

P15

STRATEGIC PIPELINE PROJECTS TO BOOST OMAN'S WATER SECURITY



P12

SIRAJ STARS AS INDIA ROUT SRI LANKA FOR EIGHTH ASIA CUP CROWN



P18

DHOFAR'S BIODIVERSITY IS A SYMPHONY OF WILDLIFE AND BIRDS



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO PRESIDENT OF CHILE

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greeting to President Gabriel Boric of the Republic of Chile, on his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Gabriel Boric and the people of his country further progress and prosperity. — ONA

OPINION

P8



Maureen Dowd

Go with the flow, Joe!

P9



Stuart Walker

Nature-positive innovation

OMAN-ITALY JOINT MILITARY DRILL



The activities of the Oman-Italy joint military drill code-named 'Jebal Shams 3' continued on Sunday. The drill is attended by the Royal Army of Oman (RAO). The exercise comes within the context of annual training programmes conducted by RAO, in cooperation with friendly countries to exchange experiences and maintain preparedness. **SEE ALSO P2**

No impact from low pressure over next five days

MUSCAT: The low pressure system is presently centred in Northern India, and is slowly moving towards the east of the Arabian Sea, according to the National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre at the Civil Aviation Authority, announced on Sunday.

Monitoring the weather system, observed several days ago over the Indian subcontinent (north India and Gujarat), Oman Met said there are chances that the low pressure will reach the Arabian Sea on Wednesday or Thursday, affirming that there is a slim chance of direct effect on the Sultanate of Oman over the next five days, however there are chances of high clouds coming into the country.

Clouds formed over various parts of the Al Hajar Mountains as the mountainous areas of the governorates of Al Dakhiliyah, Al Sharqiyah North, Al Dhahirah, Al Buraimi, Al Batinah South and Al Batinah North witnessed scattered thunderstorms and rainfall ranging from 10 to 30 mm. The rainfall was accompanied by active descending winds with speed ranging between 20 to 35 knots. Horizontal visibility decreased as a result of rising dust and rainfall. Wide parts of the coast and mountains of Dhofar Governorate witnessed fog formation with high clouds pouring into the other governorates.

GDP grows to RO 17.044 billion

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's gross domestic product (GDP) at constant prices reached RO 17.044 billion in the first half of 2023, reflecting a slight increase compared to RO 16.700 billion recorded in the same period during the previous year, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The first half figures indicate a growth rate of approximately 2.1 per cent year-on-year.

The second quarter (Q2) of 2023, however, witnessed a slight decline in GDP at constant prices compared to Q2 2022. The figure stood at RO 8.431 billion, marginally lower than the RO 8.448 billion recorded in Q2 2022. This slight decline in Q2 indicates a decrease of around 0.2 per cent year-on-year.

Breaking down the GDP figures into petroleum and non-petroleum activities reveals an interesting trend. In H1 2023, petroleum activities contributed RO 5.757 billion to the GDP, exhibiting growth when compared to the RO 5.680 billion recorded in H1 2022. This represents an increase of approximately 1.4 per cent year-on-year.

DETAILS ON P13

Antarctic sea-ice at record low

COLORADO: The sea-ice surrounding Antarctica is well below any previous recorded winter level, satellite data shows, a worrying new benchmark for a region that once seemed resistant to global warming.

"It's so far outside anything we've seen, it's almost mind-blowing," said Walter Meier, who monitors sea-ice with the National Snow and Ice Data Center.

An unstable Antarctica could have far-reaching consequences, polar experts warn. Antarctica's huge ice expanse regulates the planet's temperature, as the white surface reflects the Sun's energy back into the atmosphere and also cools the water beneath and near it. Without its ice cooling the planet, Antarctica could transform from Earth's refrigerator to a radiator, experts said.

The ice that floats on the Antarctic Ocean's surface now measures less than 17 million sq km — that is 1.5 million sq km of sea-ice less than the September average, and well below previous winter record lows. That's an area of missing ice about five times the size of the British Isles. — **Agencies**



Expats get free treatment for infectious diseases

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

The Ministry of Health has compiled a comprehensive list of infectious and communicable diseases that pose a substantial public health threat. Individuals suffering from any of these diseases will not be subject to charges for medical services. There are approximately 32 diseases on this list.

Expatriates will receive all necessary services for these conditions free of charge. The diseases in the list include cholera, yellow fever, malaria, all types of tuberculosis, rabies, plague, both neonatal and adult tetanus, Acute Flaccid Paralysis, Paediatric Aids, severe acute respiratory syndrome (Sars), acute respiratory infections caused by Covid-19 requiring hospitalisation, acute respiratory infections caused by influenza viruses requiring hospitalisation, diphtheria, leprosy, Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), chickenpox, smallpox, whooping cough in children under 5 years, haemorrhagic fevers of all types, pneumococcus in children under 5 years, cerebrospinal fever in children under five, measles, rubella, congenital rubella, brucella, dengue fever, monkeypox, active

trachoma, Hepatitis E, Hepatitis A, emerging infectious disease syndrome, and cases classified as a public threat according to both the WHO and local criteria.

FEE EXEMPTIONS

Additional categories exempt from fee encompass a wide range of individuals and circumstances. This includes blood donors and organ donors for all categories mentioned in Article 4, except when the organ donation is intended for government-employed foreigners and their families. People receiving social security benefits and their families, even those awaiting assistance as confirmed by a social security card or official letter, qualify for fee exemptions.

Those transitioning from the Ministry of Social Development to complete their social security service requirements are also exempted.

EARLY SCREENING

Furthermore, orphans under the care of the Ministry of Social Development, Omani individuals with registered disabilities, children below the age of two, beneficiaries of the Expanded Programme on Immunisation, participants in national vaccination campaigns, Omanis benefiting from early screening initiatives, pregnant Omani women, and those receiving maternal and child care services, including the birth spacing programme, are all entitled to fee waivers.

Additionally, Omanis, chronic dialysis patients, cancer patients, prison inmates, pretrial detainees, scouts, guides, and individuals converting to Islam in the Sultanate of Oman are among the groups excluded from these fees. **TURN TO P2**



ROHM KICKS OFF SEASON WITH ORCHESTRA SINFONICA NATIONALE DELL RAI

MUSCAT: The Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) will kick off its new season with the Orchestra Sinfonica Nazionale dell Rai. The National Radio Orchestra of Italy will be conducted by the acclaimed international maestro Michele Gamba. Joining the orchestra on stage will be Ettore Pagano on cello.

The concert will consist of a programme of overtures and movements from bel canto composers Paisiello, Cimarosa, and Rossini of the early 19th century. The orchestra is much in demand on the stages of the world and has been the resident orchestra of the Rossini Opera Festival since 2017. The cellist who will take to the stage for

the solo of Rossini's Une larme, da Pechès de ma veillesse, for cello and piano, is nineteen-year-old Ettore Pagano, winner of the prestigious Kachaturian International Cello Competition in 2022. The concert will take place at the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts on Sunday October 1, 2023. — ONA



MoH launches seasonal flu vaccination programme

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

The Ministry of Health (MoH) in Oman has initiated its annual seasonal influenza vaccination campaign with a multifaceted approach whose primary focus is on protecting the health of both Omani citizens and expatriates who are aged 60 and older, as well as individuals with chronic medical conditions. However, the scope of the campaign extends much further. In recognition of the fact that certain health conditions and age groups are more susceptible to the complications of influenza, the campaign includes those with respiratory ailments, heart diseases, kidney and liver problems, neurological disorders, haematological disorders, metabolic conditions, uncontrolled diabetes, and excessive obesity in both adults and children. According to MoH, these individuals are at heightened risk if they contract the flu, so vaccinating them is a crucial preventive measure. Furthermore, it encompasses a diverse range of individuals like pilgrims, whose close proximity in crowded areas can facilitate the rapid spread of infectious diseases. Likewise, healthcare



PICTURE FOR ILLUSTRATION

professionals and frontline workers, who are at increased exposure to infectious agents due to their professions, are strongly encouraged to receive the influenza vaccine to safeguard their health and ensure the continuity of essential services. Additionally, pregnant women, who experience changes in their immune systems that make them more susceptible to infections, are

also urged to participate in the campaign to protect both their health and the health of their unborn children. As part of this initiative, MoH strongly encourages the aforementioned groups to visit their nearest healthcare facilities to receive the influenza vaccine. This proactive measure is intended to reduce the risk of influenza infection, which can lead to severe complications.

It is important to note that the vaccine is not only accessible within the public healthcare system but is also available in the private healthcare sector for citizens and residents who do not fall into the specified categories but are interested in getting vaccinated. This approach aims to ensure widespread protection against the flu within the broader community.

DU conference on digital transformation on September 24

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahalbalushia

Dhofar University is all set to kick off the activities of the Third Gulf Conference, with the theme 'Digital Transformation and Contemporary Social Issues: Challenges and Visions for the Future,' scheduled to take place on September 24-25 this year. This event is integral to the annual regional conferences organised by the College of Arts and Applied Sciences, specifically by the Social Sciences Department. The conference encompasses various topics for discussion and scientific research, focusing on contemporary issues within science and social work. Dr Khaled al Mushaykhi, Dean of the College of Arts and Applied Sciences and the President of the Conference, emphasised that the primary goal of the conference is to underscore the pivotal role of digital transformation in contemporary social issues. "It seeks to examine the dimensions of social challenges arising from this transformation and its profound impact on society. The conference also aims to delve into the nature of cultural and technological shifts within our increasingly digital society. Furthermore, it will explore the human dimensions of technological advancements and the transition into the digital realm, as well as assess the role of digital transformation in delivering social services and contributing to achieving sustainable development goals." Dr Al Mushaykhi said, "The

significance of the conference lies in its call to showcase successful experiences in digital transformation and community development, whether at the local, Arab, or international levels. It also serves as a platform for fostering scientific collaboration between researchers in Oman and the global academic community, aiming to advance research in this field and analyse scientific developments during the digital transformation era." Moreover, he highlighted that the conference functions as a platform for extensive social dialogue and the formulation of coherent policies tailored to the unique needs of each nation in the context of future digital transformation. It reinforces Dhofar University's commitment to establishing partnerships with various community institutions, thereby contributing to societal development in alignment with the university's overarching strategies and the Oman Vision 2040. Consequently, the university actively encourages the participation of faculty members, academic leaders from universities and colleges, government and private sector officials, individuals from civil society organisations, experts in social work, vocational training institutions, researchers, stakeholders, and graduate students. Dr Reem Abu Eyada, a member of the conference's preparatory committee, elucidated the conference's four main discussion axes.



Free treatment for expats for infectious diseases

FROM PAGE1

It is important to note that the Ministry of Health with Ministerial Decision No 126/2023 made mandatory the establishment of a healthcare service fee regulation in Oman and defines the categories covered by this regulation. Article 3 of the regulation emphasises the importance of taking all necessary measures to ensure the collection of the specified

fee without impeding the treatment in emergency cases. Article 4 of the regulation outlines that, with the exception of injuries resulting from traffic accidents and cases covered by insurance, the following categories are entitled to free medical services: Omani nationals, citizens of Gulf Cooperation Council countries residing in Oman for a minimum of three months, foreigners married to Omani women, including their

husbands and children born to the Omani wife from this marriage, foreign women married to Omanis, foreign parents of Omanis residing in Oman, foreign parents and children of foreign spouses of Omani origin residing in Oman, foreigners employed by the government and their families as per their employment contracts, and members of foreign diplomatic missions and their family members as per the annual schedules issued by the Foreign Ministry.

OMAN-ITALY JOINT MILITARY DRILL 'JABAL SHAMS 3' CONTINUES



ROME: Activities of the joint Oman-Italy military drill codenamed 'Jabal Shams 3' continue. The drill is participated by the Royal Army of Oman (RAO). The exercise comes within the context of annual training programmes conducted by RAO, in cooperation with friendly countries to exchange experiences and maintain preparedness. — ONA



UK hikes student visa fee

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

The fee for applying for a study visa from outside the UK is set to increase by 127 pounds from October 4.

As per the UK Home Office, the fee for applying for a student visa from outside the country will rise by 127 pounds to 490 pounds to match the amount charged for in-country applications. The fee will increase from October 4 subject to Parliamentary approval, as per the Home Office.

The UK Government also announced that a UK Visit Visa for under six months will cost 15 pounds more for travellers from around the world. The Home Office has informed us that the changes mean the cost for a UK



Visit Visa for less than six months will rise to 115) pounds and the fee for applying for a UK Student Visa from outside the UK will rise to 490 pounds – to equal the amount charged for in-country applications.

The Home Office indicated a 15 per cent increase in the cost of most work and visit visas, and an increase of at least 20 per cent in the cost of priority visas, study visas, and certificates of sponsorship.

The move comes after British Prime Minister Rishi Sunak

announced that the fees and health surcharge paid towards the UK's state-funded National Health Service (NHS) by visa applicants are set to rise "significantly" to meet the country's public sector wage increase.

Other UK Visa Fee Hike The hike in fees applies across most visa categories, including health and care visas, applications to register and naturalise as a British citizen, Fees for up to six months, two, five, and 10-year visit visas The hike also applies to fees for entry clearance.

Workshop on legislations begins

MUSCAT: A training workshop titled 'drafting laws for the State's Administrative Apparatus and Public Legal Persons' began on Sunday under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Mohammed al Saeedi, Minister of Justice and Legal Affairs.

Organised by the Ministry of Justice and Legal Affairs, the two-day workshop saw the participation of more than 90 employees occupying legal positions in units of the State's Administrative Apparatus (government units) and other public legal entities. —ONA



Oman hosts 'Humanitarian International Law' seminar



MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Defence, hosted the 'Humanitarian International Law' seminar of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

The seminar held from 17-19 September aims to introduce the articles of the humanitarian international law and its historical development, as well as highlighting the work of the Red Cross.

Moreover, the seminar was attended by senior offices at the Ministry of Defence and the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and other military and security units. —ONA

Woman held for fraud in Muscat

MUSCAT: The police command in Muscat Governorate arrested a female citizen on fraud charges. The defendant conducted several purchase transactions from a jewellery store using forged invoices.

The police seized jewels and cash amounts from the defendant, Royal Oman Police (ROP) said adding that legal procedures against the defendant

are underway.

Meanwhile in Al Batinah South Governorate, ROP arrested three Asian people in connection with stealing a donation box from the Wilayat of Barka.

The Directorate-General of Inquiries and Criminal Investigation in cooperation with the Police Command in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate, arrested Arab residents on

charges of money exchange fraud. Legal action on the case is currently underway.

The police command in Al Batinah North Governorate arrested 10 people of Asian nationalities after a video circulated on social media of them being involved in a mass altercation at a neighbourhood in the Wilayat of Suhar causing public inconvenience.

Fourth edition of 'Youth Excellence Award' unveiled

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth announced the launch of the fourth edition of the Youth Excellence Award, a testament to honouring the exemplary Omani youth.

The unveiling coincides with the celebration of Omani Youth Day on October 26 each year. The announcement was made during a press conference held at the Youth Center on Sunday.

Registration for the Youth Excellence Award 2023 is officially open today (Monday) and will continue until October 3. Notably, the fourth edition sees the inclusion of digital media and digital economy fields within its five categories.

Hamoud bin Salem al Jabri, Assistant Director General of the General Directorate of Youth at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, emphasised that the 2023 Youth Excellence Award extends the recognition of the remarkable Omani youth from the years 2014-2022.

He stressed the importance of focusing on youth efforts dedicated to serving both youth and society, along with recognising institutional initiatives that support and foster fair competition in community service, aligning with the spirit of Omani Youth Day on October 26.

Among five categories include 'individuals'. This category comprises projects or initiatives geared towards youth, executed by an individual (a young man, a 'youth initiative', a deliberate and considerate collaborative effort by young individuals, driven by a specific motive and purpose.



These initiatives are voluntary, non-profit, and specifically target young individuals. To be eligible for this category, the project submitted for the competition must have been implemented under the auspices of an official institution.

'Youth institutions' is another category that is characterised by ownership and management by young people. These institutions provide services tailored to the youth and possess a valid commercial registration.

The fourth category encompasses 'civil society institutions' distinguished by their qualitative and professional nature. These organisations are registered with the Ministry of Social Development and operate in accordance with the Civil Associations Law. They deliver specialised services to the youth, excluding charitable organisations.

The fifth category focuses on 'private-sector companies', excluding government entities. These companies allocate a portion of their operations towards 'social investment' and extend their services to young individuals. They actively support and finance youth activities within the organisational framework and operational sphere of the

company.

"Through this competition, the ministry aims to instil a sense of healthy competition among Omani youth, encourage the development of skills, and nurture a conscious, responsible, creative, and proactive generation," Al Jabri added.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Faris bin Mohammad al Aufi, Director of the Youth Programmes Department at the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, provided details on the criteria for the 2023 Youth Proficiency Competition.

He said competition targets individuals aged 18-35 and emphasises voluntary, non-profit projects that align with the aspirations of young people. Projects must have completed a full year to measure their impact and should not have received previous honours in any forum or award.

Al Aufi highlighted nine key evaluation criteria, including connection with the youth sector, project description, planning and implementation, innovation, financial resource management, monitoring and evaluation, added value, impact, future plan, sustainability, and outreach to the community.

Tender Announcement

ET14/2023/OPAZ

الهيئة العامة للمناطق الاقتصادية الخاصة والمناطق الحرة
Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones
Sultanate of Oman
سلطنة عمان

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) invites the reputable and experienced Omani and Saudi companies for the following tender; through an E-Tendering portal (Esnad).

Consulting services for design , prepration of tender documents and construction supervision of the development of economic zone at Al Dhahirah (EZAD) - phase 1 -

Place of Buying and Collecting the Softcopy of Tender Documents:	Through E-Tendering System https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om .
Start of Tender Document Sale (Date):	Monday, 18 September 2023 (10:00AM)
End of Tender Documents Sale (Date):	Monday, 2 October 2023 (04:00PM)
Site showround / Visit (for all bidders):	Tuesday, 3 October 2023 (9:00 AM) at oppsite Al Dhahirah governor's office.
Tender Closing (Submission) and Opening of Technical Bids Date:	Thursday, 26 October 2023 (3:00 PM, Muscat Time).
Cost of Tender Documents:	OMR. 1500 (One thousand five hundred Omani Rial only).

- All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender Board can participate and get the specification and conditions of the above tender from the following website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
- Bidders should submit their bids online on the given website Signed and Sealed. The Bidders shall submit Tender Bond electronically through the e-tendering system, which will verify the validity of the submitted bond and this Bid bond shall be issued from Local Bank or it's accredited branches in Saudi Arabia of not less than (1%) of the Tender Value, valid for (180) days from the Proposals submission date, addressed to THE CHAIRMAN, OPAZ Internal COMMITTEE (OIC).
- OPAZ is not bound to accept the lowest or any other bid, and reserves the right to accept or reject any offer without giving reasons.

For further clarifications, you may contact:
Tel. +968 24402200 and/or,
Email: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

**PUBLIC AUTHORITY
FOR SPECIAL ECONOMIC ZONES
AND FREE ZONES (OPAZ)**

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A LOOMING HEALTH CRISIS

THERE IS A SOARING TREND OF
ELECTRONIC SMOKING AMONG TEENS
AS OMAN’S YOUTH GRAPPLES WITH
AN EMERGING CRISIS

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
@afrahbalushia

E-SMOKING is the new epidemic among teenagers in the Sultanate of Oman and has begun to spread widely.

