

P12

BAGNAIA BREAKS LAP RECORD TO CLAIM CATALUNYA GP POLE



P15

STRONG OIL PRICES CONTRIBUTE TO SURGE IN REAL ESTATE TRADING



P19

ANCIENT PRIEST'S REMAINS ARE A FIRST-OF-A-KIND FIND FOR PERU TEAM



MUSCAT

HM GREETINGS TO SAN MARINO

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Mr Alessandro Scarano and Mrs Adele Tonnini, Captains Regent of the Republic of San Marino, on the Republic Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and best wishes to the Captains Regent and the friendly people of San Marino. — ONA

COMPLICATED SURGERY PERFORMED AT KHOULA

A specialised medical team from Khoula Hospital, in cooperation with the Department of Orthopedics at Nizwa Hospital, successfully performed surgical intervention for a patient who sustained complicated vertebral fractures and spinal cord injuries as a result of road accident. Dr Sultan bin Saif al Kalbani, head of the spine unit at Khoula Hospital who led the medical team, said that the condition of the injured person required a surgical operation by a specialised team from Khoula Hospital.



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Greater Salalah master-plan envisions new city at Al Dahariz

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, Sept 2

A new sustainable city is planned for development east of Al Dahariz as part of the Greater Salalah master-plan in Dhofar Governorate.

Brief insights into this new project were shared during a meeting of officials from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI). The meeting was attended by

HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, and other officials. The new city will have a length of 5 km, and will be home to about 30,000 to 40,000

inhabitants. It will have six hotel facilities with a total of 1,100 rooms, all of which will be located in the commercial heart of the city and in front of the marina. The city will be designed to be sustainable in a number of ways. It will use renewable

energy sources, such as solar and wind power. It will also have a rainwater harvesting system and a waste water treatment plant. The buildings in the city will be designed to be energy efficient and to use recycled materials. DETAILS ON P13

OMAN TO MANUFACTURE ARMOURED VEHICLES



Karwa Motors Company, one of the companies affiliated with the Oman Investment Authority, signed a cooperation and manufacturing services agreement with The Armored Group (TAG) Duqm Co, through which it aims to transfer the manufacturing operations of armoured vehicles to Karwa Motors in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

DETAILS ON P15

Priority for health in Vision 2040

MUSCAT: Dr Hilal bin Ali al Sabti, Minister of Health, reviewed the role of healthcare in Oman Vision 2040, when he was hosted through a video conference at the first national meeting organised by the Oman Medical Specialty Board, on Saturday. The meeting was attended by more than 550 specialists from health institutions. During the meeting, the minister spoke about the theoretical framework of the health system in terms of social determinants of health, societal goals and economic development which include securing resources, providing services, governance and financing to achieve the objectives of efficiency, justice, health improvement and financial protection.

The minister focused on health as one of the priorities of Oman Vision 2040 which falls under the category of ‘people and society and the strategic orientation of a leading health system with international standards. The minister pointed to the basic building blocks of the health system namely governance, leadership, human resources, provision of health service, health information system, medicines, vaccines, medical technologies and the financing of the health system. The ministry of health seeks to achieve five goals namely a society that enjoys sustainable health with the culture of (health is everyone’s responsibility) in its core and which is protected from the dangers threatening healthcare. — ONA

Future of Mobility initiative to check carbon emissions

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, announced that it will launch the ‘Future of Mobility’ initiative during the Oman Sustainability Week (OSW) scheduled to be held between April 29 and May 1, 2024. The OSW will comprise a series of events in support of the national sustainability goals in collaboration with Oman Exhibitions Organizing Company (CONNECT).

The initiative aims to address the need to handle carbon emission. The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology is making efforts to reduce carbon emission in the transport, communications and information technology sectors. The event will highlight innovators in the transport sector who are at the forefront of driving sustainability, advanced technologies, digital solutions, data systems solutions, smart infrastructure solutions, electric and hybrid vehicles, infrastructure, and complementary components that facilitate the sector’s transformation strategy. The Future of Mobility initiative at Oman Sustainability Week will represent an effective platform for pioneers in the transportation industry to showcase their latest concepts, solutions, technologies and innovations in the field of environmental mobility. This will enhance the Sultanate of Oman’s endeavour to create an economy free of carbon emissions.

The visitors will have the opportunity to explore modern trends in the field of clean transportation and will be able to interact with experts and industry leaders involved in future mobility and see closely the constantly evolving mobility scene. A number of entities specialised in transport will take part in Oman Sustainability Week including Asyad Group, Oman Environmental Services Holding (be’ah), OQ, BP Oman, Oman LNG, Petroleum Development Oman (PDO), Sohar Aluminium, among others. — ONA

BIRDS BOOST BIODIVERSITY



The Environment Authority said birding is a growing tourism attraction and is becoming the nation’s natural wealth. DETAILS ON P3

India launches rocket to study sun

BENGALURU: Following quickly on the success of India’s moon landing, the country’s space agency launched a rocket on Saturday to study the sun in its first such solar mission. The rocket left a trail of smoke and fire as scientists clapped, a live broadcast on the Indian Space Research Organisation’s (ISRO) website showed. India’s space agency on social media platform X, formerly Twitter, later said the satellite was now in orbit. The broadcast was watched by more than 860,000 viewers, while thousands gathered at a viewing gallery near the launch site to see the lift-off of the probe, which aims to study solar winds which can cause disturbance on earth commonly seen as auroras. Named after the Hindi word for the sun, the Aditya-L1 spacecraft took flight barely a week after India beat Russia to become the



PSLV XL rocket carrying the Aditya-L1 spacecraft is launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Centre in Sriharikota on Saturday. — AFP

first country to land on the south pole of the moon. While Russia had a more powerful rocket, India’s Chandrayaan-3 out-endured the Luna-25 to execute a textbook landing. The Aditya-L1 is designed to travel 1.5 million km over four months, far short of the sun, which is 150 million km from earth. It is

meant to stop its journey in a kind of parking lot in space, called a Lagrange Point, where objects tend to stay put because of balancing gravitational forces, reducing fuel consumption for the spacecraft. “We have made sure we will have a unique data set that is not currently available from any other

mission,” said Sankar Subramanian, principal scientist of the mission. “This will allow us to understand the sun, its dynamics as well as the inner heliosphere, which is an important element for current-day technology, as well as space-weather aspects,” he added. The mission also has the capacity to make a “big bang in terms of science,” said Somak Raychaudhury, who was involved in developing some components of the observatory, adding that energy particles emitted by the sun can hit satellites that control communications on earth. “There have been episodes when major communications have gone down because a satellite has been hit by a big corona emission. Satellites in low earth orbit are the main focus of global private players, which makes the Aditya-L1 mission a very important project,” he said. — Reuters



GCC STATES LAUNCH NEW REPORT ON DISABILITY RIGHTS

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 2

The second report on the prospects for the implementation and monitoring of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries was launched last week under the auspices of Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development.

The launch took place at a ceremony held at the Sultan Qaboos Cultural Complex in

Salalah. In attendance were officials from various relevant sectors, including Dr Amer bin Mohammed al Hajri, Director-General of the Executive Office of the GCC.

Dr Al Hajri said that the GCC countries are committed to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities and empowering them within society. He added that the ratification of the CRPD by the GCC States is an expression of this commitment.

The report highlights the progress that has been made



Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, speaks at the meeting in Salalah. PHOTO BY ALMUHALLAB AL MAAMARI

in the implementation of the CRPD in the GCC countries. However, it also identifies areas where further action is needed.

Dr Al Najjar said the Ministry of Social Development believes that the success of states in achieving the rights of persons with disabilities can only be achieved through cooperation and integration of efforts between countries, with the participation of their governmental, civil and private institutions, and ensuring the active participation of persons with disabilities.

“The Ministry of Social

Development congratulates all participating countries on the completion of the preparation of the report and urges them to continue working to promote the rights of persons with disabilities,” she said.

The report was prepared despite the challenges posed by the Covid-19 pandemic, with experts and specialists working to overcome these challenges.

The Ministry is committed to continuing its work to promote the rights of persons with disabilities in the GCC countries.

Traffic accident claims payout falls to RO 11.7 million in H1



MUSCAT: Oman's insurers paid RO 11.7 million as traffic accident compensation claims during the first half of this year compared to RO 13.9 million in the same period

of 2022 as mishaps showed a decrease of 1.7 per cent. In H1 2023, insurers disbursed compensation amounting to 15 per cent of the total claims. According to the Capital

Market Authority, the total number of traffic accidents exceeded 37,000 of which 7,763 were classified as serious and 29,600 as minor traffic accidents.

The CMA's unaudited data for the first half of 2023 showed a total of 37,000 traffic accidents. Of these, 7,763 were classified as serious, indicating a considerable risk to life and property. Despite the decrease in accident numbers, compensation claims remained substantial, with approximately 41,000 claims filed in H1 2023, a slight decline from the 44,000 claims in H1 2022.

Of the total accidents, 29,600 were minor traffic accidents, which witnessed a 19-per cent decrease in compensation claims compared to the previous year. The total compensation paid for minor accidents amounted to RO 5.7 million.

Serious accidents with material damage led to RO 3.7 million payout.

Compensation for serious accidents with injuries recorded a 5-per cent decrease at more than RO 2 million.

The payout for death cases amounted to approximately RO 275,000, with 191 verified claims. This marked an 18-per cent increase compared to H1 2022. — ONA

■ RIDE IN HARMONY



A scene from Al Ardha camel show race in the Wilayat of Jaalan Bani Bu Ali in the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah on Friday. During Al Ardha, jockeys run camel side by side down a straight track. These camels are not racing. Instead, the goal is for them to run as a pair, perfectly in time, thus demonstrating their obedience and the control of the riders.

PHOTO BY ABDULLAH AL SHEHHI

Read Omani folktales in Malayalam

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The timeless folktales of Oman have found their way into the heart of the Indian audience through translation from Arabic to Malayalam, offering readers a vivid glimpse into a bygone era of Oman.

Haroon Rasheed translated the tales and aptly titled *Omanile Nadodikathakal* or Folktales of Oman.

The book has 25 carefully selected stories, which serve as windows into the rich tapestry of Omani cultural traditions and societal beliefs. The myths and legends hidden in the stories have long played a pivotal role in shaping moral boundaries and establishing the fundamental principles governing interactions within Omani society.

Rasheed, who calls Oman his home for nearly two



decades, shared his perspective on the importance of these tales. “The myths and legends of this society have always held a special allure for me, as they often serve as the bedrock upon which a nation's culture is built.” Rasheed's connection to Oman goes back to his childhood when he would visit his father, an employee of Oman's Ministry of Health. Ever since he returned to

Oman nearly two decades ago, his life has been intricately woven with the towns of Ibra and Barka.

Rasheed has translated several works by Khalil Gibran into his native tongue. He has also authored ‘Experiences Sans Prefaces’, which delves into the life of PM Jabir, a social activist in Oman for nearly four decades. This book received widespread acclaim worldwide.

Omanile Nadodikathakal has been published by ‘Minnaminni’, an imprint of Mathrubhumi Books, with distribution in Oman handled by Al Bhaj Books. TV Gireesh has designed the cover.

Each of the seventeen chapters unfolds a unique folktale from Oman, offering entertainment and serving as a conduit for passing down core values and character traits from one generation to the

next. Omani folktales have historically played a crucial role in shaping the nation's history, reinforcing cultural values, and highlighting the significant traditions that form the foundation of Omani culture. With this translation, the vast population that has embraced Oman as their second home will gain a deeper understanding of the nation that has given them a life and a sense of belonging.

The book transcends linguistic and cultural boundaries, fostering a bridge of understanding between Oman and India. Rasheed's translation of these cherished narratives serves as a testament to the enduring power of storytelling and its ability to unite people across borders, allowing the readers to embark on a captivating journey through Oman's rich heritage and cultural tapestry.

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Beneficiaries happy with Dhofar municipal services

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 2

A comprehensive survey was conducted from July 15 to August 15 to assess the satisfaction levels of beneficiaries of municipal services in the Governorate of Dhofar. The survey aimed to gauge the opinions of residents regarding various aspects of public facilities and services, including market facilities, road and rainwater drainage quality, mobile phone-based services, tourism-related services, and decorative and afforestation efforts undertaken by Dhofar Municipality.

The survey revealed that 50 per cent of beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the quality of public facilities and services available in the local markets. This finding sheds light on the areas that might need improvement to enhance the overall experience for residents utilising these



The survey revealed that 50 per cent of beneficiaries expressed satisfaction with the quality of public facilities and services available in the local markets.

essential amenities.

In terms of road and rainwater drainage quality, the survey indicated that 60 per cent of beneficiaries reported a positive satisfaction rate. While this percentage signifies a

majority of content individuals, there remains room for enhancing road infrastructure and drainage systems to meet the expectations of a more significant portion of the population.

The convenience of accessing municipal services via mobile phones garnered a higher level of satisfaction, with 76 per cent of respondents expressing contentment. This percentage underscores

the growing trend towards digitalisation and highlights the successful integration of technology into public service delivery, although continuous efforts are necessary to address the needs of the remaining 24 per cent who might have encountered challenges.

Beneficiaries were notably content with the public services provided by the municipality during tourist events and at various sites. The survey revealed an 80% satisfaction rate, showcasing the positive impact of the municipality's efforts to enhance the tourist experience and promote the region's attractions.

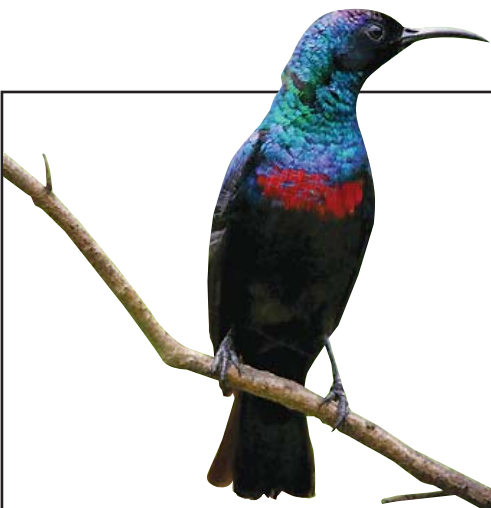
The survey's most significant satisfaction rate was observed in response to the decoration and afforestation works carried out by the municipality. An impressive 88 per cent of beneficiaries expressed contentment with these efforts, suggesting that such projects not only contribute to aesthetic

improvements but also resonate positively with the local population.

The survey also highlighted varying levels of satisfaction across different service categories. While certain aspects like decorative and greening works received high praise, there remain opportunities for the municipality to further elevate the quality of market facilities and road infrastructure.

Additionally, the widespread satisfaction with mobile phone-based services underscores the importance of continued technological integration to streamline public service accessibility and convenience for all residents.

This survey serves as a valuable tool for the Municipality of Dhofar to target areas of improvement and build upon existing successes to create an even more satisfying and efficient experience for its beneficiaries.



LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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BIRDS ATTRACT FOREIGN TOURISTS, BOOST BIODIVERSITY

The Environment Authority in the Al Batinah South Governorate received a raptor. Mohammed al Khateri from Al Rustaq handed over the bird to the authorities after he found it injured in the wild.

The bird has been taken to the Biodiversity Center in Barka to receive the necessary care.

The authority stated it appreciated the contribution of community members in preserving the natural life in the Sultanate of Oman.

Today, birding is a growing tourism attraction and is becoming the nation's natural wealth. An example is Barcelona Birding Point, a birding and wild-watching travel agency that conducts tours to Europe, Africa and beyond. It describes Oman as a link between two continents.

It stated, "This area of the world has been a natural 'bridge' between Asia and Africa for thousands of years. Nowadays, we find a beautiful combination of bird endemics from the Arabian Peninsula plus several overwintering Asian species (coming from Iran to India) and a selected core of species that once colonised the region from the Horn of Africa." Their tour begins in Muscat, with a pair of days of birding around the town where the visitors will be looking out for some key species including



Indian Silverbill, Oriental Honey-Buzzard, Pallid Scops Owl and Arabian Babbler in addition to birdlife concentrated in the local wetlands and, "That may include everything from Palla's Gull and Pin-tailed Snipe to White-tailed Lapwing and Indian Pond Heron." A star attraction in

the Hajar Mountains is the Omani Owl.

"Meanwhile, we will search for a different set of specialities from Lapped-faced Vulture to Plain Leaf Warbler, and from Hooded Wheatear to Eversmann's Redstart," they state.

From Muscat to the coast in the North of Al Duqm, in search of the iconic Crab Plover, waders, gulls and terns are much appreciated. According to the birdwatchers, the journey through deserts would provide them with first views on various birdlife, from Asian Desert & Ménétries' Warblers to Greater Hoopoe & Black-crowned Sparrow Larks.

Salalah is to showcase



dry in winter; still, they are a haven for bird watchers. Barcelonabirdingpoint.com pointed out, "But in winter, the slopes of deciduous trees and the plateaus covered by dry pastures host a wide variety of African birdlife from African Paradise Flycatcher to Blackstart, and from Bruce Green Pigeon to Abyssinian White-eye." Salalah is also known for the huge concentration of Steppes Eagles. Along with them are Imperial and Greater Spotted Eagles and Abdim's Storks.

"In their wetlands, we expect to find from Cotton Pygmy Goose to Pheasant-tailed Jacanas, with good numbers of Terek & Temmicks Sandpipers overwintering plus some Long-toed and Broad-billed Sandpipers," they point out.

Qatbait area in the Wilayat of Maqshan is presently witnessing a big presence of global bird-watchers. The area is a sanctuary and a resting place for wild birds migrating between Africa and North Asia. Qatbait area is also home to several species of local birds.

many more species, including Grey Hypocolius, Arabian Scops Owl, Jouanin's Petrel, Arabian Wheatear, Yemen Serin, Arabian Warbler, Nile Valley Sunbird and Arabian Golden-winged Grosbeak. The Dhofar Mountains are currently green; however, they become





Dust-free classrooms need of hour

**SOME STUDENTS
SAY AIR
CONDITIONERS
ARE NOT IN
ORDER AND
SCHOOL
PREMISES ARE
NOT CLEAN**

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 2

As the new academic year commenced, some parents and their wards have shared complaints on the apparent lack of readiness in a few schools.

Despite commendable efforts by educational authorities, certain issues persist — notably problems with school air conditioners and insufficient cleanliness preparations. Many parents have expressed their deep concern for the well-being of their children in light of these issues.

Alia, a guardian, noted that most schools were not ready for the students. “My eleventh-grade daughter had a day off last Thursday because her school was

not ready to receive students. I have other daughters attending a different school, and they, too, have complained about subpar conditions in their school,” she said.

Turki Mohammad, a student, lamented: “We returned to school and found no improvement. It’s the same problems as last year. The air conditioning remains unaddressed, classrooms are unprepared, dust covers the floors, and the chairs and tables are in disrepair.”

Another parent, Mohammed al Kaabi, remarked, “Regrettably, this situation repeats itself, and it’s not a new phenomenon. Why aren’t schools maintained during the ‘holiday’ period? Given the ample time during the vacation, we hope the Ministry of Education will implement a comprehensive and efficient annual plan. Ensuring classrooms are

clean and ready for students is paramount for a successful academic year. Academic achievements cannot be realised under physical discomfort in high temperatures, especially during the lingering summer heat.”

Umm Aya, another guardian, shared her children’s grievances: “My children have complained that the school is filled with dust, the air conditioners are out of order, tables are in disrepair, and the bathrooms are unclean.”

Mohammad Talabat also added that some schools in Dhofar need 15 days to be cleaned and prepared. Meanwhile, schools in the mountains should have a one-month preparation period due to the ongoing fall season, rain and fog, which pose visibility challenges and safety concerns for students.

Notably, many schools have reassured through their administrations that they initiated the academic year fully prepared, thanks to continuous efforts to oversee maintenance operations. Ali al Amiri, a school administrator, emphasised, “As school administrators, we voluntarily sacrificed a week of our summer vacation to ensure our school was ready to welcome students.”

“With the right environment, we can participate fully in our studies and reach our academic potential. When our classrooms are clean and well-equipped, it also enhances our focus on the learning process. When we step into a classroom that’s ready for us, it sends a powerful message — that our education is a top priority, and that motivates us to give our best,” Turki Mohammad, a student, said.



Pope praises Mongolia but warns of corruption, environmental ruin



Pope Francis departs the Saints Peter and Paul Cathedral following his meeting, in Ulaanbaatar. – AFP

ULAANBAATAR: Pope Francis praised the “wisdom” of the Mongolian people on Saturday, in harmony with nature and embracing spirituality, while warning the young democracy of risks such as corruption and environmental ruin.

The 86-year-old Francis, on the first papal visit to the Asian nation sandwiched between China and Russia, was feted with an official welcome ceremony that included a phalanx of Mongolian horsemen in metal armour parading past the State Palace.

The pope, who waved to the crowd in front of a massive bronze statue of Genghis Khan as a group of young Mongolian Catholics yelled ‘Viva il Papa!’, is seeking a neutral ally in the sensitive region as he seeks to improve Vatican relations with both of Mongolia’s neighbours.

Welcomed by President Ukhnaa Khurelsukh, Pope Francis called himself a “pilgrim of friendship” and extolled the virtues of the country, including its “ranchers and planters respectful of the delicate balances of the ecosystem”.

Mongolia’s Shamanist and Buddhist traditions of living in harmony with nature and its creatures “can contribute significantly to the urgent and no longer deferrable efforts to protect and preserve planet Earth”, he said.

Francis also praised Mongolia for its religious tolerance and nuclear-free policy, but warned that corruption was “the fruit of a utilitarian and unscrupulous mentality that has impoverished whole countries”.

Religions can “represent a safeguard against the insidious threat of corruption, which

effectively represents a serious menace to the development of any human community”, he said.

In the vast Sukhbaatar Plaza, named for a Mongol revolutionary hero, more than 1,000 pilgrims and others hoped to catch a glimpse of the leader of the world’s 1.3 billion Catholics.

In the crowd was Mongolian Enkhtur Dagvadorj, who said Francis “seems a great person. He is indeed a global figure.”

“Although Mongolians are Buddhists, it is lovely to receive a Pope from Rome in our country. Also, his visit is very beneficial to our country in many aspects, from reputation to the economy,” he said.

The visit by the Argentine Jesuit will provide a boost to local Catholics.

On Sunday, Francis will lead an interreligious meeting inside a hockey arena. — AFP

Saola weakens to a storm as it tracks southern China

HONG KONG: Typhoon Saola swept across southern China on Saturday after tearing down trees and smashing windows in Hong Kong, although the megacity avoided a feared direct hit from one of the region’s strongest storms in decades.

Tens of millions of people in the densely populated coastal areas of southern China had sheltered indoors on Friday ahead of the storm.

Saola had triggered Hong Kong’s highest threat level on Friday evening and registered winds of around 210 kilometres per hour at its peak.

It was downgraded before dawn on Saturday as the typhoon passed the city and tracked towards coastal areas of mainland China — where it weakened into a severe tropical storm.

So far, Hong Kong has had no reported casualties and far less damage than that created by 2018’s powerful Typhoon Mangkhut, but authorities warned people to stay away from the shoreline as Saola was still whipping up strong gales.



People make their way past fallen trees in the aftermath of Typhoon Saola in Tseung Kwan O in Hong Kong. – AFP

Multiple fallen trees were strewn across Hong Kong roads, broken windows, and crumpled scaffolding from under-construction buildings, while local media reported that solar panels had been ripped off rooftops.

The last storm to earn the city’s highest typhoon alert, Mangkhut shredded trees and unleashed floods across the city, leaving more than 300 people injured.

In mainland China, it killed six people and impacted the lives of more than three million others.

Hong Kong’s Civil Aid Service said on Saturday more than 500 people were deployed around the city to evaluate the damage, including volunteer workers who patrolled a low-lying fishing village in Lei Yue Mun district.

Hong Kong’s airport gradually resumed flights, after mass cancellations. — AFP

S Africa president vows ruling ANC will win 2024 polls outright

JOHANNESBURG: South Africa’s ruling ANC will win an outright majority in 2024 elections and not need to govern in a coalition, President Cyril Ramaphosa said on Saturday, despite struggling in opinion polls.

“The ANC is going to achieve an outright majority... We are confident we are going to emerge victorious,” said the president of the African National Congress (ANC).

Since the end of apartheid in 1994 the ANC, which fought white-minority rule, has picked the head of state in South Africa.

Next year South Africans will elect MPs, and at the end of the vote, it is the majority party which designates the president.

Asked about the type of parties with which the ANC could ally itself to stay in power, the president smiled.

“We are not working to be in a coalition,” he replied, on the eve of a meeting planned in a stadium in Soweto, an iconic township on the southern fringes of Johannesburg, to launch his campaign.

“The majority of people who have always voted for the ANC still see the ANC as the only vehicle for the transformation process in the country, to consolidate it and make it better.



S African President Cyril Ramaphosa (C) speaks to journalists at the scene where more than 70 people were killed in a building fire in Johannesburg. – AFP

“Many people don’t see anyone doing better.”

The ANC will be supported on the ground by the largest trade union federation in the country, the powerful Cosatu, and the Communist Party (SACP), he added. Meanwhile, President Cyril Ramaphosa urged authorities to enforce regulations preventing city residents from unlawfully occupying apartment blocks, after scores died in a fire in a Johannesburg building that was occupied illegally.

The fire, which killed more than 70 people, has highlighted a housing crisis in a city that is one of the world’s most unequal and where poverty and

unemployment are widespread.

“Local government has to enforce the laws,” Ramaphosa said at a governing African National Congress party event.

Ramaphosa said he has asked government ministers to look into ways of enforcing laws without violating people’s rights.

The gutted building is linked to apartheid-era South Africa, as it was where Black South Africans collected their “dompas” or passbook - documents that would enable them to work in white-owned areas of the city.

Ramaphosa said he collected his passbook at the building about 50 years ago, when he worked in the city. — Agencies



Tender Announcement

The Internal Tender committee of **Ministry of Social Development** hereby announces the following tender :-

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtaining of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-retundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
295/2023	Supply of desktop and laptop computers for the employees of the Ministry of Social Development	Companies specialized in the field of supplying communications and information technology devices and their accessories, which are registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent, first, second, third or fourth degree	Sunday 17-9-2023 02:00 PM	Sunday 8-10-2023 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O
296/2023	Supplying desktop Macs for the employees of the Ministry of Social Development					
298/2023	Installation of a vehicle management and tracking system of the Ministry of Social Development	Companies specialized in the field of information technology services / design, installation and maintenance of information programs and systems / processing information data centers registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent, first or second degree				

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) . On **Sunday 3/9/2023**.

❖ For Inquiry, please contact though the e-tendering website (reg@tenderboard.gov.om) tel. (**24402200**).

“ The lowest or any other tender shall not be binding to the Ministry”

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North Korea fires several cruise missiles towards sea, says South Korean military

SEOUL: North Korea fired several cruise missiles towards the Yellow Sea in the early hours of Saturday, according to the South Korean military. Details of the launch were being analysed by South Korean and US intelligence authorities, South Korea's Joint Chiefs of Staff said in a statement.

It was the latest in a series of missile tests and military exercises conducted by the North in recent weeks including a failed spy satellite launch late last month, prompting fresh criticism from the country's major political parties. "It's an act of hostility that threatens the peace on the Korean peninsula," a spokesperson for the ruling People Power Party said.

In a statement carried by state media KCNA, North Korea's foreign ministry accused Japan of raising tensions in the region by developing long-range missiles, but there was no mention of the missile launch. Japan and the United States are expected to soon agree on jointly developing an interceptor missile to counter hypersonic warheads being developed by China, Russia and North Korea, Japan's Yomiuri newspaper reported last month. Seoul announced sanctions on Friday on five North Korean individuals and one company in response to Pyongyang's launch



North Korean leader Kim Jong visits the training centre of the General Staff Department of the Korean People's Army (KPA) in an undisclosed location in North Korea. – Reuters

of what it said was a space rocket last month. On Thursday state media KCNA reported that Pyongyang had conducted a simulated "scorched-earth" nuclear strike on targets across South Korea, drawing criticism from Seoul. The joint annual summertime exercises between South Korea and the US known as the Ulchi Freedom Shield came to a close on Thursday after an 11-day run featuring air drills with B-1B bombers. North Korea protested the

deployment of the US strategic bombers by firing two ballistic missiles just hours later in retaliation. Pyongyang has long denounced the drills as a rehearsal for war. Recently, Russia said it intended to develop ties with North Korea, while not confirming a statement by the White House that Russian President Vladimir Putin had exchanged letters with North Korean leader Kim Jong Un. The White House said on

Wednesday it was concerned that arms negotiations between Russia and North Korea were advancing actively, and said Putin and Kim had written to each other pledging to increase their cooperation. Washington has warned before that North Korea could provide more weapons to Russia for use against Ukraine. Earlier this month the United States imposed sanctions on three entities it accused of being tied to arms deals between North Korea and Russia. — Reuters



Nigerien soldiers stand guard as supporters of Niger's National Council of Safeguard of the Homeland (CNSP) protest outside the Niger and French airbase in Niamey. – AFP

Thousands rally in Niger seeking withdrawal of French troops

NIAMEY: Thousands rallied on Saturday in the Niger capital Niamey to demand that former colonial ruler France withdraw its troops as sought by a junta which seized power in June. The protesters gathered near a base housing French soldiers following a call by several civic organisations hostile to the French military presence in the West African country. They held up banners proclaiming "French army leave our country". Niger's military regime had fired a new verbal broadside at France on Friday, accusing Paris of "blatant interference" by backing the country's ousted president, as protesters held a similar protest near a French base outside Niamey. President Mohamed Bazoum, a French ally whose election in 2021 had stoked hopes of stability in the troubled country, was detained on July 26 by

members of his guard. Relations with France, the country's former colonial power and ally in its support against fighting groups, went swiftly downhill after Paris stood by Bazoum. On August 3, the regime announced the scrapping of military agreements with France, which has some 1,500 soldiers stationed in the country to help fight groups in the region -- a move that Paris has ignored on the grounds of legitimacy. The agreements cover different time-frames, although one of them dating from 2012 was set to expire within a month, according to military leaders. The military rulers have also announced the immediate "expulsion" of the French Ambassador Sylvain Itte and announced it was withdrawing his diplomatic immunity. They said his presence was a threat to public order. — AFP

Gunshots as Eritrean asylum seekers clash with Israel police

TEL AVIV: A dozen Eritrean asylum seekers were wounded by Israeli police gunfire in Tel Aviv on Saturday after a demonstration against an Eritrean government event turned violent, police and medical sources said. Clashes began outside a south Tel Aviv venue that was set to host a pro-regime event organised by the Eritrean Embassy in Israel. Hundreds of anti-government Eritreans came to the site to prevent the event from taking place. Police declared the gathering an illegal demonstration and ordered the street to be emptied. Protesters "hurled rocks and wooden planks" at officers,

who used riot dispersal means and mounted forces to clear the Eritreans, some of whom vandalised shops in the area, police said. "Officers who feared for their lives used live fire against rioters," police added in a statement, noting that 27 of their members were wounded. "At this time, large police and Border Police forces continue to operate against lawbreakers in the Tel Aviv area," it said. Police said they arrested 39 suspects "who assaulted police and threw stones" at officers, with some of them carrying "weapons, tear gas, and an electrical stun gun".



