



HM THE SULTAN CONGRATULATES PRESIDENT OF VIETNAM

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Luong Cuong of the Socialist Republic of Vietnam on being elected and sworn in as his country's new president. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments to President Luong Cuong, wishing him success in leading the people of Vietnam towards further development and growth on all spheres.— **ONA**



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YOUR EMBASSY HACKATHON



Hackathon to boost innovation across Omani embassies

MUSCAT: The Foreign Ministry on Tuesday launched a programme codenamed “Your Embassy Hackathon” to enhance continuous innovation and upgrading of services at Omani embassies around the world.

Khalid Hashel Al Musalhi, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs (the chief guest at the event) underscored the significance of the programme.

He pointed out that “Your Embassy Hackathon” brings about “a qualitative leap in the efficiency of diplomatic action”, since it upgrades the standards of functioning at embassies in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Al Musalhi explained that the programme seeks to expand the use of modern technology by introducing smart solutions for improving embassy procedures and make them more sustainable.

He added that “Your Embassy Hackathon”, the first of its kind

in Oman, reflects the Foreign Ministry’s efforts to develop smart embassies that use modern technology to improve efficiency and sustainability in providing services.

The hackathon paves the way for the presentation of initiatives and ideas for the application of modern technologies like artificial intelligence (AI) in serving citizens abroad and establishing effective communication.

“Your Embassy Hackathon” contributes to digital transition, cybersecurity, resource management and digital communication, Al Musalhi said.

The programme, which will continue until mid-December 2024, has already generated wide response from the Ministry’s employees and Omani missions abroad.

The entries will be assessed by a jury that will announce the winning projects and initiatives in time.— **ONA**

SALALAH FREE ZONE ATTRACTS 75 PROJECTS WORTH OVER OMR4BN

The Salalah Future Industries Forum, organised by Salalah Free Zone, kicked off on Tuesday

SALALAH: Industrial activities constitute the highest percentage of projects in the free zone, said Dr. Ali Mohammed Tabouk, CEO of Salalah Free Zone.

“As many as 75 industrial projects with a total investment volume of more than OMR4.2 billion are now operational or under implementation stages,” he added.

The Salalah Future Industries Forum, organised by Salalah Free Zone, kicked off on Tuesday in the Wilayat of Salalah, Dhofar Governorate.

The two-day event seeks to promote investment and economic development.

Opening ceremony

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Marwan Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar, who honoured the forum speakers and supporters.

Organised in cooperation with Tazeez International Foundation, the forum will focus on petrochemicals, food processing and pharmaceutical industries.



Visual displays to be presented during the forum will highlight investment opportunities, comparative advantages and nascent sectors in Dhofar Governorate.

Three working papers will be

The second deals with the role of Salalah in global investments in the food industry.

The third elaborates on prospects of high returns for investment in the pharmaceutical industry in Salalah. It will also underscore the significance of Salalah's proximity to emerging markets and international shipping lines.

Sustainability

The forum includes various visual presentations on how to maintain the sustainability of companies operating in the labour market, innovation and the advantages of investment in the Sultanate of Oman.

The participants will go on field visits to industrial projects in the Salalah Free Zone.— **ONA**

GAZA DEATH TOLL

as of October 22, 2024

Deaths
42,718
Injured
100,282

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Marine mammal survey kicks off

1 The fourth phase of the marine mammal survey project kicked off in the Wilayat of Khasab on Tuesday. Being implemented by the Environment Authority in cooperation with government departments, the project will continue until 31 October 2024. The project seeks to build a comprehensive database of marine mammals. **>A2**

WORLD

President Putin hosts BRICS summit

2 A three-day summit of the BRICS grouping began on Tuesday, with Russian President Vladimir Putin inviting two dozen world leaders to the Russian city of Kazan. The summit is the first since the BRICS grouping expanded in 2023, and is also a chance for the Kremlin to show there is no political isolation of Russia amid its invasion of Ukraine. **>A6**

SPORTS

Rehan Ahmed in England squad

3 Leg-spinner Rehan Ahmed has been called for the third and final Test match of the three-match series as England announced the playing XI for the Rawalpindi Test against Pakistan with the match to be kick start from Thursday. The Test series is equally poised at 1-1 with the decider set to be played at the Rawalpindi. **>A7**

CELEBRATE BUSINESS EXCELLENCE

Times of Oman ‘Business Leadership Summit 2024’ to unite top industry leaders in a Premier Business Forum

MUSCAT: The Times of Oman is excited to announce the ‘Business Leadership Summit 2024’, a premier event that brings together the most influential leaders from across industries to explore innovative leadership practices and celebrate business excellence. This year’s summit will be held at the St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, uniting over 200 senior government officials, international experts, visionary business owners, CEOs, SMEs, and industry leaders.

A Summit of Leaders

Just like summiting a mountain requires strategy, perseverance, and teamwork, so does leader-



BUSINESS LEADERSHIP SUMMIT

ship in today’s fast-paced business world. The Business Leadership Summit will provide a platform for leaders to delve into thought-provoking discussions that focus on driving business success and sustainability. The summit emphasises overcoming challenges, much like conquering the summit of a mountain,

and highlights how visionary leadership can transform obstacles into opportunities.

Key Highlights of the Summit:

- 1. Inspiring Leadership Conversations**
 - Leaders from diverse indus-

tries will share insights on overcoming challenges and fostering innovation.

- Discussions will explore the future of leadership and its role in shaping sustainable business growth.

- 2. Unparalleled Networking Opportunities**
 - The event will provide invaluable opportunities for building strategic partnerships and connecting with industry giants, SMEs, and government officials.
 - Attendees can expect to forge new alliances and create long-lasting business collaborations.

- 3. Celebration of Business Excellence**
 - The summit will also honour exceptional achievements with the Times of Oman Business Leadership Awards, recognizing visionary CEOs, outstanding SMEs, and companies that have set new benchmarks in business innovation.

Event Details:

- Date: October 30, 2024
- Venue: St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort

Contact:

- Anand: anand@mmg.om or +968 99219268

- Kalpesh - kalpesh@mmg.om or +968 95511335
- Muna - muna@mmg.om or +968 93993334
- Neha - neha@mmg.om or +968 77188254

This summit offers a unique opportunity for leaders to summit their own leadership challenges and gain insights from others who are forging new paths in business.

The Times of Oman Business Leadership Summit 2024 is where Oman’s most influential minds will come together to push boundaries and celebrate the triumphs that continue to drive the nation forward.

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TWO CITIZENS KILLED IN ADAM TRUCK ACCIDENT

Two citizens were killed in a truck accident that led to the leakage of a hazardous substance (Triethylene Glycol in the Wilayat of Adam, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. In a statement, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA), said: "Rescue and ambulance teams and specialised personnel dealing with hazardous materials responded to a truck accident and a leak of (Triethylene Glycol in the Wilayat of Adam in the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate. The teams were able to contain the leak of the substance. The accident resulted in the death of two citizens."



COMMENTARY

Oman must pass a law for old homes to avoid disasters



SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

town of Sur collapsed and killed him and his wife instantly. To avoid such disaster from happening in the future, Oman must pass a law for owners of old houses to do regular repairs that should be compulsory and strictly adhered to. Homes which are more vulnerable are the ones near the Wadi paths. But also, many houses, depending on their age, get regularly damaged during the rainy season even if they are not near the Wadis. Purshottam Bhatia, aged 89, and his wife Padmini, aged 85, died when their bedroom's wall fell on their bed while they were

asleep in the night. Mr Bhatia was a long-term businessman in Sur and he and his wife lived there for more than 3 decades. It is was a tragic incidence that could have been easily avoided with proper maintenance of their house. Sur has been hit by heavy remains this month and that obviously has damaged the house Mr and Mrs Purshottam lived in. But such incidents are not just confined in Sur but everywhere in the country. Regular maintenance would have saved their lives. House damages due to age and rains are not uncommon in Oman.

The government must intervene and start to demand every house and commercial building owners to have annual inspection certificates after their properties have reached a certain age. The Sur incidence will not be the last one and the authorities need to look into this problem that keeps happening all the time. In most areas in Oman, there are houses that are still occupied which were built in the 1960s and landlords do not do regular maintenances. In conclusion, the government's intervention is needed for old houses and buildings to avoid another disaster.



A file picture of the couple who died in a wall collapse in Sur recently.

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Royal Opera House Muscat welcomes soul stirring shows in November



MUSCAT: Following the critically acclaimed start of the new season, Royal Opera House Muscat is continuing with a full calendar of events, bringing international performances to Oman's stage. Looking forward to November, the opera house's calendar will feature a variety of shows including Portuguese soul music, the glorious pageantry of the marching bands, an open-air concert, and a sophisticated evening of jazz. Additionally, audiences are invited to discover what is on offer in the Educational and Outreach programme with inspiring initiatives around reading and writing for children.

November opens with Cristina Branco, a legendary Fado singer who brings an authenticity and flare to this soulful Portuguese genre that strikes deep into the heart. Performing just one night, this concert offers an insight into this stunning tradition of music as well as connecting with feelings of love and loss amongst audiences. Don't miss your chance to feel this incredible depth of emotion in 'Mais que Fado' with Cristina Branco on November 5 at the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts.

Following just two days later is the annual three-night military music festival held on the polished maiden of the main opera house. A temporary auditorium with seating for over 2,000 people sets the stage for a captivating performance. Oman's military and police



marching bands, featuring drums and pipers, perform alongside visiting bands from Jordan and Austria. This dynamic exhibition combines international flair, light displays, and seamless collaboration, leaving a lasting impression. Military Music: Oman and the World is a highly popular event which sells out quickly. Choose

your tickets for 7, 8 or 9 November to enjoy the show.

The middle of the month heralds the return of Ahlam to the opera house. In a new open air concert format, this Emirati super star will perform from her most loved repertoire of songs in what will be a sell-out event on November 14.

The final concert of the main

programme in November are two nights of jazz, with a very special artist from the world stage. Anthony Strong is an extraordinary musician and performer, with a programme of classics from jazz greats such as Nat King Cole and Frank Sinatra, as well as his own original songs. In concert with the Latvian Radio Big Band, this

is a combination which will feed or inspire a lifelong love of jazz. Audiences adore this sharp suited gentleman of jazz, and this show is highly anticipated. Anthony Strong and the Latvian Radio Big Band will take place on the 28 and 29 November at the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts. Don't miss Coffee and Dates on 27 November,

with Anthony Strong in conversation with Umberto Fanni in the Music Library.

Two brand-new initiatives are launched this month by the education team. Aimed at inspiring love of reading, writing, and the theatre, November 6 & 7 sees the exclusive presentation to selected schools in Muscat of the much-loved story around the book character Gerónimo Stilton by Italian author Elisabetta Dami, with a workshop on the ways to bring characters to life on the written page for children. Let's Read, a theatrical presentation of stories and characters with YouThinkers, explores the magical tale of Beauty and the Beast (Music Library, 16 November, 10am till 1pm), building the excited anticipation for the spectacular ice show due to hit the main stage in January 2025. The month ends with the second Lunch Music of the season, Opera di Monte Carlo singers perform arias from the La Fille du Regiment at the Opera Galleria on 30 November at 12.30pm ahead of the performance.

Experience a range of musical genres to feed the appetite of loyal fans and the curiosity of young people with cultural aspirations, the opera house is dedicated to encouraging more people from across generations to make the most of their opera house. Tickets are available for purchase on the ROHM website, app, or directly at the box office.

LINGUISTIC, CULTURAL HERITAGE

Indian embassy celebrates classical language status for Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Pali and Prakrit

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Embassy of India in Muscat celebrated the historic conferral of classical language status on Marathi, Bengali, Assamese, Pali, and Prakrit by the Government of India.

This special event was organised to honour the rich linguistic and cultural heritage of these languages, which have contributed immensely to India's literary, historical, and intellectual traditions.

In his remarks, Amit Narang, Ambassador of India to the Sultanate of Oman, appreciated the decision, mentioning, "It is a proud moment for every Indian, as the recognition of Marathi, Ben-



gali, Assamese, Pali, and Prakrit as Classical Languages acknowledges their immense contribution to our nation's heritage. Today, we celebrate not just the languages, but the people, literature, and traditions they have nurtured over centuries."

The event featured a series of cultural performances by the Marathi, Bengali, and Assamese communities of the Indian diaspora in Oman.

