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SHURA TO DISCUSS ECONOMY, STEPS TAKEN TO BOOST GDP

The Shura Council will host Said Mohammed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy on Wednesday, 28 February 2024, during which the performance of the Omani economy and measures taken to boost the country's GDP would be discussed. The Shura Council will hold its fifth regular session of the first annual convening for the 10th term (2023-2027) on February 28. >A5

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SULTANATE PROVIDES TRANSPARENT BUSINESS CLIMATE TO INVESTORS

Oman, represented by the MoCIIP, has shown progress in enforcing competition laws

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion (MoCIIP), progressed by 0.53 points in the field of competition laws and enforcement, as well as adherence to international trade agreements signed between the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and the Republic of Singapore in 2023.

This is part of the annual assessment conducted by ESCWA on the legislative frameworks for the business environment in Arab countries, including competition protection, covering a total of 22 Arab nations.

The business environment is a key factor that affects the sustainability and development of the economy, and government policies and legal regulations play a crucial role in determining the country's attractiveness for investment and stimulating innovation.

NASRA AL HABSI: Director General of the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre at the MoCIIP

Nasra Al Habsi, the Director General of the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre at the MoCIIP, stated that the evaluation published by ESCWA in the field of competition law relied on specific indicators based on international best practices.

"It aims to highlight strengths and weaknesses in legislation related to establishing fair practices in the market, protecting consumer rights, providing a transparent business environment favourable to investors, enhancing corporate governance, and enabling strategic reforms contributing to improving the business environment and increasing economic growth," Al Habsi said.

Al Habsi explained that the assessment was based on these indicators used to evaluate the legal framework in each country.

The results measurement mechanism starts with a value of (0), indicating weak, and ends with a value of (7), indicating very strong.

The higher the points, the greater the alignment with ESCWA's system and international standards. The research also classified countries in the region, enhancing the analysis of regional trends and ensuring a comprehensive evaluation of legislative frameworks.

Significant improvement in law enforcement

Al Habsi clarified that the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the MoCIIP, has shown tangible progress in enforcing competition laws, as evidenced by the report.

The enforcement index increased from 4.67 in 2020 to 5.09 in 2023, highlighting the government's commitment to enhancing competitiveness and supporting the private sector. >A6

BILATERAL RELATIONS

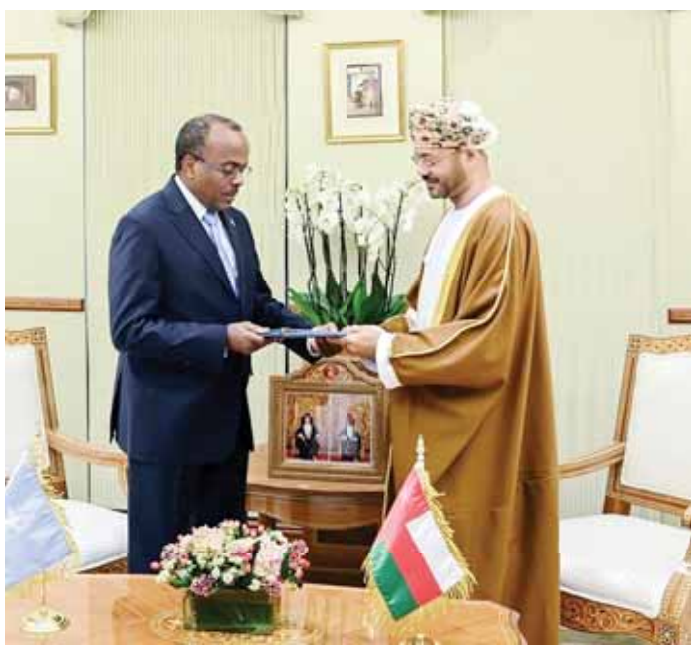
HM receives written message from President of Somalia

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has received a written message from President Dr. Hassan Sheikh Mohamud of the Federal Republic of Somalia.

The message deals with the bilateral relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Federal Republic of Somalia.

The written message was handed over to Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister when he received yesterday Ali Mohamed Omar, State Minister for Foreign Affairs of Somalia.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed areas of joint cooperation in various fields and means of enhancing them to serve the joint interests. They also exchanged views on a set of regional and international issues. The meeting was attended by a number of officials from both sides. – ONA



TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Decision issued to form Hajj Mission 1445 AH

1 The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs has issued a ministerial decision stipulating that Sultan Said Al Hinai shall be the Head of the Mission and Dr. Ahmed Ali Al Kaabi as Deputy Chief of Mission for Administrative and Financial Affairs. >A3

WORLD

OIC urges world to stop war on Gaza

2 Oman concluded its participation in the extraordinary meeting of information ministers of the OIC countries. >A7

SPORTS

Mikel Arteta praises Arsenal's 4-1 win

3 The Gunners head coach Mikel Arteta praised his side for displaying a stunning performance at the Emirates Stadium. >A8

معرض مسقط الدولي للكتاب ٢٠٢٤
Muscat International Book Fair 2024
28 | الدورة الثامنة والعشرين
Twenty-Eighth Edition

Over 13,000 applications received for registration of brands in 2023

A2

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INDUSTRIAL HUB

Madayn inaugurates Phase I of OMR9mn Ibri Industrial City

IBRI: Marking a strategic continuation of the Omani government's goal to ensure balanced economic growth across the governorates, the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) celebrated on Sunday the inauguration of Phase I of Ibri Industrial City.

The inauguration ceremony was held under the auspices of Najeeb Ali Al Rawas, Governor of A'Dhahirah.

Highlighting the significance of developing an industrial hub in Al Dhahirah Governorate, Al Rawas said, "Aligned with the core objectives outlined in Oman Vision 2040, this project aims to present a dynamic and competitive investment landscape that appeals to both local and foreign investors. The introduction of an industrial city in Al Dhahirah Governorate is poised to catalyse a significant qualitative leap in manufacturing industries and commercial activities."

"These activities will contribute to generating job opportunities, encourage exports and the establishment of export industries, while also stimulating economic sectors such as transportation and banking," Al Rawas further added.

Speaking at the inaugural ceremony of Ibri Industrial City infrastructure project (Phase One), Salah Nasser Al Alawi, Director General of Ibri Industrial City, said, "The industrial city spans an extensive area of 10 million square metres, with Phase One successfully completed at a cost of OMR9 million, covering 3 million sqm. The presence of a fully-equipped industrial city will serve as a pivotal factor in driving development and fostering an ideal environment for the private sector to engage in a diverse range of industrial, commercial and service activities."

Al Alawi further highlighted the commitment of Madayn to promote investment in Ibri Industrial City through the introduction of a comprehensive incentive package.

"These incentives resulted in a notable increase in investor interest, with 10 projects now underway in Ibri Industrial City, boasting an initial investment totalling OMR6.5 million. Several of these projects have already commenced construction and development activities," Al Alawi noted.

Ahmed Mohammed Al Farsi, Director of Projects at Madayn's Directorate General of Facilities and Infrastructure, stated that Phase One of the development project of Ibri Industrial City, includes the construction of roads, truck parking zone, water network and water tank, firefighting network, sewage networks and collection tank, dyke for protection against rainwater, and security system with surveillance cameras.

Al Farsi elaborated on the completed phase featuring the construction of 17.8 km of road network and a 24.7-km water network.

Dr. Said Khalifa Al Quraini, Director General of Investment Development at the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz), highlighted the Authority's commitment to two core functions: 'Planning and development' and 'regulation and supervision.'

Al Quraini affirmed that Opaz is dedicated to streamlining procedures for investors and providing robust after-service support to promote business continuity and growth. "Opaz collaborates with key stakeholders to promote and attract investments, aiming to enhance the added value of targeted sectors and expedite economic progress in Duqm while actively getting engaged in accelerating the implementation of development plans in various governorates to boost the country's competitive advantage," Al Quraini said. -ONA

OMAN

PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr	12:25pm
Asr	3:44pm
Maghrib	6:13pm
Isha	7:23pm
Fajr (Tomorrow)	5:16am

Over 13,000 applications received for registration of brands in 2023

The trademark is a name, code or design aimed to help consumers identify and distinguish a product or service owned by a company or an establishment

Badriya bint Khalfan Al Rahbi, Head of Trademarks and Geographic Indications Department at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

Said bin Hamdan Al Siyabi, a researcher in the field of intellectual property at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The number of applications for registration and documentation of brands, under the international trademark registration system, in the Sultanate of Oman reached 13,043 in 2023 compared to 11,742 in 2022, according to the statistics of the National Intellectual Property Office at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion.

The government departments concerned aimed to develop a mechanism regulating the signboards and trademarks in terms of their shapes, size, colour and languages.

Speaking on the regulations and laws related to trademarks Badriya bint Khalfan Al Rahbi, Head of Trademarks and Geographic Indications Department at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion said that the trademarks system at the National Intellectual Property office in the Sultanate of Oman is working under the provisions of the law regulating trademarks in the GCC States, promulgated by Royal Decree No. 33/ 2017.

She said that the trademark is a name, code or design aimed to help consumers identify and distinguish a product or service owned by a company or an establishment whether such product is industrial, agricultural or crafts product. The trademarks could include shapes, colours, images and logos among other features, she added.

Said bin Hamdan Al Siyabi, a researcher in the field of intellectual property at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion said that the application for registration a trademark is through Oman Business Platform. On completion of the required terms , a serial number is issued for the application through the trademarks system (Ipas) for inspection of the trademark registered for approval, he said, adding that the owner of the trademark may amend the trademark and transfer its ownership to other party and to renew the same every ten years. **-With ONA inputs**

MINISTRY OF HERITAGE AND TOURISM

Workshop held on combating trafficking in meteorites

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism on Sunday organised a specialised workshop titled "Meteorites in Oman and means of combating illicit trade in them".

The workshop was held under the auspices of Salim Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism.

The workshop sought ways of empowering partners in charge of customs inspection (at land, air and seaport checkpoints), small and medium enterprises doing business in the field of tourism guidance and researchers in the field of geological heritage.

The workshop dealt with means of combating illicit trafficking of cultural property and raising the awareness of companies operating in the field of posts, customs clearance and disclosure.

It also addressed judicial control officers and museum attendants.

The workshop reviewed working papers presented by experts and specialists in the field of meteorite affairs.

It also included visual presentations on combating illicit trafficking of cultural property and related legal procedures to control such practices.

The participants toured a mini exhibition about meteorites and took note of the Ministry's efforts to organise the specialty of meteorites conservation. **-ONA**

HARED HISTORY OF INDIA AND OMAN

Indian embassy hosts lecture series 'Mandvi to Muscat'

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Embassy of India in Muscat hosted the fourth lecture of the series, titled "From Mandvi to Muscat: Indian Community and the shared history of India and Oman."

Renowned historian Professor James Onley from the American University Sharjah delivered an insightful lecture on "India and Arabia: Connections across Millennia."

In his discourse, Professor James Onley delved into various aspects of maritime trade between India and the Gulf, including ancient trade links that have shaped historical narratives.

He elucidated the intricate dynamics of the Gulf region's trade with India, shedding light on the influence of Gulf imports from India before the oil era and their integration into Gulf material culture.

Additionally, Professor Onley provided valuable insights into the historical presence and interactions of Indian and Arab communities in the Gulf and India, underscoring the cultural exchanges that have defined the region's heritage.

'Cultural Cousins', Professor James highlighted the cultural kinship between Indians and Arabs in general and Indians and Omanis in particular, emphasising their cultural influence on each other.

The lecture drew enthusiastic participation from a diverse audience, including members of the Indian community, Omanis of Indian origin, scholars, and distinguished guests. Participants gained valuable insights into the shared history and cultural heritage of India and Oman.

One of the event's highlights was the personal narrative shared by Munir Toprani from the Toprani Family, who recounted his family's historical journey and emphasized their contributions to strengthening the ties between India and Oman. His account added a personal touch to the broader narrative of Indo-Omani relations.

SIXTH EDITION

James Deane wins Oman International Drift Championship

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Oman International Drift Championship (OIDC) roared to a spectacular conclusion Friday night, leaving both online and in-arena audiences impressed. The sixth edition of the championship surpassed expectations, captivating a record-breaking number of viewers, much to the delight of the Oman Automobile Association (OAA).

Diverse drifters

Day 2 of the OIDC Round 3 finals exploded with a thrilling display of skill across three categories.

Four talented Omani drivers, twelve drivers from across the Middle East, including second round's victor Ahmed Daham, showcased their diverse drifting style.

But all eyes were drawn to the international category, where global drifters met. Famous names like James Dean and Nikolass Bertans joined the sixteen other international drivers, creating a full-on of experience and talent.

With such a diverse and accomplished field, Day 2 promised an unforgettable spectacle, all competing for the ultimate glory: the OIDC championship round three title.

Held under the patronage of Engineer. Ahmed Al Humaidi chairman of Muscat Municipality, and graced by the presence of Brigadier Jamal bin Said Al Tai, Vice Chairman of the Oman Automobile Association's Board of Directors, the third and final round of Oman's sixth edition international drift championship that took place on February 22 and 23 at Muscat Arena.

The competition was divided into three categories: international, Middle East and National categories, with each category showcasing the best talent from its region.

International category: In a thrilling showdown in the international category, Irish legend James Deane emerged victorious, leaving the competition in his wake. Kuwaiti driver Ali Makhseed claimed a well-deserved second place, while Lithuanian drifter Benediktas Cirba skilfully secured third.

Middle East category: Kuwait's Ali Makhseed took the first place followed by Emirati driver Hazaa Al Hosani in second place and Jordan's driver Ahmed Daham in third place.

