazari reduced the margin with a penalty corner in the 38th minutes and Fahad Al Lawati drew parity in the 43 minute to set the stage for an enthralling final quarter.

Aiman Madit's brilliant brace in a space of two minutes (53' and 55') put Oman 4-2 ahead before a goal in the final seconds by Bangladesh almost forced a shootout but a strong Oman withstood the late charge to emerge as deserving winners. **>A5**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN EA tracks, monitors endangered eagles

1 The islands in the Governorates of Muscat and South Al Batinah are considered the most important breeding grounds for the endangered medium-sized sooty falcons. The sooty falcon spends winters in the SE coast of Africa and Madagascar. **>A3**

WORLD Hundreds killed in Israel-Palestine strife

2 Hundreds of people were killed in Israel-Palestine conflict on Saturday, according to sources. Palestinian health ministry confirmed that hundreds of people were killed in Gaza. GCC nations have called for immediate de-escalation between Israel and Palestine. **>A7**

MARKET Oman's electricity generation rises

3 The total electricity generation in the Sultanate of Oman until the end of July 2023 increased by 3.9 percent to reach 25,133.6 gigawatts per hour, compared to 24,181.9 gigawatts per hour during the same period in 2022. **>B1**



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RAS AL KHAIMAH TO MUSANDAM BUS SERVICE LAUNCHED

The RAK Transport Authority on Saturday launched the maiden land trip service connecting Ras Al Khaimah with Musandam, Sultanate of Oman. The service was launched in partnership with Musandam Governorate and will operate on weekends with two trips per day.



Hackathon for space applications launched with help from NASA

The hackathon will continue for two days with the participation of more than 185 countries around the world

Times News Service

BIDIYA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the branch of the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in the Wilayat of Bidiyah in the North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, launched the “NASA Hackathon for Space Applications” under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Azzan bin Kais Al Said.

The Hackathon has the theme ‘Discovering Open Science Together’ and will continue for two days with the participation of more than 185 countries around the world in cooperation with the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) of the United States of America.

The participants will compete in 31 different challenges in the themes of arts, astrophysics, climate, diversity and equity, Earth, gaming, hardware, open science, planets and moons, programming, space exploration, and the sun.

Dr. Saeed bin Hamad Al-Rubaie, President of the University of Purification and Applied Sciences, delivered a speech in which he indicated that the hackathon aims to create a cooperative platform that brings together those with creative ideas, including students, researchers, those interested in earth and space sciences, owners of small and medium enterprises, owners of initiatives and projects, and experts in the fields of space, transportation, and communications, to stimulate Innovation and exchange of ideas and experiences.

He stressed that the university, through participation, seeks to effectively employ technological tools and available resources to ensure the achievement of tangible results that serve multiple sectors and enhance the position



observations, and the establishment of a mobile astronomical dome to observe celestial bodies, in addition to plays aimed at space issues and training courses for participants.

Sheikh Ali bin Ahmed Al Shamsi, Governor of North Al Sharqiyah, said: “Participation in the hackathon will achieve a number of goals that are consistent with national trends in the world of space and at the same time in harmony with Oman Vision 2040, indicating that the hackathon will enhance the process of enhancing awareness and interest in space science and investment in This vital sector is witnessing global competition.”

Hosting the hackathon aims to strengthen the position of the Sultanate of Oman as a major centre for technological innovation and scientific research, encourage cooperation between academic and industrial institutions at the local and international levels, and strive to achieve excellence in research, innovation and entrepreneurship to contribute to sustainable development and build a sustainable and strategic partnership.

In addition, it aims in supporting the Oman 2040 Vision through focusing on technology and innovation, contributing to creating projects and finding solutions to issues and cosmic phenomena and those other related to challenges at the local level, opening the field of international cooperation in the space, technology and education sectors, building capabilities, skills and expertise in space and exploration technologies, and supporting projects, initiatives and ideas of participants.

of the Sultanate of Oman as a major center for innovation, technology and scientific research and the university as a leading center in technological innovation and to support “Oman Vision 2040” by focusing on technology and innovation. Opening the field of international cooperation in the space, technology and education sectors.

The activities of the first day included a visual presentation on the hackathon, in addition to presenting four main working papers. The first session talked about “the strategic direction of the space sector in the Sultanate of Oman,” the second paper talked about “the importance and opportunities of entrepreneurship in the space sector,” and the third paper touched on “Satellites serving the Earth,” while the fourth paper dealt with “The contribution of satellite communications to bridging the digital divide.”

The hackathon will be accompanied by a number of events and activities, including lectures, competitions, visual presentations, day and night astronomical

HEALTHCARE

65 doctors attend medical conference in Muscat

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Well-known expert Dr Anil Vaidya gave a talk on ‘Multi-Visceral & Abdominal Transplant with the Emphasis on Pancreas Transplant’ at an international medical conference held in Muscat on Friday.

Dr Vaidya, who is chair and director of Institute of Multi-Visceral and Abdominal Organ Transplant, MGM Healthcare in the Indian city of Chennai, was the guest speaker at the conference held at Grand Hyatt Hotel, Muscat.

Pancreas transplants

During his presentation, Dr Vaidya touched upon three key topics including renal transplants for very small child (<10 kg), pancreas transplant to cure diabetes and, intestinal failure, it's treatment via TPN and intestinal transplantation.

He highlighted the key points that contribute to a successful outcome in these areas.

Dr Vaidya went on to describe the technique of transplant oncology where slow growing tumours of the abdominal cavity can be treated and cured via intestinal and multi-visceral transplantation.

The cancers that can be cured with transplantation include metastatic neuro-endocrine tumours, desmoid tumours and pseudomyxoma peritonei from an appendiceal cancer.

The highlight of Dr Vaidya's



presentations was ‘Newer treatment for Diabetes’ including cellular therapy such as islet cell transplant and autologous de differentiated pluri potent stem cells.

Dr. Vaidya is one of the few surgeons in the world who has done over 1,000 pancreas transplants. He conducted Asia's first En-Bloc Heart Liver Transplant. He is also credited with pioneering the field of Transplant Oncology. Dr. Vaidya has a lifetime goal to promote a world that is free of diabetes by the year 2030 and free of dialysis by the year 2050.

Organised by MGM Health Care, Chennai, in joint association with Lama Polyclinic, Muscat Family Physicians' Group and Global Treatment Services, the conference was attended by 65 practicing doctors of Oman which included Hepato biliary surgeons, general & laparoscopic surgeons,

gastroenterologist, internists, pediatricians, A&R doctors, aesthetists, family physicians, homeopathy and ayurvedic doctors. The conference concluded with proactive discussions.

In his concluding remarks, Dr. Sanjay Dalal, the organiser, said, “Unfortunately these kinds of surgeries are not conducted in Oman. Dr Vaidya's goal is to mentor a transplant programme in Oman so that there is no need of sending patients outside the country for these procedures”.

He thanked the doctors who attended the conference and added, “Irrespective of specialty of the doctors who attended the conference there was a take home message for every doctor”.

Dr Dalal concluded by promising to continue organising such educative medical meetings for the benefit of healthcare professionals of Oman.

GROWTH THROUGH TOURISM

TENDER
ANNOUNCEMENT

Oman Tourism Development Company (OMRAN Group) would like to invite competent and experienced companies to participate in the following Tender:

Tender No.	43/2023
Tender Title	Design, Build, and Manage a Tourist Carnival at North Al Sharqia Governorate
Tender Submission Closing Date	19.10.2023
Tender Process Details	Please visit: www.omran.om/tenders/



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Two investment opportunities in ‘Sorouh’ project announced



The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning stated that the first investment opportunity is in the Wiayat of Bahla

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning has announced through its platform ‘Tatweer’ two investment opportunities for the project of national initiative or integrated residential quarters ‘Sorouh’ in the Govern-

rate of Al Dakhilyah. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning stated that the first investment opportunity is in the Wiayat of Bahla in Al Mamour area on 452,000 sq. metres for provision of about 600 residential lands. The second opportunity is in the Wilayat of Sumail in Al Hoob area on an area of over 137,000 sq. metres and expected to make available 400 housing units. Masaud Al Hashmi, Director General of Real Estate Development at the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, said that the efforts aimed to provide housing options with five alternatives, including the integrated residential

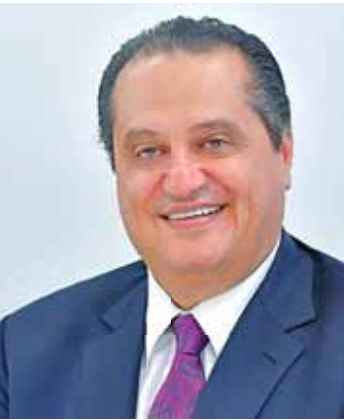
Quarters ‘Sorouh’, choose your land, acquire your land, plan your land and future cities within the Ministry’s vision associated with sustainable urban planning. He said that the title deeds of integrated residential Quarters ‘Sorouh’ at Al Naseem Quarter in Halban have been handed over for the first batch. - With ONA inputs

LEBANESE BUSINESSMAN

‘Oman offers opportunities for foreign investments’

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman offers several incentives to attract foreign investments, reaffirmed Elie Rizk, Chairman of Lebanese International Food Industries Corporation. He stressed the role the authorities concerned in the Sultanate of Oman plays in encouraging foreign investment. He said that he visited the Sultanate of Oman before Covid-19 at an invitation from Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI)



to acquaint with the incentives offered by the Sultanate to investors. He said that the Lebanese business delegation got acquainted with the promising investment opportunities in various fields. Elie Rizk, who is on investor’s residency in the Sultanate, pointed out that the potential of the Omani market based on his experience in the field of the 5-star restaurants sector found Oman has vast potential in the field of food industries and for export. He said that there are 55 Lebanese companies in Oman invest-

ing in the various sectors. He said that the investment volume in the food industries and contracting amounted to OMR600 million. He said that the government of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has taken steps and actions to reduce the public debt through rationalisation of spending and the focus is on training Omani youth. He said Oman’s economy is promising and is one of the most stable economies attractive to investments in various sectors, thanks to the efforts of His Majesty and the government.

SURVEY

Environment Authority monitors endangered sooty falcons



MUSCAT: The islands located in the Governorates of Muscat and South Al Batinah are considered the most important breeding grounds for the endangered medium-sized sooty falcons. The Environment Authority continues with its field surveys for the sooty falcons in the Sultanate of Oman which aimed to identify their numbers. The project also tracks and monitors such birds including their food/nutrition system, tracking measurements of their nests and identifying the chal-

lenges they face in cooperation with the specialised local and international associations. The sooty falcon is a semi-endangered bird on account of the reduction in their numbers at the world level. The sooty falcon spends winters in the southeastern coast of Africa and the Republic of Madagascar. It is worth mentioning that the field surveys of the project and monitoring sooty falcons are conducted in the Sultanate of Oman in May and October every year.-ONA



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Sayyid Theyazin visits Oman’s pavilion at Riyadh Book Fair

During the visit, HH Sayyid Theyazin was accompanied by Prince Badr bin Abdullah Al Saud, Saudi Minister of Culture

RIYADH: His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth visited Riyadh Interna-

tional Book Fair 2023, in which the Sultanate of Oman takes part as a guest of honour. During the visit, HH Sayyid Theyazin was accompanied by Prince Badr bin Abdullah Al Saud, Saudi Minister of Culture. HH Sayyid Theyazin went on tour of various pavilions of the fair, which witnesses wide participation from cultural institutions, as well as local, Arab and international publishing houses. He also toured the Sultanate of Oman’s pavilion and viewed the Omani publications that reflect the civilizational, cultural and intellectual reality of Oman. HH Sayyid Theyazin also familiarized himself with the Omani cultural programme in the fair that includes various activities. — ONA



RED HALL THEATRE

Sayyid Theyazin attends Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra concert

MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, attended the Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra concert at the Red Hall Theatre in Princess Nourah bint Abdulrahman University in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia on Friday. The Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra played a variety of musical pieces that formed a mixture of cultural and artistic elements of Omani music. The ceremony was attended by a number of Their Highnesses Princes, Their Excellencies Ministers, and senior officials of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The concert coincided with the Sultanate of Oman’s participation as a guest of honour in the Riyadh International Book Fair. — ONA



Oman’s tourism promotional events in GCC a grand success

The promotional workshops in the Gulf market were organised as part of the Ministry’s tourism strategy to market the Sultanate of Oman as a heritage and beautiful natural destinations for tourists

Times News Service

MUSCAT: To target more tourists from the GCC countries to Oman, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism successfully concluded promotional workshops in the Gulf market.

