



HM THE SULTAN GREETES EMIR OF QATAR

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar on his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health, happiness and long life to Sheikh Tamim. His Majesty also prayed to the Almighty Allah for the return of this occasion on him and the people of Qatar, at a time they have realised aspirations of further progress and prosperity. His Majesty also wished the partnership and cooperation relations between Oman and Qatar further progress. — **ONA**



Founded 1975 · Volume 49 No. 202 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group

[TIMESOFOMAN.COM](#) [FACEBOOK.COM/TIMESOFOMAN](#) [TWITTER.COM/TIMESOFOMAN](#) [YOUTUBE.COM/USER/TIMESOFOMANONLINE](#) [TIMESOFOMAN.COM/WHATSAPP](#) [TIMESOFOMAN.COM/RSS](#) [LINKEDIN.COM/COMPANY/TIMES-OF-OMAN](#) [INSTAGRAM.COM/TIMESOFOMAN](#)

Transfer your salary to Meethaq & get

15% cash bonus

[Know more](#) [2465 6666](#)

Terms and conditions apply. Valid until 31 December 2024.

© B. No. 1/14573/9

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Draft version of State Budget discussed



1 The State Council yesterday discussed the report of its expanded Economic and Financial Committee on the draft version of the State Budget for fiscal year 2025. The draft budget will be forwarded to the Council of Ministers, along with the recommendations of the State Council and the Shura Council, in line with the provisions of Article (52) of the Council of Oman Law. **>A3**

OMAN Belarus President visits Sohar Fort

2 President Aleksandr Lukashenko of Belarus and his accompanying delegation visited Sohar Fort in the Wilayat of Sohar, Governorate of North Al Batinah, as part of his official visit to Oman. Upon his arrival at Sohar Fort, the President of Belarus and his delegation were received by Mohammed Suleiman Al Kindi, Governor of North Al Batinah. **>A5**

SPORTS T20 Gulf Cup: Oman edge past Bahrain

3 Oman staged a nail-biting two-run win against Bahrain in their crucial group stage encounter of the Gulf Cup T20 Championship, keeping their title defence alive. It was Duleep Mendis-coached side's second victory after their loss to the hosts UAE in the previous game. Oman had begun their title defence with a win over Qatar in the six-nation tournament. **>A8**

OMAN AND ANGOLA TO EXPLORE NEW STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The visit of Angola's President to the Sultanate of Oman

represents a new chapter of bilateral cooperation between the two countries

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Angola seek to promote bilateral cooperation in various fields and open new horizons for cooperation in a manner that serves their common interests and achieves promising and solid strategic partnerships.

The upcoming official visit of President Joao Lourenco of the Republic of Angola to the Sultanate of Oman on Thursday represents a new chapter of political relations and bilateral cooperation between the two countries. It is also an important step to foster trade and economic ties in a manner that serves their com-



mon interests.

Bilateral relations

Within the context of the bilateral relations, a number of visits were made during the past period that contributed to achieving more rapprochement and exploring opportunities for cooperation

and prospects for partnership between the two countries.

One of the most important visits was made by HH Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth to Angola in May 2024.

During the visit, a cooperation agreement in the field of invest-

President of Angola to visit Oman on Thursday

MUSCAT: President Joao Lourenco of the Republic of Angola will pay an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman on Thursday. A statement to this effect was issued by the Diwan of Royal Court, reading as follows:

"In a bid to promote the joint interests between the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Angola in various spheres, President Joao Lourenco of the Republic of Angola will pay an official visit to the Sultanate of

Oman, starting from Thursday (19 December 2024).

The visit stems from the two countries' keenness on pushing the bilateral relations towards wider horizons to achieve further progress and prosperity.

The visit will explore aspects of cooperation between the two countries and means of promoting them in various fields to meet aspirations of the two countries' peoples and achieve the desired goals." — **ONA**

ment was inked.

In addition, a delegation from the State Council also visited Angola in October 2023 to participate in the meetings of the 147th General Assembly of the Inter-Parliamentary Union.

The Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Angola started to

develop economic and trade relations recently, as there are no agreements or memoranda of understanding signed between the two countries in this field, which is reflected in the figures of the volume of trade and investment between them.

>A2

ISRAELI ONSLAUGHT

Death toll across Gaza Strip crosses 45,000

MUSCAT: Israeli occupation forces committed three massacres against families in the Gaza Strip over the past 24 hours, resulting in the killing of at least 31 Palestinians and the injury to 79 others, according to medical reports.

Local health authorities confirmed that the Palestinian death toll from the Israeli onslaught since October 7, 2023 has risen to 45,059, with an additional 107,041 individuals sustaining injuries. The majority of the victims are women and children.

According to the same sources, emergency services are still unable to reach many casualties and dead bodies trapped under the rubble or scattered on roads



across the war-torn enclave, as Israeli occupation forces continue to obstruct the movement of ambulance and civil defence crews.

Israel's genocidal onslaught

continues unabated despite calls from the UNSC for an immediate ceasefire and directives from the ICJ urging measures to prevent genocide and alleviate the dire situation in Gaza. — **WAPA**

MUSCAT NIGHTS FESTIVAL

A celebration of joy and excitement for all ages



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Get ready to dive into a world of fun and unforgettable moments as the much-anticipated month-long Muscat Nights Festival kicks off on December 23, bringing families together for an exceptional celebration. Spanning across several locations in Muscat, the festival promises a blend of entertainment, culture, and adventure, making it the perfect event for everyone.

The festival will unfold at various venues, including Qurum National Park, Al Amerat Park, Naseem Park, Oman Automobile Association, Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre, Seeb Beach, and Wadi Al Khoud. Each location will offer its own unique experience, ensuring that there's something for everyone.

At the heart of Muscat Nights, attendees will find themselves



immersed in a range of exciting attractions, featuring some of the most beloved characters in entertainment. Step into vibrant worlds filled with Looney Tunes, Scooby-Doo, Batman, the Justice League, and Tom and Jerry. These iconic characters will come to life

in a way never seen before, making it a one-of-a-kind celebration that brings together your favourite childhood characters under one roof. The festival's major highlights include the Flower Festival, Food Festival, Global Village, and stunning Drone Shows, as well as awe-inspiring Laser and Light Shows. Whether you're enjoying the pleasant weather, indulging in delicious cuisine, or watching a mesmerising light display, there will be no shortage of activities to keep you entertained.

The festival will also feature a host of engaging activities across its various venues. At Qurum National Park, visitors can experience the Al Qurum Carnival, equestrian championships, and theatrical performances, while Al Amerat Public Park will host a hybrid show, Heritage Village, amusement rides, and exciting air and acrobatics games.

A unique experience

theguideoman.com @guideoman

24⁰ MUSCAT

ENVIRONMENT AUTHORITY

Symposium held on radiation monitoring

MUSCAT: The Environment Authority is organising a two-day symposium on radiation monitoring in the environment.

The symposium, held in Muscat, seeks to support efforts to protect human health against radiation hazards, endorse the best practices on addressing the rapid pace of environmental challenges and enhance awareness among various segments of society.

The symposium began on Tuesday under the auspices of

Brigadier Eng. Ali Saif Al Muqbali, Chairman of the Authority for Civil Defence and Ambulance (ACDA).

It seeks to foster cooperation and exchange of knowledge among experts and specialists in manner that contributes to the development of policies and standards on environment monitoring and radiation control.

Many researchers, specialists and decision makers are taking part in the symposium. -ONA



oman
OASIS
sifr
Pure Hydration
Zero Sodium

800 71 222
9275 5522

OMAN OASIS Official | OMAN OASIS | OMAN OASIS WATER
OASIS WATER COMPANY S.A.C

NSF IBWA

BILATERAL TRADE

Oman, Angola to explore new partnership

<FROM A1 The inter-trade statistics show that the volume of trade exchange between the two countries amounted to approximately OMR3.2 million by the end of 2023, compared to 2022, when it was about OMR1.3 million, recording an increase of 145.1 percent. The trade balance between the two countries in 2023 was in favour of the Sultanate of Oman, with a surplus of about OMR1.9 million.

Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) indicated that the total Omani exports to the Republic of Angola in 2023 amounted to more than OMR3 million, compared to OMR1.3 million in 2022, recording an increase of 131.9 percent. This surge is attributed to the export of electrical cables to the Republic of Angola.

Statistics indicate that the volume of trade exchange between the two countries reached about OMR1.97 million during the first ten months of 2024, as the value of Omani exports to Angola amounted to OMR1.9 million, while the value of Omani imports from Angola amounted to OMR69,400.

As far as the volume of cumulative Angolan investment licensed in the Sultanate of Oman is concerned, the are two registered companies with Angolan participation until September 2024.

The size of the invested capital increased from OMR24,000 in 2023 to OMR44,000 until September 2024, recording an increase of 83.3 percent. Although this reflects an increase in the interest of Angolans in establishing companies in the Sultanate of Oman, the number of companies and the invested capital is still small.

Ali Said Al Kathiri, Head of the Sultanate of Oman's Mission to the Republic of South Africa, told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the official visit of the Angolan President to the Sultanate of Oman would contribute to boosting economic and trade cooperation as it will explore the joint investment opportunities in sectors such as energy, mining, agriculture, and industry.

He pointed to the potential of signing agreements or memoranda of understanding that would boost trade exchange and open markets between the two countries.

He added that the visit will pave the way for cooperation in energy sector through the exchange of expertise in the fields of oil, gas and renewable energy, and studying joint investment opportunities in energy and sustainability projects.

The visit will also contribute to developing cultural and educational relations, Al Kathiri further added.



He pointed out that the visit would upgrade the political and diplomatic coordination through the exchange of views on a set of regional and international issues, noting that the two countries seek to enhance cooperation in international organizations to back common issues.

He explained that among the areas of cooperation are infrastructure and transportation as the two sides will discuss partnership opportunities in infrastructure projects, developing ports and logistics services, and enhancing maritime and air links between the two countries to facilitate trade and tourism movement.

Al Kathiri said: "The bilateral relations between Oman and Angola are cordial and promising, yet, they are still in their early stages of development compared to the Sultanate of Oman's relations with other countries".

He affirmed that the two countries seek to develop bilateral relations on a solid foundation, so they share a vision based on mutual respect and the desire to upgrade economic and development partnerships.

Although the volume of trade exchange between the two countries is still limited, there are great opportunities for expansion in a number of common areas, said Al Kathiri, who affirmed that fostering cooperation between the two sides comes within international and regional frameworks, in a manner that serves the common interests and enhances stability in both Africa and the Middle East.

He pointed out that there are many lucrative economic opportunities for investment between the Oman and Angola, including natural resources.

He added that the Sultanate of Oman enjoys a huge experience in managing oil resources and renewable energy, which enables it to provide innovative technologies and expertise to enhance productivity and sustainability in Angola, which in turn is one of the largest oil producers in Africa.

In the field of mining, the Head of the Mission said: "Omani companies can participate in mining projects and develop the infrastructure related to this sector, given that Angola enjoys rich resources and precious minerals, such as diamonds, gold, and copper".

He pointed out that the field of food security is one of the important sectors that provide opportunities for cooperation between the two countries. In this context, he said: "The Republic of Angola has fertile agricultural lands and a suitable climate for growing various crops, while the Sultanate of Oman is a growing market for agricultural products. Cooperation in this field would contribute to enhancing food security for both countries".

He explained that Oman and Angola also seek to enhance maritime connectivity between them to facilitate trade, strengthen economic relations, develop sustainable tourism, tourism infrastructure, and exchange expertise in tourism marketing. They also seek to foster cooperation in food processing and heavy industries,

with a focus on enhancing the added value of natural resources.

Ambassador Ali Said Al Kathiri, Head of the Sultanate of Oman's Mission to the Republic of South Africa, stressed that the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Angola can be strategic partners in enhancing regional and international trade, especially through their large ports and logistics facilities.

On his turn, Dr. Frederico Cardoso, Ambassador of the Republic of Angola to the Sultanate of Oman said that the first visit of President João Manuel Gonçalves Lourenço of the Republic of Angola to the Sultanate of Oman and his meeting with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik will constitute an unequivocal signal given by the highest representatives of both countries, of the reciprocal interest in strengthening the bilateral relations and establishing direct communication channels, effective institutional and legal mechanisms of cooperation, which will convert the countries' intentions into concrete achievements.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, the ambassador added that the official visit by the President of Angola to the Sultanate of Oman also constitutes the culmination of other important actions already carried out in the bilateral domain, as well as a great incentive to increasingly reinforce the ties of friendship that unite the countries' governments and their peoples.

He pointed out that as members and partners in several international organizations, in the concert of nations, the relations between the Republic of Angola and the Sultanate of Oman have always been based on mutual respect, friendship and cordiality.

The ambassador explained that the dynamics of changes in the world in recent years and the various challenges have required the two countries to find and experiment with new approaches to ongoing challenges. Many of these approaches, he added, involve strengthening bilateral relations, through identifying the complementarities of our economies, the reciprocity of advantages and the sustainability and long-term nature of the options the two countries share.

