

HIS MAJESTY TO VISIT BELGIUM ON MONDAY



PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....	12:01pm
Asr.....	3:04pm
Maghrib.....	5:25pm
Isha.....	6:39pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	5:13am

PHONE CALL



Sayyid Badr discusses developments with Syrian foreign minister

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister discussed through a phone call with Bassam Sabbagh, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates of the Syrian Arab Republic, the developments at the Syrian arena. Sayyid Badr expressed the Sultanate of Oman's solidarity with Syria. He said that Oman stresses the importance of the sovereignty and

unity of Syrian territory, as well as the necessity of restoring security and stability and preventing the expansion of the scope of conflict. Oman urges all parties to favor dialogue and political solutions in addressing challenges and reaching peaceful and conciliatory solutions for the benefit of the Syrian people and the regional security and stability, added Sayyid Badr. — **ONA**

ANNUAL EXERCISE

Industrial survey

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion will begin its annual survey of industrial establishments for the year 2023 on Sunday. The survey targets more than 1,600 industrial establishments across various industrial areas in the governorates and wilayats of Oman, in collaboration with the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones through the electronic industrial survey system. This is a significant increase compared to the survey conducted in 2022, which targeted

952 industrial establishments, representing a 43% increase. This survey is part of the Ministry's efforts towards digital transformation, aiming to facilitate the work of industrial establishments in submitting, collecting, reviewing, and analysing data to build objectives. Dr. Ahmed bin Khalafan Al-Badawi, Director of the Implementation and Evaluation of the Industrial Strategy Department at the Ministry, stated that the survey is an initiative from the outputs of the industrial strategy, which relies on obtaining accurate statistics on the industrial sector in Oman.

ON MONDAY

Sayyid Theyazin to patronise launch of national performance of schools

MUSCAT: His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth will preside over the launch of the National System for Evaluation of the Performance of Schools at Kempinski Hotel, Muscat on Monday. The event is being organised by Oman Authority for Academic Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Education. The launch of the system falls within the responsibilities and prerogatives of Oman Authority for Academic Accredi-

tation and Quality Assurance of Education, in accordance with Royal Decree No. (9) on the establishment of the authority and which stipulated that it shall set a national system for to ensure quality of school education in the Sultanate of Oman as to ensure continued preserving of the level of education that meet the global standards and to encourage the educational establishments establish their internal regulations in a way that contributes to achievement of Oman Vision 2040. — **ONA**



OUT OF 155 COUNTRIES

Oman climbs 57 places in UN's Global Quality Index

MUSCAT: The Sultanate has advanced 57 places in the Global Quality Index (GQI), issued by the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation (UNIDO), to reach the 60th place at the international level out of 155 countries and the sixth place at the Middle East level, compared to the 117 place in the earlier edition of the index. Dr. Saleh Said Masan, Under-secretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Industry and Commerce said that the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion has accorded due care and attention to the specifications and standards sector. He said that this achievement by the Sultanate of Oman reflects the direct impact for the project of development of the national system of specifications and standards which started in 2022 and included seven basic initiatives, notably the electronic platform



for measurement services (Hazm Platform), the Omani conformity system, establishment of Oman Accreditation Centre, the specifications initiative and control on precious metals among others. The advancement in the index is the result of the development of the quality system and motivation and encouragement of innova-

tion and making simple the export and import processes, which is evidence for the success of the national policies related to improvement of the business environment and attraction of foreign investments, he added. The Minisry is working on investment in training of nationals in the field of standardisation to

ensure continued advancement in this field and in achievement of high performance indices and development of digital system using artificial intelligence, he added. Emad bin Khamis Al Shukaili, Director General of the Directorate General of Specifications and Metrology at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) said that the implementation of the strategic project of the development of the national system for specifications and measurements goes hand in hand with the priorities of Oman Vision 2040 and the programme of the 10th five year plan and the joint efforts which included the digitalisation of the standards services and the development of the national labs. He further added that the quality index represents a significant tool for evaluation and improvement of the performance in the fields associated with quality. — **ONA**

GULF PETROCHEMICALS AND CHEMICALS ASSOCIATION



GPCA Forum to begin on Monday

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by OQ Group, will host the 18th Annual Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association (GPCA) Forum, which will begin this Monday at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC). The event, spanning several days, highlights Oman's dedication to cementing its status as a strategic hub for the petrochemical and chemical industries on both regional and global levels. Ashraf Hamad Al Mamari, Group CEO of OQ, stated: "OQ Group is proud to host the 18th Annual Forum of the Gulf Petrochemicals and Chemicals Association for the first time in the Sultanate of Oman. This milestone reflects our commitment to enhancing Oman's position as a strategic hub for the petrochemical industry on both regional and global levels. The forum attracts participants from more than 43 countries and includes over 110 regional and global companies." He added: "Through this event, we aim to highlight the Group's ongoing efforts in digital transformation and sustainability, focusing on pioneering initiatives designed to achieve carbon neutrality. Furthermore, we will emphasise our role in supporting young Omani talents, equipping them with the skills to play a vital role in driving growth and innova-

tion within the energy and petrochemical sectors." This year's forum will feature the participation of several energy ministers, senior executives, and global leaders in the petrochemical and chemical sectors. As a premier platform for the industry, the GPCA Forum facilitates discussions on key topics shaping the future of petrochemicals and chemicals. The 2024 edition will focus on sustainability, the future of energy, and how regional countries can contribute to achieving global goals in these areas. The opening day will include keynote speeches by energy ministers and GPCA officials, the announcement of the next host country, and the presentation of the GPCA Pioneers Award, which honours transformative leaders and contributors to the host nation's energy sector. The agenda features engaging panel discussions addressing challenges and opportunities in the chemicals industry. Key sessions include "The Gulf States' Vision for Achieving the Triad of Growth, Efficiency, and Sustainability," "Addressing Global Food Security Challenges: Sustainable Solutions from the Agri-Nutrients Sector," "Energy Transitions and Security," "Geopolitical Impacts on the Chemicals Sector," and "Driving Innovation

for Resilience and Efficiency in Chemicals." On the sidelines of the forum, several notable initiatives will take place. For the first time in the forum's history, the GPCA Start-up Nexus in Oman will provide a platform for startups specialising in Circular Economy and Climate Action to connect with experts, regional leaders, and global companies, facilitating the exchange of innovative solutions and expertise. Additionally, the second edition of the SolutionsXchange, following its successful debut in Qatar, will return to foster knowledge sharing and collaboration on technological solutions for the petrochemical industry's future challenges. Other highlights include the Sustainability Pavilion, GPCA Youth Forum, and more. OQ's participation in the forum will showcase its leadership in advancing the petrochemical and chemical sectors regionally and internationally. The company will demonstrate its comprehensive expertise across the energy value chain, from raw material extraction to the production of specialised chemicals. OQ will also present its innovative solutions to sector challenges and discuss its strategic vision for enhancing sustainability and efficiency in the sector. — **ONA**

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BILATERAL TIES

Oman-Belgium companies to boost partnership and investment



<FROM A1 The Ambassador explained that relations between Oman and Belgium are witnessing remarkable development and close cooperation that have contributed to the creation of strategic partnerships based on trust and mutual respect between the two countries, noting that the history of establishing diplomatic relations between the two countries dates back to 1978.

She added that the volume of trade exchange between Oman and Belgium by the end of August 2024 amounted to RO 148 million, as the volume of Omani exports to Belgium amounted to nearly RO 10 million, while the volume of imports from Belgium to Oman reached about RO 138 million.

She further added that the most important Belgian exports to Oman are food and industrial products, bunker oil, and others, while the most prominent Omani exports to Belgium are polypropylene and its products, iron products, copper, and others.

Ambassador Rua said the number of registered companies with Belgian participation until September 2024 reached 39, recording an increase of 50 percent, and the size of the invested capital increased from RO 19,243,000 in 2023 to RO 819,778,000 until September 2024. These figures, she affirmed, reflect the interest of the Belgians in setting up Omani companies.

On his turn, Pascal H. GRÉGOIRE, Ambassador of Belgium to Oman said that the upcoming state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to Belgium on December 3 and 4, 2024, marks a significant chapter in the enduring and multifaceted relationship between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Belgium.

He told Oman News Agency (ONA) that this historic visit underscores the mutual respect and shared values that have long formed the foundation of bilateral relations, and signals a deepened commitment to forging a brighter, more interconnected future.

The Belgian Ambassador pointed out that Oman and Belgium have consistently demonstrated a commitment to diplomacy and international law, sharing a vision of global stability and constructive engagement.

Oman's exemplary role as a mediator in regional conflicts resonates with Belgium's emphasis on reconciliation and compromise, said the ambassador, noting that this mutual dedication to fostering peace underscores the strategic importance of their collaboration, as both nations reaffirm their roles as responsible actors on the global stage.

He explained that the economic partnership between Oman and Belgium has evolved into a dynamic and fruitful relationship.

He added that this partnership has further expanded into transformative projects such as and to just name a few of them: 1. Port of Duqm: A testament to Omani-Belgian collaboration, this joint venture, established in 2011, positions Duqm as a pivotal hub for maritime logistics and green energy initiatives. 2. Hyport Duqm: This groundbreaking partnership, led by Belgium's DEME and Oman's OQ, focuses on the production and export of green hydrogen, aiming to drive decarbonization in industries and support Europe's renewable energy ambitions.

The ambassador affirmed that these projects not only exemplify innovation and sustainability but also highlight the complementary expertise of both nations in maritime and renewable energy sectors.

"Recognizing the immense potential for bilateral investments, Oman and Belgium are exploring opportunities to deepen ties across emerging industries, including life sciences, technological innovation, and aerospace. The extension of the Port of Duqm concession would further symbolize this forward-looking partnership, enabling both countries to solidify their positions as global players in sustainable industries," said the ambassador.

He affirmed that His Majesty's state visit would facilitate discussions on fostering investor-friendly policies and creating joint opportunities that promise lasting economic benefits for citizens and businesses alike.

He further noted that cultural and academic ties form the backbone of people-to-people connections between Oman and Belgium. Both nations recognize the importance of collaborative research, academic exchanges, and joint initiatives that foster mutual understanding and innovation. By investing in knowledge-sharing and cultural dialogue, Oman and Belgium aim to inspire a new generation of global leaders and thinkers.

He pointed out that the state visit of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik is poised to elevate Oman-Belgium relations to new heights. By focusing on sectors such as health, biopharmaceuticals, space, defense, and research, this visit lays the groundwork for diversified and sustainable growth. The mutual commitment to dialogue and innovation positions both nations as key players in shaping a peaceful, prosperous, and interconnected global future.

The Belgian ambassador concluded his statement by saying: "Oman and Belgium's collaboration is more than a bilateral relationship—it is a partnership rooted in shared aspirations for stability, sustainability, and shared prosperity. The upcoming state visit is a testament to the enduring friendship and the boundless potential for cooperation between



these two nations.

As Oman and Belgium continue to deepen their ties, their joint efforts will serve as a beacon of what is possible when nations come together in the spirit of mutual respect and shared vision, setting an inspiring example for the world."

Meanwhile, Faisal Abdullah Al Rowas, Board Chairman of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) said that this visit comes as an affirmation of the advanced bilateral relations and cooperation between Oman and Belgium, stressing the importance of the economic file as a major element in pushing these relations towards wider horizons.

He explained to Oman News Agency (ONA) that there are great opportunities and potentials provided by major sectors, most notably logistics services, port development, energy, tourism and information technology.