Through traditional dances, music, and artistic displays, each community highlighted the richness of their linguistic and cultural heritage, offering a vivid celebration of their identities.

Representatives from the Mar-

athi, Bengali, and Assamese communities expressed their gratitude to the Government of India, emphasising how this recognition strengthens their cultural pride and reaffirms the importance of preserving their linguistic heritage.

They also presented letters of appreciation to the Ambassador, addressed to the Prime Minister of India, acknowledging the government's efforts in promoting the cultural and linguistic diversity.

The event underscored the strong cultural ties between India and Oman and reaffirmed the role of the vibrant and diverse Indian community in maintaining its cultural identity abroad.

WORLD MILITARY ORIENTEERING CHAMPIONSHIP

Oman's military team takes part in Spain championship

MADRID: Oman's military team concluded its participation in the World Military Orienteering Championship, which was held in the Kingdom of Spain during the period from 16-22 October, with the participation of 27 teams from various countries of the world.

The game of compass orientation involves moving from certain points to others in different conditions and difficult terrain, and requires high physical abilities and a great level of preparation and training, in addition to familiarity with compass orientation skills. -ONA



MEETING

Al Buraimi Municipal Council reviews healthcare services

AL BURAIMI: The Municipal Council of the Governorate of Al Buraimi on Tuesday held a meeting under the chairmanship of Sayyid Dr. Hamad Ahmed Al Busrayim, Governor of Al Buraimi.

The meeting covered a range of topics, such as healthcare services in the governorate, expanding the parking lot of Al Buraimi Hospital and housing plans in the Wilayat of Al Buraimi, among other topics. -ONA



ENHANCE INTEGRITY

Ministry of education holds seminar on strategic plan

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education began implementing an awareness session for its strategic plan to enhance integrity.

The three-days seminar targets 60 employees from all administrative divisions in the Ministry's General Diwan, in Muscat Hall.

The session includes the presentation of a paper entitled: "The Ministry's Strategic Plan to Enhance Integrity 2024-2030"



presented by Badr Al Ghafri, Assistant Director of the Governance Office, Head of the Team.

The paper touched on the National Plan to Enhance Integrity (2022-2030), its vision, principles, sources, targeted results, and responsibilities.

The paper also touched on the formation of the team to prepare the ministry's strategic plan to enhance integrity, sources, projects, internal and external follow-up mechanisms.

3RD EDITION

Ministry of culture to organise Muscat Art Exhibition 2024



MUSCAT: The Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth will organise the 3rd edition of Muscat Art Exhibition 2024 from 28 to 31 October. The exhibition will be held at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre.

The opening ceremony will be held under the auspices of Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The event will see the participation of more than 200 artists

from 18 countries, including Hungary, Iran, Yemen, Palestine, Lebanon, India, the United Kingdom, Sudan and Germany.

Muscat Art Exhibition seeks to promote cultural awareness and preserve Omani arts. -ONA

Asset Management

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(Daily subscription and redemption)

1 year*: 5.21%

*annualized return

Unaudited Statement of Comprehensive Income for 9 months ended 30th September 2024

	30-Sep-24	30-Sep-23
	RO'000	RO'000
Interest Income	5,102	3,037
	5,102	3,037
Expenses:		
Management fees	(440)	(295)
General and administrative	(141)	(122)
	(581)	(417)
Net Profit for the period	4,521	2,620
Earnings per unit	0.041	0.060

Unaudited Statement of Financial Position as at 30th September 2024

	30-Sep-24	30-Sep-23
	RO'000	RO'000
Assets		
Investment at amortized cost	27,085	2,286
Investment in Deposits	96,508	36,587
Bank Balances	34,367	18,076
Interest Receivables	2,654	1,025
Total Assets	160,614	57,974
Liabilities:		
Short term loan	(8,763)	-
Accruals	(83)	(36)
	(8,846)	(36)
Net Assets Value (NAV)	151,768	57,938
Composition of net assets:		
Units issued	109,249	43,885
Retained Earnings	42,519	14,053
Net Assets Value (NAV)	151,768	57,938
Net Asset Value (NAV) per unit (Rial)	1.3892003	1.3220380

Note: Due to figures displayed in 000's, immaterial variance is likely with actual numbers. The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any Unitholder who requests them, in either Arabic or English, as requested, within 7 days of receipt of request.

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STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 30 SEPTEMBER 2024 (UN-AUDITED)				
	Unaudited 30 Sept 2024 RO	31 Dec 2023 RO	Unaudited 30 Sept 2023 RO	1 Jan 2023 RO
ASSETS				
Non-current assets				
Property, plant and equipment	294,185	380,316	625,409	509,331
Intangible assets	103,244	118,728		
Finance lease receivable	48,424,326	51,555,627	52,535,286	55,397,967
Right-of-use assets	4,535,744	4,833,558	4,933,055	96,864
Derivative financial instruments	898,375	1,143,322*	1,954,415*	1,432,109*
Total non-current assets	54,255,874	58,031,551	60,048,165	57,436,271
Current assets				
Derivative financial instruments	199,867	254,361*	434,810*	318,609*
Finance lease receivable	4,127,430	3,858,811	3,777,708	3,556,639
Trade and other receivables	1,606,009	1,495,964	1,630,062	1,507,347
Amount due from related parties	86,387	251,417	79,597	187,852
Cash and cash equivalents	2,902,824	1,764,895	3,491,501	1,988,530
Total current assets	8,922,517	7,625,448	9,413,678	7,558,977
TOTAL ASSETS	63,178,391	65,656,999	69,461,843	64,995,248
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES				
Equity				
Share capital	9,780,216	9,780,216	9,780,216	9,780,216
Legal reserve	2,719,177	2,675,133	2,668,739	2,607,174
Retained earnings	3,138,824	4,209,456	4,151,904	5,064,853
Cumulative changes in fair values	519,564	773,711*	1,828,997*	976,537*
Total equity	16,157,781	17,438,516	18,429,856	18,428,780
Liabilities				
Non-current liabilities				
Long term loan	31,814,994	33,385,049	35,096,997	36,605,585
Derivative financial instruments	398,364	398,728*	194,248*	492,321*
Deferred tax liability	3,756,590	3,720,277*	3,862,837*	3,603,009*
Deferred revenue	253,288	262,421	265,910	274,028
Employees' end of service benefit	33,726	101,962	124,384	103,088
Lease liabilities	4,352,134	4,590,002	4,781,144	35,449
Total non-current liabilities	40,609,096	42,458,439	44,325,520	41,113,480
Current liabilities				
Long term loan	3,370,461	3,306,261	3,203,543	3,171,443
Derivative financial instruments	88,626	88,707*	43,216*	109,530*
Deferred revenue	12,132	11,607	10,862	10,623
Lease liabilities	317,217	312,038	196,936	61,700
Trade and other payables	1,560,527	991,916	2,174,372	1,146,043
Amount due to related parties	1,062,551	1,049,515	1,077,538	953,649
Total current liabilities	6,411,514	5,760,044	6,706,467	5,452,988
TOTAL LIABILITIES	47,020,610	48,218,483	51,031,987	46,566,468
TOTAL EQUITY AND LIABILITIES	63,178,391	65,656,999	69,461,843	64,995,248
INTERIM STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE PERIOD ENDED 30 SEPTEMBER 2024 (UN-AUDITED)				
	Unaudited 3 months ended 30 Sept 2024 RO	Unaudited 3 months ended 30 Sept 2023 RO	Unaudited 9 months ended 30 Sept 2024 RO	Unaudited 9 months ended 30 Sept 2023 RO
Revenue	3,171,549	3,423,250	9,526,525	9,829,293
Cost of sales	(2,232,818)	(2,283,794)	(6,579,153)	(6,517,604)
Gross profit	938,731	1,139,456	2,947,372	3,311,689
Administrative and general expenses	(165,531)	(186,474)	(526,581)	(538,559)
Finance cost	(625,678)	(737,518)	(1,951,139)	(2,083,731)
Finance income	17,168	14,032	51,954	35,642
Profit before tax	164,590	229,498	521,606	725,041
Taxation	(23,669)	(39,491)	(81,162)	(109,393)
Profit For The Period	140,921	190,005	440,444	615,648
Other comprehensive income				
Items that are or may be reclassified subsequently to profit or loss:				
Fair value of the cash flow hedge adjustment - gross	(763,650)	1,002,366*	164,450	1,406,937*
Other comprehensive income/ (expense) for the period, net of tax	(786,274)	706,219*	(254,147)	852,461*
Total comprehensive income for the period	(645,353)	896,224	186,297	1,468,109*
Basic and diluted earnings per share (Baizas)	1.44	1.94	4.50	6.29

FOR WORLD PEACE

Putin hosts expanded BRICS summit

KAZAN: A three-day summit of the recently expanded BRICS grouping kicked off on Tuesday, with Russian President Vladimir Putin's government inviting two dozen world leaders to the southwestern Russian city of Kazan.

The summit is the first since the BRICS grouping expanded in 2023, and is also a chance for the Kremlin to show any political isolation of Russia amid its invasion of Ukraine doesn't extend far past NATO's borders.

Russia's major international partners like Chinese leader Xi Jinping, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi and Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdogan were scheduled to join the summit, which is the largest international gathering hosted by Putin since he launched the war on Ukraine in February 2022.

India and China remain top Russian partners

Ahead of his departure for Kazan, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi said early on Tuesday that India "attaches immense importance to BRICS." "I look forward to extensive discussions on a wide range of subjects. I also look forward to meeting various leaders there," he added.

Chinese President Xi Jinping arrived in Kazan Tuesday morning, with Foreign Ministry Spokesperson Lin Jian telling a press briefing this year's summit marks "the beginning of greater BRICS cooperation."

"China stands ready to work



with other parties to strive for the steady and sustained development of greater BRICS cooperation, open a new era for the Global South to seek strength through solidarity and jointly promote world peace and development," he said.

The spokesperson added that Xi would have "in-depth exchanges" of views with other leaders on "the international landscape, the BRICS practical cooperation, the development of the BRICS mechanism and important issues of mutual interest."

"China stands ready to work with other parties to strive for the steady and sustained development of greater BRICS cooperation, open a new era for the Global South to seek strength through solidarity

and jointly promote world peace and development," he said.

Invasion of Ukraine in February 2022.

Russia and China's partnership, more broadly, seeks to counter what Beijing and Moscow see as the US-dominated world order. China and Russia described their ties as having "no limits," shortly before Russia launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Which are the BRICS countries?

The original acronym BRICS stands for the five countries Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa. It is fashioned as an alternative to the Western-led economic order seen in the likes of the G7 — a group of seven wealthy Western

states including the US and Germany among others. The BRICS group decided at its 2023 summit to try to expand its ranks.

Argentina, Ethiopia, Egypt, Iran, the United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia were all invited to join, although Argentine President Javier Milei declined after winning the election, saying he wanted to take more of a pro-Western course.

Putin's foreign policy aide Yuri Ushakov said 36 countries had confirmed participation, and that over 20 would send heads of state. Putin is expected to hold some 20 bilateral meetings, Ushakov said, and the summit could turn into "the largest foreign policy event ever held" on Russian soil. -BW

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EDITORIAL: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24813153, E-mail: editor@timesofoman.com

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ON LAC PATROLLING AGREEMENT

Will work with India for solution, says China

BEIJING: China on Tuesday said that it has reached a resolution with India on resolving their border conflict and will work to implement solutions, a Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson said.

China Foreign Ministry spokesperson Lin Jian told a regular press briefing, "We have reached a resolution on the relevant matter; will work with the Indian side to implement the solution. We are in close communication through diplomatic and military channels."

On October 21, the Indian Ministry of External Affairs announced that an agreement has been reached regarding patrolling arrangements along the Line of Actual Control (LAC) in the India-China border area.



The announcement came ahead of Prime Minister Narendra Modi's visit to Kazan, Russia, for the 16th BRICS summit that begins today and is scheduled to run till October 24.

Foreign Secretary Vikram Misri addressed the media, stating, "This agreement is the outcome of extensive discussions over the past several weeks with Chinese interlocutors at both diplomatic and military levels." -ANI

Israeli strike near Beirut hospital kills 13, wounds 57

Hezbollah says it has launched rockets against an Israeli naval base and a military intelligence unit

BEIRUT: At least 13 people were killed and 57 wounded in an Israeli strike near the Rafik Hariri Hospital, Lebanon's biggest public hospital, according to the Lebanese Health Ministry.

