

P13

DEVELOPMENT OF OMAN'S NEWEST ECONOMIC ZONE KICKS OFF



P10

SAINZ'S PERFECT SINGAPORE DRIVE ENDS RED BULL STREAK



P18

AL KHOUDH WAS HOME TO DINOSAURS 70 MILLION YEARS AGO



■ NEW YORK

GCC-US JOINT MEETING HELD

The Sultanate of Oman chaired the joint ministerial meeting between the GCC foreign ministers and Antony J Blinken, US Secretary of State, on Monday. The GCC side was chaired by Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, Foreign Minister, with the participation of the GCC secretary-general. The meeting reviewed the GCC-US partnership and cooperation in the political, economic, and security fields. The participants exchanged points of view on the regional and international developments. — ONA

■ MUSCAT

CITIZEN FOUND KILLED IN CAIRO

An Omani citizen was found murdered in his apartment in Cairo, the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in the Arab Republic of Egypt, said in a statement on Monday. According to the sources, the embassy is actively working with the relevant Egyptian authorities to gather more information about the incident. The embassy expressed their trust in the capabilities of the Egyptian authorities to investigate the case thoroughly and bring the necessary justice to those involved.

■ FAREWELL TO AMBASSADOR OF TANZANIA



On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, received at his office on Monday Abdullah Abbas Kilima, Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty. The ambassador expressed his thanks to His Majesty the Sultan for the support extended to him from His Majesty, the Government and the Omani people during his tour of duty. **DETAILS ON P2**

Biden thanks HM over release of US detainees

WASHINGTON: President Joe Biden of the United States of America expressed his sincere thanks to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and HH Shaikh Tamim bin Hamad al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, for their efforts in facilitating a detainee-swap deal between the USA and Iran.

Following the deal, five American citizens who were released by Iranian authorities arrived in Qatar earlier on Monday, while Iranian funds estimated at \$6 billion were released and transferred to banks in Qatar.

“Today, five Americans who were imprisoned in Iran are finally coming home,” Biden said in a statement, shortly before the US detainees descended the stairs of a Qatari jet to be embraced by US diplomats.

Separately, Iran’s Press TV said the five Iranians detained by the United States had been freed. Two arrived in Doha, US and Iranian officials said.

A plane sent by mediator Qatar flew the five US citizens and two of their relatives out of Tehran after both sides got confirmation the \$6 billion was transferred from South Korea to Qatari accounts, a source briefed on the matter said.

The deal, after months of talks in Qatar, removes a major irritant between the US and Iran.

A senior US administration official said the deal did not change Washington’s relationship with Tehran, but the door was open for diplomacy on Iran’s nuclear programme. — Agencies

Oman sees 41,000 outpatients a day

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

There has been an increase in the number of visits to outpatient clinics of health institutions to 14.9 million visits, which amounted to 41,000 visits per day.

According to the Ministry of Health’s (MoH) annual report for the year 2022, the number of inpatients discharged from hospitals stood at 295,000, with a bed occupancy rate of 59.6 per cent.

The report indicated that about 37.9 per cent of outpatient morbidity was due to infectious diseases, while non-communicable diseases (NCDs) represented 43.5 per cent, and the number of cases sent for treatment abroad increased to 1,040.

The report indicated a significant increase in dengue fever, with cases reaching 1,989 cases, because of which the ministry is

cooperating with the relevant authorities to combat the Aedes mosquito (the carrier of this disease). The report explained that 11,600 cases of injury in outpatient clinics and accident and emergency departments were due to traffic accidents, with 3,164 cases, and the number of deaths reaching 188. The report added that the total number of health institutions affiliated with the Ministry of Health until the end of last year stood at 263, including 50 hospitals with a capacity of 4,954 beds, apart from 21 health complexes, and 192 health centres.

HEART DISEASES

The report said patients admitted to hospitals affiliated with the Ministry of Health indicate that about 13 out of every 10,000 residents were hospitalised due to ischemic heart disease, also called coronary heart disease (CHD) in 2022, seven out of every 10,000



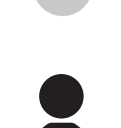
43.5% OF OUTPATIENT MORBIDITY DUE TO NCDs



SIGNIFICANT INCREASE IN DENGUE CASES



6 OUT OF EVERY 10,000 RESIDENTS HOSPITALISED DUE TO DIABETES



29.8% OF DEATHS IN MOH HOSPITALS



INFANT MORTALITY RATE FELL BY 9.5 DEATHS PER 1,000 LIVE BIRTHS

residents due to febrile infectious diseases (respiratory tract infections, mononucleosis, dengue, malaria, and typhoid fever, including Covid-19), and six out of every 10,000 residents are hospitalised due to diabetes and about two out of every 10,000 residents due to high blood pressure.

The report also indicates that the ministry’s efforts in student immunisations reached about 100 per cent, in addition to environmental health activities, drinking water quality, and health conditions and nutrition for students, in addition to mental health. The report showed a decline of 29.8 per cent in the number of deaths in hospitals affiliated with the ministry during the year 2022 (4,287 deaths) compared to 6,110 deaths in 2021. There was a decline in the crude birth rate to reach 15.7 live births per thousand population, compared to 20.7 in 2015.

■ DEAL TO RUN AL MIRANI FORT IN MUSCAT



The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism on Monday signed a contract for the management, operation and utilisation of Al Mirani Fort in the Wilayat of Muscat. The contract was inked with Al Hajar Mountains Resorts and Hotels company. **DETAILS ON P2**

Oman plans pipeline network to transport hydrogen

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

There is a plan to build a network of pipelines to transport hydrogen in the Sultanate of Oman in three wilayats, according to a senior official of the government-owned Hydrom company.

In her speech delivered at the Invest in Green Hydrogen (IGH2023) Conference in London on Saturday, Hafsa al Subhi, Director of Planning at Hydrom, said Oman is planning to build a network of pipelines with a length of 2,000 km within the country to transport green fuel, with the potential to connect it with its neighbours.

LONG-TERM PLAN

“We have a long-term plan for hydrogen transportation to three industrial areas, such as Al Duqm, Al Jazir and Salalah in the Sultanate of Oman, and it is planned to build a 2,000 km-long hydrogen pipeline connecting the country’s three wilayats.”

She further said that Oman wants to remove some of the burdens on industry developers by launching a network of pipelines to transport hydrogen, according to the specialised platform.

“The Sultanate of Oman aspires to develop green hydrogen projects and has succeeded in attracting the interest of investors and the International Energy Agency, in light of expectations that the country will join the leading fuel exporting countries by 2030.” **TURN TO P5**



HH Sayyid Asaad bids farewell to Ambassador of Tanzania



HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said with Abdullah Abbas Kilima, Ambassador of Tanzania, in Muscat on Monday.— ONA

MUSCAT: On behalf of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan,

received in his office on Monday Abdullah Abbas Kilima, Ambassador of the United Republic of Tanzania to the Sultanate of Oman, to bid him farewell at the end of his tour of duty.
The ambassador expressed his thanks

to His Majesty the Sultan for the support extended to him from His Majesty, the Government and the Omani people during his tour of duty. The ambassador wished His Majesty the Sultan good health, happiness and a long life. He also wished the Sultanate

of Oman further development and growth under the wise leadership of His Majesty.
On his turn, HH Sayyid Asaad expressed his appreciation to the ambassador for the efforts he exerted in enhancing the relations between the two countries, wishing him

continuous success. HH Sayyid Asaad also wished the people of Tanzania further progress and prosperity.
The meeting was attended by the Secretary-General and the adviser at the office of HH Sayyid Asaad.— ONA

Oman chairs GCC foreign ministers’ meeting



Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy with his GCC counterparts in New York on Monday.

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman on Monday chaired a coordination meeting of GCC foreign ministers in preparation for the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly.

Chaired by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy, the meeting looked into a programme of joint meetings that GCC states will hold with friendly countries, as well as

regional gatherings on schedule.
The GCC ministers exchanged views about ways to maximise common benefits from various aspects of cooperation.
The meeting also touched on

means of consolidating security and stability and supporting efforts to forge peaceful solutions for major regional issues and global challenges.
— ONA



‘Arabian Leopard 5’ military drill kicks off

AL JABAL AL AKHDHAR: The joint Oman-Bahrain drill ‘Arabian Leopard 5’ kicked off on Monday. The drill is conducted by the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) alongside units of Bahrain Defence Force.
The exercise, which runs till 26 September, is carried out in the training zones at Al Jabal Al Akhdhar (the Green Mountain).
Moreover, conducting this drill comes within the framework of RAO’s training plan to sustain the preparedness of its personnel.
— ONA

Contract signed for management of Al Mirani Fort

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism on Monday signed a contract for the management, operation and utilisation of Al Mirani Fort in the Wilayat of Muscat. The contract was inked with Al Hajar Mountains Resorts and Hotels company.
The agreement was signed by Eng Ibrahim bin Said bin Khalaf al Kharousi ,Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Heritage, and Eng Khalid Hamad al Busaidi, CEO of Al Hajar Mountains Resorts and Hotels.
The agreement’s signing reflects the Ministry’s efforts to make optimum use of

architectural heritage, ensure its sustainability and maximise its benefit.
This approach also seeks to provide direct and indirect employment opportunities, empower the private sector and enable small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and artisans to find marketing outlets for their products.
Other objectives include enriching the tourism sector through value-added projects serving the local community and revitalising cultural heritage sites in accordance with Oman Vision 2040 and the strategic programmes of the 10th Five-Year Plan (2021-2025). —ONA



Ibrahim bin Said bin Khalaf al Kharousi and Khalid Hamad al Busaidi sign the agreement in Muscat on Monday. — ONA



Oman Health Exhibition and Conference begins

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 18

The Oman Health Exhibition and Conference commenced at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Monday, aligning with the Oman Vision 2040 strategy that identifies the healthcare sector as crucial for the country's progress.

The three-day event began under the auspices of Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad al Busaidy, Chairman of the Board of Directors of the SABCO Group of Companies.

This year, the Oman Health Exhibition and Conference will witness the participation of more than 160 local and international exhibitors. The event will include pavilions dedicated to countries including India, Iran, Malaysia, and Thailand. Besides national companies, there is participation from Lebanon, Poland, Pakistan, Turkey, and the United Kingdom.

The Oman Health Conference recognises experts from health universities, government institutions, and scientific research societies in health. A platform to share technical developments in the sector and exchange informed insights on the latest trends and innovations in the industry.

On the second day of the conference, World Patient Safety Day will be celebrated with a



The three-day event began under the auspices of Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad al Busaidy. – ONA

presentation and panel discussion on patient and community engagement to highlight the contribution of patients and caregivers to safety in healthcare.

Sayyid Khalid bin Hamad al Busaidy emphasised the significance of the health sector in the Sultanate of Oman, acknowledging the attention it receives from His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq. He highlighted the substantial presence of governmental and private institutions from Oman

and sisterly and friendly countries at the exhibition, demonstrating the sector's importance and growth opportunities within the framework of economic growth in Oman Vision 2040.

Dr Said bin Mohammed al Mughairi, Director of Quality and Safety Control, said such conferences and exhibitions have a significant role for the Ministry of Health, which is about exchanging experiences and narrating among sister countries. Al Mughairi emphasised the ministry's three

directorates, the Oman Center for Quality Control, Private Health Institutions, and the General Directorate of Pharmaceutical Control, are participating in the event.

Farizal B Jaafar, Acting Chief Executive Officer of the Malaysia Healthcare Travel Council, expressed delight in participating in the Oman Health Exhibition and Conference. He emphasised the event's significance in transcending national boundaries and promoting collaboration in



medical knowledge, expertise exchange, technology, and best practices. Jaafar stressed the Middle East's emergence as a hub of innovation, economic growth, and cultural diversity, particularly in healthcare. He highlighted the importance of sharing healthcare best practices in the region.

"The Oman Health Vision 2050 aims to establish a more robust healthcare ecosystem in the country. Oman and Malaysia share a common inspiration for healthcare reform, striving for a

well-organised, equitable, efficient, and responsive healthcare system that prioritises citizens' well-being and productivity," Jaafar added.

The exhibition is organised in cooperation between the Ministry of Health, represented by the General Directorate of Pharmacy and Drug Control (PADC), the General Directorate of Quality Assurance Centre (DGQAC), the General Directorate of Private Health Institutions, and the Omani Exhibitions Business Company (Connect).

OCA's annual walkathon on November 3

AFRAH AL BALUSHI
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The Oman Cancer Association (OCA) will observe October as Global Pink Ribbon Month, dedicated to raising awareness about breast cancer throughout Oman. In the 19th year of important cancer awareness initiative, the theme for this year's campaign is 'Every Step Counts.' Annual walkathon to mark the occasion will be held on November 3, at Qurum Park and will be a whole day affair. The event will span from 10 am to 6.30 pm and promises a wide array of entertaining activities and a family-friendly food court to make it an enjoyable day out for all.

Throughout October 2023, the OCA's breast cancer awareness campaign will encompass a



Oman Cancer Association officials at a press conference.

comprehensive approach involving schools, colleges, businesses, and the wider community through various activities set in community spaces and malls.

The campaign will feature a range of activities and programmes, including educational sessions on breast cancer awareness and the deployment of the Mobile Mammography Unit to provide free mammography services for women aged 40 and above at select malls. There will be free clinical breast examinations and daily

programmes to educate young women on self-breast examination as part of the screening for breast cancer. It is noteworthy that breast cancer continues to be a significant concern in Oman, affecting women under 40, highlighting the necessity of educational programmes in educational institutions and workplaces.

A key highlight of the Pink Ribbon Breast Cancer Awareness month is the annual walkathon, which marks the culmination of the awareness efforts. Last year,

the Oman Cancer Association successfully organised the 18th Annual Walkathon, with nearly 8,000 participants congregating at Qurum Park.

The OCA has thoughtfully planned activities catering to both children and adults.

The walkathon will kick off at 4.30 pm and last until 6.30 pm, covering a route of approximately 1.5 km. To make a visible impact, all participants will receive high-quality T-shirts free of charge during registration.

Registration will be available at various locations every Thursday, Friday, and Saturday at City Centre Muscat, Al Araiimi Boulevard, Oman Avenues Mall, and Mall of Oman, and from Sunday to Thursday at the OCA headquarters to facilitate participation.

Omani documentary short-listed in film festival in Algeria



MUSCAT: The Omani documentary 'Al Zeeg', directed by Salah al Hadhrami, is taking part in the Kerdada African Short and Documentary Film Festival, held in Algeria from September 30 to October 2, 2023.

The Omani documentary was short-listed alongside 35 films from 12 countries.

'Al Zeeg', produced by Oman Film and Theatre Society, showcases in a theatrical way the relationship between Omani people and the cultivation and production of Omani sugarcane.

It also touches on humanitarian, economic and social aspects related to this profession. The documentary bagged several awards in local, Arabic and international festivals. — ONA

Mibam village is a hidden oasis among towering mountains

TEXT & PHOTOS
BY YAHYA AL SALMANI

Exploring the enchanting village of Mibam is not less than an adventure; it requires efforts to embark on this journey into a natural oasis nestled amidst majestic mountains. One must possess the ability to drive a four-wheel-drive vehicle with dexterity. The road that leads to Mibam wanders through the winding curves and lofty heights of the towering mountain range that envelops this pristine village.

The visitor needs to be physically fit to enjoy the village, as access to the source of the waterfalls requires climbing ladders built between the edges of the farms located on the mountain edge.

Mibam village is located in the Niyabat of Tiwi in Al Sharqiyah South Governorate. This beautiful village is about 11 km away from the Prosecution Centre.

On the way to it, the visitor

passes through other villages like Al Husn, Sima'a, and Suwi. This village is surrounded by high mountains covered with palm trees, lemon trees, mangoes, grapes and other local trees. The internal road also has several ponds.

Mibam is renowned for its various tourist attractions, with one of the most prominent being the tower perched atop a colossal rock on the western side of the village mountains. Originally constructed for defensive purposes, the tower now symbolises the village's rich history and enduring charm.

In the heart of Mibam lies the Aflaj farms, including Al Mutamared, Al Hail, and Soolan. These intricate canal systems carry cool water during the summer and warm water during the winter, serving the dual purpose of irrigation and sustenance.

Azzan al Muqaimi, a spirited young local, extends a warm welcome to visitors and eagerly volunteers to accompany and guide them through the wonders



of this natural oasis. "This village is a popular destination for tourists, especially during winter," Azzan explains. "Over time, I've grown comfortable interacting with tourists and have become adept at engaging with them.

Witnessing my village receive visitors brings me great joy, and I readily volunteer to show them the shortcuts to reach the waterfalls effortlessly." "The skills and abilities of every tourist vary. Some practice mountain climbing

to take panoramic pictures, while others prefer swimming and relaxing near water ponds. I also met some tourists who practice the hobby of drawing nature in unique oil paintings," said Azzan.

The competent authorities

have placed guiding signs at the entrance to this village urging tourists to beware of swimming in places with deep water pools. The signs also recommend the need to maintain the cleanliness of the site and to dispose of waste healthily.