Protesters hold sticks and flags during violent demonstrations by Eritrean asylum seekers, in Tel Aviv. – Reuters

Magen David Adom, Israel's emergency service, said it treated 114 people, eight of whom were in serious condition. Tel Aviv's Ichilov Hospital said it treated 43 people wounded in the clashes, including a dozen with gunshot wounds. Police said they were reinforcing their personnel in the area, with reports of clashes between Eritreans and police, as well as between supporters and opponents of Eritrea's regime, continuing elsewhere in south Tel Aviv. As of June, there were 17,850 asylum seekers from Eritrea in Israel, most of whom had arrived illegally through Egypt's Sinai Peninsula years ago.

They settled in a number of poor neighbourhoods in the coastal city of Tel Aviv, the country's economic capital. Eritrea has been led by authoritarian President Isaias Afwerki since its formal declaration of independence in 1993. It is one of the world's most isolated states and sits near the bottom of global rankings for press freedom, human rights, civil liberties and economic development. Eritreans who fled to Israel over its border with Egypt say they will face persecution if they are repatriated. Eritrea requires exit permits for its citizens and has a mandatory military draft. — Agencies

ISLAMABAD

Shopkeepers strike nationwide over inflation

Thousands of Pakistan traders shuttered their shops on Saturday, striking over soaring energy and fuel bills stirring widespread discontent ahead of national elections. There were widespread market closures on Saturday in Lahore, Karachi and Peshawar, where abandoned bazaars were posted with placards decrying "the unreasonable increase in electricity bills and taxes". "Everyone is participating because the situation has become



unbearable now," Lahore's Township Traders Union president Ajmal Hashmi said. Traders wield immense power in Pakistan. The government faces the delicate task of keeping them outside. — AFP

SAMARRA

18 Killed in deadly road accident

A collision between two minibuses killed 18 people, mostly Iranian pilgrims, north of the Iraqi capital Baghdad, medical officials said on Saturday. The "horrible accident" occurred between Dujail and Samarra, state news agency INA said, citing Khaled Burhan, director of health services in Salaheddin province. The minibuses crashed into each other shortly before midnight on Friday, leaving 18 people dead and 15 injured, a



medical official in Salaheddin said. One of the drivers was believed to have fallen asleep at the wheel, the same source said. — AFP

STOCKHOLM

Nobel cancels Russian ambassador invite

The Nobel Foundation said on Saturday it was reversing its decision to invite ambassadors from Russia and Belarus to this year's Nobel award ceremony in Stockholm, after the move sparked a backlash. The Swedish foundation however said on Thursday it was returning to its previous practice of inviting ambassadors from all countries represented in Sweden, sparking a wave of angry reactions. The foundation said on



Saturday that the decision was based on its belief "that it is important and right to reach out as widely as possible with the values and messages that the Nobel Prize stands for." — AFP

As Ukraine war grinds on, talks vanish



Steven Erlanger

The writers is the chief diplomatic correspondent in Europe for The New York Times, based in Berlin.

The conditions on the battlefield raise the question of what might be done off it, even if neither side appears open at the moment to talks. Others fear that to open a conversation may be interpreted by Moscow as a weakening of resolve

Stian Jenssen, the chief of staff to the secretary-general of Nato, recently had his knuckles rapped when he commented on possible options for an end to the war in Ukraine that did not envision a complete Russian defeat.

“I’m not saying it has to be like this, but I think that a solution could be for Ukraine to give up territory and get Nato membership in return,” he said during a panel discussion in Norway, according to the country’s VG newspaper. He also said that “it must be up to Ukraine to decide when and on what terms they want to negotiate,” which is Nato’s standard line.

But the damage was done. The remarks provoked an angry condemnation from the Ukrainians; a clarification from his boss, Jens Stoltenberg; and ultimately an apology from Jenssen.

The contretemps, say some analysts who have been similarly chastised, reflects a closing down of public discussion on options for Ukraine just at a moment when imaginative diplomacy is most needed, they say.

Western allies and Ukrainians themselves had hung much hope on a counteroffensive that might change the balance on the battlefield, expose Russian vulnerability and soften Moscow up for a negotiated end to the fighting, which has stretched on for a year and half.

Even the most sanguine of Ukraine’s backers did not predict that Ukraine would push Russian occupiers fully out of the country, an outcome that appears increasingly distant in light of the modest gains of the counteroffensive so far.

The conditions on the battlefield raise the question of what might be done off it, these officials and analysts say, even if neither side appears open at the moment to talks. Others fear that to open a conversation may be interpreted by Moscow as a weakening of resolve.

But given that even President Joe Biden says the war is likely to end in negotiations, Samuel Charap, a senior political scientist at the RAND Corp., believes there should be a serious debate in any democracy about how to get there.

Yet he, too, has also been criticised for suggesting that the interests of Washington and Ukraine do not always coincide and that it is important to talk to Russia about a negotiated outcome.

“There is a broad and increasingly widespread sense that what we’re doing now isn’t working, but not much of an idea of what to do next, and not a big openness to discuss it, which is how you come up with one,” Charap said. “The lack of success hasn’t opened up the political space for an open discussion of alternatives.”

With the counteroffensive going so slowly, and US defence and intelligence officials beginning to blame the Ukrainians, Western governments are feeling more vulnerable after providing so much equipment and raising hopes, said Charles A. Kupchan, a professor at Georgetown University and a former US official.

The American hope, he said, was that the counteroffensive would succeed in threatening the Russian position in Crimea, which would put Ukraine in a stronger negotiating position. That has not happened. “So the political atmosphere has tightened,” he said, “and overall there is still a political taboo about a hardheaded conversation about the endgame.”

Of course negotiations require two sides to talk, and right now neither President Vladimir Putin of Russia nor President Volodymyr Zelenskyy of Ukraine are ready to negotiate anything.



Soldiers with the 110th Separate Mechanized Brigade after firing a DANA, a wheeled 152 mm self-propelled artillery gun, at a Russian target in the Donetsk region of eastern Ukraine.

Putin’s forces seem to be holding their defensive lines, and most analysts suggest he thinks that the West will tire of supporting Ukraine. He may also hope that Donald Trump returns to the White House.

Trump has promised to stop US support for Ukraine and finish the war in a day. Even if he is not re-elected, he could be a strong voice in pushing the Republican Party to limit its support for Ukraine.

But it is also not clear that Zelenskyy, after so much Ukrainian sacrifice, would feel politically able to negotiate even if Russia were pushed back to its positions when the war started, in February 2022.

“Trading territory for a NATO umbrella? It is ridiculous,” Mykhailo Podolyak, an adviser to Zelenskyy, wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter. “That means deliberately choosing the defeat of democracy, encouraging a global criminal, preserving the Russian regime, destroying international law, and passing the war on to other generations.”

German officials are eager for a negotiated solution and are talking about how Russia might be brought to the negotiating table, but are only doing so in private and with trusted think tank specialists, several of them said. But the officials also understand that they can’t push Ukraine in any way, because they don’t want Russia to smell weakness.

Still, there is a desire in Berlin as in Washington that the war not continue indefinitely, in part because political willingness for indefinite military and financial support for

Ukraine is already beginning to wane, especially among those on the right and far-right, who are gaining ground.

But for many others, the suggestion of a negotiated solution or a Plan B is too early and even immoral, said Constanze Stelzenmüller of the Brookings Institution. Putin has shown no interest in talking, but the younger generation of officials around him are, if anything, even harder line, she said, citing a piece in Foreign Affairs by Tatiana Stanovaya.

“So anyone who wants to articulate a Plan B with these people on the other side is facing a significant burden of proof question,” she said. “Putin has said a lot of times he won’t negotiate except on his own terms, which are Ukraine’s obliteration. There is no lack of clarity there.”

Any credible Plan B would have to come from the key non-Western powers — like China, India, South Africa and Indonesia — that Russia is depending upon telling Moscow it must negotiate.

“These are the countries Putin is betting on,” she said. “It’s nothing we can say or do or offer.”

Eagerness from Paris or Berlin to negotiate too early will simply embolden Putin to manipulate that zeal, divide the West and seek concessions from Ukraine, said Ulrich Speck, a German analyst.

“Moving to diplomacy is both our strength and weakness,” he said. “We’re great at compromise and coalition, but that requires basic agreement on norms and goals. The shock of Ukraine is that this simply doesn’t exist on the other side.”

Scorching heat is contributing to migrant deaths



Edgar Sandoval

The author is a reporter with the National desk, where he writes about South Texas people and places.

many Texans, but deadly for some of those making their way through the hot, barren shrub land where migrants travel to avoid detection from Border Patrol agents.

Fewer people are crossing from Mexico this year compared with last year, but already there have been more than 500 deaths in 2023 — confirmed by the discovery of bodies or partial remains by White and others like him

On patrol in the harsh brush along the border in South Texas, Deputy Don White of the Brooks County Sheriff’s Office paused to study some empty water jugs, torn clothing and several indistinct footprints, looking for signs of migrants who might have been lost in the scorching heat.

Through the long summer, temperatures have lingered for days at a time at 100 degrees or higher. The heat has been stifling for

as they conduct their grim patrols. In 2022, among the deadliest in recent years, there were 853 confirmed deaths.

Tracking migrant deaths is an imperfect science. Many drown trying to cross the Rio Grande; others succumb to sweltering desert conditions or a lack of water, with most of their deaths ultimately attributed to dehydration or heat stroke. The unrelenting heat this summer in Texas, combined with suffocating humidity, has contributed to many of the fatalities, local and federal officials said.

“It would be dangerous to be out there for several hours,” said Jeremy Katz, a meteorologist with the National Weather Service in Brownsville, Texas.

Groups such as South Texas Human Rights, which tracks reports of migrants missing, detained or found dead, have seen a surge in caseloads since the spring, from 118 cases in March to double that in both July and August.

The Border Patrol has posted warnings on social media. “Extreme temperatures contributed to 45 individuals being rescued and 10 individuals who died due to the dangerous heat and conditions,” Chief Jason Owens, the director of the agency, wrote in July on X, formerly known as Twitter. He said his agents found 13 dead migrants the previous week.

Even those migrants who manage to cross the river and make their way inland face myriad challenges, White said. Led by smugglers, many migrants take risky routes



Gasoline canisters, possibly used to hold water for passing migrants, strewn about in the shade on private ranch land in Brooks County, Texas.

Tracking migrant deaths is an imperfect science. Many drown trying to cross the Rio Grande; others succumb to sweltering desert conditions or a lack of water

to avoid a Border Patrol checkpoint in the county seat of Falfurrias, about 80 miles north of the Rio Grande, often without enough food and water to endure the dayslong trek, he said.

Since 1998, at least 7,805 people have died trying to cross the border with Mexico and more than 3,527 remain missing, according to the Colibri Center for Human Rights, an advocacy organisation that reports on missing migrants and conducts DNA searches to identify remains.

White, 70, knows firsthand how unforgiving his patrol area can be: ranch land thick with cactus, thorny shrubs and occasional stands of oak and mesquite. Several hours before noon on a recent weekday morning, he and two members of his search team, John Baker, a US Army veteran, and Ray Gregory, a paramedic and former Marine, were making their way under a burning sun, sweating through their uniforms and gear. White finally sat down under a tree whose shade provided little relief, trying to catch his breath.

White said his own views on his job were not easily defined. On the one hand, he considers himself a political conservative who wants people in places such as New York and Los Angeles to understand the dangers migrants face when they do not follow the legal immigration process. But he also considers it his duty to prevent people from dying in their attempt to find a better life.

The battle against Alzheimer’s



Dr Hamed al Sinawi
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The writer is a senior consultant psychiatrist at Sultan Qaboos University Hospital

September is World Alzheimer’s Month, during which the focus is on raising public awareness about Alzheimer’s and other dementias.

This year’s theme is dedicated to discussing strategies to reduce the risk of developing Alzheimer’s, especially since recent research indicates that 40 per cent of the risk can be reduced by risk factors such as smoking, excessive alcohol consumption, physical inactivity, infrequent social contact, head injuries, and conditions including diabetes, hearing loss, depression, obesity, and hypertension.

I have been working with people who have Alzheimer’s for over 15 years and have witnessed individuals gradually fading away as the disease takes its toll. The emotions experienced by patients and their family members are profound and touching, starting from denial to anger and frustration. I can personally relate to this when my late father developed Alzheimer’s, and initially, we tried to attribute his symptoms to old age or depression following the death of his brother. It was only when things got out of control that we realised there was a serious problem.

This was in the late nineties when there were no

specialised Alzheimer’s clinics in Oman. Yet even in this day and age, we still come across families that delay seeking help for various reasons such as denial or believing that not much can be done. Such attitudes are not limited to patients and their families but can also be held by healthcare professionals who encounter patients with memory problems but don’t recommend a specialist assessment.

Even after diagnosis, and with no effective medication to cure Alzheimer’s, patients and their families become increasingly frustrated. That’s why many people were excited to hear about the new medications for Alzheimer’s that were approved last year. These drugs are shown to remove amyloid, the protein thought to cause Alzheimer’s disease, and slow down the decline in symptoms. However, recent studies suggest that the actual benefits of such medications may not be as significant when considering their cost and the potential side effects experienced by patients who take them, such as brain bleeding, which is estimated to occur in one out of every eight patients who start on such drugs.

Although the drug manufacturers advise regular brain scans, such scans may not be accessible at all hospitals or may have a long waiting list.