He explained that Duqm Port represents a model of successful partnership between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Belgium as it is a major driver for many promising projects that enhance economic development in the Special Economic Zone of Duqm.

The OCCI Board Chairman added that there is remarkable cooperation between the private sector in the two countries through the continuous communication between the OCCI and its Belgian counterpart with the aim of reviewing the investment opportunities available in Omani ports in addition to enhancing the private sector's participation in green mobility initiatives and supporting areas of modern technologies.

Reggy Vermeulen, Honorary Consul of the Kingdom of Belgium to the Sultanate of Oman said that the visit of His Majesty the Sultan to Belgium serves as a testament to the robust bond between the two countries.

He pointed out that one of the primary objectives of this visit is to highlight the significance of the opportunities available in Oman for Belgian investors.

He explained that over the past several years, the economic relationship between Oman and Belgium has been steadily growing.

He added: "The primary areas of collaboration between the two countries are in the mineral sector, particularly in the large limestone projects in Salalah. Additionally, there is significant collaboration in the hydrogen sector, with a major green hydrogen generation project underway in Duqm. The flagship project is the development of the port of Duqm, which is currently managed by a joint venture between the ASYAD group and the consortium Antwerp Port". — ONA



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HM, Turkish President sign agreements, MoUs

The signing included agreements in the fields of investment, health, and eight MoUs in the fields of political consultations, investment promotion, agriculture, fisheries, livestock, water, labour, employment

ANKARA: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Türkiye graced the signing of 10 agreements and memoranda of understanding (MoUs) at the Presidential Complex in the capital city Ankara on Thursday.

The pacts come within the context of His Majesty's current state visit to Türkiye.

The signing included two agreements in the fields of joint investment and health, and 8 memoranda of understanding in the fields of political consultations, investment promotion, agriculture, fisheries, livestock, water, labour, employment, entrepreneurship, small and medium enterprises (SMEs), cooperation between central banks, and cultural cooperation.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik delivered a speech during the signing ceremony reading as follows:

"President Recep Tayyip Erdogan: It is a great pleasure for us to be in Ankara, the capital of your hospitable country, the friendly Republic of Türkiye, and to express our great satisfaction with the constructive dialogue and consultations we held with Your Excellency and members of your government.

We are pleased to seize this opportunity to underscore the depth of historical relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Türkiye. We look forward to consolidating these relations in all areas of common interest to our two countries, towards a promising future of further growth and prosperity — a future embodied in the shared vision that will be developed by the two sides in the forthcoming stage.

Our relations, Your Excellency, are a vital model of fruitful cooperation. Turkish companies have played a vital role in supporting infrastructure and development projects in the Sultanate of Oman. Meanwhile, Omani investments in Türkiye reflect our firm confidence in the strength of the Turkish economy and the constructive ties that unite the economies of the two countries.

We have instructed the members of the Omani government to continue working diligently with their Turkish counterparts, and to accord priority to vital areas of cooperation. We hope to expand the volume of commercial exchange and to encourage the establishment of joint economic projects through the joint investment fund that was launched today to serve a number of strategic sectors, notably industries related to renewable energy and defence industries, in addition to cooperation between our educational institutions to develop research, innovation and areas of technology, health care and food security, among other areas.

We also underline the importance of cultural cooperation, which contributes to enriching knowledge and cultural interaction among peoples.

Our two countries share a firm commitment to support efforts for peace and stability. We value the efforts made to enhance regional cooperation. We would like to express our great appreciation for Türkiye's stands on the major issues affecting our region. We continue to adhere to constant principles towards the realization of a just and comprehensive solution to the Palestinian issue, based on the Two-State Solution. We



are confident in Türkiye's strong backing for this legitimate cause and the country's endeavours to help achieve justice and peace for all.

Mr. President, we thank you very much for this kind invitation, and the warm welcome accorded to us and for sincere hospitality extended to us. We are pleased to reiterate our invitation to you Mr. President to visit the Sultanate of Oman so that we can once again celebrate the historical friendship and civilizational communication between our two countries. Your Excellency's visit to Oman would enhance our fraternal relations towards further progress and constructive cooperation benefiting the two friendly peoples.

Accept our sincere wishes of further progress and prosperity for the friendly people of Türkiye."

On his turn, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Türkiye, welcomed His Majesty the Sultan, noting that this is the first high-level official visit since the start of diplomatic relations between the two countries that are bound by deep-rooted historical and fraternal ties. He pointed out that the visit would shuttle bilateral relations into higher spheres in all fields.

In a speech he delivered during the agreement signing ceremony, President Erdogan expressed his great thanks for the sincere sentiments of solidarity shown by His Majesty the Sultan in the aftermath of the earthquake disaster that hit Türkiye last year (2023).

He expressed his deep appreciation for the efforts made by His Majesty the Sultan in the context of the Yemeni crisis, as well as His Majesty the Sultan's stands on many other matters of concern to the region, noting that His Majesty the Sultan showed a high sense of responsibility and had always worked hard for the realization of peace.

President Erdogan added that his discussions with His Majesty the Sultan focused on applying an "institutional character" to bilateral relations and studying all options for developing a consultative cooperation mechanism.

He explained that with the signing of 10 agreements and memoranda of understanding, the two countries seek to augment the volume of economic and commercial relations to \$5 billion in the first phase.

President Erdogan said that bilateral cooperation will enter a new era of cooperation in the field of energy upon the start of import of liquefied natural gas from the Sultanate of Oman early next year (2025), in addition to cooperation in the field of defence industries.

He pointed out that the session of talks also touched on current developments in the region. In this context, he voiced his appreciation for the Sultanate of Oman's support for efforts aimed at resolving regional and international issues through dialogue, consultation, cooperation and shared views about these issues. Currently, the most important action now is the need to develop a tangible and comprehensive cooperation between Islamic countries to confront the massacres committed by the Israeli occupation forces in Palestine and address the assaults that continue to threaten the security of the region.

The first agreement is related

to the partnership between Oman Investment Authority and the Turkish Armed Forces Retirement Fund (OYAK). It aims to establish a joint entity worth \$500 million to invest in various sectors including food, industry, healthcare, new energy, consumption, and logistics services.

The investment will be made in existing companies or promising new projects managed by a joint board that includes representatives from both parties.

The agreement also aims to develop strategic companies and promote investments that achieve the economic and development goals of both parties, while adhering to the principles of confidentiality, transparency and effective governance.

The second agreement signed between Oman's Ministry of Health and its Turkish counterpart in the field of health included a number of items, such as cooperation in the fields of health and medical sciences, and developing the partnership between the two countries in several main areas, including public health, hospital management, pharmaceutical industries, medical equipment, health investments, research fields, and organizing health conferences and exhibitions.

The memorandum of understanding (MoU) on the political field between the Foreign Ministries of both countries included holding political consultations, in affirmation of the two countries' commitment to developing their bilateral relations and exploring new areas of cooperation in various political, economic, cultural, technological and scientific sectors.

In the diplomatic field, Oman's Foreign Ministry, represented by the Diplomatic Academy, signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with its Turkish counterpart, represented by the Diplomatic Academy.

It aims to enhance cooperation between the two sides in the field of diplomatic studies and training through the exchange of expertise, educational materials and specialized curricula, in addition to organizing lectures and exchanging faculty members and diplomats, in a manner that contributes to honing professional skills and enhancing competencies in the fields of foreign policy, international relations, international law and international economics.

In the field of investment promotion, Oman's Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the Investment Office of the Presidency of the Republic of Türkiye signed a memorandum of understanding.

The MoU aims to establish a joint framework to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and expertise in vital sectors, including food security, agriculture, logistics and transportation, infrastructure projects, minerals, financial and banking projects, tourism, information technology, and industry. The scope of the covered fields can be expanded in the future.

An MoU in the agricultural field was also signed between the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources and the Turkish Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. This memorandum deals with cooperation in the fields of

agriculture, livestock, fisheries, information exchange, research experiments and rural development. It also aims to promote joint investments in the sectors of agricultural and food sectors, as well as developing water desalination technologies, utilizing renewable energy and boosting national competencies in managing flood situations.

Further, a memorandum was signed between the Ministry of Labour and the Turkish Ministry of Labour and Social Security dealing with boosting relations pertaining to the fields of workforces, HSE, work inspections, employment policies and supporting the employment of people with disabilities and vocational recruitment. It also pertains to exchanging expertise and best practices in the fields of training and career guidance.

An MoU was also signed between the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) and the Turkish Ministry of Industry and Technology pertaining to enhancing cooperation in the field of entrepreneurship, developing SMEs, exchanging information and expertise in a bid to support innovation, financing and innovative solutions.

Meanwhile, the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) and the Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye signed a memorandum of understanding to augment cooperation in fields related to the work of central banks.

It aims to boost information exchange, conducting periodical discussions on the level of experts and organizing joint activities, including training, workshops and research. The MoU covers cooperation in the field of payment methods and cross-border organizations. It also includes articles to ensure adherence to local laws and safeguarding the confidentiality of information, as well as conducting annual meetings to evaluate the work progress.

Furthermore, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and the Turkish Ministry of Culture and Tourism signed an MoU dealing with advancing cultural cooperation through the exchange of information regarding events, organizing cultural days and developing cultural techniques. It also covers exchanging expertise in areas related to national libraries, preserving cultural collections and their digitization, as well as promoting arts and cultural products. Moreover, it includes conducting joint artistic exhibitions and visits for artists and musicians, as well as participating in theatrical, musical and cinema festivals, as well as cooperating in visual arts fields.

The two agreements and the memorandums of understanding were signed on behalf of the Sultanate of Oman by Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Abdulsalam Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority and Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Meanwhile, the agreements and MoUs were signed from the Turkish side by Hakan Fidan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Governor of the Central Bank of the Republic of Türkiye. -ONA

BOOSTING ECONOMIC RELATIONS

Joint communique underlines relations between Oman, Türkiye



MUSCAT: The joint communique, issued on His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik's state visit to the Republic of Türkiye, underlined the deep-rooted ties between the two countries and their keenness to support cooperation in various fields of common interest, as well as boosting economic relations by augmenting the volume of trade exchange and encouraging joint investments.

The communique reads as follows:

"In response to an invitation by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Türkiye, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Sultan of Oman, made a state visit to the Republic of Türkiye during 28-29 November 2024.

This is the first visit of its kind at the leader level, reflecting the importance of the historical relations and close ties between the two countries.

The meetings held between the two leaders underlined the deep-rooted ties between the two countries and their keenness to support cooperation in various fields of common interest.

The two sides discussed prospects for developing bilateral relations, especially in the political, economic, military and defence fields, in addition to science and technology, education, culture, energy and tourism.

The two leaders stressed the importance of boosting the eco-

nom ic relations between the two countries by augmenting the volume of trade exchange and encouraging joint investments. They also expressed their aspiration for the success of the 12th session of the Joint Economic Committee, scheduled to be held in Muscat in December 2024.

During the visit, a number of agreements and memoranda of understanding were signed to consolidate the legal basis for bilateral relations and enhance cooperation in various fields.

The two leaders also exchanged views on the regional and international developments. They also stressed the importance of coordinating stances to back regional security and stability.