National category: Tariq Al Shaihani emerged victorious in the national category, Ahmed Al Amri in second, and Reyadh Al Mabsali came third on the podium.

The OIDC Round 3 finals concluded with the crowning of champions in not only the three primary categories, but also in four additional categories.

International category overall: First place: Ireland's James Deane, second place: Jordan's Ahmed Daham, third place: Finland's Juha Matias.

MENA category overall: First place: Jordan's Ahmed Daham, second place: Kuwait's Ali Makhseed, third place: Oman's Ahmed Al Amri.

National category overall: First place: Ahmed Al Amri, second place: Tariq Al Shaihani, third place: Reyadh Al Mabsali.

OIDC Championship 2024 Overall: First place: James Deane, second place: Ahmed Daham, third place: Juha Matias, fourth place: Netherlands's Clint Van Oort, fifth place: Ali Makhseed.

Five seasoned judges, each an expert of international drifting championship ensured precision and fairness in every round. Kieran Haynes, an Irish judge, led the panel. Alongside him, Yemeni judge Wadah Aqaba and Dutch expert Vernon Zuaneveld were in te panel along with Omani judges Khalid Al Manji and Saud Al Rawahi.

The stands erupted in the OIDC Round 3 finals. The arena, packed to the top with a crowd even larger than the OAA anticipated and all the tickets were surprisingly sold out, pulsed the arena with an electrifying energy. This unexpected surge in attendance for the sixth edition's final rounds further solidified the OIDC's position as a premier motorsport event, leaving both fans and organisers thrilled with the expression of support.

Online viewership

The OIDC Round 3 finals weren't just about the roar of engines and the smell of burnt rubber. Beyond the packed arena, the excitement spilled onto the internet, with the OAA YouTube channel experiencing a massive surge in viewership. Over 118,000 online viewers globally tuned in, captivated by the thrilling display of skill and bold on the track.

In the premises of the Oman Automobile Association, Muscat Eat event was captivating the spectators with the full-on cuisine restaurants. OIDC and Muscat Eat Spectators exceeded 12,000 which made the weekend full of thrilling drifts and food enjoyments.

COMMENTARY

A big reason so many Omanis are still single

SALEH AL-SHAIBANY

Many young Omani men and women prefer not to get married in a hurry and some never at all as the increasing social pressures take a big dent out of their marital confidence.

The official statistics show that since the year 2010, about 36 percent of eligible Omanis, both men and women, marry well into their 40s while 42 percent after their mid-thirties and only 22 percent marry in their 20s. In contrast to the statistics between 1970 to 2009, when 78 percent of Omanis were married in their 20s.

But why do Omanis now prefer to get married late compared to the last 15 years? There are no statistics to show the reason for it but lower pay when they get a job with increasing costs of living is being blamed by Omanis who are reluctant to get married. In other words, it is affordability.

The other reason is that some Omanis do not see the marriage values the way their parents saw. Perhaps frequent divorces or constant quarrels they see in married people are putting them off from making the marital decision.

Also, when people are overwhelmed with choices they tend not to choose at all. They continue to be single convincing themselves that they still have time. It is when the years roll by and leave their youth years behind as they grow older into the middle age. So it is not that they shy away from marriage but what they see in front of them is a repressive wall which they find hard to break.

Is it the breakdown of tradition that is shifting pure Omani cultures in family matters away from young people in the last 15 years? It could well be that. The fingers are pointing that way, according to many traditionalists. Gone are the days when a young married couple live with parents and their children raised by grandparents.

Those days, any cracks in their marriage would be quickly fixed by the parents who live with them. At the same time, their expenses are shared by the parents, removing financial stress from them.

But some would argue that since many Omanis are now educated and work, the couples can help each other with the costs of living.

However, the professional part in their marriages erect another wall between them. For example, a woman would argue that "why do I need a man in my life when I earn my own money?"

Young Omani women are now much more educated than they have ever been before. They are employed and well paid. They feel the independence of being single without a man lurking behind their back leads to freedom. So another factor is independence and no responsibilities. It is one more reason young people find that being single is more attractive.

Having said that, will that trend continue into the next decade? Sociologists would say nature has its own way of controlling population. Limited number of marriages lead to less number of children being born a year.

MINISTRY OF ENDOWMENTS

Decision to form the Omani Hajj Mission 1445 AH issued

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs has issued a ministerial decision to form the Omani Hajj Mission 1445 AH.

The decision stipulated that Sultan Said Al Hinai shall be the Head of the Mission, Dr. Ahmed Ali Al Kaabi as Deputy Chief of Mission for Administrative and Financial Affairs, and Abdulaziz Mas'oud Al Ghafri as Deputy Chief of Mission for Pilgrims Affairs and Hajj Campaigns.

The decision was in implementation of Royal Decree No. 6/99 defining the powers of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs and approving its organizational structure, and the Civil Service Law issued under Royal Decree No. 120/2004 and the Executive Regulations of the Civil Service Law issued under Civil Service Council Decision No. 9/2010, Ministerial Decision No. 236/2004 promulgating the system of forming Omani Hajj mission and determining their competencies. The Omani Hajj Mission lends support to pilgrims and assists them when performing Hajj rituals. — ONA

WEATHER SATELLITES

Workshop on satellite applications

MUSCAT: The 19th regional workshop on satellite applications was held yesterday in Muscat.

The workshop discussed the topic of analysing outputs of weather monetarisation satellites and their various applications.

The event was participated by local and regional experts in the field.

Aviation specialists

Moreover, the workshop aimed to train aviation specialists in the Middle East region and to enable the trainees from analysing satellite images. -ONA

NAZDAHER

NCC reviews work progress of Business Readiness Team

MUSCAT: The National Competitiveness Committee (NCC) on Sunday held its 1st meeting for 2024 under the chairmanship of Dr. Said Mohammed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy.

The meeting reviewed NCC's decisions for 2022 and 2023, and developments in the Future of Growth Report (formerly the Global Competitiveness Report), as the evaluation methodology and structure of the report were changed.

The meeting also discussed the work progress of the Business Readiness and Economic Freedom Team, which is led by the National Programme for Investment and Export Development "Nazdaher".

It also touched on the outputs of the health indicators workshop, which aimed at addressing the mechanism for calculating health indicators linked to international indicators and followed by the National Competitiveness Office.

The NCC also reviewed during the meeting the developments in the Corruption Perceptions Index (CPI) for 2023, issued by the Transparency International. -ONA

OMAN

SULTANATE OF OMAN CELEBRATES

OMANI TEACHER'S DAY

Times News Service

The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Education, celebrates the Omani Teacher's Day, which falls on the 24 February every year, to enhance and appreciate teachers' sincere contributions in delivering the educational message, and to honour, appreciate, and emphasise the active and continuous role that the teachers carry out in the educational field.

The number of teachers in government schools in the Sultanate reached 61,195 teachers, including 18,800 male teachers and 42,395 female teachers, while the number of administrative staff in public schools reached 10,652, including 4,306 male administrators, and 6,346 female administrators.

The growth rate of the number of teachers during the four years (2020-2023) was about 7.7 percent, with an average annual growth rate equivalent to 1.9 percent.

Omani teachers receive abundant and continuous attention from the Ministry of Education, and this is represented by the provision of rehabilitation, training and development programmes, courses, and workshops to advance their professional and functional capabilities in accordance with the ongoing developments and transformations taking place in the educational field.

One of the most prominent things that Omani teacher has received in the field of training and development is the establishment of the Specialised Institute for Professional Training of Teachers, the Main Training Institute and Training Centres in the governorates that contribute to supporting the efforts of Omani teacher and advancing their professional and career path.

The Specialised Institute for Professional Training of Teachers offers several programmes, including the new Omani teachers' programme, and the subject experts' programme in the subjects: mathematics, science, English, and Arabic (1-4), and the Arabic language (5-12), and experts in the second field.

It also offers supervisory job programmes, which are: the school leadership programme, the first teachers' programme, the programmes for supervising support jobs and school administration supervisors.

The number of trainees in these training programmes during the academic year 2023-2024 reached approximately 715.

The teacher is the first basic building block in the educational process, because they have a major role in preparing generations for the future.

The Directorate-General of Educational Supervision has paid special attention to teachers so that they are qualified to deliver their lofty message. Among the aspects of interest is empowering the new teachers with teaching skills through programmes and training workshops, such as the induction programme for qualifying new teachers, which was implemented through several direct and virtual training stages, and presented by an elite group of educators in various scientific and educational specialisations, and appreciating and strengthening the brilliant teachers with certificates of gratitude and appreciation sent to their governorates, and caring for, supporting and assisting the poorly performing teacher, and following up on the development of performance.

The Directorate-General also continues to provide support and to refine the technical, scientific, and pedagogical skills of teachers during meetings and supervisory visits carried out by visiting teams to various educational governorates, and direct follow-ups of teachers in their schools and provides them with the necessary support and assistance on an ongoing basis. It also circulates scientific bulletins that enable teachers in the scientific and educational components and developments them in various subjects and scientific specialisations.

The Directorate-General is also keen to hold forums specialised in subject and employ scientific research and studies to develop teachers' performance, in order to exchange experiences between teachers by providing them with the opportunity to participate with papers in live virtual forums.

It also seeks to strengthen good teachers by recording live lessons and presenting them on television channels, providing the opportunity for teachers and early educators to review updated and developed books before authorizing and printing them, adopting innovations and initiatives received from teachers, reviewing them and circulating them to expand the scope of benefit from them, and nominating distinguished teachers to participate in international conferences and forums according to specific principles and controls.

Omani teachers receive abundant and continuous attention from the Ministry of Education, and this is represented by the provision of rehabilitation, training and development programmes, courses, and workshops to advance their professional and functional capabilities in accordance with the ongoing developments and transformations taking place in the educational field

Shura Council to discuss economy, steps taken to boost GDP growth

The Ministry of Economy will highlight the diversification plans and the challenges facing the economy

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Shura Council will host Said Mohammed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy on Wednesday, 28 February 2024, during which the performance of the Omani economy and measures taken to boost the country's Gross Domestic Product would be discussed.

Sheikh Ahmed Mohammed Al Nadabi, Secretary General of the Shura Council, pointed out that this meeting will mark the first ministerial statement discussed by the Shura Council during the first meeting of the 10th term.

In a statement, he said: "We will discuss several topics, namely the performance of the Omani economy and prominent initiatives and projects of the Ministry of Economy related to increasing the contribution to the GDP."

The discussion will involve three main topics: The first will be the performance of the Omani economy and the most prominent initiatives and projects of the Ministry of Economy with regard to the contribution of the targeted economic sectors to the gross domestic product, the growth rates achieved, the performance of the National Programme for Economic Diversification (Diversification), and the most prominent challenges facing it.

The second topic includes an assessment of the overall economic performance until the middle of the tenth five-year development plan (2021-2025), while the third topic deals with the role of the Ministry of Economy in confronting regional and international economic changes, by reviewing economic policies and draft laws related to development planning and the measures taken to raise the competitiveness of the Sultanate of Oman in various global indicators.

It is worth noting that the discussion of the ministry's statement comes in accordance with Article (69) of the Oman Council Law, which states: "The Shura Council decides at the beginning of each annual session the programme of ministerial statements and their discussion topics that will be presented during the session, based on a joint proposal from the Council's office and the heads of the Council."

The permanent committees therein, and the President of the Council must inform the government of this programme, specifying the elements and topics that each statement must include, according to the topic or sector to which the statement concerns."

The Shura Council will hold its fifth regular session of the first annual convening for the 10th term (2023-2027) on February 28.

EDUCATION MINISTER RECEIVES CEO OF AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL TESTING SERVICE

Dr. Madiha Ahmed Al Shaibni, Minister of Education, on Sunday received in her office Amit Sevak, CEO of the American Educational Testing Service (ETS). During the meeting, the two sides discussed several topics related to joint cooperation between the Ministry and the ETS. They also reviewed areas of future cooperation in a bid to achieve set objectives. The guest praised the developmental achievements made in the Sultanate of Oman at all levels. He also underscored areas of cooperation with the Ministry in fields related to evaluation and testing systems. . — ONA

UNCLAIMED REPAIR EQUIPMENTS FROM TEEJAN EQUIPMENT SERVICE CENTERS

Teejan Equipment LLC wishes to inform all customers that a number of construction, cleaning and industrial machines sent for repair and service estimates to our service centers at Misfeah (Tawiyat), Sohar and Salalah before 31st December 2023 have not been collected by some of the customers.

Customers are hereby informed that all such machines must be collected within one month from the date of this announcement on submission of the official repair-slip/job card /quotation.

Machines not collected within the notice period ending on 27th March 2024 will be disposed and the company will not accept any claim whatsoever in this regard.

Service Contact Details
Misfeah (Tawiyat) : +968 24437051, +968 99878044,
Sohar: +968 99240083, Salalah : +968 92145800
Email : aftersales@teejanequipment.com
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Sultan Qaboos University

ANNOUNCEMENT

Selling used computers and their accessories in sealed envelopes

Sultan Qaboos University announces their desire to sell used furniture in sealed envelopes. Those wishing to enter the auction must adhere to the following conditions::

- Interested parties can view used furniture in auction yard and receive the bidding on Sunday and Monday 04-03/03/2024 from 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.
- Deposit of (200) Omani riyals in cash as an insurance. This amount will be refunded to the unsuccessful bidders.
- Submitting the offer in a sealed envelope after viewing the used furniture, entitled by the name of the head of the committee for selling used furniture, and put the envelope in bid box.
- The presented offer is binding on its owner if it is placed on it, and in the event that the buyer does not pay the purchase price on time, the insurance amount will be forfeited, and the sale will be awarded to another applicant.
- Those who win the bidding will be contacted. They must pay the remaining sum, and they are responsible for moving their items within one week from 09:00 am to 03:00 pm.
- The Used furniture are sold in their current condition and SQU is not responsible for any loss or damage to the sold material if the moving is not completed after the end of the sale (10) Omani riyals will be imposed for each day after 07/03/2024.