RECENT RESEARCH INDICATES THAT 40 PER CENT OF THE RISK CAN BE REDUCED BY ADOPTING A HEALTHY LIFESTYLE AND MANAGING CHRONIC MEDICAL CONDITIONS

From a financial perspective, the average cost of such medications ranges from \$20,000 to \$26,500 (RO7,700-9,600), which does not include monitoring and management of side effects. Another crucial point is that such medications only work for the early stages of Alzheimer’s disease, making early and accurate diagnosis essential.

So, what does the new drug discovery mean for the average person? To be realistic and drawing from my experience working in Oman for the past years, we need to focus more on public awareness about Alzheimer’s and other dementias. We should invest in training primary care doctors to screen for symptoms using screening tools that are validated for the Arab population.

We also need up-to-date tools to confirm the diagnosis and monitor side effects, along with providing social care and support for patients and their caregivers as the disease progresses. Patients often become bedridden and require more care, which can exceed the skills of their family members.

Therefore, training caregivers is crucial to ensure a good quality of care. Finally, while the battle against Alzheimer’s continues, let’s remember to care for people with Alzheimer’s with dignity and love and do our best to make their lives comfortable.

Experts blame govt for Greek fires’ devastation

HELENE COLLIOPOULOU

While the Greek government has been quick to blame global warming for the summer’s devastating wildfires, some experts argue that poor planning is at least as much to blame.

The European Commission has said that the blaze in the Dadia national park, which has been burning for two weeks now, is the largest on record in Europe.

That and other deadly fires across Greece were expected to consume more than 150,000 hectares (370,600 acres), Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis told parliament this week.

And the flames have so far claimed 26 lives.

“Is the climate crisis the alibi for everything?” said Mitsotakis. “No, it is not an alibi — but it is part of the interpretation,” he insisted.

Climate change is a theme the government has touched on repeatedly in the context of the wildfires but, as Mitsotakis appeared to at least implicitly acknowledge, it is not the whole story.

This year’s fires are certainly stronger than those of previous years because of climate change, said Alexandros Dimitrakopoulos, head of Forest Protection and the Wildland Fire Science Lab at the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki.

But that does not fully explain the extent of the damage, he said pointing out that 10 per cent of the country’s woodlands had gone up in smoke since 2007.

“Better planning in the fight against fires is needed, as well as better cooperation between the fire services and the specialists in geomorphology of wooded zones,” Dimitrakopoulos argued — geomorphology being the scientific study of the form or shape of the land.

Kostas Lagouvardos, research director at the National Observatory of Athens, made a similar point, arguing that the emphasis should be on adequate measures to prevent forest fires.

But the recurring problem, he said, was the dysfunctional relationship between the state and scientific bodies.

“The scientific tools exist and can help detect and prepare for difficult climatological conditions,” he said — such as the extreme drought that has struck the Evros region near the border with Türkiye and other regions.

Opposition politicians took a similar line during a fierce parliamentary debate on Thursday.

They accused the government of having been too slow to put preventative measures in place and of poor coordination between the various government agencies concerned.

— AFP

People more generous than you think



David Brooks

Are human beings fundamentally good or fundamentally bad? Are people mostly generous, or are they mostly selfish?

Over the centuries, many of our leading lights have taken the view that people are basically selfish. Machiavelli argued that people are deceitful, ungrateful and covetous. Classical economics is based on the idea that people relentlessly pursue their self-interest. “The average human being is about 95 per cent selfish in the narrow meaning of the term,” economist Gordon Tullock once wrote. In his book “The Selfish Gene,” evolutionary biologist Richard Dawkins argued, “We are born selfish.” In the public at large, only 30 per cent of Americans say they can trust the people around them, suggesting quite a grim view of human nature.

But what if this dark view of our nature is not true?

In a recent experiment led by psychologists Ryan Dwyer, William Brady and Elizabeth Dunn and TED curator Chris Anderson, 200 people in seven nations around the world were each given \$10,000, free, and then reported how they spent the money. Did they keep it all themselves? No. On average, the participants spent more than \$6,400 of it to benefit others, including almost \$1,700 on donations to charity. Of that prosocial spending, \$3,678 went to people outside their immediate household, and \$2,163 was spent on strangers, acquaintances and donations to organisations.

People used the money to take friends out for meals or to support families that had lost loved ones or to support an organisation that provides construction training to marginalised people. Sounds pretty generous to me.

But wait a second, the cynic says. Maybe they were just spending that way so they could selfishly win status and applause.

Not likely. Some of the people in the experiment were told to record their spending on Twitter, and the rest were told to keep their spending private. There was little difference between those who publicised their outlays and those who didn’t.

Overall, the researchers concluded that people find it rewarding to spend money on others.

In his book “The Penguin and the



Leviathan: The Triumph of Cooperation Over Self-Interest,” Yochai Benkler of Harvard summarised the findings. In any given experiment, he reported, about 30 per cent of the people do, indeed, behave selfishly. But, he continued, “fully half of all people systematically, significantly and predictably behave cooperatively.”

Humanity hasn’t thrived all these centuries because we’re ruthlessly selfish; we’ve thrived because we’re really good at cooperation.

But suppose you’re a nice person and you have to compete with ruthless, selfish bastards. Aren’t you forced to play by the rules of dog eat dog? Well,

BY TELLING PEOPLE THAT THEY ARE INNATELY SELFISH AND SURROUNDED BY OTHERS WHO ARE INNATELY SELFISH, WE HAVE ENCOURAGED ONE ANOTHER TO MAGNIFY THE SELFISH SIDE OF OUR NATURES.

not necessarily. For his book “Give and Take,” organisational psychologist Adam Grant identified other-centred people in organisations (the givers) and self-centred people, the ones who are always on the lookout for what they can extract for themselves (the takers). He found that many of the low-performing workers were givers. They allowed themselves to be walked over, taken advantage of.

But when Grant looked at the top performers in organisations, he found that givers dominated those ranks, too. These givers had golden

reputations, wider social networks, better relationships — people wanted to work with and collaborate with them. It’s best to be a giver who knows, in extreme cases, how to stand up for oneself.

I’d say that a lot of our public thinkers have vastly underestimated the importance of the moral and social motivations woven into human nature. We tip at restaurants we’ll never return to. We leap to help one another during natural disasters. We yearn not only to be admired but also to be worthy of admiration.

I’d say that many of our public thinkers have wound up creating a self-fulfilling prophecy. By telling people that they are innately selfish and surrounded by others who are innately selfish, we have encouraged one another to magnify the selfish side of our natures.

I’d also say that we in the West draw too sharp a distinction between gifts and transactions.

In his classic essay “The Gift” sociologist Marcel Mauss argued that many cultures do not make this stark distinction. In those cultures, people see themselves embedded in a network of material, social and spiritual care. People give one another a hand; they lend one another an ear; they borrow and lend. They see these exchanges not as cold, zero-sum transactions but as ongoing supportive and reciprocal relationships.

Finally, I’d say we in the West have gone overboard in building systems that try to motivate people by appealing mostly to their economic self-interest. We build inhumane systems in which material incentives blot out social and moral incentives. And we’ve made ourselves miserable along the way.

— The New York Times

Flying, wealth, tourism, and a little ‘Bond’

I see myself as a typical traveller, not a Goldfinger, and not made of money, but ‘doing alright,’ who would like to go home and see the family and friends every couple of years, and on the ‘off’ year to spoil myself and my wife, with a wee leisure holiday somewhere nice. Somewhere quiet, with a comfortable room, good food, a nice beach, and something to see and do, nearby. The Sultanate of Oman sounds perfect, and would be too, but the cost of airfares is a touchy topic with me just now.

I recall four years ago, we had all the time in the world, flew from Muscat to the UK to see my daughter, and after a couple of weeks there, flew from London Heathrow to Christchurch, New Zealand for the modest sum of £444GBP, which is about RO 260. This month, searching on the Internet to fly the same route and airline was £1,800GBP or nearly RO 1,100. I was shaken, not stirred.

I thought it was a mistake, but no, even searching different departure and arrival airports, clearly much less convenient of course, I only got the price reduced by £400GBP (RO 250), though the flight times had ballooned out from 24 hours to 35, making it a proper endurance test. Shocking, positively shocking, but, I guess I’m going to have to ‘bite the bullet’ as they say, because you only live twice, and beggars can’t be choosers, can they?

But that is just one more indication, I guess, as to how global inflation, indeed all global finance, has been mismanaged so criminally by the bureaucrats, the banks, the financial powerhouses, and to a lesser extent their subservient politicians, in a manner that sees the rich get richer, yet again, and that scares the living daylight out of me.

It’s funny (weird, not ha ha), however the world turns, wherever there is conflict, tragedy, poverty, and loss, that the wealthy still maintain their wealth, still retain their positions in society, still retain their influence, but most of all, still retain that sparkling arrogance, confidence, and



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wit. It is almost as if they ‘know’ the future, what is happening, what is for your (their) eyes only, and when, but we all know that’s impossible don’t we?

So maybe, just maybe, some of those ‘James Bond’ world domination movie plots aren’t as ridiculous as we thought, with global giants in media and commerce particularly well-placed to manipulate people and events to achieve a spectre of even greater wealth and power. I mean, if you can’t trust a Swiss banker, what has the world come to? The world is not enough?

Maybe I, like thousands of others, need a holiday in Oman to chill out? Just one thing though... those pesky airfares. When UK travellers can go to Spain, the Canary Islands, and the like for less than RO 50, the competition has a decided advantage. So, let’s even the playing field with this suggestion. If the airlines Oman Air, and Salam Air allow passengers to pay a deposit to secure seats and allow them to pay off the balance before flying?

Strangely, none of them do this. I mean... you can pay for almost anything in instalments today, houses, cars, furniture, appliances, utilities, its limitless, yet we don’t see airlines doing so. It might be a way to tease prospective tourists towards the exotic ‘Jewel of the Middle East,’ and spend the difference on fares, if they could pay it in instalments. That would offer a quantum of solace to them when they are paying more for flights.

I think too, even though the sector is growing, it needs to be inventive and think of ways to have prospective tourists never say never, in terms of visiting Oman, because honestly, they will return again and again. And of course, we all know that the tourist and traveller dollar is the best dollar, because it contributes to the national and local economies and provides jobs.

I have frequently advocated that Oman is the best destination for all-inclusive type holidays, and nothing during the post-pandemic period has altered my opinion... I believe the writings on the wall.

IT MIGHT BE A WAY TO TEASE PROSPECTIVE TOURISTS TOWARDS THE EXOTIC ‘JEWEL OF THE MIDDLE EAST’

STALIN-ERA SKYSCRAPER



Tourists enjoy the view from an observation deck in front of a Stalin-era skyscraper on Kotelnicheskaya embankment in downtown Moscow on Saturday. – AFP

Inequality and democracy...

There has been much handwringing about the retreat of democracy and the rise of authoritarianism in recent years — and for good reason. From Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán to former Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro and former US President Donald Trump, we have a growing list of authoritarians and would-be autocrats who channel a curious form of right-wing populism. Though they promise to protect ordinary citizens and preserve longstanding national values, they pursue policies that protect the powerful and trash longstanding norms — and leave the rest of us trying to explain their appeal.

While there are many explanations, one that stands out is the growth of inequality, a problem stemming from modern neoliberal capitalism, which can also be linked in many ways to the erosion of democracy. Economic inequality inevitably leads to political inequality, albeit to varying degrees across countries. In a country like the United States, which has virtually no constraints on campaign contributions, “one person, one vote” has morphed into “one dollar, one vote.”

This political inequality is self-reinforcing, leading to policies that further entrench economic inequality. Tax policies favour the rich, the education system favours the already privileged, and inadequately designed



JOSEPH E STIGLITZ

The writer is a Nobel laureate in economics and University Professor at Columbia University, is a former chief economist of the World Bank

and enforced antitrust regulation tends to give corporations free rein to amass and exploit market power. Moreover, since the media is dominated by private companies owned by plutocrats like Rupert Murdoch, much of the mainstream discourse tends to entrench the same trends. News consumers thus have long been told that taxing the rich harms economic growth, that inheritance taxes are levies on death, and so forth.

More recently, traditional media controlled by the super-rich have been joined by social-media companies controlled by the super-rich, except that the latter are even less constrained in spreading misinformation. Thanks to Section 230 of the 1996 Communications Decency Act, US-based companies cannot be held liable for third-party content hosted on their platforms — or for most of the other social harms they cause (not least to teenage girls).

In this context of capitalism without accountability, should we be surprised that so many people view the growing concentration of wealth with suspicion, or that they believe the system is rigged? The pervasive feeling that democracy has delivered unfair outcomes has undermined confidence in democracy and led some to conclude that alternative systems

might produce better results.

This is an old debate. Seventy-five years ago, many wondered whether democracies could grow as fast as authoritarian regimes. Now, many are asking the same question about which system “delivers” greater fairness. Yet this debate is unfolding in a world where the very wealthy have the tools to shape national and global thinking, sometimes with outright lies (“The election was stolen!” “The voting machines were rigged!” — a falsehood that cost Fox News \$787 million).

One of the results has been deepening polarisation, which hampers the functioning of democracy — especially in countries like the US, with its

winner-take-all elections. By the time Trump was elected in 2016 with a minority of the popular vote, American politics, which once favoured problem-solving through compromise, had become a bald-faced partisan power struggle, a wrestling match where at least one side seems to believe there should be no rules.

When polarisation becomes so excessive, it will often seem as though the stakes are too high to concede anything. Rather than looking for common ground, those in power will use the means at their disposal to entrench their own positions — as the Republicans have done openly through gerrymandering and measures to suppress voter turnout.

Democracies work best when the perceived stakes are neither too low nor too high (if they are too low, people will feel little need to participate in the democratic process at all). There are design choices that democracies can make to improve the chances of hitting this happy medium. Parliamentary systems, for example, encourage coalition building and often give power to centrists, rather than extremists. Mandatory and ranked-choice voting also have been shown to help in this respect, as does the presence of a committed, protected civil service.

The US has long held itself up as a democratic beacon. Though there has always been hypocrisy — from Ronald Reagan cozying up to Augusto Pinochet — America at least embodied a shared set of political values.

But now, economic and political inequality have grown so extreme that many are rejecting democracy. This is fertile ground for authoritarianism, especially for the kind of right-wing populism that Trump, Bolsonaro, and the rest represent. But such leaders have shown that they have none of the answers that discontented voters are seeking. On the contrary, the policies they enact when given power only make matters worse.

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Oman all set for AFC U23 Asian Cup Qatar 2024 qualifiers

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 2

The Oman Olympic (under-23) football team are all set for the AFC U23 Asian Cup Qatar 2024 Qualifiers which will kick off on Wednesday in Amman city, Jordan. Oman were drawn in Group A alongside Jordan (hosts), Syria and Brunei. Oman team, coached by national head coach Akram Habresh, will look for a strong return after they missed out two last editions of Asian Finals and they will take on Syria in the opener on Wednesday.