He concluded his statement to ONA by saying "These are the foundations of the relationship that the leaders of the Sultanate of Oman and the Republic of Angola are building both at the political level and in areas as important as economic diversification, mining exploration, finance, oil and gas and renewable energies, agriculture, tourism, logistics, food security, transport, new technologies, telecommunications and more". -ONA

GRAND
MILLENNIUM
MUSCAT

Christmas Brunch

Special activities for kids will include
Christmas kids buffet, painting activities, and a Christmas theme movie.

Live cooking & carving stations
Live DJ

25th December 2024
Taybat Restaurant | 12 PM - 4 PM

OMR 25 net per person

Save 25 % when you book before 20th December 2024

OMR 12.5 net per child from 6 - 12 years old
Complimentary for kids below 6 years old

+968 9743 3203

T's&C's apply

Recall

Recall Date: 18/12/2024

Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
CLS 350 Coupe	2019-2023	9

Recall consequence

Mercedes-Benz AG has determined that on certain C-Class (205 platform), E-Class (213 platform), E-Class Coupe/Convertible (238 platform), GLC (253 platform), CLS (257 platform) vehicles with 4-cylinder gasoline engine and 48V system, the software of the engine control unit might not meet specifications regarding misfire detection.

In this case, when exiting sailing mode, the engine control software might erroneously detect misfires. Consequently, under very specific load requirements, the fuel injection could be interrupted causing the vehicle to lose propulsion without prior warning.

Recall Action

As a precautionary measure Zawawi Trading Company team will update the software of the engine control unit on the affected vehicles. The expected workshop visit for the update of the engine control unit will take around 30 minutes. Zawawi Trading Company team will also contact the customers affected by the recall to arrange a convenient time from 18.12.2024 on all working days between 08:00AM-5:00 PM to update the software of the engine control unit.

To check the serial numbers of the affected commodities, please visit the website from Recalls & Warning: <http://recall.pacp.gov.om>

هيئة حماية المستهلك
Consumer Protection Authority
www.pacp.gov.om

خط المستهلك
Consumer line
80079009
80077997

Toll free number
80079777

Zawawi Trading Company LLC.



THE DIFFERENCE...

Our History with you

Banking that is proudly human



بنك ظفار
BankDhofar

State Council discusses draft version report of the State Budget for 2025



The draft budget will be forwarded to the Council of Ministers, along with the recommendations of the State Council and the Shura Council

MUSCAT: The State Council to-day discussed the report of its expanded Economic and Financial Committee on the draft version of the State Budget for fiscal year 2025.

The draft budget will be forwarded to the Council of Ministers, along with the recommendations of the State Council and the Shura Council, in line with the provisions of Article (52) of the

Council of Oman Law.

The discussions took place during the State Council's 4th session of the 2nd regular sitting of the Eighth Term. The meeting was held under the chairmanship of Sheikh Abdulmalik bin Abdullah Al Khalili, Chairman of the State Council.

After extensive debate among the members, the Council approved the report of the expanded Economic and Financial Committee about the draft State Budget for the fiscal year 2025.

At the conclusion of the session, the Council reviewed the Secretariat's General report on the Council's activities. — **ONA**

First ecological park for baobab trees established



MIRBAT: Acting in cooperation with an initiative undertaken by the "Environment Conservation Society" (under establishment), the Environment Authority yesterday implemented a campaign to plant 160 baobab trees in the Wilayat of Mirbat.

The campaign was the first step in establishing an environmental park for baobab trees in the Sultanate of Oman.

The baobab park will be added to a set of sites for domesticating wild trees in different governorates of Oman under the supervision of the Environment Authority.

The new project, which seeks to preserve and spread the species of such rare plants, is being carried out in conjunction with the "National Campaign to Plant 10 Million Wild Trees" in the governorates of Oman.

Eng. Zahran Ahmed Al-Abdussalam, Director General of Environment in Dhofar Governorate, said that the establishment of

the new environmental park in Hasheer Plain, in the Wilayat of Mirbat, stems from the area's proximity to the most important sites of natural growth of baobab trees in the governorate, including Wadi Hanna.

Al-Abdussalam pointed out that, as part of the campaign, baobab seeds were transported and planted in nurseries before being re-planted in the environment park, which houses about 160 baobab trees. He explained that a distance of about 8 meters is kept between the trees, known for developing huge trunks.

By establishing such parks, the Environment Authority seeks to protect and preserve rare species of plants, said Al-Abdussalam, noting the Authority is also establishing permanent centres for studying these plants, introduce them to members of the public and produce seeds from them so that they could be grown in larger numbers in future. — **ONA**



CHANGAN

CS35 PLUS

INTERACTIVE AND SOCIAL SUV



1.4L Turbo Engine, 156 hp 7 Speed DCT
Manufacturer's Warranty - 6 YEARS / 250,000 KMS*

*Terms and Conditions Apply



18" Alloy Wheels



10" Infotainment Touch Screen



Leather Seats



Panoramic Sunroof



Adaptive Cruise Control



360" View Camera

*Easy Monthly Installment is calculated based on 20% down payment for 6 years loan tenure. Subject to credit approvals from Banks only. Images shown are for illustrative purpose only. Specification may vary as per the model variant. To know more, please visit the CHANGAN AUTO Showroom.

Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment LLC

Showrooms: Qurum 94641010, Mawaleh 97888180, Nizwa 96628940
Sohar 95351200, Salalah 96629050, Ibril 96628930
Sales Centers: Barka 96629010, Sur 96628920

800 50800
9662 8909
www.changanoman.com



ENJOY YOUR RIDE; YOU ARE PROTECTED

PROVIDING FLEXIBLE INSURANCE SOLUTIONS SINCE 1985
FOR ALL YOUR INSURANCE NEEDS, CHOOSE US

OMAN UNITED INSURANCE COMPANY SAOG
Post Box 1522, Ruwi, PC 112 Sultanate of Oman
24477300 | info@omanutd.com | www.omanutd.com



Oman United Insurance Co.
S.A.O.G.



Rinnai

COOK YOUR BEST WITH JAPAN'S NO. 1 BRAND
Discover a Wide Range of Table Top Cookers



- Blue Flame Technology
- Flame Failure Security Device
- Detachable stainless steel top plate
- Stainless Steel / Cast Iron Burners
- Enamel Pan Support & More

SHOP NOW



SCAN QR CODE FOR LOCATION



Al Hashar Electronics LLC

For more details, visit or call: Ruwi HO: 94584337 Sohar: 92228272
*Available in all hypermarkets and dealers across Oman

+968-94202775

THE TOMI AWARDS 2024

CELEBRATING CREATIVITY, INNOVATION & EXCELLENCE



THE WINNERS

Best Green Campaign Video :
JW Marriott Hotel Muscat

Best Marketing Video Concept :
Liva Insurance

Best Advertising Campaign - TOMI Choice :
MHD Automobiles - Jeep

Best Entertainment Company :
A Entertainment

Fastest Growing Omani Brand 2024:
Sohar Double Refined Cooking Oil



ROYAL ARMY OF OMAN

RAO celebrates opening of Border Guard Brigade’s Al-Hashman Camp



MUSCAT: The Royal Army of Oman (RAO) yesterday celebrated the opening of “Al Hashman Camp” of the Border Guards Brigade.

The ceremony was held under the auspices of Maj.Gen Mattar Salim Al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO).

The camp’s opening was part of modernization plans adopted by the Sultan’s Armed Forces (SAF) and other departments of the Ministry of Defence. It was a step forward in providing the requirements of sustainability aimed to boost the national roles and tasks undertaken by the RAO and its formations.

After unveiling the camp’s memorial plaque, the RAO Commander and the attendees listened to a briefing about the roles, tasks and national duties of the Border Guard Brigade, which operates in collaboration with other brigades, formations and units of the Royal Army of Oman.

Then, the RAO Commander toured the camp’s facilities and listened to a briefing about its advanced equipment and supplies that fit with the duties assigned to it.

The opening of “Al Hashman Camp” affirms the great attention accorded to the SAF by His Majesty the Supreme Commander and his keenness to upgrade the SAF in a manner that enables them to perform their missions in protecting the nation’s gains and accomplishments, ensuring its security and stability and lending support to development action in the country. — OMA





HONGQI

HS5

OMR 134 PER MONTH

80080777 Azaiba





7 YEARS SERVICE WARRANTY
ROADSIDE ASSISTANCE

Belarus president visits Sohar Fort

The President went on tour of the corridors of the fort, which is a symbol of Oman's ancient history and glorious events. The fort is a major landmark in North Al Batinah Governorate

SOHAR: President Aleksandr Lukashenko of the Republic of Belarus and his accompanying delegation visited Sohar Fort in the Wilayat of Sohar, Governorate of North Al Batinah on Tuesday, as part of his official visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

Upon his arrival at Sohar Fort, the President of Belarus and his delegation were received by Mohammed Suleiman Al Kindi, Governor of North Al Batinah.

The President and his accompanying delegation listened to a briefing about Sohar Fort, its history, its archaeological features and its heritage components that stand testimony to

many important events in Omani history.

The President went on tour of the corridors of the fort, which is a symbol of Oman's ancient history and glorious events. The fort is a major landmark in North Al Batinah Governorate.

The Governor of North Al Batinah presented the guest with a souvenir commemorating the visit.

During the visit, President Aleksandr Lukashenko was accompanied by Abdulsalam Mohammed Al Murshidi, Chairman of Oman Investment Authority (Head of the Mission of Honour) and members of the Mission accompanying the guest. -ONA



A CULTURAL BRIDGE

Switzerland embassy celebrates 10 years of presence in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Embassy of Switzerland in the Sultanate of Oman is proud to announce the celebration of its 10th anniversary, marking a decade of fostering strong and dynamic relations between the two nations.

Since its opening on 12 November 2014, the bilateral ties have been deepened, with significant progress achieved in peace promotion, trade and investment, scientific cooperation, and exchanges in sustainable development, education, health, and culture.

In celebration of this milestone and of the many years of building cultural, economic and cooperative bridges between the two countries, the Embassy of Switzerland, in close partnership with the Royal Opera House Muscat, hosted a week-long musical dialogue program under the label Desert Bridges.

This initiative brings together Swiss and Omani musicians to form a unique ensemble that blends jazz, traditional instruments and musical heritage from both cultures.



The idea is that the Omani-Swiss "Desert Bridge" Ensemble would in the foreseeable future also perform at a venue in Switzerland



Highlights of the celebration include:

- National Day Event Celebration: On 10 December the Embassy organised a gala reception to celebrate the Swiss National Day and the 10th anniversary with participation of the Swiss musicians.
- Masterclasses in Muscat: Swiss musicians conducted a series of educational sessions around Jazz and modal music, around creating a solo repertoire, and on composing with a dulcimer (qanun) to inspire and share their

expertise with local Omani talents.

- Community Outreach: The Desert Bridges ensemble held on 11 December an Open Doors concert at the Social Welfare Home in Al Rustaq.
- Grand Finale Concert: The program culminated in a special performance by the Desert Bridges ensemble at the Royal Opera House of Musical Arts on 12 December - a commemorative event, which underscores the enduring friendship and cultural collaboration between Switzerland and Oman.



Sayyid Badr holds meeting with envoys of EU, UK, Switzerland

The meeting laid emphasis on strengthening the parties' strategic partnership and promoting cooperation in a manner that better serves their interests and sustainable development tracks

MUSCAT: The Foreign Ministry yesterday held an annual meeting with ambassadors of the European Union (EU), the United Kingdom (UK) and Switzerland.

The meeting was chaired by Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi,

Foreign Minister.

The meeting laid emphasis on strengthening the parties' strategic partnership and promoting co-operation in a manner that better serves their interests and sustainable development tracks.

The meeting addressed major issues and developments on the regional and international arenas, including humanitarian crises, security challenges, the repercussions of climate change. It also looked into ways to enhance food security and sustainable energy.

Stability and global peace

Sayyid Badr underlined the importance of activating joint action and international cooperation to address these challenges, notably by utilising available opportunities and intensifying efforts to achieve stability and global peace.

The meeting stressed the need to enhance collective response to global challenges. It highlighted the importance of adhering to the

principle of respecting the sovereignty of countries and applying international law as a fundamental pillar for resolving conflicts and ensuring sustainable security and development.

The meeting was in pursuance of the first GCC-EU Summit held in Brussels in October 2024. The summit constituted a significant step in enhancing the member states' strategic partnership, including joint action to address common challenges at the levels of security, economy and climate change.

The meeting was attended by Khalid Hashel Al Musalhi, Under-secretary of the Foreign Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs, and a number of officials from the Ministry. — **ONA**



Printed and published by:
Muscat Media Group
Post Box: 770,
Postal Code: 112

Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zedjali
Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali
Chief Executive Officer: Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali

EDITORIAL: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24813153, E-mail: editor@timesofoman.com
ADVERTISING: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24812624, E-mail: advertising@timesofoman.com
CIRCULATION: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24818270, E-mail: circulation@timesofoman.com

‘India, Sri Lanka will work together to fight against terrorism’

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi on Monday held discussions with Sri Lankan President Anura Kumara Dissanayake, focusing on key bilateral issues, including trade, investment, connectivity and energy and said that the two nations will work together to strengthen the fight against terrorism and organised crime.

