

HM GREETES EL-SISSI

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi of Egypt on his re-election for a new presidential term. In his cable, HM expressed his sincere greetings and wishes of good health and happiness to the president, praying to the Almighty Allah to grant him success in leading his country's aspirations of further progress and prosperity and further progress to the relations between the two countries. — **ONA**



HM SENDS GREETINGS TO QATAR

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of Qatar, on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to Sheikh Tamim, praying to the Almighty Allah to return this occasion on him and on his country's people with achievement of aspirations of further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**



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HIS MAJESTY OFFERS CONDOLENCES ON THE DEATH OF KUWAIT'S EMIR

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik expressed his sincere and heartfelt sympathies to Sheikh Misha'al Al Ahmed Al Jabir Al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, on the death of Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jabir Al Sabah

KUWAIT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Monday offered condolences to Sheikh Misha'al Al Ahmed Al Jabir Al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait, Al Sabah Family and the people of Kuwait on the death of the forgiven, by the will of the Almighty Allah, the late Emir of Kuwait Sheikh Nawaf Al Ahmed Al Jabir Al Sabah, when Sheikh Misha'al received His Majesty the Sultan at the Emiri Airport.

During the meeting, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere and heartfelt sympathies on the immense loss, praying to the Almighty Allah to have mercy on his soul, to rest him in peace in heavens and grant the Al Sabah family and the people of Kuwait fortitude to bear the loss.

In his turn, the Emir of Kuwait expressed his deep thanks and appreciation for His Majesty the Sultan and his accompanying delegation for their ardent sentiments.

He prayed to the Almighty Allah to protect His Majesty the Sultan, grant him continued good health and spare Omani people all harm.

His Majesty the Sultan was accompanied during condolence offering by an official delegation that comprised HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, HH Sayyid Bilal bin Haitham Al Said, HH Sayyid Taimour bin Asa'ad Al Said, Chairman of Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sheikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah Al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr. Abdullah bin Nassir Al Harrasi, Minister of Information, Sayyid Faisal bin Hamoud Al Busaidi, Advisor at the Diwan of Royal Court and Dr. Saleh bin A'amir Al Kharousi, Ambassador of Oman to Kuwait.

His Majesty returned to the homeland after a short visit to Kuwait. — **ONA** **SEE ALSO >A4**



TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Joint naval drill held

1 The RNO with the participation of naval forces from Pakistan and the support of RAFO, carried out a naval exercise. **>A3**

WORLD El-Sissi re-elected

2 Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi has secured a third term in office, the National Election Authority said on Monday. **>A6**

SPORTS Liverpool hold United

3 Liverpool were held to a goalless draw by Man United at home in the English Premier League on Sunday. **>B6**

SURGE IN INTEREST

'Made in Oman' campaign gains momentum

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Following the launch of 'Made in Oman' campaign, local products are experiencing a surge in consumer interest. The campaign is currently taking place across various commercial centres in different governorates of the Sultanate of Oman and will continue until the end of December.

The campaign is being organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) in collaboration with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the Joint Committee for External Exhibitions of Omani Products (OPEX).

Ahmed bin Abdullah bin Salem Al Waeli said, "The 'Made in Oman' campaign, initiated by the MoCIIP, is enhancing awareness



of Omani products and promoting local investment. It is also playing a vital role in consumer education and encouraging the purchase of Omani products."

"Additionally, the campaign pre-

sents a valuable opportunity to educate consumers about the importance of supporting local products. It is crucial to understand that the local product is the best choice due to its distinguished manufacturing

quality," he further said.

"Opting for Omani products is a real step towards promoting innovation and stimulating economic growth in the Sultanate of Oman. Our commitment to buying Omani products contributes to building the economy and increasing the spread of Omani products," Al Waeli added.

According to MoCIIP several consumers have affirmed that Omani products possess high quality, specifications, and attributes that qualify them to compete with imported products in both the local and international markets.

Additionally, purchasing local products contributes to supporting the national economy, generating economic gains by circulating money internally, and promoting foreign trade.

See also > B1



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OMAN

PRAYER
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Dhuhr.....12:09pm
Asr.....3:09pm
Maghrib.....5:29pm
Isha.....6:45pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....5:23am

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CRIME

Three held

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Three people were arrested for stealing electric cables from a commercial store and a house under construction in Muscat, said the ROP. The ROP said: "The General Department of Inquiries and Criminal Investigations arrested three people for stealing electrical cables from a commercial store and a house under construction."

The United Nations observes the International Migrants Day on 18 December

opment of Sri Lanka as well as their respective host countries.

On this auspicious day of International Migrants Day 2023, the Embassy of Sri Lanka in Muscat, Oman wholeheartedly thanks all the Sri Lankans in Oman for their tireless contribution to the development of Sri Lanka and Oman, and also appreciates the government and people of Oman for accepting Sri Lankans as one of their preferred workforce.

The Sri Lankan migrant workers have been a pillar of strength that immensely supports the forex needs of Sri Lanka.

The United Nations observes the International Migrants Day on 18 December since the adoption of the Resolution on the International Convention on the Protection of the 'Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families' by all the member states including Sri Lanka on 18 December 1990 and subsequent proclamation of 18 December as the International Migrants Day since the year 2000.

This year it is commemorated in Sri Lanka under the theme of 'Honouring the Contributions of Migrants and Respecting Their Rights'.

'Promoting Safe Migration' is the theme of IOM this year. The Embassy of Sri Lanka notes that a number of vulnerable Sri Lankans were exploited by unscrupulous middlemen and abandoned in the Sultanate of Oman without visa and work permit.

The Embassy advises all those who seek foreign employment to do so only through the licensed agencies and register with the Sri Lanka Foreign Employment Bureau before departure.

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MINISTRY OF LABOUR

28 expats arrested for violating Labour Law

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour (MoL) has arrested 28 expatriates for violating the Labour Law in Muscat Governorate.

Inspection campaign

In a statement, the Labour Ministry said: "In order to follow up on the expat workforce and the extent of their commitment to the provisions of the Labour Law and to continue combating the phenomenon of "collecting iron and scrap," which is practiced by the expat workforce in the Muscat Governorate, the Ministry of Labour, represented by the General Directorate of Labour Welfare, conducted an inspection campaign that resulted in the arrest of 28 workers in violation of the provisions of the Labour Law."

The statement added that legal measures are being taken against the violators.



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MILITARY EXERCISE



Royal Navy of Oman carries out drill
along with Pakistan naval forces

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The marine exercise Al Thamar Al Tayeb, carried out by the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) with the participation of naval forces from Pakistan and the support of the Royal Air Force of Oman

(RAFO), kicked off on 17 December. The exercise included a number of activities as per the designated plan, including marine formations, marine operations and exchange of information and expertise between the crews of the participating vessels.

The military exercise also included a briefing on the stages of the exercise and its objectives. The exercise comes within the annual training plans of the Royal Navy of Oman and within the exchange of expertise with other naval forces.

COMMENTARY

More Omanis are coming out of retirement



THE NUMBER of Omanis who are now working past their retirement age is increasing every year as both men and women are discovering something new to keep them going in their twilight years. According to official statistics both in the ministries of manpower and commerce, about 34 percent of Omanis who retired between 2018 to 2023 are engaged either in a part time job or establishing a business of their own. And that number is expected to grow consistently in the coming years as more retired people refuse to stay at home doing nothing. Many Omanis now see the concept of retirement of grey hair people sitting at home, sipping coffee and watching television is a complete 'waste of time.'

Perhaps with the advancement of medicine that keep people healthier to live longer encourage the officially retired people to continue with their contributions to the society. But on closer scrutiny, the official retirement age in Oman is five years younger than in most countries. The retirement age in Oman is 60 where in most countries is 65 while countries like the United Kingdom is pushing it upward. Most Omanis I talked to, both men and women, think 60 is too young to sit at home looking at the cobwebs growing on their ceilings. But what do medical experts say about pushing the retirement age indefinitely? They agree that it is good for our mental faculties to keep going as long as it does not stress us up. But talking about work stress, young people are prone to it with office deadlines, anyway. Most of them would like an independent business so that they can work at their own pace. That is exactly what older people are doing now after retirement. Establishing a small business to keep them going. This way, they can keep working at their own pace and in full control of their routine. Medical experts support it, too. Staying at home doing nothing has many implications. Not only the body decays but the mental status deteriorates, too. Senility starts to settle in and dementia is not far off. There is a wider choice of keeping busy after the age of 60, not just part-time employment or a business. Volunteering work, charity or mentoring young people are worthy paths for them to get into. These tasks can offer a retired person a new challenge that they did not have the time to get into while they were working. The concept that 'I have enough money' is no longer an excuse. Playing golf or travelling around may not be enough to stimulate the brain. Besides, not every retired person want to get into that path. There is also the health issues when you grow old when the body cannot tolerate all the sporting activities. But the mind can still think and retain the life experiences that can be passed to the younger generation. Again, it is all in the mind and not in the bones. No one wants to hear your creaking bones but the thoughts in your mind. Whatever it is, we certainly know now retirement is not as we know it. We can all contribute, no matter what age we are, to the society to help young people get the right experience.