Then, Oman will have a tight match against hosts Jordan on Saturday (September 9) before concluding their group games against Brunei Darussalam on Tuesday (September 12). Oman players will aim for straight qualification to the finals which will be held during April 15 and May 3, 2024. The qualifiers format will be in a single round-robin at a centralised venue with the 11 group winners and four best second-placed teams going through. Oman's players are in good shape after they completed the last abroad short camp in Iraq on a successful



note. The team managed to end the friendly match against the Iraq team recently with a 2-1 win at Basra International Stadium. Despite the hosts leading the match by Zaid Tahseen's early goal in the sixth minute, coach Akram's men bounced back strongly as they equalised in the last quarter of the first half by Khalid al Qatrefi. Osama al Hadabi struck the winner in the second half of the game to deliver a crucial triumph to the team ahead of the start of

the qualifiers. The warm-up game against the Iraqi team was essential for the coaching staff to stand up on the starting list of the team and address the weak areas of the team. The national team players spent a few days in Basra city as the team had reported to few training sessions. The head coach and his assisting team addressed all the points that require further development in the technical and tactical sides. Ahead of the Iraq camp, Oman

team players completed their Turkiye camp on a positive point too. The camp in Turkiye took place from August 16 and ran for 11 days. The external gathering had featured two friendly games out of four planned matches as two games were cancelled. The first warm-up match in Turkiye camp against Al Waab SC was not completed due to an injury to a Qatari club player in the 25th minute. Later on, the Oman Olympic team suffered a 2-1 loss against

Al Khor SC in the following fixture. Oman's goal was netted by Al Faraj al Kumi while Ahmed al Mohanadi and Locas Rebero scored for Al Khor SC. The third match was against UAE's Fujairah FC which the Oman boys won 2-0. Both the goals were scored by Osama al Hadabi. The last warm-up match against Algeria's Pardou Athletic Club was cancelled as the venue was under-prepared for the match.

India emerge Asian hockey kings

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, SEPT 2

India edged out Pakistan 2-0 in the penalty shoot-out after a 4-4 draw at full time to emerge champions in Men's Hockey5s Asia Cup Salalah 2023 in Salalah on Saturday. Earlier, hosts Oman ensured their direct qualification to the Hockey5s World Cup by finishing a creditable third after they beat Malaysia 5-4 in the bronze medal play-off match of the top Asian event. In a pulsating final at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Centre hockey turfs, it was Pakistan who took the lead with a goal from Abdul Rehman in the fifth minute.

India equalised after two minutes through Jugraj Singh. Maninder Singh, adjudged the player of the tournament, put India in the lead in the 10th minute. Rana Abdul put Pakistan back in business with a brilliant goal in the 13th minute. Zikriya Hayat struck in the next minute as Pakistan went up 3-2 at the half-time. Rana finished top-scorer of the tournament with 27 goals. In the second-half, Pakistan pushed ahead and Arshad Liaquat's challenge goal made it 4-2 in favour of Pakistan in the 19th minute. Star player Mohammed Raheel sprang into action in the same minute as India reduced the deficit to 4-3. Raheel also netted India's equaliser in the 26th minute to make it 4-4. Frantic actions marked the last minutes but a winning goal evaded both the teams.



In the ensuing penalty shoot-out, cool customer Gurjot Singh and Maninder Singh found the target for India to make it 2-0 giving no chance to Pakistan goalkeeper Ishtiaq Abdullah Khan. Liaquat Arshad, who got a penalty stroke, and Muhammad Murtaza could not strike in their attempts past a valiant Indian goalkeeper Suraj Karkera as the Indian men repeated the triumph of their female counterparts in the Women's Asia Cup last week. Earlier, Pakistan comfortably beat Oman 7-3 in the first semifinal. Pakistan led 4-2 at the break. In the second semifinal, India thumped Malaysia 10-4. India led 3-2 at the half-time. OMAN SHINE Oman showed their mettle in a thrilling clash against Malaysia in the third-place play-off. Aiman Madit put the hosts



ahead in the sixth minute but Kamarulzaman Kamaruddin equalised for the Malaysians in the next minute. Oman went ahead again in the 11th minute through Khalid al Shaibi. Malaysia didn't waste any time in getting the equaliser again when Muhibddin Moharam struck in the same minute to make it 2-2 at the break. Aiman Madit hit another goal as Oman took 3-2 lead in the 19th minute. Kamarulzaman found the 3-3 goal for Malaysia three

minutes later. Khalid al Shaibi found the target again in the 24th minute as Oman moved up 4-3. After two minutes, Malaysia made it all-square when Akhimullah Anuar was on target. Oman's mercurial player Rashad al Fazari reserved his brilliance to the last moment as he netted the winner with only a minute to go. As Oman are also qualified as hosts for the World Cup, Malaysia will make it to the global showdown in Muscat with their fourth-place finish. Bangladesh finished fifth after edging Iran 7-6 in a keenly-contested match. It was 3-3 at half-time. Kazakhstan thrashed Japan 9-1 to take the seventh spot. Indonesia took the ninth spot with two wins and Hong Kong thrashed Afghanistan 12-5 to finish 10th.

FIH chief Ikram joins IOC initiative for athlete welfare

ANUROOP
ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, SEPT 2

International Olympic Committee president Thomas Bach has appointed International Hockey Federation (FIH) president Tayyab Ikram as a member of the Olympic Solidarity Commission recently. "I'm delighted to be part of the International Olympic Committee's efforts to ensure the welfare of athletes. The Olympic Solidarity Commission will help the athletes get the best training opportunities to perform and excel at the top level," Ikram told Oman Observer from Salalah, where he was present to attend the ongoing Men's and Women's Hockey5s Asia Cup. "This is a great initiative from the IOC to ensure good conditions for the athletes to participate in world-wide sports events and thereby developing the sports across the world. I'm happy to be part of it and will work towards its goals," Ikram said. The aim of Olympic Solidarity is to provide assistance to all the National Olympic Committees (NOCs) for athlete development programmes, in particular those with the greatest needs of it. This assistance is achieved through multi-faceted programmes prioritising athlete development, training of coaches and sports administrators and promoting the Olympic values. GREAT EVENT The FIH chief said the Hockey5s



Men's and Women's Asia Cup has been organised very professionally. "The Hockey5s Asia Cup is a great opportunity for the Oman Hockey Association (OHA) to showcase their organising abilities ahead of Hockey5s World Cup in Muscat next year. This is also the qualifiers for the World Cup and offers good competition for the Asian hockey nations. "The technical level of hockey among the Asian countries is getting closer and it was good to see some great matches during the tournament. The hockey5s format has given opportunities for the second and third tier hockey nations to catch up with the top-tier nations. That is the most exciting thing about this new format," the official from Macau said. The FIH president appreciated the OHA's good work of making the Asia Cup a great event in Salalah. "The OHA has done a great job in Salalah and hopefully they can repeat the same in Muscat for the World Cup as well," Ikram signed off.

DEBUTANT ATKINSON HELPS
ENGLAND TO EASY T20 VICTORY
OVER NEW ZEALAND



MANCHESTER: England's Johnny Bairstow and Harry Brook smashed half centuries before debutant Gus Atkinson took four wickets to power England to a 2-0 lead over New Zealand in their four-match Twenty20 International series with a 95-run victory on Friday.

After winning the toss and opting to bat, Bairstow finished with an unbeaten 86 off 60 balls and Brook impressed with 67 from 36 as England finished on 198 runs for four.

Atkinson made an immediate impression by taking the wickets of Devon Conway, Tim Seifert, Tim Southee and Lockie Ferguson.

Already named in England's preliminary squad for the World Cup in India, which begins in October, Atkinson was given his chance to prove his worth and wasted no time taking it. England started slowly but once Bairstow and Brook got going there was no stopping them as they combined for 131 runs. "In recent times I've tried to play the ball on merit as much as possible. If I feel I can take an option on, I'll take it," Brook said. "I try and move around in the crease as much as possible, I'm just trying to hit the ball where it's meant to be hit."

To the disappointment of the Old Trafford crowd, Brook was finally taken out in the 17th over. After hitting five fours and five sixes he attempted another big shot but did not quite get hold of it and Finn Allen had a simple catch.

New Zealand made a faster start than England had but wickets continued to fall at a steady pace. Adil Rashid claimed two to reach 97 T20I wickets, taking over from Chris Jordan as England's leading T20 wicket-taker. It was debutant Atkinson, however, who stole the show. He finished off proceedings in style, taking three wickets in the 13th over to finish off New Zealand. "They just told me to do what I've been doing and that's what I tried to do and it went great," Atkinson said.

"I try to keep as cool as possible and whatever happens, happens, thankfully it went well." The third T20 of the series will be at Edgbaston on Sunday.

LIVERPOOL SIGN DUTCH MIDFIELDER
GRAVENBERCH FROM BAYERN

LIVERPOOL: Liverpool have completed the signing of Dutch midfielder Ryan Gravenberch from Bayern Munich on a long-term contract, the Premier League club announced on Friday. Financial details were not disclosed, but British media report that the deal is worth around 34.3 million pounds (\$43.17 million) for a five-year contract.

"If you see it from the outside, it's one of the biggest clubs in the world. Also the fans, the stadium, I think everything from the outside is top," Gravenberch said in a statement.

Liverpool have already signed midfielders Alexis Mac Allister, Dominik Szoboszlai and Wataru Endo but after seeing his midfield gutted in the close season, manager Juergen Klopp was keen to sign another player before the window closed.

"Really happy to bring him in because he's an exceptional talent," Klopp said of Gravenberch.

"... he can drive the ball, he can be really a box-to-box threat, he's going there. He has a good eye for a pass and a good pass."

The 21-year-old is an academy graduate who in 2018 became the youngest-ever Ajax Amsterdam player to appear in the Dutch Eredivisie at the age of 16 years and 130 days.

Gravenberch made his international debut in 2021 and has scored one goal in 11 appearances for the Netherlands.

Liverpool's next match is a Premier League clash at home against Aston Villa on Sunday. — Reuters

\$2.97 billion in transfer window
at Premier League clubs

LONDON: Premier League clubs spent a record 2.36 billion pounds (\$2.97 billion) on new players in the transfer window that closed on Friday night, according to analysis from Deloitte.

The transfer window, which was open from June 14 to Sept. 1, exceeded last year's record 1.92 billion pounds, with the top-flight clubs spending 255 million pounds on deadline day alone, it said.

Premier League clubs were responsible for 48 per cent of the spending across Europe's top five leagues including Spain's LaLiga, Italy's Serie A, Germany's Bundesliga and France's Ligue 1.

"A second successive summer of record spending by Premier League clubs suggests that year-on-year revenue growth could return following the pandemic," Tim Bridge, lead partner in Deloitte's Sports Business Group, said in a statement.

"Nearly three-quarters of Premier League clubs (14) spent more this summer than the last, reflecting the increased intensity of competition.

Chelsea have spent more than \$1 billion in transfer fees since the new ownership led by American Todd Boehly and Clearlake Capital completed their takeover of the club in May 2022.

The London-based club broke the British transfer record for the second time in a year by signing Ecuador midfielder Moises Caicedo for a reported 115 million pounds, eclipsing the 106 million pounds they paid to sign midfielder Enzo Fernandez in January.

Champions Manchester City signed midfielder Matheus Nunes for 53 million pounds this week, having brought Jeremy Doku for 55 million pounds, defender Josko Gvardiol for 77 million and



midfielder Mateo Kovacic for 25 million earlier.

Last season's runners-up Arsenal splashed out 65 million pounds on forward Kai Havertz, followed by 105 million on England midfielder Declan Rice, while Manchester United spent 72 million on striker Rasmus Hojlund.

Newcastle United, who finished fourth last season,

brought in midfielder Sandro Tonali for 55 million pounds and winger Harvey Barnes for 38 million.

Nottingham Forest, who finished 16th last season, signed as many as seven players on deadline day.

According to the report, almost half of the transfer fees received by Premier League clubs from overseas came from the Saudi Pro

League club (SPL), which has the fourth-highest transfer spend of any league globally.

"The emergence of more active participants in the global transfer market has the potential to accelerate clubs' efforts to establish financially sustainable business models," Calum Ross, assistant director in Deloitte's Sports Business Group, said. — Reuters

Bagnaia breaks lap record to claim Catalunya GP pole



Aprilia Spanish rider Aleix Espargaro (L), Ducati Italian rider Francesco Bagnaia (C) and Aprilia Spanish rider Maverick Vinales compete during the MotoGP sprint race of the Catalunya Moto Grand Prix at the Circuit de Catalunya in Montmelo on the outskirts of Barcelona on Saturday. — AFP

BARCELONA: Championship leader Francesco Bagnaia set a new lap record to claim his sixth pole position of the season for Ducati at the Catalunya Grand Prix in Barcelona on Saturday, with three Aprilia riders finishing behind the Italian.

Bagnaia, who leads Jorge Martin by 62 points in the overall standings, finished top with a time of one minute 38.639 seconds at the Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya.

"This is one of the most important pole positions as Aprilia are so strong," Bagnaia said.

Aprilia's Aleix Espargaro, whose record Bagnaia broke, set the second-fastest time after dominating practice on Friday, while Portugal's Miguel Oliveira (RNF Aprilia) came through the first qualifying session to complete the front row.

"I tried my best but I felt a lot of chattering. I don't know if it was because of the temperature or the low fuel in the tank, but I couldn't quite get where I wanted to go," Espargaro said.

"Anyway, congratulations to (Bagnaia), this is MotoGP, it's tough, and the front row or the first two rows is more than good enough."

Spaniard Maverick Vinales (Aprilia) was fourth, with Pramac Racing duo Martin and Johann Zarco in fifth and sixth.

Yamaha's Fabio Quartararo, the 2021 world champion, did not advance to the second qualifying session after falling over in the gravel. — Reuters



DJOKOVIC FIGHTS BACK FROM TWO SETS DOWN TO REACH US OPEN FINAL 16

NEW YORK: A tenacious Novak Djokovic survived a US Open late night fright battling back from two sets down to tame fellow Serb Laslo Djere 4-6 4-6 6-1 6-1 6-3 on Friday, and move into the fourth round at Flushing Meadows.

On the ropes and reeling Djokovic, as he has done many times before, he snatched victory from the jaws of defeat in front a record crowd inside a breathless Arthur Ashe Stadium court.

It marked the 38th time Djokovic has won a five-setter and kept alive the 36-year-old's quest for a fourth US Open crown that would pull him level with Margaret Court's record haul of 24 Grand Slams.

"I hope you enjoyed the show, it was not so enjoyable for me especially in the first two sets," Djokovic told the crowd. "It was one of the toughest matches I have played here in many years."

Djokovic had looked imperious in his opening two matches surrendering only 11 games in blowout wins over Frenchman Alexandre Muller and Spaniard Bernabe Zapata Miralles but his 32nd seeded countryman proved a far tougher test.

The two Serbs had only clashed once before that in Belgrade last year but there were signs then that Djere was a danger, with the contest needing three sets and two tie-breaks before Djokovic claimed the win.

Djere signalled to Djokovic he was in for more of the same on Friday when he broke the second-seed to start the match and then held his nerve the rest of set for an unexpected and well-earned 1-0 lead.

