



HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN GREETES
PRESIDENT OF ZIMBABWE

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Emmerson Mnangagwa of the Republic of Zimbabwe on his country's Independence Anniversary. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes to President Mnangagwa and the people of his country.— **ONA**



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19 The number of deaths caused due to heavy rains

4 Missing people for whom search is still ongoing

302 Millimetre of rainfall in Mahdha

64 Millimetre of rainfall in Muscat

1,630 PEOPLE MOVED TO SAFER PLACES IN 152 RESCUE OPERATIONS

Expressing gratitude, the DG extended thanks to citizens and residents for their cooperation in the rescue efforts

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Responding to hundreds of distress calls following the recent low-pressure conditions, which led to heavy rains and flash floods in Oman, the Royal Oman Police (ROP) carried out a total of 152 operations leading to the rescue of 1,630 individuals over the past three days across various governorates.

The operations were carried out after the ROP Operations Centre and Operation Departments were inundated with distress calls. These calls have ranged from reports of individuals stranded in rainwater or vehicles to requests for aid and reports of fire incidents.

Besides the rescue operations across different governorates, the operations were done alongside the crucial role in transporting medical crews.

Tragically, amid these efforts, 19 lives were lost, with four individuals still unaccounted for. Brigadier Mohammed bin Nasser Al Kindi, Director General of Operations, acknowledged the relentless dedication of ROP personnel deployed across affected areas. Their efforts not only included rescue operations but also encompassed traffic regulation, security maintenance, and restoring normalcy, achieved through close collaboration with governmental agencies and private entities. He highlighted the tireless efforts of the Directorate General of Operations, particularly the Operations Centre and departments in governorates, which operate ceaselessly to provide timely responses in coordination with other ROP formations and units.

Expressing gratitude, the Director General extended thanks to citizens and residents for their cooperation and assistance in rescue efforts. He also issued a stern reminder for everyone to exercise utmost caution, especially with children, urging them to refrain from swimming in areas affected by running waters caused by wadis.

Meanwhile, in response to the prevailing weather conditions, the Ministry of Education has empowered director-general's of education across all governorates to assess each school's situation and determine the official duty mechanism for Thursday, 18 April 2024. This measure aims to ensure the safety of students and teaching staff.

The decision follows the diligent follow-up conducted by the National Committee for Emergency Management at the Ministry of Education on the weather's impacts.

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Passenger numbers up at Oman airports

1 The number of passengers through the airports of Oman by the end of February 2024 rose by 21.8% to 2.71mn, compared to 2.23mn passengers by the end of February 2023. **>A3**

OMAN

Forum to combat human trafficking

2 Oman hosted the Forum to Combat Human Trafficking in the Middle East. Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received heads of committees tasked with combating human trafficking **>A5**

MARKET

Oman exports 52.4mn barrels of oil in Feb.

3 Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information indicate that the total quantity of Oman's oil exports by the end of February 2024 stood at 52.43mn barrels by February 2024. **>B1**

SUBSTANTIAL RISE

Be'ah removes 31,000 tonnes of waste during Eid Al Fitr holidays

MUSCAT: Throughout the celebration of Eid Al Fitr in 2024, Oman Environmental Services Holding Company's (be'ah) engineered landfills saw an influx of over 31,000 tonnes of municipal and slaughter waste, marking a 13 percent rise from the usual intake. To tackle this substantial rise, proactive measures were implemented, including the deployment of extra skips, machinery, and personnel

Extensive strategy
Eng. Mohsin Mohammed Al Barwani, GM of MSW Planning & Service Optimisation at be'ah, affirmed that the company set an extensive strategy in partnership with service providers across all Governorates.

This strategy was designed to address the anticipated surge in waste volumes during the Eid festivities. The approach included the strategic placement of sizable skips designated for slaughter waste, calibrated to the demographic scale and accessibility of various communities.

Moreover, it involved augmenting the regularity of skip clearance and waste collection, as well as bolstering on-site supervision to maintain service excellence during the Eid holidays.

He said, "The quantities of municipal solid waste and slaughter waste received at the company's landfills during the period from 9 to 13 April exceeded 31,000 tonnes, representing an increase of 13% compared to the quantities of waste received during normal days. Slaughter waste contributed significantly to the increase in the quantities of waste received, in addition to a significant increase in a few other types of municipal solid waste quantities." **>A3**

GAZA DEATH TOLL

as of April 17, 2024

Deaths
33,899

Injured
76,664

PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....12:11pm

Asr.....3:38pm

Maghrib.....6:34pm

Isha.....7:48pm

Fajr (Tomorrow).....4:24am

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Pact inked to complete phase one of OMR79mn Al Batinah Coastal Road

The project assumes special significance due to the fact that it connects Khazaen economic zone with adjoining wilayats and the Port of Al Suwaiq

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology today signed an agreement to the tune of OMR79 million for the design, implementation and finalisation of the first phase of Al Batinah Coastal Road.

The agreement was concluded within the context of a drive to develop the transport and logistics sector to activate its role in serving the national economy.



The agreement was signed by Eng. Said Hamoud Al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, and Mohammed Abdullatif, General Manager of Consolidated Contractors Company Oman that undertakes the project. The ceremony was attended by Eng. Badr Salim Al Maamari, Secretary General of the Tender Board.

Eng. Said told reporters that the project assumes special significance due to the fact that it connects Khazaen economic zone with adjoining wilayats and the Port of Al Suwaiq.

The minister said that Al Batinah Coastal Road will ease traffic jams in the wilayats of Barka, Al Musanaa and Al Suwaiq, besides connecting the area with

the wilayats of Liwa and Shinas. This will have a positive economic impact on the local economy, the minister added.

He explained that the remaining parts of the road (a 111km stretch from Al Suwaiq to Sohar) will begin to be implemented after the completion of compensations for those whose properties are affected by the project.



The agreement provides for paving the remaining parts of the carriageway from Barka and Al Suwaiq, the construction of a flyover to replace Al Suwaiq roundabout. It also includes the completion of the first part of the first phase (30km that includes 22km from Barka to Al Suwaiq Port and 8km for the part from Sohar Port to Khatmat Milaha. It includes the construction of four bridges across wadis (valleys), 67 culverts and service roads on both sides of the road.

The agreement also covers the construction of a 4-km dual carriageway from Barka flyover to Barka Souq (marketplace) and a

6-km link to the Wilayat of Al Suwaiq, including the construction of Al Suwaiq flyover across Al Batinah Highway.

It is worth noting that Al Batinah Coastal Road project begins from the Wilayat of Barka and ends at Khatma Milaha in the Wilayat of Shinas. It is a 244km road that consists of two phases. The first phase includes two parts, the first of which starts from Al-Naseem Interchange in the Wilayat of Barka to Al Suwaiq Port (66km) and the second starts from Sohar Port to Khatmat Milaha (67km). The second phase of Al Batinah Coastal Road extends 111km from from Al Suwaiq Port to Sohar Port. — ONA

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بريد عمان

OMAN POST

Number of passengers through Oman’s airports soars by 21.8%

The number of passengers through Muscat International Airport by the end of February 2024 reached about 2.46 million, constituting an increase of 22.9 percent, by the end of February 2024, NCSI data reveals

MUSCAT: The number of passengers through the airports of the Sultanate of Oman by the end of February 2024 increased by 21.8 percent, recording 2.71 million passengers, compared to 2.23 million passengers by the end of February 2023, according to preliminary statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The number of passengers through Muscat International Airport by the end of February 2024 reached about 2,463,856, constituting an increase of 22.9



percent, who travelled on board 16,996 flights, comprising an increase in the number of flights by 16.4 percent. Out of the flights, 15,678 were international flights,

carrying 2,288,119 passengers, and 1,318 were domestic flights carrying 175,737 passengers. Indians topped the number of passengers through Muscat In-

ternational Airport during February 2024, with 75,521 arrivals and 70,951 departures, followed by Bangladeshi nationality with 15,867 inbound passengers, 20,980

outbound passengers, and Pakistani nationality with 23,803 arriving passengers and 21,740 departing passengers. The number of passengers through Salalah Airport reached 232,077 passengers, an increase of 10.1%, who travelled on board 1,572 flights, an increase in flights by 6.1%. The number of international flights through Salalah Airport reached 840 flights, carrying 115,060 passengers, while the number of domestic flights reached 732 flights, with 117,017 passengers on board. The number of passengers through Sohar Airport reached 11,410 passengers on 110 flights, while the number of passengers through Duqm Airport reached 10,492 passengers on 104 flights.

— ONA

WASTE DISPOSAL

< FROM A1 93% increase seen in A'Dhahirah, North A'Sharqiyah and Al Buraimi

Al Barwani further pointed out, “The highest increase of waste received this Eid was in the Governorates of A'Dhahirah, North A'Sharqiyah and Al Buraimi with an increase of 93% in these Governorates.”. He further explained, “A positive change has been observed in the community's overall

awareness in dealing with slaughter waste and disposing of it in designated areas, as a result of the efforts made by be'ah through its awareness campaigns before and during the Eid, focusing on the correct behaviour in dealing with slaughter waste and preserving the environment.”