Experts have warned that nicotine addiction at an early age makes quitting smoking more difficult and can cause brain reshaping and addiction to other substances in the future. Even the person who is addicted to it could smoke six times more likely to regular cigarettes than those who did not try electronic cigarettes.

Dr Ahmed bin Hamad al Wahaibi, Senior Consultant in Family and Community Medicine at the Ministry of Health, mentioned in an interview with Oman Radio that 5 per cent of Omani students use electronic cigarettes, and 26 per cent buy electronic cigarettes from inside the Sultanate of Oman.

Several years ago, electronic cigarettes gained great popularity among teenagers. Some teens resort to them as an alternative to traditional cigarettes marketed as safer. This type of cigarette has become an attraction for young people and youths as a ‘new fashion.’

However, many studies indicate that these cigarettes cause many health risks,

as one study found that e-cigarettes are one of the factors that destroy adolescents’ memory. The way an electronic cigarette works is very similar to a regular cigarette and gives the smoker the same feeling as a regular cigarette. Electronic cigarettes contain varying percentages of nicotine and thus lead to addiction.

Cigarettes, whether regular or electronic, contain nicotine in different proportions, which negatively affects health and may be more dangerous due to their high toxicity. Continuing to use them for a long period leads to many diseases, and they are considered more dangerous than regular cigarettes, as they contain eight times the amount of nicotine found in regular cigarettes.

ELECTRONIC CIGARETTES

Nicotine causes severe addiction, and a non-smoker of regular cigarettes may become addicted if they start using electronic cigarettes. In addition, using it continuously exposes a person to lung cancer because it contains emissions of nicotine and other toxic substances that are harmful to smokers and non-smokers exposed to the spray it produces indirectly. Its use by teenagers and youths has harmful effects on brain development and the destruction of memory during growth,



THERE IS A PROVISION
OF A FINE ON THE
VIOLATORS
AMOUNTING TO

RO 500

THE FINE IS DOUBLED IF THE
VIOLATION IS REPEATED,
AND IF THE VIOLATION
CONTINUES, AN
ADMINISTRATIVE FINE OF

RO 100

WILL BE IMPOSED FOR EACH
DAY THAT THE VIOLATION
CONTINUES, PROVIDED THE
TOTAL DOES NOT EXCEED

RO 2,000

leading to learning disorders and anxiety.

A study conducted by the University of South Carolina revealed that teenagers who used e-cigarettes faced a higher risk of transitioning to traditional cigarette smoking within a span of two years after initiating e-cigarette use.

This research, which studied the smoking habits of 18-year-old teenagers, supports the argument that e-cigarettes can be a gateway to smoking for teenagers.

Experts and researchers have found that nicotine added to e-cigarette liquid causes addiction, making it difficult to stop vaping and using traditional cigarettes. This may lead to nicotine poisoning, especially with the dual use of e-cigarettes and traditional cigarette wraps. They also found that nicotine causes birth defects in fetuses and inhibits the brain’s normal development. Therefore, e-cigarettes mean a trick called quitting smoking.

Moreover, it was found that it takes the same time for the lungs to recover after quitting smoking e-cigarettes as it does after quitting regular cigarettes, which takes several months to a year and sometimes longer. However, this is only if inhaling glycerin and propylene glycol fumes does not cause irreparable harm.

According to the Consumer Protection Authority, electronic cigarettes in Oman

are prohibited. The Authority decided to withdraw electronic cigarettes and shisha from the country’s markets to preserve public health.

There is a provision of a fine on the violators amounting to RO 500. The fine is doubled if the violation is repeated, and if the violation continues, an administrative fine of RO 100 will be imposed for each day that the violation continues, provided the total does not exceed RO 2,000.

One may wonder why teenagers are keen on smoking e-cigarettes despite their dangers. Likely, the period of adolescence often coincides with bad decisions. Neurologically, the parts of the brain responsible for good judgement and planning decisions are still in the developmental stage, and teenagers are also in a stage in which they are trying to discover the world outside their families and with their friends.

Prevention is the best defence for parents who want to keep their children away from electronic smoking. Parents must have a dialogue with their children and talk about the harmful effects of electronic smoking.

The way a parent reacts when they discover that their child is using e-cigarettes can greatly impact their behaviour later on.



P.O. Box 799, PC 133, Al Khuwair, Muscat,
Sultanate of Oman

Initial Public Offering of 2,122,005,720 Offer Shares

Category I Subscription Price Range: 131 Bzs to 140 Bzs per Offer Share

Category II Subscription Price: Discounted Maximum Price of Bzs 126 per Offer Share, calculated as the Maximum Price of Bzs 140 less a discount of 10 per cent

Category I Offer Period: 26 September 2023 to 9 October 2023

Category II Offer Period: 26 September 2023 to 5 October 2023

This summary has been extracted from the unofficial translation of the original Prospectus prepared in Arabic and approved by the CMA in accordance with Administrative Decision No. KH/78/2023 dated on 17 September 2023. This does not constitute an offer to sell or an invitation by or on behalf of the Issuer to subscribe to any of the Shares in any jurisdiction outside of Oman where such distribution is, or may be, unlawful.

General Information on the Offer and the Company

Name	OQ Gas Networks SAOG (under transformation)
Commercial registration number	1644130
Date of registration	23 May 2000
Registered office	P. O. Box 799, PC 133 Al Khuwair, Muscat Governorate Sultanate of Oman
Principal place of business/ headquarters	Al Khuwair/ Bousher/ Muscat Governorate, Sultanate of Oman
Duration	Unlimited
Issued share capital	OMR 433,062,392 divided into 4,330,623,920 Shares with a value of Bzs 100 per Share
Issue Manager	Bank Muscat SAOG P.O. Box 134, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman
Joint Global Coordinators	Bank Muscat SAOG P.O. Box 134, Postal Code 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman EFG-Hermes UAE Limited 301, The Exchange, DIFC, P.O. Box 30727, Dubai, United Arab Emirates acting in conjunction with EFG Hermes UAE LLC Office 106, The Offices 3, One Central, DWTC, P.O. Box 112736, Dubai United Arab Emirates <i>and another international bank as part of a consortium of international banks</i>

Articles of Association

The principal objectives for which the Company is established are to own, construct, operate and maintain oil and gas pipelines and carry out any other activities related to the oil and gas industry and investing the Company's resources in the sectors of manufacturing, construction, industry, transportation, communications, metals, petrochemicals, energy and hydrocarbons, according to the strategy that the Board deems appropriate and in the Company's interest from funds in excess of the Company's needs, without prejudice to the Company's basic purpose(s).

A copy of the Memorandum and Articles is available for perusal at the registered office of the Company during business hours on Oman business day.

Shareholding Pattern

Name of Shareholder	Number of Shares Held (value of Bzs 100)	% of Issued Share Capital	Aggregate Value of Shares held (OMR)
OQ SAOC ("OQ")	4,318,068,000	99.71007	431,806,800
Oman Energy Trading Company Limited ("OETCL")	6,277,960	0.14497	627,796
Oman Oil Services Limited ("OOSL")	6,277,960	0.14497	627,796
Total	4,330,623,920	100.00%	433,062,392

Brief profile of the Selling Shareholders:

OQ SAOC

OQ was established in 1996 to pursue investment opportunities in the energy sector both inside and outside Oman. OQ together with its wholly owned subsidiaries, the "OQ Group" is wholly owned by the Government through the Oman Investment Authority. The OQ Group is Oman's leading integrated energy group managing and developing investments across the oil and gas value chain.

OETCL

OETCL, a wholly owned subsidiary of OQ, was established solely for investment in the oil and gas sector inside and outside of Oman.

OOSL

OOSL, a wholly owned subsidiary of OQ, was established solely for investment in the oil and gas sector in Oman.

Further information about the OQ Group and its subsidiaries is available at www.oq.com.

Anchor Investors

The Company has received irrevocable commitments from the Anchor Investors, subject to the terms contained within the Anchor Investment Agreements, to subscribe to the Offer at the Maximum Price (as defined below). The following table provides details of the Offer Shares to be allotted to each Anchor Investor:

Name of Anchor Investor	Number of Shares Subscribed at the Maximum Price	Subscription Amount at the Maximum Price (OMR)	% of Offer
Saudi Omani Investment Company ⁽¹⁾	212,200,572	29,708,080	10%
Fluys International SANV	212,200,572	29,708,080	10%
Falcon Investments LLC ⁽²⁾	212,200,572	29,708,080	10%
Total	636,601,716	89,124,240	30%

⁽¹⁾ Saudi Omani Investment Company is a wholly owned entity of the Public Investment Fund of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

⁽²⁾ Falcon Investments LLC is a subsidiary of Qatar Investment Authority, the sovereign wealth fund of the State of Qatar.

Please refer to "Chapter XIX-Subscription and Sale – Anchor Investors" of the Prospectus for more details on the Anchor Investors.

Description of OQGN and Business Overview

The Company holds a natural monopoly over the essential gas transportation infrastructure in Oman and is the exclusive owner and operator of the Natural Gas Transportation Network (NGTN), serving critical roles in Oman as the asset owner, operator and maintenance and transportation provider of gas through the NGTN. The Company transports gas, through the NGTN on behalf of the Shipper, which buys gas from gas producers and sells it to gas consumers. The Company operates under a 50-year concession expiring in 2070 granted by the Government under the Amended Concession Agreement and an established RAB Framework, which has been in place since 1 January 2018.

Competitive Strengths

The Company's competitive strengths include:

- Attractiveness of Oman as an investment destination underpinned by stability and economic growth
 - Natural monopoly over critical gas transportation infrastructure under a 50-year concession (up to 2070)
 - Indispensable role as the link between core Omani gas producers and consumers, with stable long-term demand and supply
 - Established regulatory framework underpinning predictable cash flows with Allowed RAB Revenues not affected by fluctuations in gas prices or volume of the gas transported
 - Strong operating track record with consistent gas availability, minimal interruptions and international certifications
 - Stable financial performance with a growing Regulated Asset Base and efficient capital structure
 - Experienced management team with a strong track record of successful project deliveries
- The Company's strategies include:
- Strong growth prospects through Regulator-approved near-term network expansion and long-term transformative growth initiatives
 - Utilisation of the Company's strengths and market position to play an essential role in energy transition in Oman by facilitating hydrogen and captured carbon transportation and storage
 - Forward looking organisation with ESG embedded in its strategy

Risk Factors

Prior to investing in Offer Shares, prospective Applicants should carefully consider the risk factors relating to OQGN's business and industry described in "Chapter IV – Risk Factors" together with all other information contained in the Prospectus, including the financial information set out in "Chapter XIII – Selected Historical Financial Information", "Chapter XIV – Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations" and "Chapter XV – Historical Financial Statements" of the Prospectus, before making any investment decision relating to the Offer Shares. These risks and uncertainties are not the only issues that OQGN faces; additional risks and uncertainties not presently known to OQGN or that OQGN currently believes to be immaterial may also have a material adverse or beneficial effect on its financial condition or business success. The occurrence of any or a combination of the events mentioned in "Chapter IV – Risk Factors" of the Prospectus could have a material adverse or beneficial effect on OQGN's business, results of operations, financial condition and prospects and cause the market price of the Shares to fall significantly and investors to lose all or part of their investment. Unless otherwise stated in the relevant risk factors set out in the Prospectus, OQGN is not in a position to specify or quantify the financial or other risks mentioned therein.

Board of Directors

The current composition of the Board of Directors, in accordance with Article 6 of the Articles is as follows:

Name	Position	Executive/Non-Executive	Independent/Non-Independent ⁽¹⁾
Talal Al Awfi	Chairman	Non-Executive	Non-Independent
Ayad Al Balushi	Deputy Chairman	Non-Executive	Non-Independent
Fathi Al Balushi	Board Member	Non-Executive	Independent
Rajya Al Salmi	Board Member	Non-Executive	Non-Independent
Hanasa Al Hinali	Board Member	Non-Executive	Independent

⁽¹⁾ A director is deemed independent pursuant to CMA rules and regulations

Senior Management Team

The current composition of the Management is as follows:

Name	Position
Mansoor Al Abdali	Managing Director
Khalid Al Qassabi	Vice President (Finance)
Faisal Al Maamari	Vice President (P&T&C) / Acting Vice President (QHSS)
Mohammed Al Ruqaishi	Vice President (Operations)
Saif Al Hosni	Vice President (Business Development & Commercial)
Majid Al Zadjali	Vice President (Technical Services) / Acting Vice President (Project Delivery)
Haitham Al Lawati	Legal and Compliance

Subscription Conditions and Procedures

Based on the Price Range, this Offer is being offered to Category I Applicants through a bookbuild offering (as described in more detail in the "Bookbuilding Process" in the Prospectus) and to Category II Applicants at the Discounted Maximum Price. The Offer Price is the final price at which Offer Shares will be issued and allotted pursuant to the terms of the Prospectus. The Offer Price will be decided by the Selling Shareholders in consultation with the Joint Global Coordinators and the CMA on the Pricing Date.

The Category II Offer process shall be conducted through the E-IPO Mechanism. For further information on the subscription conditions and procedures applicable to both the Category I Offer and Category II Offer, please see "Chapter XIX – Subscription Conditions and Procedures" of the Prospectus.

Offer Structure

	Category I Offer (For Non-Individual Applicants)	Anchor Investors	Category II Offer (For Individual Applicants)
Offer Size	848,802,288 Offer Shares	636,601,716 Offer Shares	636,601,716 Offer Shares
Percentage of Offer Size	40%	30%	30%
Basis of Allotment	Proportionate for Local Applicants. For Non-Local Applicants determined by the Selling Shareholders in consultation with the Joint Global Coordinators. See section "Basis of Allotment" in the Prospectus for more details	Allotment confirmed by the Basis of Allotment in the Prospectus for more details. The CMA may decide that a minimum number of Category II Offer Shares be distributed equally among Category II Applicants and the remaining Category II Offer Shares shall be allocated on a pro-rata basis.	Proportionate. See section "Basis of Allotment" in the Prospectus for more details. The CMA may decide that a minimum number of Category II Offer Shares be distributed equally among Category II Applicants and the remaining Category II Offer Shares shall be allocated on a pro-rata basis.
Minimum Subscription	100,000 Offer Shares and thereafter in multiples of 100 Offer Shares	n.a.	1,000 Offer Shares and thereafter in multiples of 100 Offer Shares
Maximum Subscription	No maximum subscription size	424,401,144 Offer Shares (20% of the Offer Size)	No maximum subscription size

Terms of Payment	Applicant must make payment to the designated bank account of the Collection Agents and the Collection Agents will transfer the subscription amount due against the Offer Shares allotted, at least two Oman business days prior to the Settlement Date to the designated bank account of the Issue Manager. For Non-Local Applicants placing orders through the Joint Global Coordinators, please see section "Terms of Payments for Category I Offer" in the Prospectus for details on terms of payment	Anchor Investors must make payment to the designated bank account of the Collection Agents and the Collection Agents will transfer the subscription amount due against the Offer Shares allotted, at least two Oman business days prior to the Settlement Date to the designated bank account of the Issue Manager.	100% of the Category II Application Money to be paid at the time of submission of the Application
Offer Subscription Period	26 September 2023 to 9 October 2023	n.a.	26 September 2023 to 5 October 2023

For additional details on the circumstances under which the allocations between Category I Applicants and Category I Applicants and Category II Applicants could change, see "Chapter XIX – Subscription Conditions and Procedures – Basis of Allotment" of the Prospectus.

Eligibility for the Subscription of Category I Offer Shares

The Category I Offer will be open in Oman to Local Applicants and Non-Local Applicants only who have their accounts with MCDC. For this purpose, Local Applicants would comprise of juristic persons registered in Oman and Non-Local Applicants would comprise of juristic persons registered outside Oman.

Eligibility for the Subscription of Category II Offer Shares

The Category II Offer will be open in Oman to Omani and non-Omani Applicants (individuals) who have their accounts with MCDC. All individuals who are nationals of the countries comprising the GCC are treated as Omani individuals for the purpose of owning Shares in Oman SAOGs.

The Applicants need to consider the Minimum Subscription and Maximum Subscription applicable to them when making an Application. No Applicant may be allotted more than 10% of the Offer (212,200,572 Offer Shares) without the approval of the CMA.

Prohibitions with Regard to the Applications for Subscription

The following persons shall not be permitted to subscribe to the Offer:

- Sole proprietorship establishments** – The owners of sole proprietorship establishments may only submit Applications in their personal names;
- Total Accounts** – Applicants registered under trust accounts may only submit Applications in their personal names (except as detailed below);
- Multiple Applications** – An Applicant may not submit more than one Application;
- Joint Applications** – Applicants may not submit applications in the name of more than one individual (including on behalf of legal heir);
- Selling Shareholders** – The selling shareholders of the Company may not submit any Applications; and
- Related Parties** – The related parties of the Company cannot participate in the Category I Offer except where such relationship is due to common ownership or control exercised by units of the administrative apparatus of the Government or their primary activity is investment related.

Any Applications not complying with the above criteria may be rejected without contacting the relevant prospective investor, although Applications by Trust Accounts may be accepted in the Offer, at the discretion of the Joint Global Coordinators or the Collection Agents (as applicable), if they are satisfied that none of the underlying subscribers applying through such Trust Accounts have also applied using their individual names or their sole proprietorship establishments. The Joint Global Coordinators or Collection Agents (as applicable) may reject such Application if they become aware that there are multiple applications from such investors applying through Trust Accounts.

The acceptance by the Joint Global Coordinators or Collection Agents (as applicable) of Applications made by Trust Accounts will require issuance of an undertaking signed by the concerned investor providing further details of the underlying investors/beneficiaries on whose behalf the Application has been made. The Joint Global Coordinators or Collection Agents (as applicable) will clearly communicate to each investor that in case of multiple Applications through a Trust Account and its underlying investor(s) in their own names or their sole proprietorship establishment's name All Applications may be rejected at the discretion of the Joint Global Coordinators or Collection Agents (as applicable).

Subscription on Behalf of Minor Children (for Category II Offer)

For the purpose of this Offer, any person under 18 years of age on the date of submission of an Application will be defined as a minor. Only a father may subscribe on behalf of his minor children. If an Application is made on behalf of a minor by any person other than the minor's father, the person submitting the Application will be required to attach a valid Shariah (Legal) Power of Attorney issued by the competent authorities in Oman authorising him or her to deal in the funds of the minor through sale, purchase and investment.

Applicant's Investor Number with MCDC

Any Applicant who subscribes for the Offer Shares must have an account and Investor Number with the MCDC. Any Applicant may apply to obtain an Investor Number and open an account by completing the "MCDC Application". This may be obtained from the MCDC's Head Office or its website at www.mcdc.om, or from brokerage companies licensed by the CMA.

Offer Period

The Category I Offer Period will commence on 26 September 2023 and end on 9 October 2023.

The Category II Offer Period will commence on 26 September 2023 and end on 5 October 2023.

CATEGORY I OFFER

Subscription and Application Process for Category I Applicants

Category I Offer for Omani and non-Omani Applicants

20% of Offer Shares (i.e., 424,401,144 Offer Shares) shall be reserved for subscription by Local Applicants and 20% of the Offer Shares (i.e., 424,401,144 Offer Shares) shall be available for subscription by Non-Local Applicants. For this purpose, Local Applicants would comprise of juristic persons registered in Oman. Non-Local Applicants would include eligible Category I Applicants who are registered outside of Oman.

Maximum Limit of Subscription

There is no maximum limit on the number of Offer Shares that may be subscribed pursuant to an Application for Category I Applicants. No Applicant may be allotted more than 10% of the Offer (212,200,572 Offer Shares) except with the approval of the CMA.