The Israel Defence Forces (IDF) later said a Hezbollah target was located next to the hospital, which is a few kilometers from the center of the capital, Beirut.

The hospital itself was not targeted, the IDF said. However, footage on social media appeared to show the strike hitting close to the hospital's entrance and the Health Ministry said that the facility was damaged.

The IDF added it also struck a Hezbollah naval base overnight, while Hezbollah says it hit an Israeli tank in Lebanon's south.

This comes as US Secretary of State Antony Blinken is visiting the region in an attempt to broker a ceasefire in the region.

Lebanon-based Hezbollah says it has launched volleys of rockets at two key bases near Tel Aviv and a naval base west of Haifa. The Iran-backed group said it had attacked an Israeli military intelligence base near Tel Aviv, firing "a salvo of rockets at the Gilot base" in a suburb of the Mediterranean city.

Israeli media says the military



intelligence base also houses the headquarters of Israel's foreign intelligence service Mossad.

The group also said it had launched a "salvo of rockets" targeting the "Stella Maris naval base northwest of Haifa," a coastal city in northern Israel.

UN criticises 'damage to civilian objects'

The United Nations on Monday condemned airstrikes that Israel claimed had targeted Hezbollah's financial system in Lebanon.

More than a dozen sites tied to Al-Qard Al-Hassan, a financial firm linked to Hezbollah, were hit in strikes carried out across Lebanon on Sunday.

Israel's bombing campaign came two weeks after Israel assassinated an individual it called "Hezbollah's finance minister."

Israel has said that it is now focused on Hezbollah's finance system after having killed most of the group's top political and military leaders. It said it struck around 300 Hezbollah targets in Lebanon

over 24 hours, ramping up its offensive to hit the group's finances.

US envoy Amos Hochstein visited Lebanon in a bid to broker a cease-fire between Israel and Hezbollah. Lebanon's caretaker prime minister, Najib Mikati, said on Monday there was no alternative to UN Resolution 1701 but added that "new understandings" could be reached to implement it.

The resolution, which ended the 2006 Israel-Hezbollah war, called for the Lebanese group to withdraw towards the north of the

Litani River away from the Israel border and mandated a UN peace-keeping mission to help the Lebanese army control the area free from the presence of Hezbollah or Israel.

However, Israel maintains that the resolution was never implemented, and that Hezbollah has built up extensive military infrastructure. The Israeli aggression on Lebanon has so far claimed the lives of 2,483 people, wounded 11,628 others, and forced over a million to flee their homes. -BW

GAZA STRIP

15 Palestinians martyred in Beit Lahia

GAZA: As many as 15 Palestinians, including women and children, were martyred and others were injured in an occupation drone strike on the town of Beit Lahia in the northern Gaza Strip.

Three people were martyred and others were injured when an Israeli drone targeted a group of civilians in the town of Beit Lahia, the Palestinian news agency (WAFA) said citing the Red Crescent.

According to medical sources, 12 civilians were martyred in the occupation's artillery shelling of the displaced people at Abu Al-Jidyan junction in the Beit Lahia project.

The Israeli occupation continues its siege of the northern Gaza Strip, destroying and bombing homes, preventing the entry of food supplies for the 18th consecutive day, and forcing citizens to forcibly move, as more than 10,000 citizens in the Beit Lahia project refuse to move to the south, WAFA said.

The number of martyrs since the occupation's aggression began on the Gaza Strip on October 7 has risen to 42,603, with an additional 99,759 individuals sustaining injuries, the majority of whom are women and children. Additionally, there are thousands of victims still trapped under the rubble and in the streets, inaccessible for rescue.

Many victims trapped under the rubble or scattered on roads across the Strip, as Israeli occupation forces continue to obstruct the movement of ambulance. -GMA

BATTLEGROUND STATES

US election: Harris and Trump campaign in key swing states

NEW YORK: Presidential candidates Kamala Harris and Donald Trump both campaigned in battleground states on Monday, with barely two weeks remaining until elections in the US.

Harris toured a trio of crucial swing states with Liz Cheney, the eldest daughter of former Vice President Dick Cheney, two of the highest-profile Republicans to publicly endorse her, seeking support from moderate Republican-leaning voters.

Trump was able to win Pennsyl-

vania, Michigan and Wisconsin in his 2016 election victory against Hillary Clinton, but he lost all three states to Joe Biden in 2020.

Holding them again on November 5 would all but seal victory for Democratic candidate Harris.

What did Harris and Cheney say?

During one of her three "town hall" events with Cheney, moderated by a conservative radio host, in Malvern, Pennsylvania, Harris returned to her recent attack line of

questioning Trump's mental stability and suitability for office.

"In many, many ways, Donald Trump is an unserious man, but the consequences of him being president of the United States are brutally serious," Harris told the audience.

She also said that Trump "has been manipulated and is so clearly able to be manipulated by favor and flattery, including by dictators and autocrats."

Harris said if Trump were to win next month, Ukraine would likely

fall to Russia. Foreign policy is one area where Cheney often criticizes Trump. Cheney, meanwhile, said during the event in Royal Oak, Michigan that she had spoken to several Republicans with concerns about Trump who had also said "I can't be public" in those opinions. But she voiced confidence that "they'll do the right thing."

"And I would just remind people, if you're at all concerned, you can vote your conscience and not ever have to say a word to anybody," Cheney said. -BW



AL HILAL CLUB



Neymar returns one year after ACL injury

RIYADH: Brazil forward Neymar has made his first appearance for Al Hilal in over a year after recovering from surgery on a ruptured anterior cruciate ligament (ACL) and meniscus in his left knee. The 32-year-old came on in the 77th minute of his side's 5-4 win over UAE Pro League side Al Ain in the Asian Champions League. Neymar sustained the injury on 17 October 2023 while playing for Brazil in their 2026 World Cup qualifier with Uruguay. The forward, who is Brazil's male all-time top goalscorer, underwent surgery the following month. The substitute came close to marking his return with a goal following an Al Hilal counter-attack, but it was Al Ain who recovered possession to pull a goal back late on. Neymar moved to Saudi Arabia from Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) for a fee understood to be worth about 90m euros (£77.6m) plus add-ons in August 2023. He was sidelined for multiple months during his last two seasons with PSG because of ankle injuries. He made five appearances for Al Hilal before rupturing his ACL and meniscus on his left knee. - Agencies

England name Ahmed among three spinners to face Pakistan



Matthew Potts and Brydon Carse dropped from the side beaten in the second Test

RAWALPINDI: England have recalled Rehan Ahmed as one of three frontline spinners for the series decider against Pakistan in Rawalpindi, beginning on Thursday. Leg-spinner Ahmed, 20, comes into the side alongside Gus Atkinson, replacing Matthew Potts and Brydon Carse from the side beaten in the second Test. He will line up alongside Shoaib Bashir and Jack Leach in a three-pronged spin attack, leaving

Atkinson and captain Ben Stokes to shoulder the pace bowling. England twice played three frontline spinners on their tour of India earlier this year and the move comes amid speculation over the surface for Thursday's third Test. "We know it's probably not going to swing and seam and do all sorts in the first session, so we look at the pitch and work out what the best team is going to be," England batter Harry Brook told *BBC Sport*. Ahmed made his international debut in Pakistan two years ago, at 18 becoming the youngest man to play Test cricket for England. His 5-48 in the third Test in Karachi made him the third-youngest man to take a five-wicket haul on a Test debut. Ahmed has since won a total of four caps, the last of which came against India in Rajkot in February. "He's an outstanding cricketer," added Brook. "It's not just his bowling, but his batting and field-



ing. He's a young lad so he has a lot of time to come. "He got five-for in the last Test here, so hopefully he can do that again." Pakistan levelled the series 1-1 on a reused pitch in Multan, with spinners Noman Ali and Sajid Khan sharing all 20 wickets. As England trained in Rawalpindi for the first time on this tour on Tuesday, the large fans employed in Multan were again at either end of the pitch but not turned on. On Sunday, pictures emerged on

social media of patio heaters and windbreaks being placed around the strip in an attempt to dry it. They were removed by Monday, leaving just the industrial-sized fans. "It's interesting and it's unique," said Brook. "I think everyone is just guessing. We'll see in a couple of days. "I'd say it will be a good pitch for the first day, two days maybe, then it will start spinning." With left-armer Noman taking 11 wickets and off-spinner Sajid nine in the second Test, they became the first pair of bowlers to share all 20 wickets in a Test since 1972. England are looking for a second successive series win in Pakistan, after a 3-0 victory here two years ago. **England squad:** Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Ollie Pope, Joe Root, Harry Brook, Ben Stokes (capt), Jamie Smith (wk), Gus Atkinson, Rehan Ahmed, Jack Leach, Shoaib Bashir. - Agencies

JOS BUTTLER INJURED



Livingstone to captain England for Windies tour

LONDON: All-rounder Liam Livingstone will captain England during their white-ball tour of the West Indies after Jos Buttler suffered a setback in his recovery from a calf injury. Buttler, 34, has not played since the T20 World Cup in June and will miss the three one-day internationals in the Caribbean, though remains in the squad as skipper for the five-match T20 series that follows. Uncapped Essex wicket-keeper Michael Pepper has been added to the ODI squad while Livingstone, 31, will lead England for the first time in the ODI series in Buttler's absence. It caps a turnaround for Livingstone who was initially left out of the ODI squad to play Australia last month before being called up to replace the injured Buttler. The all-rounder, part of England's T20 World Cup-winning squad in 2022, has captained Lancashire in the T20 Blast and Bir-

mingham Phoenix in The Hundred. England described Buttler's setback as "slight", but his injury is becoming increasingly worrying. Despite not playing since England's T20 World Cup exit, Buttler sustained his third calf injury since 2021 during the summer. He was initially ruled out of The Hundred but, having been retained as captain, was picked in England's squads to play Australia last month. Buttler then pulled out of the T20 series because of the issue and targeted a return for the five ODIs, only to also withdraw. **England squad:** Jos Buttler (captain) T20 series only, Jofra Archer, Jacob Bethell, Jafer Chohan, Sam Curran, Will Jacks, Liam Livingstone, Saqib Mahmood, Dan Mousley, Jamie Overton, Michael Pepper, Adil Rashid, Phil Salt, Reece Topley, John Turner. Two further players to be added from the Test squad currently in Pakistan. - Agencies

FOOTBALL

La Liga wants Barca game against Atletico in Miami

BARCELONA: Barcelona's league fixture against Atletico Madrid in December could be staged in Miami - with La Liga officials hopeful that FIFA will approve the plan. It would be the first time a La Liga match has been played in the United States. FIFA, football's world governing body, will make the final decision on the proposal. The match is currently scheduled for 22 December, before La Liga pauses for its winter break. Both Atletico and Barcelona are scheduled to play in a four-team Spanish Super Cup in early January, which is being held in Saudi Arabia. In April, FIFA withdrew from a legal challenge by leading match promoter Relevant, which is seeking to stage overseas league matches in the United States. The following month, FIFA announced it was setting up a working group to look at the potential impact of competitive domestic matches being played abroad. La Liga president Javier Tebas has spoken of his desire to take La Liga games to other countries. Barcelona planned to stage a league match against Girona in Miami in January 2019, but the idea was scrapped in the face of opposition from Spain's football association and its players' union. League sources say there is still work to do on the plan but they are hopeful of receiving approval to proceed. The Premier League has previously said it has no plans to play games overseas. - Agencies



Ex-Man Utd striker Forlan to make ATP tennis debut



LONDON: Former Manchester United striker Diego Forlan will make his professional tennis debut in an ATP doubles event in his native Uruguay next month. The 45-year-old, who retired from football in 2019, will play alongside Argentine Federico Coria in the Uruguay Open in Montevideo. Forlan, who was a promising tennis player in his teens, has been playing in ITF Masters events - most recently in the 45 and over category. But next month's tournament is a recognised ATP event and sits on the second-tier Challenger

Tour, requiring Forlan to get a wildcard. His partner Coria is the world No.101 in singles, having reached a career-high of 49 in 2023. Forlan joined Manchester United in 2002 and made 98 appearances for the club before joining La Liga side Villarreal. In Spain, Forlan won the European Golden Shoe - awarded to the top scorer in Europe - on two occasions. The forward won the Golden Ball at the 2010 World Cup after Uruguay finished third in South Africa, and helped his country to the 2011 Copa America title. - Agencies

COMMONWEALTH GAMES IN GLASGOW

Blow for India as hockey, wrestling, badminton, cricket, TT removed from CWG 2026