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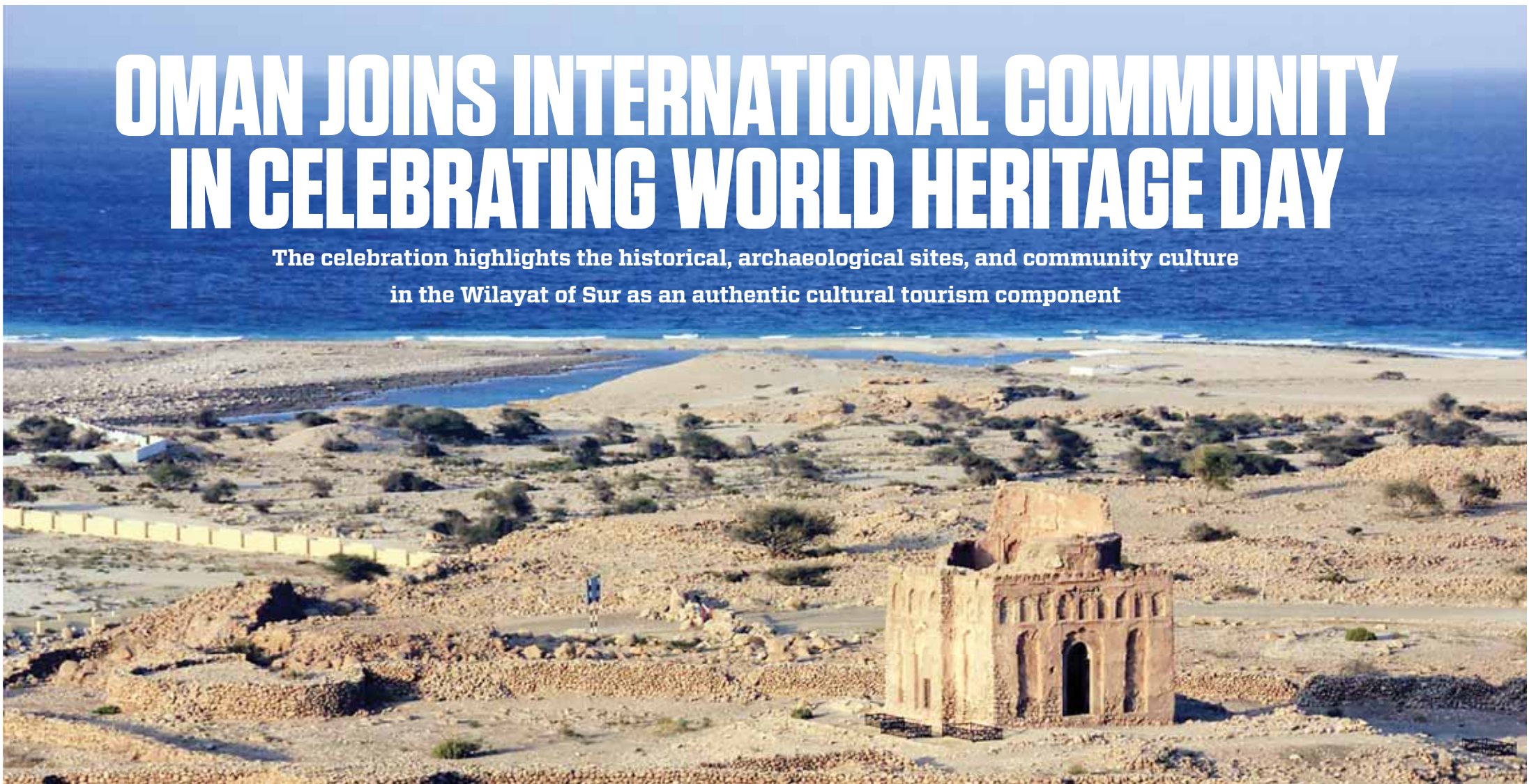
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OMAN JOINS INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY IN CELEBRATING WORLD HERITAGE DAY

The celebration highlights the historical, archaeological sites, and community culture
in the Wilayat of Sur as an authentic cultural tourism component



Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism (MHT) marked the global celebrations of World Heritage Day, which falls on 18th April of each year.

This year's celebration of World Heritage Day, which comes under the theme of "Discover and experience diversity", coincides with the launch of the programme of Sur the Capital of Arab Tourism for 2024, to highlight the historical, archaeological sites, and the community culture in the Wilayat of Sur as authentic components of cultural tourism.

Commenting on this occasion Eng. Ibrahim bin Said Al Kharusi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, for Heritage said: "The World Heritage Day is an opportunity to shed the spotlight on our ancient cultural heritage, which reflects our historical and civilization roots, as well enhances the global understanding of the diversity of heritage and encourages cultural interaction between different societies."

"The celebration activities will introduce the tangible and intangible cultural heritage, enhance the values of belonging to an authentic, rooted culture, strengthen the awareness of the importance of heritage, its protection and preservation, and encourage the communities' participation in protecting, documenting and highlighting heritage globally," he added.

The celebration also aims to encourage cultural heritage research and discoveries and create a community partnership to enhance identity and citizenship.

He clarified that the MHT has set a programme to celebrate this occasion at the Wilayat of Sur in the Governorate of Al Sharqiyah South. The programme includes an exhibition and educational workshop for children on the basics of archaeological excavation, practical experience in excavating some pieces, a decoupage session by using decoration paper and writing names with ancient Omani symbols. He emphasised that the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism pays great attention to protecting and preserving heritage through documenting and restoring historical and archaeological sites, implementing archaeological excavations, reg-



istering the discovered archaeological finds, highlighting the sites globally and rehabilitating historical sites by offering them as investment projects to contribute to the growth of the local economy within the Oman 2040 Vision.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has registered about 36,000 archaeological sites, while the number of historical monuments reached 3,525, and the restored landmarks reached 366 landmarks, till the end of 2023, across the governorates of the Sultanate of Oman to protect them from extinction to remain a witness of the Omani civilization

throughout the ages.

It is worth noting that, World Heritage Day, was proposed by The International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) in 1982, and later approved by the General Assembly of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1983. The celebration aims to enhance awareness of the importance of human cultural heritage and multiply the necessary efforts to protect and preserve heritage while highlighting the co-responsibility among countries of the world to preserve human heritage.



Sayyid Badr receives officials tasked with combating human trafficking

Sayyid Badr underscored the role of GCC-Arab committees through the measures that the panels undertake to spread public awareness and the exchange of expertise

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday hosted the 5th session of the Government Forum to Combat Human Trafficking in the Middle East (2024).

Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received heads of committees tasked with combating human trafficking, representatives of GCC states, Jordan, Egypt, the GCC Secretariat General and representatives of regional and international organisations taking part in the forum.

Enactment of national laws

During the meeting, Sayyid Badr underscored the role of GCC-Arab committees entrusted with combating human trafficking through the measures that the panels undertake to spread public awareness, as well as their participation in regional and international events, the enactment of national laws, the exchange of expertise and experiences and their endeavours to join ranks to address the phenomenon in a manner that guarantees public security.

Sayyid Badr stressed the need to strengthen coordination among those committees and put to practice the findings of the studies that they conduct.

Effective contribution

He pointed out that the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking receives the full support of the government in Oman due to the committee's effective contribution with other institutions of the country.

The meeting also dealt with prominent topics on the agenda of the forum which seeks to upgrade the level of performance of the committees concerned and realise the aspirations of the leaders and peoples of the region.

The forum's participants expressed their thanks to the Sultanate of Oman for hosting the 2024 session of the forum, which, they said, yielded good results.

They also voiced their appreciation for Oman's cooperation and continuous support for the joint GCC-Arab march "within the framework of the System of Combating Human Trafficking, deemed a model of success at the regional and global levels". — OMA



MINISTRY OF DEFENCE

Oman signs academic connection agreement with UK University

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Defence has signed a renewal addendum to the academic connection agreement between the Military Technological College and the University of Portsmouth, as part of the two institutions' existing cooperation.

Signing ceremony

The signing ceremony took place during the visit of Dr. Mohammed Nasser Al Zaabi, Secretary General at the Ministry of Defence, to the United Kingdom where he held meetings with officials of the UK Ministry of Defence.

Military delegation

The Secretary General at the Ministry of Defence was accompanied by a military delegation comprising senior officers from the Ministry of Defence and the Sultan's Armed Forces.

— OMA



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Oman bag seven more medals at GCC Youth Games in UAE

Oman's rich harvest of medals continued on Wednesday with four more gold and two silver in taekwondo and one gold in sailing's Optimist class

MUSCAT: Oman's rich harvest of medals at the inaugural GCC Youth Games continued on the second day in the UAE with seven more medals added on Wednesday to raise the overall tally to 12.

Oman, which won five medals including four gold on the inaugural day, had another successful outing with five gold and two silver medals.

Taekwondo players bagged six of the medals won on Wednesday with four gold and two silver in Fujairah while the sailing team clinched the gold in the Optimist class in Abu Dhabi.

Shahnaz Al Ma'awali snatched a gold medal in the 44 kg competition with a win over Saudi Arabia's Seyouf Hassan while Al Ezz Al Ma'awali won the title in the 68 kg weight class with a win over Kuwait's Othman Faris.

Fida Al Barwani picked the third gold of the day for Oman in the 52kg class while Abdulrahman Al Jabri earned the fourth gold.

Two silver medals were won by Qaboos Al Balushi in the 68 kg category, going down to UAE's Mohammed Khaled while Hind Al Balushi lost to Saudi Arabia's Amam Abdullah in the final. After two days of action the taekwondo team had pocketed a total of 11 medals.

Oman U17 beat UAE in football opener

Following the postponement of the opening match of the football event due to rains on Tuesday, Oman beat hosts 2-0 in the rescheduled match in Abu Dhabi on Wednesday.

Oman and UAE were locked in a goalless stalemate at halftime before Osama Al Maamari drew the first blood in the 59th minute. Ibrahim Al Tamimi made it 2-0 for Oman in the 84th minute.

Sailing gold

The other gold was won by Oman sailors in the Optimist class at the Abu Dhabi Sailing Club.

After an exciting competition,



Oman sailors won the gold in difficult weather conditions. They beat Qatar in the first round and then overcame the hosts UAE in the final round for the title. The winning squad comprised Tamim Al Balushi, Hood Al Nofali, Tarteel

Al Hassani, Mohammed Al Qasimi, and Khamis Al Mashaykhi. Meanwhile, the national handball team arrived on Wednesday with competition beginning on Friday. Also chess competition was postponed, due to the non-ar-

rival of some of the Gulf teams, including Oman as flights were postponed due to weather conditions. Weather conditions in Dubai also led to postponement of athletics events, which was scheduled to begin on Wednesday.

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UNITED NATIONS

UN appeals for \$2.8 billion help for Palestinians

NEW YORK: Andrea De Domenico, Head of the UN Humanitarian Affairs Office (OCHA) in the occupied Palestinian territories said that the United Nations (UN) will launch a \$2.8 billion appeal to help Palestinians in Gaza Strip and the West Bank.

"With the entire humanitarian community, we will appeal for \$2.8 billion to support the three million people identified across the West Bank and Gaza," he said on Wednesday in a video press conference.

He said that the original request was for \$4 billion "but considering the limited ability to deliver and the space that we have to do so, we have really focused on the highest priority."

Days after the start of the Israeli aggression on the Gaza Strip on October 7, the United Nations launched an initial emergency appeal for \$294 million.

That appeal was modified in early November and raised to \$1.2 billion to meet the most urgent needs of 2.7 million people in the Palestinian territories, including 2.2 million in Gaza and 500,000 people in the West Bank by the end of 2023.

Aid trucks

Out of 5,000 aid trucks sent to Gaza in the last month, more than 99.5 per cent were cleared for entry after inspection by Israeli authorities.

"This is Israel's role in the aid operation - we inspect the aid to make sure it isn't carrying items that can be used by Hamas for terrorism, and we do it efficiently," said the agency.

COGAT added that 126 aid trucks were transferred to northern Gaza and that two bakeries are operational in northern Gaza following coordination, supplying over 800,000 pita breads for the local population.

Also, 72 pallets containing tens of thousands of packages of aid were airdropped into northern Gaza Monday, April 15. In addition, 4 tankers of cooking gas and 3 tankers of fuel designated for the operation of essential infrastructure in Gaza and 9 trucks with medical aid were transferred to the Emirati Field Hospital in Gaza on Sunday too.