Maritime security

“India and Sri Lanka will also work together to strengthen the fight against terrorism and organised crime. Likewise, we will also focus on maritime security, cyber security and disaster relief,” the post added.

In another post, PM Modi said, “It was indeed wonderful meeting you, President Anura Kumara Dissanayake. Your visit to India is going to add great momentum to the India-Sri Lanka friendship!”

Meanwhile, Dissanayake said that he engaged in discussions with PM Modi on sectors of trade, defence, energy, BRICS,

United Nations Commission on the Limits of the Continental Shelf (UNCLOS), and stopping illegal fishing.

In a post on X, Dissanayake wrote, “It is a privilege to visit India on my first overseas trip as President and I am grateful to PM @narendramodi for supporting Sri Lanka during the economic crisis and for aiding debt restructuring.”

The post added, “We discussed trade, defence, energy, BRICS, UNCLOS, and stopping illegal fishing during our meeting today. I invited PM Modi to visit Sri Lanka and assured India that Sri Lanka’s territory would not be used against India’s security interests.”

The visit of the Sri Lankan President also witnessed the signing of several agreements, including an MoU on civil servant training and a protocol to amend the double taxation avoidance pact, alongside announcements of grant assistance for development projects and educational scholarships. — **ANI**

ON DECEMBER 18

Qatar to celebrate its 53rd National Day today

DOHA: The sisterly State of Qatar will celebrate on Wednesday the 53rd National Day, which falls on December 18 of each year, embodying the progress and advancement it has achieved under the leadership of Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar.

The relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the sisterly State of Qatar, under the wise care of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, are a model of brotherhood and cooperation in all fields, including economic, cultural, social and investment fields.

The State of Qatar is witnessing one of the fastest economic growths regionally and interna-



tionally. It also sits on the throne of liquefied gas production, and has become a major force in the field of foreign investments, in addition to its achievements at various levels and fields: political, economic, scientific, cultural, social, and legis-

lative. Regarding the foreign relations of the State of Qatar, this year witnessed Qatari political and diplomatic activity and movement, which contributed to achieving more successes and accomplishments in its foreign relations in

the political, economic, investment, military, defence, and strategic partnership fields, through its openness to various countries and peoples with active diplomacy based on a policy of mutual respect and common interests. — **ONA**



SNAP ELECTIONS

German Chancellor loses trust vote triggering snap elections

BERLIN: In a major turn of events, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz lost a confidence vote in their parliament forcing the country into snap elections seven months ahead of schedule, Al Jazeera reported.

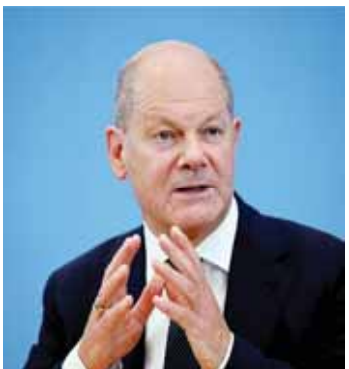
The vote on Monday came after Scholz’s fragile coalition collapsed, sparking a political crisis in the largest economy of the European Union.

Only 207 lawmakers voted in support of the 733-member lower house, or Bundestag, while 394 members voted against him and 116 abstained. That left him far short of the majority of 367 needed to sustain in power.

Following this, the snap elections for a new parliament will take place on February 23.

However, Scholz’s centre-left Social Democrats (SPD) and the Greens will continue running the country without parliamentary backing until a new government is formed.

The governing coalition, which consisted of three political parties, was shaken when Scholz fired Finance Minister Christian Lindner in November. It was followed by Lindner’s pro-business Free Democrats quitting the coalition government, robbing Scholz of a



majority in parliament.

Earlier, Tesla CEO Elon Musk called Chancellor Scholz a “fool” after the collapse of his three-party coalition. Musk posted in German on X: “Olaf ist ein Narr.” The sentence translates to: “Olaf is a fool.”

Monday’s move came after months of infighting over fiscal priorities and debt spending.

In Germany, Scholz - who previously served as mayor of Hamburg and finance minister before becoming the head of a new government in 2021 - accused the Free Democrats of wanting to block investment in the country.

Seen as a continuity candidate when he took over from Angela Merkel three years ago, he has

framed next year’s election as an opportunity for voters to set a new course, casting the vote as a choice between a future of growth versus one of austerity, according to Al Jazeera.

If he gets a second term, Scholz said he would invest heavily in Germany’s creaking infrastructure and would not make the spending cuts he said the conservatives want.

Scholz and the leader of the conservative Christian Democratic Union, Friedrich Merz, who polls suggest is likely to be the next chancellor, clashed in a debate before Monday’s vote, accusing each other of incompetence.

“Shortsightedness might save money in the short term, but the mortgage on our future is unaffordable,” Scholz told lawmakers.

Merz said that Scholz’s spending plans would burden future generations and accused the chancellor of failing to deliver on promises of rearmament since Russia’s invasion of Ukraine.

According to Al Jazeera, the conservatives have a comfortable, albeit narrowing lead of more than 10 percentage points over the SPD in most polls ahead of the February vote. — **ANI**

12 MARTYRED

UN condemns strike on school-turned Gaza shelter

NEW YORK: The United Nations (UN) on Tuesday condemned Israeli occupation’s strike on a school sheltering displaced persons in southern Gaza Strip, which led to the martyrdom of 12 Palestinians.

“Dozens of people were reportedly killed in heavy shelling. We once again condemn all killing of civilians,” UN spokesman Stephane Dujarric said in a press briefing.

Dujarric also revealed that OCHA reports that “three humanitarian missions planning to bring food and water to parts of besieged North Gaza were once again denied by Israeli authorities.”

Regarding the occupation authorities’ plan to expand illegal settlements in the occupied Syrian Golan Heights, he said “We reiterate our call on the Israelis to cease all settlement activities, whether it’s in the occupied Golan or the occupied Palestinian territories.

“Any such settlements are illegal under international law,” Dujarric added.

The Director-General of the World Health Organization, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said that the conditions in Kamal



Adwan Hospital in the northern Gaza Strip are “truly appalling”, in light of the continued Israeli occupation bombing.

The UN official stated that the World Health Organization and its partners arrived at the hospital two days ago, in light of the Israeli attacks and bombing, and delivered 5,000 litres of fuel, and quantities of food and medicine.

Ghebreyesus said in his post

that the organisation transferred three patients from Kamal Adwan Hospital to Al-Shifa Hospital, to continue receiving treatment.

He pointed out that Israel arbitrarily refused access for members of the WHO to Kamal Adwan Hospital last week.

He affirmed that these developments deprived the hospital of specialized workers in surgical and obstetric care. — **Agencies**

Trump takes dig at Trudeau after his aide quits, calls her behaviour ‘toxic’

Hours before the statement on Canada’s economy, Chrystia Freeland, Canada’s Finance Minister and Deputy Prime Minister announced her resignation from the Cabinet

WASHINGTON DC: US President-elect Donald Trump took a dig at the troubles in the Canadian ruling party after the resignation of Canadian Finance Minister and



Deputy Prime Minister Chrystia Freeland. In a post on Truth Social the President elect once again dubbed Candian PM Justin Trudeau as the Governor of Canada and said that Freeland’s behaviour had not been conducive towards making good decisions for the Canadian citizens. In a post on his social media platform, Truth, Donald Trump wrote, “The Great State of Canada is stunned as the Finance Minister resigns, or was fired, from her position by Governor Justin Trudeau. Her behavior was totally toxic, and not at all conducive to making deals which are good for the very unhappy citizens of Canada. She will not be missed!!!” The statement by Donald



Trump comes on Monday, hours before the statement of Canada’s minister Chrystia Freeland announced her resignation from the Cabinet. Notably, Freeland was scheduled to present the 2024 Fall Economic Statement on Monday. In her resignation letter, Freeland had expressed that Canada faces a grave challenge from the incoming Trump administration. The letter said, “Our country today faces a grave challenge. The incoming administration in the United States is pursuing a policy of aggressive economic nationalism, including a threat of 25 per cent tariffs. We need to take that threat extremely seriously. That means keeping our fiscal powder dry today, so we have the reserves

we may need for a coming tariff war. That means eschewing costly political gimmicks, which we can ill afford and which make Canadians doubt that we recognize the gravity of the moment.” “That means pushing back against ‘America First’ economic nationalism with a determined effort to fight for capital and investment and the jobs they bring. That means working in good faith and humility with the Premiers of the provinces and territories of our great and diverse country and building a true Team Canada response. “I know Canadians would recognize and respect such an approach. They know when we are working for them, and they equally know when we are focused on ourselves. Inevitably, our time in government will come to an end. But how we deal with the threat our country currently faces will define us for a generation, and perhaps longer. Canada will win if we are strong, smart, and united,” the letter added. -ANI

POLITICAL CONSENSUS

Bangladesh HC reinstates caretaker govt system

DHAKA: The High Court Division of the Bangladesh Supreme Court on Tuesday partially annulled the Fifteenth Amendment to the Constitution and reinstated the non-partisan, neutral caretaker government system, the lawyers said. The High Court bench of Justice Farah Mahbub and Justice Debashish Roy Chowdhury gave the verdict. The main part of the judgment was read by Senior Justice Farah Mahbub. Observing the judgment, the court said that the caretaker government was based on political consensus. That is why it has become the fundamental basis of the constitution. The High Court, in its observation, said that the basic structure of the constitution was destroyed by the Fifteenth Amendment. But the Fifteenth Amendment will not be completely repealed. The court also said that the basic structure of the constitution is democracy. Only fair and acceptable elections can establish democracy. The beauty of the constitution is the empowerment of the people, the people are the source of all power. The Supreme Court of Bangladesh ruled to abolish the caretaker government system by the Fifteenth amendment of the constitution of Bangladesh in 2011. On December 16, Bangladesh’s Chief Adviser Muhammad Yunus said that Bangladesh’s next gen-



eral elections could be scheduled between late 2025 and the first half of 2026. He made the statement during his address to the nation on Victory Day, marking Bangladesh’s victory in the 1971 Liberation War. In his address, Yunus emphasised the importance of political consensus to move forward with elections. He said, “If political consensus allows us, again, to conduct elections based on accurate electoral rolls with a few reforms, it may be possible to hold elections by the end of 2025.” Yunus acknowledged, however, that additional time might be needed to implement the necessary reforms. He further said, “And if we add to this the extent of

reforms expected in terms of the electoral process and the Electoral Reforms Commission’s recommendations and on the basis another six months may be required.” He clarified that the timeline for the elections could be fixed between late 2025 and the first half of 2026. “Roughly speaking, the timing of elections can be fixed between the end of 2025 and the first half of 2026,” he stated. His comments came amid political instability in Bangladesh. On August 5, a student-led movement ousted Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina after weeks of protests and violence that led to over 600 deaths. Hasina fled to India, and an interim government led by Yunus took charge. -ANI

POLITICAL CLIMATE IS HEATING

What will Yoon’s impeachment mean for South Korea?

SEOUL: South Korean politics is likely to be confrontational and chaotic for the foreseeable future after the country’s Constitutional Court on Monday held its first meeting on the impeachment of President Yoon Suk Yeol. The National Assembly on Saturday passed Yoon’s impeachment motion, 11 days after he declared martial law only to have it overturned hours later. However, it is up to the court to decide whether to remove Yoon from office or restore his powers. In the meantime, Yoon has been suspended from his duties and Han Duck-soo, who was previously the prime minister, is now South Korea’s acting president. Han Dong-hoon, the leader of the ruling People Power Party (PPP), on Monday stepped down from the role “due to the collapse of the party’s Supreme Council.” Han vowed he would “devote all my energy and efforts to ensuring stability” — although analysts say the opposition Democratic Party knows it has the government on the ropes and will settle for nothing less than a general election. **Democratic Party favoured** With more than 70% of the South Korean public demanding Yoon’s



impeachment, there is little doubt that the opposition Democratic Party would sweep to power under Lee Jae-myung, even though he also has legal issues hanging over his head. “Yoon’s impeachment is not the end of South Korea’s political turmoil. It is not even the beginning of the end, which will ultimately involve the election of a new president,” said Leif-Eric Easley, a professor of international studies at Ewha Womans University in Seoul. And while he applauded the “peaceful street protests” that emerged when the nation’s democracy was under threat, Easley cautioned that the deep polarization

that exists today in South Korean society remains a threat. “While it is to be expected that a legislative opposition will use its investigative and budgetary powers in the struggle between partisan agendas, there should be accountability mechanisms against causing prolonged government dysfunction and paralysis,” he told DW. **What happens next?** By law, the Constitutional Court has six months to issue its ruling, although previous claims against presidents have been handed down much more swiftly, allowing for a quicker return to political normalcy.