NEW DELHI: In a massive blow to India's medal chances, cricket, field hockey, badminton, wrestling among others have been dropped from the programme for Commonwealth Games (CWG) 2026 in Glasgow, which will be held from July 23 to August 2, 2026. The sporting event's return to the Scottish city after 12 events would not be as bright for the Indians as some of their best medal-scoring sports have been removed from the schedule. The CWG 2026 will be featuring only 10 sports across four venues placed within an eight-mile corridor, organisers Commonwealth Games Federation (CGF) announced on

Tuesday, as per *Olympics.com*. The 10-sport itinerary for Glasgow 2026 includes athletics (track and field), swimming, 3x3 basketball, track cycling, weightlifting, lawn bowls, artistic gymnastics, netball, boxing and judo. The para variants of the first five will be part of the integrated para programme at the 2026 CWG. Four venues will be hosting the game, including Scotstoun Stadium, Tollcross International Swimming Centre, Emirates Arena - including the Sir Chris Hoy Velodrome, and the Scottish Event Campus (SEC). The list of sports for 2026 CWG is way thinner than the 2022 edi-

tion in Birmingham, which had 20 sports. The sports excluded include hockey, cricket, badminton, wrestling, table tennis, diving, rugby sevens, beach volleyball, mountain biking, squash and rhythmic gymnastics. Shooting, which was earlier removed from the Birmingham 2022 CWG programme, is still not reinstated in the schedule. Shooting and wrestling have been dominant sports for India at Commonwealth Games since its inception, having won 135 and 114 medals, including 63 and 49 gold medals respectively. In the last edition, India won 12 medals in wrestling, including six gold, a

silver and five bronze medals. Field hockey's exclusion means the sport will be missing from the event for the first time since its CWG debut back in 1998. With a total of six medals shared between men's and women's team, including a gold, four silver and a bronze, India is the second-most successful field-hockey side in CWG behind Australia. India also has a stellar record in badminton, table tennis and squash at the CWG, having won 31 medals (including 10 gold), 28 medals (including 10 gold) and five medals (including a gold) across all editions of the competitions in which they were played. - ANI



Hong Kong stun Afghanistan A by five wickets in a last-over thriller

A sensational spell of 6/12 by Anas Khan and a half-century by skipper Nizakat Khan helped the team to end their campaign in the Emerging Teams Asia Cup with a victory

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Hong Kong concluded their ACC Men's T20 Emerging Teams Asia Cup campaign in style, securing a thrilling five-wicket last-over win over Afghanistan A in their final Group A match at the Oman Cricket Academy ground in Al Amerat on Tuesday.

With Afghanistan A already through to the semi-finals, Hong Kong put in a determined performance, led by Anas Khan's extraordinary spell and Nizakat Khan's match-winning knock, to end their campaign on a high note.

Anas Khan's mesmerising spell of 6/12

Afghanistan A won the toss and opted to bat, but their innings was derailed by Hong Kong's Anas Khan, who delivered the best bowling figures of the tournament so far, taking a remarkable 6 wickets for just 12 runs.

Anas's pinpoint accuracy and variation rattled Afghanistan A, reducing them to 131 all out in 19.5 overs.

Sediqullah Atal was the lone bright spot for Afghanistan A, top-scoring with 52 off 41 balls, while skipper Darwish Rasooli chipped in with 18. Numan Shah (20) and Karim Janat (21) offered brief resistance, but Anas' brilliance ensured Afghanistan A could not build any momentum, with his wickets coming at crucial intervals.



His spell included crucial dismissals of Atal, Rasooli, Janat, Shahidullah and Sharafuddin Ashraf

Nizakat Khan's captain's knock

Chasing 132, Hong Kong faced early trouble, losing opener Anshy Rath for a duck and Zeeshan Ali for 12, leaving them at 19/2.

However, captain Nizakat Khan stood tall, anchoring the innings with a well-paced 61 off 53 balls. His innings, laced with 2 boundaries and 3 sixes, kept Hong Kong in control of the chase despite Afghanistan A's efforts to fight back.

Nizakat found a reliable partner in Babar Hayat, who added 39 off 37 balls, playing a crucial supporting role in a 93-run stand for the third wicket.

Their partnership was the backbone of Hong Kong's chase, keeping the scoreboard ticking without taking unnecessary risks.

Late in the innings, Afghanistan A struck back, dismissing both Nizakat and Hayat in a space of two balls by Abdul Rahman. With 10 runs still needed in the final over, Martin Coetzee (15* off 5 balls) smashed two boundaries and a six to finish the game in style, ensuring Hong Kong chased down the target with three balls to spare.

Brief scores: Afghanistan A: 131 all out in 19.5 overs (Sediqullah Atai 52, Numan Shah 20, Karim Janat 21; Anas Khan 6/12) lost to Hong Kong: 133/5 in 19.3 overs (Nizakat Khan 61, Babar Hayat 39; Abdul Rahman 3/17, Qais Ahmad 2/18).



Sri Lanka A defeat Bangladesh A to seal spot in semis

MUSCAT: Sri Lanka A joined Afghanistan A from Group A in the semi-finals of the ongoing ACC Men's T20 Emerging Teams Asia Cup after a dominant 19-run win over Bangladesh A at the Oman Cricket Academy ground on Tuesday night.

In the final league game of the group, Bangladesh, chasing 162 to win, were restricted to 142/7.

The victory also sealed Sri Lanka's top spot in the group and they will now play the second-placed team of Group B in the semi-finals on Friday.

India A have already qualified into the semis from Group A and a win over hosts Oman on Wednesday will secure them top spot.

The winner of the morning match on Wednesday between Pakistan A and UAE will decide the semi-finalist to face Sri Lanka A. Afghanistan A will play the winner of Group B.

On Tuesday, Bangladesh openers – Saif Hassan (29 ret'd hurt) and Parvez Hossain Emon (24) began the chase in the right earnest as they scored 41 in just 3.4 overs. However, an injury to Hassan left Bangladesh at 59/1.

Sri Lanka's Dushan Hemantha's three-wicket spell trig-



gered a middle order collapse as their opponents were struggling at 103/6 in 15 overs.

Abu Hider's lone fighting

unbeaten knock of 38 that included three maximums was not enough as Bangladesh needed 23 off the last over and

they could only manage 142/7.

Earlier, Sri Lanka rode on Pavan Rathnayake's 26-ball 42 blitz and Sahan Arachchige's 30 to set up a competitive total after openers Yashoda Lanka (23) and Lahiru Udara (35) smashed 40 in the first 5 overs. Skipper Nuwanidu Fernando scored a 20-ball 19 to help the team score 161/7.

Final scores: Sri Lanka A 161/7 (Yashoda Lanka 23, Lahiru Udara 35, Sahan Arachchige 30, Pavan Rathnayake 42; Ripon Mondol 2/36, Rejaun Rahman Raja 2/35) beat Bangladesh A 142/7 (Said Hassan 29 reth hurt, Parvez Hossain Emon 24, Abu Hider 38 not out; Dushan Hemantha 3/23).

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by December 2024 reaching \$73.48, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by 3 cents from the price of Monday, which was \$73.51. - **ONA**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,796.05 points, down by 0.08% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.28% at 432.92 points. A'Saffa Foods, up 5.38%, was the top gainer while Gulf Hotels, down 10.00%, was the top loser.

Three new contracts signed to strengthen in-country value

We are proud to be part of this important milestone in advancing Oman's In-Country Value initiatives through the newly introduced Majd identity, said Steven Lauver, President and General Manager of Oxy Oman



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oxy Oman has signed three In-Country Value (ICV) contracts as part of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals (MEM) ICV event. As part of the event, the MEM launched a unifying ICV brand called Majd, which will be used for ICV programmes and initiatives across the sector.

The launch event was held at the JW Marriott Muscat under the auspices of Dr. Saeed bin Mohammed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy. Steven Lauver, President and General Manager of Oxy Oman, attended with senior representatives of the company. Oxy Oman took part in a signing ceremony for its ICV contracts: Vendor development programme

- Sakan Facility Management, for the provision of maintenance and repair services for Oxy Oman camp areas, offices, and facilities. Vendor development programme - Aman the First, for services in measuring emissions from process equipment through the Leak Detection and Repair (LDAR) programme. Local manufacturing oppor-

tunity - Duqm Hongtong Pipes (DHTP), for the supply of Reinforced Thermoplastic Pipes (RTP). DHTP has invested in building a facility in Duqm, demonstrating Oxy Oman's support for local growth and capabilities. "We are proud to be part of this important milestone in advancing Oman's In-Country Value initiatives through the newly introduced

Majd identity," said Lauver. "Oxy Oman's ICV strategy is focused on developing a diverse local supply chain, enhancing local technical capabilities, and supporting Omani businesses. We look forward to continuing our collaboration with the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and other stakeholders to further contribute to the Sultanate's growing economy."

This sponsorship falls under Oxy Oman's umbrella of strategic partnerships and continuous collaboration with key stakeholders, and is part of Oxy Oman's endeavour and long-term commitment to support programmes that enhance economic growth and sustainable development and that yield positive impacts in the neighbouring communities.

BRIEFS

Oil prices fall on China slow demand worries



SINGAPORE: Oil prices fell yesterday, paring the previous day as slow demand in China continued to weigh on the market. Brent crude futures for December delivery were down 26 cents, or 0.3%, at \$74.03 a barrel. US West Texas Intermediate crude futures for November delivery were 2 cents lower at \$70.54 a barrel on the contracts last day as the front month. The more actively traded WTI futures for December, which will soon become the front month, lost 23 cents, or 0.3%, to \$69.81 per barrel. Both Brent and WTI settled nearly 2% higher than day before, recouping some of last week's more than 7% decline.

Gold hovers near record high on safe-haven demand



SINGAPORE: Gold prices rose and hovered near a record high hit in the previous session amid uncertainties around the US election, ongoing Middle East tensions, and expectations of central banks' interest rate cuts. Spot gold rose 0.5 percent to USD 2,732.44 per ounce. US gold futures rose 0.3 percent to USD 2,746.20 per ounce. Gold hit an all-time high of USD 2,740.37 on Monday and has gained more than 32 percent since the start of the year. Among other precious metals, spot silver rose 0.9 percent to USD 34.05 per ounce after hitting its highest level since late 2012 in the previous session, platinum rose 0.6 percent to USD 1,006.87 per ounce, and palladium rose 1.1 percent to USD 1,062.59 per ounce.

Japan stocks fall over 1%

TOKYO: Japan's stocks fell at the close of trading yesterday, as investors' concerns grew about the outcome of the country's general elections to be held on October 27. According to Tokyo Stock Exchange, the Nikkei 225 index ended the session down 1.39%, or 542.64 points, to 38,411.96, while the broader Topix index fell 1.06%, or 28.44 points, to close at 2,651.47. Fast Retailing, the parent company of Uniqlo fell 3.18% or 1,690 points to 51,430 yen. Chip stocks deepened their losses, with Tokyo Electron falling 3.08%, or 730 points, to close at 22,990 yen and Advantest falling 2.7%, or 221 points, to close at 7,960 yen. In morning trading, the US currency was at 150.75 yen. - **ONA**

STRATEGIC

Oman Data Park signs MoU to offer advanced cybersecurity for hybrid digital environments

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Data Park (ODP), the Sultanate of Oman's premier provider of state-of-the-art data centres and cloud services, recently announced that it has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Seclore, the global leader in data-centric cybersecurity solutions.

This strategic alliance is poised to address growing concerns around data privacy, security, and third-party risks, particularly as artificial intelligence gains traction in Oman. By reinforcing cybersecurity measures, this collaboration reflects ODP's unwavering commitment to fortifying the nation's digital infrastructure and fostering trust in a complex digital environment.

Eng. Maqbool Al Wahaibi, CEO of Oman Data Park, expressed his enthusiasm about the partnership, stating, "Data protection has evolved from an operational necessity to a strategic priority, vital for safeguarding the very foundation of businesses. In today's rapidly evolving cybersecurity landscape, where threats become more sophisticated and pervasive, securing sensitive information is paramount. At Oman Data Park, we recognize that adopting a data-centric security framework



is critical to meeting stringent regulatory standards and enhancing long-term business resilience and operational efficiency. Our partnership with Seclore reaffirms our dedication to setting new standards in cybersecurity and further solidifies our leadership in IT-managed services. Together, we are empowering businesses to thrive securely, ensuring they remain agile and protected in all their digital endeavours."