And 3,204 injured and sick individuals together with 725 escorts have been evacuated from the strip since the fighting began. -ANI

SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORM

X blocks posts in India on election commission order

NEW DELHI: Social media platform X has blocked posts in India involving political speech following orders from the country's election commission ahead of upcoming polls, the company said late on Tuesday.

"In compliance with the orders, we have withheld these posts for the remainder of the election period," X said in a statement.

Despite complying, X expressed disagreement with the action and maintained that "freedom of expression should extend to these posts and political speech in general."

The posts, which will be hidden from Indian audiences during the

election period, included unverified claims about political opponents, the Election Commission of India said in a letter.

Modi critics believe freedom of expression at risk in India

X, formerly known as Twitter and owned by Elon Musk, faced a similar situation in Brazil where it was asked to block disinformation-spreading users.

Musk initially threatened to disregard the Brazilian court order but eventually adhered to it.

The billionaire and Prime Minister Narendra Modi are expected to meet his month to explore investment opportunities in India.

India election to start on April 19.

Modi's critics say that freedom of expression in India is diminishing. Last year, an Indian court fined X \$61,000 (€57,404) because the platform initially resisted removing tweets and accounts that criticised the Modi administration.

India's ranking in the World Press Freedom Index has fallen 21 places to 161 out of 180 countries since Modi took office in 2014.

Tuesday's announcement came as India gears up for its general election starting April 19, involving nearly 968 million voters.

-DW

US TRADE REPRESENTATIVE

'India's tariff removal on US products benefiting farmers'

WASHINGTON, DC: US Trade Representative Katherine Tai said on Tuesday that India's decision to remove retaliatory tariffs on several US products has improved access for chickpeas, lentils, almonds, walnuts, and apples and is benefiting farmers across the country.

In her testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee Hearing on the President's 2024 Trade Policy Agenda, Tai mentioned that India and the US resolved the final outstanding WTO dispute in September last year, and India agreed to reduce tariffs on several US products.

"Last June, India and the United States terminated six WTO disputes, and India agreed to remove retaliatory tariffs on several US products. This means improved access for chickpeas, lentils, almonds, walnuts, and apples, benefiting farmers across the country, including in Michigan, Oregon, and Washington," Katherine Tai said.

"Additionally, in September, India and the United States resolved our final outstanding WTO dispute, and India agreed to reduce tariffs on several US products. This means more market access for turkey, duck, blueberries, and cranberries, benefiting farmers in North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and Wisconsin," she added.

Earlier in September, Katherine Tai announced that India and the US had agreed to resolve their last outstanding dispute at the World Trade Organisation (WTO) and lower tariffs on certain US agricultural products, including frozen turkey, frozen duck, fresh blueberries, and cranberries, frozen blueberries, and cranberries, dried blueberries, and cranberries, and processed blueberries and cranberries.

The announcement came as US President Joe Biden met with Prime Minister Narendra Modi on September 8 in New Delhi ahead of the G20

Leaders' Summit.

The joint statement released by India and the US after the meeting between the two leaders said, "The leaders lauded the settlement of the seventh and last outstanding World Trade Organisation (WTO) dispute between India and the United States."

Notably, the six disputes in the WTO were resolved during PM Modi's state visit to the US in June. India also agreed to reduce tariffs on certain US products, including chickpeas, lentils, almonds, walnuts, apples, boric acid, and diagnostic reagents.

-ANI

Human trafficking forum calls for updating laws to keep pace with crime rates, techniques



The working group is envisaged to devise a roadmap for implementing the recommendations of the forum, besides following up action to meet the forum's overall goals

MUSCAT: The Government Forum to Combat Human Trafficking in the Middle East (2024), hosted by the Sultanate of Oman, came up with a number of recommendations, among them calls for updating laws to keep pace with human trafficking crimes and novel techniques that the criminals use to hide their violations.

The forum, titled "Combating human trafficking through labour legislation and procedures", was held in Muscat yesterday. It underscored the importance of periodically reviewing the laws in force, including those directly dealing with trafficking in persons or those pertaining to work in private sectors.

The forum recommended that statutes should be updated to ensure that they keep pace with developments in crimes and methodologies of committing them, in



addition to expanding supervisory role of labour inspectors.

The forum stressed the need to form a technical working group that comprises representatives of the departments concerned, the Secretariat of the Forum, the "United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime" and UN agencies concerned.

The working group is envisaged to devise a roadmap for implementing the recommendations of the forum, besides following up action to meet the forum's overall goals.

The opening ceremony of the forum was held under the auspices of Dr. Mahad Said Ba'Owain, Minister of Labour.

The event sought to develop a unified vision to combat human trafficking in a manner that ensures the sustainability and effectiveness of punitive measures, training those operating in the field combating the crime and specialized assistance for victims.

Sheikh Khalifa Issa Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, Chairman of the National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking, said that the Sultanate of Oman took many measures to protect workers from exposure to exploitation or human trafficking. This approach, he explained, included the promulgation of a new labour law pursuant to Royal Decree No. (53/2023). The statute included articles prohibiting forced labour and associated practices, he added.

Sheikh Khalifa added that other measures undertaken by Oman included the following:

- The formation of a team from relevant government departments to enhance bilateral cooperation with labour exporting countries. The team visited 10 countries where it signed memorandums of understanding in the field of labour and prevention of human trafficking.
- The introduction of a Wage Protection System (an electronic monitoring tool) was launched. The system serves as a link between the Ministry of Labour and the Central Bank of Oman (CBO)

and helps monitor wage disbursement processes in private sector establishments. Through the system, the authorities concerned could follow up the extent to which private enterprises continue to pay workers their dues in accordance with the provisions of Article 87 of the Labour Law.

- The establishment of a joint inspection unit serving as a link between the Ministry of Labour and the security and safety service. The unit seeks to enhance the quality and efficiency of inspection operations and liaising with security support services. The step helps the intensification of campaigns to prevent the employment of loose labour, as well as the streamlining of employment procedures.
- The National Committee to Combat Human Trafficking launched a National Action Plan to Combat Human Trafficking (2024-2026) to boost the Sultanate of Oman's efforts to prevent and penalize human trafficking in its various forms.
- Preparation of a new law to



combat human trafficking after amending and developing the current law.

For his part, Dr. Hatem Ali, GCC Regional Representative of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, expressed his appreciation for the efforts made by Oman to combat human trafficking through a clear and comprehensive methodology in supporting victims and raising community awareness of this crime.

As part of the forum's activities, a discussion panel was held on preventing trafficking in persons through the enactment of national laws and regulations, review of the experiences of participating countries and study of the challenges posed to those who operate in the field of crime prevention. The discussion panel was attended by representatives of countries and international and regional organizations that participated in the forum.

The discussions touched on practical measures undertaken by countries to combat human trafficking, exchanging ideas and successful experiences in this field and studying legal tools and administrative procedures to address the phenomenon of human trafficking.

The forum provided specific details about the challenges faced by participating countries, successful experiences and innovative practices that proved effective in reducing cases of human trafficking. The participants in the panel discussion also stressed the need to enhance international cooperation to address this dangerous phenomenon and protect the rights of victims.

The forum saw the participation of ministers, heads and members of the committees tasked with combating human trafficking crimes in GCC states, Jordan, Egypt, the Secretariat General of the GCC, the Arab League, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the US Department of State, the African Union and the Association of Southeast Asian Nations. -ONA

WEATHER CONDITIONS

Dubai Airports issues travel advisory for passengers

DUBAI: Dubai International (DXB) is advising passengers not to come to the airport, unless absolutely necessary due to the unprecedented weather conditions in the country.

In a statement, Dubai Airports said that flights continue to be delayed and diverted.

Passengers are advised to contact their respective airlines for the latest information on flight status.

Dubai Airports assures passengers that they are working hard to recover operations as quickly as possible in very challenging conditions.

On the same note, Emirates Airlines has decided to suspend travel procedures for passengers



departing from Dubai starting from 8:00 am on Wednesday, April 17, until midnight on April 18th, due to operational challenges resulting from adverse weather

conditions and road conditions. Emirates Airlines added that procedures for passengers arriving in Dubai and transit passengers will continue. -ANI

NATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY BUREAU

Nawaz Sharif cleared in Toshakhana vehicle case

KARACHI: The National Accountability Bureau (NAB) has granted a clean chit to former Prime Minister Nawaz Sharif in the Toshakhana vehicle reference, Dawn reported.

The Toshakhana is a government department tasked with storing gifts bestowed upon rulers, parliamentarians, bureaucrats, and officials by foreign heads of state and dignitaries.

According to NAB's allegations, then-Prime Minister Yousaf Raza Gilani purportedly facilitated the retention of vehicles gifted to Nawaz Sharif and then-President Asif Ali Zardari by foreign states and dignitaries.

This allegedly occurred through the relaxation of procedures related to gift submission to Toshakhana, aiming to confer illegal benefits to Nawaz and Zardari, as reported by Dawn.

The accused purportedly retained these vehicles "through

dishonest and illegal means for their personal benefit and interest," the reference stated, allowing them to keep the vehicles by paying a nominal fee of 15 per cent of the total value.

In June 2020, an accountability court issued non-bailable arrest warrants for Nawaz Sharif, who was abroad at the time. He challenged the warrants in the Islamabad High Court but withdrew the petition shortly after.

Subsequently, in September 2020, Nawaz Sharif was declared a proclaimed offender in the case, prompting an accountability court to initiate processes for the confiscation of his properties and directing NAB to pursue his arrest through Interpol.

However, prior to his return to Pakistan in October of the same year, an accountability court suspended the perpetual arrest warrants against Nawaz Sha-

rif, granting him bail shortly afterward.

In November, NAB informed a Lahore accountability court that it had recorded Nawaz Sharif's statement in the reference, according to Dawn.

Today, NAB submitted a report to an Islamabad accountability court following orders to have Nawaz Sharif join the investigation. The report indicated that the vehicle in question, gifted to Nawaz by the government of Saudi Arabia in 1997, was initially submitted to Toshakhana. However, it was later included in the federal transport pool.

