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OMAN TO SET
UP CENTRALISED
DATABASE OF
OPERATORS

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OURAYAT IS
A HAVEN FOR
PINK AND WHITE
FLAMINGOS

P12

DJOKOVIC BAGS
RECORD-TYING
24TH GRAND SLAM
AT US OPEN

MUSCAT

HM THANKED BY UZBEK PRESIDENT

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a cable of thanks from President Dr Shavkat Mirziyoyev of the Republic of Uzbekistan, in reply to His Majesty's greetings cable on his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, President Dr Shavkat expressed his appreciation for His Majesty's heartfelt sentiments. He underscored the importance of boosting relations and cooperation between the two countries to achieve the interests of the two countries' peoples. He also wished His Majesty good health and happiness and the Omani people continuous progress and prosperity. — ONA

BAHRAIN'S AHMED WINS TOUR OF SALALAH STAGE 2



Bahrain's Ahmed Naser of Victorious Club rode to victory in 4 hours 31 minutes in the second stage of Tour of Salalah from Sadah to Hajeef for 148 km on Monday. Slovenian rider Grega Bole of Shabab Al Ahli Dubai Cycling Team repeated his second position in the first stage to take the leader's golden jersey after the two stages of the four-stage Salalah Tour. UAE national team's Abdulla Jasim al Ali (04:32:11) bettered his fourth place in the opening stage on Sunday to third in the second stage. The Emirati teenager got the white jersey for the best young rider. **DETAILS ON P10**

OMAN CONDOLENCES TO LIBYA OVER STORM

The Sultanate of Oman expressed its heart-felt condolences and sympathy to the government and people of Libya on the victims of Storm Daniel. In a statement, the Foreign Ministry expressed condolences with the victims' families wishing the injured a speedy recovery. Deadly storm winds and heavy floods hit Libya over the past two days, with estimates of fatalities ranging from hundreds to thousands of people, senior officials said on Monday. Storm Daniel swept in over the Mediterranean on Sunday, swamping roads and destroying buildings in Derna. **SEE ALSO P6**

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G20 Summit saw broadening of Omani diplomacy: Sayyid Badr

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
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Oman has participated in over 200 meetings and working groups, nine of them at the ministerial level. I want to express my warm thanks to all the ministries

SAYYID BADR
Foreign Minister

The G20 Summit in Delhi concluded on Sunday, and on that note Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad al Busaidy shared with the Observer the Sultanate of Oman's experience. During the high-profile event, Oman participated in nine ministerial meetings and 200 meetings and working groups.

"Reflecting on the conclusion of the G20 Summit, and looking back on a year of intensive engagement with the G20 process, we have learned a lot. Oman's participation came as a result of the kind invitation of the Indian government," Sayyid Badr noted. He said that the summit has

comprises the 19 largest national economies plus the European Union, and in New Delhi it has been decided to include the African Union as a member.

"This will give the Global South a bigger voice which is most welcome," he pointed out.

"Given the diversity of the G20, it is a remarkable achievement that the New Delhi Declaration was agreed by consensus. In particular I want to congratulate the current and future G20 presidencies: India, Brazil, and the United States, for their successful dialogue to reach this positive outcome.

"Oman has participated in over 200 meetings and working groups, nine of them at the ministerial level."

TURN TO P2

STATE PUBLIC REVENUES AT RO 7.1 BILLION

MUSCAT: The State's public revenue at the end of July 2023 stood at RO 7.183 billion, down by 10 per cent compared to RO 8.003 billion registered over the same period in 2022, according to the Fiscal Performance Bulletin published by the Ministry of Finance on Monday.

At the end of July 2023, net oil revenue amounted to RO 3.714 billion, down by 3 per cent when compared to RO 3.827 billion registered over the same period in 2022. Average oil price amounted to \$83 per barrel and average oil production reached 1,058,000 barrels per day.

Further, net gas revenue amounted to RO 1.329 billion at the end of July 2023, down by 35 per cent when compared to RO 2.056 billion registered over the same period in 2022. This is due to the deduction of gas purchase and transport expenses from total revenue collected from the Integrated Gas Company.

By the end of July 2023, current revenue registered RO 2.132 billion, up by 1 per cent when compared to an amount of RO 2.107 billion collected over the same period in 2022.

Public spending by the end of July 2023 amounted to RO 6.481 billion, down by RO 503 million, i.e. 7 per cent compared to actual spending over the same period in 2022.

Meanwhile, current expenditure at the end of July 2023

Budget surplus at RO 702m

Category	Amount (RO bn)
Gas revenue	1.329
Current revenue	2.132
oil revenue	3.714
Expenditure	4.836
Public spending	6.481

Arabian Tahr sighted in Dima W'attayeen

STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 11

The Directorate of Environment in Al Sharqiyah North Governorate has recently sighted an increase in the number of wild animals in the Wilayat of Dima W'attayeen most notably the Arabian Tahr and several species of local and migratory birds.

The Eastern Al Hajar Mountain range is a major natural habitat for wildlife in the Sultanate of Oman and is characterised by an abundance of trees and plants which provide food for animals.

The Department of Eastern Al Hajar seeks endeavours to boost foot patrols and constant follow-up in remote areas, valleys and plateaus to monitor wildlife and prevent illegal hunting and the cutting down of trees. The department carries out a number of programmes and campaigns to spread the culture of environment preservation among the public.

The department's wildlife rangers are permanently on stand-by to receive reports on violations to the laws that protect the environment and wildlife.





Airport taxi fares to cost less from Oct 1

VINOD NAIR
@vinot_nair

The often contentious fares while availing a taxi from Muscat International Airport and other airports will be soon resolved with the government's new decision, which will come into force from October 1.

The Ministry of Transport, Communications, and Information Technology (MoTCIT) on Sunday decided to grant licenses to two companies to operate airport taxis, which will benefit inbound air travellers, including tourists.

Currently, the fare meter for an airport taxi starts from RO2,500, and each kilometre costs 400 baisas up to 40 km. After that, 200 baisas are charged for every kilometre, while the mobile app-based on-demand taxis are prohibited from picking up travellers from the airport.

According to airport users, a taxi fare from the Muscat International Airport to Ruwi and Muttrah will cost between RO 15-20 (off-peak traffic hours), while generally, an on-demand taxi fare to Muscat from Ruwi costs only around RO6.

"I recently availed a taxi



from the airport to a hotel in Al Khuwair, and it cost me around RO10 for a business client, which is too exorbitant, but I didn't have many options then. The app-based taxi operators are not allowed to pick up inbound passengers due to resistance from the airport taxi operators," said Selvaraj Kumar, an executive of a distribution company.

Speaking to the Observer, Harith al Maqbali - Chief Executive Officer - O'Taxi, "This long-awaited decision is highly welcome, and it will be costlier than the on-demand services but less than the current airport taxi fares." The designated airport taxi operators claim stiff competition from illegal transportation. The

high taxi fares force passengers to resort to illegal transportation, which is banned under the Land Transportation Law.

Illegal taxis are fined RO200 and above per violation. It may be noted that several private vehicle owners have claimed that they have been subject to strict scrutiny and fines from the officials of the ministry and the police at the airport.

On Monday, the ministry granted licenses to manage taxi services at the airports of the Sultanate of Oman. Cloud World Trading's 'Otaxi' and Ubar Smart Cities Company's Oman Taxi will offer trips at fixed prices determined before the trip. The fares will be announced in the

coming days before October 1. To ensure the privacy and security of the user, the two companies will offer facilities such as route tracking and monitoring systems.

The ministry said Sunday's decision followed the companies' meeting the requirements of the Land Transport Law and its plans to include all taxi owners at airports to operate under app-based operators to improve the public transportation system in the Sultanate of Oman.

MoTCIT urged taxi drivers operating at airports to join the licensed applications, and the service provision at airports will be limited to these two companies. There are eight app-based services, including one for women taxi drivers.

The ministry stated that the first phase begins on October 1 and includes taxis operating at the airports of the Sultanate of Oman, while the second phase will cover tourist complexes, hotels, commercial centres, and ports beginning from November 1.

The third phase will cover white and orange street taxis from January 1, which are currently mandated to operate as per a mobile-based meter called Aber.

Oman's participation at G20 underscores deep-rooted ties

LAKSHMI KOTHANETH
@lakshmioman

The Indian Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, Amit Narang Met the media of Oman on Monday at the Indian Embassy to summarise the achievements of the G20 Summit that concluded in New Delhi on Sunday.

He said the G20 Summit under India's Presidency was a resounding success and it was the culmination of months of intensive efforts put together by Team India under the leadership of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

He added that it was also the result of painstaking diplomatic work among the participating countries, symbolising a shared commitment to address pressing global challenges.

"As you are aware, the Sultanate of Oman participated in the G20 for the first time under India's Presidency, on our invitation as our 'Special Guest'."

He said he was happy to note that the Sultanate of Oman honoured India with their esteemed presence as a Special Guest during the G20 Presidency. "The invitation by India to Oman underscores the deep-rooted and time-tested bonds of friendship and brotherhood that we share with Oman. We deeply value Oman's constructive participation in over 150 G20 meetings so far," he said.

Omani delegation enriched the Working Group discussions with their perspectives, and nine Ministers (Foreign Minister, Ministers of Tourism, Agriculture, Economy, Labour, Commerce, Health, and Chairpersons of State Audit and



Environment Authority) of the Omani Government visited India over the past few months to join their ministerial colleagues from the world over in productive deliberations.

"For this, we convey our appreciation to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik. More importantly, it has provided an additional platform to deepen the bilateral partnership between India and Oman," he said.

The ambassador said that His Highness Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik participating in the G20 Summit as His Majesty's Personal Representative and his gracious remarks at the Leaders' Sessions in which he congratulated India for the successful G20 Summit and lauded the invitation extended to Oman to participate as a Special Guest, are highly appreciated.

According to the ambassador, over the course of the past year, the G20 under India's Presidency had sought to find solutions to some of the most pressing global problems, and in that process, has endeavoured to put in place future-ready road-maps for collective global progress.

The summit that concluded yesterday brought together the leaders of the 20 member countries, nine invitee countries, and 14 organisations.

G20 Summit saw broadening of Omani diplomacy: Sayyid Badr

FROM PAGE1

"I want to express my warm thanks to all the ministries and other government agencies who have worked hard to make this possible, not least my own hardworking team."

Interestingly for Oman, G20 has brought focus on green hydrogen and major developments are expected in this field.

Sayyid Badr pointed out: "Oman has made substantive contributions to G20 working groups in agriculture, mining, tourism, and especially renewables including green hydrogen. Our

green hydrogen initiatives are some of the largest and most advanced in the world. Our projects are seeking to integrate green hydrogen production with green steel factories, to build out sustainability more broadly into our economy.

"We therefore welcome the New Delhi Declaration, the announcement of the establishment of a Green Hydrogen Innovation Centre, tripling of renewable energy by 2030, setting up a global biofuels alliance, and moving the language on transition finance from billions to trillions."

He said that these developments

are the building blocks of a new global economy, and for Oman they are the pillars on which Oman Vision 2040 can thrive.

With regard to climate change, the foreign minister said: "It is perhaps the most significant long term challenge to our national security."

"A successful transition to net zero, and the development of better technologies to make extreme weather more survivable, are both essential for our long term future. Only concerted efforts by governments, financial institutions, and people everywhere will make it possible to manage

the consequences of climate change. We must all adjust our habits and lifestyles to support a global drive towards achieving human development goals and sustainability by adopting green economic and green industrial solutions.

"It is my belief that India's strong leadership of the G20 in 2023 has materially advanced this agenda. Now our attention must turn to COP28, where I am confident that our brothers and friends in the United Arab Emirates will deliver another successful summit with further positive outcomes," said Sayyid Badr.

Innovative Milestone: First time in Oman Private Healthcare Sector

Muscat Private Hospital successfully accomplishes Atrial Septal Defect (ASD) Device Closure

Muscat Private Hospital's achievement is not only a testament to its dedication to pioneering medical innovations but also an emblem of hope for patients grappling with similar cardiac challenges. The hospital's state-of-the-art facilities and a competent medical team played a crucial role in achieving this milestone.



Muscat Private Hospital proudly announces the successful completion of the first ASD (Atrial Septal Defect) Device Closure procedure within the private healthcare sector in Oman. This groundbreaking achievement reflects the hospital's commitment to pioneering medical advancements and delivering top-notch patient care.

Atrial Septal Defect, a condition characterized by a hole between the heart's chambers, has found a remarkable solution through the expertise of Muscat Private Hospital's medical team. Dr. Salim Al Maskari, Sr. Consultant in Interventional Pediatric Cardiology, led the innovative



procedure that brought relief to 37-year-old Omani woman suffering from this condition. Dr. Salim's expertise in non-surgical approach has paved the way for a successful closure of the heart chamber defect through an invasive cardiac procedure known as ASD Device Closure.

The revolutionary procedure, performed on August 29, 2023, marked a pivotal moment in Oman's medical landscape. Dr. Salim's meticulous expertise ensured a smooth execution of the

non-surgical intervention, sparing the patient from traditional surgical methods. Post-procedure, the patient experienced a fast recovery, spending just a single day in the hospital before being discharged home.

As an Oman's premier private healthcare institution, Muscat Private Hospital continues to pave the way for advanced medical procedures, supporting in transforming lives and shaping the future of healthcare in the country. The successful ASD Device Closure procedure serves as a beacon of progress and a promise of enhanced quality of life for patients.

Oman participates in interconnection advisory committee meeting



DOHA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Authority for Public Services Regulation (APSR), in the 56th meeting of the Advisory and Regulatory Committee of the GCC Interconnection Authority

(GCCIA), held in Qatar.

Oman's delegation was headed by Dr Mansour bin Talib al Hinai, Chairman of APSR.

The meeting discussed a range of topics that contribute

to enhancing electricity interconnection between GCC states. It also highlighted figures and indicators of exchanged energy, among other topics.

— ONA

Oman-Italy joint military drill kicks off



MUSCAT: A joint Omani-Italian military drill code-named 'Jabal Shams 3' kicked off on Monday. The exercise, which runs till 21 September, is participated by the Royal Army of Oman (RAO). A briefing was presented on the preparatory stages of the exercise and its training programmes and practical applications in a bid to achieve the envisaged training objectives. — ONA



ADVENTUROUS BICYCLE JOURNEY FROM SAHAM TO SALALAH

NAHLA AL MAAMARI
SAHAM, SEPT 11

Faisal al Maamari, a young athletic enthusiast, embarked on a remarkable adventure on September 1. His journey began in Saham, also known as the ‘Valley of Troops’ or ‘Wadi Bani Omar,’ in northern Sultanate of Oman. Faisal meticulously planned this exciting bicycle trip, dedicating around three months to making all the necessary preparations.

Setting out from Saham, Faisal was accompanied by his trusty companions: His bicycle, a well-packed bag, and indomitable spirit. The weather in Oman has frequent changes. Undeterred by the challenging conditions, Faisal embarked on his expedition through the desert.

The adventure began as the sun cast its first rays, and the streets started bustling with life.



Faisal recollected that the weather between Al Zamayim and Haima was particularly challenging, with strong winds whipping up dust around him.

Throughout his journey, Faisal made regular stops to recharge and recuperate. “Between each station, I took around 15 minutes to rest and stretch my legs to keep myself relaxed,” he shared. Passersby along the road were

incredibly encouraging, offering words of support and even extending gestures of kindness by providing cups of coffee, water and even taking selfies with him.

