



HIS MAJESTY CONGRATULATES PRESIDENT OF UZBEKISTAN

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Dr. Shavkat Mirziyoyev, President of the Republic of Uzbekistan on his country's Independence Day anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes to the president and for his country's people further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**



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SAYYID THEYAZIN MEETS OMAN FOOTBALL TEAM

Muscat: His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, visited the national football team camp at the main stadium of the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex in the Wilayat of Bausher. His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said was briefed on the national team's readiness for the upcoming match against the Iraq national team for the 2026 FIFA World Cup Asian Qualifier third round to be held in Basra, Iraq on 5 September, 2024. His Highness stressed his support and great confidence in the national team stars during the World Cup qualifiers. - **ONA**



TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Tropical storm Asna to bring rain



1 Tropical storm, Asna, which is centred northeast of the Arabian Sea at a latitude of 23.5 N and a longitude of 65.0 E, may bring rain in some governorates of Oman. **>A2**

OMAN Visitor numbers to Khareef Dhofar rise

2 The number of visitors to Khareef Dhofar has seen a significant increase this year, with 816,081 people visiting since the start of the season until August 15. This marks a 10.3% increase compared to the same period in 2023. **>A3**

MARKET Credit granted by banks up by 3.8%

3 The total credit granted by the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 3.8 percent to reach OMR31.4 billion by the end of June 2024. **>B1**

INDIAN BUSINESS HOUSES INVITED TO EXPLORE INVESTMENTS IN OMAN

Oman's high-powered delegation was led by the Minister of Commerce, HE Qais Mohammed Al Yousef

PANKAJ K. SHARMA

MUMBAI: HE Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Oman's Minister of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, has invited Indian business houses to come and invest in the Sultanate as it offers a wealth of opportunities to foreign investors.

"From mining to engineering to heavy industry, Oman has opened its doors for business houses," Oman's Minister of Commerce said at an event in Mumbai, in which several key members of the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce Industry (FICCI) in Mumbai participated.

Oman's high-powered delegation was led by the Minister of



Commerce and Pankaj Khimji, advisor for foreign trade and international cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, along with senior officials from the ministry of culture and Oman's ambassador to India.

"Situated just across the Arabian sea, Oman and India enjoy historic relationships dating back to thousands of years ago. We have good and trusted ties with FICCI, CII, and WIPO. India is so important to Oman that after His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik came to power, India was the first

non-Arab country to which His Majesty chose to visit. There is a natural love among the Omani and Indian people for each other," the Minister said. "Earlier an investor had to go through five to six stages with their investment plans, but now that has been simplified to one group for their benefit. We are here to take this relationship from regular business to a comprehensive economic partnership," the Minister further added.

Ahmed Al Mamari from Invest Oman said people these days don't want to visit crowded cities; they love peace and tranquillity, and

Oman is the best choice for them.

Deepak Bagla, Adviser to the ministry, said that the Indian Film industry has a global audience; therefore, showcasing stunning Omani landscapes in movies will have great appeal to global audiences.

The Minister said that Pankaj Khimji, Foreign Trade and International Cooperation Adviser, Ministry of Commerce, Oman, is looking after our newly created Centre for International Strategic Partnership and Foreign Trade to ease the process of investments and remove the bottlenecks, if any. **>A5**

FREE TRADE AGREEMENT

Oman-India working on FTA



MUMBAI: The Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, Qais Al Yousef, is in India along with Pankaj Khimji, Adviser for Foreign Trade and International Cooperation at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, to prepare the course for the Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the Sultanate of Oman and India. In fact, work is on for an India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA) so that the trade between the two countries gets a further boost. India is a vast

country with a huge market but Oman can be a development partner with its strategic ports of Sohar, Salalah and Duqm due to its unique location between the west and the east, added the minister. Indian Union Minister of Commerce and Industry, Piyush Goyal had a meeting with the Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion on Thursday during which they discussed about enhancing co-operation, unlocking new avenues for growth, and deepening the India-Oman economic partnership. **>A5**

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IN PICTURES

Sayyid Theyazin meets Oman football team



PRESIDENT OF SLOVAKIA

His Majesty sends cable of congratulations

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Peter Pellegrini of the Slovak Republic on his country's National Day.

In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes to the president and his country's people. — **ONA**



CIVIL AVIATION AUTHORITY

Tropical storm to bring rain



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Tropical storm, Asna, which is centred northeast of the Arabian Sea at a latitude of 23.5 N and a longitude of 65.0 E, may bring rain in some governorates of Oman.

Starting from Sunday evening through Monday, September 1-2, 2024, varying intensity rainfall ranging from 10 to 30 mm is expected to affect the governorates of South Sharqiyah, North Sharqiyah, Muscat, and parts of Al Wusta.

This scenario poses a risk of wadi flows due to expected rainfall. The storm currently lies approximately 635km away from the coast of Oman near Ras Al Hadd, in Sur.

According to Abdullah bin Rashid Al-Khadouri, Director General of Meteorology at the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA), Tropical Cyclone Asna is expected to veer southward towards the southwest when it reaches the gateway to the Sea of Oman on Sunday, avoiding a direct impact on the Sultanate's coasts.

The latest report from the CAA indicates that current satellite imagery and analyses from the National Multi-Hazard Early Warning Centre show the cyclone's

centre is located northeast of the Arabian Sea at coordinates 23.5 N latitude and 65.0 E longitude, approximately 635 kilometres from Ras Al Hadd.

Wind speeds around the cyclone's centre are estimated between 35 and 45 knots, with the nearest rain-bearing cloud mass situated about 280 kilometres from Ras Al Hadd.

The storm is anticipated to continue its westward movement towards the Oman Sea over the next 24 hours before shifting south/southwest in the following 48 hours, gradually dissipating away from the South Al Sharqiyah coast.

The impact of the cyclone is expected to diminish by Tuesday morning, September 3, 2024.

Additionally, fresh winds between 15 and 30 knots (28-55 km/h) are forecasted, with rough sea conditions along the Oman Sea and Arabian Sea coasts, where wave heights may range from 3 to 5 meters. There is also a possibility of seawater inundation in low-lying coastal areas and creeks.

The Civil Aviation Authority advises the public to exercise caution during rainfall and potential flash floods, check visibility and sea conditions before sailing, and stay updated with weather bulletins and reports.

NORTH AL BATINAH

Expat arrested

MUSCAT: An expatriate has been arrested for the possession of drugs and more than 2,700 psychotropic tablets. ROP said: "The Anti-Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Department, led by the North Al Batinah Police, arrested an Asian resident in possession of a quantity of crystal meth, morphine, hashish and more than 2,700 psychotropic tablets."

WILAYAT OF SALALAH

Emergency medicine conference

SALALAH: The International Conference of Omani Society of Emergency Medicine (OSEM) concluded on Thursday in the Wilayat of Salalah, with recommendations to develop unified protocols to respond to disasters and crises in emergency departments.

The conference also stressed the need to enhance training for health personnel handling critical cases, establish integrated poison control centres and expand the use of digital technology for improving the quality of emergency healthcare services, notably in areas with limited access.

The conference underscored the importance of consolidating the role of communities in emergency preparedness, updating curricula on the study of emergency medicine and adopting advanced technologies in emergency departments to improve the accuracy of diagnosis and the speed of response.

Hosted by the Directorate General of Health Services in Dhofar Governorate, the conference was organised by OSEM in cooperation at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah. More than 40 specialists from Oman and abroad took part in the 3-day conference. — **ONA**

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GREEN SALALAH

Visitor numbers to Khareef Dhofar up by over 10% compared to 2023



MUSCAT: As many as 816,081 visitors turned up in the Governorate of Dhofar since the beginning of the Khareef (monsoon) season (in mid-June) until 15 August 2024, posting an increase of 10.3 percent compared to the figures of the corresponding period in 2023, according to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The NCSI statistics indicate the following: By mid-August 2024, Dhofar Khareef venues saw the arrival of 567,761 Omani visitors (up by 10%); 139,781 from GCC states and 108,540 from other countries (from 97,719 by August 2023).

Statistics also show tht 648,083 visitors arrived in Dhofar Governorate via land border checkpoints, while 167,998 visitors arrived by air. It is worth noting that 49.4% of the visitors to the Dhofar Khareef venues arrived between 1 and 15 August. Key attractions this year include Awqad Public Park in Salalah, designed specifically for children and featuring international entertainment villages and interactive games. One of the notable initiatives this season is the enhancement of displays featuring products by Omani youth, complemented by the design of 200 kiosks for restaurants and cafes.

Last year, significant projects were inaugurated in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and Omran Group, including the scenic viewpoints of Wadi Darbat and Hamrir, the seafront of Al Mughsail, and the development of Ayn Jarziz projects. This year, additional tourism projects have been executed in the Wilayat of Rakhyut and at Al Damar beach in the Wilayat of Mirbat. It is once again proved, Dhofar stands ready to welcome tourists from around the world, offering a vibrant mix of cultural, recreational, and entrepreneurial activities set against the backdrop of its stunning natural beauty.

NEW APPOINTMENT

TAISM welcomes Peter Lee as new school director, announces exciting new developments



MUSCAT: The American International School of Muscat (TAISM) is pleased to announce that Peter Lee officially assumed the role of School Director as of July 1, 2024. Lee steps into this leadership role following the departure of Kevin Schafer from the directorship at the end of the 2023-24 school year.

Lee brings a wealth of experience to his new role, having been an integral part of the TAISM community for 19 years. Previously serving as the Middle School Principal, Lee has been a key figure in fostering a school climate emphasizing community, wellness, and inclusivity. His dedication to creating an environment of belonging and mutual respect is evident in his daily interactions with students, staff, and parents.

In 2022, Peter was honoured as one of only two international school educators to receive the prestigious National Distinguished Principals Award from the US-based National Association of Elementary School Principals (NAESP). This accolade was awarded at a ceremony in Washington DC, recognising his outstanding leadership and contribution to education at the international level.

Educated at Gustavus Adolphus College with a bachelor's



degree in Elementary Education, Peter also holds a Master's in Education from St. Mary's University and an Ed.S. in Education Leadership from Capella University. His leadership is marked by a dedication to excellence and a deep commitment to the educational and personal development of every student.

"Finding the right fit for the leadership role of School Director at TAISM is no small task," says Fawzi Mushantaf, Chair of the TAISM Board of Directors. "An extensive recruitment and selection process, led by our Board and international consultants over the course of ___ months, ensured we chose the best leader for our community. Peter Lee brings with him 19 years of dedicated service at TAISM and a deep familiarity

with the American educational system. His experience and understanding of our community make him uniquely qualified to lead the school into its next chapter."