The report clarified that Nawaz Sharif purchased the vehicle from the federal transport pool, not Toshakhana, in 2008. Therefore, NAB concluded that the case lacked relevance to Toshakhana benefits since the vehicle was not part of Toshakhana when Nawaz acquired it. -ANI



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Oman drub Kuwait to march into semis of ACC Men’s Premier Cup

Hosts record fourth win in a row to top Group B and set up semi-final clash with Hong Kong on Friday

MUSCAT: Oman stormed into the semi-finals of the ACC Men's Premier T20I Cup on Wednesday with a commanding 46-run win over Kuwait in a Group B match at the Oman Cricket Academy ground. Oman's victory propelled them into the semi-finals with an impeccable record of four consecutive wins, accumulating a maximum of eight points in the group stage. All-round display by skipper Zeeshan Maqsood (4/29 and 35) and Aqib Ilyas (3/14 and 34) and a record seventh-wicket stand between Ayaan Khan (45) and Rafiullah (23*) powered Oman's march into the semi-finals where they will take on Hong Kong on Friday. Chasing 201 to win after Oman had put up a challenging total of 200/9, Kuwait were off to a flyer as Clinto Anto and Ravija Sandaruwan shared a 45-run stand in just 4 overs. Shakeel Ahmed got the breakthrough as he cleaned up Sandaruwan for 23 before Fayyaz Butt had Anto caught by wicket-keeper Pratik Athavale in the next over to stem the run flow. Anto departed after a quickfire 34 off 15 balls that included three fours and three sixes. Ilyas struck off the first ball after powerplay as he had Adnan Idrees leg before and Maqsood picked his first of the four victims in the tenth over as Kuwait slumped from 61/2 to 88/4. Ilyas got the key wicket of Meet



Bhavsar in the 12th over to trigger a collapse as Kuwait batters went back in procession except for Bilal Tahir who stayed unbeaten on 33. Captain Maqsood removed his counterpart Mohammed Aslam and Sayed Monib in the same over and then bowled Nimish Lathief in his final over to have Kuwait down

to 143/9 as they ended up at 154/9. Besides Maqsood and Ilyas, Fayyaz Butt and Shakeel Ahmed took a wicket apiece Earlier, Oman were put to bat and lost two early wickets with openers Kashyap Prajapati and Naseem Khushi back in the hut with the total 22/2 in the third

over. Skipper Zeeshan Maqsood and Aqib Ilyas then rebuilt the innings with a 50-run third-wicket partnership as Oman finished the powerplay at 47/2. The 50-run stand came off 42 balls before Ilyas was dismissed for 34 in the 10th over. Maqsood was next to go for 35 with Oman



at 92/4. Khalid Kail and Pratik Athavale were out for 15 each as Oman were struggling at 130/6. A brilliant record-breaking seventh-wicket partnership between Ayaan Khan and Rafiullah took the attack to the rival camp as they shared a 63-run stand, the highest for seventh-wicket in T20Is. They bettered the previous stand of 57 between Khurran Nawaz and Naseem Khushi. Their 50-run stand came off just 15 balls with Ayaan on 27 and Rafiullah on 21. Ayaan was out for 20-ball 45 that included four sixes and two boundaries and Rafiullah stayed unbeaten on 23 off 11 balls with three hits to the ropes and one maximum as Oman finished at 200/9. Three of Oman batters – Khushi, Athavale and Fayyaz Butt were run out, something coach Duleep Mendis would be worried about. Adnan Idrees and Mohammed Aslam picked two wickets each. In the semi-finals, Oman will take on Hong Kong after the latter finished second in Group A behind Nepal.

Both Hong Kong and Qatar were tied with four points each after four games, but Hong Kong's seven-wicket win over Malaysia on Wednesday helped them gain a better net run-rate and scrape into the semis. Nepal won their fourth successive match on Wednesday with a six-wicket win over Saudi Arabia in a rain-curtailed match of eight overs a side. UAE will take on Nepal in the other semi-final, with both matches scheduled on Friday. UAE handed Cambodia a lesson as they won by nine wickets, racing to 79/1 in just 5.1 overs after bowling the rivals out for paltry 76 in 19 overs. UAE finished with six points while Kuwait came third with four points. **Brief scores:** Oman 200/9 (Aqib Ilyas 34, Zeeshan Maqsood 35, Ayaan Khan 45, Rafiullah 23*; Adnan Idrees 2/31, Mohammed Aslam 2/32) beat Kuwait 154/9 (Clinto Anto 34, Bilal Tahir 33*; Zeeshan Maqsood 4/29, Aqib Ilyas 3/14).

AFC CUP WEST ZONE FINAL



Al Nahda go down fighting to Lebanon’s Al Ahed in first leg

MUSCAT: Oman's Al Nahda went down fighting 1-0 to Lebanon's Al Ahed to hand the former champions' advantage in the AFC Cup 2023/24 West Zonal Final in the first leg of the tie at Karbala International Stadium in Karbala, Iraq, on Tuesday. Al Nahda, coached by Hamad Al Azani, will now hope to use home advantage to overturn the deficit and claim victory when they host the 2019 champions Al Ahed in a week's time with the aggregate winners facing one of the Inter-Zone finalists, Central Coast Mariners and Abdysh-Ata Kant in the AFC Cup final. Al Nahda wasted no time in showing their attacking intent with Congolese forward Walter Bwalya finding space behind the Al Ahed defence inside the first 60 seconds of the match, controlling a long pass and shooting from a tight angle, but goalkeeper Mostafa Matar produced a confident save. The Lebanese side then took the initiative, threatening on multiple occasions within the first half hour. Hussein Al Zein saw his cross-cum-shot collected by goalkeeper Ibrahim Al Mukhaini, while Mohammed Haidar fed Mohammad Al Marmour with a through pass, only for the latter to scuff his shot with only the goalkeeper to beat. Karim Darwich was left holding his head in disbelief after he was set-up by a fine Al Mar-



mour cross which he met with an unchallenged header that he sent straight into the arms of the keeper when it was easier to score. The forward thought he had opened the scoring in the final minutes of the first half when he latched onto a fine defence-splitting pass and slotted home past the goalkeeper, only for the linesman to raise his flag, ruling Darwich offside. With very much the first attack after the restart, Al Ahed took the lead thanks to Mohammed Al Hallak who was perfectly positioned to receive Walid Shour's exquisite pass inside the box and turned it into the back of the net for the opener.

Al Nahda looked to hit back and once more their most dangerous player was Bwalya who had a golden opportunity to equalise when he beat his marker to reach Billel Bensaha's cross from the right and aimed his header towards the top corner, only to be denied by the Al Ahed keeper. Defender Abdulaziz Khalfan tried his luck from distance on a couple of occasions, but his efforts lacked accuracy as frustration grew for the Omani team. A string of half chances followed but a combination of good defensive organisation from Al Ahed and lack of concentration from Al Nahda meant Al Hallak's goal remained the difference at the end of the first leg.

IPL 2024

Buttler’s unbeaten 107 leads Royals to victory off final ball

KOLKATA: Jos Buttler hit an unbeaten 107 to lead Rajasthan Royals to a thrilling final-ball win in pursuit of 224 against Kolkata Knight Riders at Eden Gardens on Tuesday. England's white-ball captain struggled for his touch early on but burst into life when the seventh wicket fell. He faced every ball in the last three overs and scored the single needed from the last ball to seal a two-wicket win. The Royals chase was the joint-highest in the IPL and puts Royals top of the table. Buttler, who scored 100 not out against Royal Challengers Bangalore 10 days ago, edged and mistimed his way to 42 from his first 33 balls - and the Royals needed 96 from the last 36 balls as wickets fell around him. Rovman Powell struck an important 26 from 13 balls but he was trapped lbw in the 17th over by Sunil Narine - who had hit a brilliant 109 in Kolkata's 223-6 - leaving the Royals seven down and Buttler without any frontline batters to partner. Buttler started the 18th by hitting Mitchell Starc for a straight six - and later in the over, his England team-mate Phil Salt, Kolkata's wicketkeeper, let one through his gloves from the Australian left-arm-er, which ran away for five crucial wides. Trent Boult sacrificed his wicket with a run out to allow Buttler to keep the strike throughout Starc's over and the opener hit seamer Harshit Rana for two more sixes in the 19th to leave nine runs required from the last. A six from the first ball took Buttler to three figures from 55 balls before he turned down singles from the next three balls to protect No.10 Avesh Khan. With three needed from two balls, Buttler raced back for two and flicked the final delivery off his pads to complete the win. Earlier, as good as Buttler was, though, Narine just had less support from his team-mates. Though known as a powerplay aggressor, he let Phil Salt and An-



krish Raghuvanshi take the lead early on, before blooming in the middle overs against the spinners. He smacked R Aswhin for two sixes, and Yuzvendra Chahal for three, as both those bowlers conceded in excess of 12 an over. It was Narine's fours, though, that truly powered his innings. He hit 13 of them, all but four of them on the off side. Although Narine had been impressive through the middle overs, he also accelerated towards the death. He hit 35 runs off the last 14 balls he faced. Most impressively, he motored from 79 to KKR's third IPL hundred in the space of one Chahal over, in which he crashed two sixes and two fours. Rinku Singh provided some closing fireworks to the KKR in-

nings, but Narine's best stand had been the 85-run second-wicket partnership with Raghuvanshi, who made only 30 of those runs. Such was Narine's early dominance. Later, Shreyas Iyer, the Kolkata Knight Riders captain, was fined after his team maintained a slow over-rate against Rajasthan Royals in their last-ball defeat at Eden Gardens on Tuesday. As it was KKR's first offence of the season - in six games - Iyer was fined INR 12 lakh. **Brief scores:** Kolkata Knight Riders 223/6 (Sunil Narine 109, Angkrish Raghuvanshi 30; Avesh Khan 2-35, Sen 2-46) lost to Rajasthan Royals 224/8 (Jos Buttler 107*, Riyan Parag 34; Sunil Narine 2-30, Varun Chakravarthy 2-36, Harshit Rana 2-45). - Agencies

OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by June 2024 reaching \$90.50, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 8 cents from the price of Tuesday, which was \$90.42. - ONA

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,722.93 points, down by 0.31 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.80 per cent at 448.26 points. Muscat Thread Mill, up 9.88 per cent, was the top gainer while Construction Materials, down 9.80 per cent, was the top loser.

Oman exports 52.4 million barrels of oil by the end of February 2024

The data indicated that total oil exports recorded an increase of 5.5 percent at the end of February 2024 compared to the end of February 2023

MUSCAT: Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information indicate that the total quantity of the Sultanate of Oman's oil exports by the end of February 2024 stood at 52,430,300 barrels, calculating the average price of a barrel at \$80.2, as oil exports constituted 87.2 per cent of the total production, which amounted to 60,073,100 barrels.

The data indicated that total oil exports recorded an increase of 5.5 percent at the end of February 2024 compared to the end of Feb-



ruary 2023, when total exports at that time reached 49,713,300 barrels, in parallel with a decrease in production by 4.3 percent, as production recorded at the end of

February 2023 about 62,750,100 barrels.

The total production of crude oil decreased by 6.8 percent, reaching by the end of February 2024 about

46,025,800 barrels, while the total production of oil condensates increased by 5.2 percent, recording 14,047,300 barrels, while the average daily oil production reached

1,001,000 barrels until the end of February 2024.