If Yoon’s impeachment is confirmed, a general election would have to be held within two months. And even though the case against Yoon appears strong, there are complications. The court typically has nine judges, with seven justices required to make a final decision. The court only has six judges at present, however, as the Democratic Party has been in dispute with the government in recent months and demanding it be permitted to appoint extra justices. **Constitutional Court to deliberate impeachment** The court has said it has the authority to reach a conclusion on



WASHINGTON DC : US President Joe Biden on Monday (local time) condemned the shooting at Abundant Life Christian School in Wisconsin. Calling the incident “shocking and unconscionable,” Biden said it is “unacceptable that we are unable to protect our children” from this “scourge of gun violence.” “Today, families in Madison, Wisconsin, are grieving the loss of those who were killed and wounded at Abundant Life Christian School. It’s shocking and unconscionable. We need Congress to act. Now,” the statement released by the White House read. “From Newtown to Uvalde, Parkland to Madison, to so many other shootings that don’t receive attention - it is unacceptable that we are unable to protect our children from this scourge of gun violence. We cannot continue to accept it as normal. Every child deserves to feel safe in their classroom. Students across our country should be learning how to read and write - not having to learn how to duck and cover,” the statement added. As many as two people were killed and six others sustained injuries in a shooting incident at Abundant Life Christian School in Madison, Wisconsin on Monday, CNN reported citing officials. The juvenile shooting suspect was also found dead at the scene, Madison Police Chief Shon Barnes said. The suspect appears

to be a student at the school, he added. At least seven people were taken to area hospitals after the shooting at a Madison, Wisconsin, school on Monday, according to fire chief Chris Carbon. President Biden expressed gratitude to the first responders and the FBI for supporting the local law enforcement efforts. “At my direction, my team has reached out to local officials to offer further support as needed,” he added. The outgoing president further asserted that his administration took “aggressive action” to combat the “gun violence epidemic.” He added that it’s not enough and US Congress must pass commonsense gun safety laws. “My administration has taken aggressive action to combat the gun violence epidemic. We passed the most significant gun safety legislation in nearly 30 years, I have taken more execu-

tive action to reduce gun violence than any other President in history, and I created the first-ever White House Office of Gun Violence Prevention. But more is needed. Congress must pass commonsense gun safety laws: Universal background checks. A national red flag law. A ban on assault weapons and high-capacity magazines,” the President stated. “We can never accept senseless violence that traumatizes children, their families, and tears entire communities apart,” it added. The school shooter was 17 years old, CNN reported citing a law enforcement source. It is believed the shooter died of a self-inflicted gunshot. Barnes confirmed earlier today that the suspected shooter was a student at the school. Police have declined to provide any other identifying details about the suspected shooter, but one law enforcement source told CNN the person was a female. -DW

SPORTS

T20 Gulf Cup: Oman edge past Bahrain in thrilling victory



Cricket

Duleep Mendis' men registered a two-run win for their second victory in the tournament in Dubai

MUSCAT: Oman staged a nail-biting two-run win against Bahrain in their crucial group

stage encounter of the Gulf Cup T20 Championship on Tuesday at the ICC Academy ground in Dubai, keeping their title defence alive. It was Duleep Mendis-coached side's second victory after their loss to the hosts UAE in the previous game. Oman had begun their title defence with a win over Qatar in the six-nation tournament. The win meant that Oman stayed in the hunt for the final spot, now sitting third in the standings, level on points with Kuwait and Bahrain, all with 4 points. Kuwait hold the advantage with a superior net run rate (NRR) of 0.601, while Oman follow with 0.217, and Bahrain is just behind with 0.178. UAE, with 6 points from three matches, lead the group. On Tuesday, Oman, put to bat, set a modest total of 130/8 in their 20 overs. Mohammad Nadeem, who was later named player of the match, top-scored with a resilient 47 off 49 balls, helping Oman recover from early setbacks. A key fifth wicket partnership of 50 runs between Nadeem and Vinayak Shukla (33 off 24 balls) kept the momentum going after Oman were reduced to 52/4 in ninth over. Shukla's quick 33 and Suyfan Mehmood's 11, helped Oman

a 130 with Wasim Ali chipping in with 10. Bahrain's bowlers kept the pressure on, with Imran Khan (2/19), Imran Anwar (2/29) and Rizwan Butt (2/23) being the most successful. Abdul Majid took one, as they restricted Oman to a modest total. Chasing 131, Bahrain faced early setbacks as Oman's bowlers, led by Mehran Khan and Mohammad Nadeem, struck early blows, leaving them 46/2 in eight overs. Prashant Kurup (5) was dismissed by Khan, and Sarfaraz Ali (11) followed shortly after. Asif Ali, however, countered with a brilliant 52 off 44 balls, supported by Ahmer Bin Nasir (25). Aamir Kaleem's crucial wicket of Asif Ali and Samay Shrivastav's two key strikes, including Haider Ali (16) and Ahmer Bin Nasir, swung the game in Oman's favour. Bahrain's collapse continued, with Shakeel Ahmed dismissing both Imran Anwar (0) and Sai Sarthak (2), leaving Bahrain struggling at 113/7. Bahrain needed 14 to win in the final over against Shakeel and stole nine off 4 balls including a six by Rizwan Butt but a runout off the penultimate ball of Junaid Aziz meant Bahrain required five to

win off the last ball and they could score only 2 as Bahrain fell short, finishing at 128/8 in 20 overs. Oman now gear up for their next challenge against Saudi Arabia on Wednesday before their crucial match against Kuwait on December 20. The top-two teams in the league format will vie for the title the next day. **Brief scores:** Oman 130/8 (Mohammed Nadeem 47, Vinayak Shukla 33; Imran Khan 2/19, Imran Anwar 2/29, Rizwan Butt 2/23) beat Bahrain 128/8 (Asif Ali 52, Ahmed Bin Nasir 25; Shakeel Ahmed 2/20, Samay Shrivastav 2/25).

Third Test

New Zealand crush England in record-equalling Test win at Seddon Park



HAMILTON: England crumbled to their second calamitous collapse of the match on Tuesday, allowing New Zealand to celebrate Tim Southee's retirement in style with a 423-run win in the third Test, equalling their largest margin of victory in Test cricket. Jacob Bethell and Joe Root offered fleeting resistance with a century stand, but the innings disintegrated soon after, leaving New Zealand in command at Seddon Park by lunch on day four. Ben Stokes, sidelined by a hamstring injury, opted not to bat, reducing England's challenge to just seven wickets. Mitchell Santner delivered a masterful spell, taking 4 for 52, while Southee capped his illustrious Test career by dismissing England's top scorer Bethell and finishing with 2 for 34. Leading his team off his home ground in Hamilton, Southee left the field to applause, his retirement marking the end of an era. The victory extended New Zealand's dominant streak at Seddon Park, where they have now won eight of their last ten Tests. It also halted a series of four consecutive home losses stretching back to February. For England, the defeat, their heaviest of the year alongside a rout in Rajkot, put a sour finish on a mixed 2024, ending with a record of nine wins and eight losses from 17 matches. Despite the drubbing, Bethell's performances at No. 3 emerged as a positive. His third successive

half-century demonstrated composure under pressure. Alongside Root, he briefly hinted at a determined chase, their partnership crossing the 100-run mark before Santner dismantled England's hopes. Root was trapped lbw sweeping at Santner, the decision overturned on review as the ball straightened sharply. Will O'Rourke's raw pace, clocking speeds up to 153kph, wreaked havoc on England's middle order. He dismissed Harry Brook cheaply for the second time in the match with a venomous short delivery and rattled Ollie Pope with a bouncer. Bethell, who had struck Southee for an audacious boundary early in the day, succumbed to the veteran seamer while attempting another expansive drive, caught at deep backward point. England's lower order offered little resistance beyond Gus Atkinson's enterprising 43 off 41 balls, which included eight boundaries. His aggressive stroke play briefly entertained but epitomised England's resigned approach. Pope's ill-judged reverse-ramp and a flurry of wickets handed Santner the final say, wrapping up the innings in five balls. **Brief scores:** New Zealand 347 (Santner 76, Latham 63, Potts 4-90) and 453 (Williamson 156, Young 60, Mitchell 60) beat England 143 (Henry 4-48, Santner 3-7, O'Rourke 3-33) and 234 (Bethell 76, Root 54, Santner 4-85) by 423 runs. - Agencies

Visitors avoid follow-on

Rahul, Jadeja rescue India, set up intriguing final day in Brisbane

BRISBANE: India defied the odds at the Gabba in the third Test on the fourth day on Tuesday, with KL Rahul and Ravindra Jadeja leading a spirited fightback, followed by a resilient last-wicket stand that kept the visitors in contention to retain the Border-Gavaskar Trophy. The 39-run unbroken partnership between Jasprit Bumrah and Akash Deep ensured India edged past the follow-on mark, leaving Australia frustrated and significantly reducing their chances of forcing a result on the final day. Despite the absence of pacer Josh Hazlewood, ruled out with a calf strain, Australia dominated large stretches of the fourth day. Pat Cummins (4-80) and Mitchell Starc (3-83) bore the brunt of the workload, sending down 45 of the 74.5 overs in India's innings. However, their efforts fell just short as India finished the day trailing by 193 runs with one wicket in hand. Resuming on 74/4, India faced immediate adversity when Rahul was handed a lifeline on the very first ball of the day. Cummins induced a fending edge, but Steven Smith, typically flawless in the slip cordon, dropped a straightforward chance. Cummins quickly redeemed himself, dismissing Rohit Sharma with a masterful sequence of deliveries, first testing him with a sharp short ball before inducing an edge to the keeper with a fuller delivery outside off. At 74/4, India seemed precariously placed, but Jadeja steadied the innings with an assured performance. His methodical



approach - avoiding risky cover drives and relying on straight-bat strokes and flicks off his legs - was complemented by his uncharacteristic use of the sweep shot, which fetched crucial runs off Nathan Lyon. Partnering with Rahul, whose cover drives and back-foot punches oozed elegance, Jadeja helped carve into the deficit with a 67-run stand. Smith, however, redeemed his earlier miss with a sensational one-handed catch at slip to dismiss Rahul for 84, ending a composed knock that had provided a glimmer of hope for India. Nitish Kumar Reddy joined

Jadeja, and together they mounted another valuable partnership, adding 53 runs for the seventh wicket. Reddy curbed his natural game to play a defensively resolute innings. Cummins, though, broke through once again, forcing an inside edge onto the stumps. With Jadeja holding firm, India inched closer to avoiding the follow-on, but two quick strikes - Starc removing Mohammed Siraj and Cummins bouncing out Jadeja - left the visitors teetering on the brink at 219/9, still 33 runs short. The last-wicket duo of Bumrah and Akash Deep turned the tide with a gutsy and unexpectedly assured partnership. Bumrah, known more for his bowling exploits, showcased his batting resilience, even hooking Cummins for a six. Akash, meanwhile, played with surprising confidence, smashing two boundaries and a towering six. His audacious slash over gully and subsequent six off Cummins not only brought India past the follow-on mark but also symbolised the team's indomitable spirit. Bad light halted play with India nine wickets down, but the unbroken 39-run partnership ensured India enter the final day with their hopes alive. With only one day left and a deteriorating pitch, Australia will need to wrap up India's innings quickly and hope to set a challenging target in a limited timeframe. For India, the task will be to hang on and ensure the series remains level heading into the final Test. **Brief scores:** India 252/9 (Rahul 84, Jadeja 77, Cummins 4-80, Starc 3-83) trail Australia 445.

Hazlewood set to miss rest of India series with injury

BRISBANE: Australia seamer Josh Hazlewood is likely to miss the rest of the Test series against India because of a calf injury. The 33-year-old felt tightness in his calf during the warm-up ahead of day four in the third Test at Gabba in Brisbane, and left the field after bowling one over in the morning session. He was sent for scans and Australia say the injury is likely



to result in him missing the fourth and fifth Tests in Melbourne and Sydney. The right-arm fast bowler missed the

second-Test win in Adelaide with a side injury. He was replaced by Scott Boland, while uncapped duo Sean

Abbott and Brendan Doggett were added to the squad. "He felt it this morning in warm-ups and gave it a good crack," said bowling coach Daniel Vettori. "It's just unfortunate for him to come back after putting so much effort in after another injury. It was tough on him. "He's one of the best bowlers in the world and it obviously affects the whole team."

OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

Oman Crude (February delivery 2025) fell by 65 cents to reach \$73.54 per barrel, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). Average price of Oman Crude (December Delivery) has stabilised at \$74.82 per barrel, \$1.33 per barrel higher than November delivery. - OMA

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,533.38 points, up by 0.27% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.21% at 413.86 points. Muscat Gases, up 8.79%, was the top gainer while, Oman REIT Fund, down 5.06%, was the top loser. >B2

United Finance Company signs partnership pact with Zoomlion

This collaboration is set to redefine financial solutions for businesses

Times News Service

MUSCAT: United Finance Company (UFC), a leading financial solutions provider in Oman, has proudly signed a strategic Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Zoomlion, the world's sixth-largest and China's largest construction machinery enterprise.

This collaboration is set to redefine financial solutions for businesses across the Sultanate.