The workshops were launched in Kuwait, passing through Qatar and Bahrain. The event was held in the presence of Sheikh Salem bin Muslim Al Kathiri, Head of the Sultanate of Oman Commercial Office in Dubai.

The promotional workshops in the Gulf market were organised as part of the Ministry’s tourism strategy to market the Sultanate of Oman as a heritage, beach, mountain and cultural destinations, as well as promoting adventure tour-



TOURISM DESTINATION: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in is also working with tourism stakeholders to establish new relationships and contacts with holiday service providers from emerging markets. - ONA



ism, which is gaining momentum around the world.

The Ministry is also working with tourism stakeholders to establish new relationships and contacts with holiday service providers from emerging markets, in addition to introducing new tourism and heritage projects and important tourist destinations.

Participants in the promotional workshops praised the success of the event and the efforts made to advance the tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

The participating tourism companies and institutions presented various services and tourism programmes to the visitors, in addition to reviewing the services and offers they provide.

Many meetings were held to discuss ways to enhance integration and partnership in various tourism fields in order to enhance the competitiveness of the sector.

In this regard, Abbas Al Farsi, Atana Hotels Sales Manager, said: “Our participation in promotional workshops with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism in several Gulf cities comes as part of the Ministry’s efforts to enhance the travel market and the related sector, and we hope that these participations will continue to have positive impact on tourism sector. We are betting on the Gulf market because it is the largest market exporting tourists to the Sultanate of

Oman, and these events are considered a favourable opportunity due to a large presence of Gulf companies and travel agents in them.”

Mohammed Al Habsi, Chief Business Developer and Responsible for the GCC Market at the National Travel Operator “VisitOman”, expressed his happiness with VisitOman’s participation in the promotional workshops in the GCC markets.

He said: “The aim of these campaigns was to attract more tourists from the Gulf market through tour operators and travel agencies in the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. The Ministry held promotional workshops in Kuwait, Doha, Bahrain and the UAE

with the participation of various tourism sector partners from the Sultanate of Oman. During these workshops, VisitOman had the opportunity to showcase the Visitoman.om platform, which is a digital tool for booking tourism services in the Sultanate of Oman.”

He explained: “The Visitoman website offers a wide range of tourism services, including transportation, accommodation, tours, excursions, and facilities suitable for institutions and companies.”

Moataz bin Muslim Saleh Al Maawali, Head of Operations and Logistics Department at Safari International Travel & Tourism Company, noted: “The workshops gave us the opportunity to present

our tourism services in the Sultanate of Oman at Global Safari Travel & Tourism and develop relationships between us and tourism companies interested in promoting Omani tourism.”

“Oman is distinguished by its natural beauty and rich history, which attracts tourists from various countries. Our company provides a mixture of different services to tourists, including: hotel accommodation, tourist trips, tourist guidance, camping and fishing services, and others,” he said. “We look forward to participating in the upcoming workshops and hope to be an active partner in the progress and success of tourism in Oman in the coming years,” he added.

LONDON

Oman-Britain relations are historic, says Sheikh Khalifa



Times News Service

LONDON: The Omani-British Association held its annual luncheon in London, in which Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali Al-Harthy, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for Diplomatic Affairs, participated as a guest of honour from the Omani side, and Lord Gerry Grimstone as a guest of honour from the British side.

Sheikh Khalifa bin Ali Al-Harthy delivered a speech on this occasion in which he praised the distinguished historic relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the United Kingdom.

He said that strengthening economic relations with Britain is in the interest of the Sultanate of Oman, and thanked the members of the association for the efforts they are making to strengthen relations between the two friendly countries.

For his part, Lord Grimstone spoke about the importance that

his country attaches to its relationship with the Sultanate of Oman and its appreciation for the role it plays in the region.

The banquet was attended by Ambassador Badr bin Mohammed Al Mandhari, the Sultanate of Oman’s accredited ambassador to the United Kingdom, retired Major General Richard Stanford, President of the Association, members of the Association and diplomats from the embassy.

With ONA inputs

ASIAN GAMES

The athletes have brought glory to our nation, says Taha Al Kishry

<FROM A1 Over the eight participations at the Asian Games since 1982, Oman have finished seventh on five occasions, their best result.

Sailors’ silver, a first

Oman had never won a silver at the Asiad. Ahead of the 2022 Hangzhou Asian Games, Oman’s overall medals haul was four, which included a gold at the Beijing Asian Games by Mohammed Amur Al Malki in the 400m.

Al Malki had opened the Sultanate’s medal account at the Asian Games in the 1986 Seoul Asian Games with a bronze in the 400m.

In 1999 at the Jakarta Games, the athletes once again got a medal when the 4x100 relay quartet bagged a bronze. Ace sprinter Barakat Al Harthi then got another bronze at the 2010 Asian Games in Guangzhou and 13 years later, Oman won their first silver with Al Hadi and Al Kindi clinching at Hangzhou.

The pair also were the first sportspersons other than track athletes to get a medal and also won the first silver for the country.

And the icing on the cake was delivered for Oman when 20-year-old Husain Al Farsi clinched a bronze in the 800m event to keep the tradition of track athletes’ contribution towards the medal haul.

Besides, athletics and sailing, Oman athletes also took part in swimming, shooting, weightlifting, hockey, and beach volleyball.



While the two teams of beach volleyball did reach the round of 16, there was disappointment in the other sports with hardly any notable performances.

Commenting on Oman’s best ever medals haul at the Asian Games, Taha Al Kishry, Oman Olympic Committee (OOC) secretary general told *Times of Oman*, “Hangzhou Asian Games have been the best ever for Oman and OOC feels proud on the accomplishments. The silver by the sailors Musab and Waleed, and Al Farsi’s bronze in 800m reflects the dedication, talent, and unwavering commitment of our athletes. The athletes have brought glory to our nation and it also showcases the potential

of Omani sportsmen at the continental level.

“At the OOC, we remain committed to nurturing and supporting our athletes as they strive for excellence in their respective fields.”

Al Kishry admitted that they expected better results from other athletes and will definitely analyse what went wrong with the performances of others.

Al Kishry added: “However, we are happy on the maiden silver medal and the first medal in 800m by our athletes and it also underlines the steady progress OOC has made under its chairman Khalid Al Zubair with the strong support and guidance from His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham

Al Said, the Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, and the ministry.

Oman Sail’s CEO Dr Khamis Al Jabri said, “Our sailors, Musab Al Hadi and Waleed Al Kindi, have etched their names in Oman’s sports history with their extraordinary achievement of bringing the first silver medal for the country.

“This is a significant milestone in our sporting journey but it will also inspire future generations of Omani sailors. We are immensely proud of their dedication, team work, and resilience.”

“As we celebrate this historic medal win, we look forward to even greater accomplishments on the global sporting stage”.

BETWEEN PALESTINIANS, ISRAELIS

GCC Secretary-General calls for immediate cessation of escalation

RIYADH: Jassem Mohamed Al Budaiwi, Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) called for immediate halt of escalation between the Palestinians and the Israel forces to protect the innocent civilians.

The GCC Secretary General of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) held the occupying forces accountable for these conditions which resulted on account of continued Israeli offences against the Palestinians and the sacred places.

He said that the continued Israeli offences represent a clear breach to the international conventions and laws and impede the efforts of peace aimed at reaching a solution for the Pal-



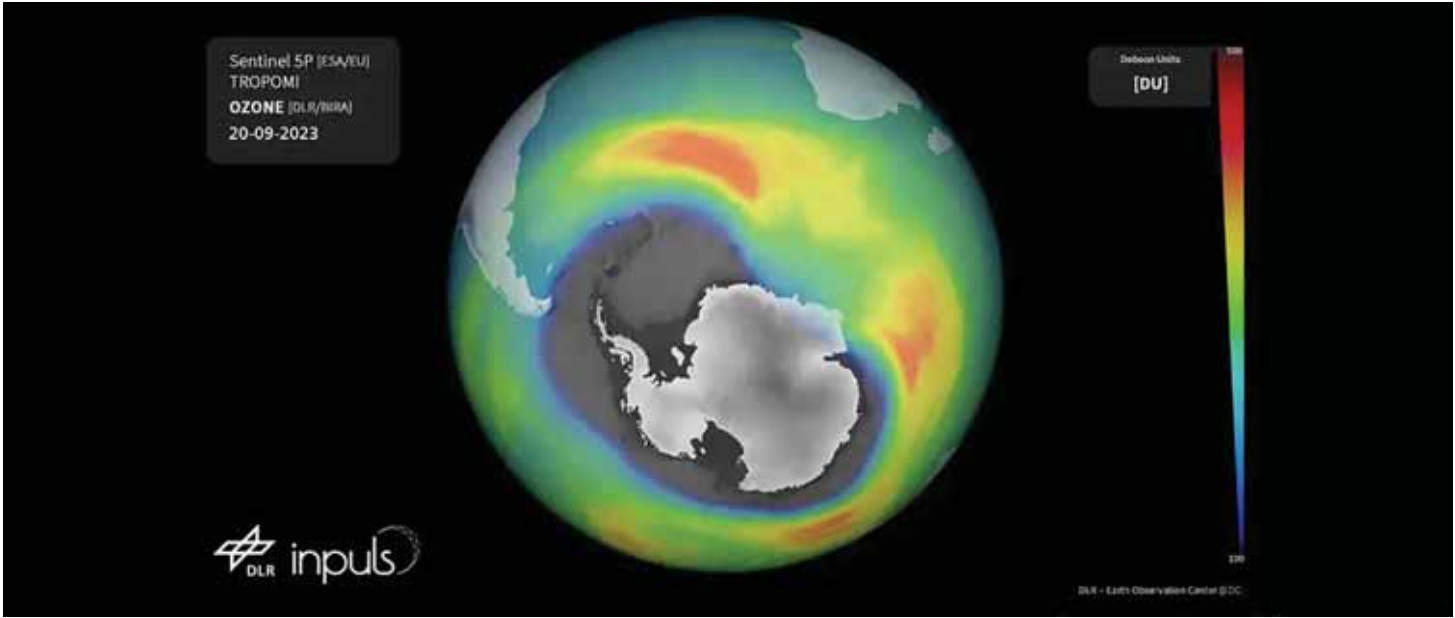
estinian cause. The GCC Secretary General also renewed his call for the international community for immediate intervention for revitalisation of the efforts to enable the Palestinian establish their state on the lands of 1967 with Eastern Al Quds as the capital for achievement of peace and stability in the occupied Palestinian lands. - ONA

ANNOUNCEMENT



This is to inform all concerned that **Mr.Souda Beevi Mansoor** holder of Indian Passport No.M7027919 Resident card No.122481094 has resigned from our company Agreement For Logistics Services LLC (Concorde OM) from.18/05/2023 Therefore, all the concerned are requested to stop dealing with the above named in favor of the company.