Note:
- **Prices are sorted according to groups and the higher price is taken.**
- **Funds will be collected electronically through visa cards.**
- **Entering the auction stores through Hospital Gate No (2).**
- **For more information contact on 24141272.**

MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY

Announcement of Public Auction No. (6 /2024)

Muscat Municipality, represented by the public auction committee for the sale of a variety of different items according to the following details:
Interested individuals for this Auction must comply with the conditions set out below:

The first group	(19) mobile homes (caravans) and a set of various materials, scrap iron
The second group	Air conditioners, water coolers, refrigerators, various cooking appliances
The third group	Iron shelves - iron beds - various furniture - chairs and seating sets - tables - cabinets - various kitchen utensils
The Fourth group	A different group of theater equipment (lighting devices - sound system devices - headphones)

- Those wishing to enter the auction must pay a fee of (4 OMR) Four Omani Rials that are not refundable, and a temporary deposit (refundable) is required to be paid an amount of (500 OMR) Five Hundred Omani Rials, to be paid electronically to the collector of the committee in the General Directorate of Public administration & Financial affairs at municipal presidency building in Darsait.
- The person who wins the **Auction** is obligated to pay the full price of the **items** if they were awarded to him plus 5% value added tax, and the **Auction** fees by (3 OMR) through electronic payment.
- **Items** are sold in their current condition, and the municipality is not responsible for the loss or damage of part of it once its amount is paid. It also does not guarantee the validity of the **Items**offered for sale or the safety of their technical condition. those wishing to participate in the **Auction** will inspect the items on the specified days mentioned below.
- The **items** sold are not returned or reduced in price, and any request submitted in this regard will not be accepted.
- The buyer is obligated to transfer the items that have been awarded to him after paying their full amount within a period not exceeding one week from the date of purchase, and he bears full responsibility for the movables that were not transported within the specified period , and in the event that they are not transferred within the specified period, the municipality may resell the items at the buyer`s own expenses.
- The date and location set for inspecting the movables and awarding the **Auction** are specified as follows:

Location	Building of the General Directorate of Projects and afforestation - Wilayat Bawshar (Ghala)
The Date/Time of the inspection	From 3 to 04/03/2024 From 08:00 AM to 12:00 PM
A site for submission participation fees	Head office in Darsait at the committee cashier at the General Directorate of Public Administrative & Financial Affair
Auction date	06/03/2024 at 7:30AM in the morning
For inquires and coordination	Please contact the specialist of the committee member at (98070900)
Other terms	• The VAT specified in the law will be applied to successful buyer. • It is not allowed to enter the auction area until after showing the receipt of the subscription fee and insurance deposit. • Muscat Municipality may cancel or postpone the auction without providing any justification. • The insurance deposit will not be refunded to the buyer in two cases:- 1. not paying the amount of the movables. 2. not transferring the movables from the site within the specified period.

OMAN

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN

CBO to raise OMR100mn via govt development bonds

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) announced the auction results of the 69th Government Development Bonds (GDB) issue worth OMR100 million.

According to CBO's Market Operations Department, the Issue, which received overwhelming response from investors, has received applications amounting to OMR231.71 million. The average yield was 4.94 percent at an equivalent price of OMR99.890, while the highest yield was 5.20 percent at an equivalent price of OMR99.175 and the lowest was at 4.00 percent at an equivalent price of OMR102.520. The 3-years Bond will be issued on 27 February, 2024 and it will mature on 27 February 2027, carrying a coupon rate of 4.90 percent per annum. — ONA

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EDITORIAL: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24813153, E-mail: editor@timesofoman.com
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PREPAREDNESS AND EFFICIENCY SHOWCASED

Several commanders view progress of naval drill titled 'Sea Lion 1/2024'

MUSCAT: Several commanders on Sunday viewed the progress of the naval drill 'Sea Lion 1/2024'.

The drill was viewed by Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), Maj. Gen Mattar Salim Al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) and Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO).

The commanders were briefed on the drill and means of implementing it in a bid to achieve the desired objectives.

They also viewed a live shooting at simulated naval targets. The demonstration showcased high levels of preparedness and efficiency of the RNO personnel.

The drill will run till 29 February 2024. — ONA

CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Aydogdu to focus on R&D, quality assurance

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Cables Industry (OCI), the leading cable solutions provider in the Sultanate of Oman, part of the Prysmian Group, has appointed Erkan Aydogdu as its new chief executive officer (CEO).

This decision comes as Cinzia Farisè, the current CEO, transitioned to a higher strategic role at the Prysmian Group headquarters with global responsibilities, as disclosed to the Muscat Stock Exchange.

The Board of Directors recognised Cinzia Farisè for her significant contributions, services, and accomplishments made during her tenure as CEO.

The board extends its best wishes for her ongoing success in the new global role, where she is expected to provide support and guidance to the company.

At the same time, Oman Cables Industry highlighted Aydogdu's strong capabilities in areas including logistics, continuous improvement, research and development, quality assurance, and management.

The Board voiced its confidence that Aydogdu's multifaceted experience will contribute significantly to the industry.

Having served as the CEO of Oceania and Southeast Asia

at the Prysmian Group since 2019, and previously CEO of Türk Prysmian Kablo, Aydogdu, brings a wealth of experience from his various roles within the company.

His tenure and expertise are set to contribute to OCI Group's continued success and growth.

Erkan Aydogdu. said: "I am both humbled and inspired by the opportunity to steer OCI Group into its next stage of evolution. Together with the Board and our leadership team, I am committed to driving sustainable value and yielding solid results. As I embrace this new role, I look forward to leading our organisation towards growth and providing value to our customers and partners throughout the region."

OCI Group looks forward to continued success under the leadership of Erkan Aydogdu.

ANNUAL ASSESSMENT

< FROM A1

Oman makes progress in protecting business competitiveness

The component assessing competition law enforcement practices focuses on their effectiveness, examining legislative provisions, penalties for violations, and the independence of regulatory bodies responsible for ensuring compliance. Several Arab countries have made progress in this area, maintaining an overall regional ranking of 'developed,' with some, like Syria and Iraq, establishing independent competition authorities with various powers. Nevertheless, gaps persist in other countries.

Improvement in combating dominance

The Director General of the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre also highlighted improvements in combating dominance. The index increased from 5.44 in 2020 to 5.6 in 2023, indicating earnest efforts to address market dominance and anti-competitive behaviours. She noted that the MoCIIP issued the executive regulations for the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Law (Decree No. 18/2020), significantly contributing to enhancing the legislative framework evaluation index in Oman. These regulations consider factors such as a person's ability to impact prices or product quantities in the relevant market, actual or potential competition, market share, potential expansion of existing competitors or entry of new ones, access to necessary production materials or distribution channels, sales, business behavior in the market, and the impact on product availability and diversity, as well as the effect of market entry, expansion, or exit on product prices or supply volume for the person in the relevant market.

Overall improvement in Arab countries' ranking.

Al Habsi pointed out that the component of combating dominance and monopolies focuses on preventing institutions from controlling or influencing the market. She clarified that from 2020 to 2023, the overall ranking of the Arab region in this component improved from average to developed. This improvement is a result of efforts made by Arab countries to enhance legal frameworks addressing market control behaviors. Several countries in the region have made significant progress in this area. Despite this positive trend, notable differences persist in the level of detail covered by laws and enforcement mechanisms, emphasizing the need to continue refining and improving these laws.

Combating cartels and arrangements

Al Habsi indicated that regarding the component of combating cartels and anti-competitive arrangements, there was a slight improvement in Oman's evaluation. The index increased from 3 to 3.5 from 2020 to 2023, assessing the legal framework for combating cartels and anti-competitive behaviors. It focuses on the effectiveness of laws in addressing these practices and the prescribed penalties to maintain fairness and efficiency in markets. The Arab region has taken notable steps in this regard, with a growing trend in the legislation of countries in the region to combat collusion in price fixing, market sharing, and other forms of collusion. However, legislation often lacks clear definitions of cartels and robust mechanisms to counter them, resulting in potential limitations in effectively addressing anti-competitive practices.

International trade agreements component

As for the international trade agreements component, the index increased from 2.8 in 2020 to 4.2 in the Sultanate of Oman in 2023, highlighting a focus on facilitating international trade and enhancing integration into the global economy. This component assesses compliance with international trade agreements and global standards for competition policies, emphasizing adherence to international best practices in competition laws. The Arab region recorded an 'average' ranking in this component. Examples include the arbitration mechanism for the Free Trade Agreement between the Gulf Cooperation Council countries and Singapore, and Egypt's policy coordination with COMESA requirements. Despite these steps, gaps persist, such as the lack of specific competition legislative provisions in Yemen's commitments with the World Trade Organization and the need for clearer definitions of competition and dispute resolution mechanisms in Libya's agreement with COMESA. This diversity underscores the momentum in achieving competitive markets while emphasizing the necessity of aligning competition policies and incorporating them in trade agreements comprehensively.

Market liberalisation component

As for the market liberalisation component and interventions related to competition, there was stability in the market liberalisation component, with the index remaining at 3.5 in 2020 and 2023. This indicates a continuity in maintaining previous efforts. This component aims to balance market liberalization and interventions related to competition in vital sectors. It assesses how authorities monitor and enforce market liberalization processes, considering the impact of exceptions on the competitive environment. Arab countries showed varied progress in this component, ranging from 'initial' to 'average.' Saudi Arabia made some advancements with its new privatization law, encouraging private sector participation. However, Oman, Bahrain, and Kuwait remained at an 'average' rank due to legal restrictions on private sector involvement in certain activities. Egypt showed progress with initiatives like public-private partnerships, promoting competitive neutrality. Meanwhile, Lebanon, ranking 'very weak,' faces significant challenges, including the need for more effective competition laws, particularly regarding the dominant role of state-owned companies in strategic sectors.

Labour protection component

Regarding the labor protection component, the data indicates an improvement in labor protection in the Sultanate of Oman. The index rose from 2.33 in 2020 to 3 in 2023, reflecting responsiveness to improved working conditions and workers' rights. This component assesses how competition policies incorporate protective measures for workers, focusing on non-competition conditions and mechanisms for addressing violations related to workers. The overall ranking for the labor component remains basic in 2023. GCC countries have implemented some protective measures for employees in cases of mergers and acquisitions, but broader guarantees, such as non-competition conditions, are lacking, except for Oman. Middle-income countries provide only symbolic guarantees, with significant gaps, including the absence of non-competition conditions in many of these countries. The least developed countries offer limited guarantees despite Mauritania prohibiting non-competition conditions to protect employees.

Merger Framework Component

The Director General of the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre stated: "As for the Merger Framework Component related to economic concentration, Oman has shown improvement, with the index rising from 5.83 in 2020 to 7 in 2023. This component evaluates the effectiveness of regulatory frameworks for merger transactions, focusing on legislative provisions and procedures for reviewing and approving mergers and acquisitions. The overall result for the Arab region remains 'Advanced,' indicating a general commitment to overseeing economic concentration and maintaining market competitiveness. Oman, Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and several Gulf countries topped the 'Very Strong' ranking, reflecting improvement in Oman's readiness to facilitate merger and acquisition operations and enhance investments. This is primarily due to detailed requirements for prior notification of merger transactions and clear criteria for merger assessments. In contrast, less developed countries such as Mauritania and Djibouti are still in their early stages, requiring the development of guidelines and standards regarding economic concentration facts.

Al Habsi confirmed that competition laws in the Arab region have seen a slight improvement, with the region achieving an "Advanced" ranking in 2023. This improvement is the result of efforts at the regional level to enhance competition frameworks and address inefficiencies in markets. However, progress varies across the region, with results differing from one group of countries to another.

The diverse paths taken to develop competition laws between 2020 and 2023 reveal variations across Arab countries. Oman, Lebanon, Sudan, Kuwait, Egypt, and Saudi Arabia achieved significant progress, adopting new laws and reforms, bringing them closer to international best practices. In contrast, some countries, such as Iraq, experienced declines. Palestine and Somalia ranked very poorly due to the lack of competition laws. Future efforts should focus on supporting all Arab countries in establishing robust competition frameworks, with attention to those lagging behind, aiming for a fair and conducive economic environment for sustainable growth, she added.

Great progress in legislation

There has been significant progress in competition-related legislation across the Arab region. The average points for the region increased from "Average" to "Advanced," reflecting the adoption of new laws and amendments by some countries. This improvement is evident in the increase in the region's points, moving from an average rank in 2020 to an advanced rank in 2023, said al Habsi.

Points for GCC countries improved from "Advanced" to "Very Strong," while points for Middle-Income Arab countries improved from "Average" to "Advanced." On the other hand, points for conflict-affected countries remained at "Average," and points for the least developed Arab countries declined from "Low Growth" to "Basic," indicating a pressing need for support and capacity building.