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IN PICTURES

His Majesty offers condolences on the death of Kuwait's Emir



HM the Sultan returns home after successful visit to India

Upon his departure, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of thanks and appreciation to the President and Prime Minister of India

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik returned home on Sunday, following a three-day state visit to the Republic of India.

His Majesty was received at the Royal Airport by HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, HH Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, Sheikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah Al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council, Khalid bin Hilal Al Ma'awali, Chairman of the Shura Council, Sayyid Hamoud bin Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, Nasr bin Hamoud Al Kindi, Secretary General of the Royal Court Affairs, Lt.Gen Hassan bin Mohsin Al Shuraig, Inspector General of Police and Customs, Lt.Gen Said bin Ali Al Hilali, Head of the Internal Security Service, Dr. Mohammed bin Said Al Ma'amari, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs, Dr. Hilal bin Ali Al Sabti, Minister of Health, Maj. Gen Mattar bin Salim Al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman, Air Vice Marshal Khamis bin Hammad Al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman, Rear Admiral Saif bin Nasir Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman and Maj.Gen Musallam bin Mohammed bin Tammam Jaaboub, Commander of the



Sultan's Special Force.

During the visit, His Majesty the Sultan was accompanied by an official high-ranking delegation that comprised HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, Sayyid Khalid bin Hilal Al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'amani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, Dr. Hamad bin Said Al Aufi, Head of the Private Office, Abdulsalam bin Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (OIA), Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Eng. Salim bin Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, Pankaj Khimji, Advisor for Foreign Trade and International Co-operation at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Sheikh Abdulaziz bin Abdullah Al Hinai, Ambassador-at-Large at the Foreign Ministry and Issa Saleh Al Shibani, Ambassador of Oman to India.

His Majesty was seen off upon departure by Shri V.Muralidharan, Minister of State for External Affairs and Parliamentary Affairs (Head of the Mission of Honour),

Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to Oman, Issa bin Saleh Al Shibani, Ambassador of Oman to India and members of Oman's Embassy in New Delhi.

Upon his departure, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of thanks and appreciation to President Droupadi Murmu of the Republic of India and Narendra Modi, Prime Minister of India

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere thanks and sentiments to the President and the Prime Minister for the warm welcome and hospitality accorded to him and his accompanying delegation.

His Majesty the Sultan hailed his meetings with the India President and the Prime Minister of India as a valuable opportunity to discuss Omani-Indian relations that are deep-rooted in history. His Majesty pointed out that the meeting also offered chances to consolidate co-operation between them in various fields, to serve the interests of the Omani and Indian peoples.

His Majesty the Sultan wished the President and the Prime Minister good health and wellbeing, to meet the Indian people's aspirations for further progress and prosperity. — ONA



El-Sissi wins third term as Egyptian president

Sissi received 89.6% of the vote. He ran against three other candidates. The election was held over three days between December 10 and 12

CAIRO: Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sissi has secured a third term in office, the National Election Authority said on Monday.

Sissi received 89.6% of the vote. He ran against three other candidates. The election was held over three days between December 10 and 12.

The authority put turnout in last week's presidential election at around 66.8%. The previous election, held in 2018, had a registered turnout of 41%.



National Election Authority head Hazem Badawy called the level of voter participation in this year's election "unprecedented."

"The voting percentage is the highest in the history of Egypt," he said.

The leader of the Republican People's Party, Hazem Omar, received 4.5% of the vote.

Farid Yahran of the centre-left Egyptian Social Democratic Party came in third place, and Abdel-

Sana Yamama of the liberal Wafd party came fourth.

The former military leader was first elected president in 2014, after ousting and outlawing the Muslim Brotherhood that led the previous government, and was handed a second term in 2018. In both elections he garnered 97% of the vote.

Egypt's constitution limits presidents from serving more than three terms in office. The duration of terms was adjusted from four to six years by a 2019 constitutional amendment, meaning el-Sissi is likely to rule until 2030.

The incumbent's victory was widely regarded as a foregone conclusion, as his three opponents were largely marginal political figures. El-Sissi's most prominent challenger halted his campaign in October, saying that officials and thugs targeted his supporters. The National Election Authority dismissed the accusations.

In his election campaign, el-Sissi pledged to address the country's economy, which has been grappling with a major crisis. His government initiated an International Monetary Fund-backed reform programme in 2016, but the austerity measures led to a steep increase in prices. — **DW**

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Africa's first mRNA factory set to open

KIGALI: German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock says Africa will have the full support of Germany and the European Union when fighting future pandemics and other diseases.

Her words came as German pharmaceutical firm BioNTech prepared to open an mRNA vaccine plant to help supply the continent when future pandemics such as COVID-19 arise.

Only one in 100 vaccine doses administered in Africa is currently produced on the continent — a figure Baerbock said should be 60 times higher by 2040.

"Diseases do not recognise national borders or continents — our solidarity must not either," the Green Party politician said as she departed for the trip.

"The path to a fair international health architecture is not a short-distance race, but a team marathon," said Baerbock.

When the COVID-19 pandemic spread across the globe, Baerbock said, the world realised that "no one is safe until everyone is safe."

She said that, especially in Africa, too many people were defencelessly exposed to the virus at the beginning of the pandemic and "that we as the international community literally could not deliver." — **DW**

BANGLADESH PM SHEIKH HASINA

'BNP cannot win public support through 'arson attacks, killing people'

DHAKA: Bangladesh Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina slammed the opposition Bangladesh Nationalist Party (BNP) over the violent incidents in the country and said that it can't win elections by "arson attacks and killing people," according to media report.

She made the remarks at a discussion at the Bangabandhu International Conference Center (BICC) organised by the ruling

Awami League to mark Victory Day. "They should know this and they should act accordingly," Hasina added.

Sheikh Hasina, also the President of the Awami League, said the BNP does not want the welfare of the people; it rather wants a regime of "looting, money laundering and plundering public money."

"They do not want to go for an election because they know very

well that the people will not cast votes for arson terrorists and killers," she added.

Hasina alleged that BNP and its allies are aware of this 'bitter truth', and that is why they want to "foil the election," slated for January 7, and "overthrow the government," Dhaka Tribune reported.

She mentioned that the Awami League was not born from an "illegal power grabber"; instead,

the party is the "organisation of the land and the people of this country." "This party has grown through struggle against all odds and injustices. So the roots of this party are deep. They (BNP) cannot overthrow or suppress the Awami League like this," she added.

Sheikh Hasina further urged the people to create resistance against criminals, arsonists, killers and saboteurs of rail lines.

"These kinds of destructive activities must not continue in this country," Dhaka Tribune quoted her as saying. The Bangladesh PM said at a time when the country is advancing by overcoming the problems caused by the COVID pandemic and the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the BNP and its allies are engaged in "arson attacks, hartal and blockades to play with the fate of the people." — **ANI**

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Israel using ‘starvation as weapon of war’ in Gaza: Human Rights Watch

HRW claimed that Israeli forces were “deliberately blocking the delivery of water, food, and fuel while willfully impeding humanitarian assistance”



GAZA: International rights group Human Rights Watch (HRW) on Monday accused Israel of “using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare in the Gaza Strip, which is a war crime.”

HRW claimed that Israeli forces were “deliberately blocking the delivery of water, food, and fuel while willfully impeding humanitarian assistance.”

The human rights watchdog said that it was part of “a policy spurred on or endorsed by high-ranking Israeli officials and reflecting an intent to starve civilians as a method of warfare.”

There was no immediate comment from Israel on the HRW report, but Israel has denied targeting civilians throughout the war

with Hamas.

Israel declared a “complete siege” of Gaza shortly after the Hamas October 7 terror attacks. However, it has allowed aid to come into the Palestinian territory through the Rafah border crossing with Egypt.

The Cabinet has also approved the temporary reopening of Israel’s Kerem Shalom crossing for humanitarian aid.

The UN World Food Programme said last week that following a food assessment, around half of all Gazans “are starving.”

Aid agencies have been calling for a significant increase in humanitarian assistance, which the UN Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) said is necessary

to “help avoid a deepening of the already dire humanitarian situation.”

Growing domestic pressure to strike new hostage deal

DW’s correspondent in Jerusalem, Tania Krämer, has reported that mounting international pressure for a cease-fire does not appear to impact current Israeli policies or strategies.

“We heard again over the weekend Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu again reiterating that only maximum military pressure will yield any results, mainly a victory for Israel or what they say, eliminating Hamas, topple Hamas and also to release more hostages,” Krämer said.

At the same time, Krämer said,

the Israeli government was under increasing pressure to do more to free the hostages that are still being held by Hamas.

“What is also happening here in Israel is that there is more and more pressure on the Israeli government domestically to do more to make a new deal to release more hostages after three Israeli hostages were killed on Friday by the Israeli military in Gaza,” Krämer said.

On the question of Israel’s closest allies pushing to revive the idea of a two-state solution, Krämer said that while there were “a lot of ideas floating around,” there was “nothing really concrete.”

Krämer said that under Netanyahu’s right-wing government, the discussion of a two-state solution

“is very far away from the reality right now.”

WHO ‘appalled’ by destruction of north Gaza hospital

The head of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said another hospital in Gaza had been effectively destroyed, days after Israeli troops stormed the facility.

“[The WHO] is appalled by the effective destruction of Kamal Adwan Hospital in northern Gaza over the last several days, rendering it non-functional and resulting in the death of at least eight patients,” Tedros said on social media.