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Scientists detect very large ozone hole over Antarctica

The hole, which scientists call an “ozone depleted area” was 26 million square kilometres (10 million square miles) in size, roughly three times the size of Brazil

PARIS: Satellite measurements over Antarctica have detected a giant hole in the ozone layer. The hole, which scientists call an “ozone depleted area” was 26 million square kilometres (10 million square miles) in size, roughly three times the size of Brazil. The European Space Agency Copernicus Sentinel-5P satellite made the recordings on September 16, 2023, as part of the EU’s environmental monitoring programme. Claus Zehner, the agency’s mission manager for Copernicus Sentinel-5P, told DW that this is one of the biggest ozone holes they’ve ever seen. “The satellite measured trace gases in the atmosphere in order to monitor the ozone and climate. It showed that this year’s ozone hole started earlier than usual, and had a big extension,” said Zehner. Experts believe the hole in the ozone is not likely to increase warming on the surface of Antarctica. “It’s not a concern for climate change,” said Zehner. **Ozone holes grow and shrink every year** The ozone layer is a trace gas in the stratosphere, one of the four layers of the Earth’s atmosphere. It functions as a protective gas shield that absorbs ultraviolet radiation, protecting humans and ecosystems from dangerous amounts of UV. Most skin cancers are caused by exposure to high amounts of UV radiation, so anything that shields us from UV rays helps reduce cancer rates. The size of the ozone hole over Antarctica fluctuates each year, opening each year in August and closing again in November or December. Zehner said the ozone hole opens up because of the rotation of the Earth causing special winds over the closed landmass of Antarctica. “The winds create a mini climate, creating a shield over Antarctica preventing it from mixing with surrounding air. When the winds die down, the hole closes,” he said. **What caused the giant ozone hole this year?** Scientists believe this year’s big ozone hole could be due to the volcanic eruptions at Hunga Tonga during December 2022 and January 2023. “Under normal conditions, gas released from a volcanic eruption stays below the level of the stratosphere, but this eruption sent a lot of water vapour into the stratosphere,” said Zehner. The water had an impact on the ozone layer through chemical reactions and changed its heating rate. The water vapor also contained other elements that can deplete ozone like bromine and iodine. **Human-caused ozone holes** While this year’s Antarctic ozone hole was likely due to a volcanic eruption, scientists became aware that human activities were creating huge ozone holes in the 1970s. Ground and satellite-based measurements detected the holes, which were caused by widespread use of chemicals called chlorofluorocarbons. “The culprit behind ozone depletion was not aerosols in aerosol cans, but the propellants we use as gases to propel the solutions inside. These gaseous propellants contain chlorine, which is released high in the stratosphere and depletes the ozone,” said Jim Haywood, a professor of atmospheric science at University of Exeter in the UK. The world took action after scientists raised alarm over the ozone holes, and quickly. In 1987, The Montreal Protocol was created to protect the ozone layer by phasing out the production of these harmful substances. The good news is that the protocol was effective — ozone holes got smaller in the decades after ozone-depleting gas emissions were controlled. **Is climate change reopening ozone holes?** Scientists agree that ozone depletion is not a principal cause of global climate change. However, Haywood said there are signs that rising global temperatures could be having an impact on ozone holes. “Our mitigation of the ozone hole was working well since the 1980s, but in 2020 we were taken by surprise when the 2020 ozone hole was very deep and long lasting,” he told DW. Research showed that the main reason for the large ozone hole in 2020 was due to the wildfires in southeastern Australia that year. Haywood said as the climate crisis carries on, with the Earth continuing to warm, fires are getting more common and more devastating around the globe. “It’s been an amazing bad year for boreal fires in the Northern Hemisphere this year. If that continues to happen, we get more smoke injected into the stratosphere, and we might get more ozone depletion coming back,” said Haywood. It’s less clear what impact ozone holes have on the Earth’s climate. Some data shows that ozone holes actually contribute to cooling effects, as they reduce the greenhouse gas effect. But Haywood said there is evidence ozone holes changes the progression of the seasons. “If you get ozone depletion, it takes longer for the hole to repair. This means you have a longer, more drawn out polar vortex, so you’ll have wintertime lasting that little bit longer,” he said. — DW





Printed and published by:
Muscat Media Group
Post Box 770,
Postal Code: 112

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SPACE ASPIRATIONS



Spain’s first private rocket launch deemed ‘successful’

MADRID: A company launched Spain’s first private rocket on Saturday, conducting Europe’s first fully private rocket launch and offering hope for the continent’s spluttering space aspirations. Spanish firm PLD Space — which launched its small Miura-1 rocket at 02:19 am (0019 GMT) from a military base in the southern region of Andalusia — stated the lift off was “successful” and that it had achieved all its “technical objectives.” The Miura-1 is named after a breed of fighting bull and is as tall as a three-storey building. The company’s blast off test in Huelva came after two previous attempts were aborted. The rocket rose to 46 kilometres (29 miles) above the Gulf of Cadiz before landing in the Atlantic Ocean after five minutes of flight. Shortly after the launch, a de-lighted Raul Torres, chief executive of PLD Space, all rocket systems worked “perfectly,” and the company was planning to triple its workforce. “This is just the beginning,” he said. **Europe’s space race** Europe’s ability to send small satellites into space is under scrutiny after a failed orbital rocket launch by Virgin Orbit from Britain in January. That scheme involved releasing the launcher from a converted Boeing 747. But competitors are currently lining up to join the race to blast off small payloads include firms in Scotland, Sweden and Germany. Saturday’s mission on the Miura-1 was the first of two planned suborbital missions. However, analysts say the most critical attempt will be the development of orbital services on the larger Miura-5. This test is slated for 2025. — DW



EXPLOSIVE ERUPTIONS

Europe’s super volcano: Is an eruption in Italy imminent?

NAPLES: An earthquake with a magnitude of 4.2 struck Naples on the morning of Wednesday, September 27, 2023. It was the strongest jolt experienced by the volcanic area, known as the Campi Flegrei or Phlegraean Fields, in more than four decades. The name of the area originates from the Greek word for “burning fields.” It is one of many, but the strongest of the small earthquakes that has rocked the region recently. Both experts and the public fear these tremors could cause a “super volcano” to erupt and force people into mass evacuation. Many residents in the region have already prepared an emergency bag in case the need arises for a sudden evacuation. **What is the Campi Flegrei?** The Campi Flegrei is a depressed volcanic area, formed as a result of repeated explosive eruptions. One of them, an outburst 40,000 years ago, was one of the most powerful catastrophes in the world, affecting global climate. This might have led to the extinction of the Neanderthal, some researchers say. Magma from that blast has been found in Greenland, some



4,500 km (2,796 miles) away. Most recently, the Campi Flegrei saw an eruption in 1538. Across the Bay of Naples from the Campi Flegrei sits Pompeii, a key tourist attraction in southern Italy, known for preserving the ruins of volcanic calamities. In Pompeii, thousands were killed in an eruption of Mount Vesuvius in 79 AD. The Campi Flegrei is home to a much bigger volcano than Vesuvius it’s dubbed a ‘super volcano’ by many. Sometimes the volcano is called the “next Vesuvius,” as it is unlikely to get its own name until it actually erupts. While experts have not spotted a volcanic cone in the ground through which lava would flow out, if the volcano erupts with full power, it could kill millions and destroy entire towns. The geological history of the caldera, the cauldron left behind when the magma empties out after an eruption, reveals that over the past 15,000 years, it has undergone more than 70 eruptions, forming volcanic edifices, craters and lakes, such as Astroni, Solfatara and the lake of Averno. **Why is there fear of volcanic eruption now?** The volcanic region near Naples sprawls across some 180 square kilometres (almost 70 square miles), and the epicentre of the recent earthquakes falls in the Campi Flegrei region. While thousands of small tremors have been felt in the region since 2019, both their frequency and intensity have increased this year. This has raised suspicions on whether the volcano brewing below the surface is about to erupt in the near future. The Italian government’s Department of Civil Protection has warned that seismic activity is more pressing of an issue than a volcanic eruption right now, and that more quakes could follow. On their social media channels, they have recorded that the recent tremors did not cause any major damage. Further, they have asked local authorities to inspect buildings for damage to identify weakness in the event of more tremors in the future. Experts suggest that the threat of volcanic activity comes from a geological phenomenon called bradyseism that is common in the region. It is the vertical movement of soil, in this case an ascent, due to pressure from the magma below. In the early 1980s, a similar increase in tremors was felt in the region without it leading to a volcanic eruption. While Italy’s National Institute for Geophysics and Volcanology (INGV) has issued a warning that more earthquakes can be expected in the coming days, no proof of rising magma has been observed so far. **What could happen during an eruption?** The Campi Flegrei region has always manifested itself mainly through explosive eruptions. If that happens again, we may see the formation of a tall eruptive column made out of gas, lava bits and ash. This could lead to fall-out of volcanic material raining down on nearby regions. The debris can fly for many kilometres — remember the extreme example of Greenland! During an eruption, the volcano could spew out a pyroclastic flow, which is characterised by an avalanche of gases, ash and volcanic fragments moving at high temperatures and speed. If the eruption is strong enough, it could affect global temperatures and climate, and could potentially lead to a much warmer winter in the northern hemisphere. — DW

AMBASSADOR OF FINLAND

‘Immense potential for India-Finland ties’

NEW DELHI: As next year marks the 75th year of the diplomatic relationship between India and Finland, Ambassador of Finland to India Kimmo Lahdevirta, on Friday emphasised that the ongoing free trade negotiations would produce beneficial results for both the countries, noting that the European Union is an important trading partner of India.

“European Union is a very important trading partner of India and that’s why I think it’s very important that the free trade negotiations which are now ongoing would produce results that would be beneficial for both parties,” the Indian envoy said.



He further shared his delight, saying that over the decades, both nations have seen a significant deepening of the relationship in different sectors, including trade, technology, education and culture.

While explaining the India-Finland relationship in terms of tourism, he said, “People-to-people contacts...are very important and tourism...also, we have direct flights between Helsinki and India by Finner which of course facilitate these exchanges very much.”

He further expressed hope towards the growing relationship between the two countries in technologies.

“I would say that looking ahead we really see immense potential for the development of relationships especially in emerging technologies like artificial intelligence, 5G, 6G, new green technologies, energy solutions, biofuels and other research and product development to combat which is linked to sustainable development are something of significance,” Lahdevirta said.

Moreover, ahead of the 75th year of diplomatic relations between India and Finland, he said, “We are very much looking forward to the 75th year of diplomatic relations between our countries next year.”

In an exclusive interview with ANI, Lahdevirta further highlighted that some of the Finnish start-

ups are looking for partners in India and noted that Indian companies are also active in Finland.

“Large Finnish companies such as Fortum Corp, Lindstrom, Nokia, Valmit and Bertilla have already established large operations here in India. Also, Indian companies like Tata Mahindra, Infosys, TCS, Motherson Group...have made significant investments in Finland as well. But in addition to that, we also have quite a few start-up companies nowadays, Finnish startups who are looking for partners here in India and also Indian companies active in Finland, for example in the IT, auto components and hospitality sectors,” he added.

Moreover, he stressed that this bilateral relationship is the key behind these developments.

In addition to the bilateral relationship and the EU being a partner, Lahdevirta also emphasized that Finland also sees value in creating partnerships between the Nordic region, the Baltic region and India.

“In that respect, we have a Baltic India business conclave coming up in November where we also hope to get ministerial-level representation and business delegation. So I think really looking ahead, we are excited about the prospects and we really are working closely with all the partners here in India,” he further added. — ANI

Hundreds killed in conflict between Israel and Palestine

GCC nations call for immediate de-escalation between Israel and Palestine

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Hundreds of people were killed in Israel-Palestine conflict on Saturday, official sources said on Saturday.

Palestinian health ministry confirmed that hundreds of people were killed in Gaza on Saturday following Israeli airstrikes in response to surprise early morning rocket strikes from Hamas militants that killed scores of people in Israel.

The United Arab Emirates (UAE) has expressed great concern regarding the escalation of violence between Israelis and Palestinians, and stressed the importance of halting escalation and preserving the lives of civilians.

The UAE has expressed its sincere condolences to all the victims of the recent crisis.

In a statement, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MoFA) stressed that the UAE has called for exercising the utmost restraint and an immediate ceasefire in order to avoid serious repercussions.

The Ministry expressed that the UAE, as a non-permanent member of the UN Security Council, urges the international community to immediately re-activate the international Quartet to revive the path process of Arab-Israeli peace, and increase all efforts to achieve a just and comprehensive peace, and prevent the region from experiencing further violence, tension, and instability.

Saudi Arabia has called for an “immediate halt to the escalation



of conflict between Palestinians and Israel” after Hamas militants carried out an unprecedented attack on daybreak Saturday.

Saudi Arabia’s foreign affairs ministry said in a statement that it “is closely following developments in the unprecedented situation between a number of Palestinian factions and the Israeli occupation forces, which has resulted in a high level of violence taking place on a number of fronts there.”

“We recall our repeated warnings of the dangers of the situation exploding as a result of the continued occupation,” the statement said. It also called on the international community to activate a credible peace process that would lead to a two-state solution.

Earlier in the day, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said Israel ‘is at war’ with Palestinian militant group Hamas after barrages of rockets were fired

from the Gaza Strip into Israel on Saturday.

For the first time in the history of the Israeli-Palestinian struggle, Palestinian militants launched a massive air, sea and land attack on Israel, according to ANI.

“We are at war, not in an operation or in rounds, but at war,” the Israeli leader said in a statement, adding Hamas had launched a “murderous surprise attack” on Israel and its people.