As Faisal finally reached his destination in Salalah, the weariness and exhaustion of the long journey melted away. He concluded his extraordinary trip by saying, “This adventure was not just about building my stamina



and improving my physical fitness, but also about connecting with my fellow young enthusiasts. I hope this journey’s message reaches both the tourism and health sectors, encouraging people to embrace the beauty of Oman’s nature and the joy of biking.”

Faisal Al Maamari’s epic bicycle expedition inspires all who dare to chase their dreams and explore the remarkable landscapes.

New parks to come up in Al Batinah North

SUHAN: The office of the Governor of Al Batinah North announced the establishment of two new gardens and four parks in a number of wilayats of the governorate with a total area exceeding 131,000 sqm as part of the governorate’s efforts to setup public entertainment places for all society segments.

Engineer Sulaiman bin Hamad al Sunaidy, Municipality Director-General in Al Batinah North Governorate, stated that tenders have been floated for the construction of the parks and the gardens which aim to increase existing green places and afforestation areas and contribute to achieving the Sultanate of Oman’s carbon neutral strategy by 2040.

Al Sunaidy said that the first of these gardens is the waterfront park in the Wilayat of Shinas on an area of 30,000 square metres. It consists of green spaces, shaded areas, children’s playgrounds, prayer halls for men and women, a fountain, among other facilities.

The second one is the Jasmine Park in Al Bidaya in the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq on an area of 26,878 square metres. It comprises green areas, children’s playgrounds, sports games, shaded areas and other facilities.

The four parks are: Al Dhuwaihir



Park in the Wilayat of Al Khabourah which will be built on an area of 3,032 square metres and comprises children’s playground, shaded places, and service facilities.

Al Khuwairat Park in the Wilayat of Al Khabourah on an area of 57,000 square metres and consists of games for children’s playgrounds, shaded areas, investment sites, and service facilities. Al Bax Park in the Wilayat of Al Khabourah on an area of 870 square metres. It comprises children’s playgrounds, shaded areas and other service facilities. Mikhailif Park in the Wilayat of Saham on an area of 13,000 square metres. It comprises children’s playgrounds, shaded areas, among other service facilities, he concluded. — **ONA**

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DON'T SKIP BREAKFAST!

K I D S S H O U L D N E V E R M I S S B R E A K F A S T B E F O R E G O I N G T O S C H O O L

MAI AL ABRI
MUSCAT, SEPT 11

IN a recent effort focused on enhancing youngsters' general health and welfare, the Ministry of Health has strongly appealed to parents, encouraging them to guarantee that their children consume a nourishing

breakfast before departing for school. There have been prior reports from numerous schools about children experiencing fainting spells during morning assemblies and struggling to focus throughout the day. Children who consume a daily breakfast experience a 40 per cent reduction in their susceptibility to obesity, as

the Ministry of Health explains. This initiative has gained traction due to its numerous health benefits, including improved immunisation, weight management, sustained energy, and enhanced mood for school-going children. Below are four benefits of having breakfast.



1 THE IMMUNISATION BOOST
One of the primary reasons behind the Ministry of Health's push for breakfast is its potential to bolster a child's immune system. Breakfast is often considered the most important meal of the day and for a good reason. A well-rounded morning meal provides essential vitamins and minerals to significantly strengthen a child's immunity. Children are better equipped to fend off illnesses and infections by fortifying their bodies with these vital nutrients, ensuring they remain healthy and active throughout the school year.

2 A STEP TOWARDS HEALTHY WEIGHT MANAGEMENT
Contrary to a common misconception that skipping breakfast aids in weight loss, research indicates that having a balanced breakfast can be instrumental in managing a child's weight. A well-structured morning meal helps regulate appetite, preventing excessive eating later in the day. This can lead to healthier eating habits and better weight control, a vital consideration given the growing concerns about childhood obesity. The Ministry of Health's recommendation to prioritise breakfast aligns with the broader public health goal of combating this pressing issue.

3 SUSTAINING VITAL ENERGY FOR LEARNING
Another significant advantage of breakfast is its role in providing the essential fuel for a child's body and brain to function optimally. The early hours of the school day demand concentration and attentiveness, making it crucial for children to start their day with a nutritious meal. A balanced breakfast helps sustain energy levels, ensuring students remain focused and engaged in their lessons. Improved cognitive function translates into enhanced academic performance, setting the stage for a successful educational journey.

4 ELEVATING MOOD AND WELL-BEING
Beyond its physical benefits, breakfast also plays a pivotal role in shaping a child's emotional well-being. The morning meal can profoundly impact a child's mood and behaviour. A well-nourished start to the day can reduce irritability, enhance attentiveness, and create a positive atmosphere for students and teachers. This positive mood can significantly influence a child's overall school experience, making engaging in learning and social interactions easier.



Agreement signed for 'SHE STEMS' programme



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, on Monday signed a cooperation agreement with Oman Cables Industry to launch the second edition of the 'SHE STEMS' programme for community development.

The agreement provides for developing the practical skills of 20 Omani female trainees to qualify them to undertake positions in the manufacturing, science, technology, engineering and mathematics sectors in the Sultanate of Oman.

The agreement was signed by Dr Rahma bint Ibrahim al Mahrouqiyah, Minister of Higher Education, Research and Innovation, and Cinzia Farisè, CEO of Oman Cable Industry.

'SHE STEMS' programme constitutes part of efforts made by Oman Cables Industry to develop local female talents to help achieve a sustainable future for Oman. It is a programme dedicated to female job-seekers. — ONA

International Literacy Day: Promoting literacy in the world

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Special Education and Continuous Learning (Department of Lifelong Learning), on Monday organised a celebration to mark International Literacy Day 2023, which falls on September 8th of each year.

This year it comes under the slogan (Promoting literacy in a world in transition: building the foundations of peaceful and sustainable societies). The celebration was held under the auspices of Dr Abdullah bin Khamis Ambusaidi, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Education for Education, in the presence of a number of officials.

Dr Ambusaidi stated: "This celebration comes in honour of learners in the field of illiteracy for their efforts to be freed from illiteracy, and for the initiatives undertaken by provincial educational institutions, to advance learners, and as a reminder of the ongoing efforts being made in the field of eradicating illiteracy. The Ministry of Education is working with all its capabilities in providing support and assistance to the people of the country to liberate themselves from illiteracy and has made great strides in this field. This year's slogan speaks about sustainability and peaceful societies, and everyone, whether in formal education or education in the field of literacy, contributes to strengthening the status of this aspect and sustainability."

Dr Thuraiya al Rashidi, Director-General of Special Education and Continuous Learning delivered the ministry's speech in which she said: "Oman



Vision 2040 is based in its stated goals on comprehensive and sustainable education, ensuring that all students have access to education, and their transition through the stages of school education to higher education, leading to their involvement in the work sectors according to their levels and academic qualifications."

"This is the approach adopted by the Ministry of Education to be the basic translation of these goals for emerging generations or for those who did not have the opportunity for formal school education. From this standpoint, the

Ministry of Education has placed the goal of education at the forefront of its strategic plans and has not hesitated to provide academic support to students for the sake of an Omani society free of illiteracy. The Ministry has achieved progress in reducing illiteracy levels in the Sultanate of Oman, as the illiteracy rate has decreased in the age group (15-44) to (0.4) according to data issued by the National Center for Statistics and Information," she added.

The celebration included a singing segment entitled "Let's Light the Stars" by the poet Amal bint Ahmed al Shaqsiyah, in which she expressed her profound coexistence in the field of literacy, followed by a visual presentation from memory that reviewed the process of literacy in the Sultanate of Oman from the point of view of former workers in the field of literacy and adult education, as they recounted the challenges and the difficulties they faced during the course of their work and the achievements that have made.

Iranian Social Club gets ministry nod

KABEER YOUSUF
@kabeeryousef

For the first time for the Iranians living in the country, a social club dedicated to their socio-cultural activities can be opened in the Sultanate of Oman as the Ministry of Social Development (MoSD) has cleared their request for the same.

Dr Laila bint Ahmed al Najar, Minister of Social Development, issued a ministerial decision announcing the 'Social Club for the Iranian Community' which further states that this is to commemorate the members of the Iranian Islamic Republic community residing in the Sultanate of Oman through various social, cultural and sporting events. Ali Najafi, Ambassador of the

Islamic Republic of Iran in Muscat thanked the ministerial decision calling it as 'historic' which enables to strengthen the bilateral bonds'.

"While we congratulate the establishment of the Iranian Social Club and thank the officials of the Sultanate of Oman, we believe that this measure provides an opportunity and an appropriate structure for Iranians residing in this friendly and brotherly country to strengthen bilateral ties. We are confident that enhancing friendship between the two countries within the framework of the goals binds the two friendly countries," he added.

As per the MoSD norms of 'community clubs', they are social institutions with continuous organisation of people comprising

several natural, non-Omani persons, whose purpose is to care for their members in the social, cultural and recreational fields with the aim of strengthening the bonds of friendship and love between members of the same community. Additionally, they should carry out their activities in accordance with the conditions and controls approved by the Ministry of Social Development.

Every country with a specified number of people as subjects in the country can request for a club or association and can submit necessary papers for the approval of the ministry which will, after careful scrutiny and verification, proceed with its approval or acknowledge the parties if the same is not approved.

Oman mulls platform to document all e-stores



STAFF REPORTER
MUSCAT, SEPT 12

The Ministry of Commerce and Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has said that it will launch a platform for electronic store documentation in cooperation with the private sector, this was revealed on Monday.

It was also revealed that the Consumer Protection Authority (CPA) has been receiving many complaints against one store, especially those related to fraud, which have been increasing.

Proper regulation for electronic stores will facilitate the process of consumer protection in dealing with complaints received and reducing such practices.

"There will be no harm to individuals who own electronic stores, and we work as much as possible to avoid imposing fees on licensing such electronic stores. The ultimate goal is to regulate the sector for the benefit of the merchants and the buyers," a press statement said.

Under the Ministerial Decision

No. 499/2023, individuals and commercial establishments must now apply for an e-commerce license before offering the service.

The introduction of the framework is the result of a National E-commerce Plan, a strategy designed to place Oman as a regional hub for e-commerce, as part of a wider economic diversification strategy. Future phases of the plan include the establishment of an e-commerce complex, and developing the necessary infrastructure to support the sector.

The new framework will require online stores to protect consumer data. According to the regulations, vendors must maintain the confidentiality of consumer data and disclose measures taken to protect the data. In the case of a breach, vendors must immediately contact relevant authorities.

Vendors must also provide a clear framework for receiving and handling consumer complaints, an exchange and return policy on par with current laws, and contact information.

Tender Announcement

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

Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtaining of Tender Document	Last date for Tender Submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)	
					Small and Medium Companies	Local Companies
311/2023	Public cleaning services for the building of the General Directorate of Social Development in Dhofar Governorate and the buildings of its social development departments	Companies specialized in the field of cleaning, washing and pest control services/ planting, gardening and garden care services, registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board in the excellent, first, second, third, or fourth degree.	Sunday 1-10-2023 02:00 PM	Sunday 22-10-2023 10:00 AM	10 R.O	25 R.O

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the **Tender Board** may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>). On **Tuesday 12/9/2023**.

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

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

www.mosd.gov.om



Protests grip Israel ahead of Supreme Court session on judicial overhaul



Israeli police disperse protesters as they block the entrance to the residence of Justice Minister Yariv Levin, in the central city of Modiin. — AFP

JERUSALEM: Hundreds of anti-government protesters shouting “Democracy” and waving national flags demonstrated outside the home of Israel’s justice minister on Monday ahead of a Supreme Court hearing on a bid by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s coalition to curb its judicial powers.

Police dragged away some protesters amid pushing and shoving tussles to a background of honking car horns. Demonstrators also blocked the car of Justice Minister Yariv Levin, one of the main architects of the plan to overhaul the judiciary. The entire 15-judge Supreme Court bench will convene for the first time in Israeli history to hear an appeal against the judicial amendment passed by the coalition in July.

The overhaul has caused Israel’s worst domestic political crisis in years, with hundreds of thousands of people taking part in huge demonstrations over the past several months.

Critics of the reform say it hurts the independence of the court, opens the door to corruption

and weakens democracy, while political supporters of Netanyahu say it will prevent the judiciary from over-reaching its powers.

Attempts to reach agreements between Netanyahu and his opponents over the plan have so far been fruitless, adding to fears the crisis will only deepen.

Despite the ramped-up rhetoric, a ruling from the Supreme Court could come as late as January, leaving time for the sides to reach agreement on the reforms, granting a possible reprieve after the months of protests, and signalling stability to the markets. Former defence minister Benny Gantz, a main Netanyahu rival in the opposition, maintained he was still open to a compromise.

“If on the table there is a solution that will safeguard democracy, I’ll be there,” he said in a speech to the Herzliya Conference.

Monday’s scuffles broke out as police moved to control crowds gathering outside Levin’s house. A big demonstration is expected outside the court later on Monday. — Reuters

Foreign rescuers join Morocco quake in race against time

TALAT NYACOUB: Moroccan rescuers supported by newly-arrived foreign teams on Monday faced an intensifying race against time to dig out any survivors from the rubble of mountain villages, on the third day after the country’s strongest-ever earthquake.

The 6.8-magnitude quake struck the Atlas mountains late on Friday southwest of the tourist centre of Marrakesh. It killed almost 2,500 people and injured a similar number, according to the latest official toll.

In the disaster-stricken community of Talat Nyacoub, 12 ambulances and several dozen 4X4s from the army and police were deployed while around 100 Moroccan rescuers were searching for signs of life amid the collapsed buildings.

Nearby, rescue operations had a Spanish team of 30 firefighters, a doctor, nurse and two technicians coordinating with Moroccan authorities before starting to dig, as a helicopter flew overhead.

“The big difficulty is in zones remote and difficult to access, like here, but the injured are choppered out,” Annika Coll said, who heads the Spanish team.

About 70 kilometres north, another Spanish team from the Military Emergencies Unit (UME) had set up camp since Sunday night on the edge of Amizmiz village. Albert Vasquez, the unit’s communications officer, said his team was awaiting a meeting with Moroccan civil defence to determine exactly where they were needed.

The rescuers are assisted by four dogs and microcameras that can be fed into the rubble in an effort to detect signs of life.

The earthquake wiped out entire



People gather around the rubble of homes in the mountain village of Imi N'Tala, south of Marrakech. — AFP

villages in the foothills of the Atlas mountains, where civilian rescuers and members of Morocco’s armed forces have searched for survivors and the bodies of the dead.

Many houses in remote mountain villages were built from mud bricks.

While the foreign teams begin to arrive, Moroccan authorities have erected emergency shelters. Bright yellow tents were visible along the road into Tikht, a village

which has effectively ceased to exist.

Members of the government’s civil protection service carried camp beds from a military-type truck toward the tents.

Citizens reported to hospitals in Marrakesh and elsewhere to donate blood for the injured. Among the donors were members of Morocco’s national football team.

Other volunteers organised

food and essential goods to help quake victims, after complaints that authorities were slow to respond.

The education ministry announced that school classes were “suspended” in the worst-hit villages of Al-Haouz province, the quake epicentre.