None of the Company's Selling Shareholders, the Issue Manager, the Joint Global Coordinators or the Collection Agents are liable for the consequences of the Application in the event of the failure to subscribe to the Offer. Applicants are advised to make their own independent investigations to ensure that their Applications comply with prevailing laws and regulations.

Price Range

The Price Range has been fixed at Bzs 131 to Bzs 140 per Share, with Bzs 131 being the minimum price and Bzs 140 being the maximum price.

Subscription Process for Category I Applicants

Category I Applicants may place Applications with any of the Collection Agents during official banking hours prior to or on the Category I Offer Closing Date. Applications, once submitted, are binding and cannot be withdrawn or modified by submitting an Application Revision Form for a higher quantity of Shares, a higher price or both, on or before the Category I Offer Closing Date.

Applications shall contain a maximum of three price and quantity combinations (bids). Category I Application Money means the highest Bid Amount from all the bids in the Application for Category I Offer. Each Collection Agent shall be responsible for verifying if the Application complies with the instructions set out in the Prospectus.

Payment for the Offer Shares subscribed by Category I Applicants shall be made in Omani Rials. Category I Applicants will be required to make full payment for the Offer Shares allotted to them to the designated bank account of the Collection Agents, and the Collection Agents will transfer the subscription proceeds, at least two Oman business days prior to the Settlement Date to the designated bank account of the Issue Manager in accordance with the provisions of "Terms of Payment for Category I Applicants" in the Prospectus.

All Applicants placing orders through the Joint Global Coordinators would be required to fund the designated bank account of the Issuer Manager at least two Oman business days prior to the Settlement Date.

In the event of a failure to make timely payment, Category I Applicants may incur significant charges and/or enforcement action against them.

Price Discovery and Determination of Offer Price and Allocation

After the Category I Offer Closing Date, and once all Applications have been submitted to the Issue Manager by the Collection Agents, the Selling Shareholders in consultation with the Joint Global Coordinators will determine the Offer Price, which will be within the Price Range.

The allocation of Offer Shares to Local Applicants shall be completed on a pro-rata basis.

The allocation of Offer Shares to Non-Local Applicants is expected to be determined by the Selling Shareholders in consultation with the Joint Global Coordinators which shall be based on certain criteria and allocation mechanism. The criteria to be considered by the Joint Global Coordinators and Selling Shareholders will include: (i) investor type, including investment profile, investment interest in the Company's sector; (ii) investor size, including assets under management; (iii) qualitative insights on investor behaviour, including participation in previous offerings and holding patterns in previous offerings; (iv) investor participation and engagement in the marketing process of the Offer; and (v) potential for creating liquidity. The above criteria, as well as the level of demand in the Category I Offer may impact the percentage of allocation of the total orders of the Category I Investors.

If there is undersubscription in the Category II Offer (such that it comprises less than 30% of the Offer) and provided that there is oversubscription in the Category I Offer, the Selling Shareholders will make any unsubscribed Offer Shares of Category II Offer available for allocation to the Category I Local Applicants and Non-Local Applicants in the respective proportions outlined above. If the Local Applicants or the Non-Local Applicants, as the case may be, do not take up all of such unsubscribed Offer Shares, those Offer Shares will be reallocated for subscription to the Non-Local Applicants or the Local Applicants within 15 days from the end of Category I Offer period in accordance with the Rules for Pricing Mechanism in Public Offering of Shares, as the case may be, to the extent their oversubscription has not been satisfied. If the demand from Category I Applicants is less than the Offer Shares offered in the Category I Offer, the Offer size may be reduced or the Offer may be withdrawn, in consultation with the CMA.

Immediately after receiving CMA approval of the proposed allotment, (i) the Offer Price will be announced by the Company on the MSX, and (ii) the Issue Manager will send the investor allocation details to the MCDC and the Joint Global Coordinators. The Joint Global Coordinators will notify Category I Applicants of their allocations.

Terms of Payment for Category I Offer

Each Collection Agent will open an escrow account entitled the "OQGN IPO – Category I" account for the collection of the Category I Application Money.

The Issue Manager will open an escrow account entitled the "OQGN IPO – Category I" account to receive the subscription proceeds from the Collection Agents at least two Oman business days prior to Settlement Date. This account will be managed by the Issue Manager for Category I Offer. After deduction of all applicable fees and VAT determined until that date, the Issue Manager for Category I Offer will transfer the net proceeds in such account to the escrow account of the MCDC on the Settlement Date.

Each Category I Applicant shall be required to make full payment for the Offer Shares allotted to them to the designated bank account of the Collection Agents. However, at the time of accepting the Application, the Collection Agent may block the Category I Applicant's account maintained by the respective Collection Agent for an amount equal to the Category I Application Money.

The Collection Agents will transfer the subscription proceeds at least two Oman business days prior to the Settlement Date, to the designated bank account of the Issue Manager. In the event of failure by a Category I Applicant to make timely payment, the concerned Category I Applicant may incur significant charges and/or enforcement action against it. Prospective investors can pay for their subscription by drawing a demand draft issued by a bank in Oman or by instructing an account transfer for the amount payable at the time stated above.

All Applicants placing orders through the Joint Global Coordinators would be required to fund the escrow account entitled the "OQGN IPO – Category I" of the Issue Manager at least two Oman business days prior to the Settlement Date.

Delivery of the Offer Shares is expected to be made on the Settlement Date to the accounts of the Category I investors through the book-entry facilities operated by the MCDC.

CATEGORY II OFFER

Subscription and Application Process for Category II Applicants

30% of the Offer (636,601,716 Offer Shares) will be available for subscription by and allocation to Category II Applicants.

Mode of Application

The Category II Offer process will be conducted through the E-IPO Mechanism.

Collection Agent E-IPO Platform

Applicants will be able to submit Applications to the Collection Agents during official banking working hours on or before the Category II Offer Closing Date. Prospective investors will need to contact a Collection Agent for further guidance on the E-IPO channel provided by the respective Collection Agent.

The Applicant will be required, before completing the Application through E-IPO, to carefully read the Prospectus, including the conditions and procedures governing the E-IPO Application. Copies of the Prospectus will be available to the Applicants through the Collection Agents, on the Company's IPO microsite or can be downloaded from the websites of the CMA and MSX, as follows: www.cma.gov.om and www.msx.com, respectively.

The Category II Application Money will be paid by the Investor as per the terms of the E-IPO Mechanism used by each Collection Agent.

MCDC E-IPO Platform

Applicants can provide their particulars in the E-IPO Platform on the MCDC website (www.mcdc.om). After verifying all the particulars, the Applicant will need to print the E-IPO Application. The Applicant needs to submit the E-IPO Application along with supporting documents and Category II Application Money to one of the Collection Agents. The Applicant will need to contact its respective Collection Agent for further guidance on the E-IPO channel provided by the respective Collection Agent. The Category II Application Money will be paid by the Applicant as per the terms of the E-IPO collection process utilised by each Collection Agent. The Collection Agent will, after verifying the supporting documents and confirming the receipt of the Category II Application Money, validate the E-IPO Application in the E-IPO Platform and share a copy of the acknowledgement of the E-IPO Application with each Applicant. The Applicant needs to ensure that they receive a copy of the acknowledgement from the Collection Agent as a valid proof of their Application.

Applications

The Application must be completed in full in accordance with the instructions contained in the Prospectus and in the Application form. Incomplete Applications may be rejected. Applicants may only use the specified Application for the purpose of making a subscription for the Offer.

Each Applicant is eligible to submit only one Application. Applications once submitted cannot be cancelled by the Applicant. Submission of a second Application after the same or to another Collection Agent will be treated as such investor having submitted multiple applications and may result in all Applications submitted by the investor being rejected at any point in time prior to the allotment of Shares in the Offer.

Application Money

Along with submission of the Application, all Category II Applicants must make a payment of 100% of the subscription amount, calculated as the total number of Offer Shares applied for multiplied by the Discounted Maximum Price, which is Bzs 126 per Share (the "Category II Application Money").

Terms of Payment for Category II

The Collection Agents will open an escrow account for the collection of the Category II Application Money.

This account will be managed by each Collection Agent, who will within the next two working days after the receipt of Category II Application Money transfer the collection proceeds to the common escrow account maintained by the MCDC. Each Category II Applicant can pay by cash, drawing a demand draft issued by a bank in Oman or instruct an account transfer for the amount payable at the time of submission of the Application.

Refunds

Category II Applicants will be allotted Offer Shares at the Offer Price less a discount of 10 per cent. The Offer Price will be determined by the outcome of the bookbuilding offering to Category I Applicants. Any refunds due to a Category II Applicant will be calculated based on the difference between (i) the Category II Application Money paid by such Category II Applicant, and (ii) the product of the number of Offer Shares allotted to such Category II Applicant and Offer Price less a discount of 10 per cent.

Particulars of the Bank Account of the Category II Applicants

The details of the Applicant's bank account listed in the records of the MCDC will be used for transferring any refund. However, if an Applicant takes a leverage facility for the IPO from a Collection Agent, the refund will be made into the Applicant's loan account with the respective Collection Agent.

Basis of Allotment

Applications received from Category II Applicants will be grouped together to determine the total demand under Category II Offer. The allotment to all Category II Applicants will be made at the Offer Price less a discount of 10 per cent.

If the aggregate demand in the Category II Offer is less than or equal to 30% of the Category II Offer (636,601,716 Offer Shares), the full allotment will be made to the Category II Applicants up to the number of Offer Shares in their valid applications. If the aggregate demand in Category II is less than 30% of the Offer, then after full allocation as above, the balance of the Offer Shares shall be made available to Category I Applicants for allocation at the Offer Price on a proportionate basis if there is oversubscription in the Category I Offer.

If the aggregate demand in Category II is greater than 30% of the Offer Shares, the CMA may decide that a minimum number of Category II Offer Shares will be distributed equally among Category II Applicants, and the remaining Category I Offer Shares shall be allocated on a pro-rata basis.

Allotment Confirmation and Refund of Money for Category II

The MCDC will send an SMS to investors who have been allotted Offer Shares to their mobile number registered with the MCDC after the end of the Category I Offer Period following receipt of the approval of the CMA on the proposed allotments. The MCDC is also expected to communicate refunds of any excess money to eligible investors within three working days after receiving the approval of the CMA on the proposed allotments.

Documentation Required

A copy of a valid power of attorney duly endorsed by the competent legal authorities is required if the subscription is on behalf of another person (with the exception of a subscription made by a father on behalf of his minor children).

Collection Agents Receiving the Applications

The Collection Agent receiving the Applications is required to accept the Application, after confirmation of the Applicant's compliance with the processes set out in the Prospectus. The Collection Agent must instruct the Applicants to comply and fulfil any requirements set out in the Application. Applicants must submit an Application to one of the Collection Agents on or before the closing of the relevant Offer Period. The Collection Agent shall refuse any Application received after the end of official working hours on Closing Date.

Acceptance of the Applications

The Issue Manager or the Collection Agents may not accept an Application if:

- The Application does not bear the signature of the Applicant;
- The Application Money is not paid by the Applicant in accordance with the conditions set out in the Prospectus;
- The Application does not include the Applicant's Investor Number registered with the MCDC;
- The Application is submitted in joint names;
- The Applicant is a Sole Proprietorship or trust account;
- The Investor Number furnished in the Application is incorrect;
- The Applicant submits more than one Application in the same name, in which case all of them may be rejected;
- The supporting documents are not enclosed with the Application;
- The Application does not contain all the particulars of the bank account of the Applicant;
- The particulars of the bank account provided for in the Application are found to be incorrect or not relevant to the Applicant, with the exception of Applications submitted in the names of minor children, who are allowed to make use of the particulars of the bank accounts held by their father;
- The power of attorney is not attached to the Application in respect of an Applicant who subscribes on behalf of another person (with the exception of the fathers who subscribe on behalf of their minor children); or
- The Application does not comply with the legal requirements as provided for in the Prospectus.

If the Issue Manager or a Collection Agent receives an Application that does not comply with the procedures set out in the Prospectus, reasonable effort will be taken to contact the investor so that the mistake may be corrected. If the



One week after Libya flood, int’l aid effort gains pace

DERNA: A week after a tsunami-sized flash flood devastated the Libyan coastal city of Derna, sweeping thousands to their deaths, the international aid effort to help the grieving survivors slowly gathered pace on Sunday.

Search-and-rescue teams wearing face masks and protective suits kept up the grim search for bodies or any survivors in the mud-caked wasteland of smashed buildings, crushed cars and uprooted trees.

Traumatised residents, 30,000 of whom are now homeless in Derna alone, are in dire need of clean water, food, shelter and basic supplies amid a growing risk of cholera, diarrhoea, dehydration and malnutrition, UN agencies warn.

Emergency response teams and relief goods have been deployed from France, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates, with more on the way from multiple other nations.

The health minister of the eastern administration, Othman Abdeljalil, has said that 3,252 people were confirmed dead in Derna.

Libyan officials and humanitarian organisations have warned that the final toll could be much higher with thousands still missing.

The massive flood came as



An aerial picture shows a view of the damage in the aftermath of a devastating flood in eastern Libya’s city of Derna. – AFP

Libya was lashed on September 10 by the hurricane-strength Storm Daniel, which had earlier brought deadly floods to Greece, Türkiye and Bulgaria.

The rapidly rising waters burst two upstream river dams in Derna, sending a late-night tidal wave crashing through the centre of the city of 100,000, sweeping entire residential blocks into the Mediterranean.

UN experts have blamed the high death toll on climatic factors as the Mediterranean region has sweltered under an unusually hot

summer.

A week on from the disaster, bodies are still washing up on the sea shore, along with vast amounts of household items and debris.

A rescue crew from Malta’s Civil Protection Department said it had discovered a beach strewn with hundreds of bodies on Friday, the Times of Malta newspaper reported.

A Libyan rescue team in an inflatable boat reported seeing “perhaps 600 bodies” at sea off the Om-al-Briket region, about 20 kilometres east of Derna,

according to a video shared on social networks.

The United Nations has launched an aid appeal for more than \$71 million.

The aid being sent to Libya includes water, food, tents, blankets, hygiene kits, medicines and emergency surgical supplies as well as heavy machinery to help clear the debris, and more body bags.

The scale of the devastation in Derna and surrounding areas has prompted shows of solidarity across divided Libya. — AFP

Mali, Niger, Burkina sign mutual defence pact

BAMAKO: The military leaders of Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger on Saturday signed a mutual defence pact, ministerial delegations from the three Sahel countries announced in Mali’s capital Bamako.

The Liptako-Gourma Charter establishes the Alliance of Sahel States (AES), Mali’s junta leader Assimi Goita posted on X.

Its aim is to “establish an architecture of collective defence and mutual assistance for the benefit of our populations”, he wrote.

The Liptako-Gourma region — where the Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger borders meet — has been ravaged by fighting in recent years.

“This alliance will be a combination of military and economic efforts between the three countries”, Mali’s Foreign Minister Abdoulaye Diop told journalists.

“Our priority is the fight against terrorism in the three countries.”

A group insurgency that erupted in northern Mali in 2012 spread to Niger and Burkina Faso in 2015.

All three countries have undergone coups since 2020, most recently Niger, where soldiers in July overthrew President Mohamed Bazoum.

The West African regional bloc ECOWAS has threatened to intervene militarily in Niger over the coup.

Mali and Burkina Faso quickly responded by saying that any such operation would be deemed a “declaration of war” against them.

The charter signed binds the signatories to assist one another — including militarily — in the event of an attack on any one of them.

“Any attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of one or more contracting parties shall be considered as an aggression against the other parties and shall give rise to a duty of assistance... including the use of armed force to restore and ensure security”, it states.

Mali has, in addition to fighting jihadists linked to Al Qaeda and the IS group, seen a resumption of hostilities by predominantly Tuareg armed groups over the past week.

The escalation risks testing an already stretched army as well as the junta’s claims that it has successfully turned around a dire security situation.

The successionist groups had in 2012 launched a rebellion before signing a peace agreement with the state in 2015. But that accord is now generally considered moribund. — AFP



Mali’s junta leader Assimi Goita attend a campaign rally on constitutional amendments, in Bamako, Mali. – Reuters

Kim heads home after deepening military ties with Russia

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un was heading home by train on Sunday after a week-long visit to Russia that included talks with President Vladimir Putin on closer military and other cooperation.

A video published on Sunday showed Kim walking along a red carpet to his train carriage in the Russian Far Eastern city of Artyom, and waving goodbye to the sounds of a military band.

Artyom is about 254 km from Khasan station on Russia’s border with North Korea.

The trip by the North Korean leader, who seldom leaves his country, marks “a fresh heyday of friendship and solidarity and cooperation is being opened up in the history of the development of the relations between the DPRK and Russia,” North Korean state news agency KCNA said, using the initials for the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea.

The United States and its allies

worry about warming military ties between the two neighbours as Russia presses its attack of Ukraine and North Korea, a reclusive communist state, proceeds with missile and nuclear development.

South Korea and the United States say military cooperation between North Korea and Russia would violate US sanctions against Pyongyang and that the allies would ensure there was a price to pay.

South Korean President Yoon Suk Yeol called such a military partnership “illegal and unjust”, saying the international community would “unite more tightly” to cope with deepening ties between Moscow and Pyongyang, in written responses to the Associated Press on Sunday.

On Saturday Kim met Russian Defence Minister Sergei Shoigu, who showed the North Korean leader Russian nuclear-capable



North Korean leader Kim Jong Un waves as he boards his train at a railway station in the town of Artyom outside Vladivostok in the Primorsky region, Russia. – Reuters

strategic bombers, hypersonic missiles and warships.

Kim and Shoigu “exchanged their constructive opinions on the practical issues arising in further strengthening the strategic and tactical coordination, cooperation and mutual exchange between the armed forces of the two countries and in the fields of their national defence and security,” KCNA said on Sunday.

Moscow is discussing joint military exercises with North Korea, Shoigu told Russian media. He visited Pyongyang in July and toured a weapons exhibition with Kim, one of the most striking signs of deepening ties up to that point.

During his trip to Russia, Kim toured Russia’s Pacific Sea Fleet, equipped with strategic nuclear submarines among other military vessels, KCNA said, quoting him as praising the fleet for its contribution to peace in the region.

— Reuters

BOGOTA

FARC dissidents kill four Colombian soldiers

Four Colombian Army soldiers were killed in fights with FARC dissidents a day before a meeting between the rebel group and the government to consolidate peace talks, Bogota’s Defense Ministry said on Saturday.

The soldiers were killed “in fighting against a residual armed group”, the ministry said.

The Estado Mayor Central (EMC) is due to begin a three-day meeting on Monday with the government to decide on a date for future peace talks, and



to formalise a bilateral ceasefire, hours before the four soldiers were killed.

The attack took place in the southwestern rural region of Narino, which is home to a large portion of the coca crops in Colombia, the world’s biggest cocaine producer. — AFP

RIO DE JANEIRO

14 killed in plane crash in Brazilian Amazon

Fourteen people were killed when a plane crashed in the Brazilian Amazon while trying to land in stormy weather in the tourist town of Barcelos, leaving no survivors, officials said.

The small plane’s pilot was approaching the remote town in heavy rain, with low visibility, and appeared to inadvertently start landing halfway down the runway.

The plane ran out of landing strip and crashed, killing all 12 passengers and two crew, he said.



Initial investigations indicated the passengers were all Brazilian men travelling to the region for sport fishing.

“Our teams have been on the ground responding since the moment of the crash to provide the necessary support,” Governor Wilson Lima said. — AFP

ISTANBUL

3 firefighters missing in helicopter crash

Turkish scuba divers searched on Sunday for three firefighters who went missing when their helicopter crashed into a water reservoir near the western resort city of Izmir.