PERILOUS JOURNEY

In Senegal, migration tears families apart

MBOUR: The departure of her 19-year-old son for Spain took Aminata Boye by surprise. “I was not informed when he left,” Boye told DW in Senegal’s coastal city of Mbour. “When I asked about him, they told me that he had taken to the sea.”

For the last three months, Boye hasn’t heard one word from her son. “His phone rang, but he didn’t answer,” she said.

Now, the young man is among those who have been reported missing somewhere around the Canary Islands.

“I lost my child at sea,” said Boye, desperate. She isn’t alone: many women in Mbour have a similar story to tell.

For Codou Boye, however, the situation is different, though no less difficult. Her husband is stuck in Spain, she told DW, waiting for paperwork to be settled. At least he regularly transfers some money back home. “We struggle, sometimes we don’t manage to meet our children’s needs,” she said. “Life is difficult here, but there’s no point in going off to beg elsewhere. We don’t know what will happen to him or how long he will stay there.”



More than 15,000 arrivals in Spain

Many migrants have set off from Senegal in recent months, but specific figures are hard to come by. The country’s navy has stepped up its patrols along the coast and says it has intercepted several thousand illegal migrants since July. Asked by DW for exact figures, government officials said they are known but “confidential.”

However, those who survive the perilous journey in packed boats to the Canary Islands are once again counted. As of October 1, the UNHCR had registered about 15,406 arrivals in 2023 alone. From Senegal, migrants travel between 1,500 and 2,100 kilometres (up to 1,300 miles) to the Canary Islands, which, as part of Spain, are the gateway to Europe.

For German anthropologist Markus Rudolf, the recent increase isn’t surprising. He said it can be attributed to a resurgence of migration after the COVID-19

pandemic. The systematic closing of other migratory routes has also added to the problem, said Rudolf, an affiliated senior researcher at Addis Ababa University.

‘Domestic situation is hopeless’

Senegal’s internal political crisis has further exacerbated the situation. In recent months, court action against the popular jailed opposition figure Ousmane Sonko

has repeatedly stirred protest, leaving at least 16 people dead. Before his imprisonment, Sonko was considered a promising candidate in next year’s presidential election.

“The domestic situation is hopeless,” said Rudolf. “The protests have led to even greater resignation.”

This comes amid ongoing economic hardship, with many Senegalese struggling to make ends

meet. That has made remittances from family members in Europe all the more important, said Rudolf. Other destinations have also been spoken about on social media as being attractive for migrants, he added. Nicaragua, for example, is sometimes seen as an easy way to get to the United States, but in reality this has repeatedly turned out to be a misconception. “Why people should first come to the Canary Islands

and then — without valid papers — try to continue to America is beyond me,” said Rudolf.

Few alternatives to migration

Nevertheless, there are groups in Senegal that are trying to persuade people to stay. Among them is the National Association of Migrant Partners (ANPM), which is trying to raise awareness about the problems that those who leave will likely cause for those left behind.

In Mbour, the ANPM also tries to help the women who are mourning their loved ones and at the same time having to cope with a lack income previously provided by their departed family members.

The government recently set up yet another program to stop migration, but ANPM chair Cheikh Diop doesn’t believe change is around the corner.

“This repressive approach of curbing migration does not work. Alternatives must be found for the young people. As long as that doesn’t happen, it’s a futile effort,” he said. — DW

IN SIX WOODEN BOATS



Hundreds of migrants overwhelm tiny Canary Island

CANARY ISLANDS: Spain’s maritime rescue service said that over the last 24 hours, 500 migrants arrived in the Canary Islands in six wooden boats after setting off into the Atlantic from West Africa.

Over half of those arrived in three boats at El Hierro island on Friday alone. Authorities on the island, with a population of 11,000, said they were overwhelmed by the number of arrivals.

Another two boats arrived in Tenerife, and one boat arrived on Gran Canaria with 243 people, all from sub-Saharan Africa.

The head of the Red Cross’ emergency unit in El Hierro, Inigo Vila, told reporters the organisation had to increase its resources to deal with the higher number of people in need of aid.

“We have reinforced our staff and equipment to be able to provide as much coverage as possible,” Vila said. “We have even reinforced with volunteer personnel from other islands that perhaps are not suffering the pressure El Hierro is suffering at the moment.”

Lying barely 100 kilometres (62 miles) from the northwest coast of Africa at their closest point, the Canary Islands have become a main route for migrants, asylum-seekers and refugees trying to reach Spain by sea. In 2022, half of irregular migrants entering Spain went via the Canaries. — DW

SPORTS

MARKRAM'S MAYHEM
IN SOUTH AFRICA'S WIN

Markram smashes the fastest century in ODI World Cups while South Africa also break World Cup records in their impressive 102-run win over Sri Lanka in Delhi

NEW DELHI: Aiden Markram hit the fastest World Cup hundred as South Africa fought off a spirited comeback from Sri Lanka to record a 102-run win over Sri Lanka at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in Delhi on Saturday.

Batting first, South Africa rode on centuries from Markram, Quinton de Kock (100) and Rassie van der Dussen (108) to make 428-5 - the highest score in the tournament's history.

Chasing a mammoth score, Sri Lanka were bowled out for 326 despite gritty half-centuries from Kusal Mendis (76), Charith Asalanka (79) and skipper Dasun Shanaka (68) but the gulf was too wide to bridge.



In the end, Sri Lanka's fight ended in 44.5 overs. Gerald Coetzee was the most successful bowler with 3/68 while Marco Jansen,

Kagiso Rabada and Keshav Mahiraj picked two wickets apiece.

Markram made his ton off 49 balls, one quicker than Ireland's Kevin O'Brien against England in Bangalore in 2011. He finally fell for 106 from 54, after Quinton de Kock and Rassie van der Dussen had also hit centuries.

David Miller then took the score beyond the previous record of Australia's 417-6 against Afghanistan in 2015.

Sri Lanka, who are coached by former England coach Chris Silverwood, crumbled amid the carnage on the flattest of pitches. They leaked 21 wides and had to bowl the final two overs with another fielder up inside the ring

because of a slow over-rate.

Matheesha Pathirana conceded 26 runs from the 43rd over, with the seamer's 10 overs costing 95 for one wicket. It was also the first time in a Men's World Cup three batters have scored centuries in the same innings.

Earlier, after captain Temba Bavuma fell lbw to left-armers Dilshan Madushanka in the second over, De Kock and Van der Dussen built relatively carefully - reaching 48-1 after 10 overs and 118-1 from 20.

Van der Dussen, who was dropped at backward point on 71, scored all around the wicket, including reverse sweeps to the spinners.

De Kock increased his intent

after reaching his 50 from 61 balls, playing his trademark flowing strokes. His 12th four, a fine flick through mid-wicket, took him to his first World Cup ton but he topped Pathirana a ball later.

That brought in Markram, whose innings began with glorious straight drives before becoming increasingly brutal as he struck 14 fours and three sixes.

Miller's 39 from 21 kept the scoring rate high, while it was a towering straight six from all-rounder Marco Jansen in the penultimate over that set the new record.

There was also 32 from 20, including three sixes, by Heinrich Klaasen - one of five South Africa

batters in the top 15 of the world rankings.

The number of Sri Lankan specialist bowlers who conceded 80-plus runs against South Africa - Kasun Rajitha (90), Dilshan Madushanka (86), Matheesha Pathirana (95) and Dunith Wellalage (81).

It is the second instance of four bowlers conceding 80-plus runs in a men's ODI innings. The Netherlands suffered the same when they faced England in Amstelveen last year.

Brief scores: South Africa 428/5 (Markram 106, de Kock 100, Van der Dussen 108; Madhushanka 2/86) beat Sri Lanka 326 in 44.5 overs (Asalanka 79, Mendis 76, Shanaka 68, Coetzee 3/68). - Agencies

MAIDEN VISIT OF AFGHANISTAN CRICKET TEAM

Oman set to host Afghanistan A cricket team for bilateral series

MUSCAT: Oman national cricketers will have a "perfect" buildup to the ICC T20 World Cup Qualifier later this month in Nepal with a bilateral series against Afghanistan A (AfghanAbdalyan) scheduled to be played at the Oman Cricket Academy (OCA) grounds in Al Amerat from 12-23 October.

This will be the first time Oman will host any Afghanistan national side and the tour will include two 50-over-matches and five T20I games.

Speaking on the upcoming visit of Afghanistan A squad to Oman, Oman Cricket Chairman Pankaj Khimji said: "Afghanistan's rise in the cricket world is an example. The tour of the A squad, which also comprises few players who have already played for the national side will be a good match practice for our boys ahead of the ICC T20 World Cup Qualifier in Nepal.

"Our boys have just started the domestic season and we wanted to provide them with quality matches and Afghanistan A will be a good test for them."

Khimji added: "The visit also assumes significance as this is the first time the Afghanistan Cricket Board has sent its squad and the visit will help strengthen our bilateral relations with them."

In a statement to the media, Afghanistan Cricket Board (ACB) Chairman Mirwais Ashraf: "We are committed to providing more playing opportunities for the AfghanAbdalyan squad, which includes top domestic players, to gain international exposure and be prepared for national call-ups when necessary. This series is an excellent opportunity for the players to demonstrate their skills and make the most of it. Oman is a strong team, and I am hopeful to witness an entertaining series of competitive cricket."

Oman head coach Duleep Mendis said: "This is a perfect buildup for our boys as we aspire to book



Mirwais Ashraf, ACB chairman



Pankaj Khimji, OC chairman.

our spot in the ICC T20 World Cup 2024. We have the Asian Qualifier in Nepal, starting on October 30 and we hope to finish among the top two in the eight-nation tournament to qualify.

"Oman had a good run in the T20 World Cup as we have made it to the global event twice in 2016 and 2021. We hope to make it this time at the 2024 ICC Men's T20 World Cup in West Indies and USA. As part of our buildup plans, we want to give our boys good preparations ahead of the Qualifier in Nepal. Afghanistan A squad comprises few T20 internationals and it would be a good exercise for our players."

ACB CEO Naseeb Khan said: "It is a significant achievement for the Afghanistan Cricket Board to have maintained strong bilateral ties with other cricketing nations.

We are committed to continuing efforts to expand and improve the game, and hope that all players will have the opportunity to showcase their skills and create good memories during this tour."

"Oman remains our close cricketing friend country where cricket has been making significant progress, the same as the game progressed in Afghanistan. The upcoming tour between the two countries is an excellent opportunity to strengthen the relationship between the two nations and promote the growth of cricket in both countries," he added.

Zeeshan Maqsood will lead Oman's squad as he returns to the team after recovering from his injury. The hosts will go into the series high on confidence after the national team recently won

the inaugural Gulf T20I title.

Mendis declared the squad for the two 50-over games that will be played on 12 October 12 and 15 October. The coach will announce the T20 squad later with the five-match T20I series to be played on 17th, 18th, 20th, 21st, and 23rd of October.

50-over-match Oman team: Zeeshan Maqsood, Aqib Ilyas, Ayaan Khan, Kashyap Prajapati, Shoaib Khan, Mohammed Nadeem, Khalid Kail, Pruthvi Machhi, Jay Odedra, Kaleemullah, Pratik Athawale, Bilal Khan, Hemal Tandel, Samay Shrivastav, Sandeep Goud. Officials: Head Coach: Duleep Mendis, assistant coach: Evert Laubscher, fast bowling coach: Champaka Ramanayake, coach co-ordinator: Mazher Saleem Khan, analyst: Zeeshan Siddiqui, physio: Sean Nowak.

AfghanAbdalyan's squad: Shahidullah Kamal (captain), Noman Shah (wicketkeeper), Mohammad Ihsaq Rahimi (wicketkeeper), Abdul Malik, Noor Ali Zadran, Zubaid Akbari, Baheer Shah, Nasir Jamal, Rahmanullah Zadran, Asif Musazai, Izharulhaq Naveed, Zia Ur Rahman Akbar, Naveed Zadran, Ibrahim Abdulrahimzai and Wafadar Momand.