China topped the countries importing oil from the Sultanate of Oman, with total exports amount-

ing to 51,429,700 barrels; an increase of 15.6 percent compared to the end of February 2023, followed by Japan with 1,000,600 barrels, a decrease of 21.1 percent. - ONA

FITCH RATINGS AFFIRMS

Stable outlook for key Indian banks amid economic turbulence

NEW DELHI: Fitch Ratings has reaffirmed the stable outlook for several major Indian banks, including Canara Bank, State Bank of India (SBI), Bank of Baroda (BOB), Punjab National Bank (PNB), and Union Bank of India. The ratings agency affirmed various credit ratings for these institutions, signaling confidence in their financial stability despite ongoing economic challenges. In its latest assessment, Fitch Ratings affirmed Canara Bank's Long-Term Issuer Default Rating (IDR) at 'BBB-' with a stable outlook. Additionally, the agency affirmed Canara Bank's Viability Rating (VR) at 'bb-' and Government Support Rating (GSR) at 'bbb-'. This reaffirmation underscores Fitch's positive outlook on Canara Bank's ability to navigate the current economic landscape. Similarly, Fitch Ratings maintained the stable outlook for State Bank of India (SBI), India's largest public sector bank. SBI's Long-Term IDR was affirmed at 'BBB-', along with its Viability Rating (VR) at 'bb' and Government Sup-

port Rating (GSR) of 'bbb-'. This reaffirmation reflects Fitch's confidence in SBI's robust position in the banking sector. Furthermore, Fitch Ratings affirmed the Long-Term Issuer Default Ratings (IDRs) of Bank of Baroda (BOB) and its subsidiary, Bank of Baroda (New Zealand) Limited (BOB NZ), at 'BBB-' with a stable outlook. BOB's Viability Rating (VR) was reaffirmed at 'bb-', along with its Government Support Rating (GSR) of 'bbb-'. Additionally, BOB NZ's Shareholder Support Rating (SSR) was affirmed at 'bbb-', indicating Fitch's positive assessment of BOB's overall financial health. Punjab National Bank (PNB) also received affirmation from Fitch Ratings, with its Long-Term IDR maintained at 'BBB-' and a stable outlook. PNB's Viability Rating (VR) was affirmed at 'b+', while its Government Support Rating (GSR) remained at 'bbb-'. This reaffirmation underscores Fitch's confidence in PNB's resilience amid economic challenges. -ANI

SALES AND PURCHASE

Oman LNG signs agreement with Shell to deliver 1.6 MTPA annually

MUSCAT: Oman LNG announced the signing of a Sales and Purchase Agreement (SPA) with Shell International Trading Middle East Limited (SITME) to deliver a total of up to 1.6 million metric tonnes per annum of LNG for 10 years starting from 2025. The agreement comes as a new step in the steadfast collaboration between the two companies, with Shell becoming the largest off-taker of LNG from Oman LNG. Commenting on this agreement, Hamed Mohammed Al Nu'amani, CEO of Oman LNG- said, "This Sales and Purchase Agreement means Shell will become our largest term buyer and solidifies a crucial relationship with a major industry partner. It not only underscores the trust and confidence Shell has in LNG from Oman but also strengthens our collaborations and opportunities to expand our LNG market access." By entering into this SPA, Oman LNG not only reinforces its reputation as a dependable LNG provider but also demonstrates its adeptness in efficiently managing business operations to deliver



secure and sustainable energy to global customers. On his turn, Walid Hadi, Senior Vice President and Country Chairman of Shell in Oman said, "This agreement offers an important addition to our LNG and integrated gas portfolio and helps to ensure that we can meet the growing demand for flexible and reliable en-

ergy from our global customers. Shell is proud of its role as the largest private shareholder in Oman LNG for the next decade." The agreement is strengthened by the reputation and credibility of Oman LNG as a reliable and trusted LNG supplier around the globe, coupled with the effective management of business processes to

produce clean energy delivered to customers around the world safely and reliably. Furthermore, the LNG plant in Qalhat, Sur has the capacity to receive and process additional volumes, where in 2023, its production rate stood at 11.5 million metric tonnes per annum, exceeding the enhanced nameplate capacity. - ONA

COLLABORATION

Port of Salalah introduces innovative water delivery system from Maersk

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Water scarcity remains a critical global challenge, affecting communities and regions across the world. In response to this pressing issue, the Port of Salalah announced a collaboration with Maersk acting as a pilot location to receive fresh water generated onboard Maersk's vessels using an innovative technology as part of their sustainability initiatives. Driven by the commitment to sustainability and environmental stewardship, a team of three former seafarers from Maersk embarked on a visionary project to optimise the existing freshwater generation system onboard container vessels. This innovative initiative aims to store and deliver fresh water to ports and regions grappling with water scarcity. Traditionally, freshwater generated onboard cargo ships through the distillation of seawater has been utilised solely for onboard consumption. However, through this pioneering project, the excess freshwater is efficiently stored in tank containers and delivered to ports in need.



The inaugural shipment of fresh water, totalling 25,000 litres, arrived at the Port of Salalah on April 3, marking a significant milestone in being part of a global initiative as well as optimising the usage of existing water sources. This pilot

delivery also serves as a sustainable solution to alternative water sources for various non-potable purposes aligned with the Port of Salalah's sustainability strategy. Keld M Christensen, Chief Executive Officer of the Port of Sala-

lah, emphasized the importance of sustainability in port operations and underscored the project's role in advancing environmental goals. He expressed optimism about the project's scalability and its potential to contribute to global efforts

in addressing water scarcity. The project's commitment to quality and environmental standards is evident through rigorous testing conducted by reputable institutions. Water quality assessments conducted by the Ceylon Institute of Scientific & Industrial Research have confirmed compliance with World Health Organization standards, ensuring safety and reliability. Furthermore, a Life Cycle Assessment study conducted by the Danish Technical University has highlighted the project's environmental benefits compared to traditional water delivery methods. The freshwater delivered through this innovative system has versatile applications, including port facilities maintenance, ship repair, container washing, firefighting, and humanitarian aid. The project opens avenues for collaboration with stakeholders worldwide to expand access to clean drinking water and address humanitarian needs. Leonardo Sonzio, Head of Fleet Management and Technology at Maersk commended the collaborative efforts and emphasized the project's potential to make a meaningful

impact on global water security. He expressed Maersk's commitment to exploring opportunities for expanding this initiative to more ports and communities in need. The Port of Salalah looks forward to further collaboration with Maersk and other partners to advance sustainable solutions and contribute to a water-secure future for all. The port continues to actively contribute to Oman's 2040 vision and objectives and support Oman's economic diversification strategy. Strategically located on the trade crossroads between Asia and Europe, and serving the markets of East Africa, the Red Sea, the Indian Subcontinent, and the Arabian Gulf - the Port of Salalah is operated by APM Terminals as part of the APM Terminals global terminal network. The port operates both a container terminal and a general cargo terminal. A.P. Moller-Maersk is an integrated container logistics company working to connect and simplify its customers' supply chains. As a global leader in shipping and logistics, Maersk is committed to driving sustainability and innovation to create a more resilient and sustainable future.

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Muscat Thread Mill, up 9.88 per cent, was the top gainer while Construction Materials, down 9.80 per cent, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,722.93 points, down by 0.31 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.80 per cent at 448.26 points. Muscat Thread Mill, up 9.88 per cent, was the top gainer while Construction Materials, down 9.80 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Global Financial Investments were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Abraj Energy Services were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 931 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR2.97 million, with more than 19.27 million shares changing hands. Out of 54 traded securities, 12 advanced, 21 declined, and 21 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for OMR635,000 while domestic investors were net buyers for OMR608,000, followed by foreign investors for OMR27,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,705.75 points, down 0.29 per cent. Prices of Global Financial Investments, Bank Nizwa were up by 4.29 per cent, 1.02 per cent

respectively. Prices of Oman & Emirates Investment, Al Madina Investments, Ahli Bank, Takaful Oman, Oman United Insurance were down by 5.50 per cent, 3.51 per cent, 1.94 per cent, 1.82 per cent, 1.58 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,740.40 points, down 0.71 per cent. Prices of Muscat Thread Mill, Dhofar Cattle Feed, Jazeera Steel Products were up by 9.88 per cent, 4.41 per cent, 1.85 per cent respectively.

Prices of Construction Materials, Gulf Mushroom Products, A'Saffa Foods, Oman Cement, National Detergent were down by 9.80 per cent, 4.20 per cent, 3.04 per cent, 2.70 per cent, 2.60 per cent respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.01 per cent before closing at 1,853.62 points. Prices of OIFC, Majan College, Ooredoo, Renaissance Services, SMN Power Holding were up by 2.25 per cent, 1.91 per cent, 1.35 per cent, 1.04 per cent, 0.92 per cent respectively.

Prices of Al Batinah Power, Sembcorp Salalah, Abraj Energy, Oman Telecom were down by 1.27 per cent, 0.90 per cent, 0.64 per cent, 0.57 per cent respectively. — United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,750.02	4,722.93	4,722.93	4,737.59	-14.66	-0.31
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,762.67	7,730.75	7,705.75	7,728.21	-22.46	-0.29
Industry Index	5,804.13	5,739.01	5,740.40	5,781.37	-40.97	-0.71
Services Index	1,856.07	1,849.65	1,853.62	1,853.42	0.20	0.01
MSX Shariah Index	452.15	447.97	448.26	451.86	-3.60	-0.80
MSX TR INDEX	6,568.23	6,530.78	6,530.78	6,551.05	-20.27	-0.31
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,757.36	8,693.14	8,693.14	8,718.48	-25.34	-0.29
SERVICES TR IDX	2,144.65	2,137.23	2,141.82	2,141.59	0.23	0.01
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,682.77	6,607.79	6,609.40	6,656.56	-47.17	-0.71
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,027.09	1,027.09	1,027.09	1,027.09	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
19,276,400	2,970,825	931	24,168,773,769	12	21	21	54

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, APRIL 17

SEC. NO.

SECURITY NAME

VOLUME

TURNOVER

TRADES

OPEN PRICE

HIGH

LOW

CLOSE PR.

PREV. CLOSE

DIFF. B/D

DIFF %

LAST PD.

LAST BD.

LAST OFF.

PREV. VALUE

MARKET CAP.