Overall, there has been a general increase in the assessment points for various components of competition laws in 2020, showing some improvement in the quality of legislation, especially in enforcement practices and the implementing rules of merger operations. The region's engagement in international trade agreements, such as the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), has contributed to this progress. However, the region's points have not exceeded an advanced rank in any of these components, indicating the ongoing need for significant progress across the region. No progress has been made in some components, such as labor protection, cartels and anti competitive arrangements, market liberalization, and competition-related interventions. This suggests that these components require more attention, and exemptions granted to state-owned companies are widespread, emphasizing the need to embed principles of competitive neutrality in competition-related legislation, she added.

Recommendations

The Director General of the Competition Protection and Monopoly Prevention Centre noted that the report recommended the Sultanate of Oman to make significant amendments to the legislative frameworks for the business environment, including the Competition Law, by providing more definitions for unfair competition practices such as collusion, vertical and horizontal agreements, and changes in control.

The recommendations also include ensuring the independence of the Competition Protection and Anti-Monopoly Center from the Ministry of Commerce, Industry, and Investment Promotion, reviewing temporary exemptions and exceptions, establishing strict and clear conditions with penalties for companies violating conditions after obtaining an exception, setting benchmark ceilings for the regulatory framework, and liberalizing the market for some vital sectors, especially those operated by state-owned enterprises, while linking state intervention to specific conditions.

— With inputs from ONA

OIC urges world countries to recognise the State of Palestine, stop war on Gaza

Oman's delegation at the meeting was headed by Mohammed Said Al Balushi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information

ISTANBUL: The Sultanate of Oman on Sunday concluded its participation in the extraordinary meeting of information ministers of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation (OIC) countries.

Held in Istanbul, the meeting discussed the Israeli occupation forces' targeting journalists in the occupied Palestinian territories with the aim of misleading international public opinion.

Oman's delegation at the meeting was headed by Mohammed Said Al Balushi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Information.

The meeting's communique called on the rest of the world to recognise the State of Palestine and take concrete measures to stop the Israeli destructive war on the Gaza Strip, ongoing since last October 7.

The communique affirmed that that "The Two-State Solution is the only way to guarantee permanent, comprehensive and stable peace and security in the region".

It urged all countries to recognise the independent, sovereign State of Palestine, on the basis of the 1967 borders, with Al Quds Al Sharqiya (East Jerusalem) as its capital.

The communique condemned "the deliberate Israeli attacks on journalists". It stressed "the need for the international community to take immediate action to hold the Israeli occupation forces accountable for violation of international law, notably by targeting journalists". It called for conducting an immediate investigation and protecting all journalists.

The communique also denounced the ongoing military aggression launched by the Israeli occupation against the Palestinian people. It condemned the systematic oppression, massacres and genocide of Palestinian civilians in the Gaza Strip and in the occupied West Bank, including Jerusalem."

The communique also rejected "the systematic disinformation campaigns launched by the Israeli occupation forces and the country's spreading false information and fake news to cover up its brutality and the genocidal massacres it is committing in the Gaza Strip".

Seven massacres

Meanwhile, Israeli occupation forces committed seven massacres against families in the Gaza Strip during the past 24 hours, resulting in 86 documented Palestinian fatalities and 131 others wounded, according to medical sources.

Local health authorities in Gaza confirmed that the death toll from the Israeli onslaught since October 7 has risen to 29,692 reported Palestinian deaths, with an additional 69,879 individuals sustaining injuries.

Meanwhile, ambulance and rescue teams are facing difficulties reaching the casualties, with many dead bodies still trapped under the rubble or scattered on roads as Israeli occupation forces continue to target civil defence and medical personnel.

In addition, the Israeli aggression on Gaza has pushed 85% of the besieged territory's population into internal displacement amid acute shortages of food, clean water, and medicine, while 60% of the enclave's infrastructure has been damaged or destroyed, according to the UN. — Agencies

ECONOMIC COMMUNITY OF WEST AFRICAN STATES

West African bloc ECOWAS lifts post-coup sanctions on Niger

NIAMEY: West African leaders and diplomats met on Saturday to discuss the region's challenges after a string of coups threatened to weaken the regional bloc of the Economic Community of West African States, or ECOWAS.

The leaders announced that they were lifting a number of sanctions that had been imposed on Niger after the military took control there last year.

Niger, along with military juntas in Mali and Burkina Faso, announced in January they were quitting ECOWAS because of sanctions imposed by the bloc in response to coups in each of those countries.The regional bloc imposed sanctions on Niger following a coup in July that toppled Niger's President Mohamed Bazoum. The bloc also shuttered borders with the country, suspended financial transactions and froze Niger's assets.

Nigeria cut off power that supplied 70% of its neighbor, Niger's, electricity. ECOWAS said Saturday it would reverse those measures. Borders would be reopened and a freeze on financial transactions would be lifted.

The sanctions will be lifted with immediate effect, said Omar Alieu Touray, the president of the ECOWAS Commission.

The lifting of the sanctions on Niger is "on purely humanitarian grounds" to ease the suffering caused as a result, Touray told reporters. "There are targeted individual sanctions as well as political sanctions that remain in force," he added.

Niger's junta in December had challenged the sanctions at the ECOWAS Court of Justice in the Nigerian capital Abuja, arguing they were causing severe hardship for Niger's citizens.

One of the top priorities of the summit was to discuss the decision made by Mali, Burkina Faso and Niger to quit the region's most important political and economic bloc on January 28.

Decisions at the summit "must be guided by our commitment to safeguarding the constitutional order, upholding democratic principles, and promoting the social and economic wellbeing of the citizens," said Nigerian President Bola Tinubu, who also serves as the chairman of the commission.

The departure of three countries has threatened to weaken ECOWAS, which has struggled to curtail a retreat of democracy in West Africa that started with a military takeover in Mali in 2020.

Their departure was also unprecedented because member states wishing to withdraw must give a written one-year notice. But the juntas said in their notice they planned to leave "without delay" as they did not feel bound by treaty terms.

"We must re-examine our current approach to the quest for constitutional order in our member states," Tinubu said. "I therefore urge them to reconsider the decision... and not to perceive our organization as the enemy." — DW

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhofar Services invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their offers for the below said tenders: -

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/2024/024	UNE LOT 01D/2024	04/03/2024	14/03/2024	52.500
DISC/2024/025	UNE LOT 01E/2024	04/03/2024	14/03/2024	52.500
DISC/2024/026	UNE LOT 01G/2024	04/03/2024	14/03/2024	52.500
DISC/2024/027	UNE LOT 02A/2024	04/03/2024	14/03/2024	52.500
DISC/2024/028	11 KV & LV Network improvement works of 2023/LOT-11	04/03/2024	14/03/2024	52.500
DISC/2024/029	11 KV & LV Network improvement works of 2023/LOT-12	04/03/2024	14/03/2024	52.500
DISC/2024/032	Supply of Safety Padlocks for Electrical Networks	04/03/2024	14/03/2024	52.500

- To purchase the tender document website via the link or the Barcode below: https://isupplier.nama.om:4443/OA_HTML/OA.jsp?OAFunc=XXTEN_TENDER_FLOAT_DISC_F
- Every company wishing to participate in this tender must attach with its bid a bid bond in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate of Oman. Any bid that does not contain the bid bond will be disqualified.
- The original bid bond must be submitted in an envelope sealed with red wax and addressed to the chairperson of the minor tender committee and written on outside the Tender name and the Tender number and it should be paced in the tender box in Nama dhofar services in Salalah before 10:00 am of the last day for submitting Bids.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using "isupplier portal". No hard copies are accepted.
- The Tender fees are not refundable. However, Tenderers who are holding riyada card issued from public authority for SME development will be exempted from providing the tender fee and the Bid bond.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.

نماء nama لخدمات ظفار DHOFAR SERVICES

Dhofar Integrated Services Companys. a. o. c.
CR Number 2185229 ,PO Box 2609
PC 211 ,Salalah - Sultanate of Oman
Phone Number 23232523 ,Fax 23201183
www.dhofarservices.nama.om

NEW YORK'S HARLEM

27-year-old Indian man dies in fire at Harlem residential building

NEW YORK: A 27-year-old Indian national has died in a deadly fire incident in New York's Harlem. The deceased was identified as Fazil Khan. The Indian Embassy in New York extended support and said that the embassy is in touch with Khan's friends and family.

"Saddened to learn about death of 27-year-old Indian national Mr. Fazil Khan in an unfortunate fire incident in Harlem, NY. India in New York is in touch with the late Mr. Fazil Khan's family & friends. We continue to extend all possible assistance in reparation of his mortal remains to India," the Indian Embassy in New York posted on X.

According to the Fire Department of New York (FDNY), a lithium-ion battery caused a deadly fire at a Harlem apartment building on Friday, as reported by CBS News.

Reportedly, 17 others were injured and dozens of people were displaced.

Moreover, the raging fire forced dramatic and rare rope rescues.

One of the neighbours Angie Ratchford said, "People were coming out of the building. The fire is at the top. Side, you see the police coming down with the people, people jumping out the window."

"Just what I have on me. My phone, my keys and this guy," said Akil Jones, a resident who escaped the fire with his father, according to CBS News.

To save their lives, the residents of the St. Nicholas Place apartment building were forced to jump or use the fire escape.

Meanwhile, according to fire officials, 18 people were rescued. Moreover, 12 were rushed to a local hospital and four victims remain in critical condition, CBS News reported.

Following the incident, a full vacate order has been issued by the Department of Buildings and the Red Cross is assisting dozens of people with temporary housing at a school nearby.

Reportedly, "On the third floor, one of the apartment doors was left open where the fire was. The fire was so intense, if you could imagine, flames coming out that door and blocking off the stairwell," FDNY Chief of Department John Hodgens said. — DW

According to the FDNY, in 2023, lithium-ion batteries caused 267 fires, 150 injuries and 18 deaths in the city.

As of Monday, there have been 24 lithium-ion battery fire investigations and eight injuries so far this year, as reported by CBS News. — ANI

TENDER NOTICE

Sultanate of Oman
Ministry of Agriculture Fishries
Wealth and Water Resources

The Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources Announces the following Tenders: -

	Tender no.	Tender title	Tender Document Sales Start Date	Tender Document Sales end Date	Bid Submission Closing	Companies that are eligible to participate	Tender Document fee (R.O)
1	583/2023/MA-FWR/HQ-59 - Recall - 2	Consulting Services for Design & Supervision Of Food Security Warehouses in the Governorate	Monday 19/2/2024	Sunday 10/3/2024	Sunday 31/3/2024	Specialized companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board with first and second grades	(37/500) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
2	104/2024/MA-FWR/HQ-9	Construction of the fishermen's village in Ras Madrakah in the Wilayat of Duqm	Monday 19/2/2024	Sunday 10/3/2024	Sunday 31/3/2024	Specialized companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board with first and second grades	(150/-) Omani riyals for local companies (15/-) Omani riyals for SMEs
3	1008/2023/-MA WR/HQ-107-Recall-1	Hosting of Water Licensing System (Enjaz)on the cloud	Tuesday 20/2/2024	Sunday 3/3/2024	Sunday 10/3/2024	Specialized companies registered with The General Secretariat of the Tender Board with excellent, first, second, third and fourth grades	(25/-) Omani riyals for local companies (10/-) Omani riyals for SMEs

- above mentioned Grade) may obtain Tender documents from the E-Tendering website: **https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om.**
- The value of the document will be paid & submitted on line on given website.
- The Tenderer should attach Bid Commitment Declaration for local companies, and for International company that not have head quarters in the Sultanate of Oman should attach Bank Guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman (as required in the tender) and addressed to the Ministry of Agricultural, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources.
- All correspondence pertaining to the tender inquiry must be online at e-tendering System.
- All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering System technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number: +968 24402200 or **etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om.**

TENDERS COMMOTTEE
Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries Wealth and Water Resources

SPORTS

Big credit to the boys: Mikel Arteta on Arsenal's 4-1 over Newcastle

Head coach Mikel Arteta said that the Gunners have displayed a "great performance"

NEW DELHI : Following Arsenal's 4-1 win over Fulham in the Premier League (PL) on Sunday, the Gunners head coach Mikel Arteta praised his side for displaying a stunning performance at the Emirates Stadium.

While addressing the post-match press conference, Arteta said that the Gunners have displayed a "great performance". He added that they executed their plans well in the game, maintained a good intensity and played with "a lot of courage".

"I think we had a great performance, big credit to the boys after just half a day to prepare for the game. The way they executed everything - the intensity, the commitment, the determination, the aggression and progression in everything that we were doing with the ball. They played with a lot of courage against the team and we got rewarded. I think we fully deserved to win the game," Arteta said as quoted by Arsenal's official website.

When asked about the Arsenal midfielder Jorginho's role in the game, the head coach praised the Italian player and called him a "top player".

"He's a top player, especially when the opponents have certain behaviours or certain set-ups. The way I can imagine the game, he is going to have a big impact, but I think you have to do it at this level and when he's not playing consistently, credit to him because he was magnificent today, again," he added.

Arteta was really impressed after seeing the home fans. The head coach also praised the fans for showing a great attitude and energy.

"Really impressive, thank you so much to everybody that turned that around with that attitude and that energy. Thanks for the club as well because it's pushing that to generate as well this atmosphere at home and it makes a huge impact on the team, so thank you," he added.

Recapping the game, Sven Botman made the first breakthrough of the game after his own goal in the 18th minute. Following that, Kai Havertz (24'), Bukayo Saka (65') and Jakub Kiwior (69') were on the score sheet to help the Gunners thrash Newcastle. On the other hand, Joseph Willock scored the lone goal for the visitors.