SHADDAD AL MUSALMY
@shadadm

Despite the government’s efforts over the years to build more roads to solve the growing number of traffic jams in the capital, one road in the capital that has remained dangerous over the years is the Al Amerat-Bausher mountain road, which needs efficient and proper road safety measures. As part of the road maintenance work in Muscat Governorate and in coordination with the Traffic Department, Muscat Municipality has closed the road towards Bausher from Al Amerat.

To be closed for four months, one lane will be opened during the morning peak hours, between 5am and 9.30 am.

According to figures, a number of accidents have occurred on this road, taking the lives of some people and injuring many others. With this in mind, commuters are calling for a permanent solution, which many believe an alternative road and a tunnel is required to connect the two wilayats – Al Amerat and Bausher.

With the road’s closure, motorists reported a surge in traffic on the Wadi Adai-Al Amerat road, especially during morning office hours on Sunday. Authorities have urged road users to take the extra commuting time into account to avoid untoward incidents. The municipality urged everyone to take caution, follow the traffic instructions shown on the website, and use the alternative road (Wadi Adai Road) to avoid traffic congestion.

Commuters say the road has become a lifeline which has supplemented Wadi Adai road, which had seen traffic congestion in the past.

Now, with the closure of the road, motorists reported a surge in traffic on the Wadi Adai-Al Amerat road, especially during morning office hours. Authorities have urged road users to take the extra commuting time into account to avoid untoward incidents.

The municipality urged everyone to take caution, follow the traffic instructions shown on the website, and use the alternative road (Wadi Adai Road) to avoid traffic congestion.

Whenever there is an accident on Al Amerat-Bausher road or there is rain, the road is temporarily closed, leading to traffic congestion on Wadi Adai-Al Amerat road. “There is a need for a permanent solution, one of which is a tunnel connecting Al Amerat to Bausher is ideal. I request the authorities concerned to consider the tunnel just like the newly opened Wadi Al Aq tunnel,” Mubarak al Dhawi, an Al Amerat resident who uses the road daily to connect to the expressway, said.

Others feel the same road with some alterations and adding more safety measures can suffice to avoid closure for a long time. “There is a need for proper planning with the addition of more road safety measures. In my view, the road needs to be considered for reconstituting if a tunnel is not a possibility,” Taha Hameed, a Bausher resident, said.

Al Amerat-Bausher road has been under discussion among many commuters for a long time now, and they say it needs a permanent solution. The road is sometimes closed during rains for fear of mountainous landslides and waterfalls.

In the past, there were many accidents, including the one involving a truck and car, in which one person died. In another incident, two Asian men died when the water tanker they were travelling in from Al Amerat lost control after colliding with a car coming from the Bausher side.

This is in addition to eight people who were seriously injured in the road accident after a bus overturned on the same road.

The property boom in Al Amerat, which coincided with the development of roads cutting through mountains, forced many citizens and residents to shift their homes to Al Amerat, where bigger flats are available for relatively cheap rentals.

To cater to the needs of the local population, several restaurants, hypermarkets, and store chains have opened their branches in the vicinity.

CALL FOR PERMANENT SOLUTION TO AL AMERAT-BAUSHER MOUNTAIN ROAD PROBLEM



Subaru Crosstrek

Recall

Recall Date: 19th September 2023

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
Subaru Crosstrek	2024	21

Recall consequence

Recall Action

To check the serial Numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website for Recalls & Warnings: <http://recall.pacp.gov.om>

Toll free No 80050004 on all working days between 8:00 AM to 1:00 PM & 2:00 PM to 5:30 PM



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TRAINING EMPOWERS WOMEN IN AL BATINAH SOUTH

SIHAM AL SAIDI
RUSTAQ, SEPT 18

Oman Women Associations are conducting many training programmes for women in Al Batinah South Governorate. These initiatives will empower women and help them earn income. Notable among these plans are the Suar project for silverware artisans by the Omani Women's Association in Nakhal. It provides materials and helps in setting up online marketing channels to boost sales.

The project also helps to preserve traditions and transform the designs in line with modern trends.

Dr Heba al Balushi, head of the Omani Women's Association in Nakhal, says, "This initiative introduces our community to the amazing talent of our young women in silverware craft. It's



about partnering with local organisations, helping them learn the craft, and becoming entrepreneurs."

Another exciting project is the "Threads of Hope" incubator, supported by Oreedo and the Omani Women's Association in Nakhal. This platform helps

women to easily sell their craft products any time instead of depending solely on fairs. It's about modernising traditional crafts for today's market and empowering women to run their own businesses.

"Rahiq Honey" project, supported by the Ministry of

Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, shows that women can thrive in honey production and earn a steady income.

These initiatives prove that Omani women are talented entrepreneurs, artists, and community leaders. They're not only nurturing their futures but also shaping a brighter future for Oman. Dr Al Balushi said: "We are really grateful for the cooperation with the community and authorities where we worked together to support women's independence through the successful implementation of these initiatives. It was heartwarming to see the happiness of women when they got the first income from these projects."

In Al Batinah South, these women are taking bold steps to support their families thereby showing the sky's limit.

Oman plans to build pipeline to transport hydrogen

FROM PAGE1

'Invest in Green Hydrogen 2023' conference aims to showcase the latest trends in green hydrogen and foster an exchange of experiences among stakeholders in this pivotal sector. The western media further quoted that the Gulf state hopes to produce an estimated one million tonnes of hydrogen based on renewable energy sources by 2030 and plans to raise these quantities to 3.75 million tonnes by the end of the next decade in 2040, then to 8.5 million tonnes when the century reaches its mid-point in 2050, according to reports.

According to Hafsa al Subhi, a vast infrastructure network, including pipelines to transport hydrogen, will also be built to facilitate hydrogen transportation in Oman.

"We are also aiming to launch an appropriate infrastructure to transport water and electricity that the green hydrogen industry needs from renewable energy sources, and the first phase of the plan aims to build a network of pipelines to transport hydrogen fuel to serve three green hydrogen industrial zones in the country — Al Duqm, Al Jazir and Salalah."

It is intended to connect the Wilayats of Al Duqm and Al Jazir in the first phase to a network of hydrogen transport pipelines, and "In 2040, we will connect Salalah to the two wilayats," said Al Subhi.

She added that at the same time, Oman has plans to connect low-cost renewable energy generation centres in the south with other wilayats in the north of the country, such as those in the Al Batinah North Governorate, through a network of prospective hydrogen fuel transportation pipelines.

Al Subhi added that the final phase of the hydrogen transport network plan comes in 2050, when these areas are connected to Muscat, according to what the specialised energy platform reviewed.

Winners of Namat sustainability awards for schools announced

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

The Ministry of Education and the Environment Society of Oman (ESO) announced the winners of the Namat Competition 2022-2023. This year in its third edition, Namat is an annual competition organised by ESO to encourage and recognise action for sustainability and environmental consciousness among government school students, parents, and staff.

Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, handed over the awards for the winning innovative contributions. The best entries received up to RO 1,000, thanks



Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, MoE Under-Secretary, Dr Amor al Matani, President of ESO, and Erwan Rouxel, CEO of Veolia Oman, with the winners in Muscat on Monday.

to the support of Veolia Oman, an environmental management company. Erwan Rouxel, CEO of Veolia Oman, said, "We are invested in the creativity,

commitment, and ambition shown by all the participating teams, which can make a real impact on where they live and study. Veolia Oman is more than happy to make

sure some great awards were on offer to celebrate the winning teams' desire to make a sustainable change for themselves and their communities."

The entries were judged by a team of experts that visited the shortlisted schools.

The recipients of the Namat awards are as follows:

Water Management category
First place: Bilal bin Rabah School, Al Dakhiliyah

Second Place: Abdullah bin Al Abbas School in Al Batinah North

Third Place: Al Qalah School in Al Dakhiliyah

Waste Management category

First place: Al Sinainah School in Al Buraimi,

Second Place: Al Ma'amorah School in Al Dakhiliyah

Third Place: Al Hasan bin Al Haitham School in Al Dhahira

Energy Management category

First place: Saima W Mouqzah School in Al Dakhiliyah,

Second Place: Al Touq School in Al Dakhiliyah

Third Place: Al Dhia School in Al Batinah North

Sultanate of Oman

Ministry of Defence

ENGINEERING SERVICES

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Ministry of Defence invites Contractors specialized in the under mentioned works and registered with the Govt. Tender Board and Ministry of Defence to participate in the following tender.

Tender No.	Tender Name	Contractors Grade	Last Date to Obtain Tender	Tender Submission Date	Tender Price (RO)
031/2023	Termite Treatment Work - Various locations	First and above – specialist in anti-termite treatment	28 September 2023	23 October 2023	100/- RO
032/2023	Building & Maintenance Work - Various locations	First and above	28 September 2023	30 October 2023	600/- RO
034/2023	HVAC System Works - Salalah	First & above Specialized in HVAC system	28 September 2023	30 October 2023	271/- RO

*For more information about the above Tenders please visit gate number (14)

- Tender Documents (Electronic Tender Document) can be obtained from the Tender office, Gate No: 14, Muaskar Al Murtafa'a after payment of the tender fee indicated above.
- The Payment should be made electronically by using SMART CARD, VISA CARD and VISA ELECTRON. Sunday to Thursday (0900 – 1300 Hours).
- The Bid to be accompanied by Tender Bond in the value of (1%) of the bid value in the form of a Bank Guarantee or Certified Cheque issued by a local bank and addressed to HE the Chairman of the Tender Committee.
- Bids are to be submitted in sealed envelopes addressed to HE the Chairman of Tender Committee and marked with Tender Number and Name. Name of Bidder or any other marks should not be printed on the envelopes.
- Bids to be deposited in the Tender office at Gate No: 14 Muaskar Al Murtafa'a before 1300 hours on the assigned day for submission of the Tender.
- We would like to draw your attention to the importance of adherence to the submission date, request and any queries related should not be submitted to MODES fourteen days prior to submission of offer & that queries must be on electronic (Microsoft word).
- You are requested to submit the following items within your tender submission, failure to submit the required information may result a disqualification of your offer without any further notification.
 - Percentage of Omanisation within the company supported by an authenticated certificate from the Ministry of Labour (Updated Copy).
 - Detailed priced breakdown to be specified as per scope of works and drawings.
 - Full set of stamped drawings and documents, Tender Form and Tender Bonds to be submitted as hard copy and others documentation shall be as **SOFT COPY (USB)** in two separate files:
 - Financial (**bill 1&2 separated file from bills**).
 - Technical files.
 - Confirmation of site visit.
 - All addendums and circulars.
 - List of sub-contractors/suppliers and their acceptance letter to this project.
 - List of current and executed projects for the last Five years.
 - Valid Registration Certificates from Tender Board.
 - Financial Statement for the last Three years.

SAF Chief of Staff Receives Qatari Officer

MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah bin Khamis bin Abdullah al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) received in his office at Muaskar Al Murtafaa on Monday Commodore Saleh bin Ali al Saei, head of the delegation of Qatar's Armed Forces' directorate for protocols and public relations. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views on various matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Brigadier Hassan bin Ali al Mujaini, Head of SAF Morale Guidance and Military Protocols, senior COSAF officers and the Military Attaché at the Qatari Embassy in Muscat.

— ONA

Looking for job, car, flat and furniture? Check out the *Observer* classified page. It's where buyers meet sellers.

GS Inima BARKA LLC

Announcement of the tender TND GSI BV 14/09/2023 for the supply of special pump for analyzers panels

GS INIMA (BARKA) LLC now in phase of commissioning of Barka V Desalination Project in Oman, for the Oman Power and Water Procurement Company SAOC. Omani companies are invited to quote their most competitive price for the supply of **special pump ½"**. To participate to bidding please send copy of CR, copy of VAT certificate and copy of SME card if any, to e-mail: barka.v.site@inima.com, subject : **TND GSI BV 14/09/2023** within **24th September 2023** 1:00 PM. A reply with bid documents will be reverted to candidate same working day. Bid closing date: **28th September 2023** 1:00PM

SULTANATE OF OMAN MINISTRY OF HEALTH

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders:-

Tender Ref.	Description	Last Date for Collection of Tender Document	Closing Time/ Day/ Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
3456/ 2023	Rehabilitation and maintenance works at WADI NAM HEALTH CENTER	Before 9 am on Monday 2/October/2023	Before 9 am on Monday 30/October/2023	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board have Fourth grade	R.O 25 Per set

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board on the above mentioned Grade may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om> against non-refundable payment as mentioned above for each set of document.
- Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

(<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

Any Clarification, you may contact via
Telephone: 24402200
Email id: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om



Five US detainees leave Iran in prisoner swap deal

DOHA: Five US detainees released by Iran took off for Doha in a prisoner swap on Monday after \$6 billion in frozen funds were transferred to Iranian accounts in Qatar.

The five left Iran on a Qatari plane accompanied by two relatives, left in exchange for five Iranians held by the United States.

“A Qatari jet has taken off with the five prisoners and two relatives accompanied by the Qatari ambassador,” a source with knowledge of the situation said.

According to Iranian media, two of the freed Iranians have arrived in Doha. The other three have chosen to remain in the United States or a third country, Tehran said.

“We hope to have total access to the Iranian assets today,” Iran’s foreign ministry spokesman Nasser Kanani had earlier on Monday told a Tehran press conference.

“The prisoner exchange will take place on the same day and five Iranian citizens imprisoned in America will be released.”

As the prisoners were released, US President Joe Biden announced sanctions against Iran’s ex-president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad and the country’s intelligence ministry.

The five Americans were released to house arrest when the deal was agreed last month.

Last week, the official IRNA news agency identified the five Iranian prisoners.



The Iranian and US flags

They include Reza Sarhangpour and Kambiz Attar Kashani, both accused of having violated US sanctions against Tehran.

A third prisoner, Kaveh Lotfolah Afrasiabi, was detained at his home near Boston in 2021 and charged with being an Iranian government agent, according to US officials.

The two others, Mehrdad Moein Ansari and Amin Hasanzadeh, were said to have links to Iranian security forces.

Biden’s administration has insisted that Iran will only be allowed to use the money in needs to buy food, medicine and other humanitarian goods.

Iran has denied restrictions have been placed on the spending of funds.

Iran’s Kanani has insisted that the money will allow Tehran to “purchase all non-sanctioned goods”, not just food and medicine.

Biden took office with hopes of restoring the landmark 2015 nuclear agreement, under which Iran promised to constrain its contested nuclear work in return for sanctions relief.

— AFP

UN warns of disease threat in flood-ravaged east Libya

DERNA: The UN on Monday warned that disease outbreaks could bring “a second devastating crisis” to Libya a week after a massive flash flood devastated the coastal city of Derna, sweeping thousands to their deaths.

Local officials, aid agencies and the World Health Organization “are concerned about the risk of disease outbreak, particularly from contaminated water and the lack of sanitation”, the United Nations said.

The flash flood that has killed nearly 3,300 people and left thousands more missing came as the war-scarred North African country was lashed by the hurricane-strength Storm Daniel on September 10.

Tens of thousands of traumatised residents are now homeless and badly in need of clean water, food and basic supplies amid a growing risk of cholera, diarrhoea, dehydration and malnutrition, UN agencies have warned.

As rescue teams from several European and Arab countries kept up the grim search for bodies in the mud-caked wasteland of smashed buildings, crushed cars and uprooted trees, Derna survivors recounted the horror of the events.

Death toll remained unknown, with untold numbers swept into the sea.

Soldier Hamza Al-Khafifi, 45, described finding the unclothed bodies of “old, young, women, men and children” washing up on the shore a week after the disaster.

“Bodies were stuck between



Rescue personnel walk on a mud-covered road as they work in eastern Libya's city of Derna. — AFP

rocks.”

The health minister of the eastern administration, Othman Abdeljalil, has said that 3,283 people were now confirmed dead in Derna.

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

Five members of a Greek rescue team were killed in a road accident while travelling from Benghazi to Derna on Sunday, Greek officials

said.

Abdeljalil said their vehicle collided with a car carrying a Libyan family, three of whose members died while two others were seriously injured.

Emergency response teams and aid have been deployed from France, Greece, Iran, Russia, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia, Türkiye and the United Arab Emirates.

On Monday the UN mission in Libya said nine United Nations agencies were involved in efforts to deliver aid and support to

survivors.

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

The rushing waters submerged a six-square-kilometre densely-populated area in Derna, damaging 1,500 buildings of which 891 were totally razed

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

— AFP

Israeli restrictions hinder Palestinians’ access to healthcare

JERUSALEM: Israel’s restrictions and rising fiscal constraints in the Palestinian territories are severely impacting the economic conditions of Palestinians and hindering their access to timely life-saving healthcare, the World Bank said on Monday.

In a report titled “Racing Against Time”, the World Bank said that overall the Palestinian economy was performing below potential, with per capita income expected to stagnate.

Poverty in the Palestinian territories was on the rise, with one out of four Palestinians living below the poverty line, the Washington-based global lender said.