Agriculture and Forestry Minister Ibrahim Yumakli said the helicopter crashed while picking up water to douse a forest fire on Saturday night.

The helicopter team included three Kyrgyz nationals and one Turk. One of the Kyrgyz nationals was rescued and rushed



to hospital.

“The divers have identified the wreckage,” Yumakli said in televised remarks. Türkiye has funnelled resources into its emergency response efforts after being gripped by devastating fires in 2021 that killed nine people. — AFP



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7

In brief

■ SYDNEY



INDIGENOUS RIGHTS SUPPORTERS RALLY BEFORE VOTE

Australians rallied around the country on Sunday to fight for a landmark Indigenous rights reform that is bleeding support in the polls before an October 14 referendum.

Tens of thousands joined “Walk for Yes” events in major cities ahead of the vote that could grant Indigenous Australians a constitutionally enshrined right to be consulted on policies that affect them — a so-called Voice.

To pass, the referendum needs majority support across Australia but also a majority in at least four of the six states.

Voting is compulsory, with non-voters who don't have a valid reason liable to a fine of \$13. — AFP

■ FRANKFURT



CLIMATE ACTIVISTS SPRAY PAINT OVER BRANDENBURG GATE

Activists from climate group “Last Generation” spray-painted Berlin's famous Brandenburg Gate on Sunday, calling for the abandonment of fossil fuels and more action on climate change.

Six pillars of the monument at the heart of the German capital were sprayed with orange warning paint, the group said in a statement.

The paint spread to the Pariser Platz, the square at the foot of the monument, with bright footprints extending along the roadway.

Fourteen people were arrested at the site, police said, without any indication of acts of violence. — AFP

■ PARIS



FRENCH EX-PM EDGES TO PRESIDENTIAL RUN

France's popular former premier Edouard Philippe is staking out the ground for a run for the presidency in 2027 against an increasingly stern challenge from far-right figurehead Marine Le Pen. Philippe has been omnipresent in France over the past week, giving a blitz of media interviews and publishing his latest book, outlining positions well beyond his current remit as mayor of the northern port of Le Havre.

While the 2027 race is still far off, there has already been intense jostling among Macron's centrist faction given the president himself is not allowed to stand for a third consecutive term and polls indicate Le Pen has her best ever chance at winning the Elysee. — AFP

Ukraine drones strike Crimea, Moscow, oil depot, Russia says



A Ukrainian serviceman inspects a turret of a destroyed Russian BMP-3 infantry fighting vehicle in the recently liberated village of Novodarivka, amid Russia's attack on Ukraine, in Zaporizhzhia region, Ukraine. — Reuters file photo

MOSCOW: Russia said it had thwarted a coordinated Ukrainian attack on Crimea early on Sunday, while drones also targeted Moscow, disrupting air traffic in the capital, and caused a fire at an oil depot in the southwest of the country.

Ukraine in recent days has launched a series of strikes on Russian military targets in occupied Crimea, including the Russian Navy Black Sea Fleet's facilities, seeking to undermine Moscow's war efforts in the critical region.

Attacks deep inside Russia, far from the front lines, have also increased, with Moscow's mayor saying at least two drones were shot down in the region of the capital early on Sunday.

Oleksiy Danilov, the secretary of Ukraine's Security Council, urged Kyiv's allies to speed up the delivery of weapons, saying this was the only way to end the war.

“For example, the complete

or partial elimination of the Russian Black Sea Fleet, which is a doable task, should significantly accelerate the process of Russia's search for a way out of the ongoing war,” Danilov said.

Russian air defence systems destroyed at least six drones targeting Crimea from different directions, Russia's defence ministry said on Sunday.

The report on the Telegram messaging app did not say whether any damage or casualties had been caused on the Crimea peninsula, which Moscow annexed from Kyiv in a widely condemned move in 2014, eight years before Russia's full-fledged attack.

In the Moscow region, a drone was destroyed over the Istra district and another over the Ramensky district, Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin said on Telegram, adding there were no casualties or damage from drone debris.

At least 30 flights were delayed

and six cancelled at Moscow's major airports, Russian state news agencies said — a frequent move by aviation authorities during drone strikes.

In southwestern Russia, a Ukrainian drone damaged an oil depot early on Sunday, sparking a fire at a fuel tank that was later extinguished, the regional governor said. “There are no casualties, all emergency services are working on the territory of the facility,” the governor of the Oryol region, Andrei Klychkov, said on Telegram.

Another drone was downed in Russia's Voronezh region, local governor Aleksandr Gusev and the ministry of defence said. According to Gusev, there were no casualties or damage.

Authorities in Tula region also reported a drone crashing on the grounds of a logistics centre, though there were no casualties or serious damage to infrastructure.

— Reuters

Greek PM pledges state reforms and natural disaster relief

ATHENS: Greece will push ahead with state reforms to boost economic growth and offer relief measures to those hit by natural disasters, without risking the country's fiscal progress, Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis said.

His annual policy speech was overshadowed by a storm that killed 17 people last week and deadly wildfires at the north of the country this month.

The conservative premier said state coffers for natural disasters would be doubled to 600 million euros next year, drawn from a tax on luxury hotel accommodation.

The storm swept through Thessaly in central Greece for three days, flooding cities and villages and turning the region into an inland sea. Hundreds of residents were airlifted or pulled out of flooded homes in lifeboats, crops were washed away and tens of thousands of animals drowned.

In his speech from the northern city of Thessaloniki, Mitsotakis referred to the challenges the country faces due to climate change, and the financial support Greece can get from Europe.

Mitsotakis outlined reforms across the state to improve ministry coordination, tackle tax evasion, bolster the health sector and support families, youth and their access to affordable housing.

He reiterated that public sector wages would be increased and said the minimum monthly wage of 780 euros would be raised again from April 2024. He also outlined hirings of healthcare workers, first aid



Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis pauses as he delivers his speech at the annual International Fair of Thessaloniki, Greece. — Reuters

responders and firefighters.

“My speech today will not include new, pompous benefits,” Mitsotakis said. “I will never put at risk the fiscal stability which constitutes the bedrock of our progress. I will never allow us to go through the trauma of a national bankruptcy.”

In the financial sector, Mitsotakis said Greece's financial transaction tax of 0.2 per cent would be slashed by half.

This month, Greece regained an investment grade credit rating after 13 years, through not from one of the three major ratings agencies.

Wildfires and floods are expected to weigh on the economy, which has recently emerged from a decade-long debt crisis. Economic activity in Thessaly accounts for more than 5 per cent of GDP, according to a Eurobank report.

“We will do everything to ensure that the unequal battle with the climate crisis does not become a losing battle, Mitsotakis said, adding that storm Daniel was a “warning” that Greece needed to be better prepared for future flooding phenomena.

— Reuters

EU chief pledges migrant action plan in Italy's Lampedusa

LAMPEDUSA: European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen on Sunday visited the Italian island of Lampedusa, which is struggling with a surge in migrant arrivals, and promised a 10-point EU action plan to help Italy deal with the situation.

Nearly 126,000 migrants have arrived in Italy so far this year, almost double the figure by the same date in 2022. The small island of Lampedusa has recently seen a sharp rise in the number of people arriving by boat, with more than 7,000 landing this week, more than the island's permanent population.

Von der Leyen was accompanied by Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni and the car carrying them to Lampedusa's migrant reception centre was briefly blocked by locals protesting over the burden facing the island.

Following the visit to the centre, von der Leyen, who is expected to run for a second term when her mandate expires next year, set out a 10-point “action plan” to relieve pressure on Italy, where most migrants arrive from north Africa's shores by boat.



European Commission President Ursula von der Leyen and Italian PM Giorgia Meloni visit the port where migrants arrive, on the Sicilian island of Lampedusa, Italy. — Reuters

“Irregular migration is a European challenge and it needs a European response, we are in this together,” she said at a joint news

conference with Meloni. “You can count on the EU,” she added in Italian.

The plan includes using the EU's

external borders agency Frontex to identify migrants arriving in Italy and repatriate those not eligible for asylum.

Frontex would also step up sea and aerial surveillance of migrant boats and help crack down on people-smugglers, von der Leyen said, adding that she had already spoken to several EU leaders about the plan and was confident of their support.

Von der Leyen also vowed to increase access to legal channels for the migrants, saying “the better we are with legal migration the stricter we can be with irregular migration,” while committing to a sustained battle against traffickers.

The surge in migrant crossings is a major political headache for Meloni, who took office in October last year and has made fighting illegal immigration a cornerstone of her rise to power. She reiterated on Sunday that the right approach is to prevent people leaving for Europe, not redistributing migrants around the bloc.

On Monday her cabinet will meet to approve tough measures, including building new detention and repatriation centres and extending the maximum time migrants can be held for.

— Reuters

The importance of teaching climate change



Sandhya Rao Mehta

The writer is Associate Professor, Dept of English Language and Literature Sultan Qaboos University

With the most recent and catastrophic climactic events in North Africa, the floods in Libya and the earthquake in Morocco, climate change has once again shown its threatening face.

It is not only these two events – there are just too many to count now: the wildfires in Europe and Canada, the floods in China, the frequent hurricanes along many oceans, including on the Omani shores, all point to the fact that climate change is already a reality.

Various international organisations have policies on global warming and climate change but it is at the individual level that the impact will be felt. It is also at this level that awareness must be created. Teaching students about the day to day impact of climate change is the most important way of tackling this issue now. The United Nations states that “Education empowers all people, but especially motivates the young to take action”. This is why climate change must be a compulsory component of education at every level.

Climate change is now a reality and world bodies are now trying to cope with it, rather than question it. Increasing chances of flash floods, typhoons, fires and hurricanes, as well as landslides and droughts are all there and communities need to be aware of how to tackle any such eventuality.

The price of climate change will be paid by future generations, however unfair that may be. At best, we can equip them with knowledge and skills to help them cope and confront the results of environmental events.

Studies have shown that the 3 most important aspects of teaching climate change are the emotional impact of climate change, inclusion of some aspects in the curriculum, and teacher training.

It is impossible to ignore the fact that youngsters are fearful, or at least apprehensive of the future in terms of the environmental changes. Educating youth to confront and cope with these changing realities will go a long way in approaching this subject. Education in this case could include

INCLUDING A COMPONENT, WHICH COULD BE A READING OR A SHORT PROJECT AT EVERY LEVEL, WOULD INCREASE KNOWLEDGE, CREATE AWARENESS AND ENHANCE PREPAREDNESS.

giving opportunities for students to interact with scientists, creating sustainable projects, and even encouraging best practices in preserving their communities.

That climate change is not in the curriculum of schools and colleges has been acknowledged. Including a component, which could be a reading or a short project at every level, would increase knowledge, create awareness and enhance preparedness.

For any of this to happen, teachers need sufficient sensitisation and training. Presently, there are very few resources for this additional aspect in an already stressed curriculum anywhere in the globe. Teachers already find their jobs challenging and time consuming. Adding more to an already burdened system is not easy.

However, at stake is the future of the planet. From a practical perspective, people must be equipped to deal with the environmental challenges of tomorrow. It may already be too late to turn back the clock, but at least our youngsters must be given the tools to deal with our changed world.

AI ‘no substitute’ for fashion designers’ creativity

HELEN ROWE

AI is transforming the fashion world but the fast growing technology will never be a replacement for designers’ “original creativity”, according to the head of a pioneering project.

Fashion innovator Calvin Wong has developed the Interactive Design Assistant for Fashion (AiDA) — the world’s first designer-led AI system.

It uses image-recognition technology to speed up the time it takes for a design to go from a first sketch to the catwalk.

“Designers have their fabric prints, patterns, colour tones, initial sketches and they upload the images,” Wong told AFP.

“Then our AI system can recognise those design elements and come up with more proposals for designers to refine and modify their original design.” Wong said AiDA’s particular strength was its ability to present “all the possible combinations” for a designer to consider, something he said was impossible in the current design process.

An exhibition at Hong Kong’s M+ Museum in December featured collections by 14 designers developed using the tool.

But Wong stressed it was about “facilitating designers inspiration” not “using AI to take over a designers job, to take over their creativity.”

“We must treasure the designer’s original creativity,” he added.

Wong heads up the Laboratory for Artificial Intelligence in Design (AidLab), a collaboration between Britain’s Royal College of Art (RCA) and Hong Kong Polytechnic University where he is a professor in fashion.

AiDA was just one of the AidLab projects being showcased in the British capital ahead of London Fashion Week, which started on Friday.

Others included the Neo Couture project which aims to use advanced technologies to digitally preserve the specialised skills and techniques used by couturiers.

With the UK fashion industry facing a skills shortage, it is creating an AI-assisted training system to help teach couture skills.

Another project aims to increase sustainability to reduce the estimated 92 million tonnes of clothing that ends up in landfill each year.

One potential use of the AI Loupe project is to help designers overcome the problems of using so-called dead stock fabric.

Designers can photograph leftover fabric and then use the tool to get the missing details to assess its suitability for their designs.

— AFP

Go with the flow, Joe!



Maureen Dowd

BIDEN KNOWS HIS STAFF THINKS HE HAS A PROBLEM OF POPPING OFF, AND I THINK THAT HAS MADE HIM MORE TIMID AND MORE CLOISTERED

President Joe Biden gave a speech on Bidenomics at a community college in a Washington suburb on Thursday.

He ended without taking questions. He said he wished he could, “but I’m going to get in real trouble if I do that.” Dude, you’re the leader of the free world! Who sends the president to the principal’s office? At least this time, his staff didn’t play him offstage with a musical interlude as if he were an Oscar winner droning on too long. That’s what happened last Sunday in Vietnam. His press secretary, Karine Jean-Pierre, gave him the hook, abruptly ending the press conference as he was talking about his conversation with a top Chinese official. Oh, yeah, nothing important.

Seconds earlier, he had said, “I’m going to go to bed.” Republicans, naturally, jumped on that as evidence of senility. But that was silly. The president had had an extremely long day, on a five-day trip to India and Vietnam. The press conference was after 9 pm local time. I’ve been on plenty of those trips with presidents, and they’re exhausting.

Since he became president, Biden has sharply curbed how much he talks to the press, rarely giving interviews. He limits his press conferences mostly to duets with foreign leaders, where he can put his foreign policy relationships and experience on display. Even then, White House officials preselect questioners and aggressively approach reporters to ferret out what topics they would focus on if they were picked. On Friday at the White House, after backing the autoworkers in their strike, he didn’t take questions.

There’s something poignant about watching a guy who used to delight in his Irish gift of gab be muzzled. In interviews when he was a senator and then vice president, Biden could easily give a 45-minute answer to the first question. Heaven help anyone who tried to nix the prolix pol back then.

But now, when I watch him cut himself short or get cut short by his staff, I get an image of a yellow Lab gamboling smack into an electric fence. When the president stops himself and says, “Am I giving too long an answer?” or, “Maybe I’ll stop there,” or “I’m going to get in real trouble,” he seems nervous that his handlers might yank his choke



President Joe Biden heads to Air Force One after speaking to reporters at Joint Base Andrews, Maryland. – NYT file photo

collar if he rattles on.

He no longer seems a Happy Warrior. The pol who has always relished talking to people, being around people, seems sort of lonely. When he campaigned in a limited, shielded way during Covid, he was dubbed “the Man in the Basement.” But now, even without the mask, it’s as if he’s still hidden away.

He knows his staff thinks he has a problem of popping off, and I think that has made him more timid and more cloistered. And when he’s more isolated, he seems sadder — maybe because he’s not drawing energy from crowds and journalists the way he used to; perhaps his overprotective staff has gotten into his head. I know he gets frozen on Hunter questions, but he can’t hide from that forever, either.

Is his less-than-stellar inner circle undermining the boss and giving ammunition to the nasty conservative storyline about how the 80-year-old president is losing it? Biden’s more ginger gait makes Democrats flinch, but his staff reinforces the impression of a fragile chief executive by overmanaging him and white-knuckling all his appearances. By publicly treating him as if he’s not in control of his faculties, by cutting him off midthought as if he’s faltering and needs caretaking, they play into the hands of Trumpsters. His vulnerability becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.

I’ve covered Biden for 35 years. He has always been a babble merchant, prone to exaggeration and telling stories too good to be true, saying inexplicably wacky things. It was often cleanup on Aisle Biden. So when he acts like this now, it shouldn’t be attributed just to aging. Certainly, he has slowed down. But his staff has exacerbated the problem by trying too hard to keep him in check. Americans know who Uncle Joe is, quirks and all, slower and all. Let them decide.

The president’s feelings were no doubt hurt the other day by The Washington Post column by David Ignatius, a charter member of the capital’s liberal elite, saying that Biden should be proud of “the string of wins” from his first term but not run for reelection because he “risks undoing his greatest achievement — which was stopping Trump.” I don’t disagree, but I doubt it will make a difference.

If Biden has a chip on his shoulder, it’s justified. Barack Obama blew off his vice president in 2016 in favour of Hillary Clinton, and a lot of Democrats wrote off Biden during the 2020 primaries after he lost Iowa and New Hampshire.

It was amazing, given his trajectory, that Biden fought his way to the presidency. And he thinks he has done a great job. Besides, being an underdog is his sweet spot. And he’s got a point that he is the only one who has beaten Trump.

But Biden needs to start looking like he’s in command. His staff is going to have to roll with him and take some risks and stop jerking the reins. Let Joe out of the virtual basement.

— *The New York Times*

To comment & email: opinion@omanobserver.om

Never say die...

Challenges never stop emerging at every stage in one's lifetime; but, overcoming obstacles and difficulties is what life is all about. However, some people curse their life just for simple mistakes or disappointments, which they make every now and then in their day-today life. Even so often, you could hear people calling themselves failures or losers perhaps. One can imagine how negative some people are, so they lose hope on life very easily. Though one should not believe in the existence of failure!

In fact, everyone is special and successful in something different than others, but sometimes we do not realise that. Each one of us needs to be optimistic always and believe in the saying "Where there is a will, there is a way". Nevertheless, people, usually, believe that the condition of not meeting certain desirable objectives is a failure. They consider it as an opposite of success, but it is not; failure may be a little hump on the way to success.

Case in a point, Thomas Edison, the world's great inventor who invented the electric bulb, declared, "I never failed once. Discovering how to make a light bulb just happened to be a 2,000-step process". Edison attended school late due to his childhood illness and his teacher Alexander Crawford often called him "addled". He was kicked out of school three months after starting, and then he was home-schooled by his mother. However, he never gave up on trying what he believed in while trying to invent the bulb. That is why Edison became one of the greatest inventors in the world.

If you think of yourself, you may not like to think of any disappointment that happened to you, but it is a reality that the majority of us crash at some point in our lives. In fact, it is easy to think negatively, especially when it seems that things we do are not



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PATIENCE AND INSISTENCE HAVE A MAGICAL IMPACT THAT MAKES DIFFICULTIES DISAPPEAR AND OBSTACLES VANISH AFTERWARDS

good enough. No matter how hard things are, there is always a hope to find your way to jump over the page of such tough times. Men succeed when they realise that their failures are preparation for their future victories. To them, failure happens when they stop trying to fulfil their personal ambitions. Many of the world's failures are people who did not realise how close they were to success when they gave up.

Sometimes, people might think that they have wasted their time by trying to do something useful and thus regret it, but that should not be the case. The fact that they have tried doing something is much better than doing nothing. It is always said, 'no pain, no gain'. Patience and insistence have a magical impact that makes difficulties disappear and obstacles vanish afterwards.