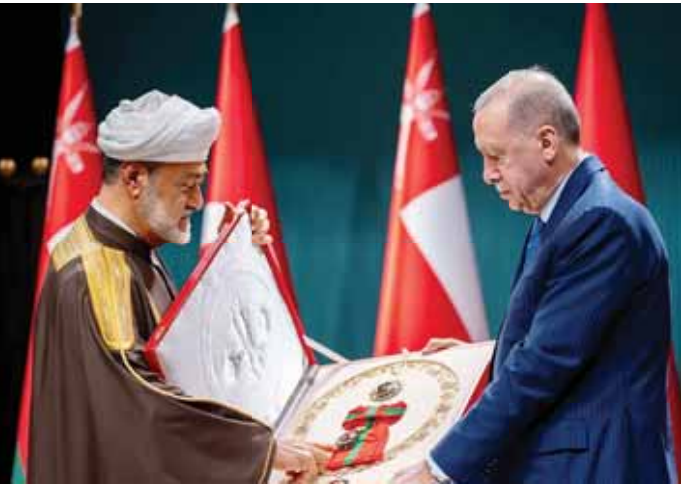
They also stressed their commitment to working together to back peacemaking efforts and address regional and international challenges.

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik extended an invitation to President Recep Tayyip Erdogan to visit the Sultanate of Oman. President Erdogan welcomed and accepted the invitation, looking forward to continuing the dialogue and boosting cooperation between the two countries.

At the end of the visit, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere appreciation to the Turkish President and people for the warm welcome and hospitality extended to him and his accompanying delegation." -ONA

EXCHANGE OF GIFTS

HM the Sultan, Turkish President exchange orders



ANKARA: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and President Recep Tayyip Erdogan of the Republic of Türkiye exchanged orders at the Presidential Complex on Thursday evening on the occasion of His Majesty's state visit to Türkiye.

His Majesty the Sultan conferred "Al Said Order", Oman's most lofty accolade, on President Erdogan, in commendation

for the Turkish President and in manifestation of the deep-rooted friendship relations binding the two countries and their peoples.

Meanwhile, President Erdogan awarded His Majesty the Sultan "Order of the State", Türkiye's most magnificent decoration, in appreciation from the President to His Majesty and in acknowledgment of the two countries' advanced relations. -ONA



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COMMENTARY

Coming days will reveal the truth of Lebanon ceasefire pact



SADIQ MUHAMMAD SAEED AL-LAWATY*

Although I do not know anything specifically about the agreement between Hezbollah, the Amal Movement and the Lebanese government on the one hand, and Israel and America on the other hand, regarding the ceasefire agreement that went into effect on 27.11.2024, all my information is what we hear from analyses in the media, and it cannot be considered true, and perhaps the agreement contains declared and secret clauses, and this is how most agreements between countries are, especially those related to war.

But despite all this, I would like to clarify two points in this regard in response to a request from some colleagues to know my opinion on the agreement.



There are two matters, the first is the Gaza war that began on 7.10.2023, and the second is Hezbollah's participation in the war on 8.10.2023 on the southern Lebanese front, in support of the Palestinian resistance in Gaza.

I wrote an article on 14.10.2023 about the Gaza war, in which I predicted that Hamas's attack on Israeli sites in the settlements on the Gaza-Israel border was orchestrated by Israel, and I presented several pieces of evidence to prove my point of view.

I said that Israel had three goals from the Gaza war and that it was nothing more than the implementation of an American-Arab-Israeli conspiracy.

The goals are:

- 1) Eliminating all Palestinian resistance movements.
- 2) Eliminating Hezbollah.
- 3) Bringing Iran into the war with NATO member states.

But, due to the strength of the Palestinian resistance, Israel was unable to achieve its goal from the Gaza war, despite the passage of more than four hundred days since the war began.

Did Hezbollah abandon its stated condition with this agreement, which was to stop the war in Gaza first? And leave Gaza alone to resist Israel, its massacres, and the destruction of its infrastructure?

Personally, I do not believe that Hezbollah will do that, and I have no doubt that there

is a clause in the agreement related to stopping the war on Gaza, but it may be within a few weeks. Let us wait for the details of the agreement.

Israel had prepared for Hezbollah to participate in the war even if the party did not volunteer to support Gaza, and this is what His Eminence Sheikh Naim Qassem recently announced.

Israel had three goals in the Lebanon war:

First, to eliminate Hezbollah. Second, to disarm Hezbollah.

Third, the establishment of a buffer zone in southern Lebanon extending 15 kilometres inside Lebanon, known as the security belt.

Was Israel able to achieve its conditions? Of course not.

So I can proudly say that Hezbollah defeated Israel, and the coming days will reveal the truth of this matter.

As for dragging Iran into a war with NATO member states led by America, Israel has failed to achieve its goal.

* The author is Corporal Sultan's Armed Forces (Retired). This is a translation of the article in Arabic published on 28.11.2024 in the Al-Shabiba magazine, the sister magazine of the Times of Oman

PRESIDENT OF ROMANIA

His Majesty sends cable

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Klaus Iohannis of Romania on his country's National Day. His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes of good health and happiness to the president and his country's people further progress and prosperity. - ONA



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Tender No.	Tender Subject	Grade	Last date for obtainment of tender document	Last date for tender submission	Tender Document Price (non-refundable)	
					Small and Medium companies	Local companies
509/2024	General maintenance work for the investment building of the Al-Wafa Center for Rehabilitation of Persons with Disabilities at Rustaq	Companies specialized in the field of construction contracting and maintenance and registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board at the third or fourth degree.	Sunday 22-12-2024 02:00 PM	Sunday 12-01-2025 10:00 AM	R.O. 10/=	R.O. 25/=

❖ Specialized Companies, registered with the Tender Board may obtain the Tender documents at the Tender Board e-tendering digital portal link (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) , on Sunday 01/12/2024

❖ 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



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Advertisement No. 39/2024

Muscat Municipality would like to notify regarding the bids announced in the Advertisement No. (37/2024), as outlined in the table below, that specialized companies may submit their offers in accordance with the procedures mentioned in this announcement:

Serial	Bidding No.	Bidding description	Document fee	Deadline for obtaining bidding docs.	Deadline for inquires submission	Deadline for submission
1	PRE/24/326	Bidding for design, implementation and management of restaurants at the Muscat Nights 2024-2025	25 Rials	04/12/2024	05/12/2024	08/12/2024
2	PRE/24/323	Organizing and holding Gulf plays and concerts, Muscat Nights events 2024-2025 parks (Re-Bidding)	25 Rials	04/12/2024	05/12/2024	08/12/2024

Companies registered with Muscat Municipality and specialized in the above mentioned bidding field are invited to participate according to the following procedures:

1. To get the bid's documents, company's registration with Muscat Municipality must be valid.

2. Document fee for the requested bid must be paid through bank deposit into the following Muscat Municipality's Bank account:

Bank Muscat

0423010702710024

3. To receive the bid's documents, a Copy of bank receipt must be submitted to the Quantity Surveying and Contracts Department at Muscat Municipality (Head office, first floor, Darsait), accompanied with the following details: (name and bid number, representative's name, contact number (mobile & office), bidder official email, commercial registration number).

4. 10.00 A.M on the above mentioned dates, is the last timing for obtaining bid documents. Any bid's document request received after the specified time will not be considered.

5. Bidders offers must be accompanied with a bond as mentioned in the bidding document valid for a period not less than (90) days, issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat Municipality. Bids that do not meet the required bond will not be accepted.

6. Documents must be enclosed in a plain closed envelope (without mention the company identity) and placed in the box located at Quantity Surveying and Contracts Department at Muscat Municipality (Head Office, first floor, Darsait)

NOTES:

1. Companies which are not registered in Muscat Municipality or their registration has been expired shall register through the Muscat Municipality's website (www.mm.gov.om). For technical support, please contact Muscat Municipality through this email (crm@mm.gov.om).

2. If the bidders have any inquiries regarding the scope of the work, they have to sent their inquiries through the following e-mail (SQ.QS@mm.gov.om)

3. 10:00 AM on the above submission mentioned dates, is the last timing for receiving bids. Offers submitted after the above mentioned date & time shall not be accepted for any reason.

4. Muscat Municipality has the right to accept or reject any offer without assigning any reason.

Website: www.mm.gov.om

Trudeau meets Trump, holds talk on tariff threat

The Canadian prime minister has jetted off to Trump’s Florida home to try and get the president-elect’s ear



OTTAWA: Canadian Prime Minister Justin Trudeau met with US President-elect Donald Trump at the US president-elect’s Mar-a-Lago estate in Florida on Friday. The meeting came days after Trump said he would slap a 25% tariff on imports from Canada

and Mexico, until both countries clamped down on drugs, particularly fentanyl, and illegal migrants crossing their borders with the US. Trump’s threat sparked worries in Canada, whose economy is deeply intertwined with that of the US.

Over three-quarters of Canadian exports, worth \$423 billion (€400 billion), went to the United States last year. And about 2 million Canadian jobs are dependent on trade. Economists say imposing hefty tariffs would harm the economies of all countries involved.

Tricky time for Trudeau
The threat of US tariffs comes at a time when Canada’s economy is already slowing. That, coupled with the rising cost of living, has already hit Trudeau’s popularity. A general election must be held in the country by late October 2025 and polls show the premier’s party is lagging behind the opposition Conservative party. Trudeau this week pledged to stay united against Trump’s tariffs threat. He called a meeting with the premiers of all 10 Canadian provinces to discuss US relations. While some say Trump’s tariff threat is just a bargaining tactic, Trudeau rejected those views. “It is important to understand that Donald Trump, when he makes statements like that, he plans on carrying them out. There’s no question about it,” Trudeau said. -**aw**

SURPRISE OFFENSIVE

Russian strikes hit Aleppo in Syria amid rebel takeover

ALEPPO: Russian and Syrian jets on Saturday flew bombing raids on a suburb of Syria’s second city of Aleppo after insurgents took control of most of the city in a surprise offensive, a war monitor and military sources have said. The strikes come as an alliance of rebel factions led by the militant organisation Hayat Tahrir al-Sham (HTS) has penetrated far into the city, the Britain-based Syrian Observatory for Human Rights said. Syria’s military announced on Saturday that it had made a “temporary troop withdrawal” to prepare a counteroffensive and that dozens of soldiers had been killed in fighting in Aleppo and Idlib in the past few days. A statement said “armed terrorist organisations” had taken over “large parts” of Aleppo. Syrian military sources say towns and villages in the surrounding area also came under air attack from Russian and Syrian forces after the rebels carried out their sweep in the region since Wednesday, forcing around



14,000 people to leave their homes, according to the United Nations. Russian forces have been fighting at the side of troops loyal to Syrian President Bashar Assad since September 2015 in a bid to quell an uprising by an assortment of rebel forces that followed a government crackdown on mostly peaceful pro-democracy protests in 2011. **Significant escalation**
The recent eruption of fighting comes after a period in which Syria’s civil war was seen to have been widely contained.