Newcastle chose Loris Karius under the goalpost after their first-choice goalie Martin Dubravka was ill. Meanwhile, Karius failed to push away properly Gabriel's header from a corner and later got back into his own goal after a deflection from Botman. The second goal came when Martinelli opened up the visitors' defence as he cut back for Kai Havertz to maximise the scoreline.

Newcastle tried to make a comeback in the game but Saka scored the third goal of the game after cutting back on his left and making a clinical shot.

Kiwior put the final pin on the coffin from a forced home header from another corner off Lewis Miley, which Karius failed to get a grip on. Just before the final whistle of the game, Willock scored a consolation goal from the header against his former club. -ANI

RANCHI TEST

Ashwin takes fifer, India given 192 runs to secure series win

RANCHI : A five-wicket haul by spinner Ravichandran Ashwin helped India bundle out England for just 145 runs in their second innings and get a target of 192 runs to seal the series on day three of the fourth Test at Ranchi on Sunday.

India ended the day at 40/0, with skipper Rohit Sharma (24*) and Yashasvi Jaiswal (16*) unbeaten.

England started the final session at 120/5, with Jonny Bairstow (30*) and Ben Foakes (0*) unbeaten.

Ravindra Jadeja struck for India at the very first ball of the session and from then on, it opened the floodgates. Bairstow had a lapse of concentration and he handed an easy catch to Rajat Patidar at covers for just 30 in 42 balls. England was 120/6.

Tom Hartley and Ollie Robinson looked to give England a brief respite from these quick wickets, but Kuldeep Yadav's spin continued its magic, first removing Hartley for just seven after being caught by Sarfaraz Khan and then he trapped Robinson leg-before-wicket for zero. England was 133/8.

Then veteran spinner Ravichandran Ashwin had his moment, registering his first major success of the series. Dismissing Ben Foakes (17) and James Anderon (0) in the same over, he got his five-wicket haul, his first in the series. England was bundled out for 145 and set India a target of 192 runs to win.

Ashwin (5/51) and Kuldeep (4/22) led a major spin assault on England batters and Ravindra Jadeja also took a wicket. All ten wickets were taken by spinners.

India came out with openers Yashasvi Jaiswal and skipper Rohit Sharma starting the run-chase of 192 runs. Rohit targeted Hartley and hit him for some boundaries. India ended the final session without a loss of a wicket.

Earlier, Ashwin and Kuldeep spun a web as England lost five wickets early in the second session of the ongoing fourth Test to put India in control of proceedings at the JSCA International Stadium Complex on Sunday.

At the time of Tea, England's score read 120/5 - lead by 166 runs- with Jonny Bairstow (30) and Ben Foakes (0) standing unbeaten at the crease. India ended the second session on a great note as the hosts pulled their way right back into this match after a flurry of wickets.

Early in the second session, star spinner Ashwin provided India with two back-to-back breakthroughs as he dismissed Ben Duckett and Ollie Pope on consecutive deliveries.

Despite losing two wickets in quick succession, England gained momentum as Zak Crawley started dealing in boundaries.

India turned to Mohammed Siraj after starting with 15 overs of spin from both ends, however, England kept the momentum in their favour.

In the 17th over of the game, Ashwin sent dangerous batter Joe Root packing with a full and straight delivery off the final ball.

Crawley continued his blistering form and slammed his third half-century of the series. The English batters rotated the strike brilliantly, not allowing the Indian bowlers to settle down while whacking the loose balls on offer.

A cracker from Kuldeep helped India spring in their step again as he removed well-set batter Crawley for 60. Crawley stepped back at a beauty that skidded through, beat the bat and smashed into the middle stump.

Kuldeep got the main man as he removed captain Ben Stokes for 4. The ball stayed low and Stokes had no answer for it, seeing it hit his shin and then spin back through his legs to hit the stumps, leaving England tottering at 120/5 at Tea.

Earlier, at lunch, India ended their first inning at 307 and trailed by 46 runs after Jurel and Kuldeep Yadav played a 76-run partnership.

Day three started with Kuldeep and Dhruv Jurel on the crease. Both the Indians were playing calmly and slowly putting runs on the scoreboard at a time when the hosts were under pressure.

Jurel and Kuldeep helped India to cross the 250-run mark in the 86th over. However, James Anderson made the first breakthrough of the day after he dismissed Kuldeep for 28 runs for 131 balls in the 89th. The off-spinner smashed 2 fours as well.

India moved past the 300 runs mark in the 101.6 overs after playing 618 balls. After the dismissal, India failed to build another partnership in their first inning. Later in the 101st over, Shoaib Bashir removed Akash Deep for 9 runs from 29 balls. With Deep's wicket, Bashir bagged his first five-wicket haul in first-class cricket.

Bashir was the main man to keep a check on India's run rate and put England in the driver's seat.

Jurel claimed his first fifty in the first ball of the 90th over. However, the youngster was unlucky to hit a century as he was dismissed by Tom Hartley for 90 runs from 149 balls and ended India's first inning. Jurel smashed 6 fours and 4 sixes with a strike rate of 60.40.

On the other hand, Bashir led the English bowling attack with his fifer. While Hartley bagged three wickets as he gave away 68 runs.

Brief Scores: India: 307 and 40/0 (Rohit Sharma 24*, Yashasvi Jaiswal) need to score 152 more runs against England: 353 and 145 (Zak Crawley 60, Jonny Bairstow 30, Ashwin 5/51). -ANI

T20I CAPTAIN

ICC suspends Wanindu Hasaranga for two international matches

DUBAI: The International Cricket Council (ICC) on Saturday announced that Sri Lanka's T20I captain Wanindu Hasaranga has been suspended for two international matches after his accumulated demerit points reached five within a 24-month period following his latest breach of the ICC Code of Conduct, for which he received a 50 per cent fine and three demerit points.

"Hasaranga was found guilty of breaching article 2.13 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to "Personal abuse of a Player, Player Support Personnel, Umpire or Match Referee during an International Match," ICC said in an official statement.

Hasaranga's five demerit points convert to two suspension points. As two suspension points equate to a ban from one Test or two ODIs or T20Is, whatever comes first for the player or player support personnel, Hasaranga stands suspended from Sri Lanka's first two T20Is against Bangladesh next month.

The incident occurred after the match when Hasaranga confronted umpire Lyndon Hanibal to chastise him for a ruling.

Afghanistan player Rahmanullah Gurbaz has also been penalised. He has been fined 15 per cent of his match fee for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct in the same match.

"Rahmanullah was found to have breached article 2.4 of the Code, which relates to "Disobeying an Umpire's instruction during an International Match," a statement from ICC read.

The sanction was imposed on Rahmanullah for changing the grip of his bat on the field of play despite being repeatedly warned not to do so.

Both players admitted the offences and accepted the sanctions proposed by Chris Broad of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees and, as such, there was no need for formal hearings.

The charges were filed by on-field umpires Lyndon Hannibal and Raveendra Wimalasiri, third umpire Ruchira Palliyaguruge, and fourth umpire Ranmore Martinez.

"Level 2 breaches carry a penalty of between 50 and 100 per cent of a player's match fee and three or four demerit points while Level 1 breaches carry a minimum penalty of an official reprimand, a maximum penalty of 50 per cent of a player's match fee, and one or two demerit points," the statement further read.

Sri Lanka won the three-match T20I series 2-1, with Afghanistan winning the last match. Hasaranga was named Player of the Series for his overall performance. -ANI

11TH CONSECUTIVE MEN'S TITLE

China win men's team title at table tennis worlds

BUSAN: China cruised past France 3-0 to claim its 11th consecutive men's title at the ITTF World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals here on Sunday.

It was also a record-extending 23rd time that China has lifted the Swaythling Cup in history.

Facing off against France, who made the final for the first time since 1997, the trio of Fan Zhendong, Wang Chuqin and Ma Long helped China stretch its title-winning streak in the tournament.

Racing out of the starting blocks first, Wang set the tone early on with a commanding display in game one for an 11-4 win against 17-year-old penholder Felix Lebrun.

The second-ranked Chinese paddler got the ball rolling afterward, emerging victorious 11-8, 11-3 in the next two games to get past the sixth-ranked Lebrun to put China on the scoreboard.

Fan and Alexis Lebrun, Felix's older brother, were the next players at the table. Fan raced to an 8-4 lead in the first game, while his sportsmanlike action saw the momentum swing in his opponent's direction.

Initially earning one point to go up 9-4, Fan showed the umpire that it was actually an edge ball from Alexis, who instead pulled within 8-5. The French player then began to gain the upper hand and turned the tide 11-9.

But Fan was unfazed by the incident, prevailing 11-4 in the second game to restore parity. Trailing 5-10 in the third game, the world No. 1 notched three points in a row, forcing a timeout from Alexis, who steadied himself for an 11-8 victory.

In a match featuring spectacular rallies time and again, Alexis appeared to gain the momentum, but Fan, in an attempt to change the tempo, came back from 5-8 down with three straight points and even saved one set point at 9-10 before emerging victorious 12-10.

With the tie level at two games apiece, Fan regained his superior position and pocketed an 11-7 win in the decisive game, moving China one point away from its title defense.

France's hope of staying in title contention rested on the shoulders of Simon Gauzy, but it was denied by Chinese veteran Ma Long, who had won all of his four encounters with Gauzy.

Gauzy took the initiative with a 9-3 lead. Although Ma kept pushing hard to cut the gap, a forehand error saw the first game end 11-7 in Gauzy's favor.

Ma regrouped from there and putting his rival firmly on the back foot to pull off an 11-2, 11-4, 11-6 comeback win.

South Korea and Chinese Taipei rounded out the podium.

On Saturday, China claimed the women's team world title for the sixth straight and a record-extending 23rd time after surviving a full-set thriller to get the better of Japan. -Xinhua

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE

GLOBAL BOAT BUILDERS

The world's mega-rich and well-heeled luxury consumers are taking to the ocean like never before, but luxury yacht builders and makers of high-end marine crafts should continue to prioritise their eco-credentials if they're to ride the wave of a $13 billion market.

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) general index (30) gained 7.2 points, comprising a rise by 0.16 per cent to close at 4578.14 points, compared to the last session, which stood at 4570.98 points.

Omani industries forge strategic partnerships at Gulfood 2024

Food industry leaders, investors and producers showed keen interest in the diverse range of Omani products showcased at the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), successfully concluded its participation at Gulfood 2024 in Dubai, UAE.

Food industry leaders, investors and producers showed keen interest in the diverse range of Omani products showcased at the Sultanate of Oman's pavilion.

Hamood Al Balushi, Assistant Director General at Madayn, emphasised that the remarkable turnout for Omani products at Gulfood, which exceeded expectations this year, underscores their exceptional quality and reputation both regionally and internationally. "This year's participation has enabled Omani industries to receive more export requests, sign commercial deals, renew existing ones, and explore entry into new markets," he said.

Al Balushi further stated, "This year, Madayn, in collaboration with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry, worked towards expanding participation by enabling more Omani companies and factories to join the exhibition. Additionally, the Sultanate's pavilion provided free spaces for the SMEs to interact with exhibition visitors and showcase their products, recognising their significant contribution to the local economy."

Al Balushi also emphasised on the keen interest expressed by global investors and business owners in setting up or expanding existing businesses in the Sultanate's industrial cities. The representatives of Madayn, the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion and the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry briefed the visitors on Oman's investment environment and the support and incentives offered by the three bodies.

On his part, Moosa Al Moosawi, Director of Exhibitions and Products Promotion at Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), highlighted that OCCI's participation at Gulfood reflects its commitment to promoting and supporting Omani industries and complementing the initiatives led by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, and Madayn. Al Moosawi mentioned that the diverse global offerings of food-related products and services that were available at the exhibition provided choices tailored to meet specific needs and budgetary requirements.

Madyan Al Balushi, Head of Export Development Department at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, underscored the key role played by international exhibitions like Gulfood in spotlighting and promoting Omani products to a global audience. He noted that the Gulfood Exhibition serves as a global platform for both government and private bodies to achieve expansion and growth goals in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

FRANCE

Free public transport takes off in Montpellier

PARIS: Since the 21st of December 2023, the half a million inhabitants of the southern French city of Montpellier and its surroundings no longer have to pay for public transport. Many of them are pleased with the measure – but there are caveats.

Thirty-one-year-old Rayene Chabbi is relieved she no longer has to pay for the bus and the tram she takes to work on weekdays, like on a recent Monday morning.

In the past, she'd often drive her parents' car the seven kilometers (four miles) to the office.

"Free public transport is a really good idea – especially for people like me who think twice before spending €50 ($54) on a monthly subscription. I only earn €1,950 gross each month," she told DW while waiting for her bus.

"It's similar for my sister who now also uses public transport," she added.

Less stress, better for the environment

Half an hour later, Chabbi gets off a tram in Montpellier's northeastern neighbourhood of Castelnau-le-Lez. "Taking the car would have taken at least ten minutes longer and I would certainly have been stuck in traffic jams. I like this stress-free way of travelling. Plus, I'm protecting the environment," she said while walking the few hundred meters to the company Simax, where Chabbi works as the manager's assistant.

The mid-sized company, which provides management software for businesses, co-finances the free public transport scheme via a two-percent wage tax, as do about 2,500 other companies in Montpellier that employ 11 staff or more. Overall, the measures cost €30 million ($32 million). That's compared to the city's total budget of €1 billion.

CEO Miren Lafourcade doesn't mind paying up – on the contrary.

"Our company used to be in an area with poor public transport connections. That's why we moved to this location, which is just a 3-minute walk from a tram stop. For once, the taxes we pay are being used for something that benefits society," she told DW.