AfghanAbdalyan's T20 squad: Shahidullah Kamal (captain), Afsar Zazai (wicketkeeper), Mohammad Shahzad (wicketkeeper), Hazratullah Zazai, Sediqullah Atal, Wafullah Tarakhil, Samiullah Shinwari, Karim Jannat, Ijaz Ahmad Ahmadzai, Nangyal Khartoti, Qais Ahmad, Zahir Khan Pakteen, Mohammad Saleem Safi, Wafadar Momand, Nijat Masoud, and Ibrahim Abdulrahimzai.

Tour schedule: 50 overs: 12th October: Oman vs Afghanistan A, 15th October: Oman vs Afghanistan A (both matches start at 2pm)

T20I fixtures: 17th, 18th, 20th, 21st and 23rd October: Oman vs Afghanistan A (all matches start at 2pm)

ODI CRICKET WORLD CUP



Miraz shines as Bangladesh beat Afghanistan

DHARAMSHALA: Mehidy Hasan Miraz's all-round show and Bangladesh's exceptional performances in all three departments stunned Afghanistan resulting in a 6-wicket victory for Bangladesh in their opening match of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup here at Himachal Pradesh Cricket Association Stadium in Dharamshala on Saturday.

In the match, Miraz starred with both bat and ball as he bagged three wickets conceding just 25 runs while he played an exceptional knock of 57 runs off 73 balls.

Bangladesh bowled out Afghanistan for just 156 thanks to a masterful bowling display and Shakib Al Hasan's team easily won the match in the 35th over.

Afghanistan got off to a nearly flawless start in their defence of a modest target of 157 thanks to some excellent fieldwork. In the fifth over, Najibullah Zadran's precise hit left Tanzid Hasan (5) short of his ground. Fazalhaq Farooqi bowled Litton Das a few overs later.

Miraz was dropped off the bowling of Farooqi, denying Af-

ghanistan a third opportunity. Miraz was able to find his rhythm and lead Bangladesh's batting order thanks to this and another drop off his bat in the 12th over. By the 20th over, the all-rounder had hit four of his team's seven long balls. He and Najmul Hossain Shanto combined 97 runs for the third wicket. His innings of 57 finally came to an end thanks to Rahmat Shah's superb one-handed catch at mid-off.

Bangladesh, though, were already far ahead of the competition at this point. In the 34th over, Shanto reached his half-century, and in the 35th over, his team reached the victory target.

Earlier, Bangladesh bowlers showed top form to bowl Afghanistan for 156. Shakib and Miraz bagged three wickets each while Shoriful Islam also starred with the ball with his two-wicket haul.

Brief scores: Afghanistan 156 in 37.2 overs (Rahmanullah Gurbaz 47, Ibrahim Zadran 22; Mehidy Hasan Miraz 3-25) vs Bangladesh 158/4 in 34.4 overs (Mehidy Hasan Miraz 57, Najmul Hossain Shanto 59*; Azmatullah Omarzai 1-9). - ANI

AFRICA'S PULSE REPORT

The World Bank's latest Africa's Pulse report paints a mixed picture of economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa. While projections indicate an increase in growth in the coming years, per capita growth remains stagnant, raising concerns of a potential lost decade for the region.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



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SUNDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2023



AUDIT CONFERENCE 2023

The much-lauded 'Audit & Organisational Excellence Conference 2023' recently concluded, marking a defining moment in the domain of internal audit and organisational governance.

MSX trading value tops OMR608 million at the end of September

However, the number of transactions executed increased by 3.5 percent from 105,000 deals to more than 108,000 deals



MUSCAT: The value of trading on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) declined in the first nine months of this year to about OMR608.1 million, compared to OMR754.1 million in the same period last year, registering a fall of 19.3 percent. However, the number of transactions executed increased by 3.5 percent from 105,000 deals to more than 108,000 deals. This was attributed to the listing of Abraaj Energy Services Company, which turned into a public joint stock company and was listed on the stock exchange in March 2023.

Trading value in the first nine months of this year was affected by a decline in the sentiments of investors, at a time when major investment funds and institutions reduced their investments in the stock market.

This had prompted the MSX to announce on June 6 initiatives to be implemented in cooperation with the National Programme for Financial Sustainability and Financial Sector Development.

Basically, the initiatives aim to improve public finances, prepare for industry transformations, and support the private financial sector.

These initiatives include market representation, securities lending, pooled trading accounts, company market creation, governance enhancements, and a liquidity fund.

The second quarter of this year witnessed the highest trading volume at OMR234.9 million, an increase of 22.7 percent over the first quarter's trading, which amounted to about OMR191.4 million, while the third quarter recorded the lowest trading volume at OMR181.7 million.

The month of April recorded the best trading value at OMR122.4 million, benefiting from the increase in the trading value of Abraaj Energy Services shares, while March came in next at 93.6 million, and July came next at OMR66.9 million and September saw the last lowest trading value at OMR51.1 million.

In the first nine months of this year, the main index of the MSX witnessed a decline of 179 points

and closed at the end of September at 4,678 points, compared to an increase of 398 points in the same period last year.

The index was affected by the decline in the shares of a number of leading companies listed on the stock exchange, and the month of July recorded the best. The performance of the index rose by 141 points, while January witnessed the highest losses at 154 points.

The declines witnessed in stock prices were reflected in the market value of securities listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange, which declined at the end of September to OMR23.50 billion, recording losses estimated at OMR236.4 million in the first nine months of this year.

The market value recorded a number of gains in the first and second quarters, however, investors' desire to sell to provide liquidity to subscribe to OQ Gas Networks pushed many stocks to decline, and this was reflected in the market value of the stock exchange, which in March recorded losses of OMR346.1 million. - **ONA**

Omani stocks rebound in weekly trading

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market saw more volatility during the trading sessions of the last few days compared with the week before, during which it recorded limited price movements, according to an analyst. The main index was able to rebound to a certain extent, closing near its peak in mid-September.

"Its performance contrasted with the constant declines of last month and the index drew closer to the range within which it traded horizontally during July and August," said Daniel Takieddine, CEO MENA BDSwiss. "However, the main index could find some resistance at the bottom of its previous range and could be exposed to some selling pressure if traders move to secure their gains," he added.

The market's rebound was driven by the financial sector's performance in particular as it was able to climb above its previous peak. The financial sector recorded a 1.05 percent increase this week, followed by a quasi-stagnant services sector and a negative performance from the industrial sector. "The services sector maintained its volatile performance week after week and



could continue to weigh on the market's performance although it was able to approach its mid-September level. The industrial sector however continued to pull the main index down, recording new losses and extending its multi-month decline," he said.

Banks represented more than 37 percent of the trading volumes and more than 33 percent of the value traded with Bank Muscat and Sohar International Bank taking the lion's share this week. The banking industry in particular could continue to see a strong

performance thanks to its resilience and the healthy growth in loans as well as the elevated interest rate level.

"In this regard, the current path in monetary policy could see interest rates remain at a high level well into next year which could leave banks with favorable conditions if the rest of the economy maintains its strength," said Daniel Takieddine.

The market has also seen a number of positive credit rating events this week as S&P raised Oman's credit rating to BB+, following in Fitch's footsteps. The latter also raised the credit rating of Oman Telecom, contributing to the stock's performance this week and to the overall market rebound. Those rating improvements and others of unlisted companies could help improve investors' sentiment overall in addition to the interest in OQ Gas Networks's ongoing IPO.

However, the market could be facing some pressure if oil prices continue to decline. "Crude markets have been recording significant losses after hitting a peak late last month after concerns about US monetary policy flared up, fueling fears over its impact on demand levels," said Daniel Takieddine.

VIBRANT GUJARAT SUMMIT



India a big investment destination for us, says Emaar group CEO

DUBAI: UAE-based Emaar Properties Group CEO Amit Jain on Friday said India is a big investment for his company and the expansion announcement could be seen during the Vibrant Gujarat summit in New Delhi.

"We talked about our investments already...what Emaar can do in India, we talked about vibrant Gujarat, ...talked about potential investment in Sabarmati river and Kevadia... I think these are very exciting projects," the Emaar Group CEO told ANI.

"India for us is a big investment and we wish to continue to make future investments in India," Jain said following his meeting with Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal.

He added, "There are a number of projects that the minister has talked about, including in Northern India, other states, and we're just working on that so that we can make something pretty remarkable in India."

Speaking further on expansion, Jain said "I think we are just looking at a number of areas where we can expand in a number of sectors relating to real estate. And as vibrant Gujarat also comes, there could be announcements."

On investments, he mentioned that his company is one largest real estate investors in India and wants it to be successful.

Notably, Union Minister Piyush Goyal is on a two-day visit to the UAE.

Elaborating on UAE's interest in investment in India, Union Commerce and Industry Minister Piyush Goyal said in the days ahead a significant flow of investments both in public markets and in the manufacturing and services sector will be witnessed adding, "Even moon is not the limit."

In an exclusive interview with ANI in Abu Dhabi, Union Minister Piyush Goyal said, "While at one point in time, we would say the sky is the limit, I can say now even the moon is not the limit."

Union Minister Piyush Goyal was in UAE to co-chair the 11th Meeting of the India-UAE High-Level Joint Task Force to boost investments between the two countries.

He said, "They are very keen to invest in infrastructure projects, projects related to education and healthcare. They are looking at food and food processing in a very big way...The airline sector and the entire aviation ecosystem also hold a lot of promise. In the days ahead, we will see a significant flow of investments both in public markets and in the manufacturing and services sector, in pharmaceuticals, roads and highways, ports, and other infrastructure activities." - **ANI**

STATISTICS

Oman's electricity generation rises 3.9%

MUSCAT: The total electricity generation in the Sultanate of Oman until the end of July 2023 increased by 3.9 percent to reach 25,133.6 gigawatts per hour, compared to 24,181.9 gigawatts per hour during the same period in 2022.

Preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicated that each of the governorates of Al-Dhahirah, South and North Al-Batinah recorded an increase in total electricity generation at the end of July 2023 by 1.8 percent, reaching 16,072 gigawatts per hour.

Electricity generation also increased in the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate by 137 percent to reach 127.8 gigawatts per hour, as well as in the North and South Al Sharqiyah Governorates by 7 percent to reach 5,628.7 gigawatts per hour, in the Dhofar Governorate by 13.8 percent, reaching 2,727.6 gigawatts per hour, and in the Musandam Governorate by 2.1 percent reaching 260.7 gigawatts per hour.

Total electricity generation in Muscat Governorate decreased by 12.7 percent, recording 267.4 gigawatts per hour, and total production in Al Wusta Governorate decreased by 36.3 percent, reaching 114.2 gigawatts per hour.



As for the Sultanate of Oman's net electricity generation until the end of July 2023, which includes the purchases of the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company and the purchases of the Rural Areas Electricity Company by region, it amounted to 24,357.2 gigawatts per hour, with the largest amount

of net electricity generation coming in each of Al-Dhahirah and the governorates of South and North Al-Batinah, which amounted to 15,488.9 gigawatts per hour.

On the other hand, the total amount of water produced in the Sultanate of Oman witnessed an increase of 1.8 percent to reach

301.98 million cubic metres at the end of July 2023, compared to 296.77 million cubic metres at the end of the same period in 2022. The production of water in the Dhofar Governorate increased during this period by 3.1 percent, and in Muscat Governorate by 1.8 percent. - **ONA**

FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION

FAO Food Price Index unchanged in September

ROME: The overall measure of international food commodity prices was broadly stable in September, with declines in quotations for vegetable oils, dairy and meat offset by a notable increase in those for sugar and maize, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) reported.

The FAO Food Price Index, which tracks monthly changes in the international prices of globally-traded food commodities, averaged 121.5 points in September, compared to 121.4 points in August. At this level, the index is 10.7 percent below its value a year ago and 24.0 percent below its all-time high reached in March 2022.

The FAO Cereal Price Index rose 1.0 percent from the previ-

The FAO Food Price Index, which tracks monthly changes in the international prices of globally-traded food commodities, averaged 121.5 points in September, compared to 121.4 points in August

ous month, due to a 7.0 percent increase in international maize prices, driven by a strong demand for Brazil's supplies, slower farmer selling in Argentina and increased barge freight rates due to low water levels on the Mississippi River in the United States of America. International wheat prices fell by 1.6 percent, underpinned by ample supplies and good production

prospects in the Russian Federation, while the FAO All-Rice Price Index dipped by 0.5 percent amid generally low import demand.

The FAO Vegetable Oil Price Index declined by 3.9 percent from August, with international quotations for palm, sunflower, soy and rapeseed oils all down, driven in part by elevated seasonal production and abundant global export supplies.