In view of that, one has to have his dreams in mind, so that he won't give up trying over and over to achieve the goals. One never knows that maybe he/she is only one step away from achieving success and meeting personal desires. One shall ask himself is he/she is willing to waste the long journey that was passed when he/she is already so close to reach the planned destination? Therefore, one should personally proceed on the life journey with the same level of enthusiasm as when you first put your first footstep on the path.

To make this possible, you should believe that you are now just one step closer to success. Another way is to keep your mind focused on the destination that takes you to the next step. So, hold on tight and do not give up your dreams. Just remember that Thomas Edison failed thousands of times to invent the light bulb, but he did not consider his attempts as failures. Instead, he regarded them as ways to achieve success. Therefore, one shall never forget that every failure brings with it the seed of an equivalent success.

A MONKEY'S PLAY!



An entertainer plays with a monkey on the Jamaa El-Fna square, with the El Koutoubia mosque in the background, that is still standing after the deadly earthquake, in Marrakech, Morocco, on Sunday. – Reuters

Nature-positive innovation

What if we could build wooden houses without felling a tree? What if we

could fish in such a way that left egg-producing females in the sea? And what if we could fill our forests with a wide array of edible plants, making commercially farmed forests look comparatively barren? Though they may seem impossible, these practices have existed for centuries, suggesting that the future we need is to be found in our past.

Climate change has become a time bomb, and the need to develop new ways of living that are far gentler on the planet has never been greater. But we stubbornly adhere to the same old mantra of innovation, technology, and unrestrained growth – offering lip service to sustainability while encouraging nature-destroying activities that are rapidly making the planet unlivable.

Even so-called "green" technologies accelerate production and promote consumption. Consider electric vehicles, bicycles, and scooters: manufacturing these goods requires ever more energy and resources and inevitably results in more emissions and waste.

While living in Canada, I had the opportunity to learn from its indigenous peoples. In the town of Port Hardy, on the northern tip of Vancouver Island, I met an indigenous fisherman at the



Stuart Walker

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AS CLIMATE CHANGE WORSENS, WE MUST MOVE BEYOND TECHNOLOGICAL FIXES THAT ACCELERATE PRODUCTION AND PROMOTE CONSUMPTION

municipal wharf, which was crowded with small fishing boats. He told me that he used to fish for halibut until industrialised fishing decimated the stocks. Now he fishes only for salmon; but those stocks are dwindling, too.

Before the Europeans arrived, indigenous peoples around the world had lived on their tribal lands for thousands of years; even after centuries of dispossession, many continue to be close to the Earth. They have learned, over generations, how to coexist with, rather than exploit, nature and developed highly sophisticated tools, mostly made of local materials. The design and utility of these tools reflect a deep knowledge of and respect for the natural world. By comparison, our modern innovations often seem frivolous and irresponsible.

Take, for example, the humble halibut fishing hook. Mass-produced hooks, which can be bought for pennies, are not made to last and can be easily replaced – like so many of today's products. The traditional halibut hook of the Pacific Northwest, however, is something else entirely.

This artifact seamlessly integrates many of the objectives that we are struggling to achieve in design today: functionality,

sustainability, and conservation. It also embodies the creativity, artistic expression, ecological knowledge, spiritual beliefs, and cultural heritage of its indigenous makers.

Perhaps most importantly, the hook is sized to catch only the male halibut, which is smaller than the female, thus preserving fish stocks for the future. This approach to fishing, like traditional indigenous methods of boat building, house construction, and forest management, ensures the continuation of community-based practices, while simultaneously conserving the

natural environment.

The good news is that Unesco, through its Intangible Cultural Heritage lists, supports the safeguarding of this type of local knowledge and know-how, which should play a foundational role in sustainable development. Indigenous practices can help us rebalance our values and recognise the importance of interdependence, the common good, localisation, a more distributed economy, and biodiversity.

These are all key aspects of economist Kate Raworth's groundbreaking book Doughnut Economics, in which

she critiques the dominant economic system and proposes an economics suited to the twenty-first century. In the same vein, Wales, as a member of the Wellbeing Economy Alliance, is attempting to transform its economy to ensure a good quality of life for all and to achieve harmony with the natural world. Transformation is progressing via a host of bottom-up (rather than centralised, top-down) initiatives, including local food production, swap shops, co-working spaces, "women's sheds," peppercorn rents for small businesses, local wealth-building projects, leadership training courses in nature-based well-being, and regular public-engagement panels.

As global warming accelerates, innovation must move beyond technological novelties whose main purpose is to generate profits for shareholders. Tools like the halibut hook of the Pacific Northwest and the localisation initiatives in Wales demonstrate the need for a different set of values. Embracing resilient and restorative design that respects and supports the environment, social equity, and cultural traditions, while also building a vibrant economy that benefits everyone, is the only way to create a future that lasts.

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Climate change has become a time bomb.

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Al Nahdha ready for Al Ahed challenge in AFC Cup

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

Oman's Al Nahdha club will commence their campaign at the 2023/2024 AFC Cup Group Stage when they take on Al Ahed FC of Lebanon at Seeb Stadium for Group A matches. The match will kick off at 8:00 pm (Oman time).

In the same group, Palestine's Jabal Al Mukaber will meet Syrian club Al Futuwa SC at the Prince Mohammed Stadium in Jordan. The match on Monday at Seeb Stadium will be considered as home venue for Lebanon Al Ahed FC as they selected Oman as home venue for the team's matches.

The Al Buraimi-based team will look for a strong start at one of Asia's most prestigious men's clubs competition. Al Nahdha team, coached by national experienced coach Hamed al Azani, will look to capture the three winning points as the team will have an advantage of the home and fans support.

KEY PLAYERS

The defending champions of the joint domestic competitions namely HM Cup and the top-tier league are equipped with many key players from the senior national team who are back recently from Minnesota, USA after they played top international friendly game against USA which Oman lost 4-0.

Oman international Harib al Saadi will be among the key players who head coach Al Azani will depend in Monday's assignment

accompanied by Oman's top strikers Issam al Subhi and other players including Salah al Yahyaei, Al Mundher al Alawi, Ahmed al Kaabi and goalkeeper Ibrahim al Mukhaini. Al Nahdha will miss the services of strikers Omar al Malki and Al Mundher al Alawi besides Salah al Yahyaei due to their injuries.

This is the fifth attendance for Al Nahdha at the AFC Cup and in this edition the team secured a slot in the group stage after defeating Bahrain's Al Khalidya SC 3-2 on August 22. The best year for Al Nahdha was in 2008 as they had reached the semifinals. The Al Buraimi club will aim to recall the memories and reach further in the final of the Asian event for the clubs.

Al Azani expressed confidence in the press conference ahead of the match and he said that his team will deliver their best in today's encounter against Al Ahed FC of Lebanon. "The biggest challenge in the AFC Cup will be duplicating the similar achievement of the Seeb club last year. I am confident our players will be able to show their top performance in this edition," he added.

The former national Olympic head coach commented on the injuries and he responded that this part is considered as the team is playing plenty of games within a short time. "We are having a full squad of players with similar readiness and I hope the injuries will not impact the team," he concluded.



Inter humble Milan 5-1 in derby



Armenian midfielder Henrikh Mkhitaryan (L), Argentine forward Lautaro Martinez (C) and Italian midfielder Davide Frattesi (R) celebrate after a goal during the Italian Serie A. –AFP

MILAN: Henrikh Mkhitaryan scored twice to help Inter Milan crush neighbours AC Milan 5-1 in Serie A on Saturday and continue their perfect start to the season.

Inter, who won their first three matches without conceding a goal, moved two points clear at the top of the standings on 12 points from four games.

They are two points above second-placed Juventus, who beat Lazio 3-1 on Saturday, and three clear of Milan in third before they travel to Real Sociedad in the Champions League on Wednesday.

Mkhitaryan, Marcus Thuram, Hakan Calhanoglu and Davide Frattesi were all on target for Inter, securing their fifth consecutive win in the Milan derby across all competitions for the first time in history.

"Last year, four derby wins brought us a (Coppa Italia) trophy and allowed us to play in a very important (Champions League) final," coach Simone Inzaghi told a press conference.

"(Today's victory) gives us first place, but the championship is still very long."

Mkhitaryan struck from close range to put Inter in front in the fifth minute

and new signing Thuram doubled the advantage before the break with a fine shot into the top corner for his first Serie A goal.

Milan pulled one back just before the hour mark through Rafael Leao, who latched onto a pass and shot past Inter keeper Yann Sommer as a sudden downpour of rain struck the San Siro.

Inter allowed Stefano Pioli's side control of possession but were far more ruthless and Mkhitaryan made it 3-1 in the 69th minute before midfielder Calhanoglu added the fourth from a penalty awarded for Theo Hernandez's foul on Lautaro Martinez.

Substitute Frattesi completed the rout in stoppage time when he was fed by Mkhitaryan and the 23-year-old outwitted the goalkeeper to find the back of the net.

"A derby lost like this weighs a lot. I'm really sorry, especially for the fans," Milan defender Simon Kjaer told DAZN. "Tonight they were smarter than us, we (only) played until 3-1."

Inter have beaten Milan a record 69 times in Serie A and scored a record 256 goals against their city rivals in the competition. — Reuters



Finland's Emil Ruusuvuori in action during his singles match against Tommy Paul of the U.S. – Reuters

PARIS: Finland wrote a new page in their tennis history on Saturday, beating the United States 2-1 in Split to reach the last eight of the Davis Cup for the first time.

Australia and defending champions Canada also qualified while Novak Djokovic played doubles in a losing cause for Serbia against Czech Republic in a dead rubber with both teams already through to the final stages to be played in Malaga in November.

Otto Virtanen set the Finns rolling in the winner-take-all match against the Americans with a 7-6 (7/5), 1-6, 7-6 (9/7) win over Mackenzie McDonald.

Emil Ruusuvuori then followed up with a 7-6 (7/1), 6-4 victory against world number 13 Tommy Paul on his fourth match point, sending Finland through with Netherlands from Group D.

"You can hear it from the (fans). It means a lot for the whole country, for tennis in Finland. It's a huge thing," 24-year-old Ruusuvuori said post-match. "We're going to Malaga!"

Alexis Galarneau saw off Alejandro Tabilo 6-3, 7-6 (7/5) to give Canada an early lead over Chile but the South Americans levelled the tie when Nicolas Jarry strolled to a 6-4, 6-4 win over Gabriel Diallo.

The Canadians won the tie when Galarneau teamed up with Vasek Pospisil to beat Tabilo and Tomas Barrios Vera 6-4, 7-6 (9/7) in the doubles.

Chile's hopes of progressing now depend on Italy, who are currently second in the group, losing 3-0 to Sweden on Sunday.

Djokovic sat out the singles in Serbia's dead rubber against the Czechs but did not disappoint the crowd in Valencia as he partnered Nikola Cacic in the doubles, losing 7-5, 6-7 (9/7), 10-3 to Tomas Machac and Adam Pavlasek.

Australia booked their place with an emphatic 3-0 win over

Switzerland in Glasgow.

Thanasi Kokkinakis and Alex de Minaur won their singles matches in straight sets to win the tie but Australia did not stamp their passage to Malaga until doubles duo Matthew Ebden and Max Purcell completed the sweep and guaranteed Australia a top-two finish in Group B.

Britain or France, who meet on Sunday, will join the Australians in Spain in November.

FORMAT ROW

Three-time major winner Stan Wawrinka did not take to the court but his comments about the poor

FINLAND BEAT USA TO REACH DAVIS CUP LAST EIGHT FOR FIRST TIME

crowds in Glasgow earlier in the week has stirred discussion over the future of the current Davis Cup format.

Wawrinka posted contrasting videos on his social media of Switzerland's first match against France which showed the stands almost empty and their second against hosts Britain on Friday where the atmosphere was pumping.

"We see the difference between today and three days ago -- it's not normal," said Wawrinka.

Since 2019, the historic competition has been converted to a World Cup-style event with group

stages and matches on neutral soil, with many of the matches played out in front of low crowd numbers.

Rising criticism has called for a return to the pre-2019 system of home and away ties in front of partisan crowds supporting their country.

"We're fully aware that some players will say, 'Why don't we go back to that home-and-away format?'," he said on Saturday.

"That format was not working. That's why the change came about. The old format was killing Davis Cup. We had nations telling the ITF they were unhappy, it needed to change." — AFP

Coleman, Jackson shine as Lyles, Richardson denied in Eugene

EUGENE: American Christian Coleman and Jamaica's Shericka Jackson won the men's and women's 100m at the Diamond League finals on Saturday as Noah Lyles and Sha'Carri Richardson were denied.

Lyles and Richardson weren't the only gold medallists from last month's World Championships in Budapest to be disappointed in Eugene, Oregon, where American Rai Benjamin stunned world and Olympic champion Karsten Warholm in the 400m hurdles.

Coleman, the world champion in 2019 who finished a disappointing fifth in Budapest, matched the season's best time of 9.83sec for the second time in two weeks as he followed up his Xiamen Diamond League win.

He is one of three men to post that time this year, along with Britain's Zhanel Hughes and Lyles -- who was unable to make good on his desire to finish his outstanding season with the outright best time of the year.

Lyles, who won 100m and 200m gold in Budapest, was second in 9.85sec and Ferdinand Omanyala of Kenya was third in the same time.

After a false start saw Ackeem Blake of Jamaica disqualified, Coleman got off to a solid if unspectacular start.

He powered through the middle stages and had enough to hold off the charging Lyles and Omanyala.



"In races like that I usually might get tight or just not execute the back end, but I was able to just find a sense of confidence and believe in myself, like I knew I was supposed to win this race and so I was able to stay composed and put out a win at the end," Coleman said.

Lyles, exhausted after his 200m Diamond League win in Zurich, had considered opting out of the season finale, but said he was happy he raced in front of home fans after his gold treble in Budapest.

"I was able to do a victory lap, even though I didn't win the victory, but they were just as excited," he said.

Jackson grabbed the first leg of what she hopes is a sprint double in Eugene, powering to victory in 10.70sec.

The 29-year-old Jamaican is due back on the Hayward Field

track on Sunday when she'll try one more time for the 200m world record set by Florence Griffith-Joyner in 1988.

Marie-Josée Ta Lou of Ivory Coast was second on 10.75 and Jamaica's Elaine Thompson-Herah was third in 10.79.

Richardson, doomed by a poor start, clocked 10.80.

Benjamin, disappointed with bronze in Budapest, pulled off a stunner, clocking a Diamond League record -- and the fourth-fastest 400 hurdles time ever -- of 46.39.

He closed the gap on Warholm over the final two hurdles and surged past in the final strides, the Norwegian finishing second in 46.53sec.

"Went back to my old race model, because my second half is just amazing," Benjamin said of the key to the win. "Just tried to

channel that today and I feel like I did a really good job," he said.

Warholm acknowledged that despite his end-of-season fatigue he was "pissed off" at losing.

"Over the last hurdle I was feeling good," he said. "I thought I had it, but when he comes to the side you know that he's gonna pass you because he has higher speed over the last hurdle."

KIPYEGON DOMINATES

Other world champions fared better. Kenyan Faith Kipyegon remained unbeaten at 1,500m this year, posting a dominant victory in 3min 50.72sec.

Kipyegon, who won the 2022 world title on the same Hayward Field track and retained her title in Budapest as part of an historic 1,500-5,000 double, was barely challenged, with world silver medallist Diribe Welteji finishing second in 3:53.93 and Olympic silver medallist Laura Muir third in 3:55.16. Winfred Mutile Yavi of Bahrain won the 3,000m steeplechase in sensational style, clocking the second-fastest time ever of 8:50.66 for a decisive win over world record-holder Beatrice Chepkoech (8:51.67).

World champion Haruka Kitaguchi of Japan won the women's javelin with a throw of 63.78m and Venezuela's four-time women's triple-jump world champion Yulimar Rojas won with a world-leading 15.35m. — AFP

Stroll out of Singapore GP following horror qualifying crash

SINGAPORE: Lance Stroll pulled out of the Singapore Grand Prix on Sunday, hours before the race was due to begin, following a huge crash in qualifying that destroyed his Aston Martin.

Stroll was pushing hard to progress from the first qualifying session on Saturday night when he lost control after running over the kerbs at the final turn and careered into the barriers opposite the pit lane at the Marina Bay street circuit.

The remains of the car, with Stroll in the cockpit, bounced back onto the track to be narrowly avoided by the McLaren of Lando Norris as red flags halted the session.

The Canadian driver got out of the car unaided and later was cleared of injury by the official

Formula One medical team. But hours before the lights were due to go out on Sunday's night race in Singapore, the Aston Martin team issued a statement saying Stroll was still not 100 per cent and would sit out in order to recover fully for next weekend's Japanese Grand Prix at Suzuka.

"Following Lance's crash in qualifying during the Singapore Grand Prix, Lance and Aston Martin have jointly agreed that he will not participate in the Singapore Grand Prix this evening," Aston Martin said.

"The team face a huge job repairing the car and understandably Lance is still sore following such a high impact." "Lance's focus shifts to fully recovering ahead of the Japanese Grand Prix." — AFP



Aston Martin's Lance Stroll after crashing during qualifying. – Reuters



India players celebrate with the trophy after winning the Asia Cup 2023. – AFP

Siraj stars as India rout Sri Lanka for eighth Asia Cup crown

COLOMBO: Pace bowler Mohammed Siraj returned figures of 6-21 to lead India's rout of Sri Lanka by 10 wickets as they clinched their eighth Asia Cup title on Sunday.

Siraj got four wickets in one over to help skittle Sri Lanka out for 50, a total the Indian openers Ishan Kishan and Shubman Gill surpassed in 6.1 overs for an impressive victory ahead of next month's ODI World Cup at home.

Sri Lanka's miserably low total in the 50-over contest left a nearly packed house disappointed after they witnessed just 116 minutes of play.

The hosts elected to bat first following a delayed start due to rain and pace spearhead Jasprit Bumrah struck first with the wicket of Kusal Perera, caught behind for a duck in the first over.

Siraj soon took over as he made the ball swing and seam in overcast conditions to easily surpass his previous ODI best of 4-32.

He got Pathum Nissanka for two and then struck on successive balls to send back Sadeera Samarawickrama (0) and Charith Asalanka (0), but a hat-trick was averted.

Dhananjaya de Silva hit a boundary but Siraj had him caught behind with the next ball, much to the delight of the Indian fans.

Siraj got his fifth with the wicket of Sri Lankan captain Dasun Shanaka, equalling an ODI record for the fastest five-wicket



India's Mohammed Siraj (R) receives the 'Player of the match' award at the end of the Asia Cup 2023. –AFP

haul from his first 16 balls of the match.

Kusal Mendis hit three boundaries before becoming Siraj's sixth wicket, although Sri Lanka avoided the lowest-ever ODI total of 35 by Zimbabwe.

After Virat Kohli's overthrow went for a boundary, and six more runs to the total, Sri Lanka pushed past their lowest ODI total of 43 scored against South Africa in 2012.

Hardik Pandya took three wickets to wrap up the innings in just 90 minutes.

Mendis' 17 and an unbeaten 13 by Dushan Hemantha were the only double-digit scores in an innings that featured five ducks.

Shubman Gill, a centurion in the previous match, began with

a boundary in the opening over on his way to an unbeaten 27 and fellow opener Ishan Kishan (23) soon joined the party.

The left-handed Ishan smashed fast bowler Matheesha Pathirana for two successive boundaries, and three more in a row from Gill gave India victory in the tournament's shortest final.