Simax currently employs 60 people and has an annual turnover of €1.5 million ($1.6 million). It aims to recruit up to ten more staff this year – with sustainability, which includes public transport, set to remain a crucial element of its expansion plans.

Part of larger climate adaptation scheme

Julie Frêche, vice-president of the metropolis of Montpellier and in charge of transport matters, is pleased with such efforts.

"We aim to implement positive environmental politics. Free public transport increases citizens' purchasing power," she said to DW.

"Plus, the measure improves air quality," Frêche added.

Montpellier is also taking other climate adaptation measures – especially as temperatures here can reach almost 50 degrees Celsius in the summer.

The city is planting greenery and will add 50,000 trees by 2026.

"We are also constructing 235 kilometers of additional bike lanes and adding five bus routes to the 41 existing ones and a fifth tram line," Frêche stressed.

But not everywhere in Montpellier is served in the same way

That new tramway will also connect Saint-Jean-de-Vedas. The neighboring town, part of greater Montpellier, has about 12,000 residents – and counting. Numerous new apartment blocks are springing up here.

That's why Hugo Daillan thinks more public transport connections will be needed.

The 28-year-old lives in central Montpellier and works in a flower shop in Saint-Jean-de-Vedas. He's traveling with a group of public transport passengers when he speaks with DW.

"This is Saint-Jean-de-Vedas' only tram stop. The tram only runs every 15 minutes, even though at the end of the workday, people need to get home. And so many people here take the car instead. The transport connection is so bad, that the local town hall has set up a shuttle in one district – which you have to pay for," Daillon told DW while pointing at the destination board.

He also stressed that the "free" public transport scheme wasn't actually free. "The price we are paying is that that money can't be invested in expanding the current transport network," he said.

"When making public transport free, you need to make sure all parts of the city have access to the transport network, especially in a growing city like this one. Or else you only please people in the well-connected centre and forget about those living in the outskirts," Daillan said.

Alexandre Brun, lecturer for geography at Montpellier's University Paul-Valéry, agrees with that view.

"The city should also build new connections between suburbs so that you no longer have to travel through the city center to get to another suburb," Brun told DW.

He also fears the wage tax could deter companies from setting up offices in Montpellier.

"And we still need additional companies to bring down unemployment," he added.

Montpellier's unemployment rate stood at 9.6% in 2023, about two points above the national average.

Drivers and economists are fans

But drivers questioned in Saint-Jean-de-Vedas seemed to welcome the free transport scheme – at least those who don't have to commute to the city centre.

"It's very convenient. I now regularly take public transport to go shopping in the city centre," Claire Maurin, a 40-year-old nursery school teacher told DW. -DW

CHALLENGING

Empty US offices cause headache for German bank

BRUSSELS: Worries about US commercial property are making a German bank nervous. What had previously promised high profits is becoming a massive problem for Deutsche Pfandbriefbank (pbb). The mid-sized bank based near Munich specialises in commercial real estate loans in Europe, but is also heavily invested in America.

The vacancy rates for offices and business premises there are higher than they have been for years. It is partly a knock-on effect of the COVID-19 pandemic and the new norm of working from home. More broadly, tighter lending, higher interest rates and inflation are making construction and real estate less attractive.

Overall, pbb is sitting on customer loans of just over €49 billion ($52.9 billion). Of that, around 44% of its real estate financing is connected to commercial real estate in Germany. Yet around €5.4 billion, or 15%, is tied to commercial real estate in the US. A market "where uncertainty surrounding commercial real estate valuations are particularly high," according to a recent report by S&P, a credit rating agency.

To make matters worse, as of last September, 12.8% of the US loans are considered problematic, "a huge difference compared to the estimated ratio of 0.3% for the German risk exposure," said Vladislav Krivenkov from Hamburg-based nordIX, a specialist for bonds and derivatives that advises institutional investors.

Taking stock as the stocks tumble

Many other German banks have real estate investments, but these businesses are generally more diversified. On February 14, S&P downgraded both its long- and short-term outlook for pbb due to its strong exposure to commercial real estate, including offices, retail, logistics and hotels. For the rating agency, it is the bank's "narrow mix of business lines" that is cause for alarm.

Investors' reaction was swift and the bank's share price fell to an all-time low. Since the start of January, the stock is down 40%.

Perhaps in anticipation of this, the bank previously issued two bulletins to try and reassure investors about its general financial health. It announced that despite the situation "pbb remains profitable thanks to its financial strength — even in the greatest real estate crisis since the financial crisis." It also vowed to have enough cash to deal with a downturn in the US.

The situation for commercial real estate in the US, especially for office properties, is challenging, says Jens Tolckmitt, chief executive of the Association of German Pfandbrief Banks (vdp). But the entire real estate industry cannot be judged together. "Individual property types and locations are affected completely differently," he told DW. -DW

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Musandam Power, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Voltamp Energy, down 4.21 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,578.14 points, up by 0.16 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.09 per cent at 442.84 points. Musandam Power, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Voltamp Energy, down 4.21 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of OQGN were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1169 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR3.08 million, with more than 18.94 million shares changing hands. Out of 50 traded securities, 13 advanced, 20 declined, and 17 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for OMR611,000 while GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for OMR384,000, followed by foreign investors for OMR227,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,199.00 points, up 0.13 per cent. Prices of National Bank Oman, and Al Anwar Investment were up by 2.36 per cent, and 1.43 per cent respectively. Prices of Bank Nizwa, and Bank Muscat were down by 1.03 per cent, and 0.38 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,449.32 points, down 0.09 per cent. Prices of Oman Cables Industry were up by 5.48 per cent. Prices of Voltamp Energy, Gulf Mushroom Products, Oman Fisheries, Jazeera Steel Products, and Dhofar Cattle Feed were down by 4.21 per cent, 2.55 per cent, 2.17 per cent, 1.83 per cent, and 1.70 per cent respectively.

Services Index was down by 0.22 per cent before closing at 1,691.68 points. Prices of Musandam Power, SMN Power Holding, Barka Water & Power Company, Dhofar Generating, and Ooredoo were up by 10.00 per cent, 9.30 per cent, 9.09 per cent, 4.88 per cent, and 1.47 per cent respectively. Prices of Muscat Desalination, Al Jazeera Services, Al Suwadi Power, Al Batinah Power, and Oman National Engineering were down by 3.90 per cent, 3.36 per cent, 3.08 per cent, 3.08 per cent, and 2.52 per cent respectively.— **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev . Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,586.04	4,560.27	4,578.14	4,570.98	7.16	0.16
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,212.69	7,155.60	7,199.00	7,190.01	8.99	0.13
Industry Index	5,460.64	5,371.80	5,449.32	5,454.35	-5.03	-0.09
Services Index	1,700.16	1,683.38	1,691.68	1,695.35	-3.67	-0.22
MSX Shariah Index	444.30	439.11	442.84	442.42	0.42	0.09
MSX TR INDEX	6,047.43	6,013.46	6,037.02	6,027.58	9.45	0.16
FINANCIAL TR IDX	7,870.37	7,808.08	7,855.43	7,845.62	9.81	0.12
SERVICES TR IDX	1,896.88	1,878.15	1,887.41	1,891.51	-4.09	-0.22
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	5,833.32	5,738.42	5,821.23	5,826.60	-5.38	-0.09

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
18,944,948	3,083,317	1,169	23,616,130,997	13	20	17	50

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 25

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	283,662	25,294	26	0.088	0.094	0.086	0.094	0.086	0.008	9.302	0.094	0.088	0.088	0.100	18,765,746
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	1,444,807	375,591	24	0.254	0.260	0.254	0.260	0.254	0.006	2.362	0.260	0.260	0.265	0.100	422,746,052
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	6,805	2,353	3	0.346	0.346	0.345	0.345	0.340	0.005	1.471	0.345	0.335	0.350	0.100	224,575,759
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	150,155	162,682	35	1.075	1.086	1.075	1.084	1.075	0.009	0.837	1.084	1.084	1.084	0.100	813,000,000
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	18,820	5,081	8	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.000	0.000	0.270	0.270	0.278	0.100	27,000,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	222,968	90,535	3	0.409	0.410	0.406	0.410	0.410	0.000	0.000	0.410	0.400	0.410	0.100	274,029,825
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	5,000	285	1	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.000	0.000	0.057	0.000	0.059	0.100	20,299,256
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	144,881	8,557	25	0.060	0.060	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.000	0.000	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.100	11,800,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	653,800	274,638	25	0.420	0.422	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.000	0.000	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.100	99,292,200
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	933,769	100,577	27	0.108	0.109	0.107	0.109	0.109	0.000	0.000	0.109	0.103	0.109	0.100	595,999,847
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	626,860	54,088	56	0.089	0.090	0.081	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.087	0.088	0.100	15,400,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	2,020,076	534,973	165	0.265	0.266	0.264	0.264	0.265	-0.001	-0.377	0.264	0.264	0.265	0.100	1,981,688,824
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	2,500	424	2	0.170	0.170	0.169	0.169	0.170	-0.001	-0.588	0.169	0.169	0.170	0.100	9,295,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	304,655	54,997	35	0.182	0.182	0.178	0.179	0.181	-0.002	-1.105	0.179	0.179	0.180	0.100	39,380,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	214,000	56,372	15	0.271	0.271	0.246	0.268	0.273	-0.005	-1.832	0.268	0.256	0.270	0.100	33,472,653
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	385,150	44,983	42	0.120	0.120	0.115	0.116	0.119	-0.003	-2.521	0.117	0.117	0.117	0.100	17,400,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	10,000	2,300	3	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.238	-0.008	-3.361	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.100	14,076,983
Total	17	7,427,908	1,793,729	495												

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	2,002	621	2	0.310	0.319	0.310	0.319	0.290	0.029	10.000	0.319	0.290	0.319	0.100	22,454,410
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	296,398	13,572	19	0.044	0.048	0.043	0.048	0.044	0.004	9.091	0.048	0.043	0.048	0.100	7,680,000
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	3,000	6,645	1	2.215	2.215	2.215	2.215	2.100	0.115	5.476	2.215	1.995	2.215	0.100	198,685,500
OM0000007407	DHOFAR GENERATING	40,000	1,760	2	0.043	0.045	0.043	0.043	0.041	0.002	4.878	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.100	9,556,320
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	406,000	28,632	16	0.070	0.071	0.070	0.071	0.070	0.001	1.429	0.071	0.070	0.071	0.100	14,626,000
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	3,804,486	554,224	269	0.144	0.146	0.144	0.145	0.144	0.001	0.694	0.145	0.145	0.146	0.100	627,940,468
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	5,000	385	1	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.100	6,545,000
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTERNATIONAL DEV. & INV. HO.	3,594	719	3	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.000	0.000	0.200	0.200	0.000	0.100	81,849,263
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	726,375	115,856	11	0.160	0.160	0.159	0.160	0.160	0.000	0.000	0.160	0.160	0.159	0.100	375,945,195
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	20	16	1	0.805	0.805	0.805	0.805	0.805	0.000	0.000	0.805	0.804	0.000	0.100	76,475,000
OM0000003281	TAAGEER FINANCE	40,160	4,297	7	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.000	0.000	0.107	0.106	0.107	0.100	28,230,349
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	160,114	23,109	43	0.144	0.150	0.140	0.150	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.150	0.143	0.150	0.100	30,447,967
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	1,570,403	150,759	27	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.000	0.000	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.100	91,638,907
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	10,000	1,180	1	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.000	0.000	0.118	0.114	0.118	0.100	8,911,596
OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	483	2,279	2	4.720	4.720	4.719	4.719	4.730	-0.011	-0.233	4.719	0.000	4.719	1.000	14,157,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	244,786	75,384	18	0.308	0.308	0.305	0.306	0.308	-0.002	-0.649	0.308	0.306	0.308	0.100	235,681,200
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	168,129	20,175	19	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.121	-0.001	-0.826	0.120	0.119	0.120	0.100	24,000,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	328,406	31,527	10	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.097	-0.001	-1.031	0.096	0.094	0.097	0.100	214,747,491
OM0000001301	DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	600	35	2	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.059	-0.001	-1.695	0.058	0.054	0.058	0.100	11,465,262
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	195,540	9,973	9	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.052	-0.001	-1.923	0.051	0.051	0.055	0.100	74,592,674
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	20,000	2,920	3	0.146	0.146	0.146	0.146	0.149	-0.003	-2.013	0.146	0.146	0.146	0.100	14,279,115
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	2,000	170	2	0.087	0.087	0.085	0.085	0.087	-0.002	-2.299	0.085	0.000	0.085	0.100	40,050,843
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	8,000	1,840	6	0.231	0.231	0.229	0.229	0.235	-0.006	-2.553	0.229	0.229	0.235	0.100	10,480,368
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	1,085,480	66,454	61	0.063	0.065	0.060	0.063	0.065	-0.002	-3.077	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.100	42,517,908
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	2,123,264	132,135	109	0.065	0.065	0.060	0.063	0.065	-0.002	-3.077	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.100	45,007,599
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	55,473	4,105	7	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.077	-0.003	-3.896	0.074	0.070	0.074	0.100	11,510,730
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	600	109	1	0.182	0.182	0.182	0.182	0.190	-0.008	-4.211	0.182	0.175	0.182	0.100	14,815,301
Total	27	11,300,313	1,248,881	652												

VOWS INCREASED OPENNESS

China aims to clinch more free trade agreements

BEIJING: China plans to step up efforts to expand its global network of high-standard free trade areas in 2024, building on significant accomplishments in negotiating free trade agreements (FTAs) over the past year.