The FAO Sugar Price Index increased by 9.8 percent from August, reaching its highest level since November 2010 amid increasing concerns over a tighter global supply outlook in the upcoming season. Early forecasts point to production declines in Thailand and India, both key producers, associated with the prevailing El Niño event.

The large crop currently being harvested in Brazil, amidst favourable weather conditions, limited the month-on-month increase in world sugar prices. The FAO Dairy Price Index declined by 2.3 percent from August, its ninth drop in a row, impacted by lacklustre global import demand and ample stocks in leading producing regions. - **WAM**

MARKET

Forum discusses future trajectory of auditing

The conference, held by IIA Oman in collaboration with KPMG Oman, was a confluence of industry stalwarts from major banks, advisory firms, and key governmental bodies

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The much-lauded 'Audit & Organisational Excellence Conference 2023' recently concluded, marking a defining moment in the domain of internal au-



dit and organisational governance. Under the patronage of Dr Abdullah Al Salmi, the conference, held by IIA Oman in collaboration with KPMG Oman, was a confluence of industry stalwarts from major banks, advisory firms, and key governmental bodies. They shared pivotal insights on areas such as the future trajectory of

auditing, the challenges and prospects of AI, and the increasing prominence of ESG in auditing. One of the standout themes this year was the conference's focus on the younger generation. Through workshops, networking, and mentorship moments, the event crafted a platform where the seasoned expertise met youthful

exuberance, fostering a collaborative environment and a vision for the future. The underlying sentiment echoed throughout was that the realm of auditing and organisational excellence is not only about navigating present challenges but also equipping the next generation to lead and innovate.

REMARKABLE RESPONSE

Bank Nizwa receives overwhelming response to OQGN IPO financing

MUSCAT: Oman's leading Islamic banking institution, Bank Nizwa, announced the resounding success of its OQGN IPO. Since its launch, the bank has witnessed an unprecedented surge in registrations, underscoring the burgeoning demand for Sharia-compliant banking solutions within the Sultanate of Oman. This remarkable response reaffirms the trust and partnership of the bank's valued customers, highlighting their shared commitment to Islamic finance. OQ Gas Networks floated 49 per cent of its share capital via an IPO which is the biggest in the history of the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) with 2,122,005,720 shares offered for subscription. A premium energy asset, the IPO allows local and international investors to be a part of a prominent and strategically important venture in Oman's energy landscape.

Demand
The great demand from Bank Nizwa customers came as a result

of the excellent services provided by the bank to customers to subscribe to the IPO through the bank's mobile application and the extensive network of branches. The bank also participated in the awareness campaign launched by OQ Gas Networks across the Sultanate to raise awareness of the bank's role in the IPO and how customers can submit their subscriptions through the bank's channels.

Collecting bank
As the leading Islamic bank in the country, Bank Nizwa ensures that all services provided under its umbrella are aligned with Islamic banking principles. As the Collecting Bank for the OQ Gas Networks IPO, the bank provided its customers with the opportunity to make investments by verifying that all aspects of this collaboration are in accordance with Sharia guidelines. By adding such services to its repertoire, Bank Nizwa continues to cement its position as a formidable force in Oman's financial landscape.

WORLD BANK

Sub-Saharan Africa's economic growth faces challenges: Report

WASHINGTON: The World Bank's latest Africa's Pulse report paints a mixed picture of economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa. While projections indicate an increase in growth in the coming years, per capita growth remains stagnant, raising concerns of a potential lost decade for the region. World Bank posted on X, "Economic growth in Sub-Saharan #Africa: a mixed outlook. While projections show growth increasing in the coming years, per capita growth remains stagnant, raising concerns for a lost decade. Dive into the #AfricasPulse report for the full picture: <http://wrld.bg/fOpI5OPTx4B>"

Short-term prospects
The report, which analyses the short-term economic prospects for Africa, highlights several key factors contributing to this mixed outlook. According to a report by The World Bank, economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is expected to decelerate from 3.6 per cent in 2022 to 2.5 per cent in 2023. However, projections suggest a gradual recovery to 3.7 per cent in 2024 and 4.1

per cent in 2025. Despite these growth figures, per capita income in the region is projected to slightly contract over the decade from 2015 to 2025. The challenges facing Sub-Saharan Africa are multifaceted, including sluggish growth, persistently low per capita income, mounting fiscal pressures due to high debt burdens, and an urgent need for job creation.

'Lost decade'
The report describes the situation as a "lost decade" for the region, highlighting the importance of comprehensive reforms to promote economic prosperity, reduce poverty, and create sustainable employment opportunities. Sub-Saharan Africa's economic growth is set to slow down due to various factors, including instability, weak growth in the region's largest economies, climate shocks, and global economic uncertainty. Current growth patterns generate only three million formal jobs annually, leaving many young people underemployed and engaged in unstable work. Job crea-

tion for youth is crucial for inclusive growth and harnessing the demographic dividend. Rising instability, conflicts, and violence in the region have a negative impact on economic activity. Climatic shocks exacerbate fragility issues, contributing to economic challenges. Although inflation is receding, it remains above central bank targets in most countries. Inflationary pressures are driven by higher food and fuel prices and weakened domestic currencies, affecting household income and consumption.

Debt distress
Sub-Saharan African economies continue to grapple with debt distress. As of June 2023, 21 countries are at high risk of external debt distress or already in debt distress. Lack of firm growth hampers the creation of quality jobs. The majority of firms in the region have fewer than five employees. Policies that disproportionately affect larger firms inhibit workforce expansion and resource allocation. -ANI

OFFICIAL DATA

China's entry-exit trips soar during eight-day holiday

BEIJING: China saw a surge in its inbound and outbound trips during the eight-day holiday that ended Friday, according to the official data released by the National Immigration Administration on Saturday. On average, nearly 1.48 million entry-exit trips were made per day amid the holiday, representing a 2.9-fold increase compared with the same period in 2022, and the total number of cross-border trips topped 11.8 million, the official data shows. The eight-day holiday, the Mid-Autumn Festival linked with the National Day holiday this year, boasted about 5.87 million inbound trips and nearly 5.95 million outbound ones. A total of 1.67 million inbound trips were logged on Oct. 2, the fourth day of the holiday, ranking first in terms of daily tourist volume during the holiday period. Trip.com, a Chinese online travel agency, said in a report that the outbound tourism market has witnessed remarkable growth, with bookings skyrocketing nearly 20 times compared to the previous year. Thailand, the Republic of Korea, Malaysia, Singapore,



Australia, and Britain were among the most popular destinations for Chinese travellers, according to the agency. Border areas are also busy. The Youyi Pass, also known as Friendship Pass, on the China-Vietnam border, became a hit for tourists. About a hundred tourists applied for outbound trips every day in the border city of Pingxiang, south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, according to a local travel agency. According to Dianping, a widely used Chinese customer review app, users left reviews about their

trips in up to 135 countries and regions throughout the holiday period. The eight-day holiday also ignited domestic enthusiasm for travelling, dining out, and sightseeing, injecting energy into the domestic tourism market. The country's domestic tourism market generated approximately 753.4 billion yuan (about \$103.2 billion) in revenue amid the holiday, representing a year-on-year increase of 129.5 percent and a rise of 1.5 percent from that of the National Day holiday in 2019, according to the Ministry of Culture and Tourism. -Xinhua

LABOUR MARKET

US job growth sizzles; wage inflation cooling

WASHINGTON: US employment increased by the most in eight months in September as hiring rose broadly, pointing to persistent labour market strength that could give the Federal Reserve ammunition to raise interest rates again, though wage growth is slowing. The larger-than-expected increase in nonfarm payrolls last month and a sharp upward revision to July and August's jobs counts reported by the Labor Department in its closely watched employment report on Friday cemented expectations that economic activity accelerated in the third quarter, Reuters reported. The labour market and the broader economy's resilience, 18 months after the US central bank started raising rates to cool demand, suggests that monetary policy could remain tight for some time. The report followed news this week that job openings jumped in August and first-time applications for unemployment benefits remained low in September. Financial markets and most economists believe the Fed is probably done hiking rates because of a recent surge in long-term US Treasury yields. "The jump in employment, the extremely low level of unemployment claims, and the rise in job openings keep alive the possibility of the Fed raising rates one more time this year," said Kathy Bostjancic, chief economist at Nationwide. "Moreover, it underscores that they will be in no hurry to cut



rates - higher rates for longer." Nonfarm payrolls increased by 336,000 jobs last month, the largest increase since January. The economy created 119,000 more jobs than previously reported in July and August. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast payrolls rising by 170,000 jobs. The economy needs to create roughly 100,000 per month to keep up with growth in the working-age population. The broad increase in payrolls was led by the leisure and hospitality industry, which added 96,000 jobs. Restaurants and bars dominated, with 61,000 positions created, returning employment in the sector back to its pre-pandemic level. Government employment increased by 73,000 jobs, boosted by state government education and local government, excluding edu-

cation. Government employment remains below its pre-pandemic level by 9,000 jobs. The healthcare sector added 41,000 jobs, lifted by ambulatory healthcare services, hospitals, nursing and residential care facilities. There were gains in professional, scientific and technical services employment, though temporary help hiring continued to decline. Employment in the transportation and warehousing industry also rose as did retail and construction payrolls. There was no impact on payrolls from a strike by the United Auto Workers (UAW) at General Motors (GM.N), Ford Motor (F.N) and Chrysler parent Stellantis (ST-LAM.MI). The strike by roughly 25,700 of the 146,000 UAW members started towards the end of week that the government surveyed businesses for September's

employment report. Manufacturing payrolls increased 17,000. Employment in the motion picture and sound recording industries fell 7,000 because of a months-long Hollywood strike. US stocks opened lower. The dollar gained versus a basket of currencies. US Treasury prices fell. Policymakers, eager to see labor market conditions easing, could draw some comfort from the unemployment rate, which was unchanged at an 18-month high of 3.8% in September. Monthly wage growth also remained moderate, with average hourly earnings rising 0.2% after a similar gain in August. That lowered the annual increase in wages to 4.2% after from 4.3% in August. The moderation in wages was likely because most of the jobs added last month was in lower paying industries. Nevertheless, wages are still rising faster than the 3.5% pace that economists say is consistent with the Fed's 2% inflation target. But as fewer people quit their jobs in search of greener pastures, wage growth could moderate, though recent hefty union contracts pose a risk. Financial markets continued to lean toward the Fed keeping rates unchanged at its Oct. 31- Nov. 1 policy meeting, though the odds of a hike are rising, according to CME Group's FedWatch tool. Inflation data next week could offer more clarity. Since March 2022, the Fed has raised its benchmark overnight interest rate by 525 basis points to the current 5.25%-5.50% range. -BNA

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DRINKING DARK TEA MAY REGULATE BLOOD SUGAR, MINIMISE RISK OF DIABETES

According to new research, drinking black tea every day may help to reduce the risk and progression of Type 2 diabetes in people by improving blood sugar control.

Researchers from the University of Adelaide in Australia and Southeast University in China discovered that daily dark tea drinkers had a 53 per cent lower risk of prediabetes and a 47 per cent lower risk of Type 2 diabetes, even after controlling for established risk factors such as age, gender, ethnicity, body mass index (BMI), average arterial blood pressure, fasting plasma glucose, and cholesterol.

“The substantial health benefits of tea, including a reduced risk of cardiovascular disease and type 2 diabetes, have been reported in several studies over recent years, but the mechanisms underlying these benefits have been unclear”, notes the study’s co-lead author Associate Professor Tongzhi Wu from the University of Adelaide and The Hospital Research Foundation Group Mid-Career Fellow.

“Our findings hint at the protective effects of habitual tea drinking on blood sugar management via increased glucose excretion in urine, improved insulin resistance and thus better control of blood sugar. These benefits were most pronounced among daily dark tea drinkers.”

These beneficial effects on metabolic control may lie in the unique way dark tea is produced, which involves microbial fermentation, a process that may yield unique bioactive compounds (including alkaloids, free

amino acids, polyphenols, polysaccharides, and their derivatives) to exhibit potent antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects, improve both insulin sensitivity and the performance of beta cells in the pancreas, and change the composition of the bacteria in the gut.