Rohit Sharma's India dropped just one match in the tournament after they lost an inconsequential Super Four contest against Bangladesh. Sri Lanka, who won the previous edition of the Asia Cup played in the T20 format, came in as underdogs and snuck into the Super Fours with a dramatic win over Afghanistan but went down without a fight in their 11th final. — AFP



Mohammed Siraj celebrates after taking the wicket of Sri Lanka's Dhananjaya de Silva during the Asia Cup 2023 final. – AFP



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Oman’s GDP grows to RO 17.044 billion in H1 2023

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

The Sultanate of Oman’s gross domestic product (GDP) at constant prices reached RO 17.044 billion in the first half (H1) of 2023, reflecting a slight increase compared to RO 16.700 billion recorded in the same period of the previous year, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The H1 2023 figures indicate a growth rate of approximately 2.1% year-on-year.

The second quarter (Q2) of 2023, however, witnessed a slight decline in Oman’s GDP at constant prices compared to Q2 2022.

The figure stood at RO 8.431 billion, marginally lower than the RO 8.448 billion recorded in Q2 2022. This slight decline in Q2 indicates a decrease of around 0.2% year-on-year.

Breaking down the GDP figures into petroleum and non-petroleum activities reveals an interesting trend. In H1 2023, petroleum activities contributed RO 5.757 billion to the GDP, exhibiting growth when compared to the RO 5.680 billion recorded in H1 2022.

This represents an increase of approximately 1.4% year-on-



year. This positive trend can be attributed to stable global oil prices and stable production levels.

The NCSI data shows petroleum activities in Q2 2023 alone generated RO 2.927 billion, a slight decline of 0.7% from last year’s Q2 with RO 2.947 billion.

On the other hand, non-petroleum activities experienced

more substantial growth in the same period.

The non-petroleum sector contributed RO 11.824 billion to the H1 2023 GDP, representing a notable increase from the RO 11.576 billion recorded in H1 2022. This positive development amounts to a growth rate of approximately 2.1% year-on-year. Within the non-petroleum sector,

both the industry and service sectors performed well.

For Q2 2023, non-petroleum activities contributed RO 5.830 billion, a 0.1% increase during the same period last year with RO 5.823 billion.

The industry sector accounted for RO 3.144 billion in H1 2023, demonstrating a modest increase from the RO 3.130 billion reported

in H1 2022. This growth equates to an expansion of approximately 0.4% year-on-year.

This growth can be attributed to increased manufacturing activities and investments in industrial infrastructure.

In contrast, the service sector experienced more significant growth during the same period.

The service sector contributed

RO 8.277 billion to the H1 2023 GDP, surpassing the RO 8.059 billion recorded in H1 2022.

This remarkable growth represents an increase of approximately 2.7% year-on-year, indicating the sector’s resilience and potential for continued expansion.

The service sector’s growth was driven by various sub-sectors, including wholesale and retail trade, transportation, telecommunications, real estate, education and health, among others.

In the financial intermediaries, H1 2023 saw a slight improvement in performance. The financial intermediaries reported a deficit of RO 349.5 million, an improvement from the previous year’s deficit of RO 355.4 million.

Although the improvement is modest, it indicates progress in the financial sector’s stability and recovery.

Furthermore, taxes less subsidies on products showed a slight improvement in H1 2023, amounting to a deficit of RO 186.9 million, compared to a deficit of RO 200.8 million in H1 2022.

This improvement may indicate adjustments in the tax structure and government subsidy policies, affecting the overall revenue and expenditure patterns within the economy.

Oman’s fiscal outlook resilient: Report

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

Oman’s economic and fiscal landscape shines with optimism, as evidenced by notable improvements in several key areas, according to international ratings agency Capital Intelligence (CI).

The Cyprus-based agency said on Saturday that its credit rating outlook for the Sultanate of Oman is positive, indicating the potential for an upgrade in the next 12 months.

This optimistic outlook stems from Oman’s ongoing commitment to reducing central government debt to a prudent threshold of 30 per cent of Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and the government’s dedication to implementing moderate fiscal reforms to sustain budget surpluses.

One of the most striking developments is the Omani government budget, says CI. In 2022, the nation managed to reverse a deficit of 2.8 per cent of GDP from the previous year into a substantial surplus of 7.5 per cent.

This impressive transformation was driven by prudent financial



management and fiscal discipline, the ratings agency noted.

Government debt also witnessed a commendable decline, falling from 40.0 per cent of GDP in 2022 to 38.6 per cent in the first half of 2023. Projections point toward a further reduction to 37.2 per cent by the end of 2023.

This debt reduction has not only bolstered Oman’s fiscal health but has also significantly alleviated the burden of interest payments.

The State-Owned Enterprises (SOEs) have followed suit with a noteworthy reduction in their debt levels, dropping from 40.7 per cent of GDP in 2021 to around 29 per cent in 2022.

While a portion of this debt carries government guarantees,

signifying a fiscal risk, it’s reassuring that this risk is on a downward trajectory, diminishing the potential impact, CI pointed out.

Looking ahead, the fiscal outlook is promising, says Capital Intelligence.

The baseline scenario is anchored on the assumption of consistently high hydrocarbon prices for the years 2023 to 2025, averaging at \$72 per barrel.

This not only exceeds the budget’s fiscal breakeven oil price of \$67 per barrel but also results in the anticipation of a central government budget surplus.

Oman’s external position reflects strength and resilience, according to the ratings agency.

The current account swung

ONE OF THE MOST STRIKING DEVELOPMENTS IS THE OMANI GOVERNMENT BUDGET, SAYS CI. IN 2022, THE NATION MANAGED TO REVERSE A DEFICIT OF 2.8 PER CENT OF GDP FROM THE PREVIOUS YEAR INTO A SUBSTANTIAL SURPLUS OF 7.5 PER CENT.

from a deficit of 0.4 per cent of GDP in 2021 to a surplus of 3.2 per cent in 2022, and this positive trend is expected to continue.

Forecasts indicate that the current account will consistently post surpluses, averaging 1.4 per cent of GDP from 2023 to 2025.

Additionally, foreign currency reserves at the central bank remain substantial, providing ample coverage for external debt obligations and mitigating external liquidity risks.

Oman’s economic growth is strong, largely attributable to the thriving hydrocarbon sector.

Real GDP expanded by an estimated 4.7 per cent in the first quarter of 2023, and projections indicate a continued average growth rate of 3.3 per cent from 2023 to 2025, it added.

EDO successfully completes its debut benchmark Sukuk

MUSCAT: Energy Development Oman (EDO) SAOC has announced the successful completion of its inaugural benchmark Sukuk issuance of \$1 billion. The offering was oversubscribed by more than five times, reflecting strong investor confidence in EDO as the national energy leader in the Sultanate of Oman.

Investor participation was widespread and global, with over 175 orders received from regions including Europe, the UK, the US, the Middle East, and Asia. The Sukuk was successfully priced at a profit rate of 5.875%, with a ten-year maturity period.

Commenting on the new issuance, Mazin al Lamki (pictured), the CEO of EDO, stated, “We take great pride in this significant transaction, which underscores international investors’ endorsement of our ongoing commitment to strengthen Oman’s energy strategy. We deeply appreciate our investors’ trust in us, highlighting our robust creditworthiness and our transformation into a fully-integrated energy enterprise.

Furthermore, this fresh offering aligns with EDO’s funding strategy to



extend the debt maturity timeline in accordance with our capital structure and corporate objectives.”

Standard & Poor’s and Fitch have assigned a BB rating to the senior unsecured Sukuk Al Ijara/Murabaha, which has been priced with a spread of 165 basis points over US Treasuries. These trust certificates will be issued within the framework of EDO Sukuk Limited’s trust certificate issuance programme.

Bank Muscat SAOG, National Bank of Oman SAOG, Abu Dhabi Commercial Bank PJSC, Arab Banking Corporation BSC, Dubai Islamic Bank PJSC, First Abu Dhabi Bank PJSC, J.P. Morgan Securities plc, KFH Capital Investment Company KSCC, Mashreqbank PSC, and Standard Chartered Bank collaborated as co-lead managers and bookrunners for the issuance.

Alizz Islamic Bank partners with Dar Al Atta’a

MUSCAT: As part of the banks pioneering role in lending a hand to the community and various institutions and associations, Alizz Islamic Bank recently partnered with Dar Al Atta’a to implement one of the Tamkeen Programme projects for the current year 2023.

This comes as part of the banks belief that the prosperity of individuals leads to the prosperity of the societies in which we live.

Dar Al Atta’a’s goal is to contribute towards improving living conditions and bringing about lasting positive change in our community.

The association contributes continuously towards making a positive impact in Omani society.

The agreement signed with Alizz Islamic Bank aims to provide a suitable educational environment for pre-school children by renovating an existing endowment building.

The project also contributes towards providing job



opportunities in the region. The agreement was signed by Maryam bint Issa al Zadjaliyah, Chairperson of the Association, and Ali bin Saif al Mani, CEO of Alizz Islamic Bank.

This project falls under the

Tamkeen Programme, which is one of the association’s main programmes and aims to contribute to sustainable projects that will enhance income and achieve prosperity for both individuals and society.

As part of the associations belief in providing better opportunities that enable investment in the nation’s people to create a support factor for Oman’s renaissance and development; over the past years, Dar Al Atta’a has worked

to establish cultural centres throughout the Sultanate of Oman.

The Dar Al Atta’a Association, will manage and supervise the project and follow up on the stages of implementing the maintenance and restoration of the endowment building in Al Hajar Village in Wilayat Al Awabi.

During this period, the building will be restored and equipped with the necessary classroom amenities and equipment to provide a comprehensive educational environment for pre-school children and a suitable environment for the school’s teaching staff.

Speaking about the project, Maryam al Zadjaliyah said: “This project is of great importance as it is linked to empowerment through pre-school education, which contributes to enhancing the abilities and skills of children and preparing them for the next stages of their education.”

Ali al Mani, CEO of Alizz Islamic

Bank said: “Social responsibility is in line with Alizz Islamic Bank’s mission of achieving exceptional and sustainable results for our shareholders.

The bank has partnered on and supported many projects that have had a positive impact on society and that have created community value.”

Al Mani added “Investing in our communities has been our focus since the founding of Alizz Islamic Bank, and the ultimate goal is to strive to provide a better life for the people we serve across the Sultanate of Oman.

We are confident that investing in sustainable initiatives is a crucial element towards achieving community prosperity.

The bank has provided strong support for leading national associations and organisations that work towards building a strong and resilient society and we have contributed to the growth of several non-profit social organisations.”

OAB CEO Summit unites 300+ leaders, inspiring change and looking to the future

MUSCAT: The second edition of the CEO Summit, conceived by Oman Arab Bank (OAB) in collaboration with Alizz Islamic Bank welcomed more than 300 chief executives, local and global thought-leaders.

Designed to inspire CEOs and leaders to embrace change and leverage emerging technologies, the event featured speakers including Tahir al Amri, Executive President of Central Bank of Oman, futurist Richard Watson and Dr Lamy El Hajj, Associate Professor at Sultan Qaboos University.

Broad topics of discussion were tackled during the event, such as driving sustainable economic recovery and trends that will disrupt industries over the next 50 years, culminating with a conversation/Q&A with all of the day’s speakers.

Sulaiman al Harthy, CEO of Oman Arab Bank, who welcomed guests to the event with an opening address, said: “It is extremely important for companies all around



the Sultanate of Oman to continue to align with Oman’s socio-economic agenda and strive towards the goals set out in Oman’s Vision 2040 to push forward our nation’s macroeconomic growth, but we all also need to take a global view to catalyse even greater achievements.

What we wanted to achieve — and successfully delivered — with the CEO Summit is to foster a perspective that will encourage the hundreds of business leaders who attended to explore the vast opportunities in international

markets that can be accessed using the latest technologies and trends.

It was inspiring to hear from the visionary thinkers who hosted sessions and see so many of my fellow leaders come together at CEO Summit in a spirit of solidarity, with minds open to learning new ideas and perspectives.”

The CEO Summit built on the success of the inaugural 100 Inspire CEOs Forum, which saw the participation of more than 200 CEOs from various sectors across the Sultanate of Oman.



Hongqi unveils sizzling summer offers on premium models

MUSCAT: Hongqi, the epitome of Chinese luxury automotive engineering, is thrilled to announce its Summer Campaign featuring an array of irresistible offers on four of its most sought-after models: the H9, Hongqi Ousado, Hongqi H5S, and Hongqi H5.

This summer, every Hongqi vehicle comes with a suite of benefits including free insurance, free registration, 7 free services*, 7 years unlimited kilometres warranty, a RO 100 fuel card and 7 years roadside assistance. In a special gesture to the educators shaping our future, Hongqi is extending additional benefits exclusively for teachers.

As a luxury vehicle brand, Hongqi redefines opulence with top-notch features, the latest technology, and an unwavering focus on safety. The Hongqi H5 is an executive sedan with sportiness

ingrained, perfect configuration, and performance to match.

It features a stylish silhouette with the ‘Wing of Hongqi’ greeting light, a nature-inspired panoramic sunroof, and luxurious interiors.

The Hongqi H5S greets drivers with unique Red Flag wings and features the Hongqi family’s classic waterfall intake grille.

This model is aesthetic and luxurious, equipped with advanced interconnection technology. Safety is a priority, with the ability to judge collisions within the speed of 75 Km/h. The driving experience is enhanced by five driving modes, aviation-class headrests, and real-time active indoor air cleaning.

The Hongqi H9 is a stunning sedan with a steel cage-style chassis, capable of tackling tough terrain. It features an imposing straight fall grille and plush interiors, including an intelligent,

oriental artistic cabin with one-touch zero-gravity seats. The H9 also offers a pioneering L2.5 Autonomous driving function and a 2.0 L turbocharged Direct Injection engine, enhanced by a 48V Recovery System for powerful performance.

While the Hongqi Ousado is a luxury sedan that combines performance and elegance. It features a powerful engine, advanced safety systems, and a spacious, luxurious interior. With cutting-edge technologies, it offers a safe and comfortable driving experience. The one-of-a-kind panoramic sunroof measures 1010x890mm, providing an unbelievably wide view.

The Ousado also boasts a stylish design, with a classic waterfall intake grille. It’s an ideal choice for those seeking a blend of luxury and performance.

Unbeatable prices on JAC vehicles in Oman

MUSCAT: Are you in search of the perfect vehicle that combines quality, performance, and affordability? Look no further because JAC Motors Oman presents the Drive with Ease campaign — an ongoing marketing sensation that’s set to revolutionise the way you think about car prices.

At JAC Motors, we understand that a vehicle is more than just a machine; it’s a part of your life’s journey. That’s why we’ve launched the Drive with Ease campaign, offering prices that no other brand in Oman can match. We’re not just claiming it — we’re setting the new standard.

JAC S3: Dynamic versatility at RO 4,699

Experience the epitome of versatility, cutting-edge technology, and captivating style with the JAC S3. Starting from



just RO 4,699, this compact SUV is engineered to seamlessly adapt to your lifestyle.

Its 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine delivers 118 horsepower and 150 nm of torque, ensuring every drive is an exhilarating experience. With features like

5-spoke alloy wheels, daytime running lamps, and a suite of modern safety systems, the JAC S3 is the perfect companion for your adventures.

JAC JS4: Command the roads at RO 5,599

Unleash the power within with

the JAC JS4, a turbocharged SUV that’s ready to conquer any terrain. Starting from only RO 5,599, this SUV offers an impressive 147 horsepower and 210 nm of torque from its 1.5-litre four-cylinder turbo engine. Designed to make a bold statement, the

JS4 boasts an aggressive exterior with 10-spoke alloy wheels, a muscular front grille, and chrome accents. With advanced specs like the 360-degree camera, electronic stability control, and a touchscreen infotainment system, the JS4 ensures every drive is extraordinary. JAC J7: Elegance and performance at RO 5,699

Luxury, performance, and sophistication merge seamlessly in the JAC J7, starting from an incredible RO 5,699. This turbocharged sedan stands out with its dynamic exterior curves and stunning waterfall intake grille. Step inside to experience ultimate comfort, with gray and black-coloured seating complementing the vibrant exterior shades.

The J7’s 1.5L turbocharged engine generates 210Nm Torque, propelling you forward with smooth precision. The

independent rear suspensions and electric power steering ensure a comfortable, responsive, and fuel-efficient drive, making every journey a joy.

JAC T8: Unleash Power and Durability at RO 5,499

Meet the JAC T8, the epitome of power and durability, starting from an unbeatable RO 5,499. This 182 HP turbocharged large-size pick-up is built to tackle the toughest tasks with ease. Its 2.0L turbocharged engine delivers remarkable performance, while the sturdy chassis design ensures stability in any conditions. Whether you’re hauling loads or exploring off-road terrain, the T8’s combination of power and practicality makes it the ultimate workhorse.

(Disclaimer: Prices mentioned are starting prices. Terms and conditions apply.)



Why Oman's OQ Gas Networks shares should be offered for subscription



ALI RASHID AL MATANI

Several strategies are used to draw in domestic and international money, including the establishment of new initiatives and the collaboration of already existing ones with strategic partners who have the necessary skills and cash available for investment.

Perhaps purchasing OQ Gas Networks shares is one way to draw in foreign capital and use local investors' savings in investment vehicles with alluring returns that produce annual income over a long period of time, such as assets that investors hold on to rather than freezing their money in bank deposits and reaping annual returns.

IPOs are essential for attracting investors, using local capital, and achieving goals for governments, enterprises, and investors, among others.

In reality, IPOs enlarge the pool of investors in government assets, increase the flow of money into nations, and energise local markets by supporting activities like purchasing shares, making cash deposits, recovering surplus funds, and other acts from which others gain.

This calls people to triple the effort on more initial public offerings (IPOs) for public and private firms as one of the methods to attract local and foreign investments and revitalise the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The success of Abraj Energy Services Company's initial public offering, which made it the first energy company to list on the Muscat Stock Exchange, inspired OQ Gas Networks to offer 49 per cent of its shares for subscription, according to a statement from the Capital Market Authority.

OQ also had objectives and goals that aimed to increase citizen and investor ownership of public assets, make them partners in the employment process for these successful companies, recycle money from these subscriptions into other investments that add value to the country and the citizen, and increase the economic and business opportunities available to Omani firms for greater openness and aspiration for a better future that benefits the Omani economy.

As a result, the Omani economy will be better able to join the global economy and form new alliances that will aid in its growth.

One of the objectives of the IPOs is also the liquidation of local liquidity in banks, which totals more than RO 21 billions, of which RO 17.9 billion are private sector

deposits deposited in banks, according to statistics from the National Centre for Statistics and Information in June 2023.

In addition to using the citizens' funds in investment vehicles that ensure a return on their investment, these subscriptions will also be used in economic initiatives.

This will increase investor trust in the firms and their subscriptions.

The largest offering in the Sultanate of Oman, the shares of OQ Gas Networks Company, are expected to do well on the market. The company anticipates paying out profits totalling RO 33 million for the first nine months of the current year in January 2024, as well as a second dividend totalling RO 11 million for the final three months of 2023 in April 2024.

These projections have led the market to expect that it will receive the highest value, or four times the offering value.

It also anticipates paying earnings that are 90 per cent more than those of the years 2025 and 2024, respectively.

The company, its skills, and its business are another factor that the investor and underwriter consider. In addition to revenues totalling over RO 160.4 million in 2022, OQ Gas Networks also generated earnings before interest, taxes, depreciation, and amortisation of almost RO 96.4 million.