“Many health workers were reportedly detained, and WHO and partners are urgently seeking information on their status.”

WHO chief

The WHO chief also expressed concern about patients who were killed and patients who evacuated.

“We learned that many patients had to self-evacuate at great risk to their health and safety, with ambulances unable to reach the facility,” he said. “Of the deceased patients, several died due to lack of adequate health care, including a nine-year-old child.”

More broadly, Tedros said the loss of another hospital in Gaza would compound the existing humanitarian crisis. “Gaza’s health system was already on its knees, and the loss of another even minimally functioning hospital is a severe blow,” he said. —DW

AFTER SIX YEARS

Missing boy found in France

LONDON: Alex Batty, a British boy who was missing for six years after going on a holiday in Spain, was found in France and has returned safely to the UK, according to media report citing local police.

Alex Batty went on holiday in Spain with his mother, Melanie Batty and his grandfather in 2017. Now aged 17, he was found near the city of Toulouse in the French department of Haute-Garonne on Wednesday morning, CNN reported citing a spokesperson for regional authorities.

A British boy who was found in France after going missing for six years has landed safely back in the UK, according to local police.

“It gives me great pleasure to say Alex has now made his safe return back to the UK after six years,” Assistant Chief Constable Matt Boyle of Greater Manchester Police, told reporters on Saturday, CNN reported citing UK’s national news agency, Press Association.

Boyle further said that the teenager met with a family member and UK police officers in the Toulouse airport before beginning his much-belated flight home.

Batty is expected to be reunited with his grandmother, Susan Caruana, who lives in Oldham, Greater Manchester, and is the boy’s legal guardian, according to Press Association.

In a statement issued through police, Caruana said she “can’t wait” to see her grandson. —ANI

REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

School fights for survival with EU help

CHIȘINĂU: Decent living conditions, better-paid jobs, a normal health care system, clean cities, a well-functioning infrastructure: These are just some of the things that people in the Republic of Moldova would like, and the reason why many would prefer to live in a different country.

Corruption and poverty are fuelling people’s desire to leave. Those who can often opt for the European Union (EU), where they hope to find a better, more welcoming world. Those who are forced to stay are doing their best to make ends meet.

In the village of Drujba (which means friendship in Russian), not far from the border with Romania, a school is fighting for its survival. The village is relatively young; it was founded only 50 years ago, when Moldova was part of the Soviet Union. But there has been a steady population drain since the early 1990s after the fall of the communist regime, as people seek better lives elsewhere.

Appeal for help from embassies

The local high school was converted into a kindergarten and



elementary school of four classes in 1993.

There are currently only 29 pupils at the school, and thus a high risk that the establishment will be closed down. So, staff members are doing their best to prove that it can survive on minimal resources.

There are limited funds provided by the government for maintenance, and the school has not been able to attract any other project funding because of the small number of pupils. It was slated to be “optimised,” or closed, but before this happened, school director Angela Chitoraga contacted several embassies in the capital

Chisinau, some 100 kilometres (60 miles) away, and asked them for help.

And help came, including from Germany. “As part of the ‘New energy infrastructure for Drujba’ project, the German embassy gave us 400,000 lei [around €20,000/\$22,500] in financial support,” Chitoraga told DW.

This money was used to install a photovoltaic system. The heating system was also modernized, and the walls thermally insulated. The school is currently the only public institution in the whole district that runs on solar power.

“I’m so proud about this project.

Several educational establishments in the district called and asked me if it was true that we had a photovoltaic system. Nobody believed that such a small school could be saved,” said Chitoraga.

Before, the kindergarten and school were spending around 100,000 lei (about €5,000) on electricity, wood and coal each year. Since the solar-powered system was introduced, there has been a significant reduction of expenses. The energy generated is used to heat the school, kindergarten, and library, as well as to prepare meals.

When energy consumption is low, during the summer vacations, for example, the surplus production is fed into the electricity grid, which generates additional income for the establishment. The school has been able to employ additional staff with the money saved.

There are 35 children in the kindergarten, while the school has five children in year one, seven in year two, eight in year three and nine in year four. “It’s not the children’s fault that more and more families are leaving their village,” said Chitoraga. —DW



INDIAN SCHOOL BOUSHER
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Tel. No. +968 91401167, purchase@isboman.com, www.isboman.com

TENDER NOTICE
Ref: ISB/Tender/2023-24 dated 19/12/2023

Bids are invited from interested parties for the following tenders:

Sl. No.	Name of Tender	Tender No.	Tender Documents available from	Tender Submission Date	Tender Document Fee. (R.O.)
01	Group Medical Insurance for Staffs & Dependents	A0010/2023-24	19/12/2023	26/12/2023	10.000
02	Road Speed Breaker Installation at 6 locations near and around School	A0011/2023-24	19/12/2023	26/12/2023	10.000

Tender documents can be collected from ISB office, till a day before the last date of submission.
Enquiries and requests for clarifications regarding above Tenders shall be submitted through emails to PURCHASE@ISBOMAN.COM
Sealed tenders, inscribing the tender name and number only, on the envelope to be dropped in the tender box placed in ISB, on/before 01.00 PM of the tender submission last date, along with all necessary details and supporting documents. ISB reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reasons whatsoever.



INDIAN SCHOOL AL MAABELA
Post Box No 134, Postal Code 122, Al Maabela, Sultanate of Oman
GSM: +968-98007274 / 78904848

TENDER NOTICE

S.#	Description
1	MEDICAL INSURANCE FOR STAFF & DEPENDENTS

Competitive Tenders are invited from Medical Insurance Companies/ Insurance Brokers.
The collection of tender documents from School will commence from 19/12/2023 after a payment of non-refundable tender fee of R.O. 10/-
Last date of tender submission is on or before 27/12/2023 by 2:00pm.
The completed tender in all aspects should be dropped in the box kept in school office.
The above tender should be submitted in a sealed envelope indicating the tender reference and without showing any identity of the company on the envelope addressed to:
The Chairperson, Purchase Subcommittee, Indian School Al Maabela
The school reserves the right to reject any tender without providing any reason and does not bind itself to accept the lowest or any tender.

IN A DECADE

Iraq holds first provincial election

BAGHDAD: People in Iraq voted on Monday in the first provincial council elections since 2013.

The elections, wherein the Shiite Muslim alliance is likely to strengthen its power, are being held amid an ongoing boycott of populist cleric Moqtada al-Sadr, who is the alliance’s main political rival. Votes are being cast in 15 provinces of Iraq, leaving out three that are autonomous Kurdistan regions.

The elections are being held under beefed-up security as some 17 million people are eligible to cast their votes at a total of 7,166 polling stations set up across Iraq.

Polling began in Baghdad, Kirkuk and Basra at 7:00 a.m. local time (0400 GMT), as was broadcast by Iraqi state television. The polling will continue until 6:00 p.m. local time. More than 6,000 candidates are running in the elections for just 285 seats in the provincial councils.

The elections are seen as an opportunity to redeem democracy in Iraq and pave the way for parliamentary elections scheduled for 2025. They also present a test for Prime Minister Mohammed Shia al-Sudani’s government, which was established over a year ago.

The elections are likely to cement the hold of the ruling Coordination Framework coalition, an Iran-aligned bloc that includes Shiite parties with factions of Hashed al-Shaabi. —DW



Ministry of Defence
TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Defence invites MOD registered suppliers to participate in the following tender:

Subject	Tender Number	Last Date for Inquiries	Last Date To Submit The Tender	Tender Document Price
SUPPLY AND TAILORING SERVICES	35 /2023	25/01/2024	12/01/2024	1500 OMR

1. Tenders documents and terms may be obtained on payment from the office of the Secretary of the Tender Committee, gate No. 14 of MAM Camp between 0900 to 1300 hrs on the working days.
2. Payment of Tender documents to be made by using of any Visa Electron Cards or “Visa credit” Cards or through Smart Card issued from all the banks are operated in oman.

SPORTS

TO BE FINALISED LATER

IPL 2024 likely to be played from March 22 to May end

MUMBAI: IPL 2024 is likely to be played between March 22 and the end of May, with the final schedule to be announced once the polling dates for India's general elections have been finalised by the Election Commission, according to an *ESP*N_{cr}icinfo report on Monday.

On the eve of the 2024 auction, the IPL also notified franchises about the availability of players in the auction for next season.

Josh Hazlewood will be available only from the first week of May if he is bought at the auction. It is understood that he and his wife, Cherina Murphy Christian, are expecting their first child. He was released by Royal Challengers

Josh Hazlewood was released by Royal Challengers Bangalore (RCB) and entered the auction with a base price of US\$240,000 approx

ers Bangalore (RCB) and entered the auction with a base price of US\$240,000 approx.

All the other Australian players in the auction are expected to be available for the whole IPL season. With the Sheffield Shield final scheduled from March 21 to 25, Cricket Australia has left the choice to the individual players if they have to choose between playing the Shield final and the IPL.

England's Rehan Ahmed withdraws from auction

England are scheduled to host Pakistan for a T20I series between May 22 and 30 but the ECB has told the IPL that its players will

be available for the whole season "subject to fitness and international duty and any periods of unavailability that players submitted on their auction applications."