About his new role, Peter shares: "At TAISM you can see an essential commitment to fostering close-knit community, and a phrase shared on t-shirts and in the hallways: "You belong here." This value is personal to me as my own children grew up in the unique family atmosphere TAISM provides, within the wider peace and safety of Oman. I look forward to collaborating with our families, students, and staff as we continue to foster an environment of lifelong learning together."

In addition to this leadership transition, TAISM is excited to announce significant upcoming developments. The construction of the new High School Science and Technology Center is progressing, with the state-of-the-art facility set to include advanced labs for Biology, Chemistry, Physics, and a new Computer Science Lab. The new center will feature collaborative and flexible learning spaces designed to enhance educational experiences, with plans to move into these areas during the second half of the school year.

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OMAN-INDIA RELATIONS

Indian businesses briefed about Oman’s special economic zones

<FROM A1 The long-standing relation between India and Oman during the reign of the late Sultan Qaboos bin Said al Said is very well known, the Minister said, adding that “instead of inviting investors to Oman, we are moving to them with open arms to invest in our country.”

“Oman and India trade relations date back to over 5,000 years,” said Pankaj Khimji, adding that “artefacts throw light on sea trade between Qalhat and Dwarka. Even the national Museum of Oman has many artefacts showing close and historic ties between the two countries,” he said.

He said that when His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik met with Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi, they discussed cricket, and the Indian Prime Minister presented His Majesty with a cricket bat with the signatures of Indian players.

“Oman has a comparative advantage in five sectors that include tourism, weddings, logistics, road network connectivity, manufacturing, and food security. Oman is rich in copper, dolomite, marble, and limestone,” said the minister.

“These meetings are a precursor to the signing of the final CEPA agreement. We are going to have one-to-one meetings rather than a general council meeting



to fine-tune the details,” said the minister.

He was all praise for the Indian Ambassador to Oman, Amit Narang, who made possible the meeting with the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce & Industry (FICCI).

Dr. Yousef Hamed Al Balushi, Advisor at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, highlighted the strategic advantages Oman offers to Indian investors, emphasising its role as a gateway to the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) and African markets. He also drew attention to the burgeoning special economic zones in Duqm, Salalah, and Sohar Freezone, showcasing them as prime investment destinations.

Other members of the Omani team spearheading the meeting

were Aziz Salim Al Hadhrami, Section head, Commercial relations, Ministry of Commerce Industry and Investment Promotion; Abdullah Al Rawahi, Section head, Industry Analysis and Evaluation, Ministry of Commerce Industry and Investment Promotion; Ahmed Al Maamari, Investment Analysis, Ministry of Commerce Industry and Investment Promotion; Ms. Mariya Al Hashar, Tourism sector Lead, Oman National Programme for Private Sector and Foreign Trade (Nazdaher); Ms. Maryam Nasser Al Kharbooshi, Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

Prominent among those who participated in the meeting were Deepak Mukhi, Director, Maharashtra State Council, FICCI, Srikant Badve, managing director, Belrise Industries, Dinesh N Joshi, Chairman and Managing Director, Satyagiri Group, Gaanesh Srinivasan, President T&D, KEC, Anant Singhania, CEO JK Enterprises, Hrishikesh Kamat, Chief Procurement Officer, Arcelor Mittal Nippon Steel India, Bobby Pauly, Managing Partner and CEO, One Planet Partners Private Limited, Summet Kabra, Director, RR Global, Anuj Sharma, CEO- Hydrogen Business, Waaree Energy, Gaurav Shekhri, Director, Tinna Group, Rajiv Podar, Managing Director, Podar Enterprises.

OMAN DESK

<FROM A1 Oman-India working on Free Trade Agreement

“Discussions focused on boosting bilateral trade, enhancing cooperation, unlocking new avenues for growth, and deepening our economic partnership,” said Goyal. The leaders expressed satisfaction at the pace of ongoing negotiations for signing an India-Oman Comprehensive Economic Partnership Agreement (CEPA). The leaders underlined that holding two rounds of negotiations in quick succession in less than a month’s time is a testimony that both countries are committed to deepening the economic relations further, said the Ministry of Finance in a press statement.

As per the statement, negotiations on the text of the India - Oman CEPA have been largely completed. The leaders exhorted their respective negotiators to conclude discussions on the remaining issues paving the way for the early conclusion of India-Oman CEPA negotiations and signing of the Agreement. Further, both Ministers also discussed the need for a focused approach to enhancing investments in both countries. It was decided that an ‘OmanDesk’ would be created in Invest India for this purpose. Oman has FTA agreement with the US and it hopes to enter into agreement with In-

The Minister also invited Indian film makers to come for film shoots as Oman has natural beauty that is unparalleled in the region. “Even the food habits of Omanis living along the coast are similar to Indians”, he said.

dia soon,” said Pankaj Khimji. “We have agreement on more than 80 percent of products but negotiations are going on for the remaining few ones and hopefully will see some positive results soon,” he said. The Adviser to the Minister of commerce invited businessmen to come for destination and big fat weddings as Oman has all the ingredients to give an amazing experience to its guests. He also invited film makers to come for film shoots as Oman has natural beauty that is unparalleled in the region. “Even the food habits of Omanis living along the coast are similar to Indians.”



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SI No	Tender No.	Tender Name	Grade	Tender Document's Fees (Omr)
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Tender Fees

OMR 300/- to be deposited in NGC's Account No. 103020020381 with Sohar International Bank. Tender document will be emailed upon submission of proof of payment of tender fees.

Start Date of Tender collection

04-Sept-2024

Last date of Tender collection

10-Sept-2024

The deadline for clarification

Before 19-Sept-2024

Bid Submission Date

26-Sept-2024 before 5pm

Submission

The bid should be submitted in a 2 separate sealed envelope mentioning only the Tender No., in the Tender Box placed at the NGC's Head office before 5pm on 26th Sept 2024. Also, a password protected soft copy to be emailed to purchase@nationalgasco.net.

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- Any bid not in compliance with the required Bid Bond will be rejected.
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- NGC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.

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MTCIT/ 205/2024	Consultancy Services for Supervision of Construction of Remaining Works of 'Upgrading of Sinaw-Muhut-Duqm Road, Section - I' (From Km. 0+000 to Km. 81+360)	29-8-2024	12-9-2024	03-10-2024	Experienced companies and registered with the Secretariat General of Tender Board (First & Second classes)	Fifty-three (53/-) Omani Rials (Local, regional) (10/) Ten Omani Rial for SME Non-refundable
MTCIT/ 206/2024	Maintenance and upgrade of Alwusta Governorate Road Department Building	29-8-2024	12-9-2024	09-10-2024	Experienced companies and registered with the Secretariat General of Tender Board (Third & Fourth classes)	Twenty-five (25/-) Omani Rials (Local, regional) (10/) Ten Omani Rial for SME Non-refundable

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OQGN implementing a number of projects in Sohar and Duqm

The company is currently executing a number of projects in several wilayats and is considering various opportunities also

MUSCAT: OQ Gas Networks, (OQGN) the key operator of Oman's natural gas transmission network announced execution of a number of projects on transmission of gas to the Wilayats of Sohar and Duqm coupled with a project on expansion of the network in pipelines, transmitting gas to the Wilayat of Sur at the cost of OMR150 million.

Mansour Al Abdali Chief Executive Officer of the company said that the company is currently executing a number of projects in several wilayats and is considering various opportunities not-



bly in the wilayats of Sohar and Duqm.

There is also a strategic project in North Oman which will see the light during the upcoming period, he added.

He also pointed to that the company's profits in the first half of 2024 amounted to OMR28 million.

Saib Project which is opened recently in Dhofar Governorate

is one of the vital projects in the governorate, he said adding that the project would contribute to the energy projects in the governorate. The project would boost the economic and social development in Dhofar Governorate. The in-Country value (ICV) of the project amounted to OMR11 million, he said.

The project employs over 300 Omani youth, he added. — **ONA**

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

More than 800,000 students return to schools for new academic year today

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A total of 811,679 students will start their new academic year (2024-2025), as Omani schools across the country will begin classes on Sunday, September 1. According to the Ministry of Education, 409,122 male students and 402,557 female students across the governorates will start the classes on Sunday.

According to the ministry, the number of students in grades (1-4)

stood at 307,765 students, including 155,449 male students and 152,316 female students, while the number of students in grades (5-8) reached 275,953 students, including 138,621 male students and 137,332 female students, and in grades (9-12) the number of students reached 227,961 students, including 115,052 male students and 112,909 female students, while the total number of new students in the first grade reached 74,078 students, and the

total number of special education students reached 2,080 male and female students.

60,000 teachers

The new academic year will have over 60,000 teachers in government schools. These students are enrolled in 1287 schools, including 359 schools for grades (1-4), 328 schools for grades (5-9), 53 schools for grades (9-12), 77 schools for grades (10-12), 20 schools for grades (11-12).



GREEK ISLANDS

Fighting water shortages with desalination

ATHENS: It is hot and sticky inside the crowded ferry approaching the coast of Naxos. When the ferry docks, the tourists, who are laden down with baggage, surge forward, impatient to disembark. It takes about half an hour for everyone to leave the ferry.

The port is extremely busy: Cars honk horns, motorcycles weave in and out between vehicles, a taxi driver gesticulates in an animated fashion while talking loudly on his phone. To the left is a large coach waiting to take the tourists to their accommodation.

The tourists here are looking forward to their vacation. What most of them don't know is that the Greek islands are running out of water. The problem is particularly acute right now in the summer months, when thousands of holidaymakers throng to the Aegean Islands, one of the most popular holiday destinations in Europe.

This influx of visitors puts a huge strain on the islands' water infrastructure — some of which is old or even non-existent. This is definitely the case on Naxos, the largest island in the Cyclades, which is popular with holidaymakers from April to October.

"We chose Naxos because of the beautiful beaches for the children and the inexpensive accommodation," says German tourist Anja Kellermann, who is here with her husband and two children.

When asked whether she is aware of the water shortage on the island, she is dismayed. "We had no idea that the situation is so serious," she tells DW.

No rainfall in almost nine months

The entire Mediterranean region is increasingly suffering from drought and the effects of climate change. The situation in Greece



— and above all on most islands in the Aegean — is particularly bad.