REGULAR MARKET

OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	3,572,942	267,181	110	0.074	0.077	0.073	0.073	0.070	0.003	4.286	0.073	0.073	0.074	0.100	14,600,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	177,408	48,755	20	0.271	0.275	0.271	0.275	0.270	0.005	1.852	0.275	0.275	0.275	0.100	34,346,939
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	126,400	37,715	17	0.289	0.304	0.288	0.301	0.297	0.004	1.347	0.301	0.301	0.310	0.100	195,934,213
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	12,291	4,794	8	0.394	0.394	0.390	0.390	0.386	0.004	1.036	0.390	0.390	0.394	0.100	92,199,900
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	353,235	107,564	22	0.338	0.338	0.321	0.328	0.325	0.003	0.922	0.328	0.328	0.328	0.100	65,480,477
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	15,000	1,725	3	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.000	0.000	0.115	0.115	0.117	0.100	17,250,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	56,307	14,591	2	0.260	0.260	0.259	0.259	0.259	0.000	0.000	0.259	0.254	0.260	0.100	421,120,106
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	61,340	3,742	4	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.000	0.000	0.061	0.061	0.062	0.100	21,723,755
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HO.	149,054	11,621	10	0.079	0.079	0.077	0.078	0.078	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.077	0.079	0.100	7,020,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,231,623	326,942	56	0.266	0.266	0.264	0.264	0.265	-0.001	-0.377	0.264	0.264	0.271	0.100	1,981,688,824
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	59,270	24,200	5	0.410	0.410	0.408	0.408	0.410	-0.002	-0.483	0.408	0.408	0.408	0.100	272,693,094
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	26,575	27,909	13	1.052	1.052	1.048	1.048	1.054	-0.006	-0.569	1.048	1.048	1.048	0.100	786,000,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	1,198,518	148,013	38	0.125	0.126	0.123	0.123	0.124	-0.001	-0.806	0.123	0.123	0.123	0.100	686,001,291
OM0000004788	MADINA TAKAFUL	431,514	35,822	26	0.084	0.084	0.083	0.083	0.084	-0.001	-1.190	0.083	0.080	0.084	0.100	14,525,000
OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	579,729	145,228	41	0.250	0.258	0.250	0.250	0.254	-0.004	-1.575	0.250	0.250	0.289	0.100	35,000,000
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	87,215	13,726	13	0.158	0.158	0.156	0.156	0.160	-0.004	-2.500	0.156	0.156	0.160	0.100	8,580,000
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	59,800	21,663	16	0.365	0.370	0.360	0.360	0.370	-0.010	-2.703	0.360	0.350	0.360	0.100	119,114,176
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	2,044,726	194,482	70	0.093	0.096	0.086	0.086	0.091	-0.005	-5.495	0.086	0.086	0.089	0.100	10,481,250
Total	18	10,222,947	1,425,671	474												

Parallel Market

OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	5,100	454	1	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.081	0.008	9.877	0.089	0.089	0.089	0.100	1,459,075
OM0000001301	DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	5,653	396	2	0.070	0.071	0.070	0.071	0.068	0.003	4.412	0.071	0.071	0.074	0.100	14,035,062
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	5,000	535	1	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.105	0.002	1.905	0.107	0.107	0.100	0.100	5,630,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	40,900	4,049	3	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.069	0.068	0.001	1.020	0.069	0.069	0.101	0.100	221,458,350
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	3,173	384	3	0.122	0.122	0.121	0.122	0.121	0.001	0.826	0.121	0.121	0.121	0.100	61,988,633
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	141,781	17,519	11	0.123	0.123	0.123	0.125	0.125	0.000	0.000	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.100	25,000,000
OM0000001509	DHOFAR INTERNATIONAL DEV & INV HO.	8,000	1,800	2	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.000	0.000	0.225	0.225	0.100	92,080,421	
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	162,958	8,361	9	0.052	0.052	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.000	0.000	0.051	0.050	0.051	0.100	15,664,463
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	596,079	52,455	22	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.000	0.000	0.088	0.084	0.089	0.100	18,128,000
OM0000001606	MUSCAT INSURANCE	1,543	555	1	0.360	0.360	0.360	0.360	0.360	0.000	0.000	0.360	0.000	0.000	1.000	3,980,017
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	45,000	4,050	5	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.000	0.000	0.090	0.084	0.090	0.100	1,860,000
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	301,580	105,536	30	0.340	0.350	0.340	0.350	0.350	0.000	0.000	0.350	0.350	0.352	0.100	5,000,000
OM0000003281	TAGEER FINANCE	15,961	1,676	2	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.000	0.000	0.105	0.102	0.105	0.100	28,464,502
OM0000003321	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	918,412	127,843	54	0.140	0.144	0.137	0.137	0.137	0.000	0.000	0.137	0.137	0.137	0.100	27,869,143
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	161	21	1	0.133	0.133	0.133	0.133	0.133	0.000	0.000	0.133	0.000	0.133	0.100	13,007,887
OM0000004833	AL SUWADI POWER	2,394,320	195,394	37	0.083	0.083	0.082	0.083	0.083	0.000	0.000	0.083	0.082	0.083	0.100	59,295,726
OM0000005983	PHOENIX POWER	294,600	17,481	11	0.062	0.062	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.000	0.000	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.100	89,216,689
OM0000007910	AMMAN REAL ESTATE	13,070	1,345	2	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.000	0.000	0.097	0.096	0.099	0.100	19,400,000
OM0000008072	QO GAS NETWORKS	859,178	128,462	111	0.146	0.147	0.146	0.147	0.147	0.000	0.000	0.147	0.147	0.147	0.100	636,601,716
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	2,177,719	676,081	55	0.312	0.313	0.309	0.310	0.312	-0.002	-0.641	0.310	0.310	0.310	0.100	238,762,000
OM0000004735	SEMBOCORP SALALAH	22,366	2,461	3	0.111	0.111	0.110	0.110	0.111	-0.001	-0.901	0.110	0.108	0.110	0.100	105,093,915
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	326,585	25,708	10	0.079	0.079	0.078	0.078	0.079	-0.001	-1.266	0.078	0.078	0.080	0.100	52,641,220
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	2,100	580	2	0.276	0.276	0.276	0.276	0.280	-0.004	-1.429	0.276	0.281	0.276	0.100	22,467,159
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	113,000	6,175	11	0.055	0.055	0.054	0.054	0.055	-0.001	-1.818	0.054	0.055	0.055	0.100	13,500,000
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	686	104	1	0.152	0.152	0.152	0.152	0.155	-0.003	-1.935	0.152	0.153	0.160	0.100	357,147,935
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	126,400	50,020	5	0.470	0.470	0.465	0.470	0.480	-0.010	-2.083	0.470	0.465	0.470	0.100	74,025,000
OM0000003265	NATIONAL DETERGENT	200	150	1	0.750	0.750	0.750	0.750	0.750	-0.020	-2.697	0.750	0.750	0.750	0.100	15,000,000
OM0000003927	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HO.	109,071	45,795	21	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.045	-0.001	-0.437	0.045	0.045	0.045	0.100	10,500,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	256,620	14,114	20	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.057	-0.002	-3.569	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.100	4,675,000
OM0000002267	GULF MUHROOM PRODUCTS	51,037	11,605	6	0.231	0.231	0.225	0.228	0.238	-0.010	-4.222	0.228	0.238	0.238	0.100	10,434,602
OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	20,038	922	3	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.046	0.051	-0.005	-9.804	0.046	0.046	0.049	0.100	2,875,000
Total	51	897,008	1,508,001	446												

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Indian female, 23 yrs B.Com, MBA (Finance& HR) Available in Oman, looking suitable job. Contact: 96266152

Indian graduate male, 2 yrs experience in accounts & sales, looking for suitable position. Contact: 95732123

Indian male Bachelor degree in administration looking for a suitable job with 2 yrs experience in Accounts/ Sales coordinator Currently in Oman & can join immediately Contact: +96878178827 Email: ridhwansubair46@gmail.com

Indian male, 32 yrs, MBA(Marketing)12 yr experience in Manager accountant & sales executive seeking position in Manager, accounts, sales fields. Contact : 97015751. Email: vvcfadhil@gmail.com

JOB WANTED

ACCOUNTS/FINANCE

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Indian Male 22 yrs B.Com Indian qualified, 1-yr India experience accountant with looking for full time placement, will be available immediately. Contact: +968 79534299, Email: musharaffsheikh@gmail.com

ADMINISTRATION

Indian male 14 yrs work experience in Oman, seeks job for admin, secretary or any suitable post. D/L & NOC available. Contact: 78723915 Email: krvaz505@outlook.com.

Sudanese female BSc in Economics & MBA with 2 yrs experience in customer service and administration Looking for suitable job. Contact: 78429319.

Indian (F) 27 yrs, 5 yrs exp in HR-Adm compliance-HSBC, BBA, MBA (pursuing), schooling in Oman. Currently in Oman. Contact: +968 78044552

Indian male B.Com, experience in office management, accounts, executive, personal assistant, admin, HR & steno secretary with Oman D/L seek job. Contact: 92558734

Indian male B.Com graduate. 6+ yrs accounting experience in Oman. Valid D/L. Seeking suitable placements. Contact: +968 90810048

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Looking for driving job. Contact: 79736940

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Looking for driving job, experience of more than 15 yrs. Contact: 92015802

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LOGISTIC

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Indian male with 9 yrs of logistics operation & purchase assistant experience with Oman D/L & Valid NOC. Contact/WA: +968 95915101. Email: sayyadshahanawaz19@gmail.com

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Project manager, construction manager having 24 yrs experience (18yrs Oman) in civil seeking suitable placement. GSM: 79113859 Email: devharish489@gmail.com

Finance Manager with 15 yrs of experience in oil & gas multinational company looking for suitable placement. Contact: 95230609

MECHANICAL/ TECHNICAL

Indian male 23 with 3 yrs experience in automobile technician. Contact: 78028420

MEDICAL

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Indian(M) 35, 8 yrs exp in marketing with Oman D/L. Contact: 77113215

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LIFESTYLE

RESEARCHERS
DISCOVER BRAIN
REGION INVOLVED
IN CONTROL OF
ATTENTION

The study, “The human subthalamic nucleus transiently inhibits active attentional processes,” was published online on March 4 in the journal *Brain*. Researchers believe that overactive brakes contribute to the disease’s tremors and other motor deficits.

In a new study, researchers at the University of Iowa linked a brain region to how humans adjust their thoughts and attention when distracted. The link is significant because it provides insights into the cognitive and behavioural adverse effects of a treatment used to treat Parkinson’s sufferers.

The study, “The human subthalamic nucleus transiently inhibits active attentional processes,” was published online on March 4 in the journal *Brain*.

The subthalamic nucleus is a pea-sized brain area that controls our movements. These motions have been hampered in Parkinson’s patients: researchers believe the subthalamic nucleus, which normally acts as a brake on abrupt movement, is exerting too much influence. Researchers believe that overactive brakes contribute to the disease’s tremors and other motor deficits.