Assad, with the help of his allies Russia and Iran, has succeeded in bringing some two-thirds of the country back under government control in the past few years, with Idlib, southwest of Aleppo, remaining as the last rebel stronghold. According to Observatory director Rami Abdel Rahman, the rebels took control of most parts of Aleppo without any major resistance on the part of government forces, who have reportedly withdrawn to a suburb. “There has been no fighting, not a single shot was fired, as regime forces withdrew,” he said. -**aw**

MANY MISSING

27 dead in Nigeria boat capsized

LAGOS: At least 27 people died on Friday after a boat capsized in the Niger River in central Nigeria. More than 100 others — mostly women — are still missing, authorities said. Some 200 passengers were taking the boat across the river — which acts as a border between the states of Kogi and Niger — to a food market when it capsized, Ibrahim Audu, the Niger State Emergency Management Agency spokesperson said. None of the passengers were wearing life jackets. The final toll is likely to increase, Kogi state authorities warned, as local divers were still looking for the missing and no survivor was found 12 hours after the incident. “It’s not clear what caused the accident,” Sandra Musa, spokesperson of the Kogi State Emergency Management Agency said. “It could be from turbulence or from the boat hitting a snag. Boat operators don’t usually have life jackets, so none of the bodies recovered had life jackets on,” she said. Musa added that the age of the boat might have played a role. -**aw**

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BANGLADESH FOREIGN AFFAIRS ADVISOR

‘Relations with India changed after August 5’

DHAKA: Bangladesh Foreign Affairs Advisor Mohammed Touhid Hossain on Saturday said that the country’s relation with India has changed since Former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina was forced out of power on August 5 of this year. “After August 5, relations with India have been changed and this is the reality,” said Md. Touhid Hossain, Foreign Affairs Advisor (Minister) to the Bangladesh interim government in a seminar at North South University. Hossain emphasised that Bangladesh have to build a relationship with India “in view of this reality.” “It is in view of this reality that we have to build and continue our relationship with India. I believe India will understand how to take forward relations with Bangladesh under the changed circumstances,” Hossain said. A student-led movement ousted Bangladesh’s then Prime Minister, Sheikh Hasina, after weeks of protests and clashes that killed over 600 people. Hasina, 76, fled to India on August 5 and an interim government led by Nobel Laureate Muhammad Yunus was formed. “The previous government (of Bangladesh) tried its best to remove India’s concerns. We also had some concerns. Problems are happening because our problems are not being addressed,” Touhid said, without elaborating. He further remained optimistic to establish good relationship with India and said that Bangladesh “will not cause harm to anyone.”



“We would like to be optimistic that we can establish a good relationship so that the interests of both parties are protected. We will not be a cause harm to anyone. We want no one to be cause us harm,” Bangladesh Adviser said. The Foreign Affairs Adviser blamed India media for exaggerating and urged Bangladesh media to be objective in providing news on the relations with India. On Friday, India expressed concern over the rise of “extremist rhetoric, increasing incidents of violence and provocation” in Bangladesh. Ministry of External Affairs (MEA) said that India has consistently and strongly raised the issue of targeted attacks on Hindus and other minorities with Bangladesh government. MEA spokesperson Randhir Jaiswal urged Bangladesh’s interim government to take steps for protection of minorities. On situation of minorities in Bangladesh, Jaiswal said, “India has consistently and strongly raised with the Bangladesh government the threats and targeted attacks on Hindus and other minorities. -**ANI**

TRADE RELATIONSHIP

New partnership to enhance local products in the construction sector and revive the trade relationship between Sohar Cement and Tasnim Concrete Products

SOHAR: November 2024, Sohar Cement Company, a subsidiary of Raysut Cement Group, announced the revival of its trade relations with Tasnim Concrete Products to enhance cement production capabilities in the Sultanate of Oman and meet the increasing market demands, especially in North Al Batinah, particularly in Sohar, where the region is witnessing numerous developmental projects. This initiative aims to bolster local products and increase local value in the Sultanate in line with both companies’ efforts to support the national economy and achieve sustainable growth in this vital sector. Through this partnership, the companies will work on developing joint projects focusing on high-quality cement produced by Sohar Cement, contributing to improving construction quality and reducing costs. This step is expected to contribute to realizing the Sultanate’s economic vision and enhancing reliance on local sources and industries, positively impacting the economy as a key driver of growth and development. Dr. Hilal bin Saif Al-Dhamri, Acting CEO of Raysut Cement Group, stated that the alliance with Tasnim Concrete Products reflects both companies’ commitment to enhancing growth and sustainability solutions. In this respect, we are setting a new standard for cement



production not only to enhance product quality but also to align with the national goals for sustainable industrial development in the Sultanate of Oman. Haitham Al-Tai, Commercial Director of Raysut Cement Group, stated that this step reflects the partnership agreement’s commitment to Sohar Cement’s continuous expansion of its production capacity, improving product quality, adopting environmentally friendly practices, and increasing production to meet the rising demand in the construction and infrastructure sectors in Oman and the Gulf Cooperation Council countries. Mohit Kimji, CEO of Tasnim Concrete Products, remarked that the partnership with Sohar Cement would enhance innovation in the cement sector and respond to the increasing demand for concrete products at a time when the Sultanate

of Oman is experiencing rapid urban growth and implementing numerous infrastructure projects. The cooperation between the two companies is expected to enhance competitiveness in the cement industry in the Sultanate of Oman, allowing local producers to supply high-quality products and reduce dependence on imported cement. The partnership agreement also aims to elevate Oman’s position as a key player in the cement market within the Gulf Cooperation Council and contribute to infrastructure projects in the region, residential projects, and other large-scale constructions, while enhancing knowledge transfer and innovation through the exchange of expertise and new technologies between the two companies and improving efficiency and sustainable practices across all their operations.

RESOLUTION IN PUNJAB ASSEMBLY

Pakistan Peoples Party opposes the resolution banning PTI

ISLAMABAD: The Pakistan Peoples Party (PPP) has opposed the idea of imposing a ban on Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf and has called on the government to take measures for mainstreaming the opposition party, Dawn reported. The PPP, which is an ally of the ruling Pakistan Muslim League - Nawaz (PML-N), expressed its opposition to the idea of proscribing PTI, after a resolution was submitted to the Punjab Assembly, seeking a ban on Imran Khan-founded party. Punjab PPP general secretary Syed Hassan Murtaza said, “We are not in favour of banning the PTI or sidelining it. Rather, the government should take the initiative to bring the PTI into the national mainstream,” according to Dawn report. While addressing a press conference on Friday, he said, “There has been no discussion with us regarding proscribing the PTI. When they (the government) contact us, we will take a decision considering the entire context.” He further said that the government must engage with PTI through a fresh dialogue rather than taking such negative measures. Murtaza stressed that while the situation was not ideal in Islamabad. However, he called it important for the nation to get rid of discord. He slammed Ali Amin Gandapur for storming Islamabad with Imran Khan’s wife Bushra Bibi instead of addressing the sufferings of people in Kurram Agency and Parachinar, where dozens of people were killed in clashes that erupted between two groups. He said that Bushra Bibi’s control of PTI during the protest march



demonstrated dynasty politics in Imran Khan’s party. The PTI, with a support from its government in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province, has repeatedly held march in Islamabad. At least five security personnel were killed and scores of others were injured in the recent incident that ended after an operation cleanup by the law enforcers during the night between November 26 and 27. **Governor’s rule**
The federal government has been discussing the option of imposing governor’s rule in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Meanwhile, PML-N Member of Provincial Assembly Uzma Kardan has submitted a resolution with the Punjab Assembly, calling for a ban on PTI. The resolution has criticised the PTI for riots on May 9 last year and again carrying out acts of violence in Islamabad this week, according to Dawn report. It said that the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Chief Minister Ali Amin Gandapur using state machinery and other resources marched in Islamabad twice, violating the orders of Islamabad High Court,

disallowing the protest, which resulted in financial damage worth Pakistani Rupees (PKR) 190 billion on a daily basis to Pakistan. The resolutions said that the ‘fitna’ party caused chaos every time some international event was taking place in Pakistan, including Shanghai Cooperation Summit and visit of Belarus President, to block foreign investment here. It called for imposing a ban on PTI by the federal government to save Pakistan from further damage. On Thursday, the Balochistan Assembly adopted a resolution, seeking a ban on PTI. The motion, accusing PTI of causing unrest and targeting state institutions like May 9, 2023 was tabled by the PML-N parliamentary leader in the house Saleem Khan Khoso. The resolution was signed by PPP parliamentary leader Mir Sadiq Umrani and had the support of other allies, including Awami National Party, Dawn reported. Meanwhile, former Senate chairman Mian Raza Rabbani has called for initiating a political dialogue and added that banning a political party was no solution. -**ANI**

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SOFANA R DALHAN FIRM



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VP, ENVIRONMENT
SOCIETY OF OMAN



AREEJ AL SHAIBAN

SENIOR MANAGER
TALENT AND PLANNING,
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SPORTS

CHRISTCHURCH TEST



England close in on victory



CHRISTCHURCH: England edged closer to sealing a win against New Zealand in the first Test after a dramatic third day, highlighted by Chris Woakes' pivotal two wickets in consecutive balls.

The visitors, buoyed by a commanding first-innings lead of 151, reduced New Zealand to 64-3 before Kane Williamson mounted a defiant stand. Williamson's masterful 61 offered hope for the hosts, but Woakes' late spell shifted the momentum decisively. A precise nip-backer trapped Williamson lbw in a tight review, and the next delivery saw Tom Blundell feather a catch to Ollie Pope.

Brydon Carse added to the carnage by trapping Glenn Phillips lbw, leaving the Black Caps in tatters at 155-6, a slender four-run lead with Daryl Mitchell (31*) the last recognised batter standing.

New Zealand's woes were compounded by an abysmal fielding display, dropping their eighth catch of the match on Saturday. Harry Brook was the chief beneficiary, riding his luck to smash 171—the highest Test score by an overseas batter at Hagley Oval. His stellar away average of 89.40

trails only Sir Donald Bradman.

Brook shared vital partnerships, including a 159-run stand with Ben Stokes, whose gritty 80 marked his best Test score in over a year. England's lower order flourished too, with Gus Atkinson (48 off 36) and Carse (33*) hammering quick runs to push the total to an imposing 499.

New Zealand's reply began poorly, with Tom Latham edging Woakes to second slip for one. Carse's pace and bounce were unplayable at times, dismissing Devon Conway and Rachin Ravindra, the latter courtesy of a sharp plan orchestrated by Stokes.

Williamson, who earlier became the first New Zealander to surpass 9,000 Test runs, looked poised to replicate his Wellington 2023 heroics. However, Woakes returned with a devastating spell, removing the Kiwi talisman and Blundell in quick succession.

New Zealand's slim hopes rest on Mitchell as England close in on a comprehensive victory.

Brief scores: New Zealand 348 (Williamson 93) & 155-6 (Williamson 61, Carse 3-22) vs England 499 (Brook 171, Stokes 80, Pope 77; Henry 4-84). - Agencies

Jansen's 11-wicket haul powers SA to facile win

The victory over Sri Lanka helped the hosts climb to second place in the World Test Championship table

DURBAN: Marco Jansen delivered a career-defining performance, taking 11 wickets across two innings, to lead South Africa to a comprehensive 233-run victory over Sri Lanka at Kingsmead in Durban on Saturday.

The triumph propelled South Africa to second place on the World Test Championship (WTC) table and ended Sri Lanka's unbeaten run at the Durban venue.

Jansen's devastating spell in the first innings, where he claimed 7 for 13, left Sri Lanka shell-shocked and bowled out for a paltry 42 within 19.4 overs.

It marked their lowest Test total against South Africa and swung the game decisively in the hosts' favour.

Building on their 149-run first-innings lead, South Africa declared their second innings at 366 for 5, powered by centuries from Tristan Stubbs (122) and Temba Bavuma (113). Stubbs' maiden Test hundred was a mix of aggression and control, while Bavuma's gritty knock consolidated his reputation as South Africa's middle-order mainstay.

Facing a daunting target of 516, Sri Lanka's top order faltered once again under pressure, reducing them to 5 for 2 by the close of Day 3. However, a spirited fightback on the fourth day added drama to the contest.

Dinesh Chandimal, who top-



scored with 83, stitched together vital partnerships with Dhananjaya de Silva (59) and Kusal Mendis (48). The sixth-wicket stand between Chandimal and Dhananjaya added 95 runs, while Mendis contributed to a 75-run partnership with Chandimal, exploiting a relatively placid surface under sunny skies.