The UN Human Rights Council in Geneva began its session on Monday with a minute’s silence for the quake victims. — AFP

150 dead as ‘catastrophic’ storm floods hit east Libya

BENGHAZI: At least 150 people were killed when freak floods hit eastern Libya, officials said on Monday, after storm “Daniel” swept the Mediterranean, its torrential rains earlier lashing Turkey, Bulgaria and Greece.

Images filmed by residents of the Libyan disaster area showed massive mudslides, collapsed buildings and entire neighbourhoods submerged under muddy water.

“At least 150 people were killed as a result of flooding and torrential rains left by storm Daniel in Derna, Jabal al-Akhdar

region and the suburbs of Al-Marj,” said Mohamed Massoud, a spokesman for the Benghazi-based administration in Libya.

“This is besides the massive material damage that struck public and private properties,” he said.

Hundreds of residents were still believed to be trapped in difficult-to-reach areas as rescuers, backed by the army, were trying to come to their aid.

The National Petroleum Company, whose main oilfields and terminals are in eastern Libya, declared “a state of maximum alert” and suspended flights between



production sites where activity was drastically reduced.

Experts have described storm Daniel as “extreme in terms of the

amount of water falling in a space of 24 hours”.

A Derna city council official described the situation in the

city as “catastrophic” and in need of “national and international intervention”, speaking to the local TV channel Libya al-Ahrar.

He reported the collapse of four main bridges and two buildings in Derna, a city of 100,000 people that lies in a river wadi 900 kilometres (560 miles) east of the capital Tripoli.

The storm struck eastern Libya on Sunday afternoon, hitting especially the coastal town of Jabal al-Akhdar but also Benghazi, where a curfew was declared and schools closed for several days.

The United Nations mission

in Libya on Monday said on X, formerly Twitter, that it was “closely following the emergency caused by severe weather conditions in the eastern region of the country”.

It expressed its condolences over the deaths and said it was “ready to support efforts by local authorities and municipalities to respond to this emergency and provide urgent humanitarian assistance”.

The French ambassador to Libya, Mostafa Mihraje, offered his condolences and expressed his “solidarity with the Libyan people in this ordeal”, also in a message on X. — AFP

SIDON

6 dead as clashes rock Palestinian camp

At least six people have been killed and dozens wounded in clashes in a Palestinian refugee camp in southern Lebanon, first responders said as fighting raged for a fifth day.

Violence broke out late on Thursday in the Ain al-Helweh camp on the outskirts of the coastal city of Sidon.

The toll has risen to at least “six dead, one of them killed on Monday, and more than 60 wounded”, said Imad Hallak from the Palestinian Red Crescent’s



Lebanon branch.

The casualties include both fighters and civilians. Sidon reported ongoing clashes with automatic gunfire and shelling, after fighting had subsided somewhat overnight. — AFP

WAD MADANI

Sudan’s army chief to visit Eritrea

Sudan’s General Abdel Fattah al-Burhan is visiting neighbouring Eritrea on Monday, officials in both countries announced.

It is the fourth foreign trip in two weeks by Burhan, the northeast African country’s de facto leader since a coup in 2021. Since August 29 he has visited Egypt, South Sudan and, last week, Qatar.

Experts say it is part of an effort to burnish his diplomatic credentials in the event of peace negotiations to end his country’s



devastating war. Eritrea’s Minister of Information Yemane Meskel announced that Burhan arrives in Asmara on Monday “for working visit,” and published a picture of him seated beside Afwerki. — AFP

DAR ES SALAAM

Police launch probe into opposition figure

Tanzanian authorities have launched an investigation into opposition stalwart Tundu Lissu after briefly arresting him and other party members on accusations of illegal gathering, police said on Monday. Lissu was detained on Sunday before being released on bail hours later.

He and other members of Chadema, Tanzania’s main opposition party, were enroute to the Ngorongoro conservation area where Maasai pastoralists are protesting against the



government’s plans to relocate them. “Investigation is still ongoing,” senior police official Justine Masejo said. “We will move ahead with other legal steps after completing the investigation,” he added. — AFP



In brief

ATHENS



GREECE SEEKS EU AID AFTER DEADLY FLOODS

The Greek government said on Monday that it would seek emergency funding from the European Union to address the damage floods caused to one of the country's main agricultural regions last week.

"The prime minister has already sent a letter to the European Commission president to secure emergency funding to address the consequences of this disaster," government spokesman Pavlos Marinakis said.

Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis will be in Strasbourg on Tuesday to discuss the issue with EU chief Ursula von der Leyen. — AFP

BARCELONA



THOUSANDS TO MARK CATALONIA DAY

Thousands of people were expected to mark Catalonia's National Day on Monday at a demonstration in Barcelona as the Spanish region's separatist parties find themselves as kingmakers in efforts to form a national government.

Attendance at La Diada events has fallen in recent years as support for breaking away from Spain has decreased.

The two Catalan parties are now in the middle of negotiations on forming a new government and hope the talks may boost the flagging independence. — Reuters

YEREVAN



ARMENIA HOLDS MILITARY DRILLS WITH US

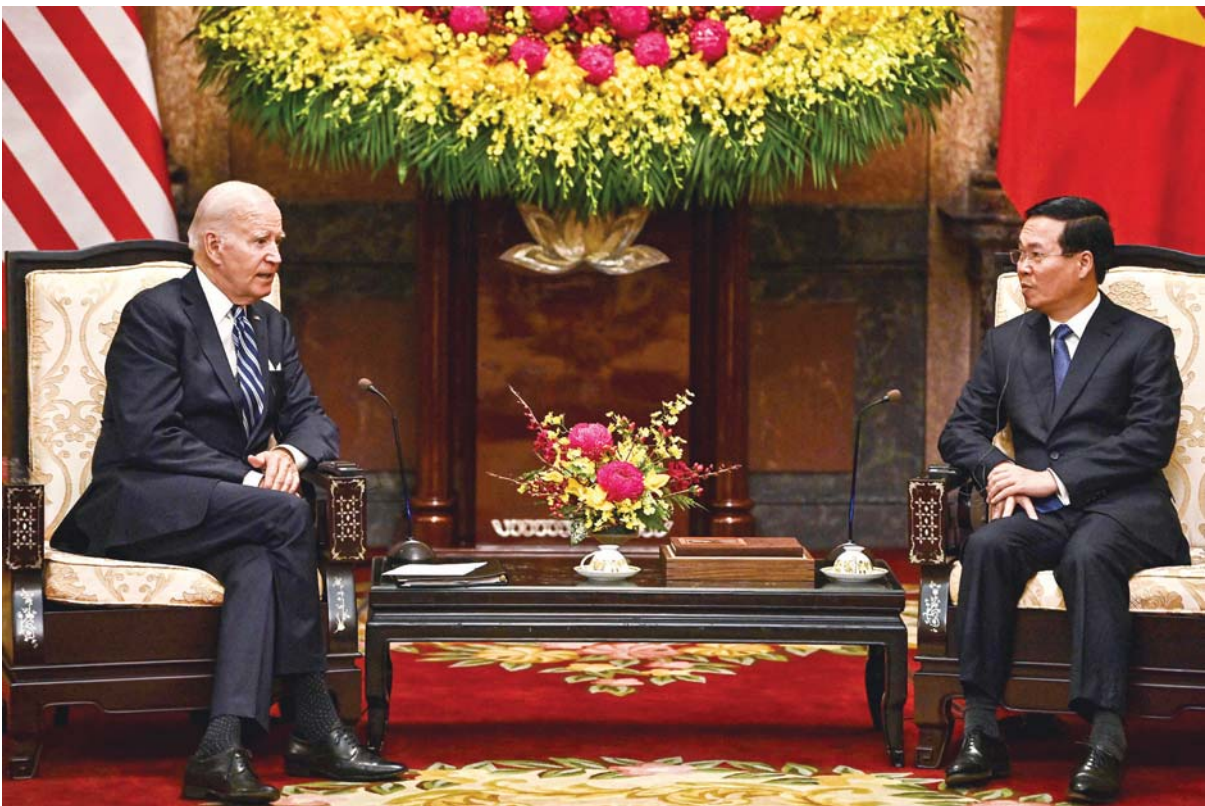
Joint military drills between Armenian and US forces opened on Monday, the latest sign of Yerevan drifting from Moscow's orbit as Russia's attack of Ukraine reshapes post-Soviet relations. The exercises come amid mounting frustration in Armenia over what it sees as Russia's failure to act as a security guarantor amid mounting tensions with its historic rival Azerbaijan.

"Exercise Eagle Partner's opening ceremony has kicked off," the US Army's Europe and Africa spokesperson said.

Armenia's defence ministry said the exercises aimed to "increase the level of interoperability" with US forces in international peacekeeping missions.

The US Army Europe and Africa Command said around 85 soldiers would train with 175 Armenian troops. — AFP

Biden leads US tech deals push in Vietnam



Vietnam's President Vo Van Thuong and US President Joe Biden hold a meeting at the Presidential Palace in Hanoi. — AFP

HANOI: President Joe Biden and senior executives from top US tech firms including Google and Intel met Vietnamese business leaders on Monday after the two countries agreed to deepen cooperation.

Biden and Vietnam's ruling Communist Party chief struck a "comprehensive strategic partnership" as Washington pushes to boost its network of allies around Asia and the Pacific.

The United States sees manufacturing dynamo Vietnam as an important part of its plan to decrease reliance on China for supplies of strategic resources, and the new pact includes agreements on semiconductors and rare earths.

Executives from tech behemoth Google, chip makers Intel and GlobalFoundries, and aviation giant Boeing joined Biden and Secretary of State Antony Blinken for an "innovation and investment summit".

They held talks with senior figures from a host of

leading Vietnamese tech and manufacturing companies including electric car maker VinFast, Internet firm VNG and digital wallet Momo.

At the talks, Biden announced that flag-carrier Vietnam Airlines had agreed a \$7.8-billion deal with Boeing to buy 50 medium-haul 737 airliners.

Other deals announced include Microsoft developing a "generative AI-based solution tailored for Vietnam" and NVIDIA teaming up with local companies to deploy artificial intelligence in the cloud, automotive and healthcare sectors.

The new partnership includes an agreement on semiconductors, with the United States committing to help Vietnam develop its capabilities and expand production, including by funding workforce training.

The White House highlighted US investment in chipmaking in Vietnam, pointing to a new \$1.6 billion factory near Hanoi due to start operations soon.

And in their joint statement, Biden and Trong launched a fresh broadside at Beijing in the sprawling, multi-state territorial row over the South China Sea.

They warned against "threat or the use of force", days after the latest clash involving Chinese vessels, and insisted the competing claims to the strategic waterway must be settled under international norms.

The president met Chinese Premier Li Qiang on the sidelines of the G20 summit in Delhi on Sunday. Biden said the major economic problems Beijing was wrestling with would limit its scope for action.

Vietnam has its own squabbles with Beijing, notably over the contested South China Sea.

Hanoi's state media on Monday hailed the deal with former war foe the United States as "historic".

Biden ended his 24-hour visit by paying his respects at a memorial to his friend John McCain, the former US Senator shot down in Hanoi as a pilot during the Vietnam War. — AFP

N Korea's Kim en route to Russia for talks with Putin

SEOUL: North Korean leader Kim Jong Un has set off for Russia aboard a special train, a South Korean source said, as Pyongyang and Moscow on Monday confirmed a summit with President Vladimir Putin.

Kim would visit Russia in the coming days at the invitation of Putin, the Kremlin said, while North Korean state news agency KCNA said the two would "meet and have a talk", without elaborating.

US officials have said the pair would discuss possible arms deals to aid Russia's war in Ukraine and provide North Korea with a much-needed economic and political lifeline.

Washington and its allies have been voicing concern at recent signs of closer military cooperation between Russia and the nuclear-armed North. It will be Kim's second summit with Putin, after the pair met in 2019.

Despite denials by both Pyongyang and Moscow, the United States has said talks are advancing actively for North Korea to supply arms to Russia, which has expended vast stocks of weapons in more than 18 months of war.

The North Korean leader left aboard his train late on Sunday.

The special train would take Kim to North Korea's northeastern border with Russia and the summit could take place as early as Tuesday, said the official and added that details could change depending on the situation there.

Neither Moscow nor Pyongyang immediately confirmed an exact schedule for the visit.

North Korea is one of the few countries to have openly supported Russia since the invasion of Ukraine last year, and Putin pledged last week to "expand bilateral ties in all respects in a planned way by pooling efforts".

Japanese media reported security was being stepped up and refurbishment was taking place at the main train station in the Russian border city of Khasan, where Kim is expected to enter Russia.

Kim does not travel abroad often and, when he does, it is often shrouded in secrecy and security. He travels by a special train with its signature olive green carriages that are said to be armoured and equipped with communications systems and a personal suite for Kim to work and confer with aides. — Reuters



Russian President Vladimir Putin welcomes North Korean leader Kim Jong Un in the far-eastern Russian port of Vladivostok on April 25. — AFP file photo

Macron to 'consolidate' France's Asia-Pacific push

DHAKA: President Emmanuel Macron was in Bangladesh on Monday in a bid to "consolidate" France's Asia-Pacific strategy and counterbalance a "new imperialism" in the region.

"Based on democratic principles and the rule of law, in a region facing new imperialism, we want to propose a third way — with no intention to bully our partners or to lead them to an unsustainable scheme," Macron told Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina.

The United States and China are competing for influence in the wider region, and Macron has pushed France as offering an alternative.

"Bangladesh is progressively retrieving its place on the world stage," Macron said, speaking after he arrived in the capital Dhaka on Sunday after the G20 leaders summit in neighbouring India wrapped up.

He praised what he called "the tremendous success" of the South Asian country, a rapidly growing economy and the world's eighth most populous nation with more than 170 million people.

Macron and Hasina on Monday discussed a "commitment" from the country's Biman airline to



France's President Emmanuel Macron (L) speaks as Bangladesh's Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina looks on during the ceremony of signing bilateral agreements at the Prime Minister's office in Dhaka. — AFP

purchase 10 A350s from European aircraft maker Airbus, a potential contract that could be worth as much as \$3.2 billion.

Biman had previously always bought aircraft from the US manufacturer Boeing, and the hope of a purchase from Airbus

was "an important point", Macron said.

Macron held talks with Hasina on Monday and visited a memorial to her father, Bangladesh's first president Sheikh Mujibur Rahman.

"We both hope that this

new strategic move between Bangladesh and France will play an effective role in establishing regional and global stability and peace," Hasina said on Monday.

Several Western governments have expressed concern over the political climate in Bangladesh

Bangladesh is progressively retrieving its place on the world stage

EMMANUEL MACRON
French President

ahead of general elections due before the end of January, where the ruling party dominates the legislature and runs it virtually as a rubber stamp.

Macron's visit follows a Pacific trip in July to the French overseas territory of New Caledonia, Vanuatu and Papua New Guinea, as well as a stopover in Sri Lanka, in which he outlined his "Indo-Pacific strategy" aimed at "recommitting" France to the region.

Macron met on Sunday with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on the sidelines of the G20 in New Delhi.

The French presidency suggested that Macron in the past six months had "done more about South Asia than in the space of a decade". — AFP

Make a quilt of life...

Put the best foot forward they always say. Culturally it is taught that we must enter a house with your right foot first. So by now it is almost a habit to always start off with right foot.