This year, Greece has been plagued by major forest fires, deadly heat waves and water shortages. At present, water reserves on Naxos have almost been used up.

In August, water is a luxury here. The reservoirs are nearly empty, and many wells have run dry. The heat and drought this year have been particularly extreme. There has been no rainfall on Naxos for almost nine months.

The impact of the dwindling water reserves on the locals is especially tough because, thanks to its very fertile soil, Naxos is the only island in the Cyclades with a significant agricultural sector.

Most of the island's residents work in agriculture, which is why tourism has become even more important as a source of income on the island this year.

Some farmers are giving up

Kyriakos Kalogeitonas has been running a hotel and a campsite in Maragas, in the southwest of the island, since 1987.

"This year in particular, because

agricultural production has decreased so dramatically, I am seeing many farmers switching to the tourism sector," Kalogeitonas tells DW, adding that he has never experienced a drought like this.

"I have no choice but to buy water for my system and have to check water supplies twice a day to manage them correctly," he explains.

Kalogeitonas says that many tourists are not aware of the water shortage. Indeed, some guests recently told him that he really should water the plants and flowers in the garden.

Kalogeitonas is already considering buying a private seawater desalination unit because he doesn't think the situation will improve in the long term: "I don't think that things will get better for us. Even if there is more rainfall in one year, that doesn't solve the problem. If it doesn't rain the year after that, we are back to square one."

Desalination plant as an emergency solution

Tourists don't really notice how bad things are, among other things,

because the tourism sector gets water from desalination plants, in particular those near the port. These units are housed in white containers opposite the port, which are easy to miss if you don't know what they are.

Four desalination plants

There are currently four desalination plants on Naxos, which are capable of producing 3,600 cubic metres (127,000 cubic feet) of usable water from sea water in 24 hours. The plants were installed to meet the increased demand for water on the island in the summer months.

The neighbouring islands of Koufonisi, Schinoussa, Iraklia and Donousa have also been operating desalination plants for several years.

"This is a very modern technology, but the costs associated with it are high," Mayor Dimitris Lianos tells DW.

Because the desalination plants are near the port of Naxos, the water can only be used in the surrounding area. "It's a huge problem for us that the water cannot be transported from one place to



the next because we don't have the necessary infrastructure," says Lianos.

Transportation costs are too high

Georgios Koutsianas checks the pH of the water every hour and monitors the system. In the event of a power outage, he gets an alert on his phone.

Koutsianas sees the high potential of the plants, but he also emphasizes the downside: "Because of climate change, desalination is the quickest method. Reservoirs are useless if it doesn't rain. But the plants consume a huge amount of electricity."

Wells have run dry

Just 4 kilometres (2.5 miles) from the port, the repercussions of this are visible. Farmer Stelios Vathrakokoilis will not be able to plant a single Naxos potato this fall. Vathrakokoilis is standing in his fallow field, looking at the bare soil. Where once there were Naxos potato plants as far as the eye could see, now there is just parched earth.

Potatoes have long been one of the main agricultural products in the Cyclades, and the potatoes grown here are popular across Greece. Because of the water shortage, the farmer was only able

to plant just under eight hectares this year. Last year, it was just under 22 hectares, and in the years before that, up to 80 hectares. The well in Vathrakokoilis' field is 14 meters (45 feet) deep. It has been dry since early May.

"There isn't a single drop of water left. We've had difficult years in the past, but the damage this year is simply irreparable," Vathrakokoilis tells DW.

"The situation is dramatic. The sad thing is that the future of agriculture on the island is in danger," he says, looking out across his dry, empty field.

Will the Naxos potato disappear?

Dimitris Kapounis, the president of the Union of Agricultural Cooperatives of Naxos, has already declared an emergency. "We used to produce an average of 6,000 tonnes. In 2023, it was just 4,000, and in spring 2024, just 1,800," he tells DW. "Our supplies will last until early October at the latest. Then there will be no more Naxos potatoes."

While the locals are extremely worried and don't know how they are going to cope with the situation moving forward, tourists continue to enjoy their vacation on the beach at Plaka, just 5 kilometres south of the port. — **DW**



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FIFTH DUQM FORUM

Al Wusta poised as key investment hub

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Al Wusta Governorate, with its extensive 550 km coastline, abundant natural resources, and moderate climate, is emerging as a prime investment destination for local and international ventures in the oil, tourism, logistics, and fisheries sectors.

To bolster this potential, the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) branch in Al Wusta Governorate actively works to create a favourable investment climate, enhance the business environment, and promote the governorate through various programmes and initiatives.

As part of these efforts, OCCI will organise the fifth Duqm Forum on October 20, 2024, at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Center in Muscat, under the theme "The Blue Economy: The New Destination for Investment."

The forum, held in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Public Authority for Economic Zones and Free Zones, will bring together experts, investors, and local and international companies specialising in the blue economy investment sector.

Honourable Dr Salem bin Salim Al Junaibi, a member of the State Council, Chairman of the OCCI in Al Wusta Governorate, and General Supervisor of the Forum, highlighted the Chamber's ongoing efforts to launch initiatives and programs that promote investment in the governorate. He emphasised that these efforts are coordinated with relevant investment author-



ities in Oman.

Speaking to Oman News Agency, Dr. Al Junaibi stated that the forum would focus on the blue economy, a vital sector within Oman's national economic framework, attracting international experts and investors to discuss three key areas. The first area will cover the pillars and strategies of investment in the blue economy, the second will explore blue investment opportunities in food security, logistics, tourism, and renewable energy in Oman, and the third will address global technologies and experiences that enhance blue economy investments.

Dr Al Junaibi also pointed out that Al Wusta Governorate, with its strategic location along the Arabian Sea and the Indian Ocean and its access to Asian markets, is well-positioned to become a significant maritime trade corridor for international goods and a logistical hub for commercial ship manufacturing and maintenance. Additionally, the governorate's rich fish resources offer promising investment opportunities in the fish processing and petrochemical and refinery sectors.

Israeli government using Google ads to discredit agency: UNRWA

Israeli government’s campaign aims to undermine and tarnish the reputation of UNRWA by using Google ads to discourage contributions and spread negative propaganda against the agency

GAZA: Philippe Lazzarini, the Commissioner-General of the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), said on Saturday that the Israeli government is purchasing advertisements on Google to defame the agency and prevent users from making donations.

Lazzarini stated that the Israeli government’s campaign aims to undermine and tarnish the reputation of UNRWA by using Google ads to discourage contributions and spread negative propaganda against the agency.

He emphasised that these actions not only damage the agency’s reputation but, more critically, endanger the lives of its staff.



In a post on X, Lazzarini called for an immediate halt to these deliberate efforts to spread misinformation and demanded an investigation into the matter.

He underscored that misinformation and false narratives continue to be used as tools in the ongoing war in Gaza, and criticized social media platforms and companies for profiting from the spread of false information.

Lazzarini also highlighted the need for stricter regulations to combat misinformation and hate speech on these platforms, pointing

out that UNRWA is the largest humanitarian organisation addressing the crisis in Gaza.

The agency has faced systematic Israeli defamation following allegations against 12 of its employees. This controversy led 18 countries and the European Union to suspend funding. However, some countries and entities have since resumed financial support following UN investigations that disproved the allegations.

Over 22 Palestinians detained by Israeli occupation forces in West Bank in past two days

Over 22 Palestinians detained by Israeli occupation

Israeli occupation forces have detained at least 22 people from the occupied West Bank over the past two days, including a journalist, a woman, and several children, as well as former prisoners.

According to a joint statement from the Palestinian Authority’s Commission of Detainees and Ex-Detainees Affairs and the Palestinian Prisoner’s Society (PPS), this surge in detentions occurred as the Israeli military continues its wide-scale offensive in the northern West Bank, specifically in the Jenin province.

The statement added that the number of detainees has risen to approximately 70 since the commencement of the Israeli military offensive in the north of the region. This figure includes confirmed cases, with the ongoing Israeli military offensive suggesting that the actual number may be higher.

According to the statement, over 10,300 Palestinians have been detained from the West Bank, including Jerusalem, since the onset of the relentless Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people in October 2023.

Israeli troops use civilians as human shields during wide-scale raid of Jenin

Israeli occupation forces detained several citizens today in the Damaj neighborhood of Jenin refugee camp, north of the occupied West Bank, using them as human shields during the ongoing attack on the camp.

Meantime, the Palestinian Red Crescent Society (PRCS) reported significant difficulties in accessing Palestinian casualties within the Al-Damaj neighborhood of the Jenin refugee camp.

The organisation said in a brief statement that its teams received reports of casualties in the area but are unable to reach them due to restrictions imposed by the occupation forces.

Local sources reported that the Israeli military conducted a wide-scale detention operation in the eastern neighborhood of Jenin, involving house raids and searches.

In a related development, Israeli forces prevented water tankers from the Jenin Civil Defense from reaching Jenin Government Hospital.

Dergham Zakarneh, Director of the Jenin Civil Defence, stated that the Israeli military stationed at the hospital’s entrance blocked the delivery of water essential for the hospital’s operations, particularly for its dialysis unit, which requires 100 litres of water daily.

Wisam Bakar, Director of Jenin Government Hospital, warned that if the Israeli blockade on water continues, the hospital may face a halt in its dialysis services.

For the fourth consecutive day, the hospital has been grappling with a severe water shortage due to the Israeli military’s destruction of the main water supply line in the hospital.

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. — WAPA

GERMANY

NASA

Knife attack on bus injures 6

SIEGEN: A woman stabbed and wounded six people in a bus in western Germany on Friday evening, police said. They said five were injured in the incident but later revised the figure.

The 32-year-old suspect, a German national, was arrested after the attack in the town of Siegen.

At least 40 people were on the bus traveling to a city festival at the time of the incident.

Three of the victims are in a life-threatening condition, according to authorities.

Police are investigating the motive behind the crime. They said there were no indications that it was a terrorist attack.

Police appealed to citizens “not to spread false reports” on social networks or other channels.

Germany’s Bild tabloid reported that the attacker may have been suffering from mental health issues. The incident comes a week after a deadly knife attack in Solingen that shook the country and forced the government to announce changes to security and asylum policies. — DW

SpaceX Crew-9 changes ahead of September launch

WASHINGTON DC: NASA astronaut Nick Hague and Roscosmos cosmonaut Aleksandr Gorbunov will launch no earlier than September 24, on the agency’s SpaceX Crew-9 mission to the International Space Station.