Israel’s restrictions on movement and trade in the occupied West Bank, the blockade imposed on the Gaza Strip and the divide between the two Palestinian territories were among several factors that had put the Palestinian economy at high risk, the report said.

“The fiscal constraints weigh heavily on the Palestinian health system and particularly on its ability to cope with the mounting burden of non-communicable diseases,” Stefan Emblad, the World Bank’s director for the West Bank and Gaza, said in a statement released with the report.

The restrictions, including “a lengthy, bureaucratic regime



A Palestinian reacts during a protest against Israeli settlements in the Israeli-occupied West Bank. — Reuters file photo

of permits”, often makes it hard to provide timely life-saving healthcare to Palestinians, he said.

Access to outside medical referrals for treatment of cancers, heart diseases, and maternal

and child birth conditions are significantly affected due to physical and administrative constraints, the statement said.

“The situation is particularly critical in Gaza, which suffers from a more limited health system capacity and where patients struggle to get needed medical exit permit applications on a timely basis,” it said.

“Research figures show that the near-blockade of Gaza has had an impact on mortality, as some patients do not outlive the length of the permit process.”

Thousands of Palestinians from the West Bank and Gaza Strip cross annually into Israel for medical treatment unavailable

in the impoverished Palestinian territories.

Israel has occupied the West Bank since the 1967 Six-Day War, when it also seized the Gaza Strip, the densely populated coastal enclave it has since withdrawn from.

The World Bank urged Israel and Palestinian authorities to better manage such medical cases and ease the permit process in a bid to provide timely healthcare assistance to patients and their companions.

“Given population growth trends, income per capita is thus expected to stagnate,” the World Bank said.

— AFP

SHORT TAKES

BANGKOK

Thailand urged to halt crop burning

Thailand must ban stubble burning by farmers to improve air quality, the head of a leading agricultural body said on Monday, after a spike in dangerous pollution left millions needing medical treatment.

The kingdom suffered dire air quality earlier in the year, with Bangkok and the northern city of Chiang Mai ranked among the most polluted cities in the world on some days in April.

Authorities urged people to stay indoors and work from



home as concentrations of the most dangerous PM2.5 particles reached unsafe levels.

One of the leading sources of the particles is farmers torching stubble to prepare land for the next crop, with “burning season” peaking between December and April. — AFP

BEIRUT

14 fighters dead in north Syria attack

A Syrian Kurdish armed group attacked an area in rebel-held northern Syria on Monday, killing at least 14. The Kurdish Afrin Liberation Forces took advantage of factional fighting that broke out after midnight on the outskirts of Al-Bab in Aleppo province, the Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said.

The groups had been fighting over “control and influence” when the ambush happened. The death toll was confirmed in the area.

The Afrin Liberation Forces



are made up of Kurdish fighters who were forced out of northwest Syria’s Afrin area and mainly present in northern Aleppo province. A 2019 Russian-brokered agreement saw Syrian government forces deployed along parts of the northern border area. — AFP

CAIRO

Flames destroy landmark tower in Sudan

One of Sudan’s main landmarks, a skyscraper that towered over the River Nile and housed the headquarters of a major oil company, has been reduced to a smouldering wreck amid heavy fighting between rival military factions in the capital.

The Greater Nile Petroleum Operating Company head office, a glass-sided tower topped with a coil of metal, was one of Sudan’s most costly constructions.

Flames and smoke rose



from the building in a financial district of Khartoum, close to the confluence of the Blue and White Niles and to areas fought over by Sudan’s army and the paramilitary Rapid Support Forces (RSF). It is unclear what caused the fire that burned through the tower. — Reuters



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In brief

■ TBILISI



GEORGIA ACCUSES UKRAINIAN OF PLOTTING COUP

Georgia on Monday accused a senior Ukrainian official of plotting to overthrow the Black Sea nation's government by organising mass unrest.

Georgian security services said the deputy chief of Ukraine's military counterintelligence and Georgia's former deputy interior minister, Giorgi Lortkipanidze, was plotting "destabilisation aimed at a violent overthrow of the government."

It said Georgians fighting Russian forces in Ukraine, including a bodyguard of Georgia's jailed ex-president Mikhail Saakashvili, were among the conspirators. — AFP

■ MADRID



POLICE FIND MISSING BODIES OFF SPANISH ISLANDS

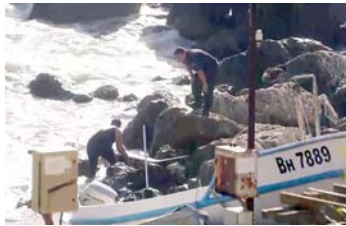
The bodies of a German man and his teenage son, who went missing at sea off Spain's Balearic Islands during a storm last month, have been found.

The pair, aged 53 and 19, disappeared when their boat sank in the Mediterranean on August 27 as they were sailing from the island of Menorca to Mallorca.

A Guardia Civil police spokesman said on Monday they had been identified as those of the missing father and son.

Strong winds with gusts of up to 120 kilometres per hour and heavy rains pummelled Spain's Mediterranean coast, causing serious damage and flight disruptions. — AFP

■ SOFIA



BULGARIA DEFUSES DRONE IN BLACK SEA TOWN

A Bulgarian navy team on Monday defused an explosive drone — the first ever found on its territory — after it appeared near a Black Sea town, the defence ministry said.

A team of military specialists was dispatched to the coastal town of Tyulenovo after a hotelier reported on Sunday that a big drone-like object appeared to be stuck in the coastal cliffs.

"On inspection, a 82-mm mortar shell was found to be attached to the remains of a drone," the statement said.

The team defused it with a controlled on-site explosion.

"We can certainly assume that it is linked to the war that Russia launched against Ukraine," Defence Minister Todor Tagarev said. — AFP

Ukraine claims gains on south front and near Bakhmut



A firefighter walks near the headquarters building of the Russian-installed local authorities, which was damaged by recent shelling in Donetsk. — Reuters

KYIV: Ukraine said on Monday its forces had recaptured small clutches of land from Russian forces along the southern front and near Bakhmut, regions where Kyiv's troops have focused their slow-moving counter-offensive.

Kyiv launched its bid to wrest back territory controlled by Moscow in June, after stockpiling Western-supplied weapons and recruiting assault battalions.

Its efforts have focused on the war-battered town of Bakhmut in the eastern Donetsk region, as well as several points along the frontline in the south, towards Crimea.

"Two square kilometres were liberated in the Bakhmut sector," Deputy Defence Minister Ganna Malyar said on state media.

Her announcement came one day after Kyiv said its forces had retaken Klishchiivka, a village south of Bakhmut, which was captured by Russian forces in May after one of the longest and bloodiest

battles of the war.

Malyar also said Ukrainian forces had clawed back 5.2 square kilometres in the south, where its forces are working to push deeper at two points along the front.

But Ukraine's progress against entrenched Russian positions has been limited since June, spurring debate among Kyiv's Western allies over its military strategy.

Russian forces meanwhile have pursued their aerial bombardment campaign, targeting Ukraine's southern regions and maritime export hubs in particular.

Ukraine said on Monday its air defence systems had downed a swarm of attack drones and nearly 20 cruise missiles in Russia's latest aerial barrage overnight.

"A total of 24 strike UAVs were recorded around the Mykolaiv and Odesa regions. Eighteen attack drones were shot down by air defence units," the air force said.

It added that its forces had shot down all 17 cruise missiles fired by Russian

forces overnight.

Kyiv has at the same time stepped up its aerial attacks on Russia. Moscow said it repelled Ukrainian drones over outer Moscow and two border regions — as well as over several parts of occupied Crimea.

Crimea has been targeted throughout the war but attacks there have intensified as Kyiv vows to recapture the Black Sea peninsula.

And since Ukraine launched its counter-offensive, Russia has weathered waves of drone attacks that have damaged buildings, including in the capital Moscow.

But Russian officials have downplayed their significance.

"Drones were intercepted over the western, southwestern, northwestern and eastern parts of the Crimean peninsula; Istra and Domodedovo districts of Moscow region, Belgorod and Voronezh regions," the defence ministry said.

— AFP



Chinese Foreign Minister Wang Yi

China's Wang Yi visits Russia ahead of possible Xi-Putin meeting

BEIJING: China's top diplomat, Wang Yi, begins on Monday a four-day trip to Russia during which both nations are expected to pledge deeper mutual political trust, readying for a possible landmark visit by President Vladimir Putin to Beijing in October.

Wang, who heads the foreign ministry as well as the ruling Communist Party's foreign affairs office, will meet Security Council Secretary Nikolai Patrushev for annual security talks, the Chinese foreign ministry said in a statement.

The veteran diplomat's talks with counterpart Sergei Lavrov will cover a "wide range of issues" including "contacts at higher and the highest levels," the Russian foreign ministry said last week.

Wang is expected to lay the groundwork for Putin's visit to the Chinese capital for the third Belt and Road Forum after an invitation by President Xi Jinping during a high-profile visit to Moscow in March.

Putin attended China's first two Belt and Road Forums in 2017 and 2019.

But he is not known to have travelled abroad since the International Criminal Court (ICC) issued an arrest warrant against him.

On September 1, Putin said he expected to meet Xi soon, but did not explicitly confirm that he would travel to China again.

The warrant, issued just days before Xi visited Russia, obligates the court's 123 member states to arrest Putin and transfer him to the Hague for trial if he enters their territory.

However, China is not a party to the Rome Statute that led to the establishment of the ICC in 2002.

The visit will also see a detailed exchange of views on issues including Ukraine, ministry spokeswoman Maria Zakharova said last week.

Wang last visited Russia in February on the eve of the one-year anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, alarming the United States, which accused the two nations at the time of sharing a vision in which "borders could be redrawn by force". — Reuters

Tensions ease in Karabakh as humanitarian supplies resume

BAKU: Tensions over Nagorno-Karabakh eased a notch on Monday as aid deliveries resumed to the breakaway territory following an agreement between Armenian separatists and authorities in Azerbaijan.

Armenia had accused Azerbaijan of fuelling a humanitarian crisis in the mountainous region — internationally recognised as part of Azerbaijan — by closing the sole road linking the region with Armenia. It had said the closure of the Lachin corridor, which is policed by Russian peacekeepers, had led to food and medicine shortages in the region and accused Azerbaijan of ethnic cleansing, allegations Baku has denied.

Baku has said separatists refused its proposal to reopen Lachin at the same time as the Aghdam road, which connects Nagorno-Karabakh with the rest of Azerbaijan.

The months-long crisis as well as Azerbaijan's deployment of troops near Nagorno-Karabakh and along the border with Armenia had



A view shows the village of Taghavard in the region of Nagorno-Karabakh. — Reuters file photo

sparked fears of a fresh war between the arch-foes locked in a decades-long dispute over the region.

The "simultaneous passage of the Red Cross cars was ensured" through the Lachin corridor and

the Aghdam road on Monday, Hikmet Hajiye, foreign policy adviser to Azerbaijan's president said on social media.

"The whole international community once again witnessed

that there was no so-called blockade but a deliberate self-blockade, weaponisation and politisation of humanitarian issues," he said.

Separatist authorities confirmed 23 tonnes of wheat flour from

Armenia as well as medical supplies had been delivered to Nagorno-Karabakh "thanks to the agreement reached between the Red Cross's Stepanakert branch and Russian peacekeepers."

"The delivery of cargo from the Russian city of Rostov is planned by Red Cross vehicles in several days via the same routes."

Armenian Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan recently said some 2,000 Russian peacekeepers were either "unable or unwilling" to control the road as part of a 2020 ceasefire deal between Baku and Yerevan.

The International Committee of the Red Cross said it had managed to deliver "wheat flour and essential medical items" through the two roads thanks to "a humanitarian consensus" between regional "decision-makers".

Nagorno-Karabakh residents "urgently need sustained relief through regular humanitarian shipments," said Ariane Bauer, ICRC's regional director for Europe and Central Asia. — AFP

Aaron Boxerman

It had been clear for years that the dams protecting Derna, on Libya's Mediterranean coast, were in danger of giving way. Torrential rains were not new. Decade after decade, they had pouped the area, washing away the soil that helped soak up water as it ran down from the dry hills above town.

Climate change had also changed the land, making it drier, harder and increasingly shorn of vegetation, less able to absorb the water before it pooled up dangerously behind the dams.

Then, there were the decades of neglect by officials — who knew the dams needed repairs — in a country so torn by years of civil war that it still has two opposing governments: one in the west and another in the east, where Derna lies. Academics had warned that it would not require a storm of biblical proportions to overwhelm the dams.

The residents of Derna are “extremely vulnerable to flood risk,” wrote Abdelwanees Ashoor, a hydraulic engineer at Omar Al Mukhtar University in Libya, in a paper he published in 2022.

The kind of storms that had hit the area in recent decades — he cited a damaging flood in 1959 — could bring down the dams and inundate Derna, he

warned, calling the situation “dangerous.” This past week, those predictions grimly proved to be true, when enormous flooding from a powerful storm broke through both dams and swept parts of the city into the sea. Thousands are dead, and many more missing, according to authorities. According to the International Organization for Migration, more than 34,000 people were displaced by the catastrophe.

Reached by phone, Ashoor said he had lost several members of his extended family to the flooding, adding that the government had ignored years of warnings — including his own paper.

“We’re living in shock. We can’t absorb what’s happening to us,” Ashoor said. “The state wasn’t interested in this. Instead, they guzzled money, practiced corruption and fought political squabbles.

Ashoor said he had sent his paper to academic colleagues in the nation’s capital, Tripoli, and a senior dam expert in the United States said his conclusions appeared to be solid.

“He nailed it,” said Michael West, a retired principal at the engineering firm Wiss, Janney, Elstner. “His main point is that the hydrologic design of those dams was inadequate, and they couldn’t handle the large-magnitude storms.

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The two dams that towered over the city had been built with the help of engineers from the former Yugoslavia, according to experts. During the long, autocratic reign of Moammar Gadhafi, floods came and went, but the dams stood. In 1986, a major storm convulsed the region, damaging the dams and shearing soil from the ground. The structures were damaged, Ashoor said, but again they held.

Despite the stresses, repairs were minimal. In 1998, the Libyan government commissioned a study that revealed cracks and fissures in the dams, said Attorney General Sadiq al Soor.

Nearly 10 years later, a Turkish company was finally contracted to repair the dams, the prosecutor added. But the government dragged its feet in paying, and the project got underway only in 2010, Al Soor said.

Just four months later, in 2011, Libyans marched against Gadhafi's 42-year grip on power, inspired by the uprisings that had toppled Arab autocrats in Tunisia and Egypt. When he threatened to annihilate the opposition, Nato intervened and bombed his forces, with the United States a backbone of the operation. Gadhafi was ousted from Tripoli that August. — **The New York Times**

GILDAS LE ROUX

Calls for compassion for migrants suffering in North Africa and those attempting to reach Europe or die trying will be at the heart of Pope Francis's visit to Marseille this week.

The pontiff is making a two-day trip to France's second-largest city, a historic gateway for immigrants, where he is expected to insist on the causes of migration, from poverty to climate change, and urge greater tolerance.

He is also likely to address the horrors many migrants face in North Africa, from internment in brutal camps to being left by traffickers to die in the desert.

The visit comes as a surge in the number of migrant arrivals in Italy revives a bitter debate over how European countries manage asylum seekers.

"It represents a challenge that is not easy, as we also see from the news in recent days, but which must be faced together," Francis said after his Angelus prayer on Sunday in Rome.

"It is essential for the future of all, which will be prosperous only if it is built on fraternity, putting human dignity and real people, especially those most in need, in first place," he said.

The Marseille trip comes as Francis, 86, is in increasingly fragile health, saying on his return from Mongolia this month that papal voyages were not as easy as they used to be.

But he continues to travel widely, focusing on the smaller Catholic communities the Vatican calls the peripheries.

He is visiting Marseille first and foremost to take part in a meeting of Mediterranean-area Catholic bishops and young people.

"I will go to Marseille, but not to France," Francis said in August, despite the risk of offending French Catholics, in particular those on the conservative fringe, who think he goes too far with his messages of compassion for migrants.

The port city is a key destination for migrants from North Africa — and is also home to some of the poorest neighbourhoods in Europe, many of which are plagued by drug trafficking.

“The problem that concerns me is the Mediterranean problem... The exploitation of migrants is criminal,” Francis said in August.

More than 2,300 migrants have died so far this year attempting the Mediterranean crossing from North Africa, according to the UN.

The Marseille event, “Mediterranean Meetings,” will look at themes including economic inequality, migration and climate change. — **AFP**

Margaret Renkl

SUFFERING DOES NOT
ALWAYS LEAD TO COM-
PASSION AND CHANGE,
BUT PHOTOGRAPHS
LIKE THESE REMIND
US THAT STANDING IN
WITNESS TO SUFFERING
SURELY SHOULD

In "Let Us Now Praise Famous Men," the poet and novelist James Agee praises the camera as "the central instrument" of his age. He believed that photography was capable of transmitting, as no other art could, "the peculiar kinds of poetic vitality which blaze in every real thing." Only photographers like his collaborator Walker Evans, he writes, captured "the cruel radiance of what is."