In recent years, clinicians have treated Parkinson’s patients with deep-brain stimulation, an electrode

implanted in the subthalamic nucleus that rhythmically generates electrical signals, causing the brain region to loosen its braking, freeing up movement. The deep brain stimulation system is like a pacemaker for the heart; once implanted, it runs continuously.

“The technique is truly miraculous, frankly,” says Jan Wessel, associate professor in the departments of Psychological and Brain Sciences and Neurology at Iowa. “People come in with Parkinson’s, surgeons turn the electrode on, and their tremor goes away. Suddenly they can hold their hands steady and go play golf. It’s one of those blockbuster treatments where, when you see it in action, it really makes you believe in what the neuroscience community is doing.”

Yet some patients treated with deep brain stimulation have been beset by an inability to focus attention and impulsive thoughts, sometimes leading to risky behaviors such as gambling and substance use. Researchers be-

gan to wonder: Did the subthalamic nucleus’ role in movement also mean this same brain region may deal with thoughts and impulse control?

Wessel decided to find out. His team designed an experiment gauging the focus of attention of more than a dozen Parkinson’s patients when the deep brain stimulation treatment was either activated or idle. The participants, outfitted with a skull cap to track their brain waves, were instructed to fix their attention on a computer screen while the brain waves in their visual cortex were being monitored. About one in five times, in a random order, the participants heard a chirping sound, meant to divert their visual attention from the screen to the newly introduced audio distraction.

In a 2021 study, Wessel’s group established that brain waves in participants’ visual cortex dropped when they heard a chirp, meaning their attention had been diverted by the sound. By interchanging instances when there was a chirp or no sound,

the researchers could see when attention had been diverted, and when the focus of visual attention had been maintained.

The team turned their attention to the Parkinson’s groups for this study. When the deep brain stimulation was idle and the chirp was sounded, the Parkinson’s patients diverted their attention from the visual to the auditory systems—just as the control group had done in the previous study.

But when the chirp was introduced to the Parkinson’s participants with deep brain stimulation activated, those participants did not divert their visual attention. “We found they no longer can break or suppress their focus of attention in the same way,” says Wessel, the study’s corresponding author. “The unexpected sound happens and they’re still full-on attending to their visual system. They haven’t diverted their attention from the visual.”

The distinction confirmed the subthalamic nucleus’ role in how the brain and body communicate not

only with movement—as previously known—but also with thoughts and attention.

“Until now, it was very unclear why those with Parkinson’s disease had issues with thoughts, such as why they performed worse on attention tests,” Wessel says. “Our study explains why: While removing the inhibitory influence of the subthalamic nucleus on the motor system is helpful in treating Parkinson’s, removing its inhibitory influence from nonmotor systems (such as thoughts or attention) can have adverse effects.”

Wessel firmly believes deep brain stimulation should continue to be used for Parkinson’s patients, citing its clear benefits to aiding motor-control functions. “There may be different areas of the subthalamic nucleus that stop the motor system and that stops the attentional system,” he says. “That’s why we’re doing the basic research, to find out how we fine-tune it to get the full benefit to the motor system without accruing any potential side effects.” -ANI

SPORTS

Mbappe nets twice as PSG stun Barcelona to reach semi-final

Paris Saint-Germain claimed a 4-1 win in the second-leg for a 6-4 aggregate triumph to reach their first Champions League semi-final in three years

BARCELONA: Kylian Mbappe scored twice as Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) thrashed a ten-man Barcelona 4-1 to turn around a first-leg deficit for a 6-4 victory and reach the semi-finals of the Champions League on Tuesday night.

PSG had trailed 3-2 after the first leg in France but reached the last four for the first time since 2021 after a chaotic encounter in Spain.

Luis Enrique's side will face Borussia Dortmund in the semi-final after they beat Atletico Madrid 5-4 on aggregate in another thrilling encounter in Germany.

The visitors started the brighter of the two at five-time champions Barcelona's temporary home - the Estadi Olimpic Lluis Companys.

But it was the Catalan side who struck first when Lamine Yamal drove down the right-hand side, beating Nuno Mendes and clipping over for Raphinha to score from close range.

The task ahead looked daunting for PSG at that point, needing to score two goals just to level the score on aggregate with the crowd



heavily against them.

But things began to unravel when Barca defender Ronald Araujo received a straight red card for clipping Bradley Barcola just outside the area and denying a clear goalscoring opportunity in the 29th minute.

Araujo appeared to argue that his centre-back partner Pau Cubarsi was covering, meaning he was not the last man, but the

tom corner nine minutes after the break to make it 2-1 on the night and 4-4 on aggregate.

PSG's remarkable recovery continued when Joao Cancelo brought down Dembele in the box and Mbappe converted the spot-kick to fire his side into the lead.

After being kept quiet for much of the two legs, Mbappe then stepped up and smashed into the net in the 89th minute to cap two highly entertaining quarter-final matches.

The two semi-final first legs take place on separate nights, on April 30 and May 1, with the second legs on May 7 and 8.

Since being taken over by Qatar Sports Investments in 2011, PSG have won nine Ligue 1 titles but have failed to deliver the ownership's main ambition of winning the Champions League. They reached the final in 2020 but lost to Bayern Munich and have since reached the semis once and gone out in the last 16 twice. - Agencies

Xavi unhappy with 'really bad' referee on a chaotic night



BARCELONA: A "disaster performance" from the referee, "panic" from Barcelona's players and "an unnecessary expulsion" were all blamed on a dramatic Tuesday evening at Estadi Olimpic Lluis Companys as Paris St-Germain ran out 4-1 winners.

As Barcelona turned in a performance riddled with mistakes, referee Istvan Kovacs had a busy evening. The Romanian showed three red cards to the hosts - manager Xavi's frustrations getting the better of him, before a member of his coaching staff was dismissed for dissent. That only compounded the damage done by Araujo's red-card inducing challenge on Bradley Barcola early in the first half.

"The referee was really bad. I told him his performance was a disaster. I don't like to talk about referees, but it had a clear impact in the season and it has to be said," Xavi told Movistar Plus.

"We are very upset and angry because the red card was the decisive factor in the match. With 11, we were in

a good position, playing well and in command.

"It's too much to flash a red card in a game like this. There was another game after that... It is a pity that the work of the season was ruined by an unnecessary expulsion."

"You can't make mistakes in the Champions League," former Barcelona striker Thierry Henry told CBS.

"If you make mistakes, you pay the price straight away and that's why it is so hard to win that competition because you cannot make one mistake."

"It is a shame that all the work of a season, because of a refereeing decision, finishes here," Xavi told CBS.

"I would have liked to have played 11 v 11 against Luis Enrique and against PSG [for] all the minutes of the game. We know that there are sendings off in football but I believe that this one [for Araujo] was unnecessary."

There were a total of 12 cards shown on the night to add to the five goals, a penalty and Ilkay Gundogan's strike which clipped the woodwork.

BARCELONA OPEN

Nadal wins on injury return

BARCELONA: Rafael Nadal enjoyed a winning start at the Barcelona Open as he returned from another long-term injury in what could be his final year before retirement.

The Spanish 22-time major champion, who turns 38 in June, won 6-2, 6-3 against inexperienced Italian Flavio Cobolli in their first-round match on Tuesday.

Now ranked 644th, Nadal was playing for the first time since January because of a hip injury and abdominal issues.

Nadal has indicated 2024 is likely to be his last as a professional player.

After pulling out of last year's French Open with the hip problem, the former world No.1 said he planned to retire at the end of this season.

Nadal, who is considered as one of the best players in history and greatest clay-court of all time, has only played one event since.

But, before making his latest comeback in Barcelona, Nadal said he was not "putting a deadline" on his retirement and would only keep playing as long as he felt it was "worth it".

"I'm just having fun and happy to start with a victory," said Nadal, who faces a tougher opponent next in Australian world number 11 Alex de Minaur.

"I'm going through some tough



moments but at the same time when I'm able to be on tour and compete a little bit it means a lot."

A record 12-time champion in Barcelona, Nadal was playing his first clay-court match in 681 days - when he won the 2022 French Open final.

Murray on French Open entry list

Andy Murray has been named on the entry list for the French Open, but fellow Briton Emma Raducanu is not yet assured of a place in the draw.

Three-time Grand Slam champion Murray, 36, ruptured ankle ligaments at the Miami

Open last month.

Raducanu missed the last eight months of 2023 but has a protected ranking of 103 and is the fifth alternate.

If she does not make the main draw because of withdrawals, she will need a wildcard or to come through qualifying.

The French Open starts on 26 May. Murray has played at Roland Garros only once since hip resurfacing surgery in 2019, losing in the first round in 2020.

The Scot, who won Olympic gold at London 2012 and Rio 2016, said this year that he wants to compete at another Games before he retires. - Agencies

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE QUARTER-FINALS - SECOND LEG

Borussia Dortmund edge Atletico Madrid in a thriller

MUNICH: Borussia Dortmund reached their first Champions League semi-final in 11 years by producing a superb second-half comeback to beat Atletico Madrid 5-4 on aggregate on Tuesday.

Having lost the first leg 2-1 in Madrid, Dortmund quickly turned things around with Julian Brandt and Chelsea loanee Ian Maatsen both scoring from tight angles in the first half.

But Atletico Madrid made it 2-1 on the night and 3-3 on aggregate when Mario Hermoso's header deflected in off Dortmund defender Mats Hummels shortly after the restart. Angel Correa then gave Atletico Madrid a 4-3 aggregate lead when he smashed in a rebounded finish from close range in the 64th minute.

But Dortmund levelled once again in a thrilling second half as Nicolas Fullkrug finished off Marcel Sabitzer's cross with a looping header after 71 minutes.

And less than three minutes later Sabitzer struck Dortmund's winner with a drilled finish into the bottom corner to round off a sublime quarter-final tie - and set up a semi-final against Paris Saint-Germain.

Dortmund defender Maatsen, whose goal gave Dortmund a 3-2



aggregate lead, said he had "been dreaming of [moments like this] as a kid". "It is such an amazing feeling," he told CBS. "Especially now scoring a great goal and my first goal in the Champions League so I am very grateful and so happy."

Maatsen, 22, signed a contract extension with parent club Chelsea in January before joining Dortmund on loan until the end of the season. The Dutchman had been playing Championship football this time last year while on loan at Burnley. "I always had the belief to play for Chelsea but unfortunately for some reasons it didn't work out," he added.

"But, now I am here, I am very

grateful for this opportunity. I came here to experience at the highest level and play my game and today I think I showed a very good performance."

Dortmund had not reached the last four of the Champions League since they finished runners-up in 2012-13. This is just the fourth time the German club have advanced beyond the quarter-finals.