This partnership reflects United Finance's commitment to deliver-



ing innovative and flexible financing options to support businesses and individuals in accessing advanced construction machinery. Through this initiative, the two companies aim to drive growth, innovation, and progress within Oman's construc-

tion and business sectors.

Speaking about the partnership, Fawaz Al Riyami, CBO of United Finance Company, said: "We are delighted to join forces with Zoomlion in this landmark collaboration. Together, we strive

to empower businesses in Oman by offering tailored financial solutions that meet their unique needs and enable them to achieve more. This partnership is a testament to our vision of driving growth and contributing to the economic de-



velopment of the Sultanate."

A significant milestone

Qirui Zhong, the Deputy General Manager of Zoomlion has commented: "This partnership with United Finance Company marks a significant milestone for us as we expand our presence in Oman. We are confident that this collaboration will provide businesses in

Oman with access to world-class construction machinery through flexible and accessible financing options, further contributing to the development of the region."

United Finance remains dedicated to providing innovative financial products and services that empower businesses and individuals to achieve their goals and aspirations.

'TAWTEEN' PLATFORM

Nama Water Services announces 479 job opportunities for youth

MUSCAT: Nama Water Services is dedicated to aligning its strategic plans with Oman Vision 2040, prioritising four key pillars: Investing in Human Capital and Community Development, Fostering Economic Growth through Water Solutions, Enhancing Governance and Operational Efficiency, and Promoting Sustainable Water Management Practices.

Nama Water Services prioritises human capital and community development, recognising the indispensable role of human resources in achieving organisational goals. In alignment with national objectives, the company is dedicated to fostering the qualification and employment of Omani talent.

As part of these continuous efforts, the company has launched an initiative to provide 479 job opportunities for Omani youth to work in supporting companies of permanent contractors in operations and maintenance roles through the digital 'Tawteen' platform.

Commenting on that, Qais bin Saud Al Zakwani, CEO of Nama Water Services, said: "These new job opportunities align with the goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040. This initiative supports the company's strategic objectives and complements government efforts to provide sustainable employment opportunities for Omani nationals. This step is not only about job creation but also about contributing to the sustainable development and future prosperity of the Sultanate of Oman."

"These job opportunities are integral to the company's ambitious initiative to establish 846 positions by the close of 2025. These permanent roles will be situated within subsidiary companies and will entail the execution of operations and maintenance tasks for Nama Water Services. In partnership with the Governance Committee for the Public Services Sector and the Training and Development Center at the Ministry of Labor, the available job opportunities span various water and wastewater sectors. These positions are crucial for addressing the evolving needs of Oman's economy and supporting the nation's progress in this vital industry. This step represents a significant milestone in the company's growth, service enhancement, and commitment to Omani youth development. By fostering a stimulating work environment, we aim to empower Omani competencies and contribute to overall development." He added.

Elaborating on the Omanisa-



tion rates, Al Zakwani added: "The company remains dedicated to its ongoing efforts to enhance Omanisation rate surpassing 55%. The announcement of 479 new employment opportunities is poised to elevate this rate to 71%. Moreover, an additional 367 job openings are scheduled to be unveiled, propelling the Omanisation rate to an impressive 83% by the end of 2025."

In this context, Qais bin Saud Al Zakwani underscored Nama Water Services' unwavering commitment to human capital development. The company is actively engaged in a comprehensive training and development program designed to elevate the competencies and capabilities of its workforce. Moreover, Nama Water Services is dedicated to enhancing the potential of Omani youth, including recent graduates, students, and job seekers, by offering specialized training opportunities within the water and wastewater sector. This strategic initiative is aligned with national objectives aimed at refining young Omanis' knowledge base and skill sets, empowering them to excel in their future careers.

"Aligned with our vision of sustainable development, Nama Water Services is dedicated to empowering Omani youth. We are actively working to create job opportunities and foster professional growth through advanced training and leadership programs. By strengthening our workforce, we can ensure the delivery of cutting-edge solutions that meet the evolving needs of our customers, safeguarding the future of water and wastewater services." He affirmed.

In concluding his statement, Nama Water CEO urged potential candidates to take advantage of this opportunity by submitting applications through the 'Tawteen' digital portal. The application period will close on 25 December 2025.

CRISIL REPORT

India's GDP growth expected to move closer to trend growth of 6.5-7 percent

NEW DELHI: India's gross domestic product (GDP) growth is expected to align with the long-term trend of 6.5-7 per cent as technical factors that caused fluctuations begin to normalise, according to a CRISIL report.

While the post-pandemic period saw a sharp rebound and significant variations in GDP growth, these irregularities are now settling down, signalling a return to stability. Post-pandemic, different economic segments recovered at varied speeds. The government's focus on infrastructure spending played a pivotal role in driving economic recovery by creating multiplier effects.

Additionally, strong corporate and bank balance sheets and healthy external markets contributed to India's economic resilience.

However, certain technical factors disrupted GDP growth patterns in recent years. For instance, net product taxes were impacted by a surge in government subsidies during the pandemic, and swings in commodity prices led to volatility in the GDP deflator.

These disruptions caused GDP growth to surge to 8.2 per cent last fiscal while creating a divergence with gross value added (GVA) growth. The current fiscal year has seen these technical factors normalise, leading to slower GDP growth. Net tax growth, a major contributor to GDP growth last fiscal, has slowed significantly due to



a high base. In the first half of this fiscal, net product taxes grew by just 3.3 per cent, compared to 10.5 per cent in the same period last year. This reduced the contribution of net taxes to GDP growth from 77 basis points (bps) last year to 25 bps this year. The GDP deflator, which measures inflation-adjusted GDP, is also stabilising. It rose to 2.7 per cent on-year in the first half of this fiscal, compared to a low of 0.8 per cent last year.

A key factor driving this increase is the rise in wholesale price index (WPI) inflation, which averaged 2.7 per cent in the first half, up from -1.7 per cent in the same pe-

riod last year. This normalisation is moderating real GDP growth but also reducing distortions between nominal and real GDP figures.

While normalisation of technical factors has slowed GDP growth, high interest rates and fiscal consolidation have also contributed to the moderation.

Yet, the main macroeconomic drivers remain strong. Private consumption, which accounts for 56.3 per cent of GDP, grew by 6.7 per cent in the first half of this fiscal compared to 4.1 per cent last year.

Fixed investment growth, although slower at 6.5 per cent com-

pared to 10.1 per cent last year, continues to maintain a larger share of GDP than in the pre-pandemic decade.

CRISIL projects GDP growth for the current fiscal to range between 6.5-7 per cent, aligning with India's pre-pandemic trend. Improving consumption demand, bolstered by a healthy monsoon and rural recovery, is expected to drive growth momentum.

While growth this fiscal may be lower than last year's 8.2 per cent, it is anticipated to be more balanced across sectors, indicating a healthier trajectory for the economy. - ANI

ING REPORT

'Despite Opec+ supply cut, global oil market will be in surplus during 2025'

NEW DELHI: The global oil market is projected to return to surplus in 2025, even as Opec+ extends supply cuts to stabilise prices, according to an ING report.

This surplus, though modest, is expected to exert downward pressure on oil prices, with Brent crude likely to average around \$71 per barrel next year.

However, various risks, including geopolitical tensions and potential changes in sanctions enforcement, could disrupt these projections.

The surplus forecast for 2025 has been revised downwards from over 1 million barrels per day (b/d) to approximately 500,000 b/d, following Opec+'s decision to delay the return of 2.2 million b/d of voluntary cuts.

Non-Opec supply is anticipated to grow by 1.4 million b/d in 2025, outpacing demand growth, which



is estimated at under 1 million b/d.

While Opec+'s extended cuts may provide a temporary floor to prices, the market is expected to remain under pressure due to surplus conditions.

Opec+ surprised markets in December by slowing the pace of supply increases, planning to take 18 months instead of 12 to reinstate

the 2.2 million b/d of cuts.

Despite this move, the group faces challenges, including maintaining compliance among members. Lower prices reduce revenues, putting fiscal budgets in the Middle East under strain and risking a breakdown in cohesion.

Historical instances, such as the 2020 Saudi-Russia price war, highlight the potential for market disruptions if members fail to adhere to agreed production targets.

Geopolitical instability in the Middle East remains a significant concern, though the market has become somewhat immune to developments unless actual supply disruptions occur.

Opec's spare production capacity, exceeding 5 million b/d, provides a buffer for potential disruptions. However, much of this capacity is concentrated in the Persian Gulf, making it vulnerable

if flows through the Strait of Hormuz are disrupted.

The incoming Trump administration could impact the Iranian oil supply through stricter sanctions enforcement, potentially putting up to 1 million b/d of Iranian exports at risk.

Meanwhile, US oil production is expected to grow modestly, adding 300,000 b/d in 2025. In the medium to long term, deregulation and infrastructure investments under Trump could support increased US oil output.

Global oil demand growth is expected to remain modest at under 1 million b/d in 2025, driven mainly by Asia. China's weaker economic performance and a shift toward alternative energy vehicles are curbing demand. Additionally, global refinery margins have weakened, signalling softer demand for refined products. - ANI

MARKET



MSX index ends higher

Muscat Gases, up 8.79%, was the top gainer while, Oman REIT Fund, down 5.06%, was the top loser at the end of yesterday's session

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,533.38 points, up by 0.27% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.21% at 413.86 points. Muscat Gases, up 8.79%, was the top gainer while, Oman REIT Fund, down 5.06%, was the top loser. Shares of OQBI were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1720 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR55.55 million, with more than 39.16 million shares changing hands. Out of 51 traded securities, 21 advanced, 11 declined, and 19 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for OMR1311,000 while GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for OMR790,000, followed by foreign investors for OMR520,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,598.65 points, up 0.21%. Prices of Al Sharqia Investment, Global Financial Investments, Bank Muscat, Bank Nizwa were up by 2.90%, 2.50%, 1.60%, 1.02% respectively. Prices of Oman & Emirates Investment, OMINVEST, Taageer Finance were down by 1.52%, 1.49%, 0.98% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,183.98 points, up 0.07%. Prices of Oman Flour Mills, A'Saffa Foods, Oman Cement, Al Maha Ceramics were up by 4.79%, 2.09%, 1.62%, 0.78% respectively. Prices of Voltamp Energy, Al Anwar Ceramics were down by 5.88%, 2.17% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.14% before closing at 1,724.91 points. Prices of Muscat Gases, Sharqiyah Desalination, National Gas, Musandam Power, Al Suwadi Power were up by 8.79%, 8.00%, 2.63%, 1.89%, 1.59% respectively. Prices of Majan College, Al Batinah Power, Barka Water & Power Company, Renaissance Services, Oman Telecom were down by 2.73%, 1.56%, 0.63%, 0.52%, 0.32% respectively.

— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,537.34	4,516.70	4,533.38	4,521.10	12.28	0.27
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,598.65	7,570.02	7,598.65	7,582.58	16.07	0.21
Industry Index	5,220.40	5,180.17	5,183.98	5,180.17	3.80	0.07
Services Index	1,728.10	1,721.94	1,724.91	1,722.56	2.35	0.14
MSX Shariah Index	413.86	412.66	413.86	412.98	0.88	0.21
MSX TR INDEX	6,349.53	6,320.65	6,343.99	6,326.80	17.18	0.27
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,632.85	8,600.32	8,632.85	8,614.59	18.26	0.21
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,023.10	5,976.69	5,981.08	5,976.69	4.39	0.07
SERVICES TR IDX	2,057.25	2,049.91	2,053.45	2,050.65	2.80	0.14
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,067.21	1,067.21	1,067.21	1,067.21	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	.....	Turnover	.....	Trades	.....	Market Cap	.....	Up	.....	Down	.....	Equal	.....	Sec. Traded	.....
39,160,549	.....	5,547,773	.....	1,720	.....	27,395,992,977	.....	21	.....	11	.....	19	.....	51	.....