Facing one of the greatest players of all-time under the bright lights of tennis's biggest stage, a fearless Djere could not be rattled piling on the pressure with another break to go up 4-3 in the second on the way to a 2-0 lead that left Arthur Ashe Stadium stunned.

Djokovic was not without his opportunities, but did not capitalise on his chances until backed into a corner.



I hope you enjoyed the show, it was not so enjoyable for me especially in the first two sets. It was one of the toughest matches I have played here in many years.

NOVAK DJOKOVIC

With the crowd still buzzing Djokovic came out for the third set with an urgency and energy missing in the opening two sets, breaking Djere at the first opportunity and again to go up 4-0 on the way to cutting the deficit to 2-1.

"I did a little pep talk in the mirror," said Djokovic about his bathroom break after the second set. "I kind of laughed at myself because I was agitated and annoyed with the result, I had to kind of force myself to lift myself, to lift the spirits up."

With cracks in Djere's game starting to appear, Djokovic continued to dial up the pressure breaking again to open the fourth set pulling a mighty fist pump from the 36-year-old.

But Djere was not done immediately breaking back, setting the stage for what was a marathon third game that saw Djokovic regain control with yet another break.

Moving in for the kill Djokovic swept the next six games to take the fourth set and a 2-0 lead in the decisive fifth that he would never surrender.

"Once I got the break in the third I thought OK, I have a shot, I have a chance," said Djokovic. "I might as well go after it."

"I started to play a bit more aggressive, started to read his games slightly more than I had in the first two sets and it worked well.

"But trust me, it was nerve wracking all the way till the last shot," he added. — **Reuters**

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OQ Gas Networks’ IPO to be biggest in Oman



MUSCAT: The Capital Market Authority (CMA) is reviewing the prospectus for OQ Gas Networks Company, which is the largest share issuance in the Omani capital market, as approximately RO 212 million will be offered for public subscription, which represents 49 per cent of the company’s capital.

The Authority called on those intending to invest, whether citizens or residents, to prepare for this type of investment by opening an investor account through the Muscat Clearing and Depository Company, which is the body concerned with organising and maintaining shareholders’ records.

The prospectus is investor’s guide towards the investment decision.

It includes the most important information and data regarding the financial position of the proposed company, its expansion vision, and its opportunities

for success, in addition to the challenges it faces and the extent of its ability to compete.

These data are essential for the investor to make the investment decision to subscribe.

By offering shares, OQ Gas Networks Company seeks to benefit from the financing advantages offered by the capital market for exiting and financing its projects and investment activities.

The offering of shares is considered one of the effective investment tools in the Omani market after the adoption of the Securities Law, which regulated the securities market in a way that achieves effective protection for the dealing parties.

It was characterised by sufficient flexibility to attract investment initiatives from issuers and owners of local and foreign capital and employ them in different investment sectors. — **ONA**

Greater Salalah master-plan envisions new city at Al Dahariz

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 2

A new sustainable city is planned for development east of Al Dahariz as part of the Greater Salalah master-plan in Dhofar Governorate. Brief insights into this new project were shared last week during a meeting of officials from the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning (MoHUP) and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI).

The meeting was attended by His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki al Said, Governor of Dhofar, Dr Khalfan bin Said al Shueili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning, and other officials.

The new city will have a length of 5 km and will be home to about 30,000 to 40,000 inhabitants. It will have six hotel facilities with a total of 1,100 rooms, all of which will be located in the commercial heart of the city and in front of the marina.

The city will be designed to be sustainable in a number of ways. It will use renewable energy sources, such as solar and wind power. It will also have a rainwater harvesting system and



a waste water treatment plant. The buildings in the city will be designed to be energy efficient and to use recycled materials.

The development of the sustainable city east of Al-Dahariz is part of Oman’s Vision 2040, which aims to make the country a more sustainable and prosperous nation. In addition to the sustainable city east of Al-Dahariz, Oman is also developing other sustainable cities.

One such city is the Yiti Sustainable City, which is located in Muscat. The Yiti Sustainable City is set to be the

largest operational sustainable community in the world. It will use a variety of sustainable technologies, such as solar power, rainwater harvesting, and waste water treatment.

The development of sustainable cities is an important part of Oman’s efforts to reduce its environmental impact and to improve the quality of life for its citizens. The sustainable cities that are being built in Oman are setting an example for other countries and are helping to make the world a more sustainable place.

The Greater Salalah project is

a major economic driver for the region and will create jobs and opportunities for the people of Dhofar.

The MoHUP gave a presentation on the project, outlining the goals of the project, which are to: Accommodate the growing population density; Attract investment; Boost the economy; Improve the quality of services; and Enhance the infrastructure and transportation system of the governorate. Officials later discussed the details of the project, such as the land use, transportation, and housing.



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Hydrom calls global energy firms for Round 2 public auction for green hydrogen production

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, SEPT 2

Hydrom, a subsidiary of state-owned Energy Development Oman, is calling global energy companies to participate in Round 2 public auction for the development of green hydrogen production in Dhofar Governorate.

The Round 2 public auction, officially launched last June, presents a lucrative opportunity for companies seeking to invest in sustainable energy projects.

According to Hydrom, the Round 2 Public Auction offers up to three prime blocks, ranging in size from 340 km2 to 400 km2, exclusively dedicated to green hydrogen production.

Hydrom aims to leverage Dhofar's abundant renewable energy resources, including wind and solar power, to establish a robust green hydrogen industry in the country.

Applicants for the auction will undergo a comprehensive evaluation process conducted in three stages to ensure that only capable and committed participants with strong financial, development, and operating capabilities are eligible for the competitive bidding process.

The first stage, known as the Minimum Qualification Criteria, establishes the minimum requirements that applicants must meet to demonstrate their capability and commitment.

These criteria are designed to ensure that participants



possess the necessary financial resources, development expertise, and operational capacities to successfully undertake green hydrogen projects in Dhofar.

The second stage, termed the Minimum Bid Criteria, sets forth the minimum requirements aligning project proposals with the strategic objectives of Oman's foray into the green hydrogen

value chain. Only bids that meet these requirements will proceed to the bid evaluation stage.

The final stage of the evaluation process is the Evaluation Framework, which provides a structured and comparative method for assessing bids.

This framework adheres to the principles of openness, equal opportunity, equality, and freedom

of competition. The evaluation process will be conducted with utmost transparency, ensuring a fair and level playing field for all participants.

Interested companies can visit Hydrom's official website at <http://hydrom.om> to access detailed information about the auction, including the specific requirements and guidelines.

THE ROUND 2 PUBLIC AUCTION OFFERS UP TO THREE PRIME BLOCKS, RANGING IN SIZE FROM 340 KM2 TO 400 KM2, EXCLUSIVELY DEDICATED TO GREEN HYDROGEN PRODUCTION.

To participate, companies must submit their Statements of Qualification (SOQ) by the deadline of October 8, 2023.

Last June, Hydrom held a qualification process followed by an investor roadshow, to provide comprehensive insights into the project and address potential queries from participants.

The subsequent phase of the auction will commence this September 2023 with the release of the Request for Proposal (RFP) documents.

This will provide qualified bidders with the necessary information to develop their proposals for green hydrogen projects in Dhofar.

The bid submission deadline is set for January 2024, allowing participants ample time to prepare and submit their proposals. The winners of the second round of the auction will be announced by the end of Q1 2024.

Successful bidders will be granted the opportunity to develop and operate green hydrogen projects within the allocated blocks.

This significant development will not only boost Oman's renewable energy sector but also contribute to the country's efforts in reducing carbon emissions and

achieving sustainability goals.

To ensure transparency and fairness throughout the auction process, applicants will be required to register on an online auction platform.

Additionally, participants will be requested to sign a Confidentiality Undertaking, safeguarding the sensitive information shared during the auction. It is important to note that a registration fee will be applicable to obtain the Request for Qualification (RFQ) documents.

Qualified bidders, after successfully completing the qualification round, will be required to pay a fee to obtain the Request for Proposal (RFP) documents. Subsequently, a fee for each bid to be submitted will also be applicable.

These fees are intended to cover the administrative costs associated with the auction process.

Hydrom recognises the importance of a robust evaluation process to select the most qualified and suitable bidders for the green hydrogen projects in Dhofar.

By implementing a comprehensive evaluation framework, the company aims to ensure that the chosen projects possess the necessary expertise, financial stability, and strategic alignment to drive the growth of the green hydrogen sector in Oman effectively.

For more information about the auction, interested parties are encouraged to visit Hydrom's website.

Navigating the crypto accounting landscape



JAMES RAVI

While the global standard-setters of financial reporting are groping with the daunting task of setting rules for accounting of crypto assets, the Digital Assets Working Group of the AICPA (American Institute of Certified Public Accountants) has released guidelines for accounting and reporting of digital assets such as cryptocurrencies.

Although non-authoritative, this practice aid provides a great deal of help to the preparers of financial statements in the absence of any other authoritative guideline.

Crypto asset is not...

Crypto assets do not meet the definition of cash or cash equivalents as they are not considered legal tender. They are not backed by sovereign governments and have traditionally experienced significant price volatility.

Although these crypto assets may be held for sale in the ordinary course of business, they are not tangible and they may not

meet the definition of inventory. Crypto assets are not financial instruments as they are not cash or an ownership interest in an entity and do not represent a contractual right to receive cash or another financial instrument.

Crypto asset is...

The term crypto asset is specific to the type of digital assets that function as a medium of exchange and must have all the characteristics, such as, they are not issued by a jurisdictional authority, they do not give rise to a contract between the holder and another party, they are not considered a security under the Securities Act of 1933 nor the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 of the USA.

For the purposes of these guidelines, digital assets are defined broadly as digital records that are made using cryptography for verification and security purposes, on a distributed ledger, referred to as a blockchain.

The distributed ledger keeps a record of all transactions on a blockchain network. Digital assets, as defined herein, may be characterised by their ability to be used for a variety of purposes, including as a medium of exchange, as a representation to provide or access goods or services, or as a financing vehicle, such as a security, among other uses.

Recognition and measurement

Crypto assets will be recognised as intangible assets and the useful life of these assets should be



considered indefinite. The term indefinite does not mean infinite or indeterminate. The useful life of an intangible asset is indefinite if that life extends beyond the foreseeable horizon i.e., there is no foreseeable limit on the period of time over which the asset is expected to contribute to the cashflows of the reporting entity.

If there is no inherent limit imposed on the useful life of the crypto asset to the entity, the crypto asset would be classified as an indefinite-lived intangible asset.

As intangible assets, these crypto assets purchased for cash would initially be measured at cost. The entity would measure the noncash consideration, if any, of the cost at its estimated fair value on the date of purchase.

Subsequent accounting

An indefinite-lived intangible asset is initially measured at cost and is not subject to amortisation. Rather, it should be tested for impairment annually. Likewise, all digital and crypto assets are tested for impairment subsequently.

Judgment may be required to identify whether an event has occurred that would require performing an impairment assessment. When an identical digital asset is bought and sold at a price below the entity's current carrying value, this will often serve as an indicator that impairment has more likely than not occurred.

If the entity concludes that the fair value of the digital asset is less than its carrying amount, an impairment loss should be recorded in the profit or loss.

An important point to note in this guideline is this, once an

impairment loss is recognised for a digital asset, subsequent reversal of previously recorded impairment loss is prohibited. This provision applies even if the fair value of the digital asset has increased.

Sale and derecognition of digital assets

When digital assets are sold, entities should track the cost (or subsequent carrying value) of units of digital assets they obtain at different times and use this value for each unit of digital assets upon derecognition when they sell or exchange.

Digital assets typically represent fungible units that can be subdivided into smaller fractional units. It may not be possible to identify which specific units of digital assets were sold or transferred in certain cases.

An entity may apply the guidance in this circumstance by developing a reasonable and rational methodology for identifying which digital assets were sold and applying it consistently.

For example, one reasonable and rational approach could be using the first-in, first-out method.

Third-party wallet service

Digital assets like any other asset, should be recognised on the financial statements of the entity that controls the asset. The fact that crypto assets are held or stored in wallets hosted by third parties, raises an important question as to the control of that asset.

Determining which entity – the depositor or the custodian – has control of the digital asset should be based on the specific facts and circumstances of the agreement between them and the applicable laws and regulations.

In this regard, a legal analysis may be necessary to evaluate certain aspects of the agreement, including legal ownership.

This paper also covers other areas in the context of digital assets like the investment entity, Stablecoin, derivatives, embedded derivatives, etc.

This practice aid is based on existing professional literature and the experience of members of the Digital Assets Working Group and represents the non-authoritative views of the staff of AICPA. *(The author is Director at Crowe Oman)*



Strong oil prices contribute to surge in real estate trading



NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 2

Buoyant international oil prices have spurred a significant uptick in real estate trading in the Sultanate of Oman, with transactions totalling RO 1.626 billion at the end of July 2023, up from RO 1.392 billion a year earlier, representing an increase of 16.8 per cent.

This impressive surge in real estate trading comes against a backdrop of strong oil price trends. According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the average price of Omani crude averaged \$74.9 per barrel in July 2023, a key factor that has contributed to the growth in Oman's real estate sector, say market experts.

Judit Lestak, Owner of Vista Real Estate, said increasing oil prices have the potential to significantly benefit Oman's economy by fostering optimism for the country's future prospects, including growth in the real estate sector.

Oman's political stability enhances its appeal as a safe investment destination, attracting large investments, notably in projects like the Dar Global Sustainable City in Muscat, and so on, which further contribute to its economic development.

Furthermore, statistics from the NCSI revealed that the fees collected for all legal transactions amounted to RO 38.3 million, marking a 10.9 per cent increase compared to the end of July 2022.

However, the trading

THE AVERAGE PRICE OF OMANI CRUDE AVERAGED \$74.9 PER BARREL IN JULY 2023, A KEY FACTOR THAT HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE GROWTH IN OMAN'S REAL ESTATE SECTOR

value of sales contracts experienced a decrease in value by 10 per cent, reaching RO 619 million for 38,440 sales contracts, despite a 4.2 per cent decrease in the number of contracts.

Moreover, the trading value of mortgage contracts experienced a substantial increase of 44.1 per cent, registering RO 1.001 billion for 14,029 contracts, indicating strong activity in the mortgage sector.

Furthermore, the number of swap contracts reached 840 contracts with a value of RO 5.9 million, highlighting diverse financial instruments in the real estate market.

As for property deed issuances, by the end of last July, approximately 137,850 property deeds were issued, representing an increase of 4.9 per cent.

Notably, the number of property deeds issued to GCC nationals reached 751 properties, marking a remarkable increase of 91.6 per cent.

These figures underscore the growing appeal of Omani real estate to international investors and GCC citizens alike. Oman's real estate market has recently expanded, as seen by a large rise in trade value, which is supported by a dynamic legal and financial ecosystem.

Pact signed to manufacture armoured vehicles in Duqm

DUQM: Karwa Motors Company — one of the companies affiliated with the Oman Investment Authority — signed a cooperation and manufacturing services agreement with The Armored Group (TAG) Duqm Co, through which it aims to transfer the manufacturing operations of armoured vehicles to Karwa Motors in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD).