Harry Brook, Phil Salt, Chris Woakes and Adil Rashid are among some of the top England players who have entered the auction. Rehan Ahmed, the 19-year-old leg-spin all-rounder who listed his base price as US\$60,000 approx, has been withdrawn from the auction at short notice.

Sri Lanka Cricket has made all its key white-ball players available for the whole of IPL 2024. This includes Maheesh Theekshana and Matheesha Pathirana, who play for Chennai

Super Kings, and Wanindu Hasaranga and Dushmantha Chameera, who are in the auction after being released by RCB and Lucknow Super Giants respectively.

None of those four players will be part of Sri Lanka's Test squad, which is scheduled to play a two-Test series against Bangladesh until April 3. The other Test players who get bought at the auction will be available for the IPL after the series against Bangladesh.

Left-arm seamer Mustafizur Rahman has been permitted by the Bangladesh Cricket Board (BCB) to play IPL 2024 between March 22 and May 11 if he is bought at the auction. He was released by

Delhi Capitals and has listed his base price as US\$240,000 approx. Fast bowlers Taskin Ahmed and Shoriful Islam will not be available for the 2024 season because they are likely to play Bangladesh's home series against Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe in March and April.

Ireland left-arm fast bowler Josh Little will be available to Gujarat Titans for the whole of the 2024 season and will not play the one-off Test match against Bangladesh from March 22 to 26.

Afghanistan, New Zealand, South Africa, West Indies and Zimbabwe have made their players fully available for IPL 2024 if they are bought at the auction.

HOLDERS Man City to face Copenhagen, Inter drawn against Atletico Madrid

The draw of the last-16 round in the Champions League has thrown some interesting fixtures to look forward to in February-March



will qualify automatically for the knockout stage and those finishing in ninth to 24th will compete in a two-legged play-off to determine who reaches the last-16 of the competition.

Last-16 draw: Porto vs Arsenal, Napoli vs Barcelona, PSG vs Real Sociedad, Inter Milan vs Atletico Madrid, PSV Eindhoven vs Borussia Dortmund, Lazio vs Bayern Munich, Copenhagen vs Manchester City, RB Leipzig vs Real Madrid.

Europa League play-off draw

The Europa League knockout round play-off draw also took place on Monday. West Ham, Brighton, Rangers and Liverpool among the eight group winners automatically advancing to the last-16 stage, which will be played on March 7 and 14.

They will be joined by the winners of the play-offs, contested by eight runners-up from the Europa League group stage and eight third-placed teams from the Champions' League group stage.

These ties will be played on February 15 and 22.

Draw: Feyenoord vs Roma, Lens vs Freiburg, Benfica vs Toulouse, Galatasaray vs Sparta Prague, AC Milan vs Rennes, Young Boys vs Sporting Lisbon, Sporting Braga vs Qarabag, Shakhtar Donetsk vs Marseille.

NYON: The road to the 2024 Champions League final at the Wembley Stadium in London just became narrower with the 16 teams for the knockouts being drawn for in Nyon, Switzerland on Monday.

England's Manchester City, the defending champions, were drawn to face Danish champions FC Copenhagen.

Copenhagen, who finished above Manchester United in their group, reached the knockout stage for the first time since 2011.

Also 14-time champions Real Madrid of Spain were handed a tricky draw against Germany's RB Leipzig.

Among the eight ties, the most heavyweight was Inter Milan – runner-ups of the last season – being drawn against Atletico Madrid.

The other ties in the round will be Arsenal facing Porto, Borussia Dortmund against PSV Eindhoven, Napoli taking on Barcelona, Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) pitted against Real Sociedad and Lazio locking horns with Bayern Munich.

Premier League leaders Arsenal, who topped Group B but have

never won the Champion League, beat Porto 5-0 at Emirates Stadium the last time they met in 2010.

Runners-up in Portugal's Primeira Liga last season, Porto won four of their six Group H games to finish level on points with Group H winners Barcelona.

Arsenal have won all three previous encounters against Porto, although they have never won at the Estadio do Dragao.

City and Arsenal are seeded, meaning they will play the second

leg at home. City won Group G with a 100 percent record, while Copenhagen, who lost 1-0 at United before beating them 4-3 at home, were runners-up to Bayern in Group A.

City have progressed from the last 16 in the past six seasons. City played Copenhagen in the group stage last season, drawing 0-0 in Denmark but winning handsomely 5-0 at home.

The first legs take place on February 13-14 or 20-21 and the

second on March 5-6 or 12-13.

The final takes place at Wembley on 1 June.

This group stage will be the last of its kind, with UEFA introducing a new format styled on the so-called 'Swiss model' from next season. That will see one big group replace the existing format of eight groups of four. Each team will play eight group matches (up from six), with half at home and half away. The top eight sides in the expanded 36-team league (up from 32)

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SCAN TO CHAT

SCAN TO KNOW MORE

MGM WINTER SALES FEST

Muscat Grand Mall (MGM) announced the forthcoming launch of its highly anticipated Winter Sales Festival, set to be the premier destination for exceptional discounts on esteemed international brands.

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



WWW.TIMESOFOMAN.COM
TUESDAY, DECEMBER 19, 2023



KENYA, EU TRADE DEAL

Kenya and the European Union have officially signed a trade agreement that will allow the East African nation to export goods duty free to the EU market.

Campaign launched to promote national products in local market

The ‘Made in Oman’ campaign also seeks to increase integration between industrial establishments and small to medium-sized enterprises and establish communication channels between producers and consumers

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP) has launched the ‘Made in Oman’ campaign in collaboration with the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and the Joint Committee for External Exhibitions of Omani Products (OPEX). The campaign aims to introduce and promote national products in the local market, highlight the new national product identity, encourage industrial establishments to obtain a licence for the national product and enhance local consumer confidence in national products as the primary choice. The campaign also emphasises the importance of quality and competitiveness of the local prod-



ucts and shapes a representative image of the diversity of the Omani industry. The campaign also seeks to increase integration between industrial establishments and small to medium-sized enterprises, foster partnerships among them, enhance consumer loyalty to local products, and establish communication channels between producers and consumers. Shoppers have pointed out that buying Omani products contributes to boosting sales and production operations in national factories, thereby increasing the size and diversity of the Omani industry. Consequently, this contributes to the growth of its share in the overall gross domestic product (GDP) and economic diversification. Ahmed bin Abdullah bin Salem Al Waeli also pointed out that, in his opinion, the one-month duration of the campaign is insufficient to promote awareness and shift towards supporting national products. “Continuous and repetitive campaigns are necessary for achieving better long-term results. Relevant authorities can implement effective promotional campaigns, increasing their impact on

the target audience,” he said. “This may include diverse media strategies such as television and radio advertisements, newspapers, social media marketing, and public advertising campaigns. These steps can contribute to building and enhancing awareness of national products, as well as motivating and changing consumer behaviour,” he further added. Elham bint Bader Al Balushi said, “Choosing Omani products contribute to the sustainability and improvement of the competitiveness of our local products. This, in turn, enhances the operational efficiency of Omani factories and companies.” “Consumers always seek the best, and Omani products are distinguished by their quality. The efforts of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, along with other relevant authorities, in monitoring Omani industries, especially in the food sector, reaffirm to us as consumers the inclination to purchase local products. Moreover, in my opinion, the prices of local products are considered affordable,” she further added. Elham said, “In recent years, our markets have witnessed various



corners dedicated to Omani products. While they used to be limited to specific places, today, the ‘Made in Oman’ label is found everywhere, even competing with various products within local markets and major stores. What caught my attention was the variety of offerings related to local products. This encourages significant interest from various segments of society, indicating the increased awareness of consumers in the Sultanate of Oman. This, in turn, reflects on individuals, families, and the community due to the high quality and competitiveness of many brands available in our markets from outside the Sultanate of Oman.” “Consequently, this signifies the substantial support provided to the national economy in general. In my personal perspective, acquiring Omani products for my home brings me more assurance regarding their raw materials and the preparation methods, aligning with the specifications of Omani food industries,” she added. Suad bint Nasser al Nabhani emphasised the significance of the ‘Made in Oman’ campaign as a pivotal initiative supporting Omani products. She highlighted its role in guiding consumers towards choosing a diverse range of Omani products, particularly in the realm of food items. Expressing her optimism, she expressed the hope for the implementation of numerous



campaigns dedicated to Omani products throughout the year, both domestically and internationally. According to her, these efforts will not only reinforce consumer preferences for Omani products but also attract new consumer segments on both regional and global scales. Additionally, she anticipates that such initiatives will draw increased investments and contribute significantly to supporting the national economy. Suad said, “There are several aspects to consider in promoting Omani products, such as organising exhibitions that showcase the quality, market coverage, and market needs. Developing appropriate marketing and promotional strategies, and building strong relationships with customers and partners are crucial elements. Omani products must stand out for their high quality and excellence. Emphasis should be placed on maintaining high-quality standards in the manufacturing and production processes, ensuring the quality of raw materials to enhance the reputation of Omani products.” She highlighted the need for the development of effective marketing and promotional strategies, advocating for a comprehensive marketing plan targeting the intended audience. Such a plan should enhance the value proposition of Omani products. Leveraging social media, advertisements,



and promotional offers can effectively introduce and raise awareness of Omani products. Forming partnerships with local retailers, and participating in relevant exhibitions and events, are essential steps in promoting Omani products. Ultimately, these strategies can lead to the success of promoting Omani industries across various segments of society. Mohammed bin Nasser Al Hadidi said, “The ‘Made in Oman’ campaign plays a crucial role in highlighting local products. It serves to educate and encourage citizens and residents on the land of the Sultanate of Oman to choose Omani products, underscoring the inherent quality that fills us with pride in our national industries.” He added, “Moreover, the campaign actively promotes local industrial establishments and companies by showcasing their products. It encourages diverse entrepreneurs, and small and medium-sized enterprises to invest in this sector. Additionally, the campaign plays a crucial role in effectively communicating information to consumers. “He expresses his hope that both government and private entities involved in this domain intensify promotional and informative campaigns for Omani products across various industries.” The ‘Made in Oman’ campaign extends its activities until December 31, 2023.