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, DECEMBER 17

SRNSECURITY NAMEVOLUME TURNOVER TRADES OPEN PRICEHIGHLOW CLOSE PRPREV. CLOSEDIFF BD

DIFF %LAST PRLAST BDLAST OFFERPAV VALUEMARKET CAP

REGULAR MARKET

OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	129,000	9,120	19	0.070	0.071	0.070	0.071	0.069	0.002	2.899	0.071	0.069	0.071	0.100	6,390,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	50,210	4,112	5	0.081	0.082	0.081	0.082	0.080	0.002	2.500	0.082	0.081	0.082	0.100	16,400,000
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	42,538	16,564	11	0.385	0.390	0.385	0.390	0.382	0.008	2.094	0.390	0.387	0.390	0.100	46,800,000
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	5,225	1,386	2	0.265	0.270	0.265	0.270	0.265	0.005	1.887	0.270	0.270	0.280	0.100	19,005,300
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	900	300	2	0.370	0.376	0.370	0.376	0.370	0.006	1.822	0.376	0.375	0.380	0.100	124,408,139
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	188,535	47,328	10	0.251	0.254	0.251	0.254	0.250	0.004	1.600	0.254	0.252	0.254	0.100	1,906,624,854
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	42,500	2,720	10	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.064	0.063	0.001	1.587	0.064	0.063	0.064	0.100	45,722,006
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	1,400,245	184,239	158	0.130	0.133	0.130	0.133	0.130	0.002	1.538	0.132	0.132	0.134	0.100	571,642,357
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	72,412	8,563	15	0.118	0.120	0.117	0.117	0.116	0.001	0.862	0.117	0.117	0.119	0.100	17,550,000
OM0000000968	COINDEO	5,368	1,256	7	0.234	0.235	0.234	0.234	0.233	0.001	0.429	0.234	0.234	0.234	0.100	152,320,650
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	4,325	1,254	2	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.290	0.000	0.000	0.290	0.290	0.310	0.100	36,220,408
OM0000003388	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	758,666	100,292	19	0.132	0.133	0.131	0.133	0.133	0.000	0.000	0.133	0.132	0.133	0.100	880,093,754
OM0000004735	SEMOBOP SALALAH	100	10	1	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.000	0.000	0.065	0.091	0.103	0.100	90,684,335
OM0000004789	MADINA TARAFUL	11,417	913	3	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.000	0.000	0.080	0.080	0.080	0.100	14,000,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	176,070	48,598	33	0.276	0.277	0.275	0.277	0.277	0.000	0.000	0.277	0.276	0.276	0.100	213,345,400
OM0000009026	OMAN TELECOM	722	669	4	0.928	0.928	0.927	0.927	0.930	-0.003	-0.323	0.927	0.927	0.930	0.100	695,250,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	70,250	26,906	16	0.383	0.383	0.383	0.383	0.385	-0.002	-0.519	0.383	0.375	0.383	0.100	90,545,090
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	72,581	23,803	19	0.333	0.333	0.325	0.330	0.335	-0.005	-1.493	0.330	0.325	0.340	0.100	220,560,591
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	8,189	529	1	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.066	-0.001	-1.515	0.065	0.065	0.065	0.100	7,921,875
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	4,500	284	3	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.064	-0.001	-1.563	0.063	0.063	0.064	0.100	42,517,908
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	518,904	47,152	31	0.092	0.092	0.090	0.090	0.092	-0.002	-2.174	0.090	0.089	0.091	0.100	19,800,000
Total	21	3,562,507	526,000	371												

Parallel Market

OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	820	80	2	0.095	0.099	0.095	0.099	0.091	0.008	8.791	0.099	0.092	0.090	0.100	2,970,000
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	246,804	33,275	2	0.124	0.135	0.124	0.135	0.125	0.010	8.000	0.135	0.124	0.137	0.100	13,203,292
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	137,65	5,824	4	0.422	0.438	0.422	0.438	0.418	0.020	4.785	0.438	0.438	0.438	0.100	68,985,000
OM0000009759	OQ EXPLORATION AND PRODUCTION	4,714,058	1,532,919	301	0.314	0.330	0.314	0.328	0.315	0.013	4.127	0.328	0.328	0.328	0.000	0,010,624,000,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	137,500	10,688	17	0.077	0.078	0.077	0.078	0.076	0.002	2.832	0.078	0.074	0.081	0.100	6,630,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	22,087	2,184	6	0.098	0.099	0.098	0.099	0.098	0.001	1.020	0.099	0.096	0.099	0.100	221,458,350
OM0000009908	OQ BASE INDUSTRIES (SF2)	29,046,894	3,198,955	888	0.110	0.111	0.109	0.111	0.110	0.001	0.909	0.111	0.112	0.111	0.040	384,003,484
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	420	50	1	0.119	0.119	0.119	0.119	0.118	0.001	0.847	0.119	0.117	0.119	0.100	60,464,322
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	16,400	2,109	3	0.128	0.129	0.128	0.129	0.128	0.001	0.781	0.129	0.128	0.130	0.100	7,095,000
OM0000001426	OMAN REFINEMENT	500	499	1	0.998	0.998	0.998	1.008	1.008	0.000	0.000	0.998	0.998	0.998	0.100	50,400,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	195,000	12,870	11	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.000	0.000	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.100	14,003,880
OM0000003000	AL MAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MARKETING	2,100	2,268	1	1.080	1.080	1.080	1.080	1.080	0.000	0.000	1.080	1.040	1.080	0.100	74,520,000
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	121,966	10,664	22	0.088	0.088	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.000	0.000	0.086	0.085	0.087	0.100	17,456,834
OM0000004248	SMY POWER HOLDING	185,572	64,208	15	0.346	0.346	0.346	0.346	0.346	0.000	0.000	0.346	0.341	0.346	0.100	69,073,918
OM0000004778	TAKAFUL OMAN	5,000	195	1	0.039	0.039	0.039	0.039	0.039	0.000	0.000	0.039	0.037	0.039	0.100	9,750,000
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	7,918	1,140	1	0.144	0.144	0.144	0.144	0.144	0.000	0.000	0.144	0.138	0.144	0.100	240,385,040
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	245,360	14,234	12	0.058	0.059	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.000	0.000	0.058	0.058	0.059	0.100	84,830,885
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	2,050	248	2	0.120	0.124	0.120	0.124	0.124	0.000	0.000	0.124	0.120	0.124	0.100	9,364,728
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	223,000	73,920	24	0.317	0.318	0.316	0.316	0.316	-0.002	-0.629	0.316	0.307	0.320	0.100	50,560,000
OM0000003281	TAAGEER FINANCE	10,000	1,010	2	0.101	0.101	0.101	0.101	0.102	-0.001	-0.980	0.101	0.101	0.101	0.100	27,380,140
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	5,000	535	1	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.110	-0.003	-2.727	0.107	0.106	0.120	0.100	9,630,000
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	20,585	1,560	7	0.078	0.078	0.075	0.079	0.004	-5.063	-5.063	0.075	0.072	0.078	0.100	38,147,347
OM0000009681	VOLTAMP ENERGY	1,174	470	2	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.425	-0.025	-5.882	0.400	0.400	0.460	0.100	32,561,100
Total	29	35,234,003	4,969,806	1,326												

ASIAN TRADING

Oil steady ahead of Fed Reserve decision

SINGAPORE:</



LIFESTYLE



SUGARY DRINKS LINKED TO HIGHER HEART DISEASE RISK THAN BAKED TREATS: STUDY

The study found that sugary beverages, such as sodas and fruit drinks, were more strongly linked to heart disease than solid treats, which digest more slowly due to nutrients like fiber and fats

A recent study in Frontiers in Public Health indicates that sugary drinks pose a greater risk for cardiovascular disease compared to sweets like baked goods. Researchers led by Suzanne Janzi from Lund University examined nearly 70,000 Swedish adults' diets and heart health over two decades. The study found that sugary beverages, such as sodas and fruit drinks, were more strongly linked to heart disease than solid treats, which digest more slowly due to nutrients like fibre and fats. Surprisingly, individuals consuming the least sugar didn't always have the lowest heart dis-

ease risk, possibly due to restrictive diets or pre-existing conditions. Experts suggest moderation instead of eliminating sugar entirely. The American Heart Association recommends limiting added sugar to 6 teaspoons daily for women and 9 for men. Gradually cutting back on sugary drinks is a practical step, said dietitian Lisa Drayer. Replacing sodas with seltzer or sparkling water can help reduce sugar intake. The findings highlight the need for further research into how sugar consumption patterns impact heart health and emphasise the importance of balanced, sustainable dietary changes to reduce cardiovascular risk. - **UNA**

Legendary Ronaldo to run for Brazil federation presidency



The 48-year-old World Cup winner Ronaldo, who made his Brazil debut in 1994, was capped 98 times

RIO DE JANEIRO: Brazil legend Ronaldo announced on Tuesday that he will run for the presidency of the country's football association and wants to "recover the prestige" of the national team. The 48-year-old, who was capped 98 times, will run as a candidate to replace current Confederation of Brazilian Football (CBF) president Ednaldo Rodrigues.

Brazil, record five-time winners of the World Cup, last won the competition in 2002 and have not progressed further than the quarter-final stage since.

"For many decades, Brazilian football has always been the escape route for the Brazilian people when they faced daily problems," Ronaldo told Globo Esporte.

"This was the fuel of the Brazilian people and today we see a total lack of interest from the population in the national team.

"Among hundreds of things that motivate me to become a candidate for president of the CBF is to recover this prestige and respect that the national team has always had and that no-one else has today."

Rodrigues' term runs until March 2026 and the presidential elections must take place in the 12 months before then.

Ronaldo, a World Cup winner in 1994 and 2002, is second on the competition's all-time top

scorer list behind Germany's Miroslav Klose with 15 goals in 19 appearances.

The former Real Madrid striker's international career spanned 17 years and included two Copa America titles and an Olympic bronze medal.

Brazil have won the Copa America once since Ronaldo's international retirement in 2011 and were knocked out of the 2022 World Cup by Croatia in the quarter-finals.

"We have the best players, we have [Vinicius Jr], Neymar, Rodrygo, Estevao, Endrick... we have a lot of talent, how can we not play well?" said Ronaldo. "We have to change this dynamic. Brazil has to be a protagonist in the World Cup, in the Copa America, it can't miss out on the Olympics. It's unacceptable for the talent we have."

As part of his bid for presidency, Ronaldo says he will sell his stake in La Liga side Real Valladolid. - Agencies

ITALIAN SERIE A



Inter Milan hit Lazio for a six

MILAN: Defending champions Inter Milan stormed to a 6-0 win at Lazio on Monday night as they inflicted the Rome club's biggest ever home defeat in Serie A.

Lazio started the night level on points with Inter, six points behind leaders Atalanta, but had no answer to a stunning attacking display from Simone Inzaghi's side.

Marco Baroni's Lazio were unbeaten in 12 home games and had not lost in front of their own fans since March. They are also top of the Europa League table, such has been their encouraging form.

Yet Lazio's night took a disappointing turn when Hakan Calhanoglu put Inter in front from the spot in the 41st minute, after a penalty award for handball, and

Federico Dimarco doubled the visitors' lead before the break with a volley.

Nicolo Barella slotted home to make it 3-0 six minutes into the second half before Denzel Dumfries netted two minutes later and Carlos Augusto and Marcus Thuram completed the rout late on.

Inter remain third in the standings, now with 34 points from 15 matches, and they trail Atalanta by three points with a game in hand.

Lazio's previous record home defeat was a 5-0 loss to Fiorentina in 1959.

Their three biggest Serie A defeats have all come against Inter: this defeat coming after 8-1 (in 1934) and 7-0 (in 1961) defeats in Milan. - Agencies

SEVEN-MATCH BAN

Tottenham's Bentancur loses appeal over ban



LONDON: Tottenham Hotspur's Rodrigo Bentancur will serve the final two matches of his seven-match ban after the Football Association dismissed his appeal.

The Uruguay midfielder was given the ban in November for using a racial slur about team-mate Son Heung-min on television.

Spurs accepted the judgement but appealed against the severity of the suspension.

However, the appeal was dismissed following a hearing and Bentancur will miss matches against Manchester United in the Carabao Cup and Liverpool in the Premier League. The former Juventus midfielder has been able to play in the Europa League during his ban as it only applies to domestic competition. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Chelsea's winger Mudryk 'in shock' over failed drugs test



LONDON: Chelsea winger Mykhailo Mudryk says he is in "complete shock" after testing positive for a banned substance.

The club confirmed on Tuesday that they had been contacted by the Football Association after an "adverse finding in a routine urine test" provided by the Ukraine international.

Mudryk denies ever knowingly using a banned substance and Chelsea say they will work to establish what caused the failed test.

"This has come as a complete shock as I have never knowingly used any banned substances or

broken any rules, and am working closely with my team to investigate how this could have happened," Mudryk wrote on Instagram.

"I know that I have not done anything wrong and remain hopeful that I will be back on the pitch soon."

Under FA guidelines, players can be provisionally suspended from football following a positive drugs test.

However, when contacted by BBC Sport, the FA refused to confirm whether Mudryk is now provisionally suspended or

when the test took place.

The 23-year-old last played for Chelsea on 28 November and has missed the past five matches in all competitions.

He was included in the match-day squad for the Blues' win against Aston Villa on 1 December but did not feature.

Head coach Enzo Maresca had said publicly that Mudryk's absence was down to illness.

Mudryk, who signed from Ukrainian club Shakhtar Donetsk in a deal worth up to £89m in 2023, has scored 10 goals in 73 appearances for Chelsea. - Agencies

GALA NIGHT IN MARRAKESH

Nigeria's Lookman, Zambia's Banda named African players of the year

MARRAKESH: Nigeria's Ademola Lookman has been crowned the 2024 African Footballer of the Year at the Confederation of African Football (CAF) Awards in Marrakesh on Monday night.

The Atalanta forward saw off competition from Ivory Coast's Simon Adingra, Guinea's Serhou Guirassy, Achraf Hakimi of Morocco and South Africa's Ronwen Williams.

Lookman is the second consecutive Nigerian to claim the award after Victor Osimhen in 2023.

Orlando Pride striker Barbara Banda made history as the first Zambian to win the women's prize, finishing ahead of Moroccan Sanaa Mssoudy and Nigeria's Chiamaka Nnadozie.