Justin Endres, Chief Revenue Officer at Seclore, said, "We are delighted to have joined hands with ODP, which has a longstanding reputation as a trusted part-

ner in Oman's IT industry. This collaboration highlights Seclore's commitment to the region and reflects our dedication to supporting both our partners and their clients. The Middle East region, including Oman, presents a substantial growth opportunity for Seclore, and we are eager to harness this partnership with ODP to drive mutual success in these dynamic markets."

As businesses increasingly rely on external collaborations and third-party service providers, this partnership represents a forward-looking approach to cybersecurity, enabling companies to share

mission-critical data confidently while driving their growth agendas. With Seclore, ODP aims to deliver advanced data-centric security solutions that allow organizations to manage sensitive information securely across hybrid environments. By addressing the complexities of digital operations—where data flows seamlessly between on-premise systems, cloud platforms, and third-party networks—this initiative aims to mitigate cybersecurity risks and strengthen Oman's digital infrastructure, ensuring that critical information is effectively safeguarded. Furthermore, the integration of cutting-edge cybersecurity measures paves the way for the adoption of AI-driven innovations, empowering organizations to grow while maintaining operational efficiency and robust data security.

By fostering a proactive cybersecurity culture, ODP is committed to enhancing its service offerings and reinforcing its role as a catalyst for digital transformation in the Sultanate. As an innovative and dynamic organization, ODP will continue to assist businesses embrace emerging technologies and promote sustainable growth, ultimately contributing to a more resilient and digitally advanced economy.

FREE TRADE ZONE

FTZ reforms deepen China-ASEAN economic, trade ties

NANNING: In a bustling fruit processing facility in south China's Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region, the air is sweet with the luscious aroma of mangoes. Workers diligently manage a state-of-the-art, fully automated production line, preparing to send the delectable products to eager markets across Southeast Asia.

Trade exchange of agricultural products
In recent years, with the deepening of economic cooperation and the trade exchange of agricultural products between China and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), the complementary advantages of agricultural products trade between Guangxi and ASEAN have become more prominent. The geographical advantages of land and

sea links with ASEAN have also injected vitality into the continuous expansion of Guangxi's fruit exports.

Year-on-year increase
According to data from the Nanning Customs, in 2023, Guangxi imported 16.71 billion yuan (about \$2.4 billion) of ASEAN agricultural products, a year-on-year increase of 43.1 percent. At the same time, Guangxi's special fruits, such as orah mandarins and sweet tangerines, have also been well received in the ASEAN market. The thriving fruit trade has also spurred related companies to invest and establish their operations in Guangxi. Guangxi Junyi Agricultural Science and Technology Co., Ltd., a mango-processing company established in 2020 in the Chongzuo area in the China (Guangxi)

Pilot Free Trade Zone (FTZ), is the region's first border-based fruit processing enterprise with an annual main business turnover of at least 20 million yuan.

Pilot policies
"The pilot FTZ's policies, including tax incentives, streamlined trade procedures and financial innovations, have not only laid fertile ground for growth but also provided substantial cost benefits to businesses," said Shen Wuyang, the company's deputy general manager. Guangxi, often described as China's gateway to ASEAN, has risen to the forefront of China's trade and cooperation with ASEAN in recent years, thanks to the establishment of the pilot FTZ. In 2019, the pilot FTZ was established to promote China's

opening up to ASEAN and to pilot new mechanisms in China-ASEAN cooperation. Since its inception, the pilot FTZ has proven to be a powerhouse, taking up a 37.7 percent share of Guangxi's total foreign investment and a notable 38.6 percent share of the region's foreign trade volume. The pilot FTZ comprises the Nanning area in the region's capital city, the Qinzhou Port area along the coast and the Chongzuo area bordering Vietnam. The Chongzuo area is home to Youyiguan Port, or Friendship Pass, one of China's busiest land ports for the trade of fruit. Thanks to the development of economic and trade relations between China and ASEAN, Youyiguan Port's cargo clearance efficiency has doubled. - **Xinhua**

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

A'Saffa Foods, up 5.38%, was the top gainer while Gulf Hotels, down 10.00%, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,796.05 points, down by 0.08% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.28% at 432.92 points. A'Saffa Foods, up 5.38%, was the top gainer while Gulf Hotels, down 10.00%, was the top loser. Shares of OQGN were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 576 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 2.46 million, with more than 12.44 million shares changing hands. Out of 47 traded securities, 16 advanced, 17 declined, and 14 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for RO 555K while domestic investors were net buyers for RO 299K, followed by foreign investors for RO 256K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,972.21 points, down 0.1%. Prices of DIDIC, Global Financial Investments, OMINVEST, Sohar International Bank were up

by 4.09%, 2.47%, 1.34%, 0.69% respectively. Prices of Al Madina Investments, Financial Corporation, Muscat Finance, Oman United Insurance, Bank Nizwa were down by 8.00%, 6.98%, 4.26%, 3.48%, 1.87% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,595.15 points, up 0.13%. Prices of A'Saffa Foods, Muscat Thread Mill, Jazeera Steel Products, Voltamp Energy, Raysut Cement were up by 5.38%, 1.37%, 1.03%, 1.00%, 0.86% respectively. Prices of Oman Fisheries, Al Anwar Ceramics, Oman Cables Industry, Galfar Engineering, Oman Cement were down by 2.94%, 2.11%, 1.22%, 0.90%, 0.26% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.14% before closing at 1,833.37 points. Prices of Sembcorp Salalah, Phoenix Power, Renaissance Services, Al Jazeera Services were up by 1.82%, 1.72%, 0.78%, 0.52% respectively. Prices of Gulf Hotels, Al Batinah Power, OQ Gas Networks, Abraj Energy, Oman Telecom were down by 10.00%, 1.25%, 0.70%, 0.67%, 0.20% respectively.— **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,810.76	4,795.44	4,796.05	4,799.89	-3.85	-0.08
FINANCIAL INDEX	8,016.67	7,972.21	7,972.21	7,979.83	-7.63	-0.10
Industry Index	5,599.88	5,559.52	5,595.15	5,588.06	7.09	0.13
Services Index	1,839.37	1,828.90	1,833.37	1,830.76	2.61	0.14
MSX Shariah Index	433.78	432.39	432.92	434.13	-1.20	-0.28
MSX TR INDEX	6,712.26	6,690.89	6,691.73	6,697.10	-5.37	-0.08
FINANCIAL TR IDX	9,107.76	9,057.25	9,057.25	9,065.91	-8.66	-0.10
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,460.94	6,414.37	6,455.47	6,447.29	8.18	0.13
SERVICES TR IDX	2,148.84	2,136.61	2,141.82	2,138.78	3.05	0.14
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,066.88	1,066.88	1,066.88	1,066.88	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap.	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
12,440,257	2,462,133	576	27,837,295,625	16	17	14	47

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, OCTOBER 22

ISINSECURITY NAMEVOLUMETURNOVERTRADESOPEN PRICEHIGHLOWCLOSE PREV. PREVIOUS CLOSEDIFF (RD)DIFF %LAST PR.LAST BD.LAST OFFERPREV. VALUEMARKET CAP

REGULAR MARKET

OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	700	274	1	0.392	0.392	0.392	0.392	0.372	0.020	5.376	0.392	0.335	0.392	0.100	47,040,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	1,125,940	93,116	51	0.082	0.083	0.082	0.083	0.081	0.002	2.469	0.083	0.073	0.083	0.100	16,600,000
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	56,000	6,301	8	0.112	0.114	0.112	0.112	0.110	0.002	1.818	0.112	0.110	0.115	0.100	106,912,058
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	1,309,265	490,583	45	0.372	0.380	0.372	0.377	0.372	0.005	1.344	0.379	0.379	0.379	0.100	251,973,766
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	30,000	8,850	4	0.295	0.295	0.295	0.292	0.003	1.027	0.295	0.275	0.296	0.389	0.100	36,844,898
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	79,330	30,630	14	0.394	0.394	0.385	0.390	0.387	0.003	0.775	0.390	0.389	0.385	0.100	92,199,900
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	1,148,249	168,341	19	0.147	0.147	0.146	0.147	0.146	0.001	0.885	0.147	0.138	0.155	0.100	819,825,202
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	25,587	7,542	1	0.295	0.295	0.295	0.295	0.295	0.000	0.000	0.295	0.295	0.295	0.100	479,654,175
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	240	174	2	0.725	0.725	0.725	0.725	0.725	0.000	0.000	0.725	0.731	0.780	0.100	66,875,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	2,115,254	562,104	65	0.265	0.266	0.265	0.265	0.265	0.000	0.000	0.265	0.265	0.266	0.100	1,989,195,221
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	8,400	664	3	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.000	0.000	0.079	0.078	0.079	0.100	13,825,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	187,286	185,973	24	0.993	0.993	0.992	0.993	0.995	-0.002	-0.201	0.993	0.993	0.993	0.100	744,750,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	2,000	774	1	0.387	0.387	0.387	0.386	0.388	-0.001	-0.258	0.387	0.000	0.387	0.100	128,047,739
OM0000008954	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	215,006	63,517	17	0.295	0.296	0.294	0.295	0.297	-0.002	-0.673	0.295	0.294	0.296	0.100	227,209,000
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	373,374	528,983	146	0.142	0.142	0.141	0.141	0.142	-0.001	-0.704	0.142	0.136	0.142	0.100	610,617,973
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	63,426	5,074	10	0.080	0.080	0.079	0.079	0.080	-0.001	-1.250	0.080	0.079	0.080	0.100	53,316,107
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	40,496	2,921	7	0.073	0.073	0.072	0.072	0.073	-0.001	-1.370	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.100	8,775,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	105,000	6,090	4	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.059	-0.001	-1.695	0.058	0.057	0.060	0.100	20,655,383
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	1,768	246	2	0.140	0.140	0.139	0.139	0.142	-0.003	-2.113	0.139	0.128	0.152	0.100	30,580,000
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	2,809	702	2	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.250	0.259	-0.009	-3.475	0.250	0.245	0.250	0.100	25,000,000
Total	20	10,230,450	2,160,860	426												

Parallel Market

OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTERNATIONAL DEV. & INV. HO.	15,470	3,327	3	0.220	0.229	0.210	0.229	0.220	0.009	4.091	0.229	0.210	0.229	0.100	93,717,406
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	20,264	1,176	3	0.058	0.059	0.058	0.059	0.058	0.001	1.724	0.059	0.057	0.059	0.100	86,293,486
OM0000008447	OMAN RETT FUND	172,346	11,367	13	0.066	0.066	0.065	0.066	0.065	0.001	1.538	0.066	0.065	0.067	0.100	33,569,666
OM0000003036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	1,281	190	1	0.148	0.148	0.148	0.148	0.146	0.002	1.370	0.148	0.000	0.148	0.100	2,428,328
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	26,937	10,778	11	0.401	0.404	0.400	0.404	0.400	0.004	1.000	0.400	0.400	0.404	0.100	32,888,711
OM0000002226	ALAJAZEERA SERVICES	17,592	3,437	7	0.194	0.197	0.194	0.195	0.194	0.001	0.515	0.195	0.195	0.209	0.100	11,934,833
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	786,844	57,472	37	0.074	0.074	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.000	0.000	0.073	0.072	0.073	0.100	15,489,140
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	326,019	54,771	3	0.168	0.168	0.168	0.168	0.168	0.000	0.000	0.168	0.152	0.168	0.100	503,387,041
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	27,300	7,371	5	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.000	0.000	0.270	0.270	0.297	0.100	43,200,000
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	4,985	708	2	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.000	0.000	0.142	0.142	0.000	0.100	7,810,000
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	4,204	294	1	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.069	0.070	0.100	15,556,890
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	6,800	646	2	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.095	0.000	0.000	0.095	0.092	0.095	0.100	19,000,000
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	412,660	45,794	19	0.112	0.112	0.109	0.110	0.111	-0.001	-0.901	0.110	0.110	0.111	0.100	22,328,509
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	12,800	33,177	5	2.600	2.600	2.510	2.598	2.630	-0.032	-1.217	2.598	2.598	2.580	0.100	233,040,600
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	3,476	365	1	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.107	-0.002	-1.869	0.105	0.105	0.108	0.100	234,880,068
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	1,323	60	2	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.047	-0.002	-4.255	0.045	0.045	0.047	0.100	13,821,585
OM0000002911	FINANCIAL CORPORATION	1,460	58	1	0.040	0.040	0.040	0.040	0.043	-0.003	-6.977	0.040	0.040	0.000	0.100	2,801,198
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	3,969	183	2	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.050	-0.004	-8.000	0.046	0.046	0.050	0.100	3,910,000
OM0000001111	GULF HOTELS (OM)	1,900	3,420	2	3.420	3.420	3.420	3.420	3.800	-0.380	-10.000	3.420	0.000	4.100	1.000	11,724,861
Total	19	1,846,626	234,593	120												

MAJOR OVERHAUL

HSBC merges commercial and investment banking units, names first female CFO

HONG KONG: HSBC Holdings, said it would combine its commercial and investment banking operations in a major overhaul under new CEO Georges Elhedery that has also seen key senior staff depart. Seeking to simplify the Asia - focused bank's

business and reduce costs, HSBC said it would be restructuring into four business units and slashing senior management positions.

lhedery said in a memo to staff that the new leadership structure, which includes the appointment

of Pam Kaur as the lender's first female chief financial officer, would "unleash our full potential and drive success into the future".