JAPANESE AUTOMAKER



Nissan to export China-developed EVs to global markets

BEIJING: Nissan Motor (7201.T) said it would sell China-developed electric vehicles (EVs) globally as it struck a deal with the country’s top university to leverage local resources to accelerate research and development on electrification. The Japanese automaker is considering exporting the line-up of existing internal combustion engine vehicles and upcoming pure electric and plug-in hybrid cars manufactured and developed in China to overseas markets, Masashi Matsuyama, vice president of Nissan Motor and president of Nissan China, told reporters in Beijing, Reuters reported. Nissan is considering aiming at the same markets as Chinese rivals such as BYD, he said. The company is joining foreign brands including Tesla (TSLA.O), BMW (BMWG.DE) and Ford (F.N) that are expanding their exports of China-made cars to exploit the country’s lower manufacturing costs and increase the capacity utilisation of their factories. China accounted for just over a fifth of Nissan’s worldwide sales

of about 2.8 million vehicles over the first 10 months of the year, down from over a third for the same period last year. Japanese automakers have faced a severe sales challenge this year in China, the world’s biggest auto market, due to the popularity of domestic brands and heavy price competition amid a rapid shift to EVs. Nissan announced it would establish a joint research centre with China’s leading Tsinghua University next year, focusing on research and development of EVs, including charging infrastructure and battery recycling. “We hope that this collaboration will help us gain a deeper understanding of the Chinese market and develop strategies that better meet the needs of customers in China,” Nissan President and Chief Executive Makoto Uchida said in a statement. The launch of the research centre is an extension of joint research efforts the company has had with Tsinghua since in 2016 that focussed on intelligent mobility and autonomous driving technology. -BNA

ASIAN DEVELOPMENT OUTLOOK

India’s economic growth surges ahead defying global challenges



NEW DELHI: In a display of resilience and economic fortitude, India is charting a path of accelerated growth, outpacing global uncertainties. According to Asian Development Outlook, recent data reveals that India’s GDP expanded at a robust rate of 7.1 per cent in the first three quarters of the calendar year, propelled by strong industrial production and substantial investment. India’s industrial sector, including manufacturing, mining, construction, and utilities, experienced double-digit growth, contributing significantly to the overall economic expansion. The data for the second quarter of the fiscal year 2023 demonstrated a noteworthy GDP growth of 7.6 per cent, underscoring the nation’s economic vigour. One of the key drivers behind India’s impressive economic performance is the increased fixed investment, propelled by heightened

capital spending by both the central and state governments. This surge in capital expenditure compensates for relatively lower growth in private consumption expenditure and weaker-than-expected exports. While challenges persist, including the economic slowdown in major export markets and power shortages, India’s economic landscape presents positive indicators. The industrial sector’s robust growth, coupled with government-driven investments, has created a favourable environment for sustained economic expansion. India’s inflation forecasts for the current fiscal year and the upcoming fiscal year remain within expectations. Efforts to reduce inflation, including contractionary monetary policies and market-based exchange rate measures, are contributing to easing inflationary pressures. The recent data aligns with the

projections, maintaining a balance between inflation control and economic growth. India’s economic surge significantly contributes to the revised growth forecast for South Asia, which is now projected at 5.7 per cent for 2023. The region’s growth trajectory, led by India, showcases the resilience of economies despite global challenges. While some economies face uncertainties, India’s growth story serves as a beacon of hope for the broader subcontinent. India’s economic momentum signals a positive trajectory amid a complex global economic landscape. The government’s strategic initiatives and a robust industrial sector have positioned the nation as a key driver of growth in South Asia. As India navigates the evolving economic landscape, sustained efforts and prudent policies will be crucial to ensuring the nation’s continued economic vibrancy. -ANI

MILESTONE



DP World to relocate its global head office to Expo City Dubai

DUBAI: DP World has announced plans to relocate its global head office to Expo City Dubai, marking the latest milestone in the company’s 50-year journey, as it continues to expand its global supply chain solutions. The move to Expo City is part of the company’s journey from a local port operator in 1972 to a truly global supply chain solutions provider, transforming how the world trades. DP World has been based in Jebel Ali, at the heart of its port and free zone operations since it was established under its current name in September 2005. Announcing the plan, Sultan Ahmed bin Sulayem, Group Chairman and CEO of DP World, said, “DP World’s relocation to Expo City Dubai is a not an isolated project; it is one of many within our overall transformation to become the leading global provider of end-to-end supply chain solutions. Moving to Expo City puts us at the heart of Dubai’s future, while also signifies our commitment to innovation, sustainability, and making trade flow for our global customers. DP World’s new head office, which is nine storeys and boasts 37,300 square metres of space will accommodate approximately 800 dedicated staff. -WAM

MARKET

Kenya, EU officially sign trade agreement

The European Union Council approved the trade agreement last week, but it still needs to be ratified by both Kenya's parliament and the European Parliament before it comes into force

NAIROBI: "Today's agreement heralds a new dawn where Kenyan goods gain immediate duty- and quota-free access to the European market," Kenyan Trade Minister Rebecca Miano said before signing the trade deal at a ceremony in Kenya's capital, Nairobi, on Monday.

"Over time, European goods will also gain preferential access to the Kenyan market," she added.

The European Union Council approved the trade agreement last week, but it still needs to be ratified by both Kenya's parliament and the European Parliament before it comes into force.

"The core of this arrangement is to put real money into the pockets of ordinary people," said Kenyan President William Ruto at the signing ceremony.

EU chief Ursula von der Leyen, who was also in attendance, called the partnership a "win-win situation on both sides."

The pact comes as Brussels seeks stronger economic relations with Africa to counter China's influence, while promoting development commitments between the EU and Kenya in areas including environmental protection and labor rights.

Duty-free and quota-free exports

The EU-Kenya Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which was finalised in June 2023, guarantees duty-free and quota-free access for goods originating in Kenya to the 27-member bloc, excluding weapons. The EU is Kenya's most important export market and second-biggest trading partner.

In 2022, Kenya exported €1.2 billion (\$1.31 billion) of mainly agricultural products to the EU, including tea, coffee, cut flowers, peas and beans. More than two-



thirds, or 70%, of Kenya's total flower production is sold in the European market. As for Kenya, East Africa's largest economy will gradually and partially open its market to European goods, with the agreement seeing tariffs reduced over a 25-year period. Currently, Kenya mainly imports machinery as well as mineral and chemical products from the EU.

Kenya will be able to protect some so-called "sensitive products," either by excluding them from tariff cuts or by triggering safeguards in case of a sudden increase in imports from the EU.

The agreement comes as trade between the EU and Kenya is growing, increasing by 27% from 2018 to 2022. The EPA is the latest broad trade deal between the EU and an African nation since the EU signed a similar agreement with Ghana in 2016.

What does the EPA mean for Kenya?

"It's a good time to have a deal that may help diversify Kenya's traded products and trading partners within the EU," said Sherrilyn Raga, a research fellow at the Overseas Development Institute, a global think tank.

The Netherlands, Germany and France are currently the leading destinations for EU imports.

The world has experienced multiple economic shocks from the COVID-19 pandemic and the fall-out from Russia's war in Ukraine to climate change. "When your trade structure is very concentrated to a limited number of partners or a limited number of products, then you're very vulnerable to sharp global price movements," said Raga, a macroeconomics and trade specialist, adding that because of this, "trade diversification is one way to increase Kenya's resilience against shocks."

For Kenya's exports to the EU,

however, the deal won't change that much in the short term. Kenya already enjoys duty- and quota-free trade with the EU under a temporary special arrangement, which was put in place in 2014 after an agreement that the EU negotiated with the East African Community (EAC) stalled.

What the latest trade agreement does, first and foremost, is formally lock in Kenya's market access to the European Union, thereby "reducing uncertainty," said economist Frederik Stender, who works on trade policy and regional economic integration issues at the German Institute of Development and Sustainability.

This, in turn, could attract EU investment and financing in the medium to long term.

Notably, the EU trade agreement isn't just about trade. It also contains "a development perspective" for Kenya, Stender said. Kenya has agreed to enforce binding commitments related to environmental protection, climate action, fighting gender inequality and strengthening labour rights.

The agreement also includes trade-related development assistance to tackle some factors limiting Kenya's exports, such as lack of productive capacities, infrastructure, human capital and capacities to comply with EU standards, Stender said.