The winners are voted for by a panel of experts which includes members of CAF's technical committee plus African media professionals, players and coaches.

Lookman, 27, was hot favourite to pick up the award for the first time in his career after an impressive 2023-24 season.

He played a key role in helping his Italian club win the first European trophy in their history with a memorable hat-trick in the final against Bayer Leverkusen - making him the sixth player to score a

treble in a European club final and the first since 1975.

On the international scene, Lookman was named in the team of the tournament at the Africa Cup of Nations in Ivory Coast, scoring three goals as the Super Eagles finished as runners-up to the hosts in February.

The former Everton, Fulham and Leicester City player was also the only African on this year's men's Ballon d'Or shortlist, finishing 14th.

Lookman has again proved instrumental for Atalanta this season, scoring eight goals in Serie A to help his team go top of the table.

Banda's back-to-back awards

Barbra Banda holds the NWSL trophy in gloved hands as teammates gather around her to celebrate Orlando Pride winning the NWSL Championship final.

Banda's success comes less than a month after she was voted the BBC Women's Footballer of the Year.

The 24-year-old was also named Most Valuable Player (MVP) in the United States' National Women's Soccer League (NWSL) as she fired her team Orlando Pride to a first title.



The striker's 17 goals resulted in her finishing second in the scoring charts - behind only Malawi's Temwa Chawinga - with her most crucial strike coming in the Championship final as Pride beat Washington Spirit 1-0.

Banda was also in fine form for

her country at the Paris Olympics, scoring four goals for Zambia's Copper Queens, including a first-half hat-trick against Australia.

Her 10 goals spread across two Games have made her the leading African scorer in Olympic history.

Glittering line-up

To celebrate the continent's top footballing performances over the past year, CAF put on a show of its own with a host of top African artists taking to the stage.

Tanzanian superstar Diamond Platnumz and Moroccan singer Dystinct led the entertainment on a night when Cameroon's President Paul Biya was given an outstanding achievement award.

It was presented on stage by FIFA president Gianni Infantino, who also congratulated Morocco after the nation was confirmed as co-hosts for the 2030 World Cup last week.

It was a good night for South Africa captain Williams, who - despite missing out on the main men's award - walked off with two trophies. The Mamelodi Sundowns shot-stopper was named the Men's Goalkeeper of the Year and the Men's Interclub Player of the Year.

On a star-studded night in Marrakesh, it was also revealed who made the CAF/FIFPro men's, external and women's, external Best XI line-ups.

2024 CAF Awards winners:

Men's Player of the Year: Ademola Lookman (Nigeria and Atalanta)

Women's Player of the Year: Barbra Banda (Zambia and Orlando Pride)

Men's Coach of the Year: Emerse Fae (Ivory Coast)

Women's Coach of the Year: Lamia Boumehdi (TP Mazembe)

Men's Goalkeeper of the Year: Ronwen Williams (South Africa and Mamelodi Sundowns)

Women's Goalkeeper of the Year: Chiamaka Nnadozie (Nigeria and Paris FC)

Men's Club of the Year: Al Ahly (Egypt)

Women's Club of the Year: TP Mazembe (DR Congo)

Men's Interclub Player of the Year: Ronwen Williams (South Africa and Mamelodi Sundowns)

Women's Interclub Player of the Year: Sanaa Mssoudy (Morocco and AS Far)

Men's Young Player of the Year: Lamine Camara (Senegal and Monaco)

Women's Young Player of the Year: Doha El Madani (Morocco and AS Far)

Men's National Team of the Year: Ivory Coast

Women's National Team of the Year: Nigeria

Goal of the Year (voted for by fans): Cristovao Mabululu (Angola) Angola vs Namibia (AFCON 2023)

ROUND-UP

Haghdan International unveils its new innovative range of products

The company also showcased sustainable urban agricultural products and smart technological irrigation systems designed to address challenging environmental conditions



MUSCAT: Under the patronage of His Excellency Sheikh Ahmed bin Saeed Al Balushi (Member of the Shura Council and Representative of the Wilayat of Seeb), Haghdan International LLC held a dinner event and launched its innovative new product in the field of agricultural irrigation technology. This event was organised in col-

laboration with K-Rain, USA, and was attended by several officials from ministries and government entities such as the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources, Muscat Municipality, Sultan Qaboos University, along with a group of guests representing the private sector and Omani entrepreneurs active in the agri-



cultural sector. During the event, the journey of Haghdan International LLC in Oman since 2018 was introduced, along with a presentation of the company's services and its market share in the Omani agricultural sector, which amounts to 50% of the total market for agricultural irrigation products and solutions.

The company also showcased sustainable urban agricultural products and smart technological irrigation systems designed to address challenging environmental conditions such as desertification, water scarcity, poor soil quality, and salinity in Oman. In partnership with K-Rain, one of the largest manufacturers of

modern irrigation products in the American market, Haghdan international has introduced a diverse range of innovative solutions capable of adapting to Oman's harsh climatic conditions. These products are designed to conserve significant amounts of water used in agriculture and to help expand green spaces across the Sultanate. The event was attended by more than 120 individuals from various governmental and private entities, as well as entrepreneurs. Additionally, Ms. Olson, the CEO of the Oman American Business Center, spoke about the importance of such partnerships between local companies in Oman and the United States of America , emphasizing the benefits of the Free Trade Agreement between the two countries.

UNBEATABLE PRICES



Mazda premium range - unmatched quality and unbeatable prices!

MUSCAT: Mazda Oman has unveiled a groundbreaking campaign, setting new benchmarks for luxury and value by offering its premium range of vehicles at truly unbeatable prices. Known for their cutting-edge designs, advanced engineering, and stellar performance, Mazda vehicles are the epitome of sophistication and reliability. This campaign represents a unique opportunity for customers in Oman to own a premium Mazda at significantly reduced prices, reinforcing Mazda's dedication to delivering high-quality craftsmanship combined with advanced technology and affordability. The campaign features a carefully curated selection of Mazda models, each tailored to meet the varied needs and desires of drivers. From the efficient and stylish Mazda 2 to the powerful and refined Mazda CX-90, Mazda offers something for everyone. Each model offers an exceptional balance of design, performance, and comfort, all at prices that make owning a premium vehicle more accessible than ever before. For those who enjoy a blend of sportiness and elegance, the Mazda 6, starting at OMR8,850, is the perfect choice.

providing an extra layer of protection on every drive. Features like the Tyre Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS) and Electronic Parking Brake (EPB) ensure that the CX-5 remains a top contender for those who value both safety and style in their vehicle. For those who demand more from their driving experience, the Mazda CX-60, starting at RO 12,999, offers the perfect blend of luxury, performance, and cutting-edge safety. This premium SUV is packed with advanced safety features such as Blind Spot Monitoring (BSM), Lane Departure Warning (LDWS), Lane Keep Assist (LKA), and Smart City Brake Support (SCBS), offering extra protection in various driving situations. Additional technologies, including Pedestrian Brake Front (PBF), Mazda Radar Cruise Control (MRCC) with Stop & Go, and Kinematic Posture Control (KPC), enhance the safety and comfort of every journey. The Mazda CX-60 promises a confident and secure driving experience, making it the ideal choice for those seeking sophistication and peace of mind on the road. The Mazda CX-90, starting at OMR15,999, is the true embodiment of Mazda's philosophy of "Power and Elegance Perfectly Aligned." This luxury segment SUV combines a 3.3L Turbo MHEV engine with a suite of advanced safety features, creating a driving experience that is both exhilarating and reassuring. The CX-90 comes equipped with seven airbags, Blind Spot Monitoring (BSM), Lane Keep Assist (LKA), and Smart City Brake Support (SCBS) to ensure your safety on the road. With advanced systems like Mazda Radar Cruise Control (MRCC) with Stop & Go, Traffic Jam Assist (TJA), and a 360-degree view camera, the CX-90 enhances driving confidence in any situation. Features such as Pedestrian Brake Front (PBF) and Rear Cross Traffic Alert (RCTA) provide extra peace of mind, ensuring the CX-90 is a premium vehicle for those who demand both power and elegance in one stunning package. Mazda's exclusive distributor in Oman, Towell Auto Centre, invites customers to visit their showrooms to explore these remarkable vehicles firsthand. With a reputation built on decades of excellence and a deep commitment to customer satisfaction, Towell Auto Centre offers a seamless car-buying experience.

AS OFFICIAL SPONSOR:

Defender partners with Dakar Rally

MUSCAT: The Dakar Rally, the world's toughest and most iconic off-road motorsport challenge, has announced Defender as its official car partner starting with the 2025 edition. The partnership, set to run until 2028, reinforces Defender's reputation for extreme durability, engineering excellence, and unmatched off-road capability. In Oman, MHD ACERE, the exclusive distributor of Defender vehicles, is thrilled to share this exciting collaboration with motorsport and adventure enthusiasts. The Dakar Rally, originally known as the Paris-Dakar, has captivated motorsport fans since its inception in 1979. Conceived by French driver Thierry Sabine after a life-changing experience in the desert, the rally has grown into an unparalleled test of endurance, skill, and engineering. From its historical route from Paris to Dakar, Senegal, to its current base



in Saudi Arabia, the Dakar Rally is a testament to the spirit of adventure and human resilience. Starting January 2025, Defender will provide a fleet of its iconic vehicles to support the rally. This includes specialized Defender recee vehicles for route testing and transportation of rally officials and VIP media. The collaboration culminates in 2026, when Defender will field its first-ever factory team to compete in the

grueling race. James Barclay, JLR Motorsport Managing Director, remarked: "Anyone who loves motorsport will have a passion for Dakar. It's the Everest of motorsport and a challenge that demands the best of human determination and engineering excellence. Defender's entry into Dakar is a milestone, and we are committed to proving the extreme durability of our vehicles in the world's toughest

conditions." Speaking on this momentous occasion, Mr. Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, said: "MHD ACERE is proud to represent Defender in Oman, a brand synonymous with adventure, resilience, and innovation. The Dakar Rally partnership is a perfect reflection of Defender's ethos, and we are excited to see these legendary vehicles in action at the world's toughest rally. This collaboration underscores Defender's engineering prowess and aligns with Oman's love for off-road adventures." The 2025 Dakar Rally, running from January 3-17, will traverse a challenging route across Saudi Arabia, culminating in the Empty Quarter, one of the most demanding terrains in the world. Defender's participation and eventual factory team entry represent a bold step in proving its mettle in motorsport.

SOHAR PORT AND FREEZONE

Student exchange programme to nurture national talent launched

MUSCAT: SOHAR Port and Freezone, in collaboration with Sultan Qaboos University, has launched a student exchange programme to nurture national talent and support sustainable development. The programme offers students and recent graduates practical experiences, helping them explore real-world challenges and opportunities in marine engineering and port management. It aims to develop competencies that meet the evolving needs of the port and freezone, fostering a collaborative environment that promotes innovation, knowledge-sharing, and the growth of a skilled talent pool to drive sus-



tainable development and regional competitiveness. As part of the programme, students will engage in a research project examining the challenges faced by marine structures, particularly regarding their sustainability and the application of

various protection techniques. To complement this, a visit to the Port of Rotterdam has been arranged, where students will participate in an intensive week-long program, featuring workshops and site visits. These activities are designed to offer an ideal environment for students to gain practical knowledge and insights in the fields of marine engineering and port management. Mohammed Al Shizawi, Acting CEO of SOHAR Freezone, VP People and Support Services commented: "At SOHAR Port and Freezone, we are committed to empowering Omani youth by providing them with an environ-

ment that enhances their skills and contributes to sustainable development. This programme is a testament to our dedication to developing local talent through international partnerships, and we aim to equip participants with the knowledge and experience needed to address real-world challenges and foster innovation in the logistics and industrial sectors." This programme, set to conclude by the end of the year, marks an important milestone in strengthening collaboration between academia and the business sector, with an emphasis on infrastructure sustainability and the development of local talent.