Dr Ibrahim bin Ali al Balushi, CEO of Karwa Motors, confirmed in a statement to the Oman News Agency (ONA) that the agreement comes within the framework of the company's strategy to diversify production lines and benefit from the manufacturing capabilities available in it.

He added that the agreement reflects the company's commitment to strengthening the local industry, expanding into regional and international markets, and stimulating commercial movement in SEZAD.

Tariq al Humaidani, CEO of TAG Duqm praised the role played by Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) in attracting investments to the region and providing means for its success and continuity.

He also praised the role of the Oman Investment Authority and Mowasalat Qatar for their support of Karwa Motors to implement its strategy aimed at strengthening the vehicle manufacturing sector in the Sultanate of Oman and the region, stressing that this support will have a significant positive impact on the level of localisation of this industry.

Al Humaidani said that the



successes achieved by Karwa Motors over the past two years encouraged the company to transfer vehicle manufacturing to it, expecting that the agreement will contribute to enhancing the performance of the two companies and achieving their aspirations and goals in enhancing investments in the special economic zone in Duqm and maximising the gains achieved for investors in both companies.

Karwa Motors is a joint venture between the State of Qatar, represented by the national transport company Qatar Transport, with a 70 per cent share, and the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Oman Investment Authority, with a 30 per cent share.

According to the agreement, Karwa Motors will allocate a new production line to produce armoured vehicles, and the

new line will benefit from the company's capabilities and equipment available to it.

Karwa Motors' bus assembly plant has a capacity to manufacture about 600 buses annually.

The factory began production in 2021, focusing in its first phase on rolling out buses for the Qatar World Cup 2022. The company produces a variety of city buses, school buses, and long-distance buses and luxury buses.

The company's factory was built on an area of 600,000 square metres in the SEZAD. It is equipped with the latest technologies, and includes various production workshops for cutting, welding, and dyeing, assembling components and materials, equipment, and engines, in addition to central maintenance workshops, warehouses, gas station, administration building and other facilities. — ONA

Major international firms keen to procure Omani LNG

MUSCAT: Oman LNG Company succeeded in marketing its production beyond 2024, and was able to attract investors from new markets from the Middle East, East Asia and Europe, as a result of the production efficiency of its plant in the Wilayat of Sur, which includes three trains for liquefying natural gas, in addition to investors' confidence in the company's operations in this field.

Hamad bin Mohammed al Numani (pictured), CEO of



Oman LNG, said: "The total number of binding term sheets signed by the company since the beginning of this year has reached 14 with a number of major

international companies from Japan, Thailand, China to Turkiye and Germany. The company is committed to exporting about 10.4 million metric tonnes of LNG starting in 2025.

Al Numani said to Oman News Agency (ONA) that these agreements come within the framework of the company's endeavour to consolidate the Sultanate of Oman's position as a reliable source of energy, increase growth opportunities, benefit

from the economic opportunities of global energy markets and consolidate strategic partnerships with various energy companies.

He added: "These agreements confirm the company's commitment to supporting the national economy by finding new markets to supply liquefied natural gas from the Sultanate of Oman, and it looks forward to strengthening its relations with the public and private sectors."

— ONA

Private sector invited to develop 4 Oman Post sites

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 2

Asyad Group, Oman's global integrated logistics provider, is offering four land plots belonging to its wholly-owned subsidiary Oman Post for private investment and redevelopment into mixed-use commercial or real estate complexes.

The four sites — distributed across Muscat and Al Buraimi governorates — are the latest in a series of land plots housing post offices that are identified for private investment under the government's Public-Private-Partnership (PPP) framework.

Under this arrangement,

successful private developers are granted a concession from the Omani government, represented by the Ministry of Finance, to develop the land plot on a Design, Build, Finance, Operate and Transfer basis, typically against a 25-year usufruct agreement.

In return, the developer commits to constructing a post office complex along with other related facilities per specs stipulated by the government.

For its part, the developer can invest in mixed-use commercial facilities that can be offered on lease or rent with the objective of recouping its initial investment and other upfront costs.

According to Asyad Group,



three of the sites are located in Muscat Governorate. It includes a 521m2 site at Sabbarah in the commercial area of Souq Al Seeb in the Wilayat of Al Seeb. Also on offer is a 1,593m2 plot in Hay Al Mina located on the main road

leading to Mina Sultan Qaboos and close to Muttrah Souq.

In the Wilayat of Qurayat, Asyad has identified a 2,029m2 plot at Shahbari near Muscat Municipality's Qurayat Office. First unveiled in 2018, Asyad

Group's initiative has garnered significant success in tapping private sector investment in the development of land holdings belonging to Oman Post under the PPP model.

The Group and its subsidiaries hold sizable land banks in different parts of the country, some of which are located in prime locations.

By roping in private investment, wholly state-owned Asyad Group — part of Oman Investment Authority (OIA) — says it is keen to generate an additional source of revenue from the commercial development of its properties, thereby reducing its dependence on the Ministry of Finance (MoF).

Under the DBFOT model,

the selected developer is granted sub-usufruct rights to invest in a mixed use development that includes commercial and residential components, hotels, public facilities, and retail shops, offices and medical centres.

The investor will also be responsible for the master planning, design, build, finance, operation and maintenance of the entire development for a period of 25 years, upon the completion of which, all of the assets will transfer to Oman Post.

The agreement provides for redeveloping existing Oman Post locations into modern post offices complemented by quality retail outlets.

A peek into the stock research process



STEFANO VIRGILLI
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The writer is a member
of the International Press
Association

In today’s article, we’re going to take you behind the scenes and explore the intricate process of researching and analysing stocks for investment.

We’ll provide a high-level overview of the steps involved and delve into the strategies used, though it’s important to note that this is just one approach among many.

Screening for ideas

The journey begins with screening for potential investment opportunities. This stage involves filtering stocks based on specific criteria.

While it’s not a rigid process, some common factors to consider include revenue growth, profitability, and debt levels. The aim is to create a shortlist of companies worth investigating further.

Understanding the business

Once a company makes it to the shortlist, the next step is to

deeply understand its operations. This involves examining the company’s segments, revenue sources, geographical presence, and key performance indicators (KPIs).

It’s crucial to grasp the nature of the business, its strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (SWOT analysis), and whether it operates within your circle of competence.

Sources of information for this stage include annual reports, quarterly reports, investor presentations, 8K filings, commercial resources, recent tweets, customer reviews, news media articles and more.

Analysing the finances

Understanding a company’s financial health is paramount. This involves evaluating factors such as debt levels, solvency, growth potential, profitability, and liquidity. Financial statements, including the income statement, balance sheet, and cash

flow statement, provide essential insights.

Additionally, calculating growth rates, margins, and ratios helps gauge the company’s financial performance.

Comparing the company to its peers in the industry helps assess its competitive position. It’s also crucial to perform forensic analysis to detect any accounting irregularities or red flags.

Examining the strategy

Investors must assess the company’s strategic plan for the future.

This involves studying the management’s priorities, capital expenditure plans, and financing strategies. Evaluating the feasibility, risks, and track record of the company’s strategies is crucial.

A history of successful execution is often a positive sign. Information about the company’s strategy can be found in regulatory filings, investor

presentations, earnings call transcripts, and industry research.

Valuation

Determining whether a stock is attractively priced is a pivotal step. Two common valuation methods are relative valuation and absolute valuation. Relative valuation involves comparing multiples like price-to-earnings (P/E) ratios with historical averages and peer companies.

Absolute valuation, such as discounted cash flow (DCF) analysis, forecasts future cash flows to determine the intrinsic value of the stock.

Additionally, considering current events, market sentiment, and technical factors can help make an informed decision.

Review and finalise

The final step involves reviewing and finalising research notes for future reference. This includes addressing any questions or gaps in information, seeking opposing viewpoints, and

building a checklist of critical factors to consider.

Having organised notes aids in monitoring the stock’s performance and responding to developments effectively.

Investment research is a multifaceted and continuous process that requires a combination of qualitative and quantitative analysis. I keep a template on Google Sheet that I use for each research. While this article provides a high-level overview, it’s essential to note that each investor may have their unique approach.

Successful investing demands discipline, patience, and a commitment to staying informed about the companies in your portfolio.

Remember, investing involves risks, and it’s wise to seek professional advice or consider passive investment strategies unless you’re passionate about researching stocks.

IT’S CRUCIAL TO GRASP THE NATURE OF THE BUSINESS, ITS STRENGTHS, WEAKNESSES, OPPORTUNITIES, AND THREATS (SWOT ANALYSIS), AND WHETHER IT OPERATES WITHIN YOUR CIRCLE OF COMPETENCE.

Omani insurance industry: Opportunities and challenges (Part II)

ENVIRONMENT, RISK MANAGEMENT & INSURANCE PRODUCTS



MURTADHA M J
IBRAHIM AL JAMALANI

The writer is a successful
entrepreneur & insurance
expert

The economy in the Sultanate of Oman, as indeed that of the other GCC countries, is dominated by the national government. As a result, the insurance industry tends to get a substantial part of its business from the government and semi-government entities in line with the national structure of the economy.

Source of business transactions are Direct Selling by the insurance companies, or / and through insurance agents, Bancassurance, insurance brokers, and Electronic Channels (e-commerce).

Analysts can observe from the Insurance Market Index Editions Years 2022, 2021 & 2020 evidence of unbalanced insurance business portfolios represent big challenges to the insurance industry.

Private insurers need to suitably amp up their risk management capabilities going forward. When they insure businesses and their operations, they need to have the requisite knowledge and capabilities to identify and assess the risks their clients face and accordingly provide them with insurance coverage.

Risk management is a discipline that insurance firms must be conversant with. Significantly, major reinsurance companies are averse to offering competitive business terms and conditions to the markets due to two key factors: adverse claims experience and low retention of risk.

**INSURANCE PRODUCTS
Fisher Community Protection**

The fisher community at the heart of one of the Sultanate of Oman’s biggest economic sectors will benefit from tailor-made insurance coverage to secure them, their equipment and

RISK MANAGEMENT IS A DISCIPLINE THAT INSURANCE FIRMS MUST BE CONVERSANT WITH. SIGNIFICANTLY, MAJOR REINSURANCE COMPANIES ARE AVERSE TO OFFERING COMPETITIVE BUSINESS TERMS AND CONDITIONS TO THE MARKETS DUE TO TWO KEY FACTORS: ADVERSE CLAIMS EXPERIENCE AND LOW RETENTION OF RISK.



assets, from an array of perils when operating out at sea.

The customised insurance policy will bring an estimated 25,000 Omani-owned fishing boats (including traditional boats and dhows) within the protective ambit of Article 17 of the Law of the Protection of Living Aquatic Resources promulgated by Royal Decree 20/2019.

Its coverage encompasses 25 fisheries ports and jetties distributed across the country’s coastline and in coastal waters extending from Musandam in the north to Dhofar in the south.

We at Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) assembled a working team with representatives from the Capital Market Authority; Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and

Water Resources; Ministry of Transport, Communications & Information Technology, Royal Oman Police (Coast Guard), and Central Bank of Oman, among other agencies, to design a customised and tailor-made insurance policy and operational manuals for use by the Oman Fishermen Association.

I was heading the Finance & Insurance Committee at Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) for period 2018-2022 and was also Head of the Working Team of the project responsible for implementing the Fishing Boats Insurance Protection Recommendations.

The policy’s impending roll-out – 30 years since it was first mandated under the Sultanate of Oman’s Maritime Law

promulgated by Royal Decree 35/81 on April 15, 1981 – is the culmination of a concerted, multi-year effort involving multiple government agencies, regulatory bodies and other stakeholders.

The Capital Market Authority – the regulator of the insurance sector – has approved this innovative approach to the implementation of a minimum insurance standardised tailor-made Insurance Policy for Fishing Boats and Vessels in the Sultanate of Oman.

It’s anticipated and expected to impart new impetus to the growth of the traditional fishing sector, which contributes the bulk of fresh fish harvests annually.

With insurance coverage, local

banks will be more amenable to providing funding support to fishermen for their purchases of new boats and equipment.

Additionally, more young Omanis will be encouraged to consider fishing-based livelihoods once lending by banks is less cumbersome.

With a view to shaping a market that is attractive to the insurance and reinsurance industry, the working team decided to add yachts and other vessels to the scope of the customised insurance policy, as well as procedures for registering such boats and vessels.

This integration contributed to competitively-priced premiums, thus meeting a key prerequisite for the overall initiative’s success.

(To be continued...)

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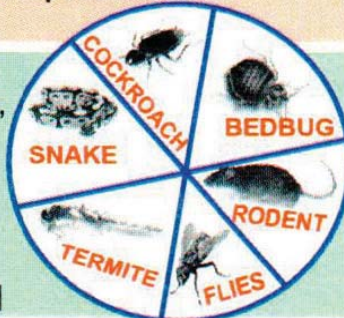
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Contact: 97541038, email: bindyabaalan@gmail.com

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Contact: 94562018 shalusebastianjmj@gmail.com

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FARMING

A picture shows Moscato grapes in a vineyard in the Monferrato countryside in Alice Bel Colle, near Alessandria, northwestern Italy. —AFP



SCIENCE

The 'Blue Moon' rises over Doha city. — AFP



FILM

Chinese actress Shu Qi poses on the red carpet before the opening ceremony of the 80th International Venice Film Festival at Venice Lido.— AFP



FASHION

New Zealand director Jane Campion poses on the red carpet before the opening ceremony of the 80th International Venice Film Festival at Venice Lido.— AFP