Such elements will hopefully help Kenyan exporters overcome some of the difficulties they face in trading with the EU, and could eventually help Kenya integrate better into EU value chains.

A 2021 study of Kenya's export possibilities co-authored by Raga found that most of the barriers to entering the EU market are complying with the EU's labelling requirements, measures needed to control plant diseases and protect plant health, known as phytosanitary control, and rules of origin.

Why did Kenya make the EU deal without the East African Community?

In 2014, East African Community members Kenya, Rwanda, Burundi, Tanzania and Uganda negotiated an Economic Partnership Agreement with the European Union. But only Kenya went on to ratify the deal. Without the signatures of the other EAC members, which now include the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, the EU-EAC free-trade agreement couldn't come into effect.

The other EAC members felt less pressure to ratify the joint agreement because they already enjoy quota-free access to the EU as designated least developed countries. But as a lower middle-income economy, Kenya does not enjoy that provision.

What about Kenya's other trade deals?

The slow progress of regional integration in Africa is probably a reason Kenya has negotiated the EU trade deal and is looking to close others.

The African Continental Free Trade Area entered into force in 2019, and its operational phase began in 2021, but so far only a number of countries, including Kenya, have provisionally started to trade selected goods on a pilot basis.

Against this background, Kenya is seemingly looking for closer integration with other partners outside of Africa. Kenya signed a similar trade deal with the United Kingdom in December 2020, when Britain exited the EU.

The East African nation is also negotiating a trade deal with the United States, which could be signed next year.

Kenya qualifies for duty-free access to the US market until 2025 under the African Growth and Opportunity Act. **DW**

UNPARALLELED SHOPPING EXPERIENCE

Muscat Grand Mall unveils largest Winter Sales Festival featuring international brands

MUSCAT: Muscat Grand Mall announced the forthcoming launch of its highly anticipated Winter Sales Festival, set to be the premier destination for exceptional discounts on esteemed international brands.

Commencing from December 21 and continuing until December 26, the festival promises an unparalleled shopping experience coupled with daily family entertainment, enriching the festive period for our esteemed patrons.

Under the guidance of Hakan Altin, CEO of Tilal Development company (Muscat Grand Mall), this seasonal extravaganza aligns seamlessly with the forthcoming holiday season and the culmination of the year. Participating stores are poised to offer discounts of up to 50% on a diverse array of acclaimed brands and outlets, including Sharaf DG Electronics, Play and Learn, Kushour Gallery, Riva Clothes, Riva Kids, Choice, The Toy Store, Family Outlet, Al Maha Gallery, among several other renowned names.

Altin emphasised that this year's Winter Sales Festival will feature daily entertainment segments catering to families, el-



evating the shopping experience with enchanting performances by magicians, bubble shows, clowns, and an array of engaging activities. These additions aim to infuse an element of joy and amusement into the shopping experience.

The festival timings, from 4pm to 10pm on weekdays and from 1pm to 10pm on weekends, have been meticulously scheduled to accommodate and optimise the experience for our valued clientele.

Join us at Muscat Grand Mall as we usher in a season of unparalleled shopping opportunities and family-oriented festivities at the W.

ANNUAL INVESTMENT MEETING

AIM Congress 2024 concludes its promotional tour in China

ABU DHABI: The organising committee of the Annual Investment Meeting (AIM) Congress concluded its promotional tour in China as part of a major promotional and marketing campaign for its 13th edition. The goal is to enhance the flourishing economic partnership between the United Arab Emirates and the People's Republic of China.

AIM Congress, held under the theme "Adapting to a Shifting Investment Landscape: Harnessing New Potentials for Global Economic Development", is organised with the support of the UAE Ministry of Industry and Advanced Technology and with the Abu Dhabi Department of Economic Development (ADDED) as lead partner. The summit is scheduled to take place from May 7 to 9 next year.

The promotional campaign kicked off through the summit's representative offices in several

European and Asian countries, participating in various global, regional, and local investment exhibitions and events. It also utilised social media platforms and traditional/electronic media to target participants and interested visitors from different continents.

The campaign aims to promote the AIM Congress, a globally leading "Annual Investment Forum" bringing together elite leaders and decision-makers worldwide to discuss, exchange experiences, and share opinions on addressing investment challenges. The goal is to reshape the global trade and investment landscape towards a prosperous and sustainable global economy.

Dawood Al Shezawi, President of the AIM Congress and the AIM Global Foundation, emphasised the vital role the summit plays in facilitating communication among global leaders and key stakeholders in the investment field. **WAM**

PREVENTION OF AVOIDABLE E-WASTE

Will Apple's India production get tangled in charger rules?

NEW DELHI: India is set to require that new smartphones, wearables and tablets feature universal charging ports by June 2025, in a move aimed at benefiting consumers and cutting down massive amounts of electronic waste.

The streamlined charging port rule follows the example of the European Union, which in June 2022 gave Apple until autumn 2024 to make changes to its charging ports.

According to a recent report on electronic waste management in India by Assocham, a nongovernmental trade organisation, India is estimated to have generated 5 million tons of e-waste in 2021, ranking behind only China and the US.

Rajan Vasa, the chairman of the RV group, an electronics industry consultancy, told DW that adopting a uniform charging port would serve the interests of consumer welfare and the prevention of avoidable e-waste.

"A shift towards universal chargers would bring down the cost of chargers" and reduce product packaging, he said.

Apple lobbying for delay

However, Apple has informed the Indian government about potential disruptions to its local production targets if New Delhi proceeds with adopting the mandate



for universal charging ports on existing iPhone models, according to a report by Reuters.

The report said Apple was actively lobbying for an exemption or a delay in the implementation of the rule and had asked Indian officials to exempt existing iPhone models, warning it would otherwise struggle to meet production targets.

"There is still consultation going on the issue of mandating universal charging ports for all smartphones in the country. We have sought views from all stakeholders, and Apple has raised concerns ... We will investigate the matter," said India's minister of state for electronics and information technology, Rajeev Chandrasekhar, in a recent interview with Indian media.

Most manufacturers, including Samsung, have agreed to comply with the rule.

Pranav Pandya, the chairman of the GESIA IT Association, an information technology interest group, told DW that if an exemption was not granted, Apple had "indicated that there may be a need for an additional 18 months" to meet production goals.

"The company has emphasized the importance of a natural transition period to align with product design timelines," he said.

"India is important for Apple and vice versa," Pandya added. "We are of the opinion that both sides will find a win-win resolution," he said.

Apple's production plans in India

Industry insiders say that India is at the centre of Apple's plans to diversify production away from China. Within the next three years, the tech giant reportedly aims to start assembling more

than 50 million iPhones annually in India.

India is the second-biggest mobile phone-producing country in the world after China, expanding by more than 20% in this regard between 2014 and 2022, according to a report by technology market research firm Counterpoint.

Shipments of domestically manufactured mobile phones exceeded 2 billion during this time, the report added. Mobile phones manufactured in India had a market share of 19 % in 2014 and saw a jump to 98 % in 2022.

The India Cellular and Electronics Association (ICEA), an electronics industry body, said the sector was "completely aligned" with the government in implementing a uniform charging port regulation in India to reduce e-waste and promote ease of living for consumers. "The mobile phone industry has already adopted the Type-C USB port for charging and 100% of the new models launched and sold in India are with Type-C," Pankaj Mohindroo, the chairman of ICEA told DW.

Most Android smartphones already come with a USB Type-C port, with only a handful requiring a micro-USB now.

Older model Apple iPhones still feature the company's proprietary lightning port, which is only compatible with Apple devices. **DW**

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WHY YOU SHOULD PUT TAMARIND ON THE MENU IN 2024

Tamarind, a spice native to Africa, India and the Middle East, has lent its acidic, tangy-sweet flavor to Latin, Caribbean and Mexican cuisines for centuries. Today, this plump, pod-like fruit is jet-setting across the world, feeding a global curiosity for what's next in food, drink and flavor.

That's according to the 24th edition of McCormick's Flavor Forecast, an annual report illuminating the latest culinary trends shaping the way people prepare and enjoy food worldwide. Every year, over four dozen global chefs, culinary professionals, trend trackers, food technologists and team members tap into their expertise and passion to uncover stand-out predictions and trends, and with this year's report, they've identified tamarind as the flavor to watch out for.



"We're thrilled to encourage people to experience the versatility and tang of tamarind. It's truly the perfect ingredient that can be incorporated into both savory and sweet dishes," says Hadar Cohen Aviram, executive chef, U.S. Consumer at McCormick.

Whether you're a home chef or foodie, McCormick is dishing up inspiration for incorporating tamarind into your life, both at home and when dining out with its new Tamarind & Pasilla Chile Seasoning, and by collaborating with Black Tap Craft Burgers & Beer on limited-edition, tamarind-infused menu items. McCormick is also sharing a recipe for Tamarind Lemon Pepper Lemonade. All grown up and ready to party, this punchy twist on classic lemonade is refreshingly different. Garnish with ground black pepper on the rim for a subtle finishing bite.