"A Long Arc: Photography and the American South since 1845," a new exhibition at the High Museum in Atlanta, might well have been titled "The Cruel Radiance of What Is." The reach of its ambitions and the brilliance of its execution offer nothing less than a full visual accounting of this beautiful, punishing and deeply troubled region.

Even before photographs of battle fortifications and mass graves and prison camps and cities in ruin brought home in detail the enormous scale and human cost of the Civil War, images of the realities of enslaved people in the South inspired widespread moral outrage and aided the abolitionist movement. Southern politicians had been lying about both the benevolence of enslavers and the “three-fifths” nature of Black humanity since the founding of this country, but the real truth about slavery began to come clear to most people outside the South only when the first photographs of enslaved people emerged.

The photograph of “Whipped Peter,” who fled a Louisiana plantation after a savage whipping, was among the most widely circulated images of the 19th century. “Peter barely survived the beating that made his back a map,” writes the scholar Imani Perry in an Aperture monograph that accompanies the exhibit, “and then ran to freedom, barefoot and chased by bloodhounds.”

The raised scars in that photograph were undeniable in a way that other accounts of slavery's brutality, however powerful, had not been. The image tells the truth about slavery "in a way that even Mrs. [Harriet Beecher] Stowe cannot approach," wrote a journalist of the time, "because it tells the story to the



Kelly Ingram Park, Birmingham, Alabama, 1963.

What a camera records, of course, is only what the human being who wields it wants it to record. A photographer shapes an image the way any other artist does: by making decisions about what to focus on, how to light the subject, what angle and distance to view it from, and the like. Those decisions are guided by a unique understanding of the world and a particular artistic intention, as well as by some sense of how a viewer might respond to the image itself.

Unsurprisingly, then, it wasn't long before the moral clarity offered by photographs became considerably less clear as politicians discovered the manipulative power of the medium when its goal is manipulation. In 1867, long before AI turned every digital experience into a cause for uncertainty, leaders in New Orleans struck on the idea of commissioning a collection of photographs designed to attract investment in the city.

The beauty of the resulting images by Theodore Lilienthal obscures the dark reality of postwar life for Black Southerners. A photo taken on St. Charles Street and aimed toward the St. Charles Exchange Hotel, for example, makes no reference to the history of the site as a place where enslaved people had been auctioned in the very recent past. As Brian Piper, the photography curator at the New Orleans Museum of Art, notes in an essay for the Aperture monograph, "What was meant to

appear splendid on the surface was in fact rotten at its core.”

The curators of “A Long Arc,” like many documentary and fine-art photographers themselves, are far more interested in overt records of injustice. When something terrible has befallen other human beings, and when it continually befalls them for no reason but their own powerlessness, a perfectly captured photograph can sometimes wake the rest of America from its slumber and inspire at least a small measure of social change.

Therefore, this exhibition does not stint on the magnificent documentary photographs that emerged from the South during the Great Depression, emerged again during the civil-rights movement, and emerged yet again during our own age as environmental devastation has ravaged not just the earth but also marginalised human communities.

And yet the most affecting photographs in "A Long Arc" are not — or at least are not merely — visual records of exploitation. The most powerful images capture the beauty and the tenderness and the self-possession of people who are living out their lives mostly invisible to the rest of the world. Or of the scarred but beautiful landscapes they call home. Or of the ramifications of an unresolved history still unspooling in this history-haunted part of the country.

— The New York Times

To comment & email: opinion@omanobserver.om

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Citizens of tomorrow, children of today

Nature needs no words to express. And it recently expressed its fury. Communication is a simple process of transmitting a message by the sender to the receiver and the receiver in turn responds. We have applied this even with artificial intelligence.

This is generally what happens during an interpersonal communication. There is a two way process that goes on, which uses verbal and non verbal communication process.

What is interesting is that according to experts, non verbal communication is used 93 per cent of time in communication and just about 7 per cent in words to convey a message. And this is when it is amongst us, humans.

Now we can imagine if nature wants to give a feedback to everything we have been doing because if you think about it all our actions must have a feedback and a response.

Earth has been regularly communicating in its own way but maybe we have not been good listeners. The receiver is the listener. But many times even in our regular conversations we find it hard to focus especially if the topic is of no interest to us.

Science continues to debate on the impact of pollution and what is effecting climate change. Some are obvious yet as our technology moves on to further sophistication it is so easy to get disconnected with nature.

But this month nature showed its response or feedback and we had to sit up, listen, watch and think. Not just that, the incidents have left nations not in just a state of crisis but might have been taken backward when it comes to development. It is not a video game.

There is no reset button except to start all over again. Two calamities — an earthquake in Morocco and a storm that led to flooding in Libya has given an insight on how quickly nature can redesign a landscape, take away lives and change lives. And most affected are going to be the vulnerable ones — citizens of tomorrow, children of today.



Lakshmi Kothaneth @lakshmioman

The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

EARTH HAS BEEN REGULARLY COMMUNICATING IN ITS OWN WAY BUT MAYBE WE HAVE NOT BEEN GOOD LISTENERS

In Morocco there is a teacher who lost all her 32 pupils in the earthquake. In Libya a 11-year-old boy was washed away with the entire family, but was miraculously returned back to the land. Just him. Today his uncle is his guardian.

For the traumatised children the earthquake must be a nightmare they are trying hard to wake up from.

Many of the young scouts and guides have gone, but the rest of the members with no time to cry continue to cheer the other children who are left as orphans due to the flood.

Unicef reported that Initial evaluation indicated that approximately 100,000 children have been impacted by the powerful earthquake that struck Morocco late on Friday night (September 8) — the strongest seismic event to hit the Kingdom since 1960.

Meanwhile, Unicef representative in Libya said that the children of Libya are facing yet again another tragedy after over a decade of conflict and the priority is to scale up life-saving assistance, in particular providing health, water and sanitation supplies, psychosocial support, family tracing and preventing waterborne diseases.

Time is precious. The aftermath of floods and earthquakes are major issues as previous experiences have shown. The most vulnerable group is children and facing them, as Unicef pointed out are high risk of disease outbreaks, lack of safe drinking water, malnutrition, disruption in learning, and violence.

According to Unicef, children who lose their parents or become separated from their families are more exposed to protection risks, including violence and exploitation.

People might argue that earth's landmass have always moved and storms have always brewed. We have always been concerned about leaving earth in good condition for the future generations and whether we like it or not, we are left speechless with no one words to console to this young children who have to build life all over again. And alone, in most cases.

BIRD SINGING COMPETITION



A man installs the cage of his bird during a bird singing competition in Thailand's southern province of Narathiwat on Monday. Some 2,000 birds from Thailand, Malaysia and Singapore entered the annual contest. — AFP

Rule-making in a divided world

If anyone had lingering doubts about the fractured state of global rule-making, they should now be dispelled. The just-concluded G20 summit in New Delhi attracted as much attention for who was not there – Russian President Vladimir Putin and Chinese President Xi Jinping – as for the discussions among those who showed up. But the real takeaway from the summit, as well as the gathering of the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) that preceded it, is that global rule-making is set to become increasingly uneven, shaped by small groups, swing states, and fluid coalitions.

Even without Putin and Xi, palpable divisions marked the G20 summit, belying its optimistic theme: “one earth, one family, one future.” While India, which has worked hard to position itself as a unifying diplomatic force and a spokesperson of the Global South, managed to secure consensus on a final declaration, this was no easy feat, owing not least to disagreements over how to refer to the Ukraine war.

The compromises this demanded were reflected in the summit's final declaration, which featured far softer language on the Ukraine war – and, in particular, Russia's culpability – than the declaration that was issued in Bali last November. In 2022, G20 leaders acknowledged that perspectives on the invasion differed, but also strongly condemned Russia's actions and calling for the withdrawal of its



Ana Palacio

The writer is a former minister of foreign affairs of Spain and former senior vice-president and general counsel of the World Bank Group, is a visiting lecturer at Georgetown University

UNLESS THE G7 CLARIFIES ITS DIRECTION ON UKRAINE, IT RISKS LOSING ITS INFLUENCE, WITH POTENTIALLY FAR-REACHING CONSEQUENCES FOR DEMOCRATIC VALUES GLOBALLY

troops. In 2023, they lamented the “immense human suffering and the adverse impact of wars and conflicts around the world,” issued a pro forma exhortation to abjure the use of nuclear weapons, and touted the hallowed principles of sovereignty and territorial integrity – all without mentioning Ukraine by name.

Not surprisingly, Russia hailed the declaration, while Ukraine decried it for containing “nothing to be proud of.” Meanwhile, analysts wondered about the potential costs of Western leaders’ decision to accept the watered-down declaration in the name of salvaging the summit.

As for China, deepening global divisions and escalating superpower rivalry likely drove Xi's decision to skip the summit, though China's prolonged border dispute with India and its recent economic travails were probably also considerations. For US President Joe Biden, Xi's absence provided an opportunity to present the United States as a reliable partner to the developing world. But the US pledge to reform the World Bank and increase its lending capacity to \$25 billion is likely to ring hollow to low- and middle-income countries.

As for the developing world, it wasn't left empty-handed. G20 leaders formally decided to make

the African Union, with its 55 member states, a permanent member, thereby putting the AU on equal footing with the European Union. This will go a long way towards amplifying the Global South's global influence.

The decision to extend a formal invitation to the AU might partly reflect the sense among Western powers that alternative groupings are breathing down their necks. After all, the BRICS bloc, which China is openly attempting to position as a rival to the G7, had just expanded its ranks to include six new members (Argentina, Egypt, Ethiopia, Iran, Saudi Arabia, and the United Arab Emirates).

Much to China's satisfaction,

the longstanding dominance of the G7 (Canada, France, Germany, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, the US – plus the EU) does seem to be weakening. While the G7 still plays a vital role on the world stage, few today would echo US National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan's 2022 assessment that it is the “steering committee of the free world.” On the contrary, with the US gearing up for next year's presidential election, and the EU preoccupied by questions about enlargement and reform, the G7 appears to lack unity of purpose, which is undermining its traction in world affairs.

This is not to discount the achievements of this year's G7

summit, carried out under Japan's capable leadership. Beyond securing a consensus on both the Ukraine war and China, Prime Minister Fumio Kishida convincingly advocated for combining the transatlantic and Indo-Pacific regions into a single strategic space. More broadly, Japan – the first to sound the alarm about the military threat posed by China – has rallied its allies and beefed up its own defences, all while maintaining a balanced policy stance based on economic realism.

Nonetheless, assessments like that of Princeton's John Ikenberry – who hails the G7 as a “power player,” and argues that, with Biden in the White House, “alliance cooperation across the liberal democratic world has entered a period of remarkable innovation and creativity” – are probably too sanguine.

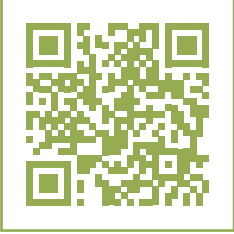
The war in Ukraine has accelerated both the fracturing of the world order and countries’ scramble to establish new alignments that can secure their interests. If the G7 – whose members comprise less than 10 per cent of the world population – does not clarify its direction, it risks losing its influence, with potentially far-reaching consequences for the values that unite its members.



The just-concluded G20 summit in New Delhi attracted as much attention for who was not there.

sport

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Ferrari's Spanish driver Carlos Sainz Jr celebrates winning the Singapore Formula One Grand Prix night race at the Marina Bay Street Circuit in Singapore. – AFP

Sainz’s perfect Singapore drive ends Red Bull streak

SINGAPORE: Carlos Sainz said Ferrari “didn’t put a foot wrong” as the Spanish driver drove a perfect race to win a thrilling Singapore Grand Prix on Sunday and end Red Bull’s hopes of sweeping every race in 2023.

But an emotional George Russell was close to tears after crashing his Mercedes on the final lap after attempting a late victory charge on fresher tyres.

Lando Norris was second after a brilliant defensive drive to hold off the Mercedes pair as Lewis Hamilton crossed the line in third after team-mate Russell’s lapse.

Championship leader Max Verstappen, who had won the last 10 races, was only fifth as Red Bull failed to take the chequered flag for the first time this season after a weekend where they were consistently off the pace.

His team-mate Sergio Perez crossed the line eighth.

Sainz controlled the night race around the city-centre street circuit brilliantly from pole position to take only his second career win, the first coming at the British Grand Prix last year.

“An incredible feeling. We didn’t put a foot wrong all weekend,” said Sainz.

“We nailed the race. We had one opportunity to win a race this year and we did it perfect,” added the Spaniard.

Sainz seemed set for a comfortable win until a virtual safety car 20 laps from the end gave the two Mercedes the chance to change to fresh medium-compound tyres.

Russell and Hamilton came out flying and soon reeled in and passed the second Ferrari of Charles Leclerc, who finished fourth.

But when they got on the heels of the top two they could not get past as Sainz cleverly backed up to keep his former team-mate Norris within DRS (drag reduction system)

range so the Englishman could defend second place.

“It was just quite tight at the end. We gave Lando a bit of a cheeky DRS boost to help him and in the end it worked,” said Sainz. “The safety car forced us to pit earlier than we wanted and I knew it was going to be a long stint on the hards.”

VERY GENEROUS

Russell was all over the back of Norris until his challenge ended in the barriers, handing Hamilton the final podium place.

“It’s heartbreaking after such a great weekend,” said Russell. “I feel like I let myself and the team down. It’s tough but we will come back.”

Norris was grateful for the help he received from Sainz, his former team-mate.

“Carlos was very generous trying to help me get DRS. It helped my race and it also helped his,” said Norris.

Alpine driver Pierre Gasly was sixth, with McLaren’s Oscar Piastri seventh.

Rookie Liam Lawson picked up his first championship points in ninth for AlphaTauri on only his third Formula One start and Haas’s Kevin Magnussen rounded out the top 10 points scorers.

Sainz began the race smoothly to take the lead with Leclerc slotting into second and there was little action until Logan Sargeant prompted a safety car when he lost the front wing of his Williams on lap 20.

A flurry of pit-lane activity followed as all the leaders headed in for fresh hard tyres to take them to the end of the 62-lap race.

Leclerc was held up double-stacking behind Sainz and Russell and Norris emerged in front of the Monegasque.

The order was unchanged until Esteban Ocon’s engine gave out causing a virtual safety car with 18 laps left.

It prompted the Mercedes pair to dive in

for fresh medium tyres as the leaders stayed out. It put the pair behind Leclerc but they were lapping two seconds quicker and soon swept past the Monegasque and closed on Norris until Russell’s error cost him a podium place.

Verstappen is still a runaway favourite to claim a third world title but the all-conquering Dutchman has still never taken the chequered flag in Singapore.

He now cannot clinch the title until the Qatar GP in three weeks’ time, but said the team would bounce back at next weekend’s Japanese Grand Prix, where the track will suit them better.

“I had fun in the second stint. We were quite quick on the medium compound,” said Verstappen, who increased his lead over Perez to 151 points with seven races to go.

“I think we will be quick in Suzuka.”

— AFP



Sultanate of Oman
SPORTS ACTIVITIES FUND
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ANNOUNCEMENT

The Sports Activities Fund announces its desire to offer the lands it owns outside Muscat Governorate to companies, specialized in the field of land investment, wishing to invest in one or more plots of land whose data are shown in the table below.

Location	Plot No.	Area in Sq.M.
Sohar	35	5.000
Nizwa	243	3.000
Ibra	230	2.511
Sur	840	628
Ibri	953	2.816

Companies wishing to submit their proposals can obtain a copy of the survey drawing of the land (Krooki) along with the Offer conditions document from the office of the Sports Activities Fund on the fifth floor in the building of Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth in Ruwi (Telephone: 24755175) **starting from Sunday the 24th of September 2023 until Thursday, October 12, 2023.**

Bid proposals must be submitted in envelopes sealed with red wax and addressed to the Executive Director of the Sports Activities Fund and received at the Fund's office on the fifth floor of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth building in Ruwi no later than the end of official working hours **on Thursday, December 14, 2023.** The bid submitted after this date will not be taken into consideration whatever the reason for the delay is. The Sports Activities Fund is not bound to accept the highest bid and has the right to accept or accompany any offer bid without giving reasons.

Sohar thump Al Wahda to remain in top spot

ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 18

Sohar continued to sizzle in Omantel League as they beat new comers Al Wahda 3-1 in the fourth week of the top-tier league. The win sent the Al Batinah North team to top of the standings with 10 points while Al Wahda remained at the bottom with one point only.

At Sur Sports Complex, former Oman national player Mohsin Jawher began the match strongly as he scored an early goal in the fifth minute from corner spot and he doubled the lead after eight minutes to make it 2-0 from a penalty kick. The match was controlled and dominated by the guests in the first half while the hosts returned back to save their net from any further goals.

In the following half, Sohar's Abdullah al Shibli managed to score the third goal in the 53rd minute in a direct meeting with the goalkeeper.

The third goal made the situation more difficult for the hosts as they missed the discipline on the field and the players created mistakes which were taken advantage by the opponents. In the dying minutes, Hamed al Mukhaini scored a consolation goal for Al Wahda to end the match at 3-1.