Chinese Vice Commerce Minister Wang Shouwen told a recent press conference that China has already inked 22 FTAs with 29 countries or regions, and the combined trade value with those countries and regions accounted for one-third of China's total.

In a move to further share China's opening-up dividends and power regional economic growth, China will enhance efforts regarding FTA negotiations in 2024, according to Wang. "We have a full agenda for FTA negotiations this year," he said.

Towards a broader FTA network

As negotiations for Version 3.0 of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area are scheduled for this week in the eastern Chinese city of Hangzhou, Wang has vowed to exert efforts to conclude the talks this year.

The building of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area was completed in 2010. According to customs data, trade between China and ASEAN since 2013 has logged an annual growth rate of 8.8 percent. In 2023, ASEAN was China's largest trading partner for the fourth straight year, while China held its position as ASEAN's largest partner for several years..

The two parties announced the official launch of the negotiations to upgrade the free trade area to its third version in November 2022, with the negotiations covering fields such as trade in goods, investment, digital and green economy to build a more inclusive, modern, comprehensive and mutually beneficial China-ASEAN FTA.

Experts believe that the upcoming version of the China-ASEAN Free Trade Area would also prompt the upgrade of the Regional Comprehensive Economic Partnership (RCEP). - **Xinhua**

DUBAI BOAT SHOW LEISURE YACHTING CONFERENCE

Global boat builders urged to prioritise sustainable manufacturing for $13 billion luxury yacht market

DUBAI: The world's mega-rich and well-heeled luxury consumers are taking to the ocean like never before, but luxury yacht builders and makers of high-end marine crafts should continue to prioritise their eco-credentials if they're to ride the wave of a $13 billion market.

Speakers at this week's Dubai Boat Show Leisure Yachting Conference agree that boatyards which prioritise sustainable manufacturing into yachts that are better for the environment will align with the values of the new-age eco-conscious yacht owner or even first-time buyer.

If they do so, expect to see plenty of e-boats and hybrid electric propulsion vessels in the coming years cruising beautiful marine tourism hotspots, including the Dubai Reef, launched in 2023, one of the world's largest reef development projects, which will span 600sqm of pristine Dubai coastline.

Eric Althaus, Managing Partner and Senior Broker of Althaus Yachts, a broker of high-end yachts, said eco yachts are the perfect foil for today's owners eager to reduce their environmental footprint: "The modern yacht owner, often younger, seeks global exploration and adventure in remote places," said Althaus, who will sit on a panel about innovative marketing strategies in luxury yachting at the Dubai Boat Show Leisure Yachting Conference, taking place on 27 February at the Westin Mina Seyahi.

"To align with these values, eco yachts are equipped with advanced features such as hybrid electric propulsion, sustainable materials, dynamic positioning, solar panels, and cutting-edge wastewater recovery systems, emphasising a commitment to environmental care during cruises."

The annual Dubai Boat Show Leisure Yachting Conference will act as the official curtain raiser for the Dubai International Boat Show, bringing more than 250 key industry leaders from across the globe to deep dive into topics including innovation, regulation, sustainability, and the future of the sector.

It arrives as yacht-brokerage firms reported record sales of super yachts in 2023, with Fortune Business Insights, a market researcher, expecting the global luxury yacht market to nearly double in size over the next eight years, with annual revenues reaching $13.6 billion by 2030.

Dr Mariem Nasraoui, R&D Director at ChromaMe Air & Surface Nano Tech, is another speaker on a panel exploring tech's role in transforming the luxury yachting sector. Dr Nasraoui said tech is critical in advancing luxury yachting's sustainability agenda.

"Innovations such as eco-friendly propulsion systems, lightweight materials, and energy-efficient technologies will help reduce the environmental footprint of yachting activities while maintaining high standards of luxury and performance," said Dr Nasraoui.

"In the coming years, we can expect to see further integration of technology into luxury yachting, including advancements in areas such as autonomous navigation, renewable energy integration, and augmented reality experiences for passengers. These innovations will continue to enhance the overall yachting experience while addressing sustainability challenges and driving industry growth."

Figen Ayan, Chief Port Officer of Galataport Istanbul and MedCruise – the largest port association globally representing over 150 ports from 22 countries – will sit on a panel of the Dubai Boat Show Leisure Yachting Conference examining the Gulf region's steep ascent as a capital of the yachting world. -**WAM**

SPORTS

We could have won: Ten Hag on loss against Fulham in Premier League

We had two slow starts in both halves and in the second half, it was a big blow to lose Casemiro. We lost some stability in the team, he said

The goal was very avoidable and then we fought back, so I have to credit the team for showing big character. Then we went for the win but, in the end, we let them slip away,

NEW DELHI: Following Manchester United's 2-1 loss against Fulham in the Premier League (PL) on Saturday, the Red Devils head coach said that they should have won the game at the iconic Old Trafford.

While speaking at the post-match press conference, Ten Hag said that in the past two months, United have performed well in the league.

"After these two months, I wouldn't go to that approach. We have seen lately that we have done very well. Now we have some setbacks, also today, we could have won this game, maybe should have won this game, because the team showed great character," Ten Hag said as quoted by Manchester United's official website.

He added that they had started both the first and second half slowly and losing Casemiro was a "big blow". He also praised the Red Devils players for "showing big character".

"We had two slow starts in both halves and in the second half, it was a big blow to lose Casemiro. We lost some stability in the team and we conceded in that moment. Also, the goal was very avoidable and then we fought back, so I have to credit the team for showing big character. Then we went for the win but, in the end, we let them slip away," he added.

The head coach revealed that they don't have a proper "left full-back" due to injury. He added that the team needs to recover from the setbacks.

"It's the truth. We don't have a left full-back, then we had the big drop-out of Casemiro, and Licha Martinez, but still, we have the players and the squad to deal with it. And also today we could have won this game, maybe should have won this game. In the end, we showed great character and we have to do with these players. We have had a good run, now we have to recover from this setback, look forward, prepare for the next game, be ready for it and do better than today, especially in the manner of the result," he added.

Recapping the match, United faced a 1-2 loss against Fulham at the Old Trafford on Saturday. Both sides failed to score in the first 45 minutes. However, the first goal came in the game from Fulham's Calvin Bassey in the 68th minute. Later, the Red Devils defender Maguire levelled the scoreline in the 89th minute. But the hosts failed to keep the lead as Alex Iwobi scored the winner in the added minutes of the second half. The 2-1 loss will be a big blow for the United as they stand in sixth place in the PL standings. -ANI

FOOTBALL

We can't slip up: Ancelotti on Real's clash against Sevilla in La Liga

AUCKLAND: Ahead of Real Madrid's clash against Sevilla in La Liga at the iconic Santiago Bernabeu Stadium on Monday, the Los Blancos head coach Carlo Ancelotti said that they need to win the upcoming matches as they can't "slip up" at this point.

While speaking at the pre-match press conference, Ancelotti said that the Real Madrid players are prepared to face Sevilla on Monday.

"We need the points to make the most of the advantage we've got. The team has worked well and we've had time to prepare for the match. I hope we can show our best tomorrow. We have built up a lead and we want to make it count. La Liga is in our hands, we can't slip up so every game is important. Two weeks ago I said we were moving towards the 80-point mark, which brings us closer to the title. However, that doesn't mean we'll win it because we know we need more points than that. But we're close," Ancelotti was quoted by Real Madrid's official website as saying.

He added that the Los Blancos have to be a "solid, hungry and motivated unit" before the forthcoming match in La Liga.

"The form we have to show against Sevilla is what we've been doing all season long, we'll have to be a solid, hungry and motivated unit. Sevilla are a team who will demand the best from us because they're on a good run in the second half of the season," he added.

When asked about Sergio Ramos' comeback to the Santiago Bernabeu, Ancelotti said that the Real Madrid fans would give him the "warmest of welcomes".

"Ramos comes back tomorrow and the Bernabeu will give him the warmest of welcomes. He deserves it because he's a club legend. He's been a wonderful captain, an example, with his immense character and personality. I've worked with captains like Maldini and Terry too. These guys help create a fantastic atmosphere among the squad," he added.

The Los Blancos are currently unbeaten in their previous five matches. They will be coming into this game after sharing points with Rayo Vallecano. Ancelotti's side stand at the top of the La Liga standings with 62 points by their name. -ANI

EDEN PARK

Matthew Wade hails Australia after clean-sweep against New Zealand

AUCKLAND: Australia wicket-keeper-batter and stand-in captain Matthew Wade praised his team's depth after a 27-run victory via DLS against New Zealand in the third and final T20I at Eden Park on Sunday.

Following the match, Wade praised Australia's clinical bowling effort as well as all-rounder Matthew Short's batting. Short scored 27 runs from 11 deliveries against New Zealand, including a boundary and three sixes.

"Our bowlers were unbelievable, was a clinical bowling performance. The way Short batted, it was fantastic. Everyone is enjoying their cricket. Everyone knows the World Cup's coming up," Wade said in a post-match presentation.

He went on to remark that it's great to see the depth of their team, and he praised their support personnel for their efforts. Spencer Johnson, a debutant, played an important role in Australia's victory by bowling cheaply and taking Tim Seifert's wicket in Auckland.

"We have a good batting line up and the bowlers are doing a good job, it's nice to see the depth in the side. Credit goes to the support staff for their homework. This venue wasn't a happy hunting ground for us before today, but the bowlers got some help, it was a really good performance," he added.

Talking about the third T20I encounter, Travis Head (33 runs from 30 balls) and Steven Smith (4 runs from 3 balls) opened for Australia and could only make a partnership of 16 runs as Mitchell Santner bagged the first wicket of the game after he dismissed Smith in the second over.

Matthew Short (27 runs from 11 balls) shined with Head on the other end of the crease and built a partnership of 51 runs. However, Ben Sears removed Short in the 6th over. The right-handed batter smashed 1 four and 3 sixes at a strike rate of 245.45. -ANI

CRICKET

ISM win Inter-School U16 and OCA bag Inter-Academy Under 16 titles

MUSCAT: Indian School Muscat U16 beat Indian School Wadi Kabir U16 by 5 wickets in the finals of Oman Cricket Inter-School U16 Junior Domestic League 2023-24 supported by Mazoon Dairy SAOC at Municipality Grounds recently.

ISWK U16 posted 185 in 30 overs courtesy Saumya Sampat's 36 and a collective contribution from the other batters. Vihaan Chauhan picked 2 wickets for ISM U16. In response, ISM U16 chased down the target with one over remaining courtesy Giriharan KK's 69 along with 36 from Siddheswaran and 31 from Jeet Shah. Arav Pillai picked 3 wickets.

Oman Cricket Academy U16 beat Muscat Cricket Coaching Centre Yellow U16 by 7 wickets in the finals of Oman Cricket Inter-Academy U16 Junior Domestic League 2023-24 supported by Mazoon Dairy SAOC at Municipality Grounds recently.

MCCC Yellow U16 was bundled for 187 courtesy a 3-wicket haul from Vignesh Karthikeyan and two wickets each for Muhammed Abrar and Mohammed Aseel. Hafiz Mohammed and Jeet Shah scored 50 each respectively. In response, OCA U16 chased the target courtesy 66 from Kavish Shah, 46 from Christo Tredoux and 45 from Saumya Sampat by 7 wickets with 10 balls remaining.

In the Prize Distribution ceremony, Mr. Alkesh Joshi, Treasurer - Oman Cricket, Mr. Kiran Asher – Board Member, Oman Cricket, Mr. Paul Martin, Mazoon Dairy and Mr. Duleep Mendis – Chief Development Officer - Oman Cricket graced the stage.

For Inter-School tournament, Saumya Sampat of ISWK U16 bagged the Best Batsman while Jeyapranesh Ayyapan of ISAS U16 was awarded Best Bowler and Rishab Gupta of ISWK Cambridge was adjudged Best All-Rounder.

For Inter-Academy tournament, Jeet Shah of MCCC Yellow U16 bagged the Best Batsman while Vignesh Karthikeyan of OCA U16 was awarded Best Bowler and Saumya Sampat of OCA U16 was adjudged Best All-Rounder.

Brief Scores : ISWK U16 185/10 in 30 overs (Saumya Sampat 36(31), Vihaan Chauhan 2/28) lost to ISM U16 A 186/5 in 29 overs (Giriharan KK 69(55); Arav Pillai 3/25) by 5 wickets.

MCCC Yellow U16 187/10 in 29.1 overs (Hafiz Mohammed 50(38); Vignesh Karthikeyan 3/26) lost to OCA U16 188/3 in 28.2 overs (Kavish Shah 66(55), Jeet Shah 1/24) by 7 wickets.

T20I SERIES

Marsh feels "nice" to beat New Zealand in T20I series

AUCKLAND: Star Australia all-rounder Mitchell Marsh said that it was nice to defeat New Zealand in the T20I series on Sunday.

Australia clinched a 27-run win against the Kiwis in the 3rd T20I match at Eden Park in Auckland. With the win, Australia have whitewashed the hosts in the three-match 20-over series.

Adressing the post-match presentation, Marsh said that the Aussies have shown a "fantastic effort" to win the series 3-0. He also credited the Aussie coaching staff and the team management for the series win.

He also praised the Kiwis and said that they are an "outstanding unit".

"Nice to contribute to the winning team, nice to win a series in New Zealand. It was a fantastic effort to win 3-0. Our coaching staff and the group make the job easy. It's a great bunch. Any series you win, playing for your country is fantastic. New Zealand are an outstanding unit. Johnson bowled well today, everyone is grabbing their opportunities," Marhs said.