The latest cross-sectional study included 1,923 adults (562 men, 1,361 women aged 20-80 years) living in the community across 8 provinces in China. In total, 436 participants were living with diabetes and 352 with prediabetes, and 1,135 had normal blood glucose levels.

Participants included both non-habitual tea drinkers and those with a history of drinking only a single type of tea. They were asked about the frequency (i.e. never, occasionally, often and every day) and type (i.e. green, black, dark, or other tea) of tea consumption.

The researchers examined the association between both the frequency and type of tea consumption and excretion of glucose in the urine (assessed by the morning spot urine glucose-to-creatinine ratio

[UGCR]), insulin resistance (measured using the triglyceride and glucose index [TyG] derived from fasting plasma glucose and fasting triglyceride levels), and glycaemic status (defined as a history of type 2 diabetes, current use of antidiabetic medications, or an abnormal 75g oral glucose tolerance test).

People with diabetes often have an enhanced capacity for renal glucose reabsorption, so their kidneys retrieve more glucose, preventing it from being excreted in urine, which contributes to higher blood sugar.

According to Associate Professor Wu: “These findings suggest that the actions

of bioactive compounds in dark tea may directly or indirectly modulate glucose excretion in the kidneys, an effect, to some extent, mimicking that of sodium-glucose co-transporter-2 (SGLT2) inhibitors, a new anti-diabetic drug class that is not only effective at preventing and treating type 2 diabetes, but also has a substantial protective effects on the heart and kidneys.”

Co-lead author Professor Zilin Sun from Southeast University adds, “Our findings suggest that drinking dark tea every day has the potential to lessen type 2 diabetes risk and progression through better blood sugar control. When you look at all the different biomarkers associated with habitual drinking of dark tea, it may be one simple step people can easily take to improve their diet and health.” -ANI

Verstappen on pole position as Formula One crown looms

The Dutchman storms to top spot in the final qualifying run at the Qatar Grand Prix

DOHA: Max Verstappen stormed to pole position at the Qatar Grand Prix and needed only one run in the final qualifying session to achieve it on Friday.

Mercedes drivers George Russell and Lewis Hamilton were promoted to second and third after penalties for McLaren's Lando Norris and Oscar Piastri, *BBC Sport* reported.

Norris and Piastri had been second and fourth, sandwiching Russell, but lost their times for exceeding track limits.

Aston Martin's Fernando Alonso starts fourth.

Ferrari's Charles Leclerc will line up fifth, while team-mate Carlos Sainz failed to make it through to the top 10 shootout.

The qualifying session set the grid for the grand prix on Sunday, by which time the most consequential result of the weekend may already have occurred.

Saturday is devoted to the sprint event, with a qualifying session followed by a short race, and this could result in champion-elect Verstappen being crowned.

Verstappen will clinch the title as long as he does not lose six points or more to Red Bull team-



mate Sergio Perez in an event that awards eight points to the winner and then a sliding scale down to one point for eighth.

That matter was on the back-burner on Friday, and as well as the strife for Sainz there was another big scalp in the second qualifying session, when Perez was eliminated.

Piastri's first lap in the session was good enough to put him sixth on the grid, while Norris, who had both his lap times deleted for track

limits transgressions, will line up 10th, behind the Alpines of Pierre Gasly and Esteban Ocon and Alfa Romeo's Valtteri Bottas.

Verstappen set his best time on his first run and then ran wide at Turns Four and Five on his second

run. But he was out of reach of his rivals - as he has been for pretty much the entire season.

The Dutchman said: "It was difficult for everyone out there. With the new Tarmac, there was not a lot of grip and as soon as you try to carry a little more speed into the corner the rear would step out.

"That made it very difficult to find the limit and see how much the track was improving without going over the limit." - *Agencies*

CHINA OPEN

Swiatek ends Gauff's winning run in semis

BEIJING: World No.2 Iga Swiatek snapped American Coco Gauff's 16-match winning run with a 6-2, 6-3 victory on Saturday to storm into the China Open final.

The Pole will meet Russian Liudmila Samsonova for the crown on Sunday.

Gauff had beaten Swiatek in their last meeting in the semi-finals at Cincinnati to end a seven-match losing run against the Pole before going on to capture her maiden Grand Slam title at the US Open.

But Swiatek, who had surrendered her top ranking to Aryna Sabalenka after losing to Jelena Ostapenko in the fourth round of the season's final Grand Slam last month, regained her grip on her rivalry with Gauff to reach a seventh final this year.

"I'm really happy with my performance," Swiatek said. "It feels like I can play freely again. It's been a while since I felt that way.

"I'll remember for the rest of my career that even though tougher times may come, in your mind, you can always overcome that. With hard work, you can achieve it.

"I'm happy I switched my attitude after the U.S. Open, and hopefully I'll be able to keep it for as long as possible."

The 22-year-old did not face a single break point during the first set, which she eased through in 40 minutes with a typically strong display from the back of the court.

Swiatek put early pressure on Gauff in the next set and surged to



2-0 with an early break before her American opponent held serve and took a medical timeout to address a niggling shoulder problem.

The four-time major champion barely stepped off the gas after the restart and completed the victory in style to stay on course for her first WTA 1000 title of the season and a tour-leading fifth trophy this year.

Up next for Swiatek is Samsonova, who beat former Wimbledon champion Elena Rybakina 7-6 (9-7) 6-3 to improve her head-to-head record over the Moscow-born Ka-

zakh world No.5 to 4-0.

"Every time it's a battle with Elena ... She's a champion," Samsonova said. "It's unbelievable to be here."

The 24-year-old Samsonova, who is ranked 22, has now beaten three former Grand Slam champions in Beijing with victories over Petra Kvitova and Ostapenko in earlier rounds.

Earlier in the men's event, Jan-nik Sinner won the China Open title after a breakthrough victory in the final, beating Daniil Medvedev 7-6, 7-6. - *Agencies*

RUGBY WORLD CUP

France earn crushing win to reach quarter-finals

PARIS: France cruised to top spot in Pool A at the World Cup as they beat Italy 60-7 on Friday.

The hosts faced elimination if they had lost but put any nerves to bed in Lyon with 31 unanswered points in the first half, going on to score eight tries for a bonus-point victory, *BBC Sport* reported.

France advanced to the quarter-finals unbeaten and ahead of New Zealand in the group stage rankings.

They will face the runners-up from Pool B - South Africa, Ireland or Scotland - on 15 October.

"Four games, four wins," said France captain Charles Ollivon. "This was an elimination match for us, we had no right to make mistakes.

"We wanted to play with intensity and we did, and we kept it up for 80 minutes. It's very positive and sets us up for the next stage. We really want to be there."

The tone was set inside two minutes when France proved too strong and quick for Italy to work the ball through the hands out to the left wing where Damian Penaud scored his first of two tries.

Full back Thomas Ramos was also in unstoppable form with the boot, converting that try before slotting a penalty from halfway.

Louis Biette-Biarrey again got the nod over Gabin Villiere on the left wing and showed why by collecting a perfect chip from Penaud before jinking around three men to touch down on 13 minutes.



Ramos scored the third try by finishing an excellent cross-field move, and the bonus point was secured before half-time when Penaud scored his second, set up by a brilliant kick to the right wing under pressure by Matthieu Jalibert.

Jalibert continued the scoring after half-time, selling the Italian defence with a dummied pass before leaving white shirts

trailing on the floor as he touched over, while try number six came from hooker Peato Mauvaka following a line-out. Replacement back Yoram Moefana brought up the half-century and scored the final two tries, both after superb moves from France that crossed the width of the pitch, while Manuel Zuliani crossed for Italy whose sole comfort was avoiding a shutout. - *Agencies*

JUVENTUS AND FRANCE FOOTBALLER



Pogba's second sample confirms positive drugs test

TURIN: Juventus midfielder Paul Pogba's failed drugs test has been confirmed after his B sample tested positive.

Pogba, 30, was provisionally suspended last month after his initial sample showed elevated levels of testosterone in his system.

The France international was selected for random testing after Juve's 3-0 win at Udinese on 20 August, when he had been an unused substitute.

If found guilty of doping, he could be banned for between two

and four years. After Pogba's initial suspension was confirmed in September, anti-doping body Nado Italia said he had violated rules when prohibited non-endogenous testosterone metabolites were found in the test, and the results were "consistent with the exogenous origin of the target compounds".

Testosterone is a hormone that increases the endurance of athletes.

Athletes can request to have their B sample tested if an initial

sample returns an adverse finding.

It is understood that Pogba will fight to clear his name believing that if he did take a banned substance, he did so inadvertently.

Speaking at the time of the initial suspension, Pogba's agent, Rafaela Pimenta, said: "What is certain is that Paul Pogba never wanted to break a rule."

Juventus re-signed Pogba on a four-year deal in July 2022 after the player ran down his contract at Manchester United and left as a free agent.

However, Pogba's return to Turin has been beset by persistent injury problems which also saw him miss last year's World Cup in Qatar.

Pogba has played a total of 51 minutes as a substitute this season in games with Bologna and Empoli.

Pogba's injury problems resurfaced recently, with Juventus boss Massimo Allegri saying the player picked up a minor back problem following his appearance against Empoli. - *Agencies*

Visit Dubai and Real Madrid sign landmark global partnership deal



Partnership

The newly formed alliance will equally serve as a powerhouse platform to create new growth opportunities for both institutions, and support Dubai's ambitious plans as part of its recently announced Dubai Economic Agenda – D33

DUBAI: Visit Dubai and Real Madrid Club de Fútbol, two leading brands with joint values, ambitions and a dedication to excellence and innovation, have kicked-off landmark collaboration. The multi-year agreement promises a range of exciting activations, special fan moments and unique experiences for Dubai and Real Madrid fans. The newly formed alliance will equally serve as a powerhouse platform to create new growth opportunities for both institutions, and support Dubai's ambitious plans as part of its recently announced Dubai Economic Agenda – D33. Being at the forefront of global sports entertainment with the world's greatest club aligns perfectly with Dubai's ambitious plans to consolidate its position among the top three global cities. Launching this October, the partnership encompasses both Real Madrid's First Men and Women Football Teams, and brings a taste of Dubai to Santiago Bernabéu, offering fans unforgettable experi-



ences and services of the highest standards. Issam Kazim, Chief Executive Officer of Dubai Corporation for Tourism and Commerce Marketing (DCTCM), and Florentino Perez, President of Real Madrid Club de Fútbol formalised the partnership during an official ceremony at the legendary Sala de Juntas in Ciudad Real Madrid, in the presence of Jose Angel Sanchez, Chief Executive Officer of the club, and Emilio Butragueño, Real Madrid legend and Director of Insti-

tutional Relations. Emilio Butragueño, Director of Institutional Relations of Real Madrid, commented, "We are very proud of this new partnership with Visit Dubai as the Club's first Official Destination Partner. Dubai is a destination that strives for excellence in all its entertainment offerings, which is a value shared by the Club. We are delighted to bring this exciting tourist destination to our millions of Madridistas around the world." Issam Kazim, CEO of DCTCM, commented: "We are excited to begin our journey with Real Madrid as a global partner. This game-changing collaboration between Dubai and the greatest club in the world is built upon a shared vision and values, where every achievement serves as motivation to pursue new heights. With our aim to consolidate Dubai's position among the top three global cities, this strategic alliance will harness the strengths of a leading destination and the world's most celebrated team, to reaffirm Dubai globally as the best

city to visit, live, and work in." Dubai's strong public and private sector relations are at the heart of its success, and this new collaboration with Real Madrid further builds on a longstanding partnership that Emirates has cemented since 2011. It is also perfectly timed for the upcoming Real Madrid themed-park, at Dubai Parks and Resorts, the largest theme park destination in the Middle East, which will further expand the city's diverse destination proposition. The park, which will be the world's first Real Madrid themed-park, will feature a number of Real Madrid-related attractions, such as a museum, amusement rides and football skill games, as well as food and beverage outlets and retail spaces selling official Real Madrid products. Kazim added: "Driven by our mutual dedication to excellence, leadership, talent, and innovation, we look forward to enjoy great success together, and showcasing Dubai and Real Madrid's winning spirit to the world."