Despite their efforts, Jansen

returned to break the resistance, dismissing Chandimal and Mendis in quick succession to end Sri Lanka's hopes. The visitors were eventually bowled out for 282 in 79.4 overs.

Sri Lanka's catastrophic first-innings collapse was the pivotal moment of the match. Losing their last eight wickets for just 15 runs in a spell of 78 minutes left

them with no realistic chance of recovery.

South Africa's victory highlighted their collective strength, with the bowling unit stepping up in the absence of Wiaan Mulder, who left the field with a side strain. Jansen's 11-wicket match haul was ably supported by contributions from Gerald Coetzee and Simon Harmer, who maintained pressure on Sri Lanka's batters.

After the win, South Africa are well in contention to make it to the WTC final. They jumped three places to the second with 59.26 percentage displacing Australia (57.69). Sri Lanka slipped to fifth with 50 while India lead the table with 61.11. New Zealand are also the mix at fourth with 54.55.

Brief scores: South Africa: 191 (Bavuma 70; Asitha Fernando 3-44, Lahiru Kumara 3-70) & 366/5 decl. (Stubbs 122, Bavuma 113) beat Sri Lanka: 42 (Jansen 7-13) & 282 (Chandimal 83, Dhananjaya de Silva 59, Jansen 4-73). - Agencies

FORMULA ONE

Norris hands Qatar sprint triumph to Piastri for McLaren one-two

DOHA: Lando Norris gave victory in the Qatar Grand Prix sprint race on Saturday to team-mate Oscar Piastri as they crossed the line ahead of Mercedes' George Russell.

As a payback for Piastri handing victory in the Sao Paulo Grand Prix sprint race to Norris earlier this month, the Briton slowed on the final straight to allow the Australian to cross the line first.

Norris had led the race from the start and helped Piastri defend from Russell's attacks.

Russell, who started second but was passed by Piastri at Turn Two on the first lap, threatened the Australian throughout the race.

But Norris ensured he measured his pace to give Piastri the use of the DRS overtaking aid, so Russell could not quite get close enough to pass.

Norris was handed victory in the Brazil sprint by Piastri to boost his title chances, which ended in Las Vegas last weekend.

He said: "I planned to do it since Brazil. It was probably a little bit sketchy - the team told me not to do it, but I did. I don't mind. It's only a sprint. I'm here to win grands prix and world championships.

"We scored a one-two. That's



what we were aiming for. We're happy as a team. I probably could have pushed a little bit more than I was doing but we wanted to keep the others behind and I was trying to make sure George could not get ahead."

Piastri said: "It was defence the whole race. Just didn't quite have the pace. Some great team work. Without that help, it would have been a much more difficult sprint."

McLaren will clinch the constructors' title this weekend if they finish one-two in both the sprint and the grand prix and claim fastest lap in the main race.

Ferrari's Carlos Sainz was the fourth car in the leading 'DRS

train' throughout the event.

Charles Leclerc, his Ferrari colleague, fought back after being overtaken by Lewis Hamilton on the first lap to pass the seven-time champion with six laps to go and take fifth ahead of his future team-mate.

Leclerc dived for the inside at Turn One, and they battled side by side around the next two corners, a left and a right before the Ferrari driver sealed the move into Turn Four. Haas driver Nico Hulkenberg was seventh while new world champion Max Verstappen took eighth after falling to ninth on the first lap from sixth on the grid.

DOMESTIC CRICKET

Vinukumar shines for PAI XI

MUSCAT: Vinukumar CG's solid 59 off 57 balls (4x5, 6x2) laid the foundation for PAI XI's 45-run win over Design Group in the Oman Cricket A Division League 2024-25 match played recently.

Batting first, PAI XI posted 162/9 in 30 overs, with support from their lower order. Vignesh Kumar led Design Group's bowling with 2/27.

Chasing 163, Design Group struggled against a disciplined bowling attack and were bowled out for 117 in 27.1 overs. Waseem Abbas top-scored with 26 off 24 balls (4x2, 6x1), while Ali Muhammed claimed 3/30 for PAI XI.

Brief scores: A Division: PAI XI 162/9 (Vinukumar CG 59; Vignesh Kumar 2/27) beat Design Group 117 in 27.1 overs (Waseem Abbas 26; Ali Muhammed 3/30) by 45 runs.

Intermediate Division: Bravos XI 129 in 29.1 overs (Gustav Burger 40; Amir Mehmood 3/20) lost to Braveheart XI 130/4 in 31 overs (Jeet Shah 61; Saumya Sampat 2/22) by 6 wickets.

G Division: Dollar Car Rental 142/6 in 20 overs (Aniket PG 34; Muhd Yousaf 3/19) beat Khedmah & Wasel Exchange 103 in 16.2 overs (Durga Prasad 22; Sharif Pindook 3/30) by 39 runs.



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INDUSTRY'S DRIVING SUSTAINABLE ADVANCEMENT
CHAPTER: FOR GLOBAL PROGRESS

INDIA'S GDP GROWTH
The Indian economy grew by 5.4 per cent in real terms in the July-September quarter of the current financial year 2024-25, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation's official data showed on Friday. > **B2**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



OMAN'S INFLATION RATE RISES
The inflation rate in the Sultanate of Oman rose by 0.8 percent at the end of October 2024 compared to the same month in 2023, according to data from the Consumer Price Index issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NC SI). > **B2**

FOCUS ON PRIVATE SECTOR

OCCI leads trade delegation to Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) is leading a trade delegation to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia to enhance trade and investment exchanges between the two countries in the private sector, while benefiting from Saudi expertise and experiences across various industrial and commercial fields.

The delegation includes several business owners and representatives from small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

Engineer Said bin Ali Al-Abri, Chairman of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in North Al Batinah Governorate and head of the delegation, stated that this visit aims to explore commercial and investment opportunities between the Sultanate of Oman and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, as well as to showcase available investment opportunities in various sectors within the governorate and promote them.

He emphasised that the visit seeks to identify promising investment opportunities in the Kingdom, discuss avenues for commercial and economic cooperation,



and increase the volume of exports between the two countries, in addition to exchanging expertise in different fields and building bridges of cooperation between both sides.

Al-Abri noted that this visit is part of the strategic plan established by the chamber to enhance economic, commercial, and investment relations between Oman and Saudi Arabia.

According to statistics from the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NC SI), the value of trade exchange between the two countries reached approximately OMR1.14 billion by the end of June 2024.

This figure indicates the available opportunities for business owners in both countries to increase the trade balance.

The statistics reveal that mineral products accounted for the largest share of Omani exports to Saudi Arabia, valued at OMR160,547,747 by the end of June 2024, followed by ordinary metals and their products worth OMR95,036,061, and machinery, electrical equipment, and their



parts valued at OMR33,592,71.

Al-Abri also addressed the Empty Quarter border crossing, stating, "The Empty Quarter road, which directly connects the two countries, plays a significant role in enhancing cooperation prospects across various fields, particularly in the economic domain. It contributes to expanding the volume of trade exchange and

enables Omani exports to reach other countries worldwide, as well as facilitating the passage of Saudi exports through Omani ports."

He added that this crossing represents a qualitative leap in trade exchange, with the value of goods imported through the crossing reaching OMR159,678,381 by the end of June, totalling 324,529,044 kilograms.

Local investment institutions step up their purchases on MSX

During the week, trading rose to OMR27.5 million compared to OMR11.4 million in the previous week, in which trading was limited to 3 days

MUSCAT: Local investment institutions increased their purchases at the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) in the week's trading to absorb foreign selling and individual sales at a time when stock prices recorded further declines and presented attractive opportunities for long-term investment portfolios.

About 41 securities recorded a decline in trading during the week, including a number of banks, telecommunications and energy companies, in addition to leading industrial companies.

These declines came before the end of the fiscal year for most public joint-stock companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange, which prompted local investment institutions to increase their purchases of shares amid expectations of an improvement in the financial performance of most companies listed on the stock exchange.

Purchases by local investment institutions during the week amounted to OMR17.9 million, accounting for 65.1 percent of the total trading value, compared to



sales worth OMR6.7 million, representing 24.6 percent of the total trading value.

The declines witnessed by stocks during the week led to a decline in the main index and sectoral indices of the stock exchange.

The main index recorded a decline of about 46 points and closed at 4,563 points, the financial sector index decreased by 30 points, the industrial sector index recorded a decline of 46 points, the services sector index lost about 20 points, and the Sharia index fell to 408 points, recording a decline of 10 points.

On the other hand, 21 securities recorded an increase during the past week, most notably Dhofar Food and Investment, Al Madina Investment Holding, Oman Fisheries, Aman Real Estate Investment Fund, and Bank Sohar International.

During the week, trading rose to OMR27.5 million compared to OMR11.4 million in the previous week, in which trading was limited to 3 days. The number of deals executed during the week also rose to 7,829 compared to 4,382 deals in the previous week.

Most traded companies

OQ Exploration and Production topped the most traded companies in terms of trading value with OMR12.6 million, representing about 46 percent of the total trading value. OQ Gas Networks came in second place with OMR3.2 million, representing OMR11.7 million, while Ominvest's unsecured secondary mudaraba sukuk came in third place with OMR2.4 million, representing 8.7 percent of the total trading value.

Investors focused on OQ Exploration and Production shares after

they fell to attractive levels for investment portfolios.

The share price ranged between 354 and 352 baisas during last week's trading, with 3,257 transactions executed.

It closed at 352 baisas, down one baiza during the week, thus approaching the subscription price for individual Omani investors, which is 351 baisas.

The market capitalisation of the Muscat Stock Exchange rose at the end of the week's trading to OMR27.39 billion, recording gains of OMR16.7 million, benefiting from the rise in the market value of closed companies that are not traded on the floor to OMR10.93 billion, recording weekly gains of about OMR100 million, while public joint-stock companies recorded a decline in their market value, affected by the decline in stock prices. — **ONA**

MSX extends losses for fifth week

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market continued its bearish momentum for the fifth consecutive week, registering a decline of 0.99%, according to an industry expert.

"Market sentiment was influenced by the downturn in oil prices, as speculation around a potential ceasefire between Hezbollah in Lebanon and Israel led to a reduction in the oil risk premium," said Ahmed Negm, Head of Market Research MENA at XS.com.

"However, the situation remained volatile as the ceasefire agreement showed signs of a breach during the final days of the week," he further added.

Market attention is now focused on the upcoming Opec+ meeting, which is expected to be a crucial catalyst for both oil prices and regional markets, particularly given the ongoing discussions about maintaining current production cuts.

The market's monthly performance concluded on a negative note, with prices approaching support levels last seen in December 2023.

The sector's performances this week were all negative, starting with the services sector as the worst performer with 1.13% Abraj energy services recorded a 0.72% loss and Oman Telecom saw a



4.21% decline, while Al Suwadi Power was negative by 2.47%. Albatinah power was also down by 3.70%.

The Industrial sector was also on the negative side, sliding by 0.89%, Galfar Engineering and contracting was lower by 2.13%, also Al Anwar ceramic was also in the red, falling by 10.91% and Almaha Ceramic by 7.91%.

The financial sector was on the same track, retreating 0.40% led by the banking sector. Bank Muscat was lower by 1.18%, while National Bank of Oman was down by 4.14% and Bank Nizwa by 2.02%.

"At the same time, the market could find support in OQ Base Industries' \$490 million IPO," said Ahmed Negm. "The new listing saw strong institutional demand, and was oversubscribed multiple times at the maximum price of 111 baisas per share," he further added.