The updated crew complement follows NASA’s decision to return the agency’s Boeing Crew Flight Test uncrewed and launch Crew-9 with two unoccupied seats. NASA astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams, who launched aboard the Starliner spacecraft in June, will fly home with Hague and Gorbunov in February 2025, a press release by NASA said.

NASA astronauts Zena Cardman and Stephanie Wilson, previously announced as crewmates, are eligible for reassignment on a future mission.

Hague and Gorbunov will fly to the space station as commander and mission specialist, respectively, as part of a two-crew member flight aboard a SpaceX Dragon.

The decision to fly Hague was made by NASA chief astronaut Joe Acaba at the agency’s Johnson Space Center in Houston. Acaba had to balance flying a NASA crew



member with previous spaceflight experience to command the flight, while ensuring NASA maintains an integrated crew with a Roscosmos cosmonaut who can operate their critical systems for continued, safe station operations.

“While we’ve changed crew before for a variety of reasons, downsizing crew for this flight was another tough decision to adjust to given that the crew has trained as a crew of four,” said Acaba.

“I have the utmost confidence in all our crew, who have been excellent throughout training for

the mission. Zena and Stephanie will continue to assist their crewmates ahead of launch, and they exemplify what it means to be a professional astronaut.”

The agency will share reassignment details for Cardman and Wilson when available, the release added.

“I am deeply proud of our entire crew,” said Cardman, “and I am confident Nick and Alex will step into their roles with excellence. All four of us remain dedicated to the success of this mission, and Stephanie and I look

forward to flying when the time is right.”

Wilson added, “I know Nick and Alex will do a great job with their work aboard the International Space Station as part of Expedition 72.”

With 203 days logged in space, this will be Hague’s third launch and second mission to the orbiting laboratory. During his first launch in October 2018, Hague and his crewmate, Roscosmos’ Alexey Ovchinnikov, experienced a rocket booster failure, resulting in an in-flight, post-launch abort, ballistic re-entry, and safe landing in their Soyuz MS-10 spacecraft.

Five months later, Hague launched aboard Soyuz MS-12 and served as a flight engineer aboard the space station during Expeditions 59 and 60. Hague conducted three spacewalks to upgrade space station power systems and install a docking adapter for commercial spacecraft.

An active-duty colonel in the US Space Force, Hague completed a developmental rotation at the Defense Department and served as the Space Force’s director of test and evaluation from 2020 to 2022. In August 2022, Hague resumed duties at NASA, working on the Boeing Starliner Program until this flight assignment.

This will be Gorbunov’s first trip to space and the station. Born in Zheleznogorsk, Kursk region, Russia, he studied engineering with qualifications in spacecraft and upper stages from the Moscow Aviation Institute.

Gorbunov graduated from the military department with a specialty in operating and repairing aircraft, helicopters, and aircraft engines. Before his selection as a cosmonaut in 2018, he worked as an engineer for Rocket Space Corp. Energia and supported cargo spacecraft launches from the Baikonur Cosmodrome, the release added.

Hague and Gorbunov will become members of the Expedition 72 crew aboard the station.

They will join Wilmore, Williams, fellow NASA astronaut Don Pettit, and Roscosmos cosmonauts Alexey Ovchinnikov and Ivan Vagner conducting scientific research and maintenance activities into the station’s 24th year of continuous human presence. — ANI

GREEN PROTECTIONIST MEASURES

BRICS countries sign climate cooperation framework pact

MOSCOW: BRICS countries have adopted a framework document on climate and sustainable development, which includes the main aspects of joint actions in this direction, the Russian Economic Development Ministry said on Friday.

“Following the two-day BRICS Climate Agenda in Modern Conditions Forum in Moscow, the BRICS countries adopted the framework on climate and sustainable development. The document covers all key aspects of climate action, including a just transition, mitigation, adaptation, carbon markets, finance, science, and business involvement,” the ministry said in a statement, carried by Sputnik.

Russian Economic Development Minister Maxim Reshetnikov noted that all BRICS countries recognise the need to halt use of unilateral green protectionist measures by developed countries, as these measures negatively impact the economies and supply chains of developing nations.



The second document, developed within the BRICS Contact Group on Climate Change and Sustainable Development, is a memorandum of understanding on the BRICS carbon markets partnership. The Ministry said that the launch of this partnership will allow BRICS countries to learn from each other’s experiences in creating carbon markets and implement joint climate projects.

Notably, the leaders of BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India, and China) countries met for the first time in St Petersburg, Russia, on the sidelines of the G8 Outreach Summit in July 2006. After a series of

high-level meetings, the 1st BRIC summit was held in Yekaterinburg, Russia on June 16, 2009.

BRIC group was renamed BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) after South Africa was accepted as a full member at the BRIC Foreign Ministers’ meeting in New York in September 2010. South Africa attended the third BRICS Summit in San-ya, China on April 14, 2011.

BRICS is an important grouping bringing together the major emerging economies from the world, comprising 41 per cent of the world population, 24 per cent of the world GDP and over 16 per cent share in the world trade. BRICS countries have been the main engines of global economic growth over the years.

Iran, Saudi Arabia, and UAE, as part of the grouping, collectively contribute to approximately 44 per cent of the global crude oil production. The inclusion of Saudi Arabia and Iran boosts BRICS access to significant energy reserves. — ANI/WAM



Royal Oman Police

ANNOUNCEMENT

Royal Oman Police - Directorate of Public Relations and Security Information – announces a public auction to sell used ROP vehicles at the Directorate General of Transport at the Airport Heights, at 4:30 pm on Tuesday 17 September 2024.

Vehicles may be inspected during official working hours during the period- from **08 to 12 September 2024.**

The successful bidder must abide by the following terms and conditions:

- The buyer must pay the vehicle’s value immediately along with the auctioneer fees at 3% by e-payment.
- The buyer must move the vehicle within a period of 3 days from the selling date; otherwise, they shall pay a fine of RO 5/- per each day of delay.
- The buyer must pay the fees of vehicle registration in their name in the traffic system before receiving the vehicle.

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DELL SHARES RISE BY 4%
Dell Technologies' shares rose by 4% on Friday following strong demand for its AI-powered servers, prompting the company to raise its full-year earnings and revenue forecasts, according to Reuters. Dell's partnership with Nvidia has attracted mid-sized customers to upgrade servers with AI capabilities. -BNA

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



X'S ALLEGED TIES RELEASED
Court documents released last week by the US District Court for the Northern District of California shed light on shareholders and investors involved with Elon Musk's X Holdings Corp, disclosing who helped to finance his \$44 billion acquisition of the platform formerly known as Twitter in 2022.

Improvement in trading volumes helps MSX end August with gains



The market capitalisation of the Muscat Stock Exchange recorded gains of OMR137.8 million during the week, rising by the end of Thursday's trading to OMR24.55 billion, which is the highest level of the market capitalisation of the Muscat Stock Exchange historically



quarter of this year, with sectoral indices recording a collective rise, with the financial sector index rising by 123 points, the industrial sector index recording a rise of 9 points, the services sector index also rising by 4 points, and the Sharia index rising to 444 points, recording a weekly rise of 2 points.

The market capitalisation of the Muscat Stock Exchange recorded gains of OMR137.8 million during the week, rising by the end of Thursday's trading to OMR24.55 billion, which is the highest level of the market capitalisation of the Muscat Stock Exchange historically.

The trading volume last week rose to 98.2 million securities compared to 50.7 million securities in the previous week.

The trading value last week recorded a 65 percent increase from OMR9.5 million to about OMR15.8 million, while the number of deals executed rose from 2,639 deals to 4,115 deals.

During the week's trading showed individual investors' interest in selling as stock prices improved, heading towards accumulating liquidity to benefit from it in upcoming IPOs and building new portfolios during the coming period. Individual investors' sales in the week amounted to 31.6 percent of the total trading value, compared to purchases at 25.4 percent of trading.

During the past week, the prices

MUSCAT: The main index of the Muscat Stock Exchange rose last week by about 72 points and closed at 4,746 points in a new upward wave after a series of declines witnessed by the index during the past weeks.

The index benefited during the week from the rise in the shares of many leading companies, with the improvement in trading volumes and values, and the rise in the number of weekly transactions executed above the level of 4,000 transactions for the first time in eight weeks. These indicators led to an atmosphere of optimism in trading, pushing the prices of 35 shares to rise, compared to 18 shares whose prices declined, while 26 securities remained unchanged at their previous levels.

During The week, the Muscat Stock Exchange witnessed one of the best trading weeks in the third

Omani stock market closes positively boosted by financial sector performance

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market ended the week positively, increasing by 1.54 percent, and also closed the month with gains after two months of losses, according to an industry expert.

"Anticipation of a potential Fed rate cut next month has supported regional market sentiment, despite mixed performances in GCC stock markets caused by declining oil prices and geopolitical tensions," said George Khoury, Global Head of Education and Research at CFI.

"Increased trading volume and strong financial sector performance drove the market upward, although it remains within a two-year price range," he further added.

During The week, all sectors in the Omani market demonstrated positive trends. The financial sector was the stand-out performer, driving the market's upward momentum. Key contributions came from Al Omaniya Financial Services, which surged by 9.93 percent, making it one of the top per-



formers. Global Financial Investment Holding also showed strong performance with a 5.41 percent increase, while Al Sharqiya Investment Holding and Bank Nizwa rose by 1.37 percent and 1.92 percent, respectively.

The services sector posted a modest gain of 0.23 percent, highlighted by Musandam Power's impressive 23.73 percent increase, which marked it as the best performer in the entire market. Additionally, OQ Gas Networks advanced by

4.96 percent, and Oman Telecom increased by 0.90 percent, contributing to the sector's overall positive outcome.

In the industrial sector, progress was more subdued, with an overall gain of 0.15 percent. Oman Flour Mills continued its upward trajectory from the previous week, rising by 1 percent. Muscat Thread Mills showed a solid performance with a 2.02 percent increase, and Oman Cement added 0.5 percent to its value.

Building on the positive market performance, Moody's upgrade of Oman's outlook from stable to positive, while maintaining the Ba1 credit rating, is significant for the Omani economy. "This change, due to declining public debt levels and improved oil revenues, could enhance investor confidence. With potential Fed rate cuts and possible GCC central bank follow-ups, this news may bolster market sentiment," said George Khoury. "Nonetheless, global economic uncertainties and oil price volatility remain critical factors affecting Oman's economic path," he further added.