WINTER STROKES

ISM hosts annual art and craft event

MUSCAT: Under the aegis of the Board of Directors, Indian School Muscat (ISM) hosted Winter Strokes - the Annual Art and Craft Extravaganza on December 14 and 15, 2024 to celebrate the artistic expressions through the vibrant fusion of colours and contemporary art forms. Art is an expression of our inner soul which is significant to the students as it adds wings to their own imagination and form to their ingenuity. As part of the ISM's illustrious Golden Jubilee carousel, the Winter Strokes was structured into two distinct categories. The first category was the Competitive Segment, an exhilarating Inter-School Competition inviting talents from various Indian Schools in Oman to compete for creative supremacy. The second highlighted the Exhibition Showcase, a curate display of remarkable artworks by students of the host school. The Chief Guest, Dr. Mona Ismail (Dean, Scientific College of



Design, Sultanate of Oman) and the Guest of Honour, Mr. Nidheesh Kumar, (Finance Director, Board of Directors, Indian Schools Oman) inaugurated the much awaited Winter Strokes 2024 with the ribbon cutting ceremony. Dr. Mona Ismail conveyed her profound elation to be a part of the symposium and commended the artistic efforts on display. Wishing the school, a good luck, she offered to extend a

helping hand to the school in future endeavours and to collaborate with Scientific College. In his address, Mr. Nidheesh Kumar P.P. expressed an overwhelming thrill for being a part of such a mega event as part of the golden jubilee celebration. Further, he appreciated the zeal and efforts of the students and teachers. The honourable Principal, Mr. Rakesh Joshi lauded the initiative taken up by the Department

of Visual Arts and expressed his heartfelt appreciations. The other eminent personalities who graced the occasion with their presence were Mr. Mohammed Rafi, Convener, School Management Committee and other esteemed members of the School Management Committee, Senior Vice-Principal Administration, Vice-Principals and Asst. Vice-Principals of various sections, Heads of various Departments, teachers, grandparents and parents. The conscientious endeavours of students have resulted into a cornucopia of an overwhelming display of more than 700 art specimens, exemplary strokes, different approaches, styles and optimal use of sentiments offering visitors, a rich and immersive experience of artistic diversity. The exhibition included sketches, acrylic paintings, oil on canvas, and terracotta sculptures which highlighted cultural themes, traditions, and the natural beauty of India and Oman.

ROUND-UP

Meethaq Islamic Banking wins prestigious GIF Market Leadership award for 2024

This prestigious recognition highlights Meethaq’s unwavering commitment to advancing the Islamic Banking landscape in the Sultanate of Oman

MUSCAT: Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat, has been honored with the esteemed Global Islamic Finance Award (GIFA) for Market Leadership. This prestigious recognition

highlights Meethaq’s unwavering commitment to advancing the Islamic Banking landscape in the Sultanate of Oman. The accolade underscores Meethaq’s dedication to providing top-tier Sharia-compliant services and innovative solutions tailored to the diverse needs of individual and institutional customers. Since its inception, Meethaq has remained steadfast in its mission to excel consistently delivering financial solutions that align with evolving customer requirements. Speaking on the recognition, Ali Ahmed Al Lawati, Assistant General Manager, Meethaq Corporate Banking, expressed his delight, stating: “We are immensely honored to receive this prestigious award, which reflects Meethaq’s enduring journey of accomplishments and successes. We extend our gratitude to the GIFA team for recognizing Meethaq’s leadership in the Islamic banking sector. This recognition would not have been possible without the trust and



confidence of our valued customers. Meethaq remains committed to delivering exceptional Sharia compliant services and innovative solutions that meet the aspirations of our customers while adhering to the international standards.” Ali Al Lawati added that Meethaq Islamic Banking has achieved significant milestones in its journey by offering tailored Sharia-compliant services that have received widespread positive

feedback. Highlighting one such achievement this year, he noted: “Meethaq Equity Fund is a Sharia-Compliant equity fund launched in collaboration with Bank Muscat’s Asset Management Unit. The Fund is designed to achieve long-term capital appreciation and dividend distributions by primarily investing in a portfolio of sharia-compliant stocks listed in the GCC region. This is just one example of how Meethaq contin-

ues to innovate and deliver value-driven banking solutions to our customers.” Meethaq Islamic Banking provides a wide range of Sharia-compliant banking services and facilities designed to meet the diverse and evolving need of its customers. All services are rigorously certified by the Sharia Supervisory Board and adhere to the guidelines established by the Central Bank of Oman. For individual customers, Meethaq offers various products, including different types of savings and current accounts, children saving accounts, Meethaq saving plan, financing solutions such as personal financing, car financing, home financing, travel finance, education finance, marriage finance, and personal goods financing. For corporate and SMEs customers, Meethaq provides tailored financial solutions, including, current accounts, project financing, short-term and long-term products being funded and non-funded. Furthermore,

strengthening its branch network, Meethaq operates 29 branches across the Sultanate, complemented by over 50 ATMs and CDMs. Additionally, customers can complete their transactions easily and conveniently through more than 830 ATMs and CDMs of Bank Muscat. In recognition of its stance of excellence in the Banking sector, Meethaq Islamic Banking has received several awards during the past few years from regional and global highly ranked institutions. Meethaq won the Best Domestic Islamic Bank in Oman Award from “Euromoney”, Best Islamic Digital Bank in Oman Award from “Global Finance”, Best Institution for Islamic Banking in Oman Award at the Islamic Banking Conference Awards “Themar” organised by The Arabian Stories, Oman’s Most Trusted Brand Award for Islamic Banking from “Apex Media”, and The Leading Islamic Banking Brand Award from Global Brand Magazine.

OMAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

OHRC commends Renaissance for excellence in worker welfare

MUSCAT: The Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC) has commended Renaissance Services for its significant contributions to advancing worker welfare and workplace standards in the Sultanate of Oman. The recognition followed a recent visit by an OHRC delegation to Renaissance Village Duqm (RSVD), led by Dr Rashid bin Hamad Al Balushi, Chairman, OHRC. During the visit, Renaissance’s commitment to international human rights principles was clearly demonstrated, particularly through its alignment with International Labour Organisation (ILO) standards in worker welfare, Health, Safety and Environment (HSE), as well as fostering a supportive working environment. **Outstanding level of care** Dr Rashid noted in his letter of appreciation: ‘We had the privilege to witness first-hand the outstanding level of care and services provided, reflecting adherence to international standards of occupational health and safety in worker accommodation. Your commitment to creating a supportive working environment with top-notch facilities and safety measures, aligned with the principles of human rights, is truly commendable. We sincerely thank you for your continuous ef-



forts, dedication, and initiatives that not only enhance the quality of life for workers, but also champion the values of human rights within the workplace.’ Stephen R Thomas, CEO, Renaissance Services, said, “We are honoured by the Oman Human Rights Commission’s recognition

of our efforts. At Renaissance, we remain committed to supporting Oman’s In-Country Value (ICV) vision. We will continue to plan sustainably, operate responsibly and deliver locally, ensuring that our work advances the goals of the Sultanate.” As a key contributor to Oman’s economic diversification beyond oil and gas, RSVD is strategically located within the 2,000sq km Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD). Renowned for its world-class living facilities, RSVD is committed to providing comfort, exceptional living standards and a vibrant sense of community. Beyond Duqm, Renaissance continues to deliver high-quality accommodation facilities for Oman’s oil and gas sector workforce.

DAZZLING CULTURAL DAY

Sindhi community in Oman hosts cultural extravaganza

MUSCAT: A kaleidoscope of colors, music, and laughter filled the Middle East College auditorium on Friday, December 13th, as the Oman Sindhi community celebrated their rich heritage with a dazzling Cultural Day. The event, attended by over 700 enthusiastic participants, showcased the vibrant tapestry of Sindhi culture, leaving a lasting impression on all who witnessed it. Renowned Sindhi artists, including acclaimed singers Shahla Gull and Shaman Ali Mirali, and the immensely popular social media comedian Asghar Khoso, flew in from Sindh to grace the occasion with their captivating performances. Their talent, combined with the vibrant energy of the audience, created an unforgettable atmosphere. The event was graced by the esteemed presence of as the Chief Guest Rudhena bin Amir Al Hajri alongside Guest of Honor Mr. Fayaz Ali Shah, Sami Al Khanjri Ambassador of Oman in Karachi, Pakistan and along with other distinguished dignitaries from Oman and Pakistan. A historic moment of unity was witnessed as members of the Indian Sindhi community joined the celebrations, fostering a spirit of cultural pride and camaraderie.



This landmark event was a resounding success, captivating the audience with the rich cultural tapestry of Sindh throughout the evening. The unprecedented turnout, with over 700 attendees remaining engaged till the very end, is a testament to the meticulous planning and dedication of the organising committee.

Special recognition was extended to Mr. Usman Lakhan, Dr Dileep Kumar, Dr Sharaf Ataulh Shah, Professor Ahmed Nawaz hakro, Mr. Advocate Ali Asfaq Mangi, Dr Niranjan, Mr. Barkat Ali Shaikh, and Mr. Asim Siddiqui for their tireless efforts in making this event a truly memorable celebration of Sindhi culture.

EXCLUSIVE PROMOTION

Own a Toyota Corolla with Festival of Joy campaign

MUSCAT: Own a Toyota Corolla now and enjoy exclusive Festival of Joy benefits. Get Service 5 Years / 50,000 kms (whichever is earlier), Insurance 1 Year and chance to win 1 out of 16 units of iPhone 16 Pro Max. The campaign is valid up to 23rd January 2025 (Terms & Conditions apply. Customers can visit any Saud Bahwan Automotive showroom for exact details.) The Toyota Corolla continues to set the gold standard in the automotive world, effortlessly blending elegant design, advanced technology and a beautifully crafted interior. Since its debut, the Corolla has become an icon synonymous with reliability, versatility and pure driving satisfaction. From its sleek, dynamic exterior to its sophisticated, well-appointed cabin, the Corolla exemplifies the perfect harmony of style, spaciousness, comfort, fuel efficiency and power. The Corolla offers two impressive engine options designed to thrill and perform. The 2.0-litre Dynamic Force engine packs a powerful 168 horsepower and 20.39 kg-m of torque, paired with a Direct Shift CVT transmission, delivering a more immersive and engaging driving experience. For those seeking an exceptional balance of power and fuel economy, the 1.6-litre four-cylinder engine option generates 121 horsepower and 15.7 kg-m of torque, also equipped with a smooth CVT



transmission for an economical yet responsive drive. Inside, the Corolla’s interior is as refined as it is inviting. The minimalist yet sophisticated design emphasises space, comfort and elegance, making each journey a pleasure. Newly cushioned, ergonomically designed seats, a spacious armrest and ample legroom create a premium experience for both driver and passengers. Rear-seat passengers will appreciate the added comfort of rear AC vents, while a host of thoughtful amenities—such as a moon roof, a 4.2-inch multi-information display (MID), a 7-inch display audio system, cruise control and a six-speaker sound system enhance every drive. Toyota’s unwavering commitment to safety shines in the Corolla, equipped with a suite of advanced safety features to keep you and your loved ones protected.

Four SRS airbags, Vehicle Stability Control (VSC), Anti-lock Braking System (ABS), Brake Assist, Electronic Brakeforce Distribution (EBD) and a Tyre Pressure Monitoring System (TPMS) work in unison, providing peace of mind at every turn. With its legendary performance, stylish design and premium comfort, the Toyota Corolla continues to captivate enthusiasts and set the benchmark for what a sedan should be. Specifications of vehicle imported from Toyota Motor Corporation are as per the GSO Conformity Certificate applicable to the model/grade. Parameters such as vehicle weight, dimensions & fuel economy could vary from the GSO Conformity Certificate due to fitment of dealer installed accessories. Pictures and colours shown may differ from actual specifications.

FOR SEAMLESS CROSS-BORDER PAYMENTS

LuLu Financial Holdings enters strategic partnership with Circle

ABU DHABI: LuLu Financial Holdings, a global financial services conglomerate, has announced a strategic partnership with digital financial technology firm Circle Internet Group, Inc. This collaboration, which was formalised at the Abu Dhabi Finance Week (ADFW), will leverage USDC, Circle’s fully-reserved digital dollar, to facilitate cross-border payments, reinforcing LuLuFin’s position as a leader in adopting digital innovations to transform financial services. This partnership will enable LuLuFin, through its payments orchestration platform Digit9, to optimize remittances and cross-border payment flows using USDC, initially targeting corridors between the Middle East and Asia. Digit9 simplifies the complexities of cross-border payments, seamlessly integrating an array of payment methods, banks, and service providers. By leveraging USDC, Digit9 will benefit from increased liquidity and reduced volatility, while harnessing the speed, immutability, and traceability of blockchain technology. By harnessing blockchain technology, the partnership aims to deliver near-instant payments with reduced transaction costs, increased liquidity, and enhanced traceability. This development



aligns with LuLuFin’s commitment to innovation and its mission to create seamless, efficient, and accessible financial services for its customers. “Our partnership with Circle reflects our unwavering commitment to innovation. At LuLu Financial Holdings, we have harnessed the transformative power of blockchain technology, enabling better, faster, and more seamless cross-border payment experiences for our customers. This collaboration with Circle marks another significant step forward in that journey, reinforcing our resolve to redefine remittance experiences with cutting-edge solutions,” said Adeeb Ahamed, Managing Direc-

tor of Lulu Financial Holdings. “This landmark partnership marks a significant step forward in the evolution of cross-border payments within one of the world’s most dynamic remittance corridors,” said Jeremy Allaire, co-founder and CEO of Circle. “By incorporating in the ADGM and collaborating with industry leaders like LuLuFin, we strengthen our commitment to advancing the digital asset economy in the region. Together, we are driving innovative solutions and enhancing access to efficient digital financial offerings, thereby contributing to the broader development of the digital economy.”



Festive Season's Brunch

Step into the spirit of the season with our Season's Brunch that's sure to warm your heart and delight your tastebuds. Indulge in a spread of seasonal favourites and classic holiday offerings at Al Tanoor.

OMR 30 net per person
inclusive of selected beverages from the buffet

1pm - 4pm | Friday 20 December

 24776565  79269247