WITH ADB

India signs loan pact

NEW DELHI: India and the Asian Development Bank (ADB) have signed a \$98 million loan agreement to enhance horticulture crop productivity in the country.

The Ministry of Finance on Friday stated that the funding will support the establishment of disease-free planting material systems, boosting crop yields, quality, and resilience to climate change. — **ANI**

BY SEPTEMBER 2024

Oman's broad money supply grows by 13.9 percent

MUSCAT: The broad money supply in Oman witnessed a growth of 13.9 percent on an annual basis to reach OMR24.7 billion by the end of September 2024.

This increase came as a result of the increase in narrow money by 18.2 percent and quasi-money by 12.3 percent, which consists of the total savings deposits and time deposits in Omani riyals plus certificates of deposit issued by banks in addition to margin accounts and all foreign currency deposits in the banking sector.

Cash held by the public decreased by 6.7 percent at the end of last September, while demand deposits increased by 25.1 percent.

Interest rate

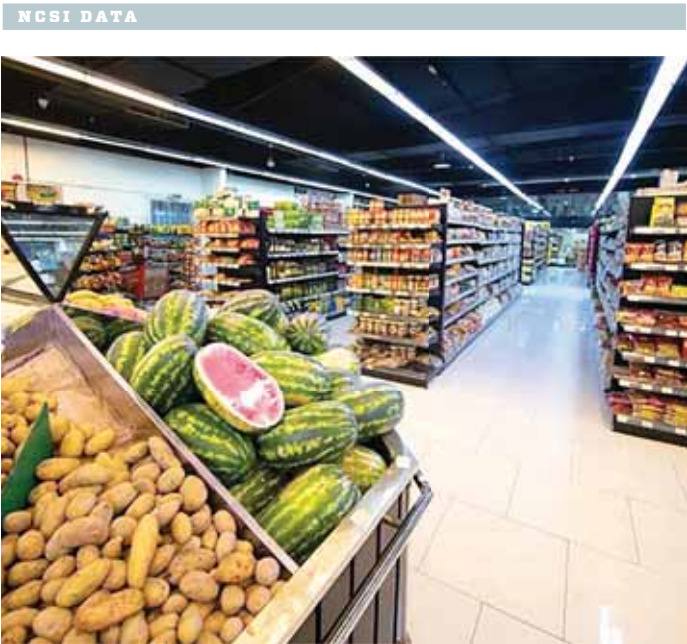
With regard to the interest rate structure of conventional commercial banks, the weighted average interest rate on deposits in Omani riyals increased from 2.453 percent in September 2023 to 2.679 percent in September 2024, while the weighted average

interest rate on loans in Omani riyals increased from 5.451 percent to 5.604 percent during the same period.

The average overnight interbank lending rate reached 4.896 percent in September 2024 compared to 5.388 percent in September 2023, as a result of the weighted average repo rate declining to 5.790 percent compared to 6.000 percent during the same period last year, in line with the US Federal Reserve's policies. — **ONA**



MARKET



Oman’s inflation rate rises by 0.8% by end of October

MUSCAT: The inflation rate in the Sultanate of Oman rose by 0.8 percent at the end of October 2024 compared to the same month in 2023, according to data from the Consumer Price Index issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data indicated an increase in the prices of various goods and services groups by 4.8 percent, food and non-alcoholic beverages by 3.5 percent, health by 3.2 percent, culture and entertainment by 0.8 percent, restaurants and hotels by 0.6 percent, clothing and footwear by 0.5 percent, furniture, household equipment and maintenance by 0.4 percent, and education by 0.1 percent.

Transportation group

In contrast to a decrease in the prices of the transportation group by 2.6 percent and stability in the prices of the housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels, communications and tobacco groups.

In the food and non-alcoholic beverages group, prices of vegeta-

bles rose by 8.9 percent, fruits by 8 percent, milk, cheese and eggs by 5.4 percent, oils and fats by 3.8 percent, meat by 2.8 percent, sugar, jam, honey and sweets by 2.4 percent, food products by 1.8 percent, bread and cereals by 0.8 percent, non-alcoholic beverages by 0.7 percent, and fish and seafood prices fell by 1.2 percent.

The South Al Sharqiyah Governorate recorded the highest inflation rate at the end of October 2024 compared to the same period last year, as the index rose by 1.9 percent, and also rose by 1.6 percent in the Al Wusta Governorate, and by 1.6 percent in the Musandam Governorate, and by 1.3 percent in the North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, and by 1.1 percent in the Ad Dakhiliyah Governorate.

The rate rose by 0.8 percent in the North Al Batinah Governorate, and by 0.7 percent in the Al Buraimi Governorate, and by 0.7 percent in the Ad Dhahirah Governorate, and by 0.6 percent in the Muscat Governorate, and by 0.4 percent in the South Al Batinah Governorate. — **DNA**

India’s Q2 GDP slows to 5.4%, sharply lower than RBI’s estimate of 7%

The quarterly growth rate was quite lower than the Reserve Bank of India’s forecast of 7 per cent

NEW DELHI: The Indian economy grew by 5.4 per cent in real terms in the July-September quarter of the current financial year 2024-25, Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation’s official data showed on Friday.

The quarterly growth was quite lower than RBI’s forecast of 7 per cent.

Real GDP in Q2 of 2024-25 is estimated at Rs 44.10 lakh crore, against Rs 41.86 lakh crore in Q2 of 2023-24, showing a moderate growth rate of 5.4 per cent.

Last year same quarter, India grew 8.1 per cent.

Indian economy grew 6.7 per cent in the April-June quarter, lower than RBI’s 7.1 per cent forecast.

The RBI has pegged India’s 2024-25 GDP growth at 7.2 per cent. IMF and World have pegged it at 7.0 per cent. Many global rating agencies and multilateral organisations have also revised their growth forecasts for India upwards.

In its latest monetary policy review meeting in October, RBI pegged Q2 growth forecast at 7.0 per cent; Q3 at 7.4 per cent; and Q4 at 7.4 per cent. Real GDP growth for Q1 of next financial year 2025-26 is projected at 7.3 per cent.



The RBI has pegged India’s 2024-25 GDP growth at 7.2 per cent. IMF and World have pegged it at 7.0 per cent. Many global rating agencies and multilateral organisations have also revised their growth forecasts for India upwards.

The Economic Survey tabled in Parliament earlier this year “conservatively” projected India’s real GDP growth at 6.5-7 per cent for 2024-25, acknowledging that market expectations are higher. Real GDP growth is the reported economic growth adjusted for in-

flation.

S&P Global Ratings this Monday retained India’s GDP forecast for the current financial year 2024-25 at 6.8 per cent while cutting economic growth forecasts for the next two years.

The Reserve Bank of India last

week said that the weakness witnessed in the Indian economy, particularly in the recent quarter, is behind us.

The slack in speed in the Indian economy observed in the second quarter of 2024-25 (July-September) is behind us as private consumption is back to being the driver of domestic demand with festival spending lighting up real activity in October-December, RBI had said in its latest monthly bulletin.

The RBI asserted that the medium-term outlook remains bullish.

India’s GDP grew by an impressive 8.2 per cent during the financial year 2023-24, continuing to be the fastest-growing major economy. The economy grew by 7.2 per cent in 2022-23 and 8.7 per cent in 2021-22. — **ANI**

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Why German investors see business in Africa too risky?

FRANKFURT: Africa is back in the spotlight as a continent of opportunities, with German Economy Minister Robert Habeck travelling to Kenya to open next week’s two-day German African Business Summit (GABS).

The gathering, which is held in a different African country every two years, is Germany’s largest business event focused on the continent, bringing together business and government leaders from Germany and Africa.



Perceptions of Africa’s investment climate

“The perspective on Africa is one of exaggerated political, policy and economic risks: politically unstable, corrupt, weak infrastructure, bureaucratic hurdles and high-risk environment,” said Serwah Prempeh, a senior fellow at the Africa Policy Research Institute’s (APRI) economy and society programme.

“This, of course, deters German investors, particularly those in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), who are typically more risk-averse,” Prempeh told DW.

In her recently-published autobiography “Freedom. Memories 1954-2021” former German Chancellor Angela Merkel mentioned the difficulty of persuading senior executives from large German companies to accompany her on trips to African countries.

“Most of them saw few opportunities for themselves on the African markets,” she wrote.

Attempts to foster investment

Previous German governments have made several attempts at persuading German SMEs to increase investments in Africa. Initiatives such as the Compact with Africa — established during Germany’s 2017 presidency of the G20 — aims to generate additional private investment in African nations to boost their economies.

Overall, however, Germany has hardly been politically and economically active in Africa in re-

cent decades, according to APRI.

Foreign direct investment data reflects this. Germany ranked ninth among the top 10 investor countries in Africa in 2022 with \$13 billion (€12.3 billion) — only \$2 billion more than 2018, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD).

Prempeh told DW that German investors generally have a low appetite for risk.

“Many are holding out for increased government support before they invest in Africa,” Prempeh said.

“This support might not come considering the tight fiscal position of the German government and the increasing pressures from citizens to focus and spend more on internal development issues.”

Challenges for German investments

In 2022, Habeck called for a “restart” and a new approach to relations between Germany, Europe and Africa ahead of his first trip to Africa, during which he visited South Africa and Namibia.

In Kenya, Germany is acting as a financing partner for the expansion of Africa’s largest geothermal power plant in Olkaria.

In May 2023, Chancellor Olaf Scholz personally announced a new €45 million loan on-site in Olkaria.

Habeck also plans to visit the power complex, whose capacity is set to double to 2,000 megawatts by the end of the decade.

According to Kenyan economist James Shikwati, the German investment approach to Africa and Kenya is facing a double crisis.

“When it comes to Africa the potential German investments are facing competition from China and other emerging economies that have become aggressive in their investment approach to Africa,” Shikwati said.

Shikwati suggested that Germans often come with a “mindset of how things should work,” and should rather step back from assuming that “they are the experts and creating possibilities where they can co-create with Kenyan and African counterparts.”

Continent of opportunities

Africa offers significant opportunities for German companies looking to diversify and reduce dependencies, especially from China. The green energy, infrastructure and IT sectors are attractive for investment projects.

But since the COVID pandemic and new conflicts on the continent, many African economies have been hit hard, financial budgets have become volatile.

Many experts warn that mitigating those risks will be important for future investments.

Christoph Kannengiesser, CEO of the German African Business Association, pointed out that while there is a lot of talk about risk, Africa can actually help safeguard business models against risks and make them more resilient. — **DW**



LIFESTYLE

NVIDIA
REVEALS
AI MODEL
FOR SOUND
PRODUCTION

It was designed by a team of AI researchers from around the world, making the model’s multi-accent and multilingual capabilities stronger

NVIDIA has unveiled a new experimental AI model called “Foundational Generative Audio Transformer Opus 1”, or Fugatto, a model that is essentially dedicated to sound.

This model is characterised by its ability to create or modify music, audio and audio files based on text prompts. It was designed by a team of AI researchers from around the world, making the model’s multi-accent and multilingual capabilities stronger.

“We wanted to create a model that understands and generates sound like humans do,” said Rafael Valle, a manager of applied audio research at NVIDIA.

Music producers could use Fugatto to quickly prototype or edit an idea for a song, trying out different styles, voices and instruments. Language learning tools could be personalised to use any voice a speaker chooses. Video game developers could use the model to modify prerecorded assets in their title to fit the changing action as users play the game.