Aussie batter Matthew Short accepted that he was nervous while batting at the end of the first inning.

While speaking at the post-match presentation, Short said that he was comfortable while playing shots in the first inning.

He praised the Aussie side and called them a "strong squad". The 28-year-old added that he was "grateful" to play with an extraordinary squad.

"I am most comfortable while playing shots. Was a strange game with rain around. Played plenty of shots though. It's such a strong squad, really grateful to play with these guys. Enjoyed batting, but I was nervous with the ball towards the end," Short said.

Recapping the third T20I encounter, Travis Head (33 runs from 30 balls) and Steven Smith (4 runs from 3 balls) opened for Australia and could only make a partnership of 16 runs as Mitchell Santner bagged the first wicket of the game after he dismissed Smith in the second over.

IN PICTURES

92nd Downtown Rodeo Parade held in Houston
A float is seen during the 92nd Downtown Rodeo Parade in Houston, Texas, the United States. Xinhua

Bollywood actors Ajay Devgn, R Madhavan, and others during the trailer launch of their upcoming film Shaitaan
Bollywood actors Ajay Devgn, R Madhavan, Jyothika, and Janki Bodiwala pose for a picture during the trailer launch of their upcoming film Shaitaan, in Mumbai. ANI Photo

Ace Moto Show held in Vancouver, Canada
People look at a customised motorcycle during the Ace Moto Show in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Xinhua

New Yorkers wrap up Lunar New Year celebrations with big parades
People perform dragon dance and lion dance during a Lantern Festival parade in New York, the United States. Xinhua

Race Day 2 of Australia Sail Grand Prix
Sailors compete on Race Day 2 of the Australia Sail Grand Prix (SailGP) in Sydney, Australia. Xinhua

Gucci's Resee event during Milan Fashion Week
People look at creations of Gucci women's Fall/Winter 2024 collections at Gucci's Resee event during Milan Fashion Week in Milan, Italy. Xinhua

Giant puppet parade held in Siem Reap, Cambodia
An aerial drone picture shows a giant puppet parade on a street in Siem Reap, Cambodia. Xinhua

ROUND-UP

Celestial journey of nature and tranquility at Alila Jabal Akhdar

During this extraordinary event, Alila Jabal Akhdar embraced the magic of the full moon by shutting down all resort lights for two hours each night

MUSCAT: Alila Jabal Akhdar, nestled amidst the breathtaking landscapes of Oman's Al Hajar mountain range, hosted an unforgettable Full Moon Experience which takes place from February 23 to 25. This exclusive experience invited guests to immerse themselves in the serene beauty of nature under the celestial glow of the full moon.

During this extraordinary event, Alila Jabal Akhdar embraced the magic of the full moon by shutting down all resort lights for two hours each night. This unique blackout allowed guests to bask in the natural radiance of the moon and reconnect with the tranquil rhythms of the surrounding environment.

In addition to the mesmerizing blackout experience, guests had the chance to engage in a variety of Full Moon activities designed to enhance their lunar journey. These included:

Full Moon Hike with Dining: Guests embarked on a guided hike under the moonlit sky, followed by a delightful dining experience amidst the stunning natural backdrop.

Yoga Nidra under the Moon: Participants indulged in a deeply relaxing Yoga Nidra session, allowing them to unwind and rejuvenate while surrounded by the soothing energy of the full moon.

Full Moon Sound Meditation: Guests were treated to a soul-nourishing meditation experience, harmonizing with the tranquil sounds of nature and the ethereal ambiance of the full moon.

The Full Moon experience at Alila Jabal Akhdar provided guests with a rare opportunity to escape the hustle and bustle of everyday life and immerse themselves in the beauty and tranquility of nature. Each activity was thoughtfully curated to offer a transformative journey of relaxation, reflection, and connection with the natural world.

Additionally, Alila is excited to announce its upcoming event, the Rose Harvest at Alila, commencing in mid-March 2024.

"We were thrilled to host our Full Moon experience at Alila Jabal Akhdar, providing our guests with a truly unforgettable opportunity to connect with nature and embrace the magic of the full moon," said Angel Al Araimi – Marketing Communication Manager at Alila Jabal Akhdar. "The overwhelming positive feedback we received from our guests reaffirms our commitment to offering unique and immersive experiences that leave a lasting impression."

MODERN COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND SCIENCE

MCBS announced as silver sponsor for QS Higher Ed Summit: Middle East 2024

MUSCAT: The Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS) announced its participation as a silver sponsor for the prestigious QS Higher Ed Summit: Middle East 2024.

The summit, which will take place from February 27 to February 29 in Ras Al Khaimah, will bring together influential leaders, educators, and experts from across the Middle East to explore the theme of "Cultures of Innovation: Elevating Quality Education for a Thriving Middle East."

The QS Higher Ed Summit: Middle East 2024 is a prestigious platform for discussing innovative regional higher education approaches. With a focus on collaboration and driving excellence in academia, this event provides an unparalleled opportunity for institutions to exchange ideas and strategies for advancing educational standards and practices.

As a leading institution dedicated to excellence in education, MCBS is committed to promoting a culture of innovation that empowers students and faculty to thrive in an ever-evolving landscape. By sponsoring this event, MCBS reaffirms its commitment to driving positive change and contributing to advancing education in the Middle East.

"We are delighted to serve as a Silver Sponsor for the QS Higher Ed Summit: Middle East 2024," said Dr Muneer Al Maskari, Executive Chairman of Modern College of Business and Science. "At MCBS, we believe in the power of innovation to transform education and empower individuals to succeed in an increasingly competitive world. This summit provides an invaluable platform for sharing best practices and dialogues that will shape the future of higher education in the Middle East."

The QS Higher Ed Summit: Middle East 2024 will feature keynote presentations, panel discussions, and interactive sessions on key themes such as technology integration, curriculum development, and student engagement. Participants will have the opportunity to network with industry peers, gain insights from thought leaders, and explore innovative solutions to common challenges facing higher education institutions in the region.

As a silver sponsor, MCBS looks forward to actively engaging with summit attendees and contributing to meaningful discussions that will drive positive change in the field of education.

CELEBRATING ACHIEVEMENTS

Bank Muscat organises 'Himam Marathon' to enable persons with disabilities

MUSCAT: Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in Oman, organised "Himam Marathon by Bank Muscat" dedicated to celebrate the achievements of persons with disabilities.

The event took place at the bank's head office in the presence of Sheikh Waleed Khamis Al Hashar, Chief Executive Officer of Bank Muscat, and a number of executive management members and representatives from the Special Olympics Oman. The marathon witnessed a wide participation of more than 250 persons with physical, mental, hearing disabilities, besides people with Autism and Down Syndrome, along with their families.

Such initiatives significantly contribute to integrating the handicapped in society, providing them the platform to showcase their sports abilities to help them achieve their ambitions.

The Marathon featured races tailored for people with Autism, Down syndrome, physical, hearing and visual impairment, challenging them to complete an 800-meter race track. The competition demonstrated participants' sports spirit and determination. The top three males and the top three females in each race, totaling 24, won worthy prizes. Sheikh Waleed Khamis Al Hashar, Chief Executive Officer of Bank Muscat, handed over the prizes to the winners.

To make the event more exciting, Bank Muscat organized a dedicated area for entertainment included children play area, games and other activities.

On the occasion, Hamza bin Abbas Al Ajmi, Deputy General Manager – Credit, Bank Muscat, said: "We are delighted today with the launch of "Himam Marathon" aiming to support this important segment of society. We are also much delighted to see this exiting competition between contestants, reflecting their strong determination in overcoming obstacles. It is really a matter of a great significance to look after persons with disabilities, honing their skills and developing their abilities".

Al Ajmi stressed on the importance of enabling the disabled and integrate them in society in alignment with the goals of Oman Vision 2040 to ensure an equal decent life for all. "Bank Muscat has always been keen to support persons with disabilities as part of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) initiatives crafted to all segments of society. I would like to extend my deepest congratulations to everyone for making this initiative a success.

Participants of Himam Marathon expressed their enthusiasm and thrill on being a part of this exciting event. Nabeel bin Khamis Al Kindi, said: "This is absolutely marvellous. It confirms the Bank's keenness in supporting the Disabled. I call upon other institutions to follow Bank Muscat suit in organizing events like this and enable this category."

Rahma bint Marhoon Al Hasani, was also delighted with her participation. She stated: "It is important to organise sports events for us and we thank Bank Muscat for considering this Marathon which we are all happy with."

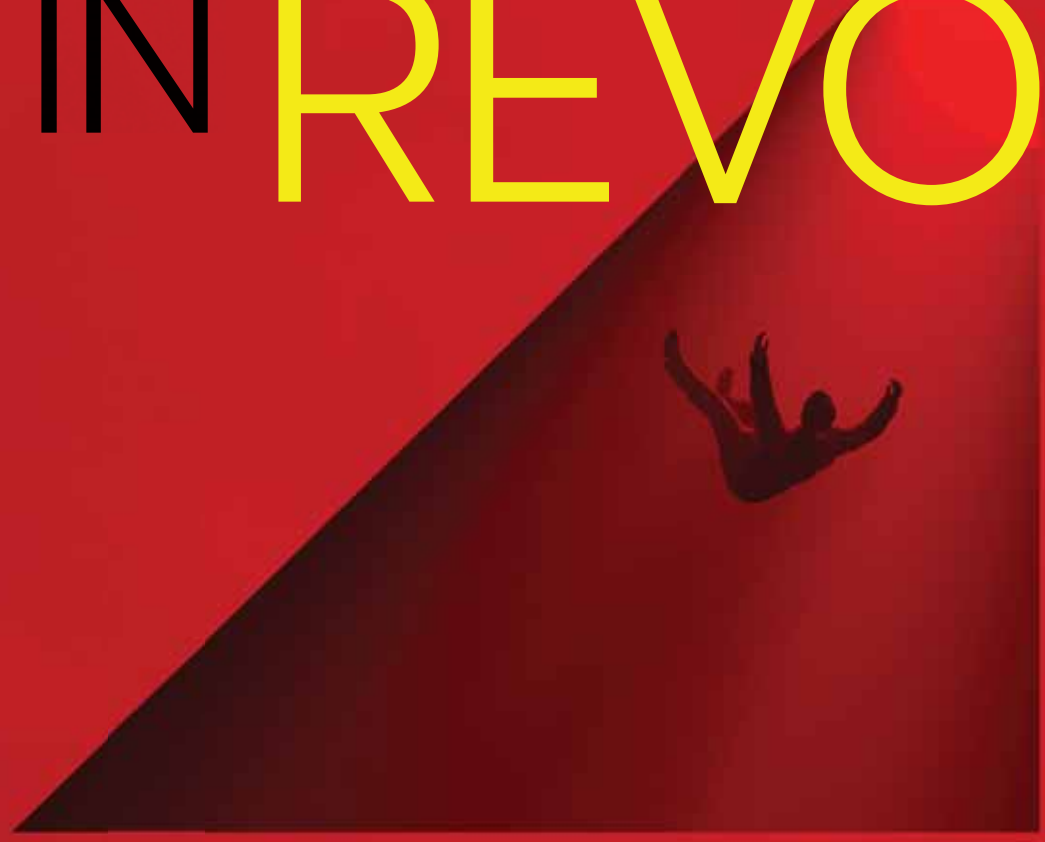
Also, Maher bin Adbualrassol Al Balushi, said: "Such gestures are of a high importance to us and they help us explore our potentials and identify our strengths."

Bank Muscat seeks to launch initiatives that serve various segments of society, especially those with disabilities, and also to cooperate with various relevant institutions and associations.

The bank continues to implement sustainable initiatives in order to enhance its leadership position in the field of Social Responsibility and Community Service.

LIFESTYLE

STUDY EXPLORES ROLE OF SMARTWATCHES IN REVOLUTIONISING DEPRESSION TREATMENT



LONDON: A study published in the New England Journal of Medicine underscores the potential of smartwatches in transforming depression treatment.

Researchers from Northeastern University, analysed anonymised patient data from Massachusetts General Hospital, focusing on monitoring physiological indicators like sleep patterns, physical activity, and social interactions.

Smartwatches can effectively track symptoms such as altered sleep patterns and social isolation, offering clinicians valuable insights.

Researchers emphasises that while passive sensor data complements clinical judgment, it doesn't replace patient input. Integration of such data into clinical practice reduces the burden of self-reporting, ensuring more accurate assessments.

Researchers note that this approach enables quicker understanding of patients' mental health status and facilitates informed treatment discussions.

Overall, the study highlights smartwatches' potential to personalise depression treatment and provide better support to those affected. -DNA

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OMR 26 per person

جواهر الخليج

ادخل إلى عالم من البذخ والدفء عندما تدخل حفل الإفطار الرمضاني المستوحى من المطبخ الخليجي. اشعر بالأجواء النابضة بالحياة التي تحيط بك، مع رائحة العود اللطيفة العالقة في الهواء، والتوهج الناعم للفوانيس الذي يلقي ضوءًا دافئًا وجذابًا. اختبر ثراء الثقافة الخليجية وأنت تنغمس في أصوات الموسيقى التقليدية، وتشاهد المناطق المحيطة المزخرفة بشكل معقد، وتذوق النكهات الأصيلة التي تنقلك إلى قلب الخليج. انضم إلينا لتجربة حسية لا تُنسى تحتفي بجوهر شهر رمضان وجمال التقاليد الخليجية.

سعر الإفطار **٢٦ ريال عماني**

CONTACT OUR CULINARY CONCIERGE
+968 2498 5000 I DINING.MUSCAT@KEMPINSKI.COM

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