Prep Time: 10 minutes

Cook Time: 5 minutes

INGREDIENTS:

Lemon Pepper Syrup:

- 1 cup sugar
- 1 cup water
- 1/4 cup McCormick Coarse Ground Black Pepper, ground with mortar and pestle
- 1 teaspoon McCormick Pure Lemon Extract

Lemon Pepper Sugar:

- 1/4 cup sugar
- 1 tablespoon McCormick Coarse Ground Black Pepper
- 1 lemon, zest only

Tamarind Lemonade:

- 6 cups water
- 3/4 cup fresh lemon juice
- 6 teaspoons tamarind paste

Instructions:

1. For the Lemon Pepper Syrup, mix sugar, water and black pepper in a medium saucepan. Bring to a boil on high heat, stirring occasionally until sugar is dissolved. Remove from heat; let steep for 15 minutes. Strain through a very fine mesh sieve. Stir in lemon extract; cover and refrigerate until ready to serve.
2. For the Lemon Pepper Sugar, mix sugar, black pepper and lemon zest until no lumps remain. Store in an airtight container until ready to serve.
3. Place 1 tablespoon of the Syrup in shallow bowl. Dip rims of 6 (10-ounce) glasses into Syrup, then dip in Lemon Pepper Sugar to coat. Fill glasses halfway with ice; set aside.
4. To prepare Lemonade, whisk water, remaining Syrup, lemon juice and tamarind concentrate in a large pitcher until well blended. Pour into prepared glasses. Refrigerate until chilled or serve immediately. Garnish with fresh lemon wedges, if desired.

Need additional 2024 culinary inspiration? The report also identified these trends:

- Sour Power: From tamarind to coconut vinegar, acidic agents are revolutionizing menus to open senses, boost crave-ability and even "cook" without heat.
 - Thoughtfully Borrowed: A reinvention of regional-traditional cuisine is paying homage and respect to chefs' roots with inspiring ingredients and techniques.
 - Indulgence Redefined: Today, indulgence is all about emotions and memories. Two ways this trend comes to life are through "newstalgia," with brands and restaurants reintroducing childhood favorites with gourmet twists, and "food maximalism," layering flavors to create a feast for the senses and ultra-customize preferences.
- "There is no shortage of trends to uncover, which allows us to continue to shake up the way people cook and eat," said Cohen Aviram. -StatePoint

SPORTS

Man United hold Liverpool to help Arsenal regain lead

Gunners down
Brighton to stay
unbeaten in their
last 13 home games

LONDON: Liverpool were held to a goalless draw by Manchester United at home in the English Premier League on Sunday, despite peppering the goal of their under-pressure visitors for almost 90 minutes.

Liverpool had 34 shots, compared with just six from United, but were unable to beat the much-criticised Andre Onana in the visitors' goal, and the point will help United coach Erik ten Hag, whose side suffered a painful exit from Europe during the week.

Liverpool's draw allowed Arsenal to leapfrog them and return to the top of the Premier League after they beat Brighton 2-0 with goals from Gabriel Jesus, who netted a cushioned header in the 53rd minute, and Kai Havertz, who sealed the win with a smart finish late on after a smart team move.



Arsenal are now unbeaten in their last 13 home games.

Visiting Aston Villa came back from a goal down to beat Brentford 2-1. Former Hull City forward Keane Lewis-Potter opened

the scoring for Brentford on the stroke of half-time, but after Ben Mee was sent off, Alex Moreno leveled for Villa with 13 minutes to play.

Ollie Watkins put Villa ahead in

the 85th minute, before the visitors' Boubacar Kamara was also shown a red card in a frantic finish to the game.

West Ham United enjoyed a comfortable 3-0 win at home to

Wolves with two first-half goals from Mohammed Kudus, both of which came from assists from Lucas Paqueta, who also set up Jarrod Bowen for a 74th-minute third.

The main drama this weekend took place on Saturday when the match between Bournemouth and Luton was suspended half-way through the second half with the score at 1-1, after Luton defender and captain Tom Lockyer collapsed after suffering a cardiac arrest.

Lockyer received attention from paramedics on the pitch and was taken to hospital where he is reported to be in a stable condition.

Manchester City surrendered a 2-0 lead to draw 2-2 at home to Crystal Palace. Goals from Jack Grealish and Rico Lewis had put City in control, but Jean-Philippe Mateta gave Palace hope when he slid home with 15 minutes left to play, and Michael Olise kept his calm to make it 2-2 from the penalty spot in the 95th minute after a rash Phil Foden challenge.

Second-half goals from Cole Palmer and Nicolas Jackson gave Chelsea a relatively comfortable win at home to Sheffield United after the bottom side had defended well before the break.

Newcastle United prevailed 3-0 at home to Fulham with second half strikes from Lewis Miley, Miguel Almiron and Dan Burn, after Fulham striker Raul Jimenez was sent off midway through the first half. - xinhua

ITALIAN SERIE A

Dominant Inter conquer Lazio



ROME: Inter Milan continued their fearsome form as they registered a 2-0 away victory over Lazio in Serie A on Sunday, thanks to strikes from Lautaro Martinez and Marcus Thuram.

After a run of plays, Inter broke the deadlock in the 40th minute when their high press forced Adam Marusic into a wayward pass which was intercepted by Lautaro, who rounded goalkeeper Ivan Provedel and placed it into the net.

Nicolo Rovella had the chance to equalize but his strike was saved by Yann Sommer.

The home side doubled the lead in the 66th minute when Nicolo Barella assisted for Thuram to seal the win.

With the comfortable victory, Inter went four points clear of second-placed Juventus who were held by Genoa 1-1 on Friday.

Also on Sunday, AC Milan built on their midweek Champions League victory over Newcastle by crushing Monza 3-0 at San Siro.

The Rossoneri went ahead af-

ter just three minutes, as Tijjani Reijnders' mazy run allowed him to penetrate the box before slotting into the net.

The home side were dealt a blow in the 24th minute when Tommaso Pobega limped off with injury, making way for starlet Jan Carlo Simic to make his debut. The 18-year-old jumped at the chance in the 41st minute when Rafael Leao rolled across from the right for him to slide it in.

AC Milan sealed the win in the 76th minute through a counter-attack when Reijnders won the ball in the final third and passed to Olivier Giroud who flicked it to fellow substitute Noah Okafor to finish with a strike.

In a head-to-head battle for fourth place, Bologna beat Roma 2-0, with Nikola Moro's strike adding to Rasmus Kristensen's own goal. Elsewhere, Fiorentina edged past Hellas Verona 1-0, while Domenico Berardi's brace of penalties helped Sassuolo come from 2-0 down to draw 2-2 with Udinese. - xinhua

SPANISH LA LIGA

Real Madrid rout Villarreal, climb back to summit

MADRID: Real Madrid enjoyed a comfortable 4-1 win at home to Villarreal to return to the top of La Liga on Sunday, but risk losing defender David Alaba for an extended period after he was carried off in the first half with what appeared a serious knee injury.

Madrid took advantage of the fact that Girona don't play Alaves until Monday, with Jude Bellingham putting them ahead in the 24th minute with a header from a Luka Modric cross.

Rodrygo then doubled their lead from close range following a corner, with a goal initially chalked off for offside but reinstated after a VAR check.

As well as Alaba's injury, Villarreal also lost two players, with Gerard Moreno limping off after a collision with Alaba, and Alex Baena injured after a challenge from Lucas Vazquez. Jose Luis Morales pulled a goal back for Villarreal 10 minutes after the break, finding space between Nacho Fernandez, who had replaced Alaba, and Antonio Rudiger.

Brahim Diaz quickly re-established Madrid's two-goal lead with an individual effort that saw him beat three defenders before scoring with a low shot.

Luka Modric added a fourth after Rodrygo latched onto a dreadful Etienne Capoue backpass to set him up in the penalty area.

Real Sociedad and Real Betis drew 0-0 in a very even game which either side could have won.

On Saturday, Barcelona were held to a 1-1 draw away to Valencia with another disappointing performance.

Joao Felix put Barca ahead in the 55th minute after a brilliant pass from Frenkie de Jong allowed Raphinha to set him up, but Hugo Guillamon leveled for Valencia



with an excellent curling shot, and Valencia keeper Giorgi Mamardashvili also made several acrobatic saves to keep the scores level.

Athletic Bilbao celebrated their 125th anniversary with a brilliant 2-0 win at home to Atletico Madrid thanks to second-half goals from Gorka Guruzeta and Nico Williams, who curled a delicious shot past Jan Oblak.

The scoreline does not tell the whole story, as Nico and Inaki Williams both hit the post, while Oihan Sancet missed a penalty and Oblak made several vital stops to keep the score down as Atletico were completely outplayed.

Sevilla sacked coach Diego Alonso almost directly after the final whistle of their disastrous 3-0 defeat at home to Getafe.

Penalties from Borja Mayoral and Mason Greenwood and a 37th-minute shot from Jaime Mata gave Getafe three easy points against a Sevilla side that failed to win in eight league and four European games with Alonso in charge.

Jorgen Strand Larsen's back-heeled goal in the 19th minute gave third-from-bottom Celta Vigo a vital 1-0 win at home to second-from-bottom Granada and possibly saved Rafa Benitez's job as coach.

The bad news for Celta was the red card shown to Iago Aspas for a cynical challenge from behind with 11 minutes left to play.