Furthermore, researchers found that the model can accomplish tasks not part of its pre-training, with some fine-tuning. It could combine instructions that it was trained on separately, such as generating speech that sounds angry with a specific accent or the sound of birds singing during a thunderstorm. The model can generate sounds that change over time, as well, such as the sound of a train moving through an area.

Fugatto is not the first of its kind; Meta has previously launched an open source AI kit to create sounds from text descriptions. Google provides its own text-to-music model called MusicLM.

- OMA

SPORTS

Now I have to prove myself, says Man City boss Guardiola

The manager faces Liverpool test on Sunday as he hopes to take the club out of the recent slump

LONDON: Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola said on Saturday that he wants to “prove” he can drag the club out of their current slump, *BBC Sport* reported.

City head to Anfield on Sunday to face Liverpool off the back of losing five consecutive matches in all competitions and tossing away a 3-0 lead to draw with Feyenoord in the Champions League on Tuesday.

Defeat on Merseyside would leave them 11 points adrift of Arne Slot’s side in the Premier League table.

Guardiola says in the present situation it is “unrealistic” to look at longer term targets like the possibility of winning the league title.

Instead, he is focusing on his own contribution and the belief that, arguably, how he deals with the present situation is a greater test of his managerial abilities than the 18 trophies he has won at City.

“Of course it’s not nice but what do you expect? That everything is red carpet? That everything is nice and easy?” he said.

“It’s easy when you are [win-



ning] 10, 12 games in a row, everyone is fit, everyone is in their prime and everyone is 26, 27, 28. When everything is going well, that is easy.

“I have to prove myself now.”

To hear Guardiola speaking in such stark terms is as staggering as City’s form.

The former Barcelona and Bayern Munich boss is the unquestioned greatest coach of his generation. For some, he is the best of all time.

Yet listening to him address City’s collapse in form was spell-binding and he even raised the

spectre of what might happen if he is unable to halt the current downturn in fortunes.

“In long careers - nine, 10, 11 years - you live in all the situations,” he said.

“We lost five games, drew the last one when we should have won, but it happens in football sometimes.

“[I have to] accept it. No complaining, no blaming, no pointing. Don’t run away from your responsibility. I have absolutely all on my shoulders. I have it and I want it.

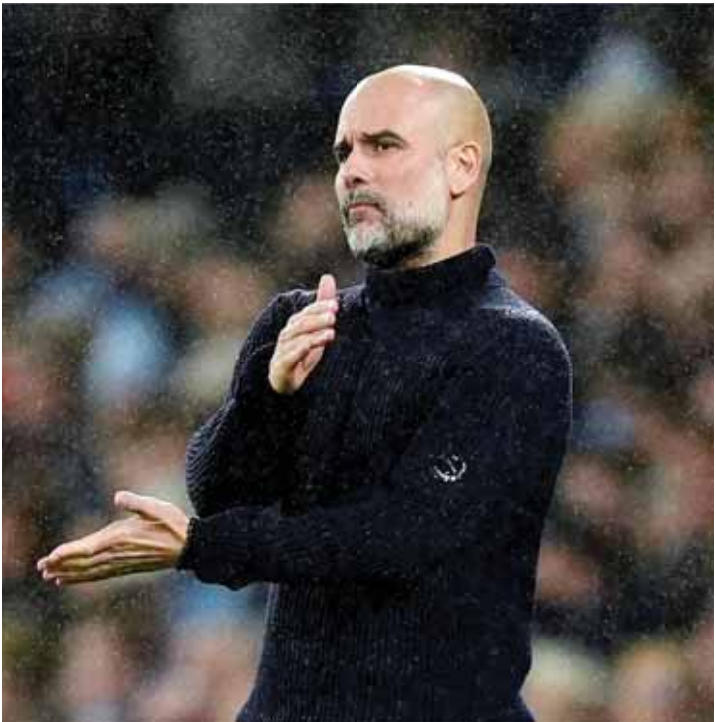
“At this football club you have to win. If you don’t, you will be in trouble. I know people say ‘why is

Pep not in trouble, why is Pep not sacked?’ I have this margin because of what we have done over the last eight years. The people rely on me.

“What’s for sure is I want to stay. But the moment I feel I am not positive for the club another one will come.”

It is just over a week since City confirmed Guardiola had signed a two-year contract extension to 2027.

He has no regrets over the deal and neither has the club after an unprecedented run of success since his arrival in 2016 that includes a record four successive



top-flight titles and a historic Treble in 2023.

“In a decade of time, we have been here,” he said. “Tell me which team around the world has been as consistent in 10 years... It doesn’t exist. Not in the NBA, not in tennis, not in golf, not in any sports.”

Guardiola must try to lift the confidence of his players, not just for the test against league leaders Liverpool, but for the challenges that come afterwards.

City have also slipped out of the top eight in the Champions League and are facing a February play-off to preserve their place in the competition if the situation does not

change in their final three first-phase games.

“We will be back, I know that,” he said. “I don’t know when.

“In the situation we are in, it is not realistic to think about big targets. The situation is to think about the next game and what I can do to help the players.

“I don’t want to run. I asked for this opportunity. I want to be there and rebuild the team in many aspects from now on until the end of the season and next season.”

City are currently in second place in the Premier League table, with one point more than Chelsea, Arsenal and Brighton. - *Agencies*

FIFA BEST AWARDS

Haaland, Rodri nominated for 2024 FIFA men’s award



LONDON: Manchester City’s Rodri and Erling Haaland are the sole nominees from the Premier League in the best male player category at the 2024 FIFA Best Awards.

The pair have been recognised after City became the first team in English top-flight history to win four league titles in a row.

Real Madrid and England midfielder Jude Bellingham is one of 11 nominees for the prize, which is dominated by Spain-based players.

Lionel Messi, the 2023 winner, is the only player nominated for the award to play outside of Europe.

Ballon d’Or winner Rodri is a leading contender for the prize but faces competition from Real Madrid’s Vinicius Jr, who finished runner-up to the Spaniard in the voting in October.

Bellingham, 21, who finished third in the Ballon d’Or voting, will be hoping to become the first male

English player to win the FIFA prize.

The award will be decided by an equally weighted split between fans, current captains and coaches of all women’s and men’s national teams, and media representatives.

Manchester City boss Pep Guardiola, who won coach of the year in 2023, is again nominated, alongside Real Madrid’s Carlo Ancelotti, Bayer Leverkusen’s Xabi Alonso, Argentina manager Lionel Scaloni and Spain coach Luis de la Fuente.

Arsenal’s David Raya, Manchester City’s Ederson and Aston Villa’s Emiliano Martinez have been nominated for the goalkeeper of the year award.

Real Madrid’s Andriy Lunin, Paris St-Germain’s Gianluigi Donnarumma, AC Milan’s Mike Maigman and Athletic Bilbao’s Unai Simon make up the rest of the nominees.

Best men’s player nominees: Dani Carvajal (Spain/Real Madrid), Erling Haaland (Norway/Manchester

City), Federico Valverde (Uruguay/Real Madrid), Florian Wirtz (Germany/Bayer Leverkusen), Jude Bellingham (England/Real Madrid), Kylian Mbappe (France/Paris Saint-Germain/Real Madrid), Lamine Yamal (Spain/Barcelona), Lionel Messi (Argentina/Inter Miami), Rodri (Spain/Manchester City), Toni Kroos (Germany/Real Madrid), Vinicius Jr (Brazil/Real Madrid)

Best men’s coach nominees: Carlo Ancelotti (Real Madrid), Lionel Scaloni (Argentina), Luis de la Fuente (Spain), Pep Guardiola (Manchester City), Xabi Alonso (Bayer Leverkusen).

Best men’s goalkeeper nominees: Andriy Lunin (Ukraine/Real Madrid), David Raya (Spain/Arsenal), Ederson (Brazil/Manchester City), Emiliano Martinez (Argentina/Aston Villa), Gianluigi Donnarumma (Italy/Paris Saint-Germain), Mike Maigman (France/AC Milan), Unai Simon (Spain/Athletic Bilbao). - *Agencies*

PREMIER LEAGUE

Ruud Van Nistelrooy named Leicester City manager

LONDON: Leicester City have appointed former PSV Eindhoven boss Ruud van Nistelrooy as their new manager.

The Dutchman replaces Steve Cooper, who was sacked last weekend after just 12 Premier League matches in charge of the Foxes.

He has signed a contract until June 2027 at the King Power Stadium.

Van Nistelrooy’s appointment comes two weeks after he left his role as interim head coach at Manchester United following Ruben Amorim’s arrival.

“I’m proud, I’m excited,” Van Nistelrooy, 48, said.

“Everybody that I speak to about Leicester City is enthusiastic. They have great stories about the quality of the people working at the club, the supporters and, of course, the recent history of the club is impressive.

“I’m excited to start and to get to know everyone and give everything I can for the football club.”

Leicester are 16th in the Premier League, one point above the relegation zone, and go to Brentford on Saturday.

First-team coach Ben Dawson will take charge of the side in west London before Van Nistelrooy leads the Foxes for the first time against West Ham at home on 3 December.

Van Nistelrooy oversaw three wins and one draw during his four-game stint in charge at United, with two of the victories coming against Leicester in the Premier League and Carabao Cup.

The Dutchman’s only previous



role in senior management was with former club PSV Eindhoven, who he led to second place in the Eredivisie in 2022-23.

Van Nistelrooy left PSV before the end of that season, citing a “lack of support within the club”.

After a year out, Van Nistelrooy joined Erik ten Hag’s backroom staff at Old Trafford in the summer, having spoken to Burnley about replacing Vincent Kompany at Turf Moor at the end of last season.

Van Nistelrooy said United was the only club he would have

considered joining in an assistant manager’s capacity, having scored 150 goals in 219 games for them during a five-year spell before he moved to Real Madrid in 2006.

Cooper, meanwhile, was dismissed after just 157 days in the job.

Leicester City chairman, Aiyawatt Srivaddhanaprabha, added: “Ruud’s experience, knowledge, and winning mentality will undoubtedly bring great value to us.

“We look forward to supporting him in achieving success for our fans and our club.” - *Agencies*

ADELAIDE TEST VS INDIA



Australia call up uncapped duo after Hazlewood injury

ADELAIDE: Australia have called up uncapped duo Sean Abbott and Brendan Doggett for the second Test against India after seamer Josh Hazlewood was ruled out through injury.

Cricknet Australia said Hazlewood will miss the day-night match at the Adelaide Oval with a “low grade left side injury”.

The 33-year-old, who has taken 278 wickets in 71 Tests, will remain with Australia’s squad in Adelaide to prepare for the

remainder of the series.

Hazlewood was the pick of Australia’s bowlers in the first innings of the first Test when he finished with figures of 4-29 as India were dismissed for 150.

His place in the side for the second Test which starts on December 6 is widely expected to go to experienced seamer Scott Boland.

Abbott, 32, has taken 29 wickets in 26 one-day internationals and 26 wickets in 20 T20 interna-

tionals for Australia but has never played Test cricket.

He has taken 261 wickets in 87 first-class matches.

Doggett has never played for Australia but was an unused member of their squad for the 2018 Test series against Pakistan.

The 30-year-old has taken 142 wickets in 40 first-class matches and took a career-best 6-15 for Australia A against India A in October.

Uncapped Tasmania all-round-

er Beau Webster was named in the squad earlier this week as cover for Mitchell Marsh, who is struggling for fitness following Australia’s defeat in the first Test in Perth.