Regarding its accomplishments, statistics show that in 2022, the company, in addition to having exclusive rights to transport gas for fifty years, transported about 39.4 billion cubic meters of gas from six gas producers to a diverse consumer base that includes about 130 gas consumers along 4,031 kilometres of gas pipelines.

If these are some of OQ Gas Networks' facts, then it makes sense for everyone to subscribe given the excellent earnings assurances it offers, such as returns on the subscription shares, and given all of its accomplishments and skills.

It goes without saying that OQ Gas Networks has undergone a revolutionary shift as a result of its subscription and its conversion into a public shareholding company listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange.

One of the objectives of the change sought by its owners, it is guaranteed that this will double its responsibilities and drive it towards achieving the best for its shareholders.

We are hopeful that the subscription to OQ Gas Networks Company will be a success, that everyone will profit from this chance to invest their money and diversify their sources of income, and that it will open up more opportunities for subscriptions to government assets as a step towards luring investments and accelerating the Sultanate of Oman's economic growth.

Oman's waste recycling potential valued at around \$1 billion

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

Oman Environmental Services Holding Co (be'ah), tasked with overseeing the management of the nation's solid waste sector, has assessed the economic potential of Oman's burgeoning waste recycling industry at around RO 400 million (approx. \$1 billion) in value.

Around 2.4 million tonnes of recyclable waste, spanning a wide array of waste streams, is currently being generated annually in the country, according to the state-owned orchestrator of the solid waste sector.

Given these volumes and the commercialisation potential of these recyclable wastes, more than 2,300 jobs can also be created as a result, be-ah – part of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) – noted in a recent post.

The upbeat outlook for Oman's promising waste recycling sector comes ahead of the launch, late next month, of the 1st ISMA World Congress in the Middle East and Africa – billed as the foremost event of the global waste management industry – here in Muscat.

The three-day event, due to take place at the Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre from October 30 to November 1, 2023, is being hosted by be'ah with the support of the International Solid Waste Association (ISMA), the world's premier networking body for the



sector.

be'ah says its efforts to streamline the solid waste sector in Oman is unlocking the potential for significant investment and economic value creation from waste recycling and recovery activities.

Among the initiatives supported by be'ah thus far are: The supply of alternative fuel from used tyres for the operations of Oman Cement; The launch of a first-ever plant for recycling lead acid batteries; The establishment of a pair of used cooking oil (UCO) recycling plants; and Projects that recycle cardboard, paper and plastic into commercially valuable commodities.

Additionally, be'ah has signed an agreement with Nakheel Oman Development Company

to supply green waste for their compost facility. With Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), the company has reached a memorandum of understanding to support the collection and proper disposal of waste electrical and electronic equipment.

Furthermore, with support from a number of corporates, be'ah has facilitated the deployment of Reverse Vending Machines (RVMs) to encourage the general public to deposit their PET bottles for processing and recycling.

In 2022 alone, an estimated 99,300 PET bottles were collected by these machines from the capital city alone. But the biggest contribution to waste recovery will be achieved when a first-ever Waste-to-Energy (WTE) project comes on

stream at Barka within the next five years.

Plans drawn up by be'ah in cooperation with Nama Power and Water Procurement (Nama PWP) – the sole buyer of power and water output in Oman – envision a plant of capacity ranging from 130 – 160 MW.

The facility will process around 4,500 tonnes of municipal waste per day collected from the governorates of Muscat, Al Batinah South, Al Dakhiliyah and part of Al Batinah North.

At this daily capacity, the Barka WTE plant is expected to reduce landfill carbon emissions by 50 million tonnes in 35 years, accounting for 30 per cent of total carbon dioxide equivalent currently emitted by landfill operations, according to be'ah.

Strategic pipeline projects to boost Oman's water security

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

Nama Water Services, the preeminent provider of integrated water and wastewater services in the Sultanate of Oman, has achieved a significant milestone in the implementation of its strategic water transport projects, bringing the nation one step closer to ensuring the sustainability of water services.

A pivotal water transmission system project designed to channel potable water from Al Sharqiyah South to Al Sharqiyah North Governorate is now 76 per cent complete, according to a key official of state-owned Nama Water Services.

Dr Musa bin Ali al Hanshi, Project Manager, emphasised the significance of these projects, stating, "The completion rate of the project has reached 76 per cent, and it is expected to be completed by the next year in 2024."

This ambitious project encompasses several critical components, all meticulously designed to fortify Oman's water transport infrastructure. To ensure the seamless flow of water across the region, approximately 312



km of pipelines will be laid, forming the backbone of the system.

In addition, the project entails the construction of four state-of-the-art pumping stations, strategically positioned to ensure a consistent and reliable supply to the region. Furthermore, the initiative includes upgrades to three existing stations, aligning them with modern standards to enhance their performance and reliability.

To strengthen water storage capabilities, the project incorporates the construction of 17 water tanks along the transportation route.

These tanks, with a combined storage capacity of up to 265,000 cubic metres, will play a pivotal

role in maintaining a steady and secure water supply.

Upon reaching completion and achieving operational status, the project is poised to transport approximately 80,000 cubic meters of water per day, said Dr Al Hanshi, adding that the project encompasses civil, mechanical, and electrical works as well.

Other initiatives by Nama Water to strengthen water supply are the following: project linking Al Batinah South to Al Batinah North; enhancing water transport in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate; and strengthening supply from Suhar's desalination hub to Al Dhahirah Governorate.

These projects are key to achieving targets set out in Oman's Water Security Plan 2040.

Insurance sector posts healthy growth in H1

BUSINESS REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 17

Gross written premiums recorded by insurance companies operating in the Sultanate of Oman totalled RO 332.9 million during the first half, with national companies account for 85.7 per cent of this share with a contribution of about RO 285 million (compared to RO 250 million in 2022), the Capital Market Authority (CMA) said. As for foreign companies, the premiums reached RO 47.8 million. Takaful companies' premiums accounted for 11 per cent of the total insurance premiums of all companies at a total value of RO 37 million, an increase by 4.3 per cent compared to the same period in 2022.

In addition, data indicates an increase by 17 per cent at a value of RO 115 million in the volume of paid compensations by insurance companies for damages that the policyholders have incurred. Compared with first half of 2023, Takaful insurance figures decreased by 6 per cent at more than RO 9.6 million of the total net compensations.

Moreover, written results of insurance companies illustrated that general insurance recorded the highest percentage of insurance premiums reaching more than RO 160 million in H1 2023 compared to RO 153 million at the same period last year, which is an increase by 4.6 per cent followed by health insurance that increased by 22.6 per cent at RO 110 million.

As for life insurance, the value of total direct premiums amounted to more than RO 37 million compared to RO 33 million in the previous year.

The data also showed an improvement in the net insurance premiums; which are the premiums retained after the deductions for reinsurance as such premiums rose by 14.1 per cent at a value of RO 193 million in comparison to about RO 169 million in the previous year.

This increase resulted from the increase of net premiums in most insurance types as life insurance (individual) recorded the highest increase amongst all insurance types by 69 per cent at RO 7.7 million.

Additionally, net premiums of property insurance amounted to RO 8.7 million, an increase by 37.3 per cent compared to last year, and net premiums of health insurance rose by 18.4 per cent at about RO 105 million.

Cultivating a growth mindset for startup success

As-Salaam-Alaikum! In the challenging journey of entrepreneurship, possessing the right mindset is half the battle won. A growth mindset, a term coined by psychologist Carol Dweck, is the belief that abilities and intelligence can be developed through dedication and hard work. It is the foundation of achievement and success. For startup success, cultivating a growth mindset is not just beneficial; it is essential.

1. Understanding the growth mindset

A growth mindset is the belief that our most basic abilities can be developed through dedication and hard work. This mindset fosters a love for learning and resilience, which is essential for great accomplishment. Individuals with a growth mindset believe that they can develop their abilities, intelligence, and talents over time. Contrarily, a fixed mindset is the belief that our abilities, intelligence, and talents are fixed traits. People with a fixed mindset believe that they have a certain



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amount of intelligence, and that's it; they can't do much to change it.

2. Why is a growth mindset important for startups?

- Embracing challenges: A growth mindset encourages us to view challenges as opportunities for growth rather than threats. It helps us to approach problems with a positive attitude and a belief that we can overcome them. Perseverance: Possessing a growth mindset fosters perseverance. It helps us to stay committed to our goals even when we face setbacks.
- Continuous learning: A growth mindset instills a love for learning. It encourages us to continuously seek knowledge and improve ourselves.
- Resilience: It helps us to be resilient in the face of failure. It encourages us to view failures as opportunities to learn and grow rather than as a negative reflection of our abilities.
- Innovation: A growth mindset fosters innovation. It encourages us to think creatively and outside the box.
- Collaboration: It

encourages collaboration and the sharing of ideas. It helps us to value the input of others and to view feedback as an opportunity for growth.

3. Strategies to cultivate a growth mindset

- Be mindful of your thoughts: Be aware of your thoughts and self-talk. Make a conscious effort to replace negative thoughts with positive ones.
- Embrace challenges: View challenges as opportunities for growth. Approach them with a positive attitude and a belief that you can overcome them.
- Learn from failure: View failures as opportunities to learn and grow. Analyse what went wrong and what you can do differently next time.
- Seek feedback: Actively seek feedback from others. View it as an opportunity for growth rather than as criticism.
- Practice self-compassion: Be kind to yourself. Treat yourself with the same compassion and encouragement that you would offer a friend.
- Commit to continuous

learning: Make a commitment to continuously seek knowledge and improve yourself.

As the Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) said, "The strong is not the one who overcomes the people by his strength, but the strong is the one who controls himself while in anger."

Similarly, cultivating a growth mindset requires us to control our thoughts and approach challenges with a positive attitude and a belief in our abilities.

4. The Impact of a growth mindset on startup success

- A growth mindset can have a profound impact on the success of a startup:
- Increased innovation: A growth mindset fosters creativity and innovation, which are crucial for the success of a startup.
 - Improved problem-solving skills: It helps to improve problem-solving skills by encouraging a positive attitude and a belief in our abilities to overcome challenges.
 - Enhanced collaboration: It fosters a collaborative culture by encouraging the sharing of ideas

and valuing the input of others.

- Greater resilience: It helps to build resilience, which is essential for navigating the challenges of running a startup.
- Higher levels of satisfaction: It leads to higher levels of satisfaction as it encourages us to view challenges as opportunities for growth rather than threats.

In conclusion, cultivating a growth mindset is crucial for the success of a startup. It fosters innovation, resilience, and a love for learning, all of which are essential for navigating the challenges of entrepreneurship. By being mindful of our thoughts, embracing challenges, learning from failure, seeking feedback, practicing self-compassion, and committing to continuous learning, we can cultivate a growth mindset and set ourselves up for success. Stay tuned for our next article, where we will discuss negotiation skills for entrepreneurs. How can mastering the art of negotiation lead to more favourable outcomes for your startup? Find out in our next piece!

China's slumping economy: What the latest numbers are signalling

China's trains, planes, stores and beaches were a little fuller last month than a year ago, and the pace of activity picked up at factories, particularly those making mobile phones and semiconductors.

A batch of numbers released on Friday by China's National Bureau of Statistics showed a modest improvement in the country's overall retail sales and industrial production during August.

A series of small steps taken by the government over the summer, including two rounds of interest rate cuts, seems to be yielding a slightly better-than-expected improvement in the country's economy.

"The national economy has accelerated its recovery, production and supply have increased steadily, market demand has gradually improved," Fu Linghui, China's director of national economic statistics, said at a news conference.

But many foreign economists were more guarded.

"Some may be of the view that China's economy has already bottomed out, but we remain cautious," said a research note from Nomura, a Japanese bank.

Real estate remains a persistent risk.

The broad troubles of China's real estate sector continue to cast a long shadow over the country's economic prospects. Property investment plummeted nearly one-fifth in August from the same month a year ago, an even steeper decline than in July.

Construction sites around China appear visibly less busy, although activity has not stopped entirely and tower cranes still dot the skyline.

Construction of new apartment towers has faltered because of falling apartment prices. Based on data released on Friday for prices of new apartments in 70 large and



KEITH BRADSHER
The author is the Pulitzer Prize-winning Beijing bureau chief for The New York Times

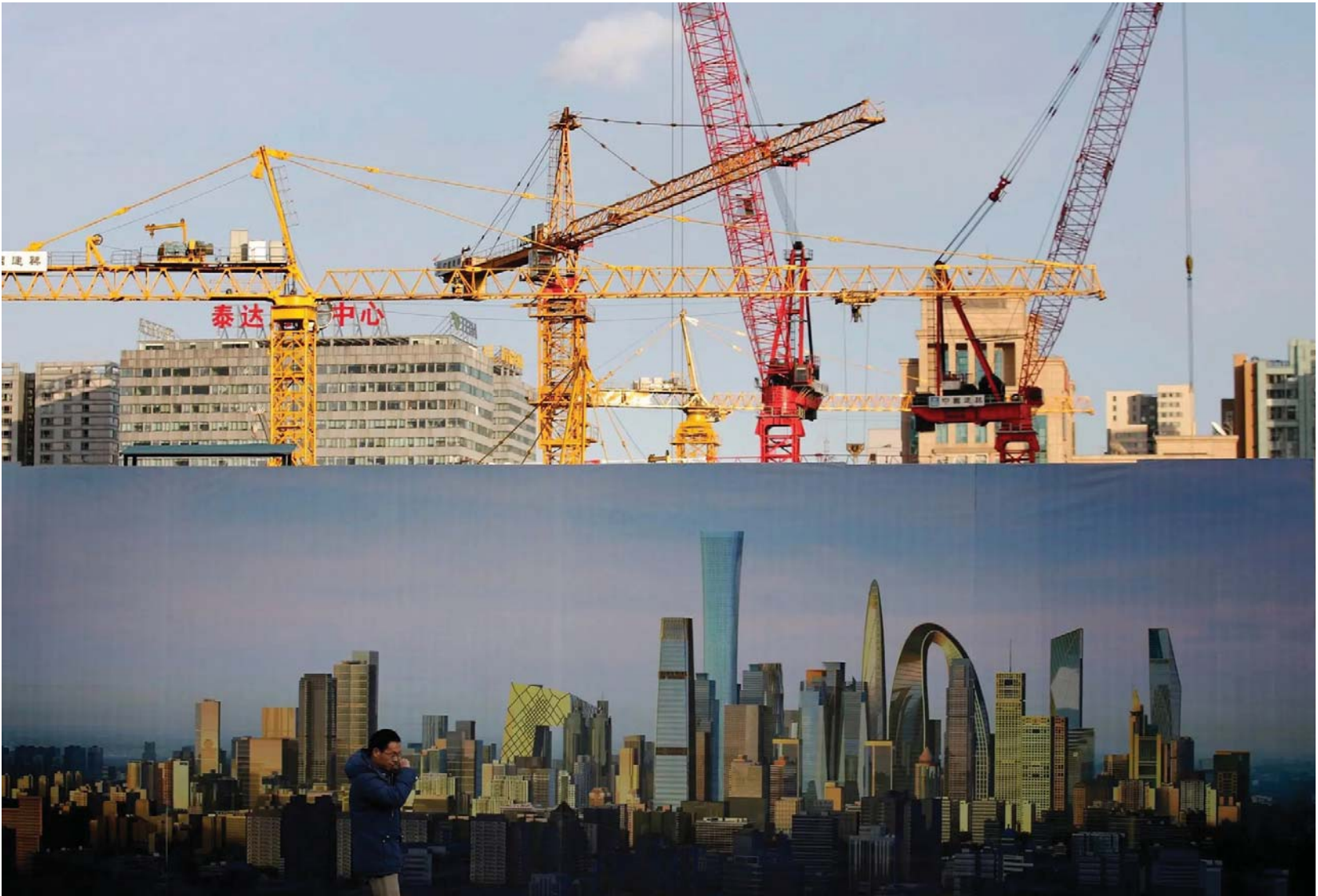
THE GOVERNMENT HAS TRIED TO OFFSET THE PLUNGE IN APARTMENT CONSTRUCTION BY DEMANDING THAT ALREADY DEEPLY INDEBTED LOCAL AND PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENTS UNDERTAKE A DEBT-FUELLED WAVE OF LARGE PROJECTS

medium-sized cities across China, Goldman Sachs calculated that prices were falling in August at a seasonally adjusted annual rate of 2.9%, compared with 2.6% in July.

The statistics for new apartments considerably understate the speed and extent of price declines, however, as local governments have put heavy pressure on developers not to cut prices.

Prices of existing homes in 100 cities across China fell an average of 14% by early August from their peak two years earlier, according to the Beike Research Institute, a Tianjin research firm. Rents have fallen 5%.

Construction and related activities, including public works projects, make up at least a quarter



A construction site in Beijing last December behind an image of an imagined new skyline. – Reuters

of the Chinese economy.

The government has tried to offset the plunge in apartment construction by demanding that already deeply indebted local and provincial governments undertake a debt-fuelled wave of large projects, including new subways, municipal water systems, highways, public parks, high-speed rail lines and other infrastructure.

Banks are being squeezed.

Loans that China's banks have made to property developers, dozens of which have defaulted on debt payments, are in trouble. So are loans to local governments and their financial affiliates involved in real estate.

Banks are allowed to demand immediate repayment if work on a

construction project has stopped, but they are reluctant to do so. Demand for new real estate loans remains weak.

The central bank, the People's Bank of China, announced on Thursday that it was freeing banks to set aside smaller reserves and start extending more credit.

The move was widely seen as intended to accommodate an upcoming large batch of bond issuance by local and provincial governments to pay for their infrastructure projects.

Investment in fixed assets was held back by property woes.

Overall investment in what are known as fixed assets was up 3.2% for the first eight months of this year compared with the same months last year —

infrastructure spending plus some manufacturing investment offset the property nosedive. The pace through August represented a slowdown from 3.4% the prior month. The production of semiconductors rose 21.1% in August from a year earlier.

The government has more heavily subsidised chipmaking as the United States has restricted the export to China of a few of the highest-speed computer chips and of the gear to manufacture them.

The value of China's industrial production, a proxy for the activity of factories, rose 4.5% in August from a year ago after adjusting for considerable deflation in wholesale prices for factory goods over the past year.

The increase had been 3.7% in July.

Consumers are changing how they spend.

Retail sales were up 4.6% in August from the same month last year, as rising energy prices likely pushed up retail sales, Nomura said.

A main reason retail sales rebounded was because a year ago, people in China were still living under stringent "zero-Covid" measures that restricted their activity.

Alcoholic production dropped from a year ago while output rose for bottled water, carried by many Chinese people during outdoor activities, and production of fruit and vegetable juices climbed sharply. — The New York Times

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FRIDAY, JULY 10, 2020 DHUL QAADA 18, 1441 AH

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Observer

ESTABLISHED IN 1981 EDITOR-IN-CHIEF: ABDULLAH BIN SALEM AL SHUAILI VOL. 39 NO. 239 | PAGES 16

HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTERS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for Sohar, today administered the oath of office to the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for Sohar, Dr. Saif bin Khalifa bin Humaid Al Mubtar.

Dr. Saif bin Khalifa bin Humaid Al Mubtar, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for Sohar, today administered the oath of office to the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for Sohar, Dr. Saif bin Khalifa bin Humaid Al Mubtar.

UN HAILS OMAN'S SUPPORT FOR PEACE IN YEMEN

NEW YORK: Antonio Guterres, Secretary-General of the United Nations, has commended the role of the Sultanate in supporting international efforts to establish security and peace in Yemen.

STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

MUSCAT: The frequent reports of uncertainty with both physical and mental strain, we should discipline ourselves, stay apart and break the chain.