The group is carving up its operations into four business lines, namely UK, Hong Kong, corpo-

rate and institutional banking and wealth banking. The new corporate and institutional banking unit will house a newly combined commercial banking and global banking and markets business, and western wholesale banking businesses.—**BNA**

REMARKABLE GROWTH

India's patent filings boom as innovation thrives

NEW DELHI: India has seen remarkable growth in global innovation, as reflected by the rise in the country's patent filings over the past decade.

From 26,807 filings in 2014 to over 1 lakh in 2024, the numbers highlight a significant increase in research and development across various sectors. This boom in patent activity showcases how innovation is becoming central to India's economy.

The surge in filings started around 2015 and has continued strongly, driven by a mix of technological advancements and expanding industries.

Geetika Dubey Manager at GreyB, stated several key industries are leading this growth, with the Internet of Things (IoT) standing out. Patents in connected devices and smart networks are on the rise, driven by the need for smarter solutions across sectors like healthcare, manufacturing, and urban infrastructure. India's focus on digitization is making IoT a key area of development.

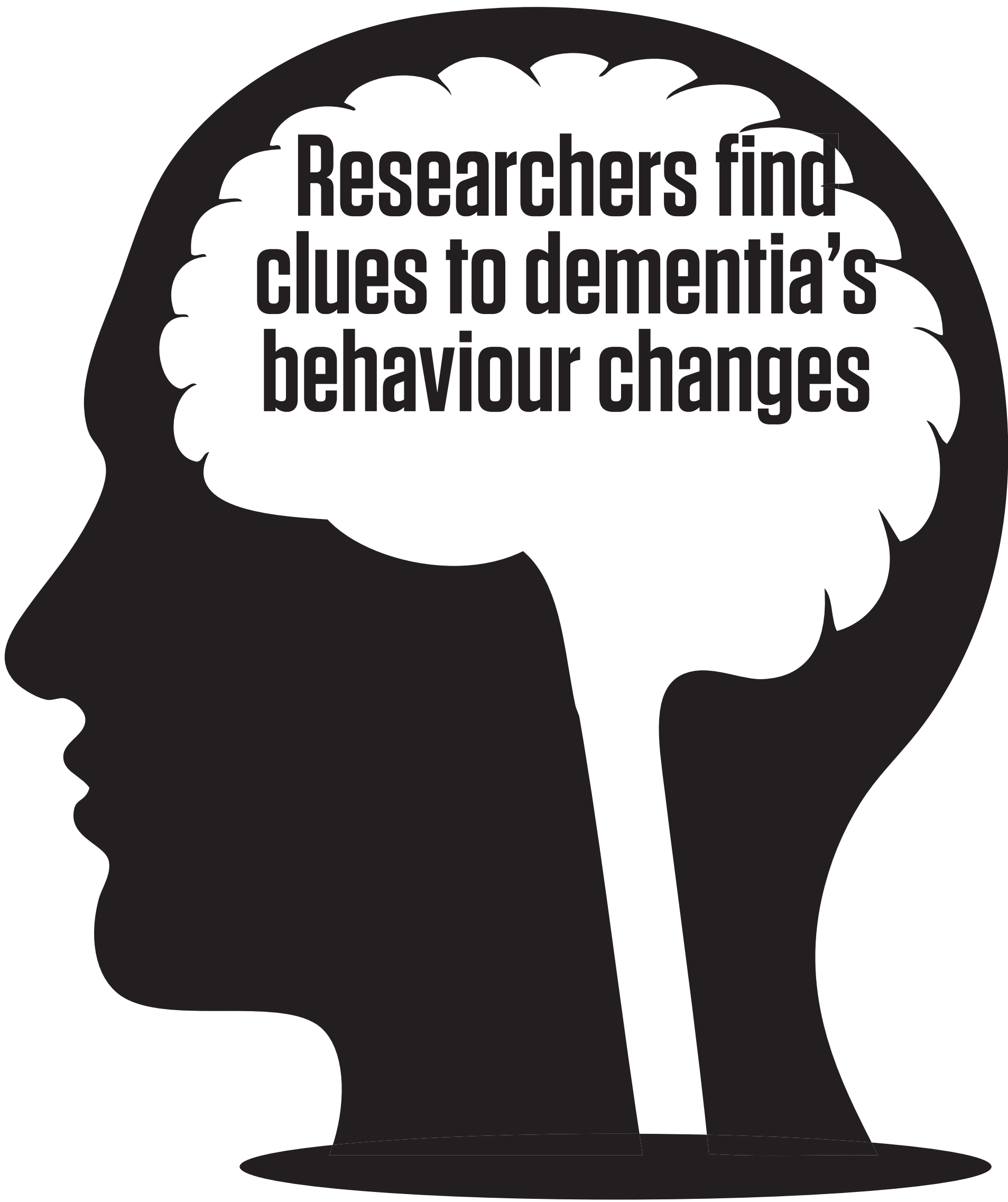
The pharmaceutical and healthcare sectors are also major contributors. Patents related to drug discovery, biological organisms, and medical treatments reflect India's growing expertise in healthcare innovation. With the ongoing global challenges in health, Indian researchers and companies are stepping up efforts to innovate in drug development and biotech solutions.

Sustainable energy is another field seeing strong growth. Patents in solar power, battery technologies, and electric power systems highlight the country's push toward cleaner, more efficient energy sources.

India's focus on developing green technologies is helping reduce carbon emissions and creating opportunities for growth in the renewable energy sector.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) and data technologies also show impressive patent growth. AI innovations, from machine learning to data processing, are becoming a core part of India's digital

From 26,807 filings in 2014 to over 1 lakh in 2024, the numbers highlight a significant increase in research and development



Researchers find clues to dementia's behaviour changes

A team of University of Michigan researchers reports new clues about what might be happening in the brains of people experiencing even the earliest signs of dementia-related behaviour changes

When most people think of dementia, particularly Alzheimer's disease, they often think of memory loss first. However, dementia alters a person's behaviour, whether it leads them to become agitated or worried, melancholy, nervous, or apathetic, or even changes their entire personality. Over time, these behavioural changes can cause as much disruption in their life as losing their capacity to think and remember effectively. Now, a team of University of Michigan researchers reports new clues about what might be happening in the brains of people experiencing even the earliest signs of dementia-related behaviour changes. Using two types of advanced medical imaging to study the brains of 128 people in the early stages of dementia, they show links between one of the brain's most crucial communication networks, a protein called tau, and the level of behavioral symptoms a person has. This goes beyond the role of tau that scientists have already

known about in people with more advanced dementia: causing tangled nerve fibres in brain regions involved in thinking and memory. The new study suggests that tau disrupts the integrity of the brain's salience network. This highway of connections between specific brain regions is key to our ability to understand and decide how to react to things that are happening around us. It also helps us process our own thoughts and emotions. The researchers showed that the more a person's salience network had been disrupted in the presence of tau, the more behavioural changes that person would experience. They report their findings in Alzheimer's & Dementia: The Journal of the Alzheimer's Association. While the one-time imaging of these 128 research volunteers can't show cause and effect, the strong association between tau, salience network disruption and behavior change is intriguing, the team says. They call for further study of the potential connection in other populations, and for research

to evaluate change over time to explore what might be going on within the pathways of connected brain cells that make up the salience network, and explore how it relates to tau buildup and behavioural changes over the course of years. They also hope to test whether they could slow behavioral change in people with early-stage dementia by targeting the salience network with mild electrical current or magnetic fields applied from outside the skull and guided by precise imaging. The researchers, from the Research Program on Cognition and Neuromodulation Based Interventions (RP-CNBI), are led by Alexandru D. Iordan, Ph.D. and programme leader Benjamin M. Hampstead, Ph.D. Both are faculty in the U-M Medical School's Department of Psychiatry. Iordan, a neuroscientist who is lead author of the new study, says, "What we see is that the presence tau pathology relates to behavioural symptoms not in a direct relationship, but rather through dysfunction of a specific network in the brain -- the sali-

ence network. The more affected this network is, the more severe the behavioral symptoms." He adds, "This is the first study that links the biomarker status of an individual with the dysfunction of this network, and behavioral symptoms, in people on the Alzheimer's disease spectrum." The team used functional magnetic resonance imaging, or fMRI, to study each volunteer's brain and trace three different networks that each connect far-flung areas of the brain. They used a measure called the network segregation index, to gauge how functionally independent each network was relative to other brain networks. They combined fMRI findings with results from a battery of neuropsychological tests and behavioural questionnaires the volunteers took. They also looked at results from positron emission tomography, or PET, scans that showed whether the person's brain contained excess tau protein as well as beta amyloid, another Alzheimer's-related protein. The salience network was the only one of the three networks whose level of integrity correlat-

ed with the presence of tau and the severity of dementia-related behavioural issues. The default-mode network appears to be involved as a supporting player. The third network studied, called the frontoparietal network, was not related to behavioural symptoms. Iordan notes that the salience network is also known to be involved in some psychiatric disorders and in frontotemporal dementia, a type of early-onset, rapidly progressing dementia marked mainly by behavioral and personality changes. Iordan notes that PET scans for tau and amyloid are now used clinically in the diagnosis of dementia, and in managing treatment with new medications that aim to reduce the buildup of amyloid, with the goal of slowing cognitive decline. But blood tests that can also detect the presence of tau and

amyloid, and use them as biomarkers of dementia risk, have also started to become available. Since they're much less expensive than PET scans, they might also be useful in future studies of tau's role in behavioural changes too, he says. Further research could also help explain and even predict variation in the onset of behavioural changes in people with dementia, and the pace of decline. It might also lead to ways to identify people whose behaviour changes are their earliest detectable sign of dementia risk, even before cognitive ability changes. But the most exciting thing to Iordan and his colleagues? "Our findings provide us with a functional target for potential intervention," he said. "We will soon be able to see if brain stimulation changes these relationships thanks to a larger study led by Dr. Hampstead that evaluates the effects of different doses of weak electrical currents applied to the brain. This larger study is nearing completion, and we are very excited to see what the results show, so stay tuned!" -ANI



HOW IS THE US PRESIDENT ELECTED?

The United States will hold its presidential election on November 5. Here’s everything you need to know about how that process works.

The 2024 US presidential election will take place on November 5, with former President Donald Trump running against the current vice president, Kamala Harris. Here are all your questions about the US election process answered.

Who can run for presidential office?
The US Constitution has three basic requirements for presidential candidates: Individuals must be natural-born citizens of the United States and at least 35 years old and have lived in the country for 14 years. There are some exceptions to the 14-year requirement for members of the US armed forces.

What are the requirements for candidates?
“Almost anybody who’s an adult citizen can run for president,” Wayne Steger, a political science professor at DePaul University in the US state of Illinois, told DW. That includes people who have been accused or convicted of crimes. The US Constitution, in fact, contains a provision that explicitly allows these individuals to run to ensure that political prisoners are not denied the ability to lead, Steger said.

A section of the 14th Amendment of the US Constitution famously prohibits individuals who have “engaged in insurrection or rebellion against the same, or given aid or comfort to the enemies thereof” from holding political office. But Steger said it was very unlikely that the amendment would play a role in the upcoming election.

Though the Supreme Court won’t rule on Trump’s involvement in the January 6, 2021, attack on the US Capitol before the 2024 election, a majority of justices said in July that the former president had broad protection from criminal prosecution for actions that fell within his official responsibilities. The Supreme Court has delegated the lower District Court in Washington to determine just how that immunity should be applied.