It is Monday morning and in a rush to reach a press conference on time and was wanting to get one more thing before stepping out. Took a long step and not sure where the left foot was placed except that the right foot jumped back out with pain as the foot had landed with all the weight on a plug that was left upward in position.

Mercifully it was only one pin that punctured the skin and no, did not want to see the sight but the screaming helped and the ceiling looked consolingly.

The shock of stepping on a plug lingered for a long time for most of the day. The walking which we take for granted was now all about limping and trying to avoid the bruise part - how do you do that when it is the mid foot? The modern shoes hugging the curve of your foot didn't help either.

In life there comes occasions where you want to blame someone and have a fight just to feel better, but there are times when there's no one to find fault with. All you can do is hold onto the pain and limp about and scream when no one is around.

But life is not about complaining and finding faults.

We ought to make a quilt of life. Quilt needs designs, patterns and the squares. But when you make a quilt you can prepare and plan and keep all the materials and tools ready. Now you might tell me life is full of surprises. Then so be it. Let us collect the experiences and keep aside to prepare the quilt.

Then there are others who visualise what they want in life and plan their life accordingly. They keep all the tools ready and then collect the designs. They take the initiative to enrich their life to make their designs unique.

The first group is often afraid to dream and so waits for events in life to happen on their own. The second group has faith and confidence and are adventurous.

Once again fear is the culprit.



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The writer is a senior journalist and a radio anchor

OFTEN WE ARE QUICK TO JUDGE OURSELVES AND OUR LIVES, BUT HONESTLY, HOW OFTEN DO WE THINK OF MAKING CHANGES AND BREAKING THE PATTERN?

The emotions will colour your quilt. The colour red could be for the excitement in your life, pink for softness, purple for everything you find mysterious, noble and glamorous, blue for wisdom and hope, green for nature, freshness and growth, yellow for joy, hope and danger, orange for warmth, kindness and joy and white for truth and indifference. And the list goes on in colour psychology.

The credit of understanding colours through white light going through prism goes to Isaac Newton. He also found out that each colour was made up of single wavelength and so cannot be separated further, but further researchers found out by blending lights we could create other colours but what is interesting is that certain blending of colours would cancel out each other and what remains is white light as in the case of green and magenta.

It seems lights of colours are just like personalities of individuals.

So now as you can choose your colour scheme let us go back to our quilt of life.

If you are new to quilting, please note that a quilt has three layers just like your life, your mind and probably the third one could be destiny or fate.

Quilting can take a long period to complete even otherwise so don't be in a rush.

Often we are quick to judge ourselves and our lives, but honestly, how often do we think of making changes and breaking the pattern?

Now at this point all the quilters would jump in to find out why would you change the pattern of the quilt?

Quilts can have repeated patterns but life can have a variety, maybe.

Even in quilts patterns have meanings like the log cabin block which is considered to be a popular patchwork patterns. The story goes that for the pioneers who were travelling West, this pattern was symbolic of home, warmth, love and security. Is it not amazing how we find meanings in everything? From colours to patterns to signs that we come across, we look for a symbol to understand mysteries of life.

There is joy in enjoy and so enjoy making your quilt of life!

UP IN THE SKY!



French tightrope walker Nathan Paulin walks on a rope during a parade for the 14th edition of the Lyon Dance Biennial on the theme of peace, in Lyon, central-eastern France, on Monday. – AFP

Self-driving cars and AI ethics

Last month, California regulators allowed two companies that operate self-driving cars to accept paying customers in San Francisco. The first week did not go well. One car drove itself onto freshly poured concrete in a road construction zone with traffic cones and workers with flags. The car got stuck in the wet concrete, and the company will be paying to repave the road.

In a more serious incident, a passenger in a driverless car was injured in a collision with a fire truck. As a result, the operator agreed to halve the number of driverless vehicles it operated in San Francisco.

The decision to permit self-driving cars may usher in a new era of transportation, or it may prove to be a false dawn. Either way, the issues surrounding self-driving cars illustrate many of the ethical questions raised by the impact of artificial intelligence on everyday life.

A world in which most vehicles were fully autonomous would have many advantages. Most private cars spend a great deal of time idle. If everyone could call up an autonomous vehicle whenever required, there would be no need to own one's own car, thus saving resources. Moreover, by keeping traffic flowing more smoothly, the widespread use of driverless cars may also save fuel and time.

But the most important reason for



Peter Singer

The writer is Professor of Bioethics at Princeton University, is Founder of the nonprofit organisation The Life You Can Save



Tse Yip Fai

The writer is an AI research assistant for Peter Singer at the Princeton University Center for Human Values

eliminating human drivers is that it could also eliminate the human errors that cause so many traffic accidents, injuries, and deaths. (The US National Highway Traffic Safety Administration puts the death toll on US roads last year at 42,795.)

Elon Musk has said that developing fully autonomous vehicles is a moral obligation because it can bring about a "virtually accident-free future." But that future is still some distance away: to date, the Teslas that Musk's company makes have been involved in more than 700 crashes, with 17 fatalities, when operating on Autopilot, their driver assistance mode.

Both companies operating driverless cars in San Francisco claim that their cars are involved in fewer collisions, and especially fewer collisions involving injuries, than human drivers in a comparable driving environment. But the validity of such claims is contested, owing to doubts about the driving environments being compared.

Still, even if the latest generation of driverless vehicles is less safe than the average human driver, it could be argued that putting them onto city streets now is justified because doing so will save so many more lives in the long run. Once autonomous vehicles are perfected, we may

even restrict human drivers to lower speeds, or prohibit them altogether, because the risk that they pose to other road users, relative to the safer option provided by driverless cars, becomes unacceptable.

Not surprisingly, opposition to "robo-taxis" has come from taxi drivers – a response familiar from other areas where AI threatens to put people out of work. By enhancing productivity, advocates say, AI will allow us to achieve a better work/life balance. But "us" will not include anyone who loses their job to AI, unless they are retrained for other work, and unless companies are required to pay their employees a living wage for a shorter work week. Will there be the political will to do that?



To date, the Tesla vehicles have been involved in more than 700 crashes, with 17 fatalities.

Looking further into the future, what if AI becomes so successful that few humans have jobs at all? Will we be able to develop new purposes that will replace the role of work in giving our lives meaning and fulfilment?

AI programming is likely to be another area for regulation. To return to the example of driverless vehicles, consumers in an unregulated market will seek cars that minimise the risk to themselves or their passengers, even if that significantly increases the risk to pedestrians. Yet if all cars were programmed this way, the number of people killed or injured by cars would be higher than if cars were programmed to follow risk-minimisation strategies that are impartial between those inside the car and

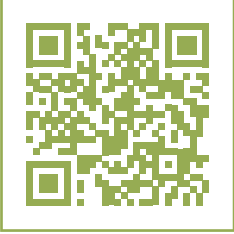
those outside it. Only regulation that requires such impartiality can prevent an outcome resembling the well-known "tragedy of the commons."

A more surprising issue raised by driverless cars is that they appear to be less reliable in detecting pedestrians with darker skin than those with lighter skin, and thus may hit disproportionately more dark-skinned pedestrians. One study (published in 2019 and using technology that was state-of-the-art in 2018) suggests that this was because the software was developed and trained in regions with more light-skinned pedestrians than dark-skinned ones. If that is the case, then once we are aware of such problems, they can and should be fixed.

One important but often overlooked ethical issue raised by autonomous vehicles is whether they should be programmed to avoid hitting animals, and if so, which ones. All vertebrates, and some invertebrates, are sentient beings, liable to suffer if hit but not killed instantly. Moreover, in many species, the loss of a mate will cause distress, or may lead to dependent offspring starving to death. How we should value the lives and interests of all sentient beings is a question that AI ethics needs to address.

sport

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BAHRAIN’S AHMED CLAIMS STAGE 2 HONOURS

ANUROOP ATHIPARAMBATH
MUSCAT, SEPT 11

Bahrain’s Ahmed Naser of Victorious Club rode to victory in 4 hours 31 minutes in the second stage of Tour of Salalah from Sadah to Hajeef for 148 km on Monday. Slovenian rider Grega Bole of Shabab Al Ahli Dubai Cycling Team repeated his second position in the first stage to take the leader’s golden jersey after the two stages of the four-stage Salalah Tour. Bole came home in 04:32:11. UAE national team’s Abdulla Jasim al

Ali (04:32:11) bettered his fourth place in the opening stage to third in the second stage. The Emirati teenager got the white jersey for the best young rider. Dutch cyclist Kenny Nijssen of Universe Cycling Team finished fourth in the race of 68 cyclists. First stage winner Algeria’s Hamza Yassin led the overall points classification to take the green jersey sponsored by the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. Tom Wijn Je took the grey jersey for

TOUR OF SALALAH STAGE 2 RESULTS		
Read as position, rider, country, team, timing		
1.	Ahmed Naser (Bahrain) VIC	04:31:00
2.	Grega Bole (Slovenia) SAD	04:32:11
3.	Abdulla Jasim al Ali (UAE) UAE	04:32:11
4.	Kenny Nijssen (Netherlands) UNI	04:32:11
5.	Eusebio PB (Spain) VIC	04:34:44
6.	Marc Clauss (Germany) TSM	04:34:44
7.	Campo Schmitz (Germany) TSM	04:36:07
8.	Jacob Buikj (Netherlands) UNI	04:36:52
9.	Abdulla al Hammadi (UAE) UAE	04:38:14
10.	Azzedine Lagab (Algeria) Algeria	04:38:25

the most aggressive rider and Universe Cycling Team led the team classification. Mundher al Hasani was the best-placed Omani rider with a 15th place finish (04:42:30). On Tuesday, the third stage covers 104 km from Al Haffa Souq to Wadi Darbat. HAMZA WINS OPENING STAGE Algerian national team’s Yacine Hamza clocked three hours five minutes and eight seconds to claim the opening stage of Tour of Salalah 2023 on Sunday. Robin Fischer of Storck-Metropol

Cycling came second (03:05:10), while Grega Bole of Shabab Al Ahli Cycling Team finished third on 03:05:56. On fourth was UAE’s Abdulla Jasim al Ali (03:05:56) and Campo Schmitz (03:06:00) of Storck-Metropol claimed the fifth spot. For hosts Oman, top finishers were former OCA League winner Said al Rahbi at 12th (03:06:50) and Mohammed al Wahibi at 13th (03:07:02). As many as 75 riders were in action for the 123km first stage from Khor Rori to Ayn Isbat.

Refuelling drama spoils great start for Ahmad in Fuji

Eye-catching start to FIA WEC 6hrs of Fuji for Ahmad al Harthy unrewarded

Refuelling problems at first pit stop end realistic hopes of strong points

Oman Racing aiming to make amends in November’s Bahrain finale

FUJI: Sensational driving from Oman’s Ahmad al Harthy and an absolutely outstanding start to his first ever 6 Hours of Fuji were ultimately unrewarded at the Japanese track on September 10, when a major refuelling issue at the first round of pit-stops cost an insurmountable amount of time. Lining-up an uncharacteristic 12th on the GTE Am grid for the penultimate race of the FIA World Endurance Championship season, after losing tyre performance later in the drying qualifying session the day before, Al Harthy was nonetheless confident for the beginning of the big race. While stormy weather and typhoon conditions had been a threat for most of the race meeting, for raceday the track was dry and the Omani aimed to make one of his customary fantastic starts and challenge for as many points as possible. Actually exceeding his own expectations, the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS partnered sportsman made a truly electrifying launch in the No 25 Aston Martin Vantage GTE and put together a terrific opening to the race.



Slicing his way through the order, passing no fewer than six cars, Al Harthy continued his march towards the podium battle and moved into the top five – right on the tail of the fourth placed No 77 Porsche 911 RSR at the end of the first hour. After challenging well for fourth, there was soon an unfortunate incident with one of the LMP2 cars and as a result Al Harthy dropped to seventh. Although disappointing and frustrating, realistic hopes of a solid points result remained. But at Oman Racing’s first scheduled pit-stop, there was a problem with the refuelling rig

and the pit crew was unable to put any fuel in the car. Costing time and badly impacting the team’s strategy, there was no other choice than for Al Harthy to rejoin the race and try and pit again. Thankfully working at the second time of asking, the huge delay effectively ended all hopes of a strong result. After taking on the required amount of fuel, Al Harthy was all the way back in 12th place and with a mountain to climb but he did the best he could and lapped competitively. The same was true during the subsequent stints for team-mates Michael Dinan and Charlie

Eastwood, both driving well but unable to make any inroads. In the end, Eastwood took the chequered flag in 13th position some four laps down on the race winning and podium entries. In terms of the championship placings, Al Harthy, Dinan and Eastwood are now fifth in the driver standings while Oman Racing with TF Sport is also fifth in the team battle. AHMAD AL HARTHY: “What a start! I didn’t expect it to go that well, we had an incredible first lap where I think got six positions and we kept climbing and I got another two cars. Then

we had a small incident with an LMP car which cost us, so I had to settle in seventh. We kept pushing and knew we were going to run the overcut at the pit-stop, while the rest were doing undercuts, and it would work in our favour. “Unfortunately though, as soon as we pitted, we had a fuel failure where we couldn’t actually put more fuel in the car. That resulted in me going out again, coming back in again and then trying to fill the car which did work that time. That ruined all of the progress we had made and ended any hopes of finishing the race on the lead lap. “From then on it was about

learning as much as we could ahead of the final round in Bahrain. It’s been a really unfortunate weekend for us, Fuji is such an amazing circuit and it’s been a pleasure to drive here – and also a pleasure to have so much support from our incredible partners and also the Ambassador from Tokyo who attended as well. It really means so much. If we have the chance to return to Japan in the future, I’m sure we could have a very strong result here at Fuji.” Al Harthy now has eight weeks to wait until the final event of his maiden season in FIA World Endurance, which will be a huge race meeting for the Omani and his many fans. Round seven of the 2023 campaign will take place in the Middle East at Bahrain International Circuit on November 4. 2023 FIA World Endurance Championship GTE Am Driver Standings: 5th Ahmad al Harthy / Michael Dinan / Charlie Eastwood, 65pts 2023 FIA World Endurance Championship GTE Am Team Standings: 5th Oman Racing with TF Sport, 65pts

OMAN POISED FOR BEST SHOW AGAINST USA



ADIL AL BALUSHI
MUSCAT, SEPT 11

Oman national football team players are gearing up in the underway high profile camp in Minnesota, USA ahead of the scheduled international friendly match against hosts USA on Wednesday. The current external camp is followed after a successful one week warm-up gathering in Muscat last week which featured a preparatory encounter against Palestine that ended on triumphant note for

the Red Warriors. The goals of Oman team were scored by Omar al Malki and Essam al Subhi. The ongoing abroad camp programme in Minnesota is part of the team's crucial preparation for the preliminary Joint Qualification for the Fifa World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 besides the 2024 AFC Asian Cup which kicks off on January 12, 2024 in Qatar. Upon arrival of the Red Warriors to Minnesota city earlier on Sunday, they reported to their daily training sessions under

direct technical supervision from head coach Branko Ivankovic and his supporting staff. The initial sessions focused on releasing the exhaustion of the team members after the long journey which lasted for more than 25 hours. Moreover, the coaching team worked hard to improve the fitness and physique sides of the players beside implementing some tactical sessions. The coaching staff is working hard to shape the readiness of all the players as the team is currently having some injured players including Salah al

Yahyai and Juma al Habsi who trained separately. The weather in Minnesota is varying between 13 to 18 C and it is acting as a suitable station for the team members to train under this climate affairs ahead of the key assignments. Oman team will be eyeing for capitalising their technical outcomes in this ongoing top class camp and show a strong performance in their second international warm-up match appearance against the USA team, ranked 11th in the world.