OMAN CLUB EDGE AL SHABAB

In another encounter, Oman club clinched a crucial 1-0 victory over Al Shabab at Al Rustaq Sports Complex. The only goal in the match was scored by Emanoel in the dying minutes at 98th minute. Al Shabab failed to take the home advantage and register their first win in the league as they have two points in the tenth place. The win took the Muscat-based team to the top four teams in the table order as they earned six points from two victories and suffered two defeats.

Al Shabab team played with 10 men since

41st minute of the first half after Al Bara al Mawali received a red card from main referee Khalid al Shaqsi.

Despite the shortage in the hosts side, the rivals could not register any goals until another red card for Al Shabab's Al Mahdi Kreshi in the 75th minute as he received his second yellow card and then the red card. Oman club players controlled the midfield and created some scoring attempts. They broke the deadlock in the extra time of the second half through Emanoel in the 98th minute.



South African players celebrate winning the series after the fifth one-day international (ODI) match between South Africa and Australia at Wanderers stadium in Johannesburg. – AFP

Jansen destroys Aussie top order to clinch series

JOHANNESBURG: Left-arm fast bowler Marco Jansen dismissed the first five Australian batsmen to clinch a come-from-behind series win for South Africa in the fifth one-day international at the Wanderers Stadium on Sunday.

Jansen took five for 39 as Australia were bowled out for 193 in reply to South Africa's 315 for nine.

South African captain Temba

Bavuma said the character of the team had shone through after they lost the first two matches of the series, which boded well for the World Cup in India next month.

"There is a lot of confidence we can take, in that we had our backs against the wall and we showed we have ways of getting on top of the game. We will go to India in probably the best state we can be."

South Africa won each of the

last three matches by more than 100 runs after they were sent in to bat by Australian captain Mitchell Marsh.

Marsh admitted: "We were outplayed in the last three games but we have a one-day game in India on Friday, a lot of players coming back and a big World Cup coming up."

Several leading players, including regular captain Pat Cummins, fellow fast bowler

Mitchell Starc, all-rounder Glenn Maxwell and star batsman Steve Smith, will join the team for a pre-World Cup series against India starting in Mohali on Friday.

Marsh's decision to bowl first in the only day game of the series seemed justified on Sunday when his bowlers reduced South Africa to 103 for four in the 24th over on a pitch which offered sideways movement and bounce to the seamers.

Player of the series Aiden Markram (93) and David Miller (63) put on 109 for the fifth wicket and lower order batsmen Jansen and Andile Phehlukwayo took the total past 300 with some big hitting towards the end.

Jansen hit three sixes in scoring 47 off 29 balls and Phehlukwayo cleared the boundary four times in his unbeaten 39 off 19 deliveries.

Marsh and David Warner

blasted 34 off the first three overs of the Australian innings but Jansen came into the attack and dismissed Warner and Inglis in a double-wicket maiden over.

Marsh (71) and Marnus Labuschagne (44) put on 90 for the third wicket but Jansen dismissed both set batsmen and Alex Carey in a burst of three wickets off seven balls to put South Africa in command.

—AFP

Al Seeb dominate Oman Club

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 18

In a thrilling match of the Credit Oman Basketball Cup, Al Seeb once again asserted their dominance by clinching a victory over Oman Club, with a commanding scoreline of 109-38. The match was held at the sub-hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher on Sunday.

From the very outset, Al Seeb Club showcased their superior prowess, dictating the tempo of the game and securing victory decisively in all four quarters. The first quarter saw Al Seeb employing organised attacks, enabling them to secure a 4-point lead. Al Waqqas al Hinai and Abdul Rahman al Shabibi contributed crucial points for Al Seeb, while Hussein al Kindi made a valiant effort to respond for Oman Club. However, Al Seeb's relentless offensive drive, including three-pointers from Ahmed al Maamari and Al Waqqas al Hinai, further extended their lead to 28-11 in the first quarter.



The second quarter continued to see both teams striving to breach each other's defences, with Al Seeb adding 19 points and Oman Club tallying 12 points. The first half concluded with Al Seeb firmly in control, leading Oman Club 47-23.

In the third quarter, Al Seeb continued their offensive

advantage, exploiting every opportunity to score more points that widened the gap, when they netted 27 points, while the Oman Club scored only 13 points. The third quarter ended with Al Seeb leading Oman Club 74-36.

The final quarter witnessed Al Seeb's continued dominance, both offensively and defensively. Al Seeb scored an impressive 35

points, while Oman Club could only muster 2 points. The match concluded with Al Seeb securing a resounding victory over Oman Club with a final score of 109-38

AI BASHAYER BEAT NIZWA

In another clash, Al Bashayer Club got the better of their neighbours Nizwa Club 88-47.

Al Bashayer took control

of the match, showcasing excellence in both defensive and offensive maneuvers. They initiated scoring with a mistake by Bassam al Busaidi, followed by an impressive 8 points from Saeed al Saadi. Nizwa opened their scoring with a three-pointer by Mohammed al Anquodi and added a point from a mistake by Ahmed al Afifi. The first quarter concluded with Al Bashayer leading Nizwa 22-9.

The second quarter commenced with a flourish for Al Bashayer, as Ahmed al Halali and Ahmed al Jahwari both netted impressive three-pointers. Nizwa responded with a point from a foul by Mohammed al Ankoudi. Both teams continued to exchange blows, with Al Bashayer accumulating 11 points and Nizwa adding 13 points. The first half ended with Al Bashayer leading Nizwa 39-23.

The third quarter mirrored the previous ones, with Al Bashayer extending their lead significantly, capitalising on Nizwa's errors. Al Bashayer managed to amass 25 points, while Nizwa Club only contributed 8 points, resulting in a scoreline of 64-31 in favour of Al Bashayer as the third quarter concluded.

In the fourth quarter, both teams were more active, with the scoring advantage going to Al Bashayer. The excitement continued with mutual attacks until the match ended with Al Bashayer defeating Nizwa 88-47.

Jayasinghe crowned Oman Amateur Series champion

MUSCAT: Ruwan Jayasinghe has been crowned champion of the first ever Oman Amateur Series after rounds of 74, 79 and 72 for a tournament total of 225.

Played over three consecutive days at Ghala Golf Club, the event had the added attraction of World Amateur Golf Ranking points resulting in a strong field of players.

In the mix from the first round where he posted a two over par 74 to be tied with eventual runner up Bader al Amri, Jayasinghe relinquished his lead after a second round score of 77 to Azzan al Rumhi. However, Jayasinghe recorded the tournaments lowest round of the week in the final round to take top spot with a level par 72 around Ghala Golf Club which included three birdies and three bogeys.

The Sri Lankan, who plays out of Ghala Golf Club, claimed the title by a small margin of two shots from Oman national team player Bader al Amri, who posted a final round 73, with Ahmed al Wahaibi a further two shots back.

The Oman Amateur Series has been created

by the Oman Golf Association to provide playing opportunities for elite amateur golfers based in Oman. The events will be accredited with World Amateur Golf Ranking (WAGR) points, the WAGR listing is managed by the R&A and the USGA and is used as a global measure of the elite amateur competitive game. Currently Oman has one player, Azzan al Rumhi, listed with WAGR status, through these events the Oman Golf Association endeavours to see this number increase.

As the series develops, it will attract more elite players from wider afield which will strengthen the event and the WAGR points available, it will also allow players based in the Sultanate of Oman to measure themselves against the best in the region.

The Oman Amateur Series has been made possible by the support of Ghala Golf Club, the R&A, Asian Tour, and the Oman Golf Association's partners Sohar Aluminium and Moore Stephens. The Oman Golf Association also thanks the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth for their ongoing support and guidance.



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Oman committed to fair market competition: MoCIIP

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 18

At a forum hosted at Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry headquarters here on Monday, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) reinforced its commitment to fair competition within Oman's economic landscape. The forum, focusing on the theme, 'Together to Ensure Competition,' affirmed its resolve to promote a level playing field for businesses and safeguard consumer interests.

The central objective of the forum was to impart knowledge and awareness to the general public, consumers, traders, and investors regarding the critical provisions embedded in the Competition Protection and



Dignitaries at a forum hosted at Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Anti-Monopoly Law, including its executive regulations.

This law serves as the bedrock of ensuring competition, preventing

monopolistic practices, and nurturing a dynamic and open market economy.

The workshop, held under the

auspices of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, Governor of Muscat, was also attended by Qais bin Mohammed al Yousef, Minister

of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and Shaikh Faisal bin Abdullah al Rawas, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Presenting a series of working papers, officials underlined the extensive range of services offered by the Competition Protection and Anti-Monopoly Center.

The first paper shed light on the centre's crucial role in enforcing laws and regulations that safeguard competition and combat anti-monopoly measures.

Notably, the centre conducts exhaustive research studies to detect detrimental practices that could impede healthy competition and actively addresses complaints related to anti-competitive behaviour.

The second paper explored prohibited practices outlined

within the Competition Protection and Anti-Monopoly Law. It examined issues such as monopolies, anti-competitive conduct, cartel formation, and dominance.

The third paper delved into the domain of economic concentration, including its impact on relevant markets, whether positive or negative. This paper also outlined for submitting applications pertaining to economic concentration.

The fourth paper introduced the Anti-Dumping and Support Law, along with the compensatory and preventive measures it encompasses. It provided clarity on the concept of dumping and the deleterious effects it can inflict on local markets, outlining the remedial actions taken to counter instances of dumping.

Development of Oman's newest economic zone begins



PICTURE FOR ILLUSTRATION

CONRAD PRABHU
MUSCAT, SEPT 18

Initial groundwork on a new integrated economic zone, designed to capitalise on an upsurge in investment and economic seen the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, is set commence in earnest in Oman's Al Dhahirah Governorate.

The Economic Zone at Al Dhahirah (EZAD), planned for development on a sprawling 388 sq km area of the governorate, will serve as a new economic growth engine in a strategically important part of the country.

Located just 20 kilometres from the border crossing established on Oman's border with Saudi Arabia in The Empty Quarter (Rub Al Khali), EZAD will leverage its advantageous proximity to the massive Saudi market to target manufacturing, mining, oilfield, logistics, renewable energy and a host of other investments.

On Monday, the Omani Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ), which is overseeing the development of EZAD, invited suitably qualified local and

international consultancy firms to compete for a contract to undertake the preliminary and detailed design, among other services, linked to the zone.

But in keeping with a commitment to opening up contracting opportunities to Saudi players as well, in the case of select projects, competition for this contract will be limited to bidders from Oman and Saudi Arabia, or joint ventures between the two. But given the green-field nature of EZAD, design and supervision work will be limited to the first phase of 6.5 sq kilometres of a total master-planned area of 20 sq kilometres. Bids are due in by October 26, 2023.

Significantly, EZAD grew out of agreements signed by Oman and Saudi Arabia in February this year, setting the ground for a new wave of economic cooperation between the two neighbours. It included a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to finance the infrastructure development of EZAD at a cost of RO 100 million.

In April, a high-level Executive Committee was set up to oversee the conceptualisation and implementation of EZAD.

JOMAR MENDOZA
MUSCAT, SEPT 18

The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) unveiled its latest innovation, the Omap platform yesterday. This digital portal revolutionises the way people access comprehensive geographical data, encompassing masterplans for special economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities overseen by OPAZ.

Omap empowers users with detailed information and services via interactive digital maps and tools. Omap represents the first step in enhancing OPAZ's online land allocation service.

The introduction of Omap Platform aligns seamlessly with OPAZ's commitment to enhancing investor services. It simplifies and expedites procedures, reduces time and effort, ensures equitable opportunities for all investors, and prevents overlapping plans.

This platform offers effortless access to precise spatial information through detailed interactive maps for all zones, even pinpointing available lands for investment and associated economic activities.

Dr Ali bin Masoud al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, emphasised the platform's unique capabilities. In an interview with the *Observer*, he stated, "Investors can examine the elevation of the land, whether inside or outside Oman. It allows investors to understand the surface area of the land, they are able to decide whether the power



Officials at the launch of the Omap platform.

line is near enough or the water capacity is available, and whether that particular plot is suitable for their specific industry, hotel, or commercial activity.

It will also enable investors to understand whether there are roads planned for the future or if there is a network of fiber optics or a telephone network."

The primary objective of this platform is to boost investment opportunities within and outside Oman, delivering information and spatial systems that empower investor decision-making.

It also facilitates the use of modern technologies in urban planning and enables the printing of maps.

Al Sunaidy added, "Anything that's either available or in the pipeline, this platform will allow investors to comprehend it and also enables them to remotely reserve the land, whether inside or outside Oman.

They have a 20-day window to reserve the land and finalise the land acquisition process. Furthermore, it allows investors, both inside and outside Oman, to interact and learn more about the specific plot available within all our zones. We also collect data, utilising artificial intelligence, to understand the preferences and concerns of people, allowing the Authority to plan ahead effectively."

Speaking at the launch event, Najya bint Sultan al Hajriyah, Section Head of Geographical Information System (GIS), highlighted Omap's features, including location searches for investment properties and comprehensive information on nearby landmarks and facilities like hospitals, restaurants, schools, stores, and hotels.

Users can also obtain land details by type, usufruct rates, location coordinates, size, and nearby utilities such as electricity, telecommunications, water, and transportation networks.

Furthermore, the platform allows users to measure distances between different locations and their proximity to transportation networks relevant to goods shipping.

GIS enthusiasts can access the latest satellite imagery, add information, upload pictures, and coordinates for OPAZ-affiliated zones. Omap even informs users about drone-specific locations and restricted drone flying zones.

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Food & Hospitality expo spotlights opportunities in key sector

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 18

The 16th Food and Hospitality Oman (FHO) began at Oman Convention & Exhibition Centre here on Monday, offering three days of opportunities for engagement, investment and collaboration.

The event was inaugurated by Dr Saud bin Hamood al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources, in the presence of distinguished representatives from the ministry and key industry figures. FHO is held under the patronage of the Ministry, reaffirming its significance in Oman's food and hospitality landscape.

The event is supported by prestigious entities, with Oman Air Catering as the Host Organization and A'Saffa Foods SAOG as the Poultry Sponsor.

"We are happy to welcome you to Food and Hospitality Oman 2023.

This event helps businesses and lets smaller companies see new technologies and global brands. It's a chance to make connections and do business," a Ministry official said.

After the event's start, important people got a tour of the



Dr Saud bin Hamood al Habsi inaugurating the event.

exhibition to see the food and hospitality industry up close.

FHO brings together companies from Bangladesh, Belgium, China, India, Iran, Oman, Pakistan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Turkey, and the UAE. FHO showcases innovations in food and drink, farming, food

machines, kitchen tools, hotel supplies, and cafe ideas.

This event also helps Oman's economy, culture, and tourism, in line with Oman Vision 2040.

At FHO, there's also a place called the FHO Knowledge Hub, where people can join seminars and conferences to learn more about Oman's hospitality industry.

They talk about things like making food and farming more sustainable, using data to help customers better, and how to make sure there's enough food and it's healthy.

The next day, they'll talk about how small businesses can keep growing and make customers happy.

They'll also share cooking ideas from great chefs.

On the last day, various speakers will dwell on how new technology is changing how we buy food, the good things and problems with using technology in grocery stores, and why it's important to make sure food is made the right way.



NBO empowers Omani youth in banking industry

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to unlock opportunities for the Omani youth, National Bank of Oman (NBO) continues its steadfast support for skill development in banking and finance.

To date, NBO has accepted an impressive 563 interns in 2023, a testament to its dedication to empowering Omani youth with valuable expertise and equip them with the professional and social skills to confidently enter the job market.

The programme involves an engaging orientation session, offering interns profound insights into the details of the banking sector and the distinctive culture of the organisation.

These promising interns have been strategically assigned to various departments within NBO, providing them with practical exposure to areas such as retail banking, corporate banking, Brand and more.

This comprehensive approach ensures they develop a holistic understanding of the banking landscape whilst acquiring invaluable skills that will serve them well throughout their careers. NBO's internship programme aligns seamlessly with the bank's steadfastness to bolstering the nation's growth by inspiring its youth and preparing them for the competitive job market.

By equipping these talented individuals with professional and social proficiencies, NBO aims to solidify Oman's forthcoming workforce and enhance the nation's global competitiveness and knowledge-based economy as per Oman's 2040 Vision.

NBO's enthusiasm for youth development is demonstrated by a number of initiatives that it organises and supports, including its unique scholarship programme.

BMW iX5 Hydrogen undergoes test drives in the desert

MUSCAT: The vehicles in the BMW iX5 Hydrogen pilot fleet, which launched in February this year, have completed an intensive round of hot-weather testing in the United Arab Emirates for the first time.

The car's fuel cell drive system performed impressively in the face of temperatures rising to 45°C, as well as sand and dust, varying gradients and significant fluctuations in humidity.

The highly efficient fuel cell system, the two hydrogen tanks, the electric motor and the power battery teamed up with the central vehicle control unit to demonstrate their outstanding performance and state of readiness.