What happens in primaries and caucuses?
These modest eligibility requirements mean that the candidate pool must be whittled down before the November election.

Primaries and caucuses represent the first step of this process by determining political party support for candidates. These take place at the state level during early spring of an election year. Unless a candidate runs as an independent, they will register to run with a political party in the state where they

live. As in regular elections, primaries take place via secret ballot, and the candidate with the most votes wins. Caucuses are more complex. In states that use them, a day is designated for political party members to meet to decide together, through a sort of public vote, which candidate they want to represent them. Hundreds of these meetings occur when a state holds its caucus.

Primaries and caucuses look different depending on the state and the party, but the goal is the same:

to determine support for individual candidates and pick a nominee for the general election.

What is the significance of the national conventions?
After all the state-level primaries and caucuses, the political parties hold national conventions to officially choose the candidate to represent them in the November election, along with his or her running mate.

At the conventions, delegates from each of the 50 US states come

together to vote on the presidential nominee. A candidate needs a simple majority of delegate votes to win the nomination.

There are different types of delegates. The Democrats call them “pledged” and “unpledged”; the Republicans call them “bound” and “unbound.” Pledged/bound delegates must vote for the candidate who won the primary in their state — at least in the first round of voting. Unpledged/unbound candidates are free to vote for a candidate of their personal choosing.

At the Democrats’ convention, unpledged delegates are only allowed to vote starting in round two.

In July, President Joe Biden withdrew his candidacy for the 2024 election, endorsing his vice president, Kamala Harris. All Democratic delegates who had previously been pledged to Biden were free to vote for whomever they chose at the Democratic National Convention, since the candidate they’d been pledged to via the primary process was no longer running. The overwhelming majority voted for Harris, so she became the presidential nominee.

What happens in the presidential general election?
After national conventions, election season heats up. On Election Day, votes are held nationwide in thousands of cities and towns. Any US citizen registered to vote can take part.

What is the Electoral College?
The US presidential election is not determined by a majority vote but is ultimately decided by the Electoral College, which comprises 538 electors (one elector for every member of US Congress, plus three for the District of Columbia). A simple majority of at least 270 of these electoral votes is needed to win the election.

These votes are allocated based on geography and population, with each US state given one electoral vote per member of its congressional delegation. That means that regardless of population, each state automatically has three electoral votes because all states have two US senators and at least one seat in the House of Representatives.

The number of people who make up a state’s congressional delegation depends on its population. California has the most electoral votes, with 54, while Vermont, for example, has the minimum, with three. Except for Maine and Nebraska, which have a variation of the proportional representation system, a candidate will win all of a state’s electoral votes if it wins the majority there. -DW



ROUND-UP

Mitsubishi unveils all-new XFORCE in Oman

Built for the bold, this stylish, dynamic, and versatile compact SUV is designed to resonate with a new generation of drivers – the style-savvy, the daring, and the explorers who challenge the ordinary

MUSCAT: General Automotive Company, the authorised distributor of Mitsubishi Motors in Oman officially unveils the all-new Mitsubishi XFORCE.

Built for the bold, this stylish, dynamic, and versatile compact SUV is designed to resonate with a new generation of drivers – the style-savvy, the daring, and the explorers who challenge the ordinary.

Targeted at young families, ambitious young professionals, and empty nesters looking to elevate their driving experience, the XFORCE encapsulates Mitsubishi Motors' vision of bold innovation. The model combines sleek aesthetics with a range of advanced features, all while delivering the exceptional reliability Mitsubishi is renowned for.

Junya Takami, President of Mitsubishi Motors Middle East and Africa, highlighted the model's versatility: "The XFORCE is engineered for those who want more from their vehicles – more style, more capability, and more boldness. It's for the ones who defy limits, explore the unknown, and embrace every jour-



ney with confidence."

Hani M. Al Zubair, Chairman of Mobility and Equipment Sector, The Zubair Corporation, said: "While Mitsubishi has been striving to introduce highly advanced and innovative products in the region, General Automotive Company has played a pivotal role in bringing this cutting-edge automotive technology and unparalleled customer service excellence to the Omani market, in line with our vision of staying ahead of the market trends.

"The all-new Mitsubishi XFORCE is more than just a car – it's a statement. Built for those who are bold at heart, it combines cutting-edge technology with a trendy, striking design that appeals to those who seek adventure, sophistication, and performance."

The Mitsubishi XFORCE leads the charge with a sleek and commanding exterior that is sure to turn heads. The bold front grille with dynamic shield and honeycomb accents, complemented by the newly designed T-shaped LED headlights, reflects a trend-forward stance. The dual-tone 18" wheels, alongside T-shaped LED rear lights, offer a contemporary touch that resonates with those

who live life on the edge.

Engineered for tech-savvy interior

Inside, the XFORCE offers a modern, inviting cabin, featuring premium melange materials resistant to dirt, newly designed seats with black and mocha synthetic leather, and a thoughtful anti-temperature rise function – all engineered to provide maximum comfort. The spacious cabin, enhanced with ambient lighting, a 12.3" Smartphone-link Display Audio, and an 8" Digital Driver Display, delivers the perfect combination of style and technology for today's tech-savvy drivers. Seamless connectivity on the go is ensured with features like wireless smartphone charging and USB Type A & C ports in the rear console.

Performance for explorers

The XFORCE offers four distinct driving modes – Normal, Gravel, Wet, and Mud – ensuring smooth and reliable performance across a variety of terrains. With its enhanced ground clearance and intelligent driving systems, this SUV is built for drivers who seek new horizons and are not afraid to challenge boundaries. The rear seat

roominess, ample storage space, and hands-free power tailgate add to the vehicle's practicality.

Innovative safety features for modern explorer

Safety is a priority in the Mitsubishi XFORCE, which comes equipped with six airbags, Blind Spot Warning (BSW), Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA), Tire Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS), and a rearview camera. These state-of-the-art safety features ensure peace of mind for drivers and passengers alike.

Built for bold – Ready for the Omani landscapes

Designed for Oman's bold, ambitious, and adventurous drivers, the XFORCE delivers a unique blend of power, style, and versatility, setting a new benchmark in the compact SUV segment.

The all-new Mitsubishi XFORCE is more than just a vehicle – it's a lifestyle choice for those who want to drive with purpose, confidence, and style. The XFORCE is the perfect companion for those who embrace life with a sense of adventure and boldness. Built for the bold, this SUV invites you to explore the extraordinary.



Zubair Corporation celebrates spirit of Omani women

MUSCAT: The Zubair Corporation (TZC) celebrated Omani Women's Day with a vibrant and empowering event, honouring the achievements, contributions, and spirit of the 500 women across the group. The event, held under the patronage of Eng. Naashiah Saud Al Kharusi, demonstrated the banner of the SheSpirit initiative, focused on promoting women's empowerment, health, and work-life balance.

The celebration began with opening remarks by Sharifa Al Balushi, Group Head of the Human Capital Centre of Excellence at TZC, who stated, "At The Zubair Corporation, we recognise the integral role women play in shaping the future of our organisation. From leadership roles to operational excellence, our female employees are at the heart of our success, and we remain committed to providing the support, growth opportunities, and resources they need to thrive. Omani Women's Day is not just a celebration; it is a powerful reminder of the crucial role women play in shaping our society. Omani women have demonstrated that they are not only integral to the social fabric but also essential pillars driving the economic and social progress of our nation."

The highlight of the day was an insightful panel discussion featuring The Eng. Naashiah Saud Al Kharusi, a prominent figure in Omani engineering. The panel sparked meaningful conversations on women's evolving role in traditionally male-dominated sectors. Ruba Sheikh, a well-known nutritionist, engaged the audience in an interactive dialogue on women's health and nutrition. Her session included a Q&A, allowing participants to gain valuable insights into maintaining a healthy and balanced lifestyle.

The festivities continued with a fun-filled cake decoration competition, judged by the skilled pastry chef at the Shangri La Barr Al Jissah. The competition brought out the creativity of the participants, adding a touch of light-hearted fun to the day.

During a session on the Role of Women at The Zubair Corporation, TZC's GCEO, Niels Bormans, shared his thoughts on equality and empowerment, saying, "Equality is not just a principle but a practice at The Zubair Corporation. We believe that empowering women is key to driving innovation, fostering a culture of inclusivity, and ultimately, achieving our vision. Today, we celebrate the remarkable women who contribute to the growth of the Corporation and the nation."

The day culminated with a Long Service Awards Ceremony, where the GCEO and Leadership Team honoured women employees for their dedication and longstanding commitment to the Corporation, capturing and celebrating their invaluable contributions to the company's legacy for 20 years and above.

ISAS RIZWIN NAMED BEST PLAYER



IS Al Seeb Under 17 handball team clinches silver medal at CBSE national championship

MUSCAT: The Under 17 Handball team of Indian School Al Seeb (ISAS) shone at the CBSE National Handball Championship at Dr. K N Modi Global School in the Indian city of Modi Nagar, Ghaziabad, by securing the silver medal recently.

Throughout the tournament, held from October 7 to 10 overcoming fierce competition among five teams, the ISAS U17 handball team demonstrated exceptional talent, unwavering determination, and exemplary teamwork. Their remarkable efforts culminated in a commendable finish as runners-up.

The journey to the finals was nothing short of remarkable, as the team navigated a series of exhilarating matches. The campaign commenced with a commanding victory over Bharat National Public School with a final score line of 19-7. The team exhibited dominance in their second match against MES Indian School, Doha, achieving a significant win with a score line of 31-4. Despite a valiant effort in the third match against Dr. K N Modi Global School, the team faced a narrow defeat, concluding

ing the match at 19-23. In a thrilling semi-final showdown, they emerged victorious against The Hindu Public School, clinching a nail-biting win of 23-22.

The final saw the team face hosts Dr. K N Modi Global School, once more; in this fiercely competitive clash, the ISAS team exhibited exemplary fighting spirit before finally losing the match with a score of 14-15, thereby securing the silver medal.

Rizwin Thayat of Indian School Al Seeb was bestowed with the title of Best Player of the CBSE National Handball Championship for his outstanding performance throughout the tournament. His leadership and skill were pivotal in guiding the team to this impressive accomplishment.

The entire team, along with their coach and physical education teacher, Tony Thomas, and the ISAS community, take great pride in this iconic achievement. It stands as a testament to their dedication, hard work, and unwavering sportsmanship. Congratulations to the U17 handball team for their remarkable journey and significant accomplishments at the CBSE national level.

SUPPORTING YOUTH AND SPORTS

Commitment to community: Bank Muscat celebrates 13th edition of Green Sports initiative

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, remains dedicated to community service and social responsibility, aligning its initiatives with sustainable development goals.

Since its launch in 2012, the Green Sports programme has registered a positive feedback, fostering competition among local sports teams for support in categories such as natural or synthetic turf, lighting systems, and water desalination. Building on the success achieved thus far, the Bank recently announced the names of the 20 winning teams for this year's 13th edition of Green Sports in a joyous event organised in Bank Muscat Head Office.

Officials of several sports teams from across the Sultanate have appreciated and praised Bank Muscat for its very important role in supporting the youth and local communities. In particular, they hailed the Bank's pioneering role in enhancing sports, social and community bonding and youth empowerment in Oman. They emphasised the initiative's influence on providing youngsters with the necessary tools and an appropriate environment to develop their skills and talents.

The contribution of the Green Sports programme does not only revolve around sports, but encourages greatly on enhancing the role of voluntary work and community initiatives. Speaking about this, Rubaia Mubarak Al Khalili, Head of the Al Etihad Sports Team in the Wilayat of Bahla, pointed out: "The initiative not only improved sports facilities but also stimulated investment opportunities for the team. The addition of natural grass and lighting has allowed the team to host various events, generating additional income and providing a safe, high-quality training environment for players. Bank Muscat's contribution has helped us to take advantage of an equipped sports field that can be used to host various sports tournaments and events. This in turn will provide an



additional source of income for the team, as well as publicity by inviting media personnel to cover various events held, thus contributing to the development of the team."