Atletico conceded four goals in a Champions League knockout tie for the first time since losing 4-1 to rivals Real Madrid in the 2014 final. Diego Simeone's side have now gone seven years without reaching the final four of Europe's premier competition. - Agencies

GOLF



I'll play the PGA Tour for rest of my career: McIlroy

LONDON: Rory McIlroy says he will play on the PGA Tour "for the rest of my career" as he quashed rumours of him making a big-money move to LIV Golf.

A report by City AM on Sunday said the four-time major winner had been offered \$850m (£683m) to join the Saudi Arabian-backed circuit.

But McIlroy dismissed the report in an interview with Golf Channel, external on Tuesday.

"I honestly don't know how these things get started," said the Northern Irishman, 34.

"I've never been offered a number from LIV and have never con-

templated going to LIV."

McIlroy has been one of LIV Golf's most vocal critics since the breakaway tour was launched in 2022.

However, he admitted to feeling like a "sacrificial lamb" after a framework agreement between the PGA Tour and the Public Investment Fund, which funds LIV, was announced in June last year.

"My future is on PGA Tour and it's never been any different"

But while LIV managed to add McIlroy's Ryder Cup team-mates Jon Rahm and Tyrrell Hatton to its ranks for the 2024 season, the world number two has reiterated

that his future remains on the PGA Tour.

"I think I've made it clear over the past two years that I don't think it's something for me," McIlroy added of LIV.

"It doesn't mean I judge people that have went and played over there. I think one of the things I've realised over the past two years is people can make their own decisions for whatever they think is best for themselves. Who are we to judge them for that?"

"For me, my future is here on the PGA Tour and it's never been any different."

He added: "It's never even been

a conversation for us. It's one of those things, it's unfortunate that we have to deal with it but I'm obviously here today and I'm playing this PGA Tour event next week and will play the PGA Tour for the rest of my career."

McIlroy is coming off a disappointing week at the Masters, where he finished in a tie for 22nd in his latest unsuccessful bid to complete the career grand slam.

The 24-time PGA Tour winner is playing in this week's RBC Heritage in South Carolina before teaming up with Ireland's Shane Lowry for next week's Zurich Classic of New Orleans. - Agencies

IN PICTURES



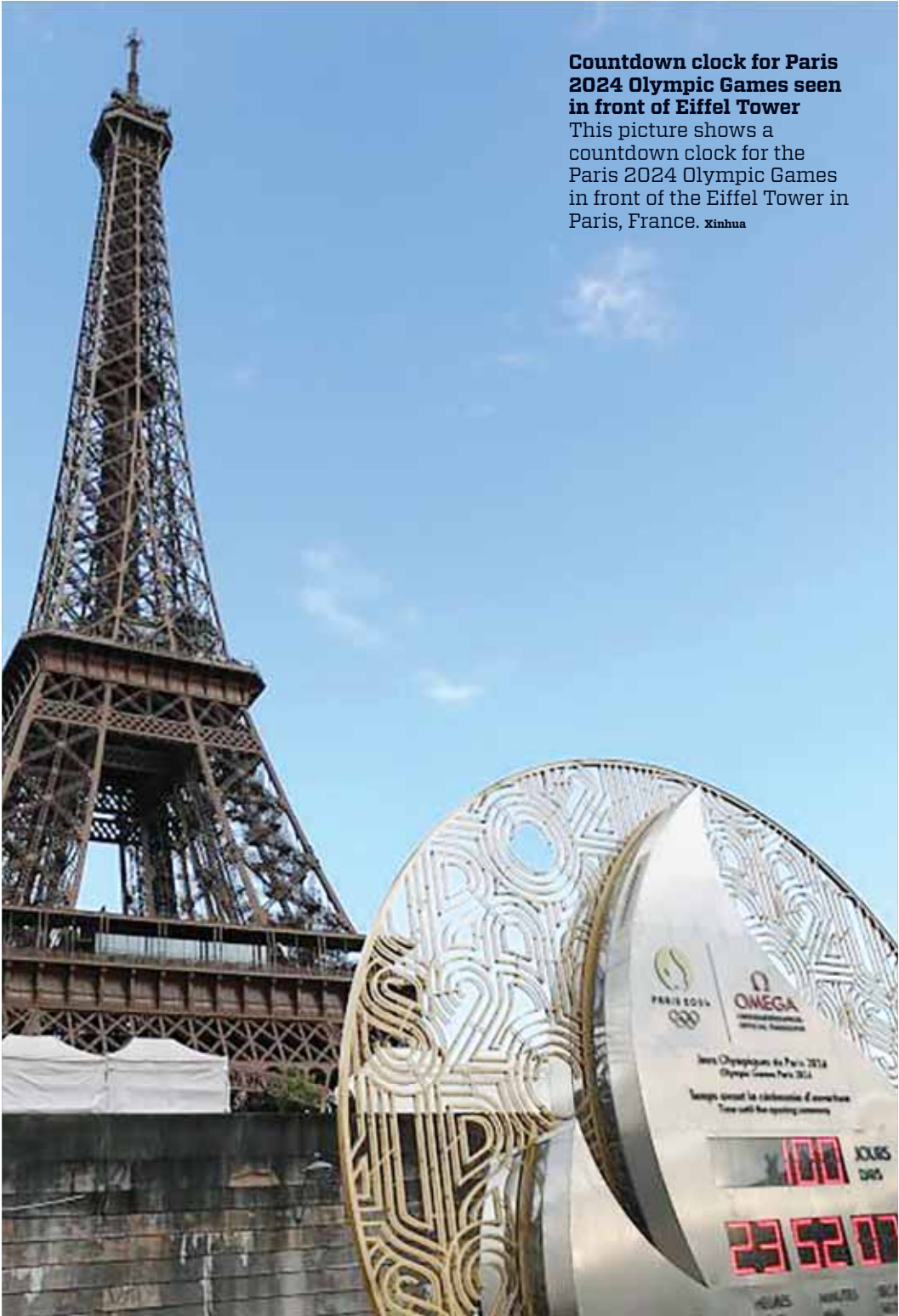
Paris Book Festival 2024 concludes in France
Writers sign for readers during the Paris Book Festival 2024 in Paris, France. *xinhua*



People celebrate water festival in Myanmar
People celebrate the water festival in Yangon, Myanmar. *xinhua*



China's gigantic telescope detects over 900 new pulsars
A drone picture shows China's Five-hundred-metre Aperture Spherical Radio Telescope (FAST) under maintenance in southwest China's Guizhou Province. *xinhua*



Countdown clock for Paris 2024 Olympic Games seen in front of Eiffel Tower
This picture shows a countdown clock for the Paris 2024 Olympic Games in front of the Eiffel Tower in Paris, France. *xinhua*



Parineeti Chopra and Diljit Dosanjh at the trailer launch of their film 'Amar Singh Chamkila'
Bollywood actress Parineeti Chopra and singer Diljit Dosanjh pose for a picture with film director Imtiaz Ali and singer AR Rahman during the trailer launch of their film 'Amar Singh Chamkila', in Mumbai. *ANI Photo*



Sudanese displaced by conflict strive to rebuild lives in Egypt
People fleeing from Sudan are pictured at a bus station in Aswan, Egypt. Displaced by the civil war in Sudan a year ago, asylum-seeking Sudanese citizens have been trying to rebuild their lives in neighbouring Egypt, but the task is by no means easy. *xinhua*

ROUND-UP

BankDhofar: A key contributor to govt initiatives with strong focus on employment and digital transformation



Over the past months, the bank has facilitated over 250 employment opportunities for Omanis across various fields and academic backgrounds, resulting in a notable rise in the Omanisation rate to 92 per cent

MUSCAT: BankDhofar is presently dedicated to bolstering governmental directives and diverse developmental strategies aligned with Oman Vision 2040, particularly emphasising the employment sector and the provision of job opportunities for citizens.

This commitment significantly contributes to the revitalisation of the national economy, with a particular impact on the banking sector. Over the past months, the bank has facilitated over 250 employment opportunities for Omanis across various fields and academic backgrounds, resulting in a notable rise in the Omanisation rate to 92%.

Furthermore, BankDhofar is steadfast in its efforts to perpetually enhance its digital channels, in harmony with the government's vision for digital transformation aimed at fostering a sustainable knowledge society and advancing the information technology industry in the Sultanate of Oman. The bank has successfully broadened its digital footprint by enabling customers to open bank accounts through smartphones and other digital platforms, facilitating convenient and timely banking transactions. This initiative has driven an 85.5% surge in total digital transactions in 2023, coupled with a 55.3% increase in transaction values.

Recently, the bank introduced "Dhofar Pay," an innovative service marking a first in the Sultanate of Oman, allowing customers to easily and securely make payments via smartphones, eliminating the need for traditional debit cards.

In 2024, BankDhofar continues its customer centric momentum by prioritizing the delivery of superior customer service, enhancing the branch network and introducing bespoke product and services. Additionally, BankDhofar also provides tailored products to diverse segments of society, including small and medium enterprises, children, youth, women, and minors.

The bank is actively pursuing an enhancement of its credit rating, capitalizing on the improved business environment in the Sultanate of Oman, heightened foreign investments, and in light of the continuous rise in oil prices. In 2023, BankDhofar attained a BAI rating from Moody's, BB from Standard & Poor's, and BB+ from Fitch.

As one of the oldest banks in the Sultanate of Oman, BankDhofar remains committed to deliver unparalleled services to its customers. It stands as the second-largest bank in terms of branch network, with a growing number of branches. The bank has 118 branches as of 31 March 2024, spread across various governorates and regions. The bank has expanded its network of devices, including ATMs, cash deposit machines, multi-use devices, and multi-service interactive devices, witnessing a 36% increase to reach a total of 350 devices ensuring customers can bank any time at their convenience.

GRAND OPENING

Kaldi 850's new store promises unique experience for coffee connoisseurs



MUSCAT: Kaldi 850 announced the grand opening of its newest store, bringing a fusion of passion and flavour to the heart of Muscat. Nestled in Al Muzn Mall, Kaldi 850 promises a unique experience for coffee connoisseurs and casual drinkers alike.

Named after the legendary Ethiopian goat herder who discovered coffee, Kaldi 850 embodies the spirit of exploration and discovery. With a dedication to quality and sustainability, every cup of coffee at Kaldi 850 tells a story – from the journey of the beans to the expertly crafted brew.

At Kaldi 850, patrons can expect: An extensive selection of single-

origin coffees from around the world

Speciality blends curated by our expert roasters.

A cosy ambiance perfect for work or relaxation

Delectable pastries and treats to complement your coffee experience

"Our mission at Kaldi 850 is simple; to elevate the coffee experience," says Paul Biswajit, Country Head, Kaldi 850 - Oman. "We believe that great coffee has the power to bring people together, spark creativity, and inspire meaningful connections. We're thrilled to invite the community to embark on this journey with us."



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