LIFESTYLE

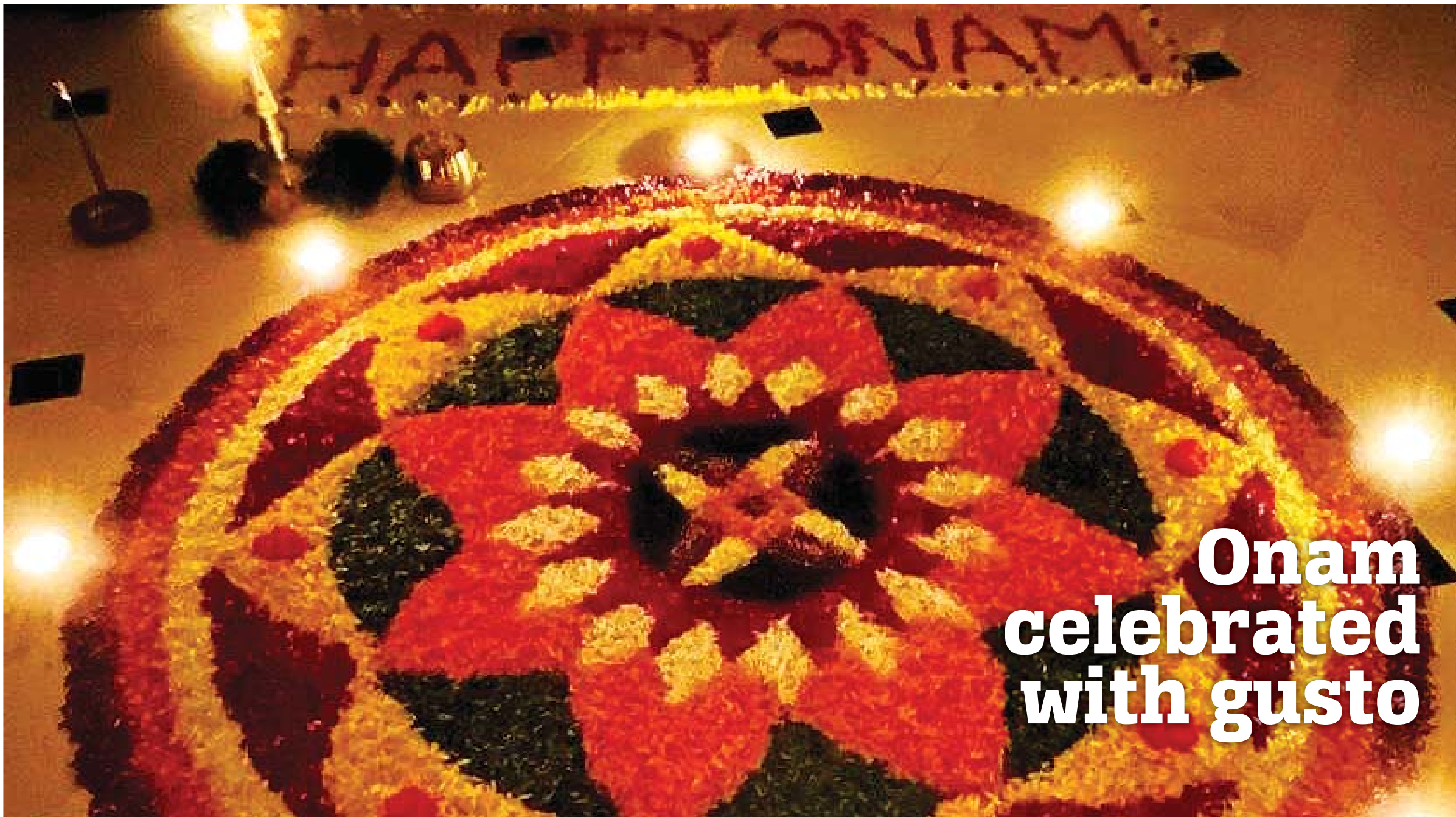
Children harvest onions in the village of al-Jaberab west of Shindi in Sudan — AFP



art & life

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Onam celebrated with gusto

KABEER YOUSUF
PHOTO BY SHAFEEH VK

Indian expatriates in Oman, predominantly those from the south, gathered at various hotels of the Sultanate of Oman, celebrating the harvest festival — Onam — in the past few days which will continue over the coming weekends.

They celebrated Thiruvonam on Tuesday but celebrations were on since a week ago which ensured participation of all in all the activities of the festival fervour.

Onam is usually celebrated with traditional floral decorations on the floor, elaborate feast and people wearing the authentic golden threaded sarees and dhottis.

Various hotels and restaurants have been busy offering sadya packages and vied to add the number of side dishes anything from 4 to 40 around the plantain leaf on which food is served.

All eateries have been abuzz with people celebrating Onam while many families are celebrating Onam with their close relatives with traditional floral carpet and delicious meals at homes cherishing the childhood memories.

"Onam brings in nostalgic vibes and it is a passage to the past and



our own childhood. Luckily, we are able to celebrate Onam in Oman much better and larger in size than we used to do back home, thanks to the country and the ruler of Oman," said Jagajith Prabhakaran, MD of Cochin Gold who held a massive Onam celebration for his friends and staff members.

A delicious 'sadya', an extensive lunch with scores of side dishes, is served on a banana leaf platter, from forenoon until

evening and is arranged on a pre-booking basis.

Various associations and other NGOs are organising festivities and cultural celebrations which culminate in the delicious 'Onam Sadya', which is also a treat made of vegetables that accompany traditional rice on the plantain leaf.

History of Onam

Onam, also known as the 'Harvest Festival of Kerala', is celebrated on the tenth day of the



Malayalam month 'Chingam' which is called 'Thiruvonam', and is a combination of myths, folklore and traditions. Onam is one of the great occasions where Malayalis rejoice together and reaffirm the values of harmony and coexistence.

Onam, for those who celebrate, brings in memories in abundance and most of them are connected to childhood days. As the myth aptly indicates an era of sweet memories, people rejoice those days of their days with their dear and near ones.

Omanis join their expat friends in celebrations: Omani friends of those who celebrate Onam in Oman, joined their friends in their joy and celebrations and made Onam theirs too with active participation in floral decorations and enjoyed a sumptuous feast called 'Sadya' while participating in the fun-filled energising activities that followed.

The Omani friends, along with their families make it a point to join their expat fraternity in celebrating the feast festival at the hotels as well as their homes and share the joy and camaraderie.



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Stolen at birth: Chilean kidnapped during dictatorship meets mother after 42 years

A 42-YEAR-OLD LAWYER who was stolen at birth during the rule of Chilean dictator Augusto Pinochet and raised in the United States has travelled thousands of miles to South America to meet his biological mother for the first time. "She didn't know about me because they took me at birth and told her I was dead," Jimmy Lippert Thyden said in a TikTok video while on the plane to meet his mother for the first time. "When she asked for my body, they told her they had disposed of it." "So we've never held each other, we've never hugged." Walking down a street in mother's hometown of Valdivia some 740km (460 miles) south of the Chilean capital, with a bouquet of flowers in hand, Lippert Thyden tearfully hugged Maria Angelica Gonzalez, his biological mother, and told her he loved her. He travelled to Chile with his wife and two daughters, who

met their grandmother for the first time. Lippert Thyden reconnected with his family thanks to a DNA tracing via MyHeritage.com and Nos Buscamos, a Chilean non-governmental organization which helps reconnect people separated during the 17-year dictatorship. Thousands of people were disappeared and tens of thousands tortured during Pinochet's rule, which ended in 1990. Nos Buscamos founder Constanza del Rio created the organisation after failing to find information about her own biological family. The NGO says it has managed to help some 400 people reconnect to their family. "This case is one of hundreds or thousands of cases of child trafficking during the dictatorship and democracy," del Rio said. "These children were declared as dead and sold to foreigners for \$10,000 or \$15,000."

—Reuters



SCIENCES

Ancient priest's remains are a first-of-a-kind find for Peru team



A GROUP OF JAPANESE and Peruvian archaeologists have discovered the 3,000-year-old tomb of a priest alongside ceramic offerings in northern Peru.

"We have recently discovered the tomb of a 3,000-year-old figure at the Pacopampa archaeological site," in the Cajamarca region, 900 kilometers (560 miles) north of Lima, archaeologist Juan Pablo Villanueva said on Saturday.

"He is one of the first priests in the Andes to have a series of offerings," the researcher said, adding that "the funerary context is intact."

The body, its lower extremities partially flexed, was oriented from south to north. On the western side of the tomb were small spherical ceramic bowls, a carved bone spatula and other offerings.

Two seals were also found, one with designs of an anthropomorphic face and the other with that of a jaguar.

The body and the offerings were covered by at least six layers of ash and earth. The tomb is circular, three meters in diameter and one meter deep (10 feet by 3.3 feet).

- Powerful leaders -

"The find is extremely important because he is one of the first priests to begin to control the temples in the country's

northern Andes," Japanese archaeologist Yuji Seki, who has been working at the site for 18 years, said.

Researchers estimate that the priest lived around 1,000 BC.

Seki said the find helped demonstrate that even that long ago, "powerful leaders had appeared in the Andes." In September 2022, the same group of archaeologists had discovered the tomb, more than 3,000 years old, of a man they called the "Priest of the Pututos," along with musical instruments made of seashells.

Pututos or pututus are conch-like shells that the inhabitants of ancient Peru could use to make trumpet-like sounds.

The Pacopampa site, at an altitude of 2,500 meters (8,200 feet), includes nine monumental ceremonial buildings of carved and polished stone.

Other burials found in the same site include those of the "Lady of Pacopampa," found in 2009, and of two "Jaguar Serpent priests," discovered in 2015.

They are estimated to date from around 700 to 600 years BC.

Archaeologists from the National Museum of Ethnology in Japan and from Peru's National University of San Marcos participate in the work in Pacopampa—**AFP**

HEALTH

Blood test for Parkinson's disease promising in early study

AN EXPERIMENTAL BLOOD test that detected Parkinson's disease in a preliminary study could become the first specific tool for diagnosing the devastating neurodegenerative condition, researchers said on Wednesday.

The test, which looks for cell damage associated with the disease, is years away from being commercially available. If its reliability is confirmed in future trials, the test would allow doctors to diagnose the condition earlier and start therapies sooner, before nervous system damage worsens, the researchers said.

"Currently, Parkinson's disease is diagnosed largely based on symptoms, when patients already have significant neurological damage," said study leader Laurie Sanders of Duke School of Medicine in Durham, North Carolina.

The new blood test measures DNA damage in mitochondria, the structures inside cells that generate energy for cellular functions. Mitochondrial DNA damage is known to be associated with Parkinson's disease.

The test showed greater damage in blood cells from patients with Parkinson's compared to people without the disease, researchers reported in Science Translational Medicine.



It also found elevated DNA damage in people with a genetic mutation called LRRK2 that increases the risk for Parkinson's disease, even in the absence of symptoms, they said.

Presently, drugs for Parkinson's disease only help control symptoms. Sanders said she hopes that along with diagnosing Parkinson's, the new test will help identify drugs that can reverse or halt mitochondrial DNA damage and the disease process, as well as patients who could benefit from those drugs.

Several companies including Abcam and

Biogen with partner Denali Therapeutics are testing such experimental treatments.

"A new blood-based diagnostic test would be a major advancement for Parkinson's disease, which afflicts 10 million people worldwide and is the second most common neurodegenerative disease after Alzheimer's," the researchers said.

Going forward, the researchers plan to test the diagnostic in samples from high-risk individuals who have not yet developed symptoms—**Reuters**

ENVIRONMENT

Japan's century of efforts to tame earthquakes

TAKASHI HOSODA WAS in a Tokyo skyscraper when the 9.0 magnitude quake struck on March 11, 2011, but the trained architect was "not particularly worried" as modern Japanese buildings are designed to protect their occupants.

A century after Tokyo was destroyed in the Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923, the Japanese capital today bears no resemblance to the city levelled by that 7.9 tremor, which killed 105,000 people.

The low-rise, largely wooden city that was destroyed a second time by US firebombing during World War II has been replaced by a soaring megalopolis where reinforced concrete is king.

The September 1, 1923, disaster marked "the dawn of seismic design of structures in Japan", said Yoshiaki Nakano, an earthquake engineering expert from the National Research Institute for Earth Sciences and Disaster Resilience (NIED).

The following year Japan introduced its first building code for earthquake-resistant construction.

These standards have been constantly expanded since then, drawing on lessons from other major tremors in the archipelago, which accounts for around 10 per cent of the world's earthquakes.

Japan's seismic building code is one of the most stringent in the world, Nakano told AFP.

"Basically, the Japanese building requires a relatively higher strength" than elsewhere, he said, stressing the importance of meticulous monitoring of compliance.

"The system to supervise and check the design and the construction on-site is a very key factor to ensure the quality of the structure, the performance of the building during earthquakes," he said.

The 2011 earthquake triggered a deadly tsunami along the northeast coast but in Tokyo the damage was limited: high-rise towers oscillated alarmingly for several minutes but did not topple.

SKYSCRAPER SHOCK ABSORBERS

Early basic reinforced structures have been adapted with more sophisticated seismic safety measures found in modern towers.

Massive soft rubber cushions are installed under the foundations to isolate them from ground vibrations; shock absorbers are distributed throughout the floors; and some even have pendulums weighing several hundred tonnes installed at the top to counteract the movement of the building during a quake.

Built in 2014 and rising 247 metres (810 feet) above the city, the Toranomon Hills Mori



Tower is fitted with such seismic anti-vibration systems, including 516 oil dampers, each comprising a thick cylinder 1.7 metres long.

"It stretches and shrinks repeatedly in case of an earthquake. It then starts getting warm, which means the energy of the quake transforms into heat and gets released," Kai Toyama, a structural engineering official at real estate giant Mori Building, told AFP.

"As a result, the tremor of the whole building can be controlled."

After the Kobe earthquake in 1995 left more than 6,000 dead, emphasis was also placed on strengthening earthquake resistance standards for new wooden houses and upgrading older buildings dating from before the last major overhaul of the building code in 1981.

The Great Kanto Earthquake of 1923 was also "a wake-up call to Japan", Nakano noted. "Not only the engineers but also for people."

Since 1960, Japan has marked September 1 as national Disaster Prevention Day.

Every year on that day, countless schoolchildren, employees and civil servants — including the entire government — carry out simulation exercises in preparation for a major earthquake.

In Japan, many people stock emergency supplies at home, as do businesses and local governments. As of April 1, 2023, local authorities in Tokyo have stockpiled 9.5 million instant meals (comprising rice, noodles and biscuits) in about 400 warehouses.

STILL VULNERABLE

These precautionary measures were intensified after the 2011 earthquake, which caused huge traffic jams in Tokyo and the suspension of public transport, preventing millions of people from returning home, said Hosoda, now head of disaster management at Mori Building.

Despite all these efforts, some experts say Tokyo remains vulnerable to earthquakes, and even more to other natural dis-

asters such as floods.

The eastern districts of the capital are built on unstable and flood-prone soils, and there are still concentrations of old wooden dwellings attached to each other.

Post-war rebuilding of Tokyo was "anarchic" and "prioritised economic development and not the construction of a resilient city", seismologist Masayuki Takemura lamented during a recent press conference.

He also pointed to an "excessive concentration of skyscrapers" and the construction of residential areas on artificial islands, increasing their risk of isolation in the event of a natural disaster.

And experts say there is a 70 per cent chance of a major earthquake hitting Tokyo within the next 30 years — **AFP**



Basta! Let Italians play Italians in movies, actor says

ONE OF ITALY'S MOST famous actors, Pierfrancesco Favino, on Wednesday said Italian actors should be given a chance to play Italian roles in big international movies.

He didn't mention any names but his plea came just a day before "Ferrari" was due to debut at the Venice Film Festival, with US actor Adam Driver playing Italian car-maker Enzo Ferrari and Spain's



Penelope Cruz playing his wife. Two years ago, Driver played another well-known Italian, Maurizio Gucci, in Ridley Scott's "House of Gucci." Other Italian roles were taken by Lady Gaga, Jared Leto, Jeremy Irons, Salma Hayek and Al Pacino.



"I wish Italian actors ... were more present in international movies where Italian characters are written," said Favino, who was promoting his new Italian-language film "Comandante," which opens the Venice Festival on Wednesday. "I don't have anything against huge American stars ... (but)there are talented actors in our country. They are just waiting to be given the right roles," he said, speaking in perfect English — **Reuters**