Australia squad for second Test: Usman Khawaja, Nathan McSweeney, Marnus Labuschagne, Steven Smith, Travis Head, Mitchell Marsh, Alex Carey, Josh Inglis, Pat Cummins (c), Mitchell Starc, Nathan Lyon, Sean Abbott, Brendan Doggett, Scott Boland, Beau Webster. - *Agencies*

IN PICTURES



China's innovative panda toys get popular around world
A girl selects stuffed panda toys at a cultural and creative product store in Chengdu, southwest China's Sichuan Province. So far, more than 50,000 customized simulated panda toys have been sold to more than 50 countries and regions around the world by these firms. *Xinhua*



Farmers harvest sesame in Baghdad, Iraq
Iraqi farmers harvest sesame on a farm north of Baghdad, Iraq. *Xinhua*



Rescued, rehabilitated sea turtles released on beach in Kuwait
Rescued and rehabilitated sea turtles are released on a beach in Kuwait City, Kuwait. *Xinhua*



Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna promote their upcoming movie 'Pushpa: The Rule'
Actors Allu Arjun and Rashmika Mandanna during the promotion of their upcoming movie 'Pushpa: The Rule' at a press conference, in Mumbai. *ANI Photo*



Highlight of FIS Snowboard Big Air World Cup 2025
Iwabuchi Reira of Japan competes during the women's qualification of the FIS Snowboard Big Air World Cup 2025 at Big Air Shougang in Beijing, capital of China. *Xinhua*



Penguins parade held in Harbin
An aerial drone photo shows tourists watching a parade of penguins in Harbin, northeast China's Heilongjiang Province. *Xinhua*



View of Lebanon after Israel-Lebanon ceasefire deal
A man operates an excavator to clear the debris in the southern suburb of Beirut, Lebanon. According to the ceasefire deal, the Lebanese army will take control of southern border areas over the next 60 days, Israel will gradually withdraw, and civilians will return home. *Xinhua*

ROUND-UP

Sohar International partners with Al Noor Association for the Blind

The MoU was signed by Mazin Mahmood Al Raisi, Chief Marketing Officer at Sohar International, and Mahmood Amor Al Alawi, Financial and Administrative Affairs Manager representing Al Noor Association for the Blind in Sohar

MUSCAT: Sohar International, Oman's best bank, has recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Al Noor Association for the Blind in Sohar to sponsor specialised training programmes aimed at enhancing the soft skills of 50 visually impaired individuals.

The MoU was signed by Mazin Mahmood Al Raisi, Chief Marketing Officer at Sohar International, and Mahmood Amor Al Alawi, Financial and Administrative Affairs Manager representing Al Noor Association for the Blind in Sohar.

This initiative underscores Sohar International's steadfast commitment to impactful Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)



endeavours that drive meaningful change.

Community empowerment

By prioritising social inclusion and community empowerment, the bank continues to champion initiatives that deliver sustainable, long-term benefits and contribute to the well-being of society.

Commenting on the bank's involvement in the programme, Mazin Mahmood Al Raisi said, "At Sohar International, we are committed to fostering initia-

tives that empower individuals and drive inclusivity across all sectors of society. Our partnership with Al Noor Association for the Blind reflects our strategic focus on impactful CSR endeavours that break down barriers and enable individuals to realise their full potential. This programme not only enhances participants' personal growth but also prepares them to enter the workforce, equipping them with essential skills to navigate the professional world with con-

fidence. By bridging challenges and opportunities, this initiative aligns with our mission to create lasting value and advance Oman's national priorities of accessibility and integration. Through such comprehensive support, we are fostering a resilient and dynamic workforce ready to contribute meaningfully to society."

Every aspect of the programme has been thoughtfully curated to cater to the unique needs of visually impaired individuals and is designed to nurture self-es-

teem, adaptability, and a sense of empowerment.

The targeted training program will last for 5 days and address key areas vital for building confidence, decision-making, and social aptitude.

The first module, focusing on self-confidence and self-appreciation, aims to instill a strong sense of self-worth and resilience, empowering participants to realise their potential.

This foundation is further strengthened through the second module on decision-making and problem-solving, equipping individuals with the critical thinking ability needed to navigate diverse challenges.

The final module on social intelligence and communication emphasises the development of interpersonal competencies, enabling participants to engage more effectively in both personal and professional interactions.

Together, the modules form a holistic framework that paves the way for greater independence and integration into society.

Commenting on the partnership, Mohammed Ismail Al Balushi, Chairman of Al Noor Association for the Blind in Sohar, said: "This collaboration with Sohar International is a significant step forward in our mission to empower visually impaired individuals and equip them with the skills needed to thrive in society. The bank's support reflects a deep understanding of the importance of inclusivity and the need for collective efforts to create opportunities for all members of the community. This is not the first time Sohar International has supported Al Noor Association for the Blind; the bank

has consistently extended its support over several years, demonstrating its steadfast commitment to our cause. We are confident that this initiative will have a lasting positive impact, helping participants unlock their potential and contribute meaningfully to Oman's future."

Sohar International's commitment to CSR campaigns is evident in its diverse portfolio of initiatives aimed at improving the well-being of vulnerable segments of society.

From supporting education and healthcare to fostering socio-economic advancement, the bank continues to prioritise programmes that have a lasting impact.

By driving meaningful change, Sohar International stands as a beacon of inspiration, encouraging others to champion similarly transformative endeavours.

About Sohar International

With the vision to become a world-class Omani services company that helps customers, community and people to prosper and grow, Sohar International operates with a purpose to help people 'win' by delivering responsive banking for their ever-changing world, complementing their growth and prosperity with international standard service delivery.

The Bank seeks to redefine banking in Oman through transformational developments centred on the principles of More Velocity, making everything simple and fast; More Value, ensuring relevance and connectivity to customers' world; and More Vision, liberating stakeholders through talented leadership. www.soharinternational.com

FOR NRI INVESTORS

India Home Fest

MUSCAT: The 15th edition of the India Home Fest - 2024 took centre stage at Hotel Muscat Holiday, Al Khuwair, Muscat Oman on November 29th and 30th, 2024. It ran from 10AM to 8.30PM on both days, this event promises to be a gateway for NRI investors to explore India's thriving real estate market.

Since its inception in 2013, the India Home Fest has built a legacy as South East Asia's premier real estate event, hosted by Adsync Advertising LLC showcasing properties from India's leading builders and developers. This year's edition in Muscat aims to uphold that legacy, offering attendees an unparalleled opportunity to discover properties across India's most promising regions.

This edition of the India Home Fest -2024 proudly presents an impressive lineup of confirmed builders and developers from across India, offering exclusive opportunities for NRI investors. These esteemed participants are renowned for their exceptional projects and customer-centric approach. A few of include Godrej Properties, Mahindra Lifespaces, Puravankara, Brigade Group, Birla Estates, Bhutani Infra, Epsilon Infra, Favourite Homes, Kolte Patil, Land Trades, Nyati Group, Pushpam Infra, Rhythm ResiTel, Rohan Estates, Sampangi, SSM & Harshika Developers, Total Environment, TVS Emerald, Vasavi Builders, Vijay Raja, VTP Realty, Gravity Properties and many more.

This year's India Home Fest offers a unique opportunity to explore a wide range of prime prop-

erties, whether you're searching for your dream home or a lucrative commercial investment. Attendees can browse through offerings from top cities such as Delhi, Gurugrama, Noida, Mumbai, Pune, Bangalore, Chennai, Hyderabad, Kerala, Gujrat, Managalore, Mysore and many more. The event also provides access to exclusive offers, including special discounts, flexible payment options such as 'book now, pay later' schemes, and deals specifically tailored for NRI buyers.

Gain valuable insights from seasoned real estate experts and consultants to make informed decisions about your investments.

Additionally, the exhibition is an excellent platform to network with industry leaders, fellow investors, and top developers, creating connections that can enhance your real estate journey.

The India Home Fest has long been a trusted platform for bridging the gap between NRI investors and India's booming real estate market.

Whether you're seeking to buy a home, expand your investment portfolio, or explore exciting commercial opportunities, this event promises something for everyone.

Treat yourselves to exclusive discounts, flexible payment plans, and expert insights tailored to NRI needs at the India Home Fest 2024, a one-stop destination for fulfilling your real estate dreams.

This event is organised by Horizon Expo. Hosted by Adsync Advertising LLC & Marketing partnered by Niksglobal Realty.

A SUBSIDIARY OF FDO

SIMAK launches new line of canned fish products from its factory in Duqm

MUSCAT: Under the esteemed patronage of His Excellency Dr. Saud bin Hamoud bin Ahmed Al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources, SIMAK, a subsidiary of Fisheries Development Oman (FDO), proudly announces the commencement of commercial production at its cannery factory in Duqm.

This significant milestone aligns with the Sultanate's celebration of its 54th National Day.

SIMAK's canned tuna products are available across the local hypermarket, with plans to introduce mackerels in the coming months. This marks an exciting milestone as SIMAK makes its first foray into the consumer products market.

SIMAK's state-of-the-art facility, strategically located in the Duqm Special Economic Zone, harnesses advanced technology to produce over 100 million cans annually, equivalent to more than 30,000 tonnes of top-grade raw materials of seafood.

This output not only meets local demand but also positions Oman as a significant player in the global seafood market.

The factory's strategic location near major ports and specialized fisheries Industrial Zone supports efficient operations and distribution.

"We are thrilled to bring our high-quality, sustainably sourced canned fish products to Omani consumers," said Zakariya Al Hasni, CEO of SIMAK.

"Our commitment to quality, sustainability, and supporting the



local economy is at the core of our operations. By sourcing raw materials from the Sea of Oman and the Indian Ocean, we ensure freshness and superior taste in every can."

SIMAK's operations are deeply rooted in eco-friendly practices, such as water conservation and solar energy utilisation, underscoring the company's dedication to a sustainable future. This aligns with Oman's Vision 2040, emphasising food security and the growth of the blue economy.

Omani consumers can expect the highest quality in SIMAK's products, which have received positive feedback at seafood events across different countries. The response highlights the product's superior quality, nutritional value, and convenience, making it a popular choice for a healthy lifestyle. Rich in High protein

Rich in Omega 3, good Source

of Vitamin D, Low Calorie with low-fat content, SIMAK's canned fish products offer a nutritious and convenient meal option.

In addition to retail offerings, SIMAK is exploring white-label opportunities. The company received excellent reviews for product quality and usability at the recent HORECA Oman event.

"We are committed to maintaining the highest standards of cleanliness and hygiene, meeting global standards in our production process," added Zakariya Al Hasni. "Our state-of-the-art testing facilities ensure that every product that leaves our factory is of the highest quality."

SIMAK adheres to rigorous quality control standards, with certifications from renowned bodies such as FDA and ISO. Additionally, the company is committed to sourcing raw materials from

sustainably and ethically known sources.

About SIMAK

SIMAK, a subsidiary of FDO, is a leading seafood cannery based in the Fishery Zone of the Special Economic Zone of Duqm (SEZAD). Renowned for its commitment to quality, sustainability, and innovation, SIMAK leverages advanced technology and eco-friendly practices to produce premium-grade seafood products. With a state-of-the-art facility that produces over 100 million cans annually, SIMAK sources raw materials locally and from the Indian Ocean, ensuring the freshest and most flavorful seafood. The company is dedicated to supporting the local economy, promoting sustainable fishing practices, and contributing to Oman's Vision 2040 for food security and the blue economy.





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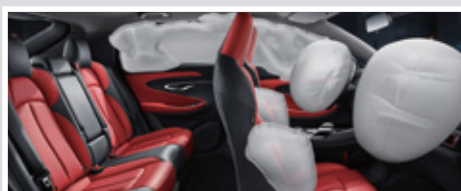
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