NEW RO 50 BANKNOTE FROM THIS MONTH

MUSCAT: To mark the 50th anniversary of the Sultanate and its commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the founding of the Sultanate, the Ministry of Finance has issued a new 50 Omani banknote, which will begin circulation this month.



LIFESTYLE

Parents buy school supplies for their children at a bookshop in Tunis. — AFP



ENTERTAINMENT

T1 team professional e-sport players compete in Valorant on stage during the KCX3 eSport event at the Paris La Defense Arena in Nanterre, in the western outskirts of Paris — AFP



FILM

French actress and singer Charlotte Gainsbourg poses during a photocall for the film "Lux Aeterna" at the 72nd edition of the Cannes Film Festival in Cannes, southern France. —AFP



FASHION

Fashion designer by Susan Fang acknowledges the applause following a catwalk presentation for their Spring/Summer 2024 collection, at London Fashion Week in London. —AFP



CULTURE

A young participant walks with women in traditional dresses during the costume parade. — AFP

art & life

MONDAY | SEPTEMBER 18, 2023 | RABEE AL AWWAL 2, 1445 AH OMAN OBSERVER www.omanobserver.om features@omanobserver.om



Dhofar's biodiversity is a symphony of wildlife and birds

By Zuwaina Al Sulimani

The southern corner of the Sultanate of Oman attracts wildlife enthusiasts and birdwatchers. Dhofar is an ecological haven, boasting an extraordinary array of animals and birds, owing much of its biodiversity to its diverse landscapes that range from verdant mountains to stunning beaches. The Al Qara Mountains offer a cool and moist refuge for various animal species during the Khareef or monsoon season. Here, amid the craggy terrain, the elusive Arabian leopard, a creature of unmatched beauty, stealthily roams. Descending from the highlands to the coastal lowlands, one experiences a dramatic transformation as arid deserts give way to luxuriant oases and wetlands. Wadi Darbat, adorned with emerald pools and cascading

waterfalls, becomes a watering hole for a myriad of species. Gazelles, Arabian oryx, and Nubian ibex are frequently sighted grazing near these life-sustaining freshwater sources. For avid birdwatchers, Dhofar is nothing short of paradise. Positioned strategically along migratory routes, the region serves as a vital rest stop for countless bird species during their annual journey. From June to September, the Khareef season witnesses a grand spectacle as migrating birds seek respite from harsher climes. Flamingos, herons, and storks adorn the coastal marshes, infusing the landscape with a vibrant burst of colour. The rugged cliffs and canyons provide ideal nesting grounds for these avian wonders. Said al Marhoon, a celebrated Omani photographer, has made it his mission to

capture the serene beauty of Oman's nature with his camera lens. Reflecting on his experiences in the Sultanate of Oman, he shared, "My journey as a photographer in Oman, especially in Dhofar Governorate, has been an exceptional one, owing to the environmental diversity and wildlife that have provided a canvas for us to showcase our talents, explore our skills, and express ourselves in innovative ways. I felt compelled to harness the splendour of these natural landscapes and the richness of wildlife in the Sultanate of Oman to create artistic masterpieces. I aim to convey the Sultanate of Oman's rich diversity through my lens, attracting photographers and tourists worldwide." When asked about his early experiences with photography, Said reminisced, "My journey with the cam-

era began like that of any photographer. I encountered obstacles but overcame them through learning, practising, and seeking advice. This journey of growth and skill improvement has been enriching." He recounted one of his most unforgettable shots was "the photograph of a mountain shaped like a lion's face. It's a scarce and unique image captured through my lens. I was the first to discover and document this mountain on social media platforms, and it gained widespread acclaim. This experience encouraged me to explore Oman's nature and environment further." Said al Marhoon reflected on his experience photographing wildlife in Dhofar Governorate, saying, "Dhofar Governorate boasts a rich and diverse wildlife, prompting me to delve deeper into wildlife photog-



raphy after capturing its natural beauty. These two realms complement each other splendidly. I continue to strive for growth in this field, recognising that it

demands more time and effort to truly capture and showcase Dhofar Governorate's natural splendour in a distinctive and personal manner."



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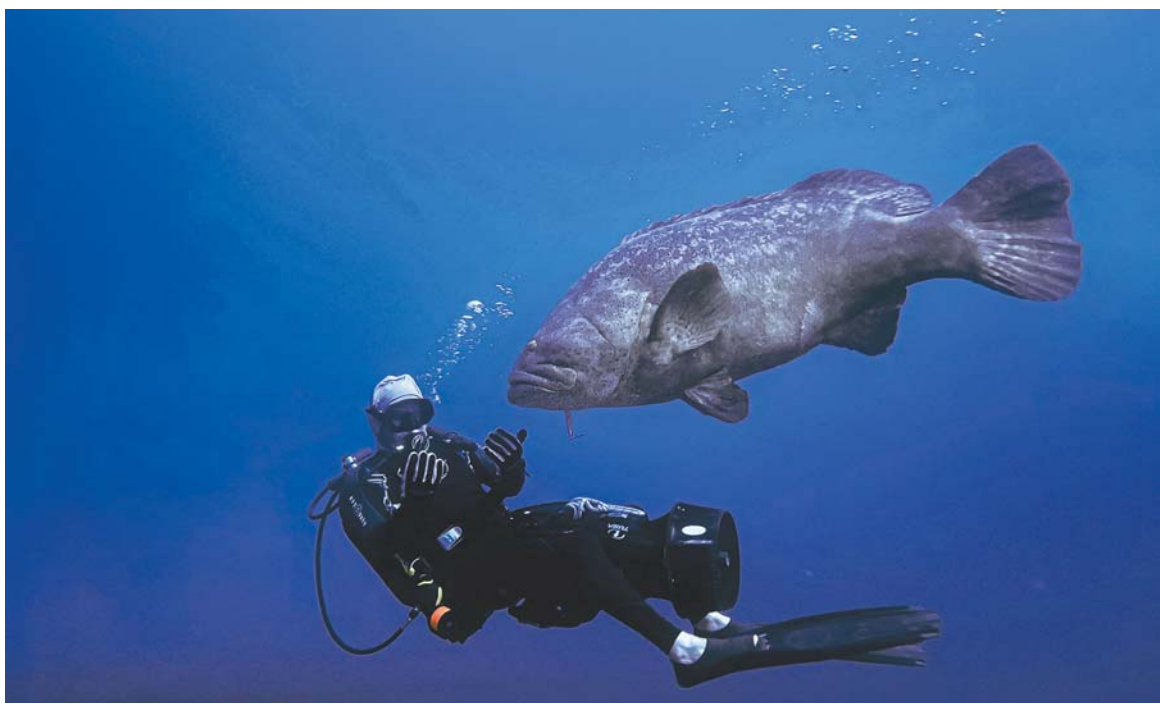
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Huge groupers, the joy of Florida divers, are now 'vulnerable'



The grouper, a colossus of a fish that can weigh up to 360 kilograms (nearly 800 pounds), is the delight of divers in Florida, though scientists warn their numbers are down since the US state allowed fishing of the giants to resume.

"There's nowhere else you can have an experience with a fish that big while you're diving — and being this close to it," Dr James Locascio, a marine biologist

with the Mote Marine Laboratory, told AFP.

"And so, really, we feel that the fish is worth a lot more alive than it is dead."

During a sea trip early this month off Boynton Beach, on Florida's Atlantic coast north of Miami, divers were amazed by these giants, which can measure up to 2.4 metres (eight feet) long.

With naturally downturned mouths, these creatures may appear cranky,

but some actually allow themselves to be brushed by a human hand.

- 'FEWER AND FEWER' -

"We were totally amazed about the amount of groupers that show up to the Boynton Beach area," diver Ben Galemme told AFP.

Still, he added, "from talking to the locals, (the population) has actually gone down in numbers" in recent years.

A recent study confirms

that trend.

"The diving industry has reported that they are seeing fewer and fewer of these fish," said Locascio, the marine biologist.

That could devastate the local diving business.

Last year, when researchers with the Mote laboratory repeated a census of spawning sites first conducted in 2013, they observed significantly fewer goliath groupers in five of the six locations studied.

Overfishing had left the species near extinction in the 1980s, but conservation efforts saved it. Goliath grouper fishing was banned for more than 30 years.

But in the past year Florida authorities deemed the population had recovered sufficiently, and allowed 200 of the fish to be caught and killed each year in state waters.

Unfortunately, the goliath grouper lends itself to overfishing partly because it grows slowly — it can live as long as 30 years — and takes a relatively long time to reproduce.

The goliath is now classed as a "vulnerable" species by the International Union for Conservation of Nature, according to Locascio.

Calling the fish "an essential species for maintaining the balance of the ecosystem," he added, "We do not want its population to decline."

The huge fish also lives in the waters of the Gulf of Mexico, the Caribbean, and off the coast of Brazil — AFP

Lake Zakt is a natural wonder of Oman



Zamzam al Ghailaniya

Experience the natural wonders of Oman's tourism, a delightful journey that offers recreation and insights into environmental preservation. Among the Sultanate of Oman's hidden treasures lies the enchanting Lake Zakt, a destination that beckons those seeking a unique and unspoiled adventure. Nestled in the heart of Samad Al Shan, in the Wilayat of Al Mudhaibi, Lake Zakt is a testament to Oman's pristine beauty.

Lake Zakt is a pristine oasis renowned for its crystal-clear waters and an ideal spot for swimming enthusiasts. Its impressive depth, plunging to around 45 metres, makes it a haven for water-based recreational activities. What sets this lake apart is its intriguing origin story — it emerged from the aftermath of extensive drilling operations in search of chromium. As the waters gradually rose, this captivating natural reservoir came into existence.

Reaching Lake Zakt requires a journey of approximately 150 kilometres from Muscat Governorate, roughly a two-hour drive. However,

the last leg of the journey is an unpaved dirt road, rendering a four-wheel-drive vehicle essential and necessitating all necessary safety precautions.

Visitors should know that Lake Zakt lacks conventional tourist amenities and is not developed for mainstream tourism. Nevertheless, it holds a special allure for those dedicated to professional swimming and diving. The lake complex consists of a large primary lake and a smaller, more treacherous one. Caution is strongly advised when approaching the smaller lake due to the risk of falls, particularly for families with children. A visit to Lake Zakt is best enjoyed during winter, as the scorching summer temperatures can be challenging.

Lake Zakt, concealed within Oman's natural splendour, offers an opportunity to connect with nature in its purest form. While it may not boast the amenities of more popular tourist destinations, its untouched beauty and the chance for adventure seekers to plunge into its depths make it a remarkable destination for those looking to uncover Oman's hidden treasures.

FASHION

From streetwear to red carpet, London Fashion Week offers choices

FROM STREETWEAR TO elegant evening dresses, the catwalks of London Fashion Week were not short of choices as designers showcased their spring and summer 2024 collections.

- JW Anderson and clay -

The invitation to the show of fashion label JW Anderson was a block of clay, arousing the curiosity of the guests.

The first models walked down the catwalk in Bermuda shorts and hoodies made from play-dough, resembling moving sculptures.

Then followed colourful ensembles from a shiny plastic material, crochet dresses and feathers worn as belts and on sleeves.

Jonathan Anderson also showcased oversized bomber jackets, long enough to cover the thighs, and trenchcoats with long skirts.

"Using jackets as dresses becomes very simple," Anderson, who is also the creative director of



Spanish fashion house Loewe, explained after the show.

His show, a staple of London Fashion Week, attracted celebrities including British actresses Suki Waterhouse and Jenna Coleman as well as actor Ncuti Gatwa of TV show "Sex Education".

Vogue's editor-in-chief Anna Wintour was also among the guests, sitting next to Edward Enninful, the outgoing editor-in-chief of British Vogue.

Enninful will be stepping down in January to take on a global adviser role at Vogue publisher Conde Nast.

Media reports have suggested a power struggle between the two but it did not show in front of the cameras.

- RED CARPET FASHION -

London-based designer David Koma is known for his contouring dresses.

At his show, models walked the runway to the music of Beyonce, who lists among the clients of the Georgian designer.

His collection was dominated by dark colours, especially black, but there were also designs in yellow, orange and even neon pink.

Some of the dresses were asymmetrical, short in the front and long at the back, and were worn with tall, over-the-knee boots.

Evening dresses were also at the show of designer Febe, a recent graduate of London's Central Saint Martins university.

Among her collection were large, transparent dresses made entirely of beads with long fringed skirts.

- EUDON CHOI, THE IMPRESSIONIST -

The collection of South Korean designer Eudon Choi was inspired by the works of French Impressionist painter Berthe Morisot.

Models of all ages walked the runway at his show with some of Choi's designs presented by older women.

The collection, presented in the garden of a church in central London, was elegant and refined.

The designer wanted to freeze a moment in time in the way Morisot, the 19th-century artist, had done in her paintings.

The looks were often monochrome with a neutral colour palette.

The tones evolved from a soft powder pink to anthracite grey.

With the colours, the outfits transitioned from daytime to evening wear, combining transparent and opaque fabrics.

Choi also used floral patterns and the contrast of black and white.

- ROKSANDA AND SERBIAN MONASTERIES -

Roksanda Ilincic, the founder of fashion brand Roksanda, was inspired by the monasteries of her native Serbia.

Tall headdresses worn by models at her show resembled those worn by Orthodox priests.

The straight, almost austere lines of some pieces were countered by a vibrant pop of colour or heels with tassels.

Silk dresses and capes were

accessorised with large jewellery items, which blended in to become part of the garment.

The silhouettes were sometimes straight and narrow, sometimes fluid and moving, sometimes imposing and rigid.

- LABRUM, 'DESIGNED BY AN IMMIGRANT'

British label Labrum's collection was inspired by a nomad, a figurine from Sierra Leone, where founder and creative director Foday Dumbuya was born.

The winner of this year's prestigious Queen Elizabeth II Award for British Design opened his show with ex-footballer Ian Wright walking the runway in a double-breasted suit and Adidas Samba sneakers.

The collection continued mixing casual and formal elements, with designs featuring mixed textiles and high-contrast patterns.

Male and female models walked to music by singer-songwriter Tawiah, with piano accompaniment.

Dumbuya chose the Four Seasons as his venue to bring the people of Brixton "into a world where they think they don't belong", he told AFP.

"The story I'm telling is about population movements, migration," added the designer, whose brand is known for the unofficial slogan "designed by an immigrant".

London Fashion Week continues on Sunday with showcases from Ukraine-born Masha Popova and fashion house Erdem, among others — AFP



LIFESTYLE

Six Simple Tips to Get Into RV Travel



RECREATIONAL-VEHICLE travel is on the rise and not just with baby boomers. With the growth of peer-to-peer rental companies like RVShare and Outdoorsy, RV travel has become more accessible — and more appealing — to vacationers of varying ages and budgets.

Over the past six months, Outdoorsy's bookings have shot up more than 300% among global users, the company said, with half those users under the age of 40. Similarly, Kampgrounds of America's latest North American Camping Report noted millennials and Gen Xers now account for 70% of R.V. users.

If you've never travelled by motor home or RV, or thought it wasn't for you, here are a few tips to set the wheels in motion.

CONSIDER THE BENEFITS

Freedom, flexibility and an immersion in nature are just a few appealing perks of RV travel. Visiting multiple destinations without having to pack and unpack, travelling with a pet, the lure of the open road and kitchens for those with dietary restrictions are also big advantages. Boondocking, or dry camping, lets travellers park almost anywhere without sacrificing comforts like shelter and a bed.

"It's a happy medium between a hotel and tent camping," said Jon Gray, RVShare's chief execu-



tive. RVs have also become a popular choice for people attending festivals, tailgating at sporting events or staying near family during the holiday season, he added.

SELECT THE RIGHT PROVIDER

Traditional rental firms offer a service that's similar to renting a car, while peer-to-peer services are more akin to Airbnb, said Kevin Broom, a spokesman for the RV Industry Association.

"When renting from owners, look closely at the details," he advised. Take time to read customer reviews, check the age of the vehicle and make sure it's well maintained.

"Companies like Cruise America, El Monte RV and Apollo tend to have lower insurance deductibles than renting a privately owned vehicle," said Deborah Trevino, a Virtuoso travel agent, "but rental prices are typically less in the sharing economy because you're not renting from a franchise."

For travellers uncomfortable driving larger RVs, peer-to-peer rental websites provide search filters for owners who are willing to deliver and set up trailers at a location selected by the renter.

CHOOSE THE RIGHT VEHICLE FOR YOUR TRIP

Your budget, destination and the number of travellers are the biggest factors in determining what size and model is best for your trip. "A couple visiting several locations and driving lots of miles may want a smaller motor home with better fuel economy," Broom said. "A family with children may want a larger RV with slide outs and more sleeping areas."

GoRVing is a website that compares features of various RV types and has a "Find My RV" tool to help select the right fit, while the CompactAppliance website outlines the pros and cons of the different categories. (Most states do not require a special driver's license for RVs.)



Motor homes, or motorised RVs, come in three different classes based on size and amenities. Towable RVs, such as conventional travel trailers, fifth-wheel trailers, truck campers, folding camping trailers and sport utility RVs, require a vehicle to pull them.

If you have the right vehicle to pull it, a towable RV is a great option because you have a car for exploring, Gray said.

"Campervans with four-wheel drive are popular among millennials because they're ideal for driving in off-grid locations," said Jeff Cavins, chief executive of Outdoorsy, based on his company's data. "The Mercedes-Benz Sprinter, Winnebago Revel and the Sportsmobile Classic 4 by 4 are all top sellers."

PLAN YOUR ROUTE

"Map out your route in advance," Trevino said. "Smaller roads may not be equipped to accommodate heavier RVs." She recommends becoming a Good Sam Club member (\$29/year) to access its web-based trip planner, which has helpful filters for low-clearance avoidance and options to bypass highways and tolls.

For a \$26.99 yearly subscription, the app

CoPilotGPS offers RV-specific navigation (trucker maps and RV-specific GPS devices provide similar information), while Roadtrippers.com is a free resource for plotting RV routes and calculating travel time, mileage and estimated fuel cost.

RESERVE AND READ UP BEFORE YOU HIT THE ROAD

It's crucial to reserve campgrounds in advance, especially during summer months and other peak travel periods. Websites like Reserve America, Roverpass, Campendium and Recreation.gov provide lists of campsites available across the country.

"We recommend first timers to stay at a fully-loaded RV park or campground like Kampgrounds of America and Yogi Bear's Jellystone Park Camp-Resorts, which offer full hookups, dump stations and staff on site," Gray said.

When renting a rig, request detailed instructions from the owner or rental company how to use the RV's systems, including the generator, air-conditioning, levelling, slide outs, electric and entertainment, as well as how to empty waste tanks

and refill fresh water.

Typically, the owner or rental company will conduct a walk-through orientation with the vehicle's renters. Most rental companies offer roadside assistance in their pricing, and extended roadside service, for nonmechanical mishaps like misplacing your keys, is also available.

Make sure to take the vehicle for a test drive to get comfortable turning, parking and towing it.

PACK SMART

Some RV owners provide free bedding, towels and kitchen essentials, while others offer house-keeping kits and outdoors equipment at a cost; inquire ahead of time. "Many customers opt to have their RVs supplied with groceries and camping gear like kayaks, fishing poles and a grill, so all they need to do is arrive with their suitcase," said Cavins.

If you're stocking the vehicle yourself, RV-camping.org provides a helpful checklist, broken down into categories from toiletries and clothing to kitchen supplies and tools. Of course, most items can be purchased on the road if you don't want to buy them before you leave. — **NYT**