TOP-NOTCH CARE



MG Oman introduces more savings with enhanced periodic maintenance services

MUSCAT: MG Oman, a leading automotive brand in the region, has revamped its periodic maintenance services to offer MG vehicle owners even greater value. The enhanced maintenance services are designed to provide top-notch care and attention, now with the added benefit of increased savings for customers. With a wide network of 14 service centers across Oman and 98% availability of genuine parts, MG Oman ensures complete peace of mind. The focus on customer savings is part of MG Oman's commitment to delivering high-quality service without compromising on standards. The reliable service from experienced profession-

als, increased availability of service and parts around the region, and quick service with minimal downtime further enhance the value proposition. The company advises a regular service interval for MG vehicles at either 10,000 kilometres or every 6 months, whichever occurs first. This regimen connects customers with our proficient team of technicians who meticulously evaluate the vehicle's performance based on a rigorous checklist. Periodic maintenance services stand as an essential practice in preserving a vehicle's seamless operation, promoting peak performance, prolonging its longevity, and safeguarding its resale

value. This underscores MG Oman's unwavering commitment to providing top-tier care for all vehicles. Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE said, "Our commitment towards quality and affordability is unwavering. At MG, we are dedicated to providing the utmost customer satisfaction. With our enhanced maintenance services, MG owners can now enjoy exceptional care for their vehicles while also benefiting from significant savings." MG Oman invites all MG vehicle owners to experience the new enhanced maintenance services and enjoy all the benefits of periodic maintenance with increased savings.

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ROUND-UP

Turkish luxury furniture brand Intrahome enters Oman

The new exclusive swanky showroom, exemplifies the luxury features of Intrahome, being a spacious and trendy setup offering premium quality at great value, along with excellent customer services and dedicated support of interior designers and team of architects



MUSCAT: Turkish luxury furniture brand Intrahome has marked its entry into Oman with the recent opening of its exclusive store in Muscat. Inaugurated by Muhammet Hekimoğlu, ambassador of Türkiye to Oman, Intrahome rolls out an amazing range of luxury furniture solutions that combine versatility, style, aesthetics and functionality. Located on the November 18th

Street, Al Azaiba North in Muscat, the new exclusive swanky showroom, exemplifies the luxury features of Intrahome, being a spacious and trendy setup offering premium quality at great value, along with excellent customer services and dedicated support of interior designers and team of architects. Mohammad Nadeem Azeemi and Ali Wasif Shah, both partners, with their extensive industry

knowledge and deep-rooted passion for interior design and luxury furnishings, played a pivotal role in bringing the Luxury Intrahome brand to the Sultanate. Speaking about Intrahome, Mohammad Nadeem Azeemi explains, "Our products seamlessly integrate the latest technology and designs into its products, evolving a new dimension in innovative furnishing and trends in Oman."



On the unique selling point, Ali Wasif Shah, explains, "Intrahome retails a range of home furniture to office furniture and its unique selling point is innovation in design, luxury and comfort that makes us stand out from the competition as well as the prices we offer to our customers." Turgay Arsalan, CEO Intrahome Türkiye, is excited about the launch, "The launch of Intrahome in Oman is considered as a gift of

Türkiye to Oman, and indicates evidence of warmer Oman-Turkish relations. It is a revolutionary step in the right direction as Turkish furniture has seen a big demand in this region." Being a one-stop shop, Intrahome also provides exclusive services by offering dedicated interior designing and architectural designing to ensure each project, customer requirement gets dedicated personalised attention.

OFFERS



Kia Sonet now available with exclusive benefits

MUSCAT: Own a Kia Sonet and get Service up to 5 years / 50,000 kms (Whichever is earlier), 1 Year Comprehensive Insurance and Attractive Instalments. (Conditions apply. Please visit any Kia showroom for details.) The Kia Sonet offers some of the finest experiences while making daily driving fun. The Sonet's powerful and fuel-efficient 1.5L engine is paired to a CVT transmission

that dishes out exciting performance with an impressive fuel efficiency of 17.5 kmpl. The Sonet's interior makes a perfect impression with its well laid-out expanse that includes intuitive infotainment and cluster interface which enhances the end user's experience. Reliable International Automotive, the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers.

INSURANCE CEO OF THE YEAR

Liva Insurance CEO Hanaa Al Hinai recognised for exceptional leadership

MUSCAT: Driving the journey of excellence and setting new benchmarks in the insurance industry, Liva Insurance CEO, Hanaa Al Hinai was recently honoured with the title 'Insurance CEO of the Year' at Alam al Iktisaad Awards 2023. This prestigious accolade reflects the company's continuous efforts to redefine insurance solutions and achieve a paradigm shift in the insurance industry in the Sultanate of Oman. Held under the auspice of His Highness Sayyid Malik bin Shihab Al Said, in the presence of business leaders, dignitaries, and key decision-makers from a cross-section of the industry, the Alam al Iktisaad Awards felicitated the best-performing Omani companies who drive a catalyst change in the nation's economy and distinguished achievements. On this occasion, Hanaa Al Hinai, CEO of Liva Insurance said, "We are delighted to have been conferred with this prestigious accolade. It is a testament to the entire team's effort and dedication to successfully achieving the company's strategic goals. We focus on our strategic plan on developing com-



petencies, enhancing innovation, and an insightful future outlook, which has paved the way for us to maintain an outstanding record of growth and excellence. At Liva, we strongly believe that our clients are the key growth drive for the company, and we are relentlessly working on catering to the needs and aspirations of our client base by offering innovative insurance services and products. With the vision of creating a fully integrated multi-line insurance powerhouse in the region, we are steadfast to spearhead the

development of the insurance industry of the nation." Hanaa's exceptional leadership and unwavering dedication inspired her team to successfully complete the integration of the two largest insurers propelling Liva to become a prominent force in the insurance sector. She played a pivotal role in leading the company's strategy with efficiency by balancing corporate objectives and cadres skills, ensuring to reach new heights in the Sultanate's insurance sector. Guided by the in-

sightful vision of its CEO, Liva experienced remarkable growth with this merger. It is worth mentioning that Liva is a new brand created in 2023 from the synergetic union of Al Ahlia Insurance and National Life & General Insurance Company (NLGIC). Aspiring to become the region's leading multi-line insurer, Liva is a unique combination of two dynamic and award-winning companies with a collective experience of over 80 years, a shared vision, and highly complementary capabilities.

ATTRACTIVE

Bank Nizwa's education finance plan to help fulfil higher education dreams

MUSCAT: As the leading and most-trusted Islamic bank in the Sultanate of Oman, Bank Nizwa has always ensured that its innovative banking solutions serve to guarantee the community's welfare and progress. In line with this aim is Bank Nizwa's attractive education finance offering that helps customers achieve their education goals. The offering is based on the Islamic principles of Murabaha and Ijarah (service Ijara) and offers attractive profit rates, with flexible payment options and a comfortable repayment period to all enrollees. This Education Finance plan is geared towards the youth in the Sultanate who wish to pursue

higher education degrees. Bank Nizwa recognizes the potential of the country's youth and the important role they play in Oman's future economic and social flourishing. To this end, the bank has created this offering for students who have completed high school. The offer can be applied for jointly with their parents or guardians. The parent or guardian is required to pay only the profit amount during the period of the course and will additionally have a grace period of one year after course completion to repay the full amount. Encouraging young dreamers to avail the Education Finance offering, Ikhlās Al Lawati, Senior Head of Services Quality, Phone Banking



and In Charge of Product Development at Bank Nizwa, said, "At Bank Nizwa, we believe the youth are the future of Oman and we must empower them with knowledge, skills and expertise, so that they may be prepared for the challenges

of the workforce. We encourage students and dreamers to avail our attractive fully Sharia-compliant Education Finance offering to fulfil their education dreams. Through this plan we wish to make higher education accessible to all."

Aligned with the emphasis Oman Vision 2040 places on the education sector, Bank Nizwa's Education Finance offering also helps parents and guardians finance their children's school fees. Though this option does not have a grace period and enrollees are required to pay the instalments immediately, the convenient repayment period extends over a longer time span at a competitive rate. Salaried individuals who are looking to pursue further education to enhance their skills can also avail Bank Nizwa's Education Finance offering. While there is no joint financing or grace period for working individuals, the plan gives them an opportunity to cover the entire

course fees and provides them with a flexible installment plan. The Education Finance offering exemplifies Bank Nizwa's commitment to its customers' progress and empowerment and reaffirms its position as the leading Islamic bank in Oman providing a comprehensive suite of Islamic banking solutions. As the Sultanate's first Sharia-compliant Education Finance, the plan provides youth, students and working individuals with the opportunity to upskill, and enhance their academic qualifications in order to build and thrive in successful careers. The bank's expansive network of branches is well placed around leading educational institutions and colleges for easy access.



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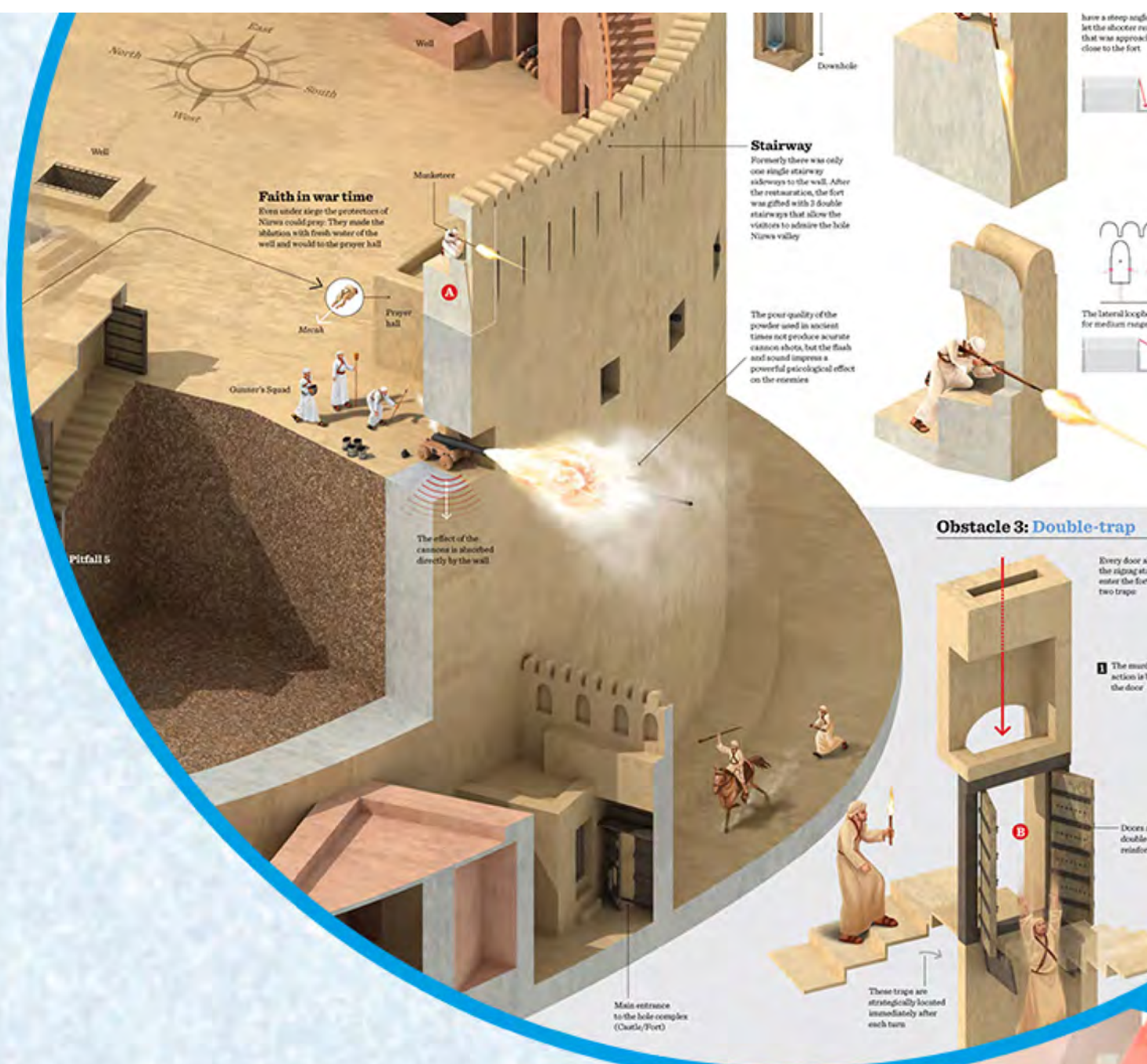
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