GROWTH



Oman Flour Mills records remarkable growth of 25% in flour exports

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Flour Mills (OFM) Company achieved a significant 25 percent growth in its exports at 40,449 metric tonnes of flour products compared to 32,423 metric tonnes in the previous year.

This comes within the framework of the company's commitment to expanding its presence in local and international markets, and meeting the growing demand for its products in the Gulf region and beyond.

The company's exports included various markets in the Arabian Gulf region, Africa and Europe, with a focus on improving the quality of products and ensuring their adherence to the highest food standards.

Oman Flour Mills Company plays a vital role in strengthening the national economy by providing direct and indirect job opportunities for hundreds of Omani citizens. The company works to

train and develop the skills of its employees, which enhances the efficiency of the national workforce and contributes to raising the level of productivity.

The company contributes to increasing the competitiveness of the Omani food industries by providing high quality products that meet the needs of the local and international market. The company relies on an integrated production chain that includes various mills to produce a wide range of products.

The company is working on developing the infrastructure to support its business, and enhancing transportation and distribution capabilities to ensure that its products reach all governorates in the Sultanate of Oman and regional markets in a timely manner. The company is working on improving packaging processes in line with international standards, which contributes to improving the image of Omani products in global markets.

DATA

Credit granted by Oman's banking sector rises by 3.8% to OMR31bn

MUSCAT: The total credit granted by the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 3.8 percent to reach OMR31.4 billion by the end of June 2024.

Data issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) showed that credit granted to the private sector recorded a growth of 3.4 percent reaching OMR26.3 billion by the end of June 2024.

Data on its distribution across various sectors indicate that non-financial companies accounted for the largest share, amounting to 45.2 percent by the end of June 2024. This was followed by the household sector at 44.8 percent, while the remaining percentage was distributed between the financial companies sector at 6.4



percent and other sectors at 3.6 percent.

Total deposits in the banking sector recorded a growth of 11.6 percent to reach OMR30.7 billion by the end of June 2024. Within this total, private sector deposits in the banking system witnessed

an increase of 14.8 percent to reach OMR20.7 billion by the end of June 2024.

When looking at the distribution of the total private sector deposit base across the various sectors, the figures indicate that the household sector has the largest share,

amounting to approximately 51.8 percent, followed by the non-financial corporate sector and the financial corporate sector with shares amounting to 29.6 percent and 15.6 percent respectively, while the remaining 2.9 percent is distributed across other sectors. -ONA

NCSI

Effective exchange rate of Omani Rial increases by 2.7%

MUSCAT: The effective exchange rate index of Omani Rial rose by 2.7 percent to reach 118.4 points by the end of June 2024, according to preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data indicated that local liquidity in the Sultanate of Oman increased by OMR2.6 billion to reach OMR24.62 billion by the end of June 2024 registering an increase of 12 percent compared to the same period in 2023. Total issued cash decreased by 3.3 percent to OMR1.70 billion by the end of June 2024 compared to OMR1.76 billion by the end of June 2023.

The narrow money supply (M1), which consists of total cash outside the banking system in addition

to current accounts and demand deposits in local currency, also increased by 16.3 percent, to reach OMR6.73 billion compared to OMR5.78 billion at the end of June 2023.

The total foreign assets of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) also increased by 6.2 percent to reach OMR6.99 billion by the end of June 2024 compared to OMR6.58 billion to the end of June 2023.

The total loans and financing in commercial banks and Islamic windows increased by 3.8 percent at the end of June 2024 to reach OMR31.43 billion compared to OMR30.27 billion. The average interest rate on total loans increased by 2.7 percent at 5.581 percent at the end of June 2024. -ONA



MARKET

What X's alleged ties to Russian oligarchs mean for Elon Musk

A US court filing has forced X owner Elon Musk to reveal the identities of the social media platform's investors. The move could have far-reaching repercussions

NEW YORK: Court documents released last week by the US District Court for the Northern District of California shed light on shareholders and investors involved with Elon Musk's X Holdings Corp, disclosing who helped to finance his \$44 billion acquisition of the platform formerly known as Twitter in 2022.

The filing, obtained by the Washington Post, lists around 100 entities and individuals, including prominent Silicon Valley entrepreneurs, but also individuals that reportedly have links to Russian oligarchs.

Lawyers for the nonprofit Reporters Committee for Freedom of the Press filed a motion in July asking the court to unseal the records, on behalf of independent technology journalist Jacob Silverman.

On his website, Silverman wrote that, "I believe that people have a right to know who owns a company with such a prominent role in shaping public discourse,



both in the United States and around the world."

Ties to Russian oligarchs? One of firms listed is 8VC, a venture capitalist company co-founded by Joe Lonsdale, co-founder of intelligence contractor and data analysis platform Palantir.

8VC has invested in US defense projects with Lonsdale arguing that China's growing influence is behind his firm's move to back military startups.

Speaking at an event in March, Lonsdale said China is "building really advanced things that they're starting to compete with the US." "That became a very scary realization to us about 10 years ago so we went hard into defense," he said.

On the fund's website Denis Aven and Jack Moshkovich pop up in the staff section — the sons of sanctioned Russian oligarchs Petr Aven and Vadim Moshkovich. The former is co-founder of Alfa-Bank, Russia's largest private bank, and Letter-One Holdings investment company. He's been sanctioned as part of

the measures imposed on Russian individuals in the wake of Russia's war against Ukraine.

Moshkovich, meanwhile, made his fortune in the agro-industrial business with his Rusagro Group company. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine he was sanctioned by Western countries due to his alleged ties with Russian President Vladimir Putin.

There is nothing to suggest that the sanctioned fathers have any financial ties with 8VC. However, their sons' roles are likely to come under further scrutiny, as the US government is becoming increasingly wary of foreign actors' ties to the tech industry.

The National Counterintelligence and Security Center recently released a bulletin warning Silicon Valley startups about foreign players using investment deals to exploit sensitive data. At the time of writing 8VC had not responded to DW's request for comment.

What does the disclosure mean for X? Knowing the ownership of a media channel that wields considerable

influence with an international reach provides transparency — not only for users but also interested financial parties. So what do these ownership disclosures mean for Elon Musk and his social media platform X?

"Traditional owners such as investment funds might expect a conventional financial return. In comparison to other media, the wild west of social media channels could attract other investors who might imagine their returns coming in a different mix of ways," says Gordon Fletcher, Associate Dean: Research and Innovation at the UK's Salford Business School.

"Endorsements, access to data, algorithmic amplification of messages or enhanced filtering could all be possibilities," he told DW.

The disclosure could prove uncomfortable for some of the high-profile investors, who include Prince Alwaleed bin Talal from Saudi Arabia's ruling royal family and investment firms such as the Baron Opportunity Fund and Andreessen Horowitz.

"While the US-based tech investors were revealed early on, the wider pool of investors were not. A promise of nondisclosure would upset some who are now in the spotlight. It might be useful as leverage to negotiate a different position in relation to the company," said Fletcher.

However, whether it will spark an investors' exodus from X is unclear at this stage.

"It may not be straightforward for them to sell their interests to Musk or some other buyer. The ability to sell may turn on particular investment agreements to which we're not privy," says Paul M. Barrett, deputy director of the NYU Stern Center for Business and Human Rights. **DW**

ECONOMIC ACTIVITY



US consumer spending picks up; inflation rises moderately in July

WASHINGTON: US consumer spending increased solidly in July, suggesting the economy remained on firmer ground early in the third quarter and arguing against a half-percentage-point interest rate cut from the Federal Reserve next month.

Consumer spending, which accounts for more than two-thirds of US economic activity, rose 0.5% last month after advancing by an unrevised 0.3% in June, the Commerce Department reported on Friday. Economists polled by Reuters had forecast spending would accelerate by 0.5%.

This implies that consumer spending maintained most of the momentum from the second quarter, when it helped to boost gross domestic product growth to a 3.0% annualised rate. The economy grew at a 1.4% pace in the January-March quarter.

There have been concerns over the economy's health following a jump in the unemployment rate to near a three-year high of 4.3% in July. The fourth straight monthly rise in the jobless rate led financial markets and some economists to put a 50-basis-

point rate cut on the table when the US central bank embarks on a widely anticipated policy easing in September, Reuters reported.

The slowdown in the labour market, mostly driven by a step down in hiring rather than layoffs, has caught the attention of policymakers.

The personal consumption expenditures (PCE) price index rose 0.2% last month after an unrevised 0.1% gain in June, the report also showed. Economists had forecast PCE inflation would rise 0.2%. In the 12 months through July, the PCE price index increased 2.5%, matching June's gain.

Excluding the volatile food and energy components, the PCE price index rose 0.2% last month, matching the increase in June. In the 12 months through July, core inflation increased 2.6% after advancing by the same rate in June.

The Fed tracks the PCE price measures for monetary policy, and has maintained its policy rate in the current 5.25%-5.50% range for more than a year, having raised it by 525 basis points in 2022 and 2023. **-BNA**

INITIATIVES

Dhofar University concludes summer 2024 educational and training programmes

MUSCAT: Dhofar University has successfully concluded its summer 2024 educational and training programmes, which included a series of activities targeting school students, community members, and employees from both government and private sectors.

These programmes were overseen by the Community Service and Continuing Education Centre, in collaboration with various university units, including colleges, centres, and departments, all of which played a significant role in the success of these initiatives, reflecting the university's mission and commitment to community service.

Among the summer programmes, the university organised the "Dhofar University Summer Academy" from July 7 to 25 and the "Academic Support Program" from August 4 to 22, which focused on enhancing the skills of 12th-grade students in Arabic, English, Advanced Mathematics, and Physics.

Regarding training programmes, the university targeted employees from various government administrative units, including the Office of the Governor of Dhofar, Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning, Royal Oman Police, Central Bank of Oman, Royal Opera House Muscat, Office of the Governor of North Al Batinah, State Council, Civil Aviation Authority, Military Technological College, Ministry of Energy and Minerals, Salalah Free Zone, and Dhofar University.

In this context, the "Train the Trainer" programme was conducted from August 4 to August 8, 2024, led by Mr. Hassan Al Sheizawi from the Oman Academy for Training. Additionally, the "Methodology and Fundamentals of Risk Management" program was held in collaboration with the Community Service and Continuing Education Centers of Sultan Qaboos University and Dhofar University from August 11 to August 15, 2024, under the supervi-



sion of Dr. Aseela Al Harthy, Head of the Strategic and Academic Studies Department at Sultan Qaboos University.