Cadiz's point in a 1-1 draw away to Las Palmas means Celta remain in the bottom three, but level on points with Sevilla. Pejino put Las Palmas in front with a powerful stop after seven minutes, but Chris Ramos saved a deserved point for Cadiz with an 83rd-minute header, although they remain without a win since September 1.

Almeria remain bottom of the table and winless, but did at least pick up their fifth point of the season after a painful 0-0 draw at home to Mallorca in a game where the visitors had 20 shots, but only managed to get two on target.

Raul Garcia's 95th-minute header allowed Osasuna to end a run of six games without a win with a 1-0 win at home to Rayo Vallecano on Friday. - xinhua

FRENCH LIGUE 1



Lille halt PSG's winning run

PARIS: Lille equalised five minutes into stoppage time to deny leaders Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) a ninth successive Ligue 1 win on Sunday. Kylian Mbappe converted a penalty as PSG looked to be heading seven points clear at the top.

But substitute Jonathan David headed in from close range after goalkeeper Arnau Tenas blocked Adam Ounas' effort.

PSG are on 37 points as they chase a 10th French title in 12 seasons, with second-placed Nice five points back. Monaco sit third with 30 points.

Despite Sunday evening's disappointment, Luis Enrique's PSG ended the weekend in a stronger position than they began it. Monaco were beaten 1-0 by Lyon on Friday before Nice fell to a 3-1 loss at Le Havre on Saturday.

Mbappe scored his 16th league goal of the season in his 16th appearance after Bafode Diakite fouled Lucas Hernandez. Yusuf Yazici almost grabbed an equaliser for Lille, but his low shot was well blocked by PSG's Marquinhos.

Substitute Tiago Santos also had a chance for the hosts, but his deflected effort looped up and ended up on the roof of the net as PSG tried to hold on.

It was David, with fresh legs after coming on in the 81st minute, who salvaged a draw for the home side. - Agencies

NEW FORMAT

US to host FIFA Club World Cup in 2025

GENEVA: FIFA on Sunday announced the schedule and detailed information of the revised FIFA Club World Cup, whose first edition will take place in the United States in 2025.

The FIFA Council met on Sunday at Jeddah, Saudi Arabia ahead of the 2023 FIFA Club World Cup semifinals, to make several key principles of the new 32-team event, which will be held from June 15 to July 13, 2025.

The new structure sees the tournament take place only once every four years. Clubs qualify with new

standard rankings, which award three points for a win and one point for a draw as usual, as well as three points for progress to each stage of the continental competitions of five confederations, except Europe. For European clubs, a win counts two points and four points for qualification in the group stage of the UEFA Champions League.

The 2025 event will feature 12 teams from Europe, six from South America, four each from Asia, Africa and North & Central America, one from Oceania and one team from the host nation. - xinhua

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

Leverkusen open up four-point lead

BERLIN: Unbeaten Bayer Leverkusen consolidated their leading position in German Bundesliga with 39 points, 12 wins and three draws, after easing past Eintracht Frankfurt 3-0 on Sunday.

Victor Boniface marked the opener and provided two assists for the home victory.

With the result, Leverkusen open up a four-point advantage and are guaranteed to be top of the table at Christmas, while Frankfurt slip to eighth position.

The hosts needed some time but clinically broke the deadlock with 14 minutes gone as Boniface's slow strike slipped past Frankfurt



goalkeeper Kevin Trapp.

Frankfurt tried to reply but Tuta lacked accuracy from the edge of the box in the 27th minute.

Leverkusen gained the upper

hand and almost doubled their lead in the 34th minute when Alejandro Grimaldo's 20-meter free kick rattled the woodwork.

After the restart, Frankfurt as-

sumed control again but it was the hosts who doubled the lead in the 51st minute after Trapp blocked a Boniface shot into the path of Jeremie Frimpong, who showed no mercy to poke home.

Leverkusen gained momentum and scored soon after as Boniface's through-ball found Florian Wirtz, whose lob over Trapp made it 3-0 in the 57th minute.

Elsewhere, Bayern Munich remain second as Harry Kane's brace brought his goal tally up to 20 goals after overpowering Stuttgart 3-0, and Freiburg snatched their third straight victory after a 2-0 win over ten-man Cologne. - xinhua



WHAT IF YOUR CO-WORKER WAS A BIRD?



In parts of Africa, birds and humans work together to find honey. A new study shows their relationship is even closer than previously thought.

In many parts of Africa, humans and wild honeyguide birds have developed a symbiotic relationship. Human honey-hunters call for the birds, which guide them to honeycombs. The humans collect the honey, leaving the waxy combs for the birds to gobble up.

Now, researchers have found that the honeyguide birds are much more responsive to local human calls than outsiders, suggesting the birds recognize a local dialect. They outlined their findings on December 7 in the journal *Nature*.

Co-lead author Claire Spottiswoode, an evolutionary biologist at the University of Cambridge's Department of Zoology and the University of Cape Town, has been studying the honeyguide bird-human hunter relationship for years



in Mozambique.

There, local Yao hunters call for the birds using a sort of trill whistle followed by a grunt.

Spottiswoode already knew that honeyguide calls vary in different locations throughout Africa. Different people across the continent use different calls to attract the birds to help gather honey. She set out

to discover whether the birds are more likely to respond to calls from local people than outsiders.

She teamed up with Brian Wood, a honeyguide researcher from the University of California Los Angeles and the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology, to study this question in two specific areas: the Kidero Hills of Tanzania

Human honey-hunters call for the birds, which guide them to honeycombs. The humans collect the honey, leaving the waxy combs for the birds to gobble up

and the Niassa Special Reserve in Mozambique.

In their experiments, they played different honeyguide calls on a speaker while they walked along honey hunting routes in Mozambique and Tanzania. They found that honeyguide birds are very picky about local calls.

The researchers found that hon-

eyguide birds in Mozambique were "almost twice as likely" to cooperate with hunters using the local Yao grunt and trill than the hunters who used the Hadza whistle from Tanzania.

The same was true in Tanzania: There, the birds responded to the local Hadza whistle three times more often than the Yao grunt.

"I was quite astonished when we saw together how discriminating the Tanzanian honey guides were," she said. "It was almost uncanny how strongly they preferred the beautiful whistle melodies of their local Hadza partners compared to either the foreign sounds used by (other) Hadza hunters or arbitrary human sounds."

Spottiswoode said this is like human language.

"Findings suggest that communication between humans and other species can assign meaning to arbitrary sounds in a similar manner to human language," said Spottiswoode.

"The key thing for both language and these interspecies signals is that everyone agrees what the sounds mean," she continued. "So it seems that such social conventions improve our ability not only to cooperate with other humans, but also with other species. And I think most honey hunters would be quite unsurprised by these findings." -nw

INVESTMENT OPPORTUNITIES

His Majesty the Sultan gives audience to Indian business leaders in New Delhi

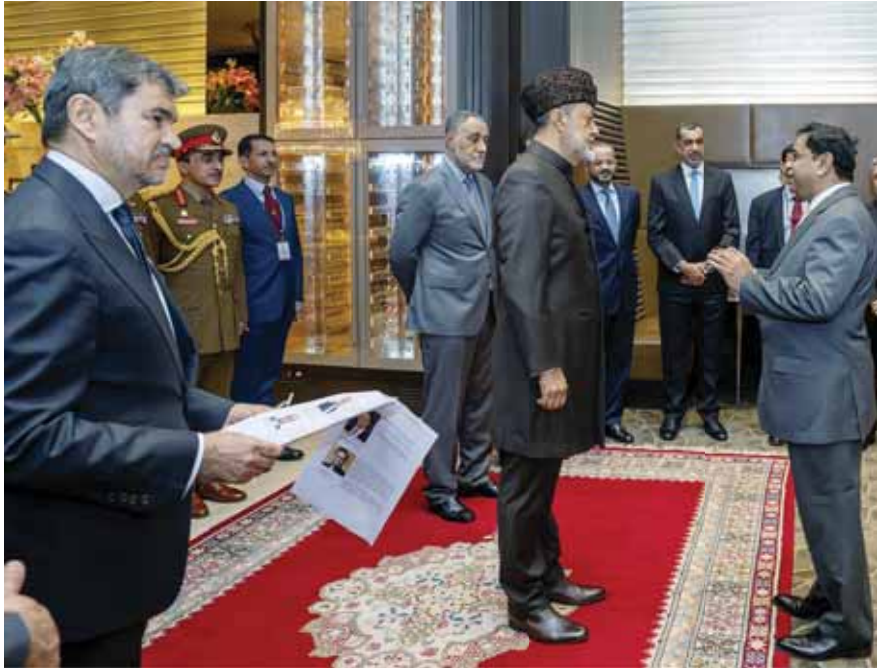
NEW DELHI: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik gave an audience at his residency in New Delhi today to a number of business people in the Republic of India.

During the audience, His Majesty the Sultan exchanged views with them on a set of economic and trade topics.

His Majesty urged them to explore the promising investment opportunities available in various fields in the Sultanate of Oman.

On their turn, the business people expressed their great honour to have an audience with His Majesty. They affirmed that this audience would contribute to augmenting the trade and investment exchange between the two countries.

The audience was attended by members of the official delegation accompanying His Majesty the Sultan during his visit to India. -ONA





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