The Munich-based development team examined both the functionality of all the electric systems under the extreme conditions and the



provision of the cooling power to enable the full performance of the vehicle.

The vehicles were able to ensure the driving dynamics for which BMW is renowned. Vehicles from the pilot fleet are currently in action in Europe, Japan, Korea, China, the USA and the Middle East.

The aim is to shine a spotlight on the everyday usability of hydrogen-powered vehicles, and

beyond that to gain important knowledge for the development of a potential series-produced model.

The BMW Group is using the pilot fleet to provide support on a regional level for the development of a refuelling infrastructure which can be used with 700-bar refuelling technology across all categories of vehicle – from passenger cars and small vans to buses and heavy-duty commercial

vehicles.

Synergies between different areas of application also offer important scope for developing a strong network of suppliers in hydrogen technology and reducing costs.

The BMW iX5 Hydrogen combines long-distance capability and short refuelling stops with locally emission-free driving.

Provided the relevant framework is in place, the hydrogen fuel cell technology has the potential to serve as another pillar in the BMW Group's future drive system portfolio.

As part of its ongoing transformation, the BMW Group is applying a "technology-open" approach when it comes to drive systems.

The company is therefore adapting to different customer requirements, infrastructure

standards and political and regulatory landscapes in the various regions of the world.

This flexibility puts the BMW Group in the position to respond quickly to changing requirements in the markets in any situation and to present an attractive offer for as many customers as possible at all times.

The BMW iX5 Hydrogen has a fuel cell system generating output of 125 kW/170 hp and a highly integrated drive unit using fifth-generation BMW eDrive technology (the electric motor, transmission and power electronics are grouped together in a compact housing).

The output of the overall drive system is 295 kW / 401 hp. The hydrogen needed to power the fuel cell is stored in a pair of 700-bar tanks made from carbon-fibre-reinforced plastic (CFRP).

OPAZ launches Omap platform: Streamlining investment in SEZ

FROM PAGE 13

Future enhancements will include a service for photographing projects upon investor request. The Omap Platform is equipped with a toolkit that aids users, offering measurement tools, planning, drawing, and annotation features, proximity service searches, cadastral drawing capabilities (Krooki), map printing, and a site selection tool for digitally recording coordinates.

This platform also brings several advantages, including the identification of biodiversity sites, reserves, tourist attractions, camping areas, and more. It provides insights into weather and climate conditions

through connections to climate monitoring stations in the zones.

Additionally, it offers information related to soil tests in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm, which is a focal point for future and artificial intelligence technologies. Omap Platform is set to play a pivotal role in promoting special economic zones, free zones, industrial cities, and investment opportunities by offering easy access to comprehensive geographical data and unified electronic services at reduced costs.

It will contribute to the development and enrichment of urban planning processes and the establishment of smart digital economic cities.

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 18

Muscat Clearing and Depository (MCD) Company, majority owned by Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), has released its new mobile application called 'Oman Stocks' with a strong commitment to serving Omani nationals, long-term residents, and international investors.

In a world where digital transformation is the driving force, Oman Stocks has simplified the onboarding process for Omani nationals and residents.

Oman Stocks offers multiple services such as creating a new investor account, updating an investor account, and view application status.

For Omani nationals, the platform offers a swift and efficient way to capture and upload Resident Card details, significantly reducing the need for manual intervention.

For residents, the platform goes a step

MCD launches new 'Oman Stocks' app



further by seamlessly capturing both Resident Card and Passport details, ensuring a hassle-free experience.

Oman Stocks has transformed the age-old Know Your Customer (KYC) process with its cutting-edge Optical Character Recognition

(OCR) technology.

This innovative feature streamlines data input, minimising potential errors, and ensures that the onboarding process is faster than ever before.

This commitment to efficiency ensures that investors can start their journey without unnecessary delays. Keeping digital security in mind, Oman Stocks' Liveness Detection feature takes user authentication to the next level, ensuring that the person accessing the app is genuine and present.

Further, to ensure that sensitive data remains protected at all times, the platform has integrated with Mala'a and PKI.

The platform also offers a dynamic dashboard that makes managing and updating customer details a delightful experience.

This user-centric approach ensures that investors have the tools they need to navigate their investments effectively.



OQGN IPO to open on Sept 26; Subscription price range Bzs 131 – 140 per share for Category I offer

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, SEPT 18

OQ Gas Networks SAOG (under transformation) announced on Monday the price range and details of the subscription period for its initial public offering (IPO) on the MSX.

■ The offering comprises of the sale of a total of 2,122,005,720 existing shares by OQ SAOC (OQ) directly and indirectly through Oman Energy Trading Company Limited (OETCL) and Oman Oil Services Limited (OOSL) – together known as the selling shareholders – representing 49 per cent of OQGN's total issued share capital.

■ The Offering will include a Category I offer for Institutional investors representing 40 per cent of the total offer size, a sale to Anchor Investors representing 30 per cent of the total offer size and a discounted Category II Retail offer representing the remaining 30 per cent.

■ Subscription price for the Category I offer will be between Bzs 131 and Bzs 140 per share with the final price to be set through a bookbuilding exercise. Subscription price for the Category II offer to be set at a maximum discounted price of Bzs 126 per share, calculated as the maximum price of Bzs 140 per share less a discount of 10 per cent.

■ Significantly, three Anchor Investors – Saudi Omani Investment Company, a wholly owned entity of the Public Investment Fund, Falcon Investments LLC, a subsidiary of Qatar Investment Authority, and Fluxys International SA/NV – have irrevocably committed to subscribe to the Offering at Bzs 140 per share, subject to the terms contained in their respective anchor investment agreements. They are each taking 10 per cent of the Offer.

■ The offer is expected to raise up to RO 297 million (equivalent to \$771 million) at the top of the price range, valuing OQGN at up to RO 606 million (equivalent to \$1.574 billion).

■ Subscription periods



open on September 26, 2023 with the Category I offer closing on October 9, 2023 and the Category II offer closing on October 5, 2023

■ OQGN shares are expected to commence trading on the MSX on or around October 24, 2023.

Talal al Aufi, OQ Group Chief Executive Officer and OQGN Chairman, said: “We are immensely proud of this milestone and look forward to the launch of the IPO subscription period. OQGN has a compelling story, a track record of consistent delivery and is now taking a significant step forward to its next phase of growth.”

Mansoor al Abdali, Managing Director of OQGN, said: “We are confident in our position as the exclusive operator of gas transportation network in Oman and in our ability to provide critical infrastructure for both our domestic and international partners.

Since announcing our intention to float on the MSX, we are pleased to see our strong position and performance



reflected by significant interest from investors including our three, globally renowned, anchor investors. We believe that OQGN represents an attractive investment proposition, and we are excited for what is to come.”

Muteb al Shathri, Acting CEO of the Saudi Omani Investment Company, said: “The company's high cash flow visibility, underpinned by a robust regulatory environment and experienced leadership team were critical in determining our investment in OQGN.

We are pleased to underline our commitment to the investment by securing an anchor position in the forthcoming IPO. We have confidence in OQGN's development and trajectory, as well as in Oman as an attractive investment destination and are excited to be part of the largest IPO to date on the Muscat Stock

Exchange.

This investment underscores our commitment and our long-term investment strategy for Oman.”

Mansoor bin Ibrahim al Mahmoud, CEO, QIA, said: “We are proud to partner with OQGN in its IPO and recognise the critical role OQGN plays in connecting gas producers and customers as part of Oman's broader infrastructure network. QIA recognises OQGN's strong growth potential through further network expansion and adaptation to renewable energy sources.”

Pascal De Buck, Chief Executive Officer, Fluxys, said: “This investment aligns perfectly with our strategy to develop low carbon energy value chains through partnerships. As Oman will become a leading export hub for renewable hydrogen, it's a

unique opportunity for Fluxys to play a key role in accelerating the energy transition and bringing renewable hydrogen to Belgium and Europe.” The Selling Shareholders intend to offer up to 49% of OQGN's total share capital. Immediately following the Offering, a minimum of 51% shareholding will continue to be held by OQ.

■ Category I Offer: 848,802,288 Offer Shares have been allocated for Category I applicants, as follows: (a) 20 per cent of the Offer Shares (equivalent to 50 per cent of the Category I Offer Shares i.e., 424,401,144 Offer Shares) shall be reserved for subscription by Local Applicants.

The allocation of Offer Shares to Local Applicants shall be made on a proportionate basis. Applicants for Offer Shares in the Category I Offer for can apply for a minimum of 100,000 Offer Shares and in multiples of 100 thereafter. (b) 20 per cent of the Offer Shares (equivalent to 50 per cent of the Category I Offer Shares i.e., 424,401,144 Offer Shares) shall be available

for subscription by Non-Local Applicants. Allocation of Offer Shares to Non-Local Applicants shall be determined by the Selling Shareholders in consultation with the Joint Global Coordinators.

■ Anchor investors: 636,601,716 Offer Shares have been allocated for Anchor Investors, being 30 per cent of the Offer. In this respect, the Company has received irrevocable commitments from the Saudi Omani Investment Company, a wholly owned entity of the Public Investment Fund of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Falcon Investments LLC, a subsidiary of Qatar Investment Authority, the sovereign wealth fund of the State of Qatar, and Fluxys International SA/NV.

The anchor investors have, in aggregate irrevocably committed RO 89,124,240 to the IPO representing a purchase price of Bzs 140 per share, subject to the terms contained in their respective anchor investment agreements.

■ Category II Offer: 636,601,716 Offer Shares have been allocated for Category II, being 30 per cent of the Offer (allocation to Category II Applicants to be made on a proportionate basis). If the aggregate demand in Category II is greater than 30% of the Offer Shares, the CMA may decide that a minimum number of Category II Offer Shares be distributed equally among Category II Applicants, and the remaining Category II Offer Shares shall be allocated on a pro-rata basis. Applicants for Offer Shares in the

Category II Offer for can apply for a minimum of 1,000 Offer Shares and in multiples of 100 thereafter.

If the aggregate demand in Category II is less than or equal to 30 per cent of the Offer, then after full allocation to the Category II Applicants, the balance of the Offer Shares will be made available to the Category I Applicants in the respective proportion outlined above for allocation at the Offer Price, if there is oversubscription in Category I.

Belgian firm announces strategic partnership with OQGN

BUSINESS REPORTER

MUSCAT, SEPT 18

Leading Belgian based energy transportation specialist Fluxys has announced a strategic partnership with OQ Gas Networks (OQGN), the state-owned gas transporter of the Sultanate of Oman, which is set to launch an Initial Public Offering (IPO) later this month.

The partnership follows an invitation to become an anchor investor in the coming IPO process on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), said Fluxys in a press statement.

As part of this arrangement, Fluxys has committed to acquire a 4.9 per cent stake in OQGN. The partnership is further strengthened by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between Fluxys and OQGN to explore areas of strategic cooperation



in the development of Oman's hydrogen and CO2 infrastructure.

Oman has a major renewable energy potential as solar and wind conditions are among the best in the world.

Furthermore, Oman is strategically located with excellent

access to hydrogen import markets with ports located on established sea trading routes.

With strong government support, a substantial investment plan is currently implemented with 9 hydrogen projects under development.

In September 2021, the Belgian and Omani ministers of energy signed an MoU to promote and develop renewable hydrogen projects together.

Belgian players like Port of Antwerp-Bruges and DEME already hold a material presence

in the Port of Duqm and the hydrogen space in Oman. Within this 100 per cent renewable hydrogen strategy, OQGN will play a critical role in developing the country's renewable hydrogen (and CO2) networks.

Therefore, this acquisition fits perfectly with Fluxys' strategy to connect and invest in new low-carbon energy value chains by developing hydrogen (and CO2) routes towards Belgium and Europe. Fluxys and OQGN are frontrunners in decarbonisation projects sharing the same renewable future vision.

Both company's infrastructure and projects are highly complementary, translating into a strategic MoU confirming the collaborative ambition of both companies to develop hydrogen, CO2 and green gases infrastructure in Oman.

Talal al Aufi, CEO of OQ Group and Chairman of OQGN noted that, “Fluxys' decision to be an anchor investor in OQGN's IPO demonstrates the strength of OQGN's investment case and growth potential in Oman and beyond.

This investment creates a natural partnership between our businesses as we both seek to support the global energy transition and Oman's Vision 2040.”

Pascal De Buck, CEO of Fluxys: “This investment aligns perfectly with our strategy to develop low carbon energy value chains through partnerships. As Oman will become a leading export hub for renewable hydrogen, it's a unique opportunity for Fluxys to play a key role in accelerating the energy transition and bringing renewable hydrogen to Belgium and Europe.”

Opportunity Oman: Healthcare and pharmaceuticals sector



DR YOUSUF HAMED
AL BALUSHI

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Globally and nationally, the Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals Industry plays an integral role in impacting socio-economic wellbeing incrementally.

Key contributors include essential medical amenities, critical care unit provisions, and one-on-one medicinal therapies provided by niche experts leading modern-day medical breakthroughs that significantly elevate better lifestyles all around.

Creating such a positive impact comes with great responsibility, considering management ethics and sound management practices to ensure effective control must come into play.

Unfortunately, corrupt handling can lead us astray, causing more harm than good over time if poorly monitored practices get neglected entirely.

By ensuring equal healthcare accessibility while controlling morally and ethically questionable practices, we can foster an environment that thrives on encouraging job creation within the industry via innovations in medicinal breakthroughs, ultimately contributing positively to society. Global trends in the healthcare and pharmaceuticals industry The healthcare and pharmaceutical industries are experiencing significant global changes and trends that offer remarkable opportunities for national economies to capitalize on.

Among the observed transformations are technological advancements, such as AI applications in drug discovery, research and innovative medical devices improving diagnosis and patient-care quality and has rendered information widely available for all

Additionally, the ongoing improvement in healthcare has led to the gradual growth of the elderly population and the rise of chronic disease cases are fueling entrepreneurship-driven research, intellectual property creation and increased demand in long-term care and palliative opportunities.

Progressive countries that prioritize investments within the healthcare-pharmaceuticals sectors foster economic growth, improved public health outcomes, and job creation possibilities which accordingly impact progress of Human Development Indicators (HDI).

Investing in cutting-edge therapies and promoting collaborations with academic institutions, consultancy services and subject matter experts, which support the optimization of institutional infrastructures both tangible and intangible will help achieve the goals of entrepreneurship promotion and international leadership status attainment.

The healthcare sector & pharmaceutical industry in Oman offers ample sources of investment opportunities within its dynamic healthcare sector, welcoming foreign investors alongside regional and local counterparts.

The emphasis on improving its infrastructure while promoting natural health solutions makes this industry incredibly alluring

to would-be savers.

Hence, it is not surprising that it appears so enticingly within various financial portfolios worldwide. The forward-thinking stance adopted by current-day leadership in Oman is exemplified through their recent commitment toward funding healthcare facilities development projects.

They received a notable increase in funding upwards of RO 1.4 billion, which rose 8% for the current year, according to the Ministry of Finance. These investments make clear the government's unshakable zeal towards strengthening healthcare services while simultaneously creating a conducive and supportive environment for potential investors.

The healthcare sector is thriving in Oman, as evidenced by continuously mounting expenditures, which reached RO 3.12 billion this year (approximately 4.5% of GDP). This illustrates an uptick in demand for high-quality medical services, along with emerging prospects worth considering by investors wishing to tap into this growing market trend.

The emphasis laid on maintaining one's wellbeing naturally also holds immense significance here; hence, traditional and complimentary medicinal practices such as herbal and alternative medicine are becoming increasingly popular amongst citizens too. To promote this further, the Omani government has developed an extensive database of medicinal plants native to Oman, known as the "Omani Medicinal Plants Database."

Within it, one can find a complete list of indigenous herbs, as well as their traditional uses for treating a range of ailments, creating promising options for individuals to invest in.

Additionally, focus on elderly care has been a prime concern after Covid-19, leading to increased demand on long term, hospice and palliative care options; taking into consideration the touristic nature of Oman and capitalizing on the medical tourism status of Oman among the neighboring markets accordingly positioning Oman as a gateway to three different continents and an enticing opportunity for serious investors. It is essential to consider that Oman offers an advantageous site in terms of strategic healthcare investment opportunities logistically.

The country's placement at the junction of Asia, Africa, and Europe provides convenient access to regional markets easily



THE FORWARD-THINKING STANCE ADOPTED BY CURRENT-DAY LEADERSHIP IN OMAN IS EXEMPLIFIED THROUGH THEIR RECENT COMMITMENT TOWARD FUNDING HEALTHCARE FACILITIES DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS. THEY RECEIVED A NOTABLE INCREASE IN FUNDING UPWARDS OF RO 1.4 BILLION, WHICH ROSE 8% FOR THE CURRENT YEAR, ACCORDING TO THE MINISTRY OF FINANCE. THESE INVESTMENTS MAKE CLEAR THE GOVERNMENT'S UNSHAKABLE ZEAL TOWARDS STRENGTHENING HEALTHCARE SERVICES WHILE SIMULTANEOUSLY CREATING A CONDUCTIVE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENT FOR POTENTIAL INVESTORS.

accessible by investors.