The top friendly match against the USA team will be vital for the coaching staff to assess the fitness and physical conditions besides technical prowess of the players. The 69-year-old coach will look to gain the desired results from this friendly fixture. Moreover, the players will get into the mood of tough games and could execute several tactics and strategies employed in the recent training sessions at today's preparatory game. The Red Warriors' preparatory programme will stop temporarily during October as the players will

join their respective clubs. The national team will resume their training activities in November as their campaign in the joint qualifiers will begin in the same month. Oman, ranked 72nd in the world, will face Kyrgyz Republic, Malaysia, Chinese Taipei/Timor Leste in Group D of the joint qualifiers. Oman will launch their challenge at the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 finals in January 2024 in Group F which comprised Asian favourites Saudi Arabia, Thailand and Kyrgyzstan.

Germany beat Serbia to win Basketball World Cup



Germany's players celebrate after winning the Fiba Basketball World Cup final game against Serbia in Manila. — AFP

MANILA: Germany beat Serbia 83-77 on Sunday to win the Basketball World Cup for the first time. The Germans, who went unbeaten through the tournament and were appearing in their first final, broke clear of Serbia in the third quarter in Manila. Serbia launched a furious fourth-quarter fightback but Germany managed to hold them off and put their name on the Naismith Trophy. Dennis Schröder finished as Germany's top scorer with 28 points, followed by Franz Wagner with 19. Germany had beaten the United States in a dramatic semifinal. "We're the champions of the world, we're undefeated, we won every single game," said Germany's Maodo Lo. "We had a tough group to begin with, we were able to keep building, we had huge wins throughout the whole tournament and then we faced the United States in the semi-final. "I think we deserved this world championship." Serbia, who were looking to

win the title for the first time as an independent nation, lost small forward Ognjen Dobric to injury with less than three minutes of the game gone. Dobric had to be carried off after a hard landing while attacking the basket. He later reappeared at court side, cycling on an exercise bike, but did not come back into the game. Serbia were cheered on by a large group of travelling supporters but could not keep up with Germany in the second half. "We made a great success," said Serbia's Aleksa Avramovic. "Our heads are already up. Our next goal is to go to the Olympics... and make a better success than this." Avramovic finished as Serbia's top scorer with 21 points, followed by Bogdan Bogdanovic with 17. There was little to separate the two teams in a fiercely fought first half that ended 47-47. That all changed in the third quarter when Germany outscored the Serbians 22-10. "They deserved this win," said Serbia head coach Svetislav Pesic. — AFP

Seeb dominate Nizwa in Credit Oman Cup

AHMED AL KAABI
MUSCAT, SEPT 11

Al Seeb Club delivered a commanding performance over Nizwa Club, winning 96-39 in the opening match of the second Credit Oman Basketball Cup tournament held at the sub-hall of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in Bausher. The tournament features four competitive clubs: Al Seeb, Al Bashaer, Nizwa and Oman Club. The match-up unfolded as a masterful display by Al Seeb, as they executed a precise game plan orchestrated by the national coach, Kadhim al Balushi. Their strategy revolved around impeccable control of both offensive and defensive fronts. Al Seeb players flawlessly implemented a zone defence system that made it difficult for Nizwa players to find comfortable shooting opportunities, neutralising most of their offensive threats. Al Seeb were able to advance by 3 points, which came through Ahmed al Sinani and Noah al Balushi. Despite Nizwa's efforts to respond, Al Seeb maintained the upper hand, but Nizwa succeeded in adjusting with a hat-trick by Khamis al Murr, making the score 3-3. However, Al Seeb responded quickly with three points by Suhail al Busaidi and two points after a shot from under the basket by his teammate Waqas al Hinai, making the score 8-3. After the intervention of the Nizwa coach when he asked for a time-out to



guide his players, Qasim al Qasimi managed to score a three-pointer by which he narrowed the difference. Then, Al Seeb again returned to their offensive effectiveness by scoring more points through Ahmed al Sinani, Rashid al Zuhairi and Hassan al Faraji, making the score 13-6 in their favour. Then Qasim al Qasimi was able to respond by scoring two points after a shot from under the basket. Al Seeb returned to expand the gap despite Nizwa's attempts to reduce it to end the first quarter 20-8. In the second quarter,

Al Seeb's offensive prowess continued to shine through Zakaria al Wahaibi and Ayman al Mahrami, while Nizwa struggled to capitalise on opportunities. Al Seeb extended their lead to a formidable 19 points, closing the first-half with a score of 42-16. The third quarter witnessed an even more dominant performance by Al Seeb, as they widened the gap by an additional 20 points in the first six minutes. The score stood at an impressive 62-18, with Al Mahrami and Zakaria al Wahaibi contributing significantly. Nizwa managed to respond with some points

from Mohammed al Anquodi, but Al Seeb maintained control, ending the third quarter with a commanding lead of 77-29. In the final quarter, Al Seeb's relentless offence and solid defence continued to stifle Nizwa's efforts. The team added four more points, sealing the victory with a final score of 96-39. The match was officiated with international referees Rashid al Mushaifri, Ahmed al Khasibi and Ali al Salmani overseeing proceedings. Mahmoud al Ajami, Yaqoub al Nadabi and Al Mahdi al Alawi managed the scoring table.

24 AND GOING STRONG

DJOKOVIC BAGS RECORD-TYING 24TH GRAND SLAM AT US OPEN

NOVAK DJOKOVIC defeated Daniil Medvedev in straight sets on Sunday to win his fourth US Open and a record-equalling 24th Grand Slam singles title, cementing his claim as the greatest tennis player in history.

The 36-year-old Djokovic won 6-3, 7-6 (7/5), 6-3 to become the oldest men's champion in New York in the Open era and match Margaret Court's all-time mark for most Grand Slam victories.

"I don't know where to start. It obviously means the world to me," said Djokovic, wearing a white jacket with the number 24 on his chest during the trophy presentation.

"It's hard to describe. I'm really living my childhood dream to compete at the highest level in this sport.

"I never imagined I would be standing talking about 24 Grand Slams but the last couple of years I've felt I have a chance and I have a shot at history and why not grab it."

The Serbian is the first man to win three Grand Slam events in the same season four times, crowning his impending return to world number one in the most fitting of ways inside Arthur Ashe Stadium.

The victory added to his wins at the Australian and French Opens earlier this year, with the only blemish his five-set defeat to Carlos Alcaraz in the final of Wimbledon in July.

"You know, some people who are born, he's a genius. He's one of kind. Not too many people in this world like him in sport-wise," said Djokovic's coach, Goran Ivanisevic.

"This is one of the biggest achievement in the sport history."

Medvedev suffered his fourth loss in five Grand Slam finals, all of which were against Djokovic or Rafael Nadal.

"First of all I want to ask Novak: What are you still doing here? Come on!" quipped Medvedev.

"I don't know when you are planning to slow down a little bit.

"I mean, 24. I feel like I have not a bad career and I have 20 titles. You have 24 Grand Slams. Wow."

Medvedev defeated Djokovic in straight sets in the 2021 final to prevent the Serbian from becoming the first man to win all four Grand Slams in the same year since Rod Laver in 1969.

Djokovic admitted to feeling overwhelmed on that occasion, but there was little evidence of nerves as he quickly took command of Sunday's championship match.

The second seed — who missed last year's US Open because of his refusal to be vaccinated against

Covid-19 — burst out of the gate with a confident hold sealed by successive aces and struck at the first opportunity, punishing Medvedev for a double-fault to break for a 2-0 lead.

A third ace consolidated his advantage before Medvedev got on the board in the fourth game.

The pair traded holds largely untroubled until Djokovic again put pressure on Medvedev as the third seed served down 2-5.

Medvedev dug in to twice stave off set points, but Djokovic calmly made the set his the following game.

SECOND SET GRIND

Medvedev dethroned last year's champion Alcaraz with a "12 out of 10" performance in the semifinals, but he struggled to replicate his very best consistently against an imperious Djokovic.

Attempting to be the first player to beat the top two seeds en route to the title since 1975, Medvedev once more repeatedly found himself under the pump early in the second set.

He was able to resist, hitting a sweeping volley to fight off break point as he secured a gutsy hold for 4-3 before finally asking questions of Djokovic, who was showing signs of fatigue.

A leaping overhead gave Medvedev his first break chance of the contest the very next game, but Djokovic responded with a brilliant scoop on the half-volley to save it.

Djokovic wobbled serving at 5-6, double-faulting twice as Medvedev brought up set point. But Djokovic was waiting as Medvedev went cross-court, and put away the volley to force a tie-break.

Medvedev seemed to have the momentum on his side after winning an astonishing rally to nose 5-4 ahead only for Djokovic to bag the next three points, snatching a marathon 104-minute second set and closing in on a historic triumph.

"Should have won it," Medvedev said of the second set. "Should have won it, but sometimes tennis is not that easy." — AFP





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E-commerce regulations:
Oman to set up centralised
database of operators

NASRULAH AL AJMI
MUSCAT, SEPT 11

A newly unveiled regulatory framework governing e-commerce in the Sultanate of Oman is set to provide new impetus to the eventual implementation of the country's National Ecommerce Strategy, according to a key official of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Mubarak bin Mohammed al Dohani, Director General of Commerce at the Ministry, said the regulatory framework launched on Sunday, September 10, 2023, is one of 30 initiatives set out in the comprehensive National Ecommerce Strategy — a blueprint to fuel the growth of ecommerce in the country.

In an interview aired on Oman TV on Sunday, Al Dohani said the new regulations will help establish a strong framework for e-commerce activities within Oman. One key aspect is the creation of a centralised database that will encompass all e-commerce practitioners in



Oman.

This database will not only facilitate better governance but also enable enhanced consumer protection by minimising harmful practices, especially electronic and commercial fraud, he noted.

"These regulations are part of a broader set of economic legislations mandated by the Omani government, and are a crucial outcome of the National E-commerce Plan. Comprising over 30 initiatives, this comprehensive plan aims to shape the future of e-commerce in Oman, with the newly introduced regulations playing a central role," the official stated.

The licensing system introduced by these regulations is structured into two categories.

TURN TO PAGE 14

Oman's G20 participation to
strengthen relations with India

HIBBA AL KINDI
MUSCAT, SEPT 11

The Sultanate of Oman's participation in the G20 Summit, which concluded in India on Sunday, September 10, will yield in a stronger bilateral relationship between the two nations, according to Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to Oman.

In a press briefing, Narang expressed India's appreciation of Oman's acceptance of the guest invitation, citing it as an opportunity to further strengthen the bilateral relationship.

"The bilateral trade between India and Oman has more than doubled in the last two years. It has gone from about \$5.6 billion in the last financial year, to almost \$12.4 billion [recently]."

According to Narang, this is due to the increase of non-oil exports from Oman to India, and the increased exports from India. However, according to Narang, this figure is just the "tip of the iceberg".

"The potential to further upscale the trade relationship is



very much untapped. And we are working closely with the ministry of industry of commerce on both sides to tap into this potential."

The Sultanate of Oman was invited to participate in the G20 summit in India as a guest attendee for the first time, amongst nine other countries.

According to Narang, Oman participated in over 150 meetings over the last few months, and around 9 ministers including the ministers of Tourism, Foreign Affairs, Agriculture, Economy, Labour, Commerce, Health

participated in ministerial level meetings in India. This is in addition to the chairpersons of the State Audit Institution and the Environment Authority.

The G20 Summit, which sought to address global economic issues, brought together 19 member states along with the European Union, with the African Union invited to join the grouping at the most recent gathering in India.

The most notable outcomes of this year's summit included the New Delhi Leaders' Declaration, which encompassed a wide

range of topics but emphasised sustainability in line with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

It also witnessed the launch of the Global Biofuel Alliance (GABA), a pledge to accelerate the use of sustainable biofuels, and the decision to create the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMED) envisaging a rail and shipping corridor connecting India with the Middle East and Europe.

Earlier this year, Pankaj Khimji, the leader of the Secretariat of the Sultanate of Oman for the meetings of the Group of Twenty and Adviser to the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, shared that Oman's participation in the G20 Summit will have a positive impact on the country's economy.

The event, he stated, had the potential to open up unprecedented networking opportunities across diverse economies, which would lead to the formation of valuable alliances aligned with the country's sustainable goals.

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E-commerce regulations: Oman to set up centralised database of operators

FROM PAGE 13

The first category is exclusively reserved for Omani citizens, provided they are at least 18 years old, granting them the ability to engage in various e-commerce activities.

The second category pertains to commercial companies, further diversifying the landscape of e-commerce in the country.

The need for the introduction of clear-cut e-commerce regulations, the official pointed out, stemmed from a number of dubious practices that emerged in the way of the launch of the “Shop from Your Home” initiative by the Ministry to enable the general public to access foodstuff and consumer goods during the pandemic lockdowns.

There were instances, for example, of payments being collected on goods that went undelivered, or counterfeit goods supplied in lieu of authentic products.

To safeguard the interests of consumers, the Ministry felt compelled to introduce these regulatory measures, Al Dohani explained.

A noteworthy aspect of the regulatory development process is the extensive collaboration it entailed. Over 15 government entities actively participated, ensuring an integrated approach to the legislation's formulation.

Equally vital was the involvement of the private sector, which played a crucial role in shaping these economic regulations. In terms of implementation, these regulations are set to become effective 90 days after their publication in the official newspaper, marking a significant milestone in Oman's journey toward a secure and flourishing e-commerce landscape.



Specs for 241 GCC standards approved at Salalah forum

QASIM AL MAASHANI
SALALAH, SEPT 11

The 56th meeting of the Technical Council of Heads of Standardisation Bodies of the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) concluded in Salalah on Monday, September 2023. The meeting was chaired by Dr Saleh bin Said bin Salim Masan, Under-Secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry.

In remarks to the Observer, Saud bin Nasser al Khusaibi, Chairman of the GCC Standardisation Organisation (GSO), said that standard specifications a total of 241 Gulf standard projects were approved during the forum.

Participants also approval of the formation of an independent

metrological technical committee for time and frequency measurements and another technical committee specialised in acoustic, ultrasonic and vibration measurements.

They also green-lighted a proposal for the formation of a Gulf technical committee for environment and climate change Earlier, Imad al Shukaili, Director General of Standards and Metrology in the Sultanate of Oman, said that the meeting touched on the most important projects discussed by the general committees related to specifications, metrology, conformity and metrology.

“We added a committee concerned in the laboratories, which is one of the achievements we reached in this meeting,” Al-Shukaili said. “We also adopted some Gulf technical projects and

regulations, the most important of which was considered in the previous meetings, the most important of which is the Regulation of Water Conservation Resources.”

Al Shukaili said that the members of the GCC Standardization Organisation were directed to highlight the importance of adopting the rest of the regulations, which are three other regulations, including the list of low-voltage household electrical appliances. The Technical Council also approved the proceeding with the adoption of the Quality Award for the GCC States.