Rubaia Al-Khalili explained: "On the technical level, the addition of the natural turf provided a suitable environment for the team to get high-quality training, consequently elevating the level of players and refining their skills. It also contributed to providing a professional competitive atmosphere that enhances the performance of players in local tournaments. And for the community, it encouraged people to exercise and improve their fitness, positively impacting their health. As a team, we aspire in the long term to invest in the premises by creating new opportunities for investment. I would like to take this opportunity to thank Bank Muscat for their support, calling on private sector companies to follow this model and implement projects that support the community as a whole."

As a key pillar of Bank Muscat's CSR programmes and initiatives, the broader vision of the Green Sports programme focuses on the importance of benefiting various groups of the society. One successful example in achieving this goal is Al Shabab Sports team of the Yanqul Sports Club. Ahmed Saleem Al Alawi explained: "The implementation of the turf for the team's field contributed to serving five age groups, including chil-

dren within The Academy, which was launched on the opening day of the project; juniors; youth, who represented some of the Sultanate's sports clubs, including Yanqul, Majis and Bahla; and the main team of Al Shabab Team, the official representative, which was able to win the Yuqul Club Cup in the first year of inaugurating the project. And finally, elderly members who founded the team and had a clear imprint in supporting its members."

The Head of Al Shabab Sports Team continued: "I would like to extend my appreciation to Bank Muscat for its programmes and initiatives in general, and the Green Sports programme in particular. I hope such programmes will continue supporting and encouraging local sports teams."

Khalifa Hamad Al Hasani, Deputy Head of the Azaiba Cultural and Sports Team, highlighted the programme's transformative effect on sports infrastructure, noting its direct benefits for local teams. The Azaiba team, for instance, enhanced its field facilities through improved lighting, enabling more events and activities, particularly in the evenings. He further added: "considering that it is one of its kind, the Green Sports programme contributed today in the emergence of Omani talents and enhanced the role of local teams in supporting national sports."

Khalifa Al Hasani also expressed his appreciation for Bank Muscat

for its dedication to develop sports fields across Oman, stating: "The programme is a great example for supporting the youth and contributing to the development of local teams, which represent strategic locations for organising various social activities."

On his part, Fahad Salem Al Zuhami, a sports journalist, expressed his appreciation to Bank Muscat for implementing this important programme, and emphasized its role in empowering Omani youth and enhancing the infrastructure of local sports teams. Since its inception, the Green Sports programme has supported 203 teams and benefited around 70,000 members.

He added: "The programme witnesses great turn out each year by teams from various governorates, which in turn contributed to enhancing green spaces in the Sultanate. Bank Muscat is keen to continue supporting such programmes for their positive impact, especially for the youth. In addition, the programme witnesses a noticeable attention from media due to its importance in developing sports teams and supporting Omani youth to become stars in the future."

As part of its ongoing commitment, Bank Muscat will continue to enhance community engagement through the Green Sports programme, with plans for new field openings and further support for local teams across the Sultanate of Oman.

ROUND-UP

COYA Muscat debuts at The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort

The opening ceremony indulged guests with a tantalising introduction to Peruvian cuisine, featuring a selection of delectable dishes that were passed around, in a family style-format

MUSCAT: COYA, the world’s premier destination for exquisite Peruvian cuisine and immersive cultural experiences, made its highly anticipated debut in Muscat with an unforgettable grand opening event. The impressive affair, attended by VIPs and media personalities, showcased the best of COYA’s rich heritage and luxurious ambience.



The evening unfolded with a dazzling array of entertainment, including specially curated music from the COYA label, an international DJ spinning captivating tracks, and live performances that set the tone for an evening of sophistication and celebration. For the uninitiated, COYA MUSIC, the in-house record label, curates a diverse lineup of talented artists and DJs, with a focus on South American and Spanish influences that blend Latin rhythms with modern electronic elements.

The opening ceremony indulged guests with a tantalising introduction to Peruvian cuisine, featuring a selection of delectable dishes that were passed around, in a family style-format. This presentation highlighted COYA’s commitment to deliver an immersive and interactive dining experience. It may be noted that the opening comes after a month-long soft launch period, during which the COYA Muscat team underwent extensive training to ensure impeccable service and a seamless guest experience.

The restaurant’s design draws inspiration directly from Peru, featuring authentic artefacts, bespoke furnishings, and vibrant murals that transport visitors to the heart of Latin America. Tropical plants at the entrance create a lush, inviting atmosphere, making a memorable first impression. Adding to the allure, COYA Muscat boasts a stylish outdoor seating area adjacent to The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort pool. This space will soon host COYA’s famed weekend brunches, continuing the venue’s tradition of offering exceptional culinary experiences.

As part of a strategic alliance with the renowned Alfardan Group, COYA, at The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, stands as a testament to the group’s dedication to setting new standards in the luxury hospitality industry. Commenting on the grand opening, Jason Xuereb, Hotel Manager, The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, said, “This opening enhances our already vibrant food and beverage offerings, bringing a unique and engaging Latin American dining experience to our guests. COYA’s exceptional blend of Peruvian cuisine, enchanting music, and stunning design perfectly complements the luxury and elegance of our resort. We look forward to seeing COYA Muscat become a premier destination for both our guests and the local community.” Reiterating similar sentiments, Stefano Pizzini, COYA Middle East’s Director of Operations, stated: “Our team has worked diligently to create an authentic and timeless experience that reflects the essence of Peru. We are proud to offer Muscat a dining venue where exceptional food, vibrant music, and beautiful art come together. This opening is just the beginning, and we are excited to invite guests to embark on this thrilling journey with us.”

Guests at COYA Muscat can indulge in a menu that celebrates traditional Peruvian dishes with a modern twist, including ceviches (marinated seafood), tiraditos (sashimi-style fish), and anticuchos (marinated meat skewers). COYA MUSIC delivers a unique soundscape blending South American and Spanish influences. Art also plays a central role at COYA, with each venue showcasing works by both established and emerging artists, transforming the dining experience into a cultural journey. Since its inception in London’s distinguished Mayfair district in 2012, COYA has swiftly established itself as a leader in luxury dining, expanding its presence to iconic cities such as Dubai, Abu Dhabi, Monte Carlo, Paris, Mykonos, Doha, Riyadh, Marbella, and Barcelona. Each venue exemplifying COYA’s unwavering commitment to authentic Peruvian cuisine, vibrant art, and captivating cultural experiences, solidifying its reputation as a premier dining destination worldwide. COYA Muscat invites guests to experience a new standard in luxury dining, where exceptional food, vibrant music, and artistic expression converge to create a truly immersive Latin American adventure.

LUXURY LIFESTYLE AWARD

Radisson Blu Hotel & Resort’s Salah Al Mamari among best 100 hotel general managers in 2024

MUSCAT: Radisson Hotels Group announced that Salah Al Mamari - General Manager of Radisson Blu Hotel & Resort, Sohar, amongst one of best 100 Hotel General Managers in the world in “Luxury Lifestyle Award 2024”. “We are honoured to win this International Award, such recognition is a testament to the dedication & efforts exerted by our team at Radisson Blu Hotel & Resort, Sohar. We always strive to deliver the highest levels of quality, luxury and unique hospitality experience. Such awards motivate us to continue exceeding our service expectations at all times” said Salah Al Mamari- General Manager of Radisson Blu Hotel & Resort, Sohar. The Global Top 100 Best Hotel General Managers Award for



2024 recognizes the elite group of leading individuals in hospitality sector with most outstanding and exceptional performance.

COMPACT CROSSOVER

Experience versatility and style with MG ZST

MUSCAT: MG ZST, a compact crossover that embodies the perfect blend of contemporary design, exhilarating performance, and advanced technology. Designed with British heritage and crafted to meet the needs of the modern driver, the MG ZST has quickly gained popularity in the Middle East for its dynamic character and exceptional value. Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, CEO, MHD ACERE remarked, “The MG ZST reflects our commitment to delivering vehicles that blend style, performance, and innovation, tailored for the modern driver. Its dynamic design and cutting-edge technology make it a standout in the crossover segment, while the versatility it offers ensures an exceptional driving experience, whether in the city or on the open road. At MHD ACERE, we are proud to continue bringing such remarkable models to Oman, enhancing our customers’ journeys with world-class quality and reliability.” The MG ZST is built to turn heads with its bold new design that exudes confidence and style. Featuring a redesigned front end with a striking hexagonal grille in a sleek black finish, the MG ZST makes a statement on any road.



Slender headlamps with LED daytime running lights enhance visibility, while the sporty rear LED light clusters reflect the powerful ‘Dark Rider’ theme. With black finishes on the side skirts and wheels, and 17-inch alloy wheels available in a range of eye-catching paint colors, the MG ZST stands out wherever it goes. Step inside the MG ZST and experience a cabin that combines comfort with innovation. The luxurious interior boasts a refreshed dashboard with intuitive controls, premium materials like carbon fiber, and textured leather accents.

The LUX variant offers a panoramic sunroof that fills the cabin with natural light, enhancing the sense of space and freedom. With room to seat five, a generous boot capacity, and an electrically adjustable driver’s seat, the MG ZST is designed to tackle life’s adventures in style. Under the hood, the MG ZST offers a choice of two engines to suit your driving style. The energetic 1.3-liter Turbo engine delivers 160 horsepower and 230 Nm of torque, providing a lively and responsive drive, while the 6-speed automatic gearbox ensures smooth acceleration

from 0-100 km/h in just 9.8 seconds. For those who prioritize fuel economy, the 1.5-liter CVT engine offers 118 horsepower, 180 Nm of torque, and impressive efficiency at 16.5 km/l, making it a versatile choice for any journey. The MG ZST comes equipped with advanced technology that enhances your driving experience. A 10.1-inch HD touchscreen display with Apple CarPlay and Android Auto compatibility ensures seamless connectivity with your smartphone apps. The 360-degree surround parking camera simplifies parking and maneuvering, while four USB ports throughout the cabin keep everyone connected. Standard features like cruise control, air conditioning, and keyless entry provide convenience for every adventure. Safety is paramount in the MG ZST, which offers state-of-the-art features to protect you and your passengers. The comprehensive safety suite includes driver, passenger, and curtain airbags, ISO-FIX anchor points for child seats, and active safety measures like auto-hold and a blind spot warning system. With these features, the MG ZST ensures that every journey is safe and secure.

REFINED FEATURES

Lincoln Navigator redefines family travel in ultimate luxury

MUSCAT: Discover the Lincoln Navigator — the ultimate luxury SUV designed for families seeking to elevate every journey with comfort and unforgettable memories. Crafted with meticulous attention to detail, its expansive size and refined features make it a top choice for those who appreciate the finer things in life. Campaign The Lincoln Navigator is now available with Service 5 Years / 100,000 Kms, Registration 1 Year and Manufacturer’s Warranty 5 Years / 100,000 Kms. The campaign is valid up to 7th November 2024.

(Conditions apply. For details visit Lincoln showroom Wattayah.) Beneath the hood, the Navigator roars to life with a twin-turbo 3.5L V6 engine, delivering an exhilarating 440 horsepower. Paired with a 10-speed automatic transmission and SelectShift paddle activation, it promises thrilling, smooth power on any adventure. The Navigator stands out with its adaptive pixel projector LED headlamps, complete with signature lighting, predictive curve illumination, and sign-based lighting for optimal visibility. Its elegant design is further highlighted by a panoramic vista roof with a power



sunshade, and Lincoln Embrace technology, which includes LED-illuminated door handle pockets, approach detection, a glowing star

on the grille, and signature lighting that fades gracefully in and out. Inside, the Navigator offers a sanctuary of relaxation. Enjoy the

convenience of the 1st-row passenger seat memory, 3rd-row Power-Fold 60/40 split bench with power recline, a 12-inch configurable LCD instrument cluster, and head-up display. Ambient LED lighting, enhanced active noise control, and wireless charging ensure passengers experience the pinnacle of luxury and convenience. For those who seek an immersive audio experience, the available Revel® Ultima 3D system, with 28 speakers, is perfectly tuned to the Navigator’s acoustics. The standard SYNC® 4 system lets you seamlessly control audio, navigation, and communication through

the intuitive touchscreen or steering wheel-mounted controls. Safety remains paramount with the Navigator’s dual-stage front airbags, front-seat side airbags, safety canopy side-curtain airbags with a rollover sensor, AdvanceTrac with Roll Stability Control (RSC), MyKey technology, and the SecuriCode invisible keypad. For families who demand more from their journeys, the Lincoln Navigator redefines what a luxury SUV should be — power, prestige and pure comfort. In Oman, Lincoln vehicles are brought to you by Arabian Car Marketing Co.





pH 9.1 to 9.5

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