Thus, presenting an excellent prospect for focused investment in Oman's thriving healthcare sector, viewed as a foremost hub for medical tourism, catering primarily to neighboring countries where high-quality yet affordable healthcare services draw clients seeking such facilities outside their own borders more cost-effectively.

Henceforth, it can be highly profitable for investors to consider targeting the country's thriving healthcare domain.

Firstly, investors in Oman enjoy benefits such as tax exemptions, through which businesses pay no taxes on invested capital gains over time, alongside other fiscal perks, such as repatriation of earned profits without additional levies from regulatory authorities.

Secondly, "Oman encouraging private sector participation" reflects one of many policy changes aimed at drawing attention from seasoned investors by making it easy for them to collaborate with domestic operators, according to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion.

This emphasis on building state-of-the-art infrastructure and other measures related to the healthcare industry boosts its attractiveness to potential investors in Oman.

In summary, investing within Oman's burgeoning healthcare sector presents an attractive proposition for regional and

international investors alike.

With a determined government focus on improving healthcare infrastructure while promoting natural health solutions within their populace, combined with a geo-strategic positioning that bolsters ease-of-access across neighboring regions, makes it one of the most accessible markets globally, providing robust long-term returns on any invested capital.

With generous tax exemptions enabled by a promising legal framework, alongside stable policies actively attracting foreign capital investment upwards, there is no doubt that prospective business owners can partake in this burgeoning industry with confidence.

The healthcare sector in Oman is undergoing rapid growth, making it an attractive investment opportunity. This is largely due to the government encouraging investment policies to enhance healthcare services, investors are offered tax benefits, financial grants, and subsidies to attract local, regional, and foreign investors.

Driven by factors such as population growth, changing demographics, and increasing healthcare awareness, the pharmaceutical market in Oman is expanding steadily.

Investing in the local production of pharmaceuticals presents a significant opportunity for investors to meet this rising demand. This information is presented by the Pharmaceuticals

Research and Manufacturers of America, as reported in 2021.

Oman has implemented favorable regulations and policies to promote the local production of healthcare and pharmaceutical products.

Among these measures are streamlined licensing processes, quality standards that ensure patient safety, and protection for intellectual property rights—all serving to create a conducive environment for investors aiming to tap into this growing sector.

These regulatory developments are highlighted by the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, as recent as 2022.

The Sultanate of Oman has demonstrated in recent years a commendable commitment by investing heavily in building a dependable healthcare infrastructure that includes modern hospitals, clinics, and research facilities. These critical facilities constantly require healthcare and pharmaceutical products, presenting local producers with a viable and sustainable market.

Due to its high-quality medical services and advanced treatments, Oman has been attracting medical tourists from neighboring countries.

As this trend continues to surge upward, it unlocks additional opportunities for investors in the healthcare and pharmaceutical sectors.

Through local product manufacturing endeavors, they can capture this heightened

demand.

Healthcare spending has continuously increased under the Oman government's watchful eye as part of a broader effort towards improving access to high-quality medical services throughout the country.

This strategic move comes in response to mounting healthcare needs among residents, which few can ignore in recent times.

By doing so, it projects an exciting avenue for potential investments within domestic healthcare and pharmaceutical productions that promise substantial returns for stakeholders alike, as highlighted by comments released by the Ministry of Finance (2022).

In conclusion, Oman, with its strategic location, stable policies, and supportive government initiatives, presents a fertile ground for investors seeking to capitalize on the booming healthcare and pharmaceutical sector.

The country's emphasis on cutting-edge medical technologies, research, and development, coupled with a thriving medical tourism industry, opens up a myriad of opportunities for business owners and investors alike.

By seizing these opportunities and aligning with Oman's vision for the healthcare industry, investors can not only realize attractive returns on investment but also contribute to the improved well-being of the nation's populace.

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HIS MAJESTY ADMINISTRATORS OATH TO NEW MINISTER

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for Sohar, today administered the oath of office to the newly appointed Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries for Sohar, Sayed Khalifa bin

Sayed bin Khalifa bin Binali, and Chairman of the Administrative and Judicial Court, Sayed Khalifa bin

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STAY APART AND BREAK THE CHAIN

MUSCAT: The frequent critical moments of uncertainty with health spread and beyond, appear by the authorities to follow social distancing guidelines are being on their own.

A 15-day period of the downtown Muscat and its surrounding areas reveals how religiously people crowd at different corners and walk, shoulder-to-shoulder.

While most people across the country are following the guidelines that health authorities say are necessary to keep the coronavirus from spreading, many

are not. "In these critical moments of uncertainty with health spread and beyond, appear by the authorities to follow social distancing guidelines are being on their own."

And in some cases, it is necessary to follow the guidelines of other people as well," said Khalifa bin Binali, who stopped his car to

score away a group of people at a highway in Sohar. The Supreme Committee and the Ministry of Health have said it more than enough times that social distancing is the best way to slow the spread of COVID-19.

While expressing his appreciation for the efforts of other people as well, Khalifa bin Binali said, "The Ministry of Health has said it more than enough times that social distancing is the best way to slow the spread of COVID-19."

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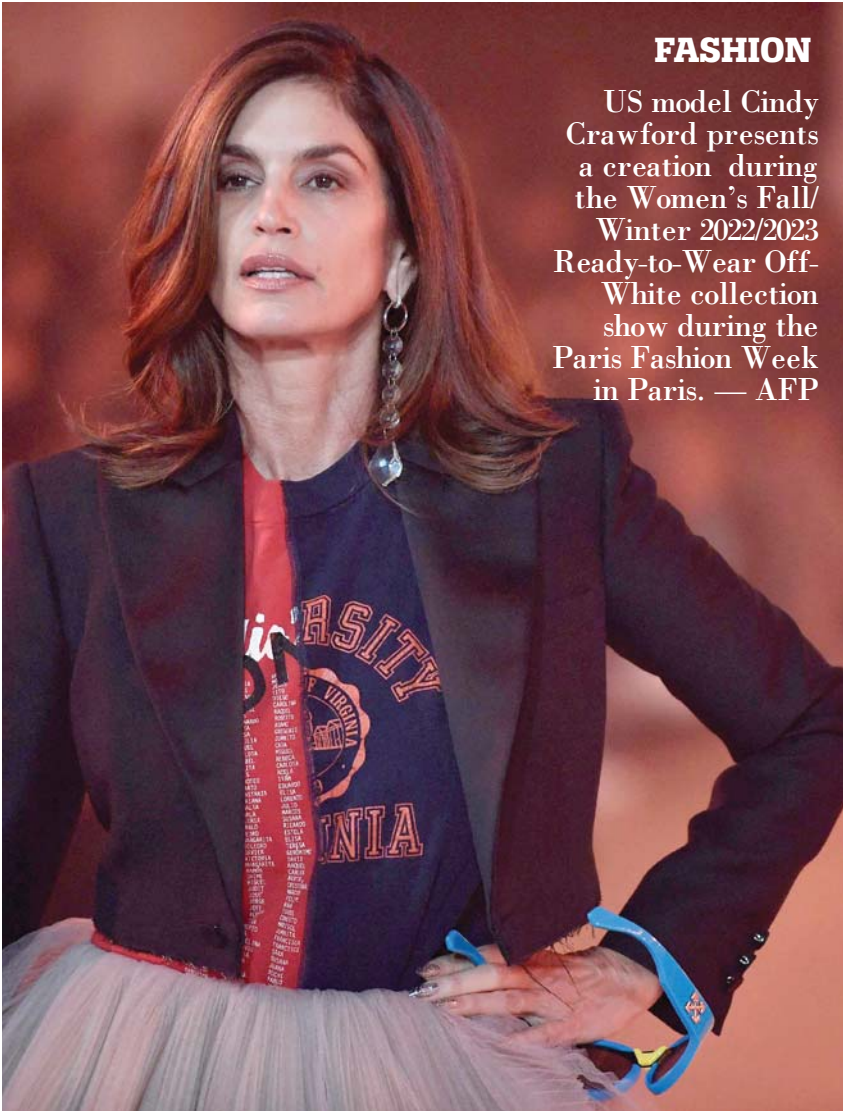
ENTERTAINMENT

Mexico’s Sasha Donanno performs during the Mexican Surf Open Baja California 2023 in Rosarito, Baja California State, Mexico. — AFP



MUSIC

US producer-musician Sean “Diddy” Combs performs onstage during the MTV Video Music Awards at the Prudential Center in Newark, New Jersey. — AFP



FASHION

US model Cindy Crawford presents a creation during the Women’s Fall/Winter 2022/2023 Ready-to-Wear Off-White collection show during the Paris Fashion Week in Paris. — AFP



LIFESTYLE

People walk past willow trees by the waterfront of the Hangzhou West Lake Scenic in Hangzhou, China’s eastern Zhejiang province. — AFP



CULTURE

Women dance after offering prayers to Hindu god Shiva during the celebrations to mark ‘Teej’ festival at Pashupatinath temple in Kathmandu.—AFP

art & life

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TEXT BY ARWA AL HASHIMI
PHOTO BY AL BARAA AL HASHIMI

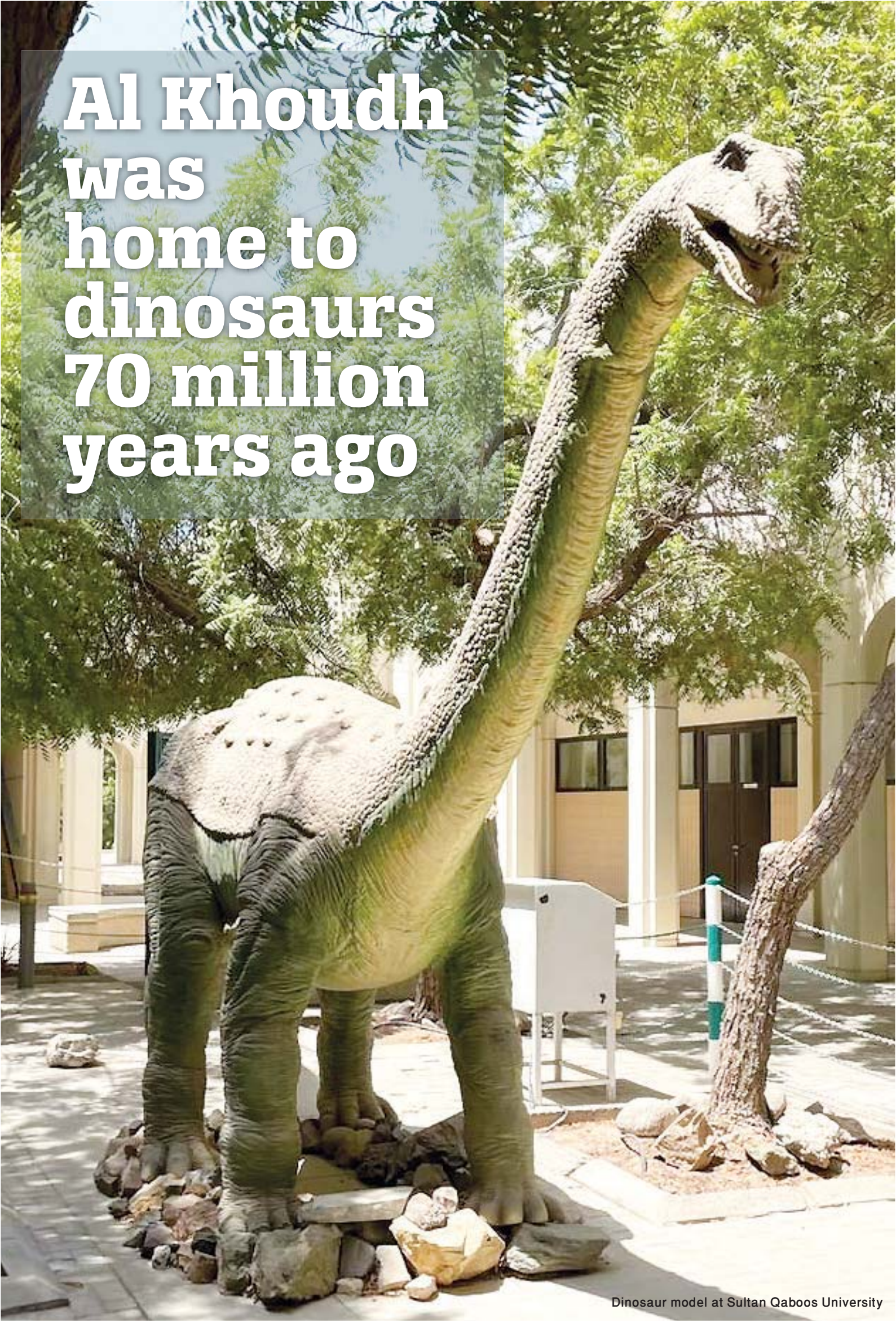
The enchanting tapestry of nature continually weaves its intricate patterns, providing glimpses into the deep-rooted history of life on Earth. In the case of Al Khoudh in the Sultanate of Oman, nature's magic has unfolded through a remarkable revelation — dinosaur footprints dating back an astonishing 70 million years have been unearthed, thanks to the tireless work of geologists from Sultan Qaboos University.

These fossilised imprints bear testament to the biological activity of long-extinct creatures, capturing their burrows, feeding marks, and, most captivatingly, their footprints. This invaluable geological evidence takes us on a captivating journey into the past, offering a glimpse into the coexistence of Theropods and Sauropods in Al Khoudh during a distant era.

The discovery site, nestled in the Wilayat of Al Seeb in Muscat Governorate, was once a thriving region of active rivers during the Cretaceous period. These rivers flowed vigorously in a climate more humid than today, reminiscent of the valleys seen in Fanja and Al Khoudh today, descending from the mountains.

Researchers at Sultan Qaboos University have meticulously identified four distinct dinosaur species that once roamed Oman. Among them, the predatory Theropod dinosaur takes centre stage. This renowned carnivore ranks among the largest predators known to have walked the Earth, boasting teeth that could measure several inches in length.

On the other end of the spectrum, the Sauropod dinosaur emerges as one of the largest land creatures ever to grace our planet. Certain sauropod species could attain stag-



Al Khoudh was home to dinosaurs 70 million years ago

Dinosaur model at Sultan Qaboos University

gering lengths of up to 30 metres and reach heights of around 18 metres, characterised by their relatively short tails, elongated necks, and colossal bodies reminiscent of elephants.

These fossilised bones constitute the Arabian Peninsula's inaugural evidence of these dinosaur species. The reason behind the scarcity of complete skeletons becomes evident when we consider the rivers' role in transporting and repositioning fossilised bones into ravines and coastal areas. Subsequently, sediment encased these remnants, shielding them from decomposition due to oxygen depletion. Thus, the scattered dinosaur bones, both past and present discoveries, beckon further research to unravel their origins fully.

A remarkable contribution to this discovery comes from the diligent efforts of Axel Hartman and Mohammed al Kindi, who uncovered a diverse array of dinosaur fossils. These specimens range in size from a mere 10 cm to an astounding 55 cm or more. During geological surveys near Al Khoudh village, the Oman Geological Society team stumbled upon yet another astonishing find: fossilised dinosaur dung. This prehistoric excrement offers a unique window into the dietary habits of these ancient creatures and helps identify the specific dinosaur species that once inhabited this region.

Intriguingly, these dung fossils, rich in phosphorus, have found practical use in certain parts of the world as a natural soil fertiliser. Mohammed al Kindi emphasises that the area surrounding Al Khoudh village teems with undiscovered Cretaceous period fossils, suggesting that more extensive efforts and research are needed to unveil the hidden treasures of this captivating region. The story of Al Khoudh's ancient inhabitants continues to unravel, offering an awe-inspiring testament to the ever-evolving narrative of life on Earth.



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INSTAGRAM TOP PICKS



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Mothers showcase talent at a grand Onam celebration



KABEER YOUSUF
@KABEERYOUSEF

Breaking away from the monotonous routines of everyday life and shattering societal norms, there was a remarkable gathering of 190 mothers at a mall in the Sultanate of Oman.

The mothers converged under the banner of the Malayali Mothers Middle East (MMME) Oman chapter and reclaimed some precious moments for themselves, creating an exuberant celebration of the festive season of Onam, replete with fervour and merriment.

The festivities showcased traditional cultural performances, including the graceful 'thiruvathira' and vibrant 'oppana' dances. The event also featured engaging skits,

group and solo songs, fusion performances, and various other delightful acts that filled the air with enthusiasm and talent.

"This MMME group, a community of kindred spirits among Muscat's mothers, is independently orchestrated by its members, allowing them to assemble periodically, organise recreational activities, and provide a platform for nurturing future talents," remarked an MMME spokesperson.

These immensely talented mothers captivated the audience with a mesmerising display of various art forms during a five-hour extravaganza. The dance performances, particularly, were a visual delight, enthralling spectators.

To warmly welcome new members, the event featured exciting games and lucky

draws, showering attendees with fantastic prizes. No member left the celebration empty-handed, as all were generously presented with special return gifts. The pinnacle of the gathering was a sumptuous Onam sadya, celebrating the rich culinary heritage of Kerala.