“This award is a qualitative leap in the field of quality and will contribute to supporting the efforts of the GCC countries to achieve the highest levels of quality in their products and services,” Al Shukaili said.

The meeting was a success, and the participants agreed to continue their efforts to promote standardisation in the GCC.

The 149th meeting of the GSO was attended by representatives from all member states. The meeting was a success, and it helped to further promote joint Gulf action in the field of standardisation.

In other news, the GSO is also working on a number of other projects, including the development of a new Gulf standard for food safety, and the establishment of a Gulf conformity assessment scheme.

The GSO is committed to promoting the development of standardisation in the Gulf region, and it is working to ensure that the region has a strong and robust standardisation system in place.

SMN Power seeks buyers for retired gas turbines



QASIM AL MAASHANI
MUSCAT, SEPT 11

Publicly traded electricity generation firm SMN Power Holding SAOG has announced its intention to sell Gas Turbines 1 to 6 at the plant of its 99.99 per cent subsidiary Al Rusail Power Company SAOC.

According to a filing by the company to the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) on Monday, Gas Turbines 1 to 6 were installed in four phases between 1984 and 2000.

They have a total capacity of 480 megawatts (MW). The turbines were retired in September 2021 and are no longer in operation.

Gas Turbines 7 and 8, of a total capacity of 480 MW, were also installed in four phases between 1984 and 2000. These turbines are still in operation under the existing Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Nama Power and Water Procurement (NamaPWP).

The PPA is valid until December 31, 2023. If the PPA is extended beyond December 31, 2023, Gas Turbines 7 and 8 will continue to be in operation, the company noted in its filing.

Maisarah Sukuk redefines Shariah-compliant investment

MUSCAT: Maisarah Islamic Banking Services, the Shariah compliant financial services window of BankDhofar, is the leading institution in Oman when comes to the Shariah advisory services.

Leaders in advising Sukuk, Maisarah has advised from governments to corporate on their funding requirements. As a pioneer of Islamic Banking in Oman, Maisarah introduced



investment banking and capital market services in 2017.

The primary objective is to be client oriented and responsive to changing customer needs by providing a wide range of Shariah compliant investment products and advisory transactions.

Maisarah Investment Banking and Capital Markets offerings bridges the gap between financial goals and ethical beliefs for Islamic investors, while also enabling

governments and corporations to raise capital for development and growth.

Kamal Uddin Hassan al Maraza (pictured), General Manager & Chief Maisarah Chief Islamic Banking Officer, emphasised: “Maisarah Islamic Banking Services has a noteworthy operating history in the Sultanate of Oman.

With extensive experience and expertise, we have become

a key player in the Islamic finance industry, providing comprehensive and innovative Islamic banking services.

The Sukuk which has been advised by Maisarah gained investors’ confidence since its inception and we remain committed to delivering investment opportunities that resonate with the principles and values of our esteemed customers”.

NBO and Oman Air announce exciting travel promotion

MUSCAT: National Bank of Oman (NBO) and Oman Air have joined forces to delight their valued customers with a promotion during the travel season. This exclusive offer is part of NBO's constant efforts to make banking even more rewarding for its customers.

NBO's Retail Credit Cardholders can enjoy amazing rewards, including complimentary Oman Air return air tickets to the enchanting city of Paris and cashback prizes, ensuring an unforgettable journey and a satisfying banking experience.

The promotion grants the highest spenders across both domestic and international transactions a chance to win ten Oman Air Economy Class return tickets to Paris. Additionally, three



coveted Oman Air Business Class return tickets to Paris will be awarded to those who make the most substantial purchases.

Apart from the travel prizes, NBO and Oman Air will also offer cashback incentives of up to RO 100 to 36 top spenders for their international transactions throughout the offer period. Valid until October 31, 2023, this special offer is available to those who book their tickets using the NBO Visa Retail Credit Cards through the Oman Air app, website or their offices.

Commenting on the offer, Maha al Raisi, Head of Product at NBO Retail Banking, said, “We are thrilled to team up with Oman Air for this special promotion, as it presents an excellent opportunity for us to reward our NBO credit

card users. At NBO, we constantly strive to surpass our customers’ aspirations by offering a wide range of value-added lifestyle benefits and prizes just for being an NBO credit cardholder.”

“At Oman Air, we aim to elevate the travel experience for our guests and express our gratitude for their continuous support. We're delighted to collaborate with NBO for this promotion, which offers us an opportunity to give something back.

Together, we are committed to creating unforgettable journeys and fortifying the connection that makes our guests feel truly valued,” added Umesh Chhibber, Acting Chief Commercial Officer at Oman Air.

Winners must book their tickets on or before November

30, 2023. The lucky winners can embark on their dream journeys to explore the iconic landmarks, indulge in exquisite cuisine and experience the unmatched charm of the City of Lights before May 31, 2024. This extended travel validity provides ample time for the fortunate beneficiaries to plan and enjoy their unforgettable trips to Paris with

Oman Air's exceptional services. NBO's wide range of credit cards provides excellent spending power and a smarter, safer alternative to cash.

Cardholders are able to access a host of exciting benefits, including free annual fee, rewards points on every purchase, dining and hotel discounts, free travel insurance, airport lounge access and much more.



MSX launches ESG platform for listed companies

**NASRULAH AL AJMI**

MUSCAT, SEPT 11

The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) unveiled on Monday, September 11, 2023, a new platform for ‘Triple Governance’, designed to encourage listed companies to disclose environmental, social and corporate governance (ESG) standards.

The launch took place in the presence of Sayyid Saud bin Hilal al Busaidy, the Minister of State and Governor of Muscat. Also present were top officials of the Capital Market Authority (CMA) and MSX.

The event marked a crucial milestone in the MSX's journey towards becoming a prominent player in sustainable finance.

With growing interest among investors worldwide in sustainable

WITH GROWING INTEREST AMONG INVESTORS WORLDWIDE IN SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND RESPONSIBLE INVESTING, THE EXCHANGE AIMS TO MEET THE CURRENT INVESTMENT NEEDS WHILE SAFEGUARDING THE INTERESTS OF FUTURE GENERATIONS

development and responsible investing, the exchange aims to meet the current investment needs while safeguarding the interests of future generations.

The Omani bourse recently joined the United Nations Sustainable Stock Exchanges initiative as a partner, committing to fostering a sustainable and inclusive financial culture.

In alignment with this

initiative, the MSX formulated essential governance standards to promote sustainability.

These standards assist and encourage listed companies to make relevant environmental and social information available to investors and the general public.

To facilitate this process, the MSX has unveiled a company guidance manual, serving as a reference for ESG disclosures. This manual is designed to help companies effectively manage information and data related to sustainability principles.

In addition to the guidance manual, the exchange has launched a dedicated platform on its website.

This platform will serve as a central hub for broadcasting ESG-related disclosures of listed companies, further enhancing

transparency and accountability.

In his address, Al Busaidy commended the MSX's efforts in championing sustainability and expressed his gratitude for the exchange's role in advancing Oman's economic vision.

He emphasised the importance of sustainability in today's investment landscape and its alignment with Oman's long-term financial goals.

As the Muscat Stock Exchange continues evolving into a responsible and sustainable investing hub, it sets a noteworthy example for financial markets worldwide.

By embracing the principles of transparency, accountability, and sustainability, the exchange is positioning itself as a catalyst for positive change in Oman's financial landscape and beyond.

GCC stock exchanges harmonise ESG reporting

JOMAR MENDOZA

MUSCAT, SEPT 11

Following the issuance of ESG guidelines on September 11 for publicly listed and registered as ‘SAOG’ on Muscat Stock Exchange, (MSX), all publicly listed companies are encouraged to voluntarily report on their environment, social and governance (ESG) performance in 2024, covering their activities for this year.

MSX said that starting 2025, reporting on the 2024 activities will be mandatory.

At the regional level, MSX actively participates as a member of the GCC Stock Exchanges ESG Committee, contributing significantly to the creation of standardised ESG Disclosure Metrics for Listed Companies within the GCC.

This marks a crucial milestone in advancing ESG considerations in the region and bringing GCC markets in line with global best practices.

In December 2022, MSX unveiled its commitment to the UN SSE Initiative as part of its broader ‘Sustainable ESG Initiative.’

Collaborating with key entities such as the Ministry of Social Development, Ministry of Commerce, Industry & Investment Promotion, and the Environment Authority, MSX is dedicated to fostering an environment of ethical business practices.

This includes the establishment of a dedicated sustainable investment team focused on monitoring ESG practices at MSX and assisting listed companies in disclosing their own ESG efforts.

To facilitate this, MSX has introduced a comprehensive governance framework encompassing supplementary reports, guidelines, and projects to prepare companies for the global transition to mandatory ESG reporting.

Haitham al Salmi, CEO of Muscat Stock Exchange said in a statement: “In keeping with global sustainability trends, the Muscat Stock Exchange recently joined the United Nations Sustainable Stock Exchanges initiative as a partner exchange.

Our aim is to build a sustainable and inclusive financial culture by adopting the best environmental, social, and governance practices, corresponding to Oman Vision 2040 for achieving a diverse and sustainable economy.

These guidelines are intended to meet the current and future needs of investors, while also achieving sustainable development, which is a crucial part of our world's future. Companies play a vital role in achieving this noble goal.



These guidelines are intended to meet the current and future needs of investors, while also achieving sustainable development, which is a crucial part of our world's future.

HAITHAM AL SALMI
CEO, MSX

While profitability and financial success are important aspects of our businesses, sustainability cannot be measured solely by financial indicators. It also encompasses social responsibility, environmental protection, and strong governance.

Therefore, the Exchange is committed to enhancing transparency in these areas as a matter of responsibility. Good governance is an essential pillar for achieving sustainable development and building a strong economy.”

The MSX ESG Disclosure Guideline underscores the growing significance of ESG considerations not only in Oman but also regionally and globally.

Its primary aim is to support the country's sustainable development objectives by providing clear guidelines for ESG reporting.

Through this initiative, MSX seeks to raise awareness about ESG considerations and encourage companies to prioritise sustainability and responsible business practices.

On January 9, 2023, the GCC Exchanges Committee, led by the Saudi Exchange, published a cohesive set of ESG Disclosure Metrics.

This standardised framework consists of 29 standards aligned with the World Federation of Exchanges and Sustainable Stock Exchanges Initiative.

It encompasses a wide range of categories, including GHG emissions, energy consumption, water usage, gender pay equity, employee turnover, gender diversity, data privacy, ethics, and more.

The introduction of these GCC ESG Disclosure Metrics represents a significant stride towards standardising ESG reporting practices throughout the GCC region.

Asyad supports SMEs with contracts worth RO 38 million

**BUSINESS REPORTER**

MUSCAT, SEPT 11

In partnership with the private sector and the small and medium enterprise sector, the Asyad Group contributed to providing business opportunities for local suppliers worth more than RO 38 million during the first six months of 2023 by awarding more than 5,000 contracts and purchase orders, including more than two thousand contracts and purchase orders for small and medium enterprises holding a Riyada card, with a value exceeding RO 10 million that were distributed to more than 600 small and medium enterprises.

This contributed to providing many commercial opportunities for various local economic activities and projects in various economic and commercial sectors.

Sameh Batouq, Vice-President of the Contracts and Procurement Unit at Asyad Group, said “The (Asyad) group is keen to build local supply chains that serve our needs by entering into strategic partnerships with private sector companies and small and medium enterprises to localise their spending on purchases from the local market, in addition to building capabilities for national companies and human competencies to ensure the sustainability of supply chains and provide innovative logistics solutions.”

OIA, IIA to promote and support Omani SMEs



MUSCAT: As part of its efforts to enhance local content, promote local products and support Omani SMEs, Oman Investment Authority (OIA) signed a Memorandum of Cooperation (MoC) with the Industrial Innovation Academy (IIA).

The MoC aims to establish industrial activities in diverse economic sectors. It also seeks to examine and analyse value chains, explore investment opportunities targeting SMEs, and train national talents in order to qualify them for market needs through specialised business accelerators.

The programme is one of many OIA initiatives and similar programmes launched in cooperation with its companies and stakeholders, all aiming to enhance local content and create

business opportunities for SMEs.

The new MoC will focus on IIA's programmes, projects, and databases, which serve the entrepreneurial sector in Oman.

The agreement was signed by Al Mutasim bin Said al Sariri, Director of In-country Value at OIA, and Dr Ayman bin Abdullah al Fudaili, CEO of IIA.

In light of the signing, Al Sariri reiterated that OIA will work on multiple streams, starting with sharing the Business Technology Mapping Outcomes with IIA, which mainly includes opportunities and challenges that face OIA companies.

IIA will then work on resolutions that will be presented to SMEs. This MoC reflects the synergies between OIA and its companies in terms of ICV.”

On the other hand, Dr Al Fudaili noted that “IIA has

worked on strategic and service projects aiming at creating business opportunities for SMEs, including the ‘Tawreed’ programme that focused on examining the value-added chains for a number of economic sectors in Oman. In addition, IIA built a database for all products manufactured in Madayn's industrial cities.”

Moreover, the collaboration programme is in line with the strategic partnerships between OIA and its companies on the one hand and other partners and stakeholders on the other hand.

This new agreement will further help SMEs win rewarding tenders and contracts, provide them with further competition opportunities, broaden their business horizons, and create job opportunities for the national workforce. — ONA

Opportunity Oman: Al Shuwaymiyyah’s treasures



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Al Shuwaymiyyah has become a central hub for investors looking for promising investment opportunities in Oman’s mining sector. This article explores these opportunities and highlights the advantages of investing in each specific domain. Furthermore, Al Shuwaymiyyah offers an enticing ecosystem, featuring abundant reserves of valuable minerals and an appealing regulatory framework designed to attract international, local, and regional investors. Nestled in the heart of Oman, Shuwaymiyyah is rapidly gaining prominence as a focal point for investment prospects. This article examines the various investment options and the benefits of investing in this region. Shuwaymiyyah’s strategic location and business-friendly environment make it a promising destination for both local and

international investors. Shuwaymiyyah plays a pivotal role in Oman’s ambitious endeavour to diversify its economy, reducing its reliance on oil revenues. As the government shifts its focus towards crafting a sustainable and diversified economic landscape, significant investments have been channelled into various sectors, firmly establishing Shuwaymiyyah as a key driving force behind Oman’s economic growth. This region primarily focuses on four key sectors: minerals, tourism, fishery, and renewable energy. Each of these domains offers unique investment potential. **MINERALS:** Al Shuwaymiyyah boasts a wealth of valuable minerals, including limestone, gypsum, and dolomite. These minerals are in high demand globally, especially in industries like construction and agriculture. Immense Reserve for Precious Stones and their Diverse Applications: Investing in the Al Shuwaymiyyah offers an opportunity due to its reserves of valuable minerals. Oman is known for its deposits of minerals such as chromite, limestone, gypsum, and marble, making it a promising destination for mining ventures. The Al Shuwaymiyyah is a treasure chest of rare earth minerals, with abundant reserves of Limestone, Gypsum, and Dolomite. Based on surveys conducted by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals is believed to possess around 2.5 billion tonnes of limestone 960 million metric tonnes of gypsum and 1.3 billion metric tonnes of dolomite.