Furthermore, the university, in collaboration with Sultan Qaboos University, offered the "Artificial Intelligence for Employee Empowerment" program from August 18 to 22, which aimed to equip employees from various administrative units with AI skills. This program was led by Dr. Sobhi Suleiman, Head of the Education Department at the College of Arts and Applied Sciences.

As part of its community outreach, Dhofar University organised an Excel training program from August 26 to 28, targeting 100 community members.

This programme was conducted by Shahrzad Al Marhoon, Lecturer in the Department of Management Information Systems at the College of Commerce and Business ad-

ministration; Naef Al Muati, Lecturer in the Information Technology Unit at the Preparatory Studies Center; and Ms. Shamma Al Harizi, Lecturer in the Information Technology Unit at the Preparatory Studies Center.

Additionally, a public lecture titled "Personal Financial Portfolio Management" was held on August 27, 2024, presented by Dr. Moawiyah Hussein, Assistant Professor of Finance and Economics at the College of Commerce and Administrative Sciences, where participants were introduced to key financial principles for effective personal resource management.

These programmes highlight Dhofar University's commitment to enhancing its leadership role in community service and developing the skills of its members, contributing to capacity building and achieving sustainable development in the Sultanate of Oman.

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LIFESTYLE

RESEARCHERS DISCOVER HOW BODY'S NATURAL KILLER CELLS PROTECTS FROM CANCER

The Southampton scientists found that a peptide - short chains of amino acids - derived from the XPO1 protein attracted the natural killer cells

After discovering how the immune system of the body targets cancer-ravaged cells, scientists are on the approach of a significant breakthrough in the fight against the disease.

According to a recent study, human immune system's natural killer cells, which guard against infections and illness, have an innate ability to identify and target a protein that promotes the formation of cancer.

The experts say that by hijacking this protein, known as XPO1, they may be able to activate more killer cells to destroy the disease.

Scientists from the University of Southampton, working with experts worldwide, led the study and now believe it could offer new and less invasive forms of treatments.

The findings have been published in the Science Advances journal.

Lead author Professor of Hepatology Salim Khakoo, from Southampton, said it was previously believed that killer cells attack cancer cells in a random manner.

He added: "Our findings actu-

ally show how our body's immune system recognises and attacks these cancer cells."

"Killer cells are an emerging form of immunotherapy that shows huge promise.

"They don't attack healthy tissue in the way chemotherapy and other immunotherapies do, so are safer and have less side-effects than traditional forms of cancer treatment."

The XPO1 protein examined by the scientists is essential for normal cell function.

However, in many cancers, it becomes overactive and allows malignant cells to multiply unchecked. The Southampton scientists found that a peptide - short chains of amino acids - derived from the XPO1 protein attracted the natural killer cells.

This, they say, triggers the body's immune response against the cancerous cells.

Prof Khakoo added: "Patients with cancer who had both active killer cells and high levels of XPO1 had significantly better survival rates. "This holds true for a range of cancers including those with higher rates of death such as liver

cancer, which has an average survival rate of only 18 months.

"As well as liver cancer, killer cell treatment in the future could be used to treat head and neck cancers, endometrial, bladder or breast cancer."

Previous studies have linked natural killer cells to the body's protection against cancer.

But the latest study is the first of its kind to highlight a viable technique of activating killer cells - to target the XPO1 protein - to fight the disease.

Co-author Professor Ralf Schittenhelm, from Monash University in Australia, said the discovery could change the course of immunotherapy.

"We hope it could lead to personalised cancer treatment, especially in cases where traditional therapies have failed.

"The potential to develop targeted therapies that utilise the body's own immune system is incredibly exciting."

The scientific team at Southampton are now working on the development of the world's first vaccine that uses natural killer cells to fight cancer. **ANI**

SPORTS

Man Utd-Liverpool high stakes for Ten Hag as Premier League prepares for break

Another defeat to Liverpool would have fans further questioning the wisdom of retaining Ten Hag after last season's frustrations

LONDON: One of the biggest games of any season in the Premier League arrives in the third weekend as Manchester United entertain Liverpool at Old Trafford in a clash that is vital to home coach Erik ten Hag. Manchester United's 2-1 defeat away to Brighton last weekend brought back memories of the defensive errors that hamstrung their last campaign, and another defeat to Liverpool would have fans further questioning the wisdom of retaining Ten Hag after last season's frustrations. There have been some positive signs at United in the opening games, but the coach will know that any defensive lapses against Liverpool will be punished. Liverpool have kicked off with consecutive wins under new coach Arne Slot and a further victory would give a perfect start af



ter a quiet summer in the transfer window. Arsenal and Brighton have both impressed in the first two weekends of action, but one of their 100 percent records will have to give when the two teams meet at the Emirates' Stadium. Brighton have been quick and aggressive under new coach Fabian Hurlzeler and will take the game to Arsenal, whose coach Mikel Arteta must be tempted to give a start to former Brighton forward Leandro 'Trossard, who deserves to be in the starting 11 more often after

his habit of scoring after coming off the bench. Manchester City face a difficult visit to play Julen Lopetegui's West Ham, with Ilkay Gundogan in line for a first start since returning from Barcelona. Erling Haaland remains City's dangerman, as he proved with his hat-trick in last weekend's quick-fire demolition of Ipswich Town. Consecutive 3-0 and 4-0 defeats have set the alarm bells well and truly ringing for Everton, especially as off the field instability has affected their ability to strengthen

their squad. Bournemouth's aggressive high-press will give Everton plenty of problems and another defeat for Sean Dyche's men would hint at another long winter at Goodison Park. Brentford's question mark over the future of striker Ivan Toney will have been answered one way or another by the time they kick off at home to Southampton, with the recently promoted side close to have Aaron Ramsdale in goal after reportedly agreed a deal with Arsenal.



After kicking off their return to the Premier League against Liverpool and Manchester City, Fulham should give Ipswich are more realistic indication of their survival chances when they visit Portman Road. Aston Villa visit Leicester City looking for more clinical finishing than last weekend against Arsenal, while Nottingham Forest will fancy their chances against a Wolves side that looks weaker than last season and shipped six goals to Chelsea last weekend. Chelsea are at home to Crystal

Palace have disappointed so far this season and Palace's starting 11 in Stamford Bridge will be determined by whether or not they hand on to England defender Marc Guehi beyond Friday's transfer window. Newcastle are keen on Guehi, but coach Eddie Howe will have to focus on Sunday's game against Tottenham, Fabian Schar is still suspended for the game, while Tottenham are without new arrival Dominic Solanke (a former Newcastle target) due to an ankle injury. — Agencies

LA LIGA

Things to look out for in Spain's Matchday 4

MADRID: La Liga goes into its fourth round of matches this weekend at the end of a hectic start to the season in which there has been little let-up for teams still reaching full fitness after a short summer break. Here are four things to look out for ahead of the first international break of the season.

1. Dani Olmo's home debut La Liga accepted a medical report that says Andreas Christensen is a long-term injury loss for Barcelona to allow the club to include summer signing Dani Olmo in their squad under their financial fair-play rules. Although many are skeptical over just how 'long-term' Christensen's tendonitis actually is, the fact is Olmo is an important arrival for Barcelona and he showed that with his second half appearance away to Rayo Vallecano on Tuesday in which he raised Barca's level of play and scored the winning goal. The Spain international will start against Valladolid on Saturday as Barca looks to maintain their 100 percent start under Hansi Flick and can expect a warm reception in Montjuic - although if Christensen return to action in two, rather than four months, some will say LaLiga have allowed Barca to adulterate the league.

2. Athletic and Atletico face up again in a classic Athletic Club Bilbao and Atletico



Madrid play one of the classic encounters in La Liga in the San Mames Stadium. The game comes after Athletic came to life with a 1-0 win at home to Valencia, with a display that was closer to the energetic and aggressive performances that saw them finish fifth last season. The Basque side need to be in top shape to play their pressing game, that allows them to win possession high up the field and then use the pace of the Williams brothers and Oihan Sancet to threaten their rivals' goal. Atletico disappointed as they were held to a 0-0 draw at home to Espanyol on Wednesday and coach Diego Simeone won't have forgotten the 2-0 league defeat and 3-0 Copa del Rey thrashing they received in Bilbao last season. The question is. Will he take the game to Athletic, or sit deep and play on the break?

3. Can Real Madrid hit form against Betis? Real Madrid again underwhelmed with a 1-1 draw away to Las Palmas on Thursday night in a game where their only goal came from the penalty spot. Kylian Mbappe is still looking for his first goal in LaLiga and Thursday's game raised the first doubts about his compatibility with Vinicius Jr, with the Brazilian at times preferring to shoot rather than pass to his team-mate. Real Madrid's big issue continues to be playing the ball out from the back, with Aurelien Tchouameni solid in defensive work, but unable to repeat Toni Kroos' ability to keep the ball and launch Madrid through the middle. Kroos' absence means Madrid is looking to play more longer passes and those are easier for rivals to defend. — Agencies

FOOTBALL

Interim England boss Carsley looks to youth in first squad



LONDON: Stand-in England coach Lee Carsley has named four debutants in his first squad as stand-in England coach in the wake of Gareth Southgate's decision to stand down in the wake of this summer's European Championships. The former Under-21 coach has given debut call-ups to Newcastle defender Tino Livramento, Nottingham Forest's Morgan Gibbs-White, Lille's Angel Gomes and Chelsea's Noni Madueke, who scored a hat-trick at the weekend and who have all worked with him at Under-21 level. He has also recalled Jack Grealish after the Manchester City winger was left out of Southgate's squad in the summer, while Harry Maguire, who missed the Euro due to injury, is also back for the UEFA Nations League games against the Republic of Ireland and Finland. "It's important to put my own stamp on the squad but also recognize how well they've done in the past. We've come so close (to winning a trophy) but I thought it was important to put some fresh faces in the squad," said Carsley in his press conference. — Agencies

CRICKET

John Buchanan picks Australia as 'favourite' in upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy

MUMBAI: Former Australia head coach John Buchanan picked Australia as the favourite ahead of the upcoming Border-Gavaskar Trophy this year. The Border-Gavaskar series between India and Australia will begin on November 22. Pointing out that it is getting difficult for travelling teams to win across the world, the 71-year-old said India would be playing Bangladesh at home before heading to Australia and that would give the hosts an advantage at the start of the series. Buchanan was in Mumbai to launch the multi-sports foundation program 'Ready Steady Go Kids' with CP Goenka International School on Thursday in partnership with Sports Gurukul. "I never give predictions, but I will say Australia is favourite at the start of the series. When you look around world cricket these days, it's very difficult to tour other countries. One of the reason for that is that travelling teams no longer have that preparation of playing two-three games before the first Test to get used to conditions," Buchanan said. Started in Australia, the 'Ready Steady Go Kids' Program aims to develop the required motor skills of students in a fun, non-compet



itive environment. The program currently runs in 13 countries and will expand to various cities in India. The former Australia head coach added that the upcoming Border Gavaskar series will be going to be a "classic series." "It's going to be a classic series. Five Tests, which is one more Test than what we had previously. It does make a difference as by the time the teams reach Sydney, they would have played presumably four hard Test matches prior to that in a short period of time. It's going to test their resolve physically and mentally," he added. Buchanan added that both Australia and India have a strong bowling line-up. — Agencies

TABLE TENNIS

Hamid Shamas, Rembert progress to main draw of WTT Feeder Muscat 2024

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Iran's Hamid Shamas and French Bastien Rembert advanced to main draw of Men's singles at WTT Feeder Muscat 2024 on Thursday. Hamid met World ranking No. 46 Xiang Peng from China in the main draw late of last 32 round on Friday while Rembert will take on Japan's Jo Yokotani in the same round. Shamas managed to win Indian's Rahul Malik by 3-0 (11-3, 11-8, 11-9) while Rembert beat Yemen's Omar Ali by 3-0 (12-14, 5-11, 3-11). Oman's Asad al Raisi suffered to a 3-0 loss against Chinese Ho Dongshen by 3-0. Indian player Chinmaya Somaiya defeated Oman's Ghassan al Ghasani by 3-0



while Iranian Naeem Nobakht defeated Oman's player Mohammed al Mutawa with the same score. Oman's Haitham al Mandhari also lost his game against Italian player John Oybone with a score of 3-0. The underway edition of WTT

Feeder Muscat 2024 reached to the exciting knockout stages of final rounds. On Saturday, the final rounds of the mixed doubles competition will take place to determine the teams that will advance to the semifinals. Furthermore,



the last 16 round matches for the men's and women's singles competitions will occur on Saturday. The TT mega event included several categories including men's singles, women's singles, men's doubles, women's doubles and mixed dou

bles events. More than six tables have been set up in the main hall to allow multiple matches to be played simultaneously beside training halls designated for players to conduct their final warm-ups ahead of en

tering their matches. All participating players in the tournament are competing for a total cash prize of \$22,500. In the mixed doubles competition, the Indian duo comprised from Parmar / Kutumbale won against Uzbaikstan duo comprised from Avatar Iskandarov / Magdieva by 3-0 to set up a match against their Chinese counterparts in the next round which will take place on Saturday morning session. The Chinese duo of Zhong and Yuan won against the French Joe and his Dutch partner Shohan Min from Netherlands with a score of 3-1 while the Uzbek duo of Zakrov and Ashikeva defeated the Indian pair of Goyal and Rahul Malik with a score of 3-1.

Bank Muscat introduces government customers in Dhofar to impact of digital services on investment

This event aligns with Bank Muscat's objective of continuously sharing the latest developments in banking services tailored for government institutions



MUSCAT: As part of its constant keenness to introduce customers to various developments in the business sector, Bank Muscat recently organized a special meeting with its customers from the government sector in Dhofar governorate, in the presence of Ilham Murtadha al Hamaid, General Manager of Corporate Banking at Bank Muscat, and a number of officials from the public sector.

This event aligns with Bank Muscat's objective of continuously sharing the latest developments in banking services tailored for government institutions. It also provided an open forum for exchanging views, listening to suggestions, and enhancing service offerings, echoing the Bank's vision: "To serve you better every day."

In her speech, Ilham Murtadha Al Hamaid, General Manager of Corporate Banking at Bank Mus-

cat, highlighted the importance of the meeting, which took place during Khareef Dhofar 2024, underscoring the alignment of Bank Muscat's current strategy with Oman Vision 2040. She noted that the Bank is dedicated to seizing available opportunities and enhancing services across all economic sectors. Al Hamaid expressed pride in the Bank's longstanding partnerships with various government institutions across economic, health, and education sectors, among others. She emphasized the significant achievements resulting from these partnerships and looked forward to continued success in the years to come.

The General Manager of Corporate Banking also touched upon the role of modern technology in transforming financial services, noting that digital transformation has redefined the future of banking. "To adapt to these changes,

Bank Muscat has launched innovative electronic channels, providing customers with a wide range of options to conduct their banking transactions online, anytime, and from anywhere. I would like to extend gratitude to our valued customers for attendance and confirm once again that we will continue the development process to providing the best services."

The event also featured a presentation by Dr. Ahmed Said Kashoob, Head of Investments - Public Markets at the Oman National Investment Development Company. His paper, titled "Automation of Government Services and its Impact on the Process of Attracting Investment," addressed key topics such as the significance of automation, the role of government institutions, challenges in implementing automation, and recommendations for attracting investment. Kashoob also explored the public-private partnership,

the development of digital skills, enhancement of service quality, cyber risks, system infrastructure, and data privacy.

The meeting fostered rich discussions and the exchange of ideas, proposals, and visions aimed at equipping attendees with the necessary knowledge to provide fast and efficient digital services. This, in turn, is expected to streamline procedures and transactions for investors, thereby positively impacting the investment climate in the Sultanate of Oman.

Bank Muscat remains committed to regularly engaging with its customers across all governorates, hosting experts from financial and economic sectors to keep abreast of the latest developments in financial services. These efforts are specifically designed to familiarize corporate and institutional customers with innovations that contribute to their business growth and expansion.

The Bank places a high priority on the corporate sector, offering a wide range of banking facilities and services that organizations need to advance their operations. The adoption of online electronic solutions has played a crucial role in economic development, enabling government and private institutions to enhance their operations—from marketing and supply chain management to financial management. This digital transformation has improved efficiency, reduced costs, and expedited transactions, benefiting the broader economy.

Bank Muscat provides a suite of comprehensive solutions tailored to meet the unique needs of government entities, ensuring efficient funds management and tailored funding facilities to support a wide range of government projects, from infrastructure development to public service enhancements. The Bank's strategic

investment solutions are designed to optimize returns on government funds, contributing to Oman's economic stability and growth. By integrating these services, Bank Muscat helps drive forward the nation's development agenda with reliability and expertise.

The Bank's online corporate banking platform is a vital tool for government institutions and companies, enabling them to manage their financial affairs around the clock. With world-class security features, it offers easy and fast access to account details and transactions in both local and foreign currencies. The platform supports a variety of transactions, including local and international transfers, payroll processing, supplier payments, credit card-related payments, and invoice settlements. This comprehensive service ensures that corporate and institutional customers can manage their finances efficiently, securely, and with ease.

ACADEMICS

ISWK [Cambridge] announces IGCSE and AS/A level results

MUSCAT: Indian School Wadi Kabir [Cambridge] announced the outstanding performance of its learners in the Cambridge Assessment International Education June 2024 Series.

Learners from IGCSE to A Level have demonstrated remarkable academic excellence, setting a new benchmark in the IGCSE qualification by securing three ICE Awards with Distinction and one ICE Award with Merit. These prestigious awards highlight the learners' all-round excellence across a broad range of subjects and are a testament to their dedication and hard work.

In the IGCSE qualifications, the school proudly secured 30 A* and 35 A grades. Outstanding performances include:

Jinay Bafna: 7A* in Business Studies, Economics, Computer Science, English as First Language, Mathematics, French as Foreign Language, and Combined Sciences.

Taha Muhammad Wani: 7A* in Economics, Computer Science, English as Second Language, French as Foreign Language, Mathematics, Chemistry, and Physics.

Trushant Raghvani: 5A* in Computer Science, English as Second Language, French as Foreign Language, Mathematics, Chemistry, and an A in Physics.

Aditya Soni: 5A* in Computer Science, Physics, French as Foreign Language, Mathematics, Chemistry, and an A in English as Second Language.

Rohitha Harshini Palani: A in English as First Language, Mathematics, Biology, Chemistry, and Physics.

Additional notable achievements include:

Jiya Amit Kirti: A* in English as a Second Language, and A grades in Mathematics, Combined Science, and Information Technology.

Nikhilesh Itlapuram: A grades in English as a Second Language, Mathematics and Combined Science.

Cailyn Justine Durham: A* in First Language English.

Eshan Kummam Thammanna: A



grades in Information and Communication Technology, Business Studies, English as a Second Language, Foreign Language French, and Combined Science.

Marc Mathews: A grades in Business Studies and Combined Science.

Mohammed Mokim Uddin Adib: A* in Mathematics and A grades in Computer Science, Chemistry, and Physics.

Om Budur: A* in English as a Second Language and A grades in Mathematics and Combined Science.

Rehan adeer: A grade in Combined Science.

Shruti Shaju: A* in First Language English and Biology and an A grade in Chemistry.

Ishan Arun Swamy: A grades in Computer Science, First Language English, Foreign Language French, Mathematics, and Combined Science.

Nirvaan Aju Samuel: A grade in Combined Science.

In the AS and A Level qualification, the school secured 4A* and 22 A grades. Key achievements include:

Mannat Ajmani: A* in Physics, Accounting, and Mathematics, and an A in Economics.

Arya Amogh Budur: A grades in Physics, Chemistry, and Math-

ematics. Munir Shaikh: A* in Mathematics and an A in Physics. Bhumika Sham Jagtiani: A grades in Business and Economics.

Krish Sachin Kamath: A grades in Computer Science, Physics, Chemistry and Mathematics.

Ruchit Devraj Karnik: A grades in English General Paper, Business, Accounting, and Mathematics. Samarth Pramod Pujari: A grades in English Language, Accounting, and Economics.

Dylan Riley Menezes: A grade in Computer Science and Mathematics.

Ananya Gupta: A grade in Mathematics.

These outstanding results highlight the dedication and perseverance of our learners, the unwavering commitment of our exceptional teaching staff, and the continuous support from our parent community.

Additionally, ISWK [Cambridge] earned the 'Top in Oman' and 'Outstanding Learner Achievement' awards for the June 2023 Series.

As the #SchoolOfChoice, ISWK [Cambridge] remains committed to fostering an environment of excellence and achievement. These results are a testament to our holistic approach to education, innovative teaching methodologies, and focus on empowering every learner.