The event's masterminds, Mona Mohiyadheen, Sindhu Soman, and Smitha Nair, worked diligently to ensure its success.

The MMME Oman chapter was conceived with the noble objective of harnessing the latent talents of mothers living far from their homeland, often confined within the walls of their homes. It serves as a beacon of empowerment, allowing these remarkable women to break free from convention and celebrate their unique talents and identities.

H&M to sell second-hand clothes at London store



Eco friendly sustainable shopping.

H&M plans to sell second-hand clothes and accessories at its flagship store in London from October 5, as pressure increases on fast fashion companies to curb their environmental impact by encouraging the reuse and recycling of garments.

With the European Union planning new regulation to crack down on textile waste in the bloc, H&M has said it is "part of the problem" and that the way fashion is produced and consumed needs to change.

The "PRE-LOVED" wom-

enswear collection, at H&M's Regent Street store, will include garments from several other brands and designers as well as H&M group brands, which include Arket, Cos, Monki, and Weekday.

The autumn-winter 2023 collection of the second-hand offerings will include metallic dresses and shirts, trench coats, and "trendy knits", H&M said, with new items added every day.

H&M did not immediately respond to a query about pricing and how the garments would be

sourced. The retailer launched a clothing rental service at its Regent Street store in November last year.

Peer-to-peer resale of second-hand garments has become big business, with online platforms like ThredUP, Vinted, and Depop multiplying and brands following suit by launching their own services.

Zara last week launched its online second-hand service in France, having trialled it in Britain since November last year.

— Reuters

MUSIC

'Heart of Brick' Review: A Homebody Goes Clubbing, and Tells All

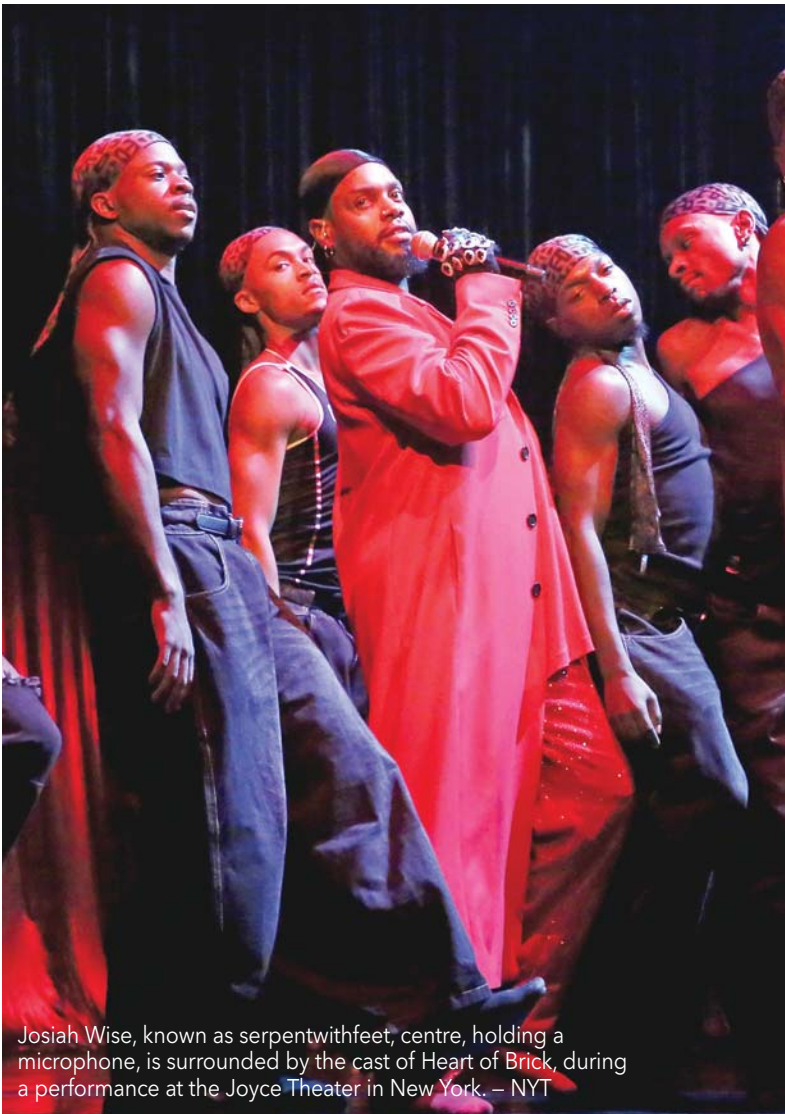
"My vibe is cozy, comfortable," R&B musician Josiah Wise, professionally known as serpentwithfeet, says near the start of "Heart of Brick." Covered in a fuzzy blanket, he tells us that he prefers to stay at home.

It's an unusual introduction for a show in a theater. But "Heart of Brick," which had its premiere at the Joyce Theater in Manhattan on Friday, is an unusual production. It's somewhat like a staged concert of songs from Wise's latest album, "GRIP," which he performs live to recorded tracks. But it's also like an 80-minute jukebox

musical in which he stars as a version of himself, the songs threaded with scenes of dialogue heard in voice-over while he and the other performers silently act and dance.

The story is sweet and slight. Having made a confidant of the crowd, Wise gets up the courage to visit a nightclub where he has heard his ex-boyfriend might be showing up. The ex-boyfriend might as well be named MacGuffin, since he isn't mentioned again. Instead, Wise meets Brick (Dylan M. Contreras), one of the owners of the club, and the two fall for each other immediately. Will the affair last? Is Brick a heartbreaker? These are the dramatic questions.

Although the format takes some getting used to, it focuses the point of view. Wise — the only one talking and singing to us directly, the only one holding a microphone — is telling us his story. The songs, which he delivers in a sensitive, tremulous tenor, express his feelings of romantic hope and vulnerability. The dialogue, by Wise and Donte Collins in collaboration with the other performers, is natu-



Josiah Wise, known as serpentwithfeet, centre, holding a microphone, is surrounded by the cast of Heart of Brick, during a performance at the Joyce Theater in New York. — NYT

ralistic and conversational, not too subtle or shaded. A slightly catty clique of five clubgoers offers a little comic relief, but between jokes and what Wise calls "heart stuff," heart stuff predominates.

Directed by Wu Tsang, the production is mostly clear and economical. Carlos Soto's set design suggests location changes between the club and Wise's apartment with little more than curtains and rails. Costumes (by Julio Delgado) and lighting (by Luke Rolls) are also mostly understated.

So, too, is the choreography (by Raja Feather Kelly). The clubgoers slink and ripple in fluid patterns and florid armwork, occasionally stretching a leg impressively towards the ceiling, hinging backward to the floor or unspooling multiple spins. But however sinuous, they are stuck in the role of backup dancers to serpentwithfeet.

Wise's songs don't advance the narrative or deepen insight into the characters, and several of the dialogue-to-song transitions are clunky. But mostly, the show is a cozy, comfortable experience, about the slow rewards of

romance rather than sex; the lovers spoon but don't even kiss.

Cozy and comfortable, that is, until Darius — a drunk shaman played by Justin Daniels — arrives, posing riddles and warning about poisoned plants. The clubgoers, now dressed in floral ruffles to embody the plants, entangle Brick, who collapses in a coma. To save him, Wise must go on a quest for a mystical flower.

This might be a swerve into allegory, the poisoned plants symbolising gossip (which the show also represents, amusingly, in the form of news reports). It might be a dream ballet. It is certainly an attempt to heighten the drama of intimacy issues. Not strange enough to break into the realm of the surreal, it lifts off awkwardly, as at the end of his quest Wise makes an underpowered leap into the light.

That swerve is a risky move that fails, but the true value of "Heart of Brick" lies in its simple portrayal of love between two men and in Wise's affectionate celebration of Black gay clubs. It's a fuzzy blanket of a show. — NYT



TRAVEL

In the Faeroe Islands, art, food and fashion take a cue from nature

Huddled in the North Atlantic between Iceland, Scotland and Norway, the Faeroes — an 18-island archipelago and self-governing nation within the Kingdom of Denmark — captivates visitors the instant they land at the airport on the island of Vágar. Silence saturates the emerald green slopes and basalt cliffs. Sheep roam the grassy expanses that are sliced vertically by dark rocky threads caused by the erosion of streams. It's hard to keep your eyes focused on the road as you behold a gauzy mist swirling around the mountains, veiling deep gorges, wide fjords, occasional turf-roofed dwellings and waterfalls.



Nes vindmøllepark, where you may run into some animals cloaked in thick fog, in the Faeroe Islands. — NYT



Jan Andersson, owner of Steinprent, a lithography workshop in Tórshavn. — NYT

In this isolated land with its sparse population of some 54,400 people, the environment's magic is pervasive — one reason, perhaps, why the Faeroes also bubble with human innovation that takes its cue from nature. And getting there is easier than ever — Atlantic Airways just started its first non-stop flights from the United States (from New York's Stewart International Airport, about 60 miles from Manhattan).

Consider the islands' 14 miles of subsea tunnels that are currently open. The newest, at about 7 miles, takes drivers from Tórshavn, the cosmopolitan capital of the



Tórshavn, the capital and largest city in the Faeroe Islands. — NYT



The Gudrun & Gudrun boutique in Tórshavn, Faeroe Islands. — NYT

Faeroes, on the island of Streymoy (the largest island), to Eysturoy (the second largest island). Said to be the world's first subsea tunnel with a roundabout, its unusual design features a multicolored illuminated pillar encircled by a steel installation of people holding hands, by Faeroese artist Tróndur Patursson. To augment the experience of driving through the tunnel, tune in to 97.0 FM to listen to the spellbinding soundscape created by musician Jens L. Thomsen, who said he "wanted to find the voice of the tunnel." Another art-infused subsea tunnel is scheduled to open by Christmas, making for faster travel between Tórshavn and Sandoy, one of the southern isles.

Coastal Tórshavn — one of the world's smallest capitals — is itself a nexus of creativity, embracing the contemporary without losing its connection to the past. The old quarter, populated by centuries-old turf-roofed houses, covers a peninsula that juts into the busy harbor. Walk the city's winding

lanes, steep alleyways and wide boulevards, and you'll find buzzy coffee shops, wine bars and fashion emporia. Rather than just using Tórshavn as a base for island hopping, stay awhile and explore the city's food, fashion and art.

FOR FOOD LOVERS

A sense of whimsy pervades ROKS (meaning "silly"), the laid-back sister restaurant to two-Michelin-starred KOKS (temporarily decamped to Greenland, but returning to Streymoy in 2025). Occupying a two-story, turf-roofed structure dating to at least the 1600s, the space is filled with amusing art, including depictions of an octopus holding glasses of red wine. The seasonal offerings, created by the head chef, Poul Andrias Ziska, showcase the Faeroes' fish and shellfish bounty in two tasting menus (\$95 and \$95 Danish kroner, or about \$87 and \$130). The razor clams, a must-try, are served raw, accompanied by a

vinaigrette and shallot sauce, and sprinkled with yellow dandelion and white sweet cicely blossoms.

Across the rugged cobbled lane stands another centuries-old building, housing a different kind of restaurant. With three homey dining rooms adorned with photos of former Tórshavn residents from the late 1800s and early 1900s, Raest, which means "fermented," honours this age-old Faeroese method for preserving food. The chef, Sebastian Jiménez, hails from Atlixco, Mexico, and puts a Mexican twist on the traditional fermented cuisine served in the 14-course tasting menu (1,400 kroner), each dish assembled like a work of art. Faeroese flatbread, for example, is fashioned into a tortilla and topped with a pan-fried langoustine, fermented carrots and pipián rojo, a mole-type sauce that Jiménez's mother regularly cooks.

FOR THE STYLE-CONSCIOUS

Fluffy sheep are ubiquitous in the Faeroes, as are the bulky sweaters made from their thick wool. But two shops — both on Niels Finsens gøta, a major shopping street in Tórshavn — defy expectations. Ulvurhúsið ("wool wear house") features racks of long, stylish cardigans, sweaters and vests, all with a minimalist silhouette — hardly what you'd expect a fisherman or farmer to wear (1,500 to 2,500 kroner). Sissal Kristiansen, a co-owner of the shop, created her Shisa Brand using predominantly undyed Faeroese wool, working in the wool's natural shades of gray, brown and white. Knitting since she was a child, Kristiansen mostly designs female figure-flattering apparel, some bearing side slits. It shouldn't be at all surprising that

the fog-draped landscape influences her. "The side slits were inspired by the layering in the landscape, when I looked at the mountains through the fog," she says.

At Gudrun & Gudrun, owned by Gudrun Ludvig and Gudrun Rógvaddóttir, cocktail and ankle-length dresses bear spaghetti straps, plunging backs and, sometimes, a diaphanous texture. Delicate sweaters are made with a mix of materials: one silk and one alpaca sleeve; mohair paired with glittery threads; a patchwork of different colourful wools. You can even custom order a mohair bridal gown. Ludvig constructs some of her garments by modernising traditional Faeroese patterns, including the star that's often emblazoned on seamen's sweaters. She sources organic wool from all over the world, including the Faeroes. The apparel (2,025 to 4,725 kroner) is mostly hand-knit in the Faeroes, and also by women's empowerment groups that the owners established in Peru and Jordan.

FOR ART ENTHUSIASTS

A sprawling, late-19th-century cannery building fronting the harbour is home to a lithography workshop: Steinprent (meaning "stoneprint"), which has worked with Faeroese and Nordic artists over its two dozen years, relying on a printing process that dates to 1798. In the sun-flooded, second-floor space, you can watch an artist painting on the unusual beige-coloured limestone, and lithographers manning the printing presses. Don't be shy: The owner, Jan Andersson, or his 22-year-old son, Mikkjál, will be delighted to show you around. Some 2,000 original lithographs are for sale (810 to 24,818 kroner). The ground-floor gallery is worth exploring for exhibitions that range from graphic arts to mixed media, mostly from the Faeroes and the Nordic countries.

Also along the harbour you'll find the studio of Hansina Iversen within the ironworks shop of a shipyard building. Inside, gears and other machinery clutter the immense, shadow-laden warehouse. Yet Iversen's space is suffused with sunlight, the white walls hung with her boldly coloured and pastel-hued abstract oils and lithographs (25,000 to 90,000 kroner). An appointment is necessary, but worth it. Visitors can chat with the artist about her canvasses, and how she takes inspiration from the Faeroes' unpredictable weather.

You can also see her work at the National Gallery of the Faeroe Islands, which is snuggled on a grassy expanse within the trail-laced forest known as the Plantation (90 kroner for adults). The exterior of this black, turf-roofed, multi-gabled building references a Faeroese boat shed. Sun floods the modern interior, offering views of the surrounding wood-

land and the figurative bronzes of Hans Pauli Olsen that are displayed outside. The more than 200 works in the gallery's permanent collection are arranged by genre (landscape, the ocean, wool and knitting) and include the dark, melancholy, 20th-century seascapes of Samuel Joensen-Mikines, one of the Faeroes' most revered artists. Other works range from political to playful, like the "rocks" constructed of wool and embroidered with flowers and moss by Súsan í Jákupsstovu; and a giant spider-like installation by Ole Wich, representing the topography of Litla Dimun, the smallest of the Faeroes.

A short uphill walk away is a green knoll dotted with curious sculptures, including a cluster of steel sheep by Bernhard Lipsoe. Here, the Nordic House makes a statement of unity via its design and its eclectic offerings. Each of the Nordic countries contributed to this modernist structure, including Norway (granite flooring), Finland (birch furnishings), Iceland (roof construction), Denmark (glass and steel construction), Sweden (ash wood wall panels) and the Faeroes (grass roof). Faeroese and Nordic theatre, music, dance, cinema, art and literature are all celebrated here. Every summer, the house also hosts an afternoon concert series, mainly classical and jazz, in the glass-walled amphitheatre.

A 20-minute stroll back to the city centre takes you from the architecturally grand to the petite. Leirlist ("clay art") is the small, by-appointment-only atelier of ceramist Gudrid Poulsen. Experimenting with local ash, mud, sand and volcanic basalt in her glazes, Poulsen evokes the Faeroes in her stoneware and porcelain plates, cups and sculptures. Her latest works: rough, yet delicate, chawan cups (350 to 500 kroner), which make evocative souvenirs. And, in this land that's peppered with memorials to men who died at sea, she's working on a massive sculpture debuting in November on Eysturoy, honouring women who died in childbirth.

GETTING AROUND

The easiest way to get from Vágar Airport to Tórshavn is by either a shared taxi (about 243 kroner; prebook at auto.fo or taxi.fo), or a rental car (around 1,000 kroner per day, including basic insurance). Downtown Tórshavn is walkable, so you don't need a car. You can also take a free bus to get around downtown and the rest of the municipality. Be aware that driving in the Faeroes involves travel along narrow, winding roads where sheep will often cross your path. Winds can be quite blustery and fog can obscure visibility. Driving on other islands can involve transiting dark, single-lane tunnels that require you to veer into a pull-in if another car is approaching. — NYT