These extensive mineral resources present immensely lucrative investment opportunities and significant value-added propositions for potential investors. The value-added proposition for Investors in Al Shuwaymiyyah is expediential. Cement production relies heavily on limestone, and the global demand for it is projected to reach 5 billion metric tonnes by 2030 as the World Bank indicates. With Al Shuwaymiyyah holding reserves of limestone, investors can take advantage of the expanding domestic and international construction sector. Gypsum holds value as a mineral that finds use in the construction and agriculture industries. According to a report by Grand View Research, the global gypsum market is projected to experience a compound growth rate of 4.6 per cent from 2021 to 2028. This gives investors a chance to explore Al Shuwaymiyyah gypsum reserves and broaden their sources of income. Dolomite is a mineral in the industry experiencing a growing demand because of its multiple uses in steel, iron, and glass production. Experts predict that the global Dolomite market will reach a value of \$3 billion by 2028. Investors in Al Shuwaymiyyah can benefit from taking advantage of the increasing demand for the Dolomite across industries to gain an edge. **FISHERY SECTOR:** Al Shuwaymiyyah’s strategic coastal location along Oman’s pristine coastline presents a golden opportunity for investment in the fishery sector. The region’s rich marine

ecosystem, abundant with diverse fish species, crustaceans, and mollusks, offers a multitude of investment prospects, ranging from traditional fishing to aquaculture and seafood processing. **TOURISM AND HOSPITALITY:** The serene beauty of Al Shuwaymiyyah’s coastal areas and its cultural heritage make it an attractive destination for tourism development. Investors can explore opportunities in establishing hotels, resorts, and other tourism-related ventures. **RENEWABLE ENERGY:** Oman is making strides in renewable energy, and Al Shuwaymiyyah’s expansive landscapes offer potential for solar and wind energy projects. Investing in renewable energy aligns with Oman’s commitment to sustainability. In conclusion, Al Shuwaymiyyah offers a diverse investment landscape with profit potential in various sectors, including minerals, tourism, fishery, and renewable energy. Investors, whether international or local, have a chance to take advantage of this potential and contribute to the country’s economic growth. Al Shuwaymiyyah’s political environment and investor-friendly policies make it an appealing destination for business. However, conducting thorough research and assessing risks are essential steps to make the most of this investment opportunity. Furthermore, Al Shuwaymiyyah’s strategic location and robust infrastructure establish it as a leader in the mining industry, presenting unmatched opportunities for investors.

Time to target fossil fuel demand, not supply

Just stop oil production — and, for that matter, gas and coal supply. Then there will be hardly any greenhouse gas emissions. Mission accomplished. It’s a seductive theory. With global emissions still rising and the northern hemisphere suffering the hottest summer on record, many climate change activists want companies to stop pumping crude. They also want investors to stop funding the fossil fuel industry — and to put an end to coal, gas and oil-fired power generation.

Campaigners are, of course, right that the world needs to cut its use of fossil fuels. But focussing on curbing supply is not as effective as pushing for measures that cut demand - such as carbon taxes, faster permissioning of renewable energy and green subsidies. International climate negotiators are also wrangling over whether to “phase down” fossil fuels. The diplomatic texts don’t spell out whether it is supply or demand that should be cut. Though politicians sometimes talk about phasing down “use”, which puts the emphasis on reducing consumption, the ambiguity of the official language may not be helpful. After all, big fossil fuel producers such as Saudi



HUGO DIXON

The author is a British business journalist and the former editor-in-chief and chairman of the financial commentary website Breakingviews which he co-founded.

CONSIDER A FANTASY SCENARIO, WHERE CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES, THE TWO WESTERN COUNTRIES WITH THE LARGEST RESERVES, CUT OIL PRODUCTION WHILE CONSUMPTION REMAINS HIGH. THE OPEC COUNTRIES AND RUSSIA, THE OTHER COUNTRIES WITH BIG RESERVES, COULD JUST PUMP MORE OIL TO FILL THE GAP. AFTER ALL, MOST HAVE LOW COSTS OF PRODUCTION.

Arabia and Russia are opposed to any suggestion that they need to cut production. They have so far stymied various attempts to get a global deal to phase down fossil fuels, including at COP27, last year’s United Nations climate change conference and last weekend’s Group of 20 summit. Of course, the likes of Saudi Arabia still wouldn’t be happy at the prospect of falling demand for their products. But even if they block a global deal on phasing down consumption, other countries could press ahead and do it anyway as that is within their control. **DEMAND CREATES ITS OWN SUPPLY** Some climate campaigners don’t like anything that would let the producers off the hook. They argue it is necessary to have a pincer movement - driving down both supply and demand. In theory, this sounds right. After all, if there was no production, there could be no consumption. But how feasible is that? At current rates of consumption, the world has 139 years of proven coal reserves — and enough oil and gas to last 57 and 49 years respectively. Of course, it is foolish for companies to pump oil when there’s going to be no market for it. But consider a fantasy



From left, World Bank President Ajay Banga, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa and US President Joe Biden pose for the group photo during G20 Summit, in New Delhi, India. — Reuters

scenario, where Canada and the United States, the two Western countries with the largest reserves, cut oil production while consumption remains high. The Opec countries and Russia, the other countries with big reserves, could just pump more oil to fill the gap. After all, most have low costs of production. This wouldn’t help the planet. Indeed, emissions might go up. After all, gas flaring - the burning of natural gas associated with oil extraction - is rife in many Opec+ countries, albeit not Saudi Arabia. There’s another scenario. Opec+ might refuse to fill the gap if Western countries curbed production. Greenhouse gas emissions would, indeed, fall. But prices would sky-rocket, causing economic havoc and hardship across the world. In either scenario, Opec+ would make massive profits. But enriching these countries is not a desirable outcome, as few are champions of freedom. Insofar as governments are willing to push up the costs of energy for their consumers, it would be better to tax consumption of fossil fuels more. That way, they would capture the extra revenues. They could use the money to cushion the blow for their most vulnerable citizens — and help poorer countries grow in a green way. — Reuters

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IN accordance with the provisions of Article 150 of the Commercial Companies Law. The company **Al Nawaiyah Al Dawaiyah Company**, which is registered with the Commercial Registration No 1242829, hereby announces that it is going to reduce its capital from RO 250,000.000 to 100,000.000. Whoever has any objection to the foregoing shall present the reasons for such objection to the Secretariat of Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion within 30 days from the date hereof.

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FASHION

A model walks the runway at the Eckhaus Latta Spring Summer 2024 runway show during New York Fashion Week at the Rockefeller Center in New York City. — AFP



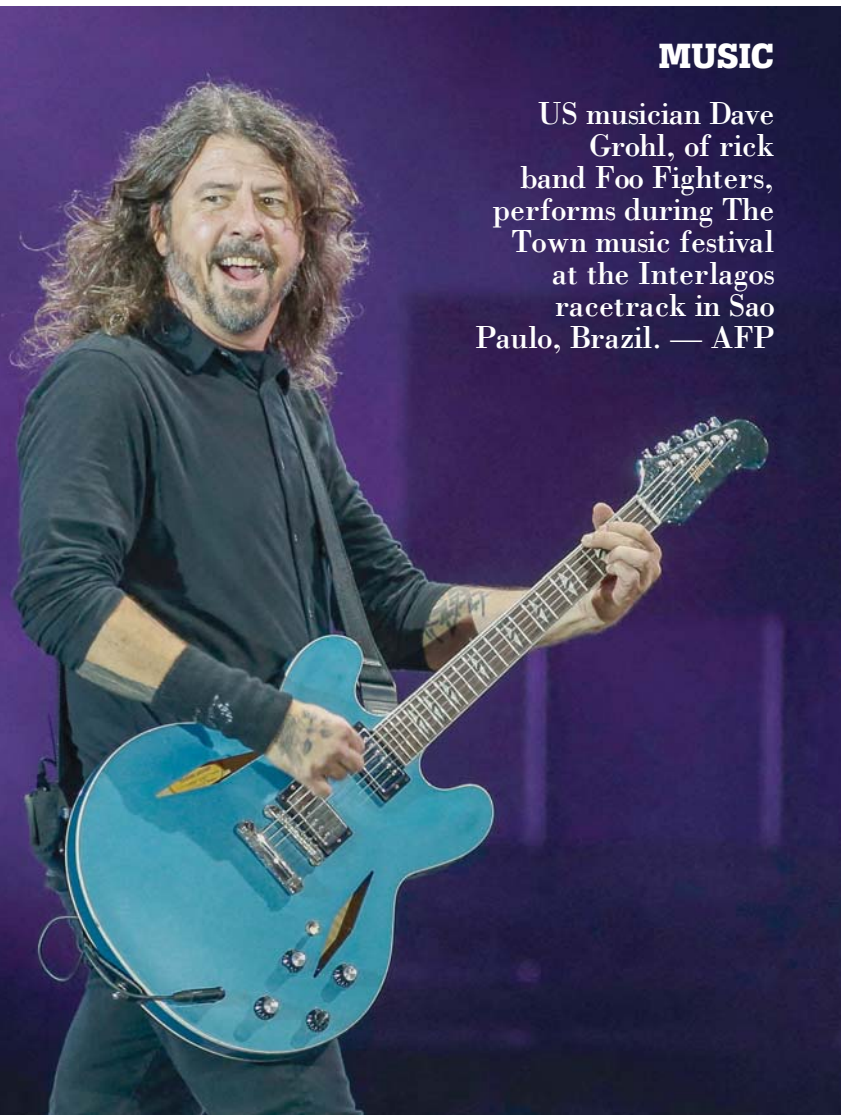
ENTERTENMENT

Rugby World Cup 2023 - Pool B - South Africa v Scotland - Orange Velodrome, Marseille, France. — Reuters



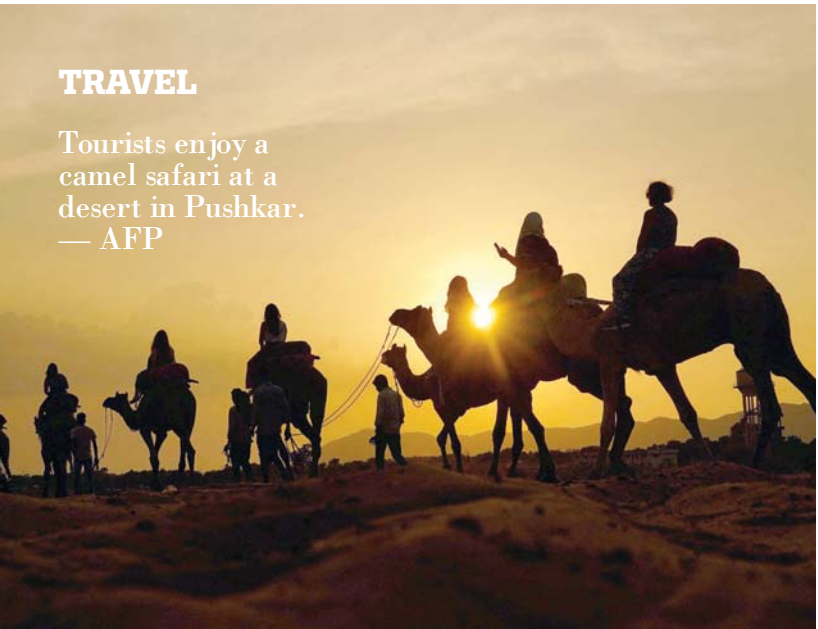
MUSIC

US musician Dave Grohl, of rock band Foo Fighters, performs during The Town music festival at the Interlagos racetrack in Sao Paulo, Brazil. — AFP



TRAVEL

Tourists enjoy a camel safari at a desert in Pushkar. — AFP



FILM

Chinese actress Shu Qi attends the red carpet of the closing ceremony of the 80th Venice Film Festival. — AFP



art & life

TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 12, 2023 | SAFAR 26, 1445 AH

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



BY ZUWAINA AL SULIEMANI

In the picturesque coastal region of Muscat Governorate in the Sultanate of Oman, a mesmerising spectacle awaits those who venture to its shores — the elegant and enchanting flamingos. These beautiful birds, known for their distinctive pink and white plumage, grace the serene waters of The Flamingo Lake in Qurayat, amongst other locations across Oman, including Al Mughsail Beach in Salalah and Al Suwaih in Al Sharqiyah South.

Standing gracefully in the shallow, salty waters with one leg raised and sporting striking white-black bills, these flamingos are a true marvel of nature. Their vibrant pink colouration results from their diet, primarily shrimp and algae. Along the shores, one can often witness these graceful creatures taking flight in groups, their long legs and stretched necks allowing them to effortlessly capture fish from the waters below. With their large wings and short tails, they navigate the skies with remarkable finesse, making



ing them both powerful swimmers and agile fliers.

For photographer Ahmed al

Wahibi, weekends are a special opportunity to capture the beauty of the flamingos at the Flamingo Lake in Qurayat. After the Al Fajr prayer, he embarks on a journey approximately fifty minutes from Muscat city along the main road. Armed with his trusty Sony camera equipped with a 200-600 mm lens, Ahmed captures these magnificent birds in all their glory.

Ahmed shares his deep admiration for the location, saying, "The place was spectacular, and I felt as though I was transported outside of Oman for a moment. I make it a point to visit every vacation because I love the place."

As the flamingos take to the



skies in flocks, their outstretched legs and gracefully curved necks create an awe-inspiring sight. It is common to see them standing on one leg, a

behaviour that has intrigued scientists for years. Some believe it regulates their body temperature, while others speculate it is an energy-saving

technique or a way to dry their legs.

The word "flamingo" finds its origins in the Spanish and Latin term "flamenco," which means "fire." This name aptly captures their fiery-coloured plumage. Flamingos are categorised as "wading birds" and have a lifespan of twenty to thirty years in the wild. They are filter feeders, using their unique feeding technique: they dip their heads underwater, turning them upside down to consume food. Then, they deftly swing their heads, employing their tongues to pump water in and out of their bills. This creates a water filter along the edge of their bills, effectively trapping their food.

Ahmed al Wahibi immortalises his Flamingo Lake experiences through stunning imagery, which he shares across social media platforms. He aims to inspire Omanis and tourists alike to explore the unspoiled beauty of Oman's natural landscapes and witness the captivating spectacle of flamingos soaring in flocks along Oman's pristine lakes and coastline.



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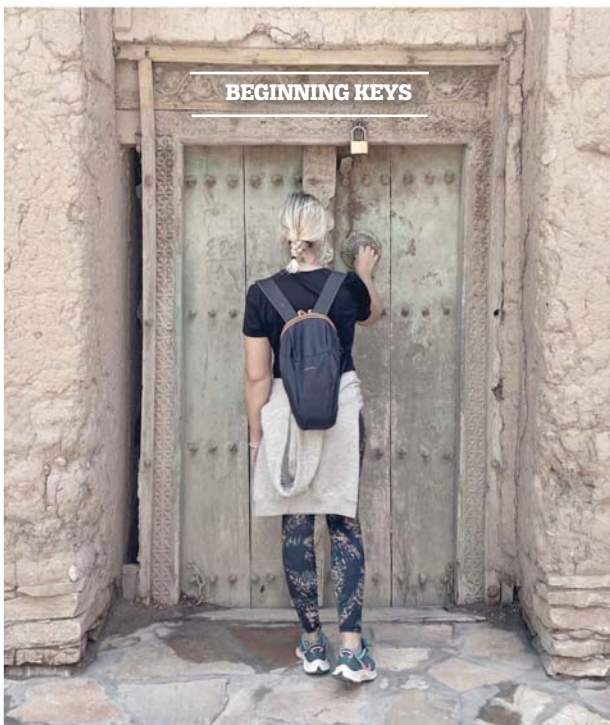
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Izki is a treasure trove of Oman's rich history

Buthaina al Riyami

IN THE HEART of the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate lies a precious repository of Oman's rich heritage - Izki. This historic town is witness to the emergence of numerous esteemed figures in Omani history, serving as a beacon of cultural and social significance. Izki, steeped in tradition and history, holds a treasure trove of documents that offer glimpses into the beliefs and virtues of its people.