OFFER



Spring into season of celebrations with Kia and win incredible gifts

MUSCAT: Spring into the season of celebration with Kia and win incredible gifts, discover unbeatable savings and surprises with Kia's latest promotional offer. Head to your nearest Kia showroom to find the best of Kia's line-up. Check out the amazing incentives such as 1st year free registration, insurance, service & upgrade your deal through Scratch & Win Coupons.

It is all about winning at Kia. Get a chance to win 10-gram 24-carat gold coins, the latest iPhone 15s and service upgrades of up to 200,000 kms as assured scratch and win prizes, everybody at KIA is a winner. Take advantage of Kia's promotional offer, valid for its dynamic sedans and SUVs range until the offer ends on 23rd October 2024.

"Seeing you driving our vehicles brings us immense joy. But our main objective is to provide a unique, comfortable, enjoyable and safe driving experience for people from all walks of life." Commented a representative from Kia Oman. "We're offering a chance to upgrade the service benefits of up to 200,000 km, which means your vehicle will be under the expert care of Kia's team, without any additional cost or hidden charges."

He further shared.

Kia's diverse SUV range includes the AWD Kia Telluride 3.8L and Sorento 3.5L V6 with 7 and 8-seater options. For five-seater options, customers can select Sportage 2.0/1.6L Turbo, Seltos 1.6L 5-seater, and Sonet 1.5L.

Explore more with Kia's MPV range: the new Carnival 3.5L in 8-seater, Carens 1.5L 7-seater, the PC segment Picanto 1.25L 4 Cyl, Pegas 1.4L, K3 1.6L 5-seater sedan, Cerato 1.6L/2.0L, K5 2.0/2.5L DOHC CVT Engine, and K8 3.5L GDL SPL.

The all-electric range of EV6 and EV9 showcase its versatility and the enhanced ability to satisfy customers' needs. Kia's strategy of blending technological innovation with a customer-centric approach has been a consistent focus for the brand. Abiding by their motto, Kia offers a ride for everyone.

Venture out with friends for fun hangouts with our new Kia K3. The sedan becomes your everyday companion that makes city hustles easy. Powered by a 1.6 Litre engine it delivers 120hp at 6300 rpm paired with 6-speed transmission. The K3 comes with a modern smart keyless entry system for easy access. For enhanced safety, it features the Parking Re-

verse warning camera (RVC).

For those looking for a utilitarian drive – have a look at the all-new Kia Sorento. Power-packed with a 3.5L V6 with 7 and 8 seater option, the AWD is an ideal family car. Step inside and feel welcomed with the spacious premium leather-fitted interiors, roomy leg and headroom. Enhance the inside mood with multi-ambient lighting, curved display infotainment system integrated with Android Auto and Apple CarPlay and wireless charging trays for compatible smartphones.

Kia strongly emphasizes creating family bonds and delivering products that are reliable with enhanced utility functions. Get your Kia automobiles serviced by Kia to keep drives smooth and stress-free. The Kia team is always there to assist you.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), Kia's distributor in Oman, ensures a rewarding ownership experience with excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities. Recognized globally, RIA has received prestigious accolades, including the 'Good Partnership' award, the 'Family Like Care' Service Award, and the 'Kia Distributor of Distinction' award.

ROUND-UP

MHD Auto celebrates one year as Oman’s official distributor for Jeep, Dodge, RAM & Alfa Romeo

To commemorate this significant milestone, exclusive pricing is being introduced on some of the most sought-after models from these brands

MUSCAT: MHD Automobiles, Oman’s leading automotive distributor, marks its first anniversary as the official distributor for Jeep, Dodge, RAM, and Alfa Romeo. To commemorate this significant milestone, exclusive pricing is being introduced on some of the most sought-after models from these brands.

A year of automotive excellence
Since the launch of the state-of-the-art Stellantis showroom in Al Hail North last year, MHD Automobiles has been committed to providing an exceptional automotive experience. Over the past year, the company has established itself as the premier destination for luxury automotive brands, including Jeep, Dodge, RAM, Alfa Romeo, and the after-sales brand Mopar. This anniversary highlights the dedication to delivering top-tier automotive innovation, style, and



service to Oman.

1st anniversary celebration pricing
In appreciation of the continued support from customers, MHD Automobiles is presenting exclusive anniversary pricing on the following models:

- Jeep Grand Cherokee 18” Limited (MY24): Starting at OMR 18,995, featuring 18” wheels, a 5-seat configuration, and more.
- Dodge Durango R/T V8 (MY23):

Starting at OMR 19,995, equipped with a powerful V8 engine, advanced technology, and premium comfort. This is the last chance to get your hands on the legendary Dodge 5.7L HEMI V8 engine with 360HP and 390LB-FT of torque.

Dodge Charger GT V6 (MY23): Starting at OMR 17,695, with a sporty design, V6 engine, and advanced safety features.

Alfa Romeo Tonale Ti (MY24): Starting at OMR 16,995, the compact SUV is an All-Wheel Drive

featuring a powerful 2-Litre Turbo engine. It also comes with an industry-leading 5 years or 120,000 Kms Service and 7 years or 200,000 Kms Warranty (whichever is earlier).

These exceptional prices provide an opportunity to acquire the renowned Jeep Grand Cherokee, the dynamic Dodge Durango, the powerful Dodge Charger, or the smart Alfa Romeo Tonale. These prices are available for a limited time and while stocks last.

Reflecting on the successful year, Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, CEO of MHD Automobiles, expressed his gratitude and vision for the future: “Celebrating this milestone as Oman’s official distributor for Jeep, Dodge, RAM, and Alfa Romeo is a significant achievement. The past year has been characterized by dedication, passion, and growth. Our commitment to providing Oman with world-class automotive brands remains unwavering. This anniversary is an opportunity to express gratitude to the customers for their support and to present these exclusive pricing options as a token of appreciation. Our focus remains on continuing to serve the community with excellence and advancing automotive innovation in Oman.”

Visit the flagship showroom in Al Hail North to take advantage of these exclusive pricing options and experience the performance of Stellantis brands firsthand.

FOR SMES

TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION

Bank Nizwa’s business account unlocks business potential and drives growth

MUSCAT: Solidifying its position as the most-trusted banking partner to the SME sector, Bank Nizwa, the Sultanate of Oman’s leading Islamic bank, is launching a Business Account campaign which targets Mini and SMEs titled ‘Elevate Your Business Ambitions’, reflecting its endeavours to bolster entrepreneurship in the country.

The account is designed to foster the growth and development of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and underscores the bank’s steadfast commitment to stimulating the country’s economic growth with a wide range of innovative Sharia-compliant products.

Bank Nizwa’s Business Account offers SMEs a comprehensive suite of benefits designed to support their growth and success. Customers can enjoy the convenience of multiple chequebooks and a complimentary corporate Debit Card with exclusive privileges.

Furthermore, underlining its commitment to digital transformation, the bank also offers robust Internet banking solutions, specifically designed to boost operational efficiency and promote financial prudence in the SME sector.

Commenting on this offering, Mohamed Al Ghassani, Chief Retail Banking Officer, said, “Entrepreneurs are a cornerstone of development and the driving force behind economic advancement.



At Bank Nizwa, we understand the significance of empowering entrepreneurs by cultivating a banking environment that fosters innovation. Our ‘Elevate Your Business Ambitions’ campaign exemplifies our dedication to providing SMEs with bespoke Sharia-compliant banking solutions and operational agility, enhancing their capacity to flourish and contribute to Oman’s

Sohar International launches ‘Tap & Go’ services across its ATM & CDM network

MUSCAT: Sohar International, Oman’s best bank, has reinforced its commitment to leading the banking sector in technological innovation with the launch of its ‘Tap & Go’ service, now available across its extensive network of ATMs and CDMs.

This strategic move underscores the bank’s dedication to enhancing customer experience through cutting-edge solutions, positioning Sohar International as a pioneer in delivering convenience and security in banking.

The introduction of contactless functionality represents a significant advancement in the bank’s digital transformation journey. With this feature, Sohar International and Sohar Islamic cardholders can now complete transactions at ATMs and CDMs with unprecedented speed and ease. By eliminating the need for physical card insertion, the ‘Tap & Go’ service reduces transaction times and enhances security, offering a seamless banking experience. Additionally, Samsung Pay users can leverage this functionality to conduct transactions effortlessly, further enriching the convenience of mobile banking.

Sajeel Bashiruddin, Chief Digital Officer at Sohar International, commented, “At Sohar International, our commitment to innovation is driven by our focus on customer satisfaction. We are committed to delivering new digi-



tal services and ensuring a secure and convenient customer journey, while maintaining all the necessary safety and security measures first and foremost. The introduction of ‘Tap & Go’ is a testament to our relentless pursuit of excellence in delivering secure and convenient banking solutions. Sohar International continues to digitize and enhance its services to meet the evolving needs of customers. This is an exciting development in our service offerings, and we encourage everyone to experience the enhanced capabilities of our ATM and CDM network.”

This service is available for all Near-Field Communication (NFC) enabled cards, including debit, credit, and prepaid cards from all banks, providing a broad reach to customers. By ensuring compatibility across a wide range of card types, Sohar International has made this innovation accessible to a diverse customer base, enhancing the overall utility of its ATM and CDM network.

Security remains a cornerstone of this initiative. While the ‘Tap & Go’ feature simplifies the transaction process, stringent measures have been implemented to maintain the highest standards of security. Cardholders and Samsung Pay users are required to enter their PIN to authenticate transactions, ensuring that the service not only offers convenience but also robust protection against unauthorized access.

This strategic initiative is a crucial element of Sohar International’s ongoing efforts to lead the market in delivering innovative banking services that exceed customer expectations. By embracing advanced technology, the bank empowers its customers to manage their finances with greater efficiency, setting a new benchmark for the banking experience in Oman.



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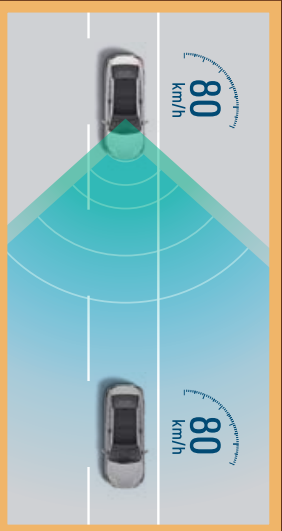
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