Izki has been and will continue to be, a pivotal player in shaping Oman's historical narrative and future trajectory. With this in mind, the Izki Across Ages Symposium seeks to illuminate the historical importance of Izki and harness it as a guiding star for a prosperous future.

Scheduled to commence on September 11 and 12 at the Izki Public Hall, the symposium has a two-fold mission: To explore Izki's potential and its pivotal role in catalysing the nation's growth. The event is intended for history scholars, students, youth, and anyone interested in delving into the annals of history and culture.

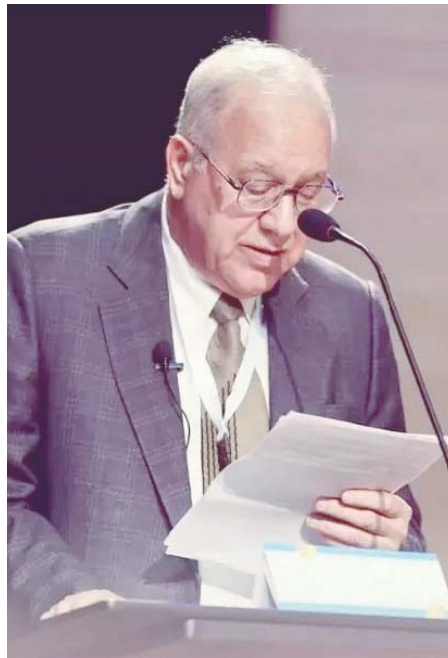
Collaboration between the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth, Izki Governor's Office, Izki Cultural Center, and Izki Club has been instrumental in ensuring the symposium's success. These entities share a common objective - to orchestrate an exemplary symposium that vividly portrays Izki's civilised and cultural heritage while recognising the dedicated efforts of local scholars and researchers.



Over two days, the symposium will feature diverse research papers. These papers will delve into Izki's history, geography, and prominent figures. The papers include, Geography of Izki by Dr Badriya al



Amari; Izki in Ancient Times by Nail Hanon; Izki's Historical and Political Stature by Dr Ismail al Agbari; Izki from 1624 to 1749 by Ahmed al Tob; Izki's Political Evolution from 1920 to 1960 by Salim al Nbhani; Izki's Role in Achieving the Oman Vision 2040 by Rahma al Azri; Tourist



Attractions and Historical Monuments in Izki by Dr Masoud al Hadhrami; and Economic Conditions in Izki Across Ages by Dr Hameed al Nofli.

Furthermore, the symposium will shine a spotlight on the material culture of Izki, including its castles, fortresses, 'afla' (traditional water systems), and ancient villages. In addition to these architectural treasures, the event will showcase various traditional arts, customs, and traditions, offering a comprehensive immersion into Izki's vibrant cultural tapestry. Izki stands not only as a testament to its past but also as a guiding light for Oman's future, and the symposium promises to celebrate this enduring legacy.

SCIENCES

Hawaii's Kilauea volcano erupts again

HAWAII'S KILAUEA VOLCANO, one of the world's most active, erupted again on Sunday, spewing fountains of lava more than 80 feet (24 meters) high.

Kilauea began erupting at around 3:15 pm local time (0115 GMT Monday), the US Geological Survey's Hawaiian Volcano Observatory said.

"The eruption was preceded by a period of strong seismicity and rapid uplift of the summit," it said.

It is the third time the volcano has erupted this year, after bursting to life in January and June.

A USGS livestream from the

rim of the caldera showed fountains of lava erupting from multiple fissures in the crater.

"Lava fountain heights have decreased since the eruption onset, but remain up to about 20-25 meters (65-82 feet) high," the volcano observatory said in an update at 0520 GMT Monday.

The observatory raised the volcano's alert status from "watch" to "warning" and the aviation alert was increased to red.

Kilauea is in the Hawai'i Volcanoes National Park on Big Island, well away from population centers, but Hawaii Emergency Management Agency warned that volcanic gases could be a problem for people exposed to them.

"At this time, lava at Kilauea is confined to the summit and does not pose a lava threat to communities. However, eruptions emit volcanic particles and gases which may create breathing problems for people exposed," it



posted on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Sulphur dioxide released during eruptions reacts in the atmosphere to create the visible haze known as vog (volcanic smog), which can create breathing difficulties for people and animals.

Kilauea is much smaller than

neighbouring Mauna Loa but is far more active and regularly wows helicopter-riding tourists who come to see its red-hot shows.

Kilauea is one of six active volcanoes on the Hawaiian islands.

It erupted almost continuously between 1983 and 2019—**AFP**

FASHION

Dior's former creative director Marc Bohan dies at 97

Marc Bohan, a fashion visionary and the longest-serving designer at Dior, has died at 97, the French luxury fashion house said.

"Dior is deeply saddened to learn of the passing of Marc Bohan, an immense and influential visionary who was Creative Director of our House for nearly three decades," Dior said in a late Friday statement on social network X.

"His originality and modernity have never ceased to inspire. Our thoughts are with his family and friends."

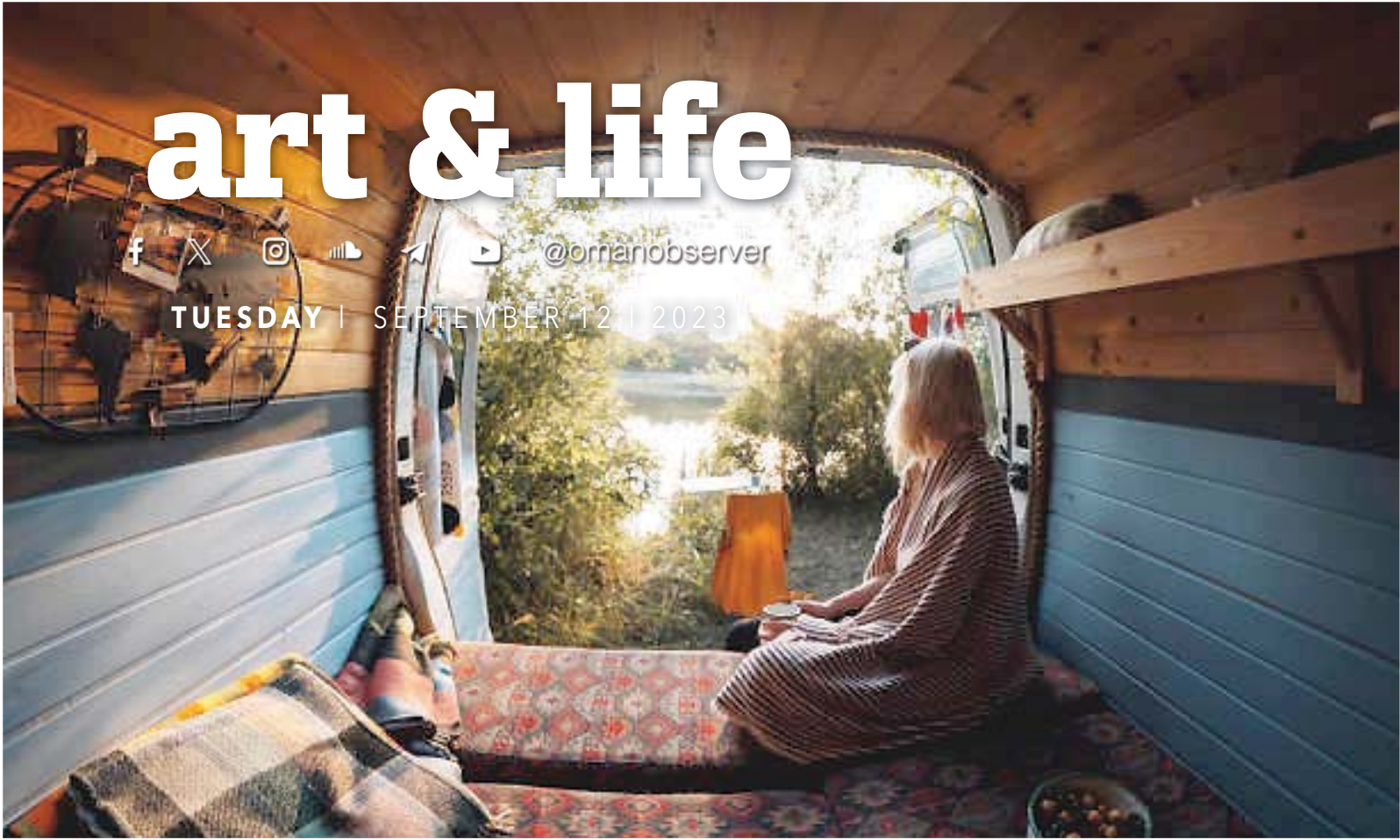
Bohan, who died on Sept. 6, began working for Christian Dior in 1957, creating collections in



London.

He became the house's third artistic director in 1961, when he was asked to lead the French label after his predecessor Yves Saint Laurent was drafted into the French military.

He went on to oversee the brand as artistic director for nearly three decades until 1989, developing a reputation for creating stylish, feminine clothes for a wealthy clientele that included Princess Grace of Monaco, movie stars Sophia Loren and Elizabeth Taylor and opera diva Maria Callas—**Reuters**



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TUESDAY | SEPTEMBER 12 | 2023

LIFESTYLE

How to go camping: A beginner's guide



FOR FIRST-TIME CAMPERS, spending the night outside presents a planning wilderness, including figuring out what to bring. The following are tips from experts in getting started.

CHOOSE YOUR CAMP STYLE

Camping comes in many varieties, from car camping, meaning you drive to a campsite and pitch a tent, to overnight backpacking, in which you carry everything on foot.

Starter-friendly, car camping allows travelers to bring things like coolers and camp chairs, and most campgrounds maintain toilets.

Rental camper vans often come equipped with gear, including bedding, cookware and a camp stove. Companies such as Escape Campervans, Wandervans and Native Campervans rent modified vans that campers sleep in.

"My advice for a first-time camper is, take small steps," said Alyssa Ravasio, the founder and CEO of Hipcamp, which lists campsites on private land such as farms and ranches. "Try a night or two. Go somewhere closer to home. And make sure the amenities that are important to you, such as a bathroom or shower, are there."

RESERVE IN ADVANCE

Like hotels, many campsites can be booked online. Reserve your spot in advance, especially in peak seasons. At New Hampshire State Parks, for example, reservations open 30 days in advance with just a few campsites held back for day-of arrivals.

The federal website Recreation.gov offers campsite reservations across many government agencies, including the National Park Service.

If you aim to camp at a popular national park, plan well in advance and get familiar with its booking rules, which are not

standardised, by searching park websites or Recreation.gov. Campsites at Upper Pines Campground in Yosemite National Park in California, for example, are available five months in advance. In contrast, sites at South Campground in Zion National Park in Utah are bookable up to 14 days before arrival.

If national park sites are booked, look for nearby state parks or alternative campgrounds. Hipcamp offers maps showing public lands, including national parks, and many places to camp around them.

Commercial campgrounds like KOA may

offer amenities such as swimming pools or basketball courts. Websites like ReserveAmerica.com make it easy to find both public and private campgrounds. Booking platforms such as Hipcamp, the Dyrt and Pitchup.com are good places to look for off-the-beaten-path options or privately owned properties.

If a campground is booked, set up an alert with the Dyrt, which will text you if a site becomes available. The service starts at \$9 for nonmembers.

RENT CAMPING BASICS

When it comes to basic gear, rent before you buy. "Gear can be pretty expensive," said Ravasio, who recommends renting from an REI Co-op store. Other companies such as Outdoors Geek and Kit Lender will ship gear.

"With tents, it is worth noting that a four-man tent won't comfortably fit four men in reality," said Dan Yates, the founder of Pitchup.com, noting that tent sizes don't account for baggage. He recommends choosing a tent sized for two people more than will be sleeping in it.

Sleeping bags, rated for outside temperatures, are also often available to rent. Most guides recommend adding a sleeping pad or mat.

"We can deal with almost anything during the day if we get a good night's sleep," said Gary Elbert, who designs camping trips for REI Adventures. "If I'm investing money in something, it's a sleeping kit."

PLAN THE KITCHEN

With a vehicle, avoid buying specialty cooking gear and pack small pots, pans, plates and utensils from home. If you don't want to cook over an open fire, rent a camp stove.

Food storage advice depends on where you camp. Where bears are not present, storing food overnight in your car deters animals such as raccoons. In bear country, follow campground requirements and use provided food storage safes. Depending on the location, the National Park Service recommends storing food in a locked car only during the day with food or food storage containers such

as coolers covered and windows closed.

Water is a primary survival need. In its guide on what to bring, the National Park Service recommends 2 litres of drinking water a person a day and more if you are in hot places. The Green Mountain Club, a nonprofit that manages 500 miles of trails in Vermont, recommends adding 2 litres for cooking and another 2 for extinguishing a campfire.

"Most developed front-country campgrounds will have a potable water source, so be sure to check before you go," said Emily Mosher, the visitor services manager for the Green Mountain Club.

PACK FOR PROBLEMS

Pack and dress in layers to account for changes in temperature from day to night, and remember rain gear or a water-repellent outer layer. Avoid cotton, which absorbs water, including perspiration, and is slow to dry.

Bring a headlamp, which allows you to do things hands-free in the dark, like unzip your tent. A utility knife or multi-tool device helps with chores. A first-aid kit should be stocked with bandages, antiseptic wipes and pain relievers.

To account for no or low connectivity, bring paper maps or download maps that you can review offline.

It's not all defensive packing. Don't forget cards, books and games.

PRACTICE FIRE SAFETY

One of the great joys of camping is sitting around a campfire. Campers should check with park or campground authorities to ensure fires are permitted; in drought conditions, they are often banned.

Only burn wood that has been purchased or provided locally. Firewood from other places risks transporting invasive insects or diseases.

There are several ways to build a fire. Using the basic tepee or cone structure, lean small sticks against a bundle of starter such as dry grass or birch tree bark. Once the tinder is ignited and the sticks catch fire, add increasingly larger sticks, working up to logs.

The most important step in breaking camp is to ensure your fire is out. According to the Department of the Interior, almost 9 in 10 wildfires are caused by humans.

When you douse a fire, make "campfire soup" by drenching the fire pit in water and stirring it with a stick so that it reaches all the coals. The remains should be cool enough to touch before you leave.

LEAVE NO TRACE

Collect all garbage and dispose of it or take it home. Strain gray water used to wash dishes and drain the water in collection areas.

The nonprofit conservation organisation Leave No Trace offers a free 45-minute online tutorial in safe and eco-friendly camping basics.

FEEL WELCOME

Outdoor lovers in historically marginalised communities have created organisations that encourage hiking and camping with events, trips and how-to videos. Look for educational resources at Black Folks Camp Too, Latino Outdoors and the Venture Out Project, among others. —NYT

