



OMANI TEACHER'S DAY

Dr. Madiha thanks HM for care to education



MUSCAT: Dr. Madiha bint Ahmed Al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, expressed gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik for the great care and attention given to the education sector.

The education minister thanked HM for designating 24 February each year as an official holiday for all teachers and those holding administrative positions in public and private schools in appreciation of their efforts for fulfilling the trust entrusted on them.

In her speech on the occasion of Omani Teacher's Day, Dr. Madiha praised the efforts made by teachers and their dedication in performing their educational mission to groom students and prepare them to contribute towards building the comprehensive development of Oman.

She also appreciated the greetings of HH the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamad Al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, to the teachers on this happy occasion, and her deep appreciation of the efforts made by the administrative bodies and all workers in the educational field. -ONA

49th anniversary

An exceptional, inspiring journey

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Times of Oman celebrated its 49th anniversary on 23 February, 2024 (Friday). Since its inception in 1975, the newspaper has been providing its readers with breaking and accurate local, regional and international news. Oman's largest circulated newspaper, currently reaches over 65 percent of the country's population through its various platforms with its website receiving more than 20 million views a month. With 382,372 readers, our epaper reaches over 300,000 readers every morning and evening with two editions (52,747 subscribers in English and 45,857 in Arabic). >A4



HM SENDS GREETINGS TO KUWAIT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to His Highness Sheikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait on his country's National Day. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes of good health, happiness and a long life to Sheikh Mishal, praying to the Almighty Allah to return this occasion on him and on his country's people with achievement of aspirations of further progress, development and prosperity.— ONA



HONOURABLE LADY GREETES TEACHERS



The Honourable Lady congratulated teachers on the occasion of Omani Teacher's Day

MUSCAT: Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamad Al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, on Saturday congratulated male and female teachers on the occasion of Omani Teacher's Day.

The greetings message reads as follows: "We are pleased to congratulate teachers, both male and female, in our dear country on the occasion of the celebration marking Omani Teacher's Day, which falls on 24 February.

"We value teachers' central role in the educational process and their abundant contribu-

tion in grooming future cadres, empowering them with useful knowledge, sound values and sciences, so that they could in turn contribute to the service of the nation. "We wish teachers success in accomplishing their important mission. We also extend our deep thanks to the administrative bodies and all personnel operating in the field of education. We appreciate their tangible efforts in upgrading the education system.

"We wish that the endeavours of all be crowned with success. "Many happy returns of the occasion." -ONA

IN 2023

Oman's insurance sector set to grow by over 10%

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's insurance sector is expected to exceed 10 percent growth in 2023, according to an industry expert.

"The insurance sector is one of the fastest growing sectors in the Sultanate of Oman and its contribution to the gross domestic product (GDP) was 1.23 percent while the growth rate of insurance premiums reached about 13 percent in 2022," Mustafa Ahmed Salman, member of the Board of Directors of the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) and Chairman of the Chamber's Finance and Insurance Committee, said.

He further pointed out that raising the capital of insurance companies will also contribute significantly to their ability to bring in more investors and help their businesses to grow better.

Mustafa Ahmed Salman in a statement to the Oman News



Agency said, "The contribution of the insurance sector to the gross domestic product of the Sultanate of Oman currently amounts to 1.3 percent. This is a good percentage rate compared to other Arab countries.

He further said that the volume of Arab insurance reached about \$45 billion and constitutes one percent of the volume of the global insurance industry.

He said that the Finance and

Insurance Committee of the OCCI is working to study and develop laws, decisions and regulations related to the sector. It also seeks to monitor challenges and present its proposals and visions to solve these, indicating that increasing the contribution of insurance to the GDP will be achieved by establishing large projects and capital for insurance companies and strengthening their reserves.



It's over 75 years of oppression for Palestinians: Oman

A2

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Muscat book fair

1 A symposium on children's theatre was held at the Muscat book fair. >A5



OMAN Muscat-Sharjah bus

2 Mwasalat has announced a new service to Sharjah from February 27. >A5

MARKET Credit by Oman banks

3 The total credit granted by the banking sector reached OMR30.4bn. >B1

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Palestinians have been living under oppression for over 75 years: Oman

The international community has failed to assist the people of Palestine to realise their aspirations by having their own independent state

THE HAGUE: The Sultanate of Oman delivered its oral statement before the International Court of Justice (ICJ) in The Hague on Friday on the legal consequences arising from the policies and practices of Israel in the occupied Palestinian Territories including East Jerusalem.

The Sultanate of Oman reaffirmed during the oral proceedings delivered on behalf of the government of the Sultanate of Oman by Sheikh Dr. Abdullah Salim Al Harthy, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman, that for more than 75 years, the Palestinians have been living under occupation, oppression, injustice and daily humiliation committed against them by the Israelis.

Meanwhile, the international community and the international organisations have failed to assist the people of Palestine to realise their aspirations by having their own independent state.

Oman pointed out that today in Gaza, the world for (4) months is witnessing one of the worst atrocities and acts of genocide in modern times, where more than 29,000 killed and 68,000 wounded, in addition to 2.2 million living under very unbearable conditions; being driven from one place to another



in a clear violation of international norms.

Al Harthy stressed that the Sultanate of Oman supports UNGA resolution (77/247) of 30 December 2022 in which the Assembly requested the Court to render an advisory opinion in relation to two specific issues namely:

A. The legal consequences arising from Israel's ongoing violation of the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination, its prolonged occupation of the Palestinian Territory occupied since 1967, including the Holy City of Jerusalem and its measures aimed at altering the demographic composition, character, and status of, and from its adoption of related discriminatory legislations and measures.

B. Israel's policies and practices referred to in paragraph (a) affect the legal status of the occupation and the legal consequences that arise for all States and the United Nations from this status.

Al Harthy said, "The Sultanate of Oman requests that the following issues are taken into account:

1 Violation of the Right to Self-Determination That the occupa-

tion, settlement, and annexation of Palestinian Territories occupied since 1967 by Israel obstructs the realisation of the Palestinian people's inalienable rights, including their right of self-determination and right to return.

He added that there is an overwhelming international agreement on the existence of the right to self-determination and its continued denial in the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

Al Harthy continued, "The right to self-determination is enshrined, inter alia, in article 1(2) of the Charter of the United Nations. The UN General Assembly has consistently reaffirmed the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. The UN Security Council has called for an end to the Israeli occupation and the establishment of two states based on the 1967 lines".

The Human Rights Council consistently recognises the 'inalienable, permanent and unqualified right to self-determination of the Palestinian people'.

Al Harthy pointed out that arising from these clear and consistent breaches of international law

in maintaining a (75) year occupation, the Court should determine that the government of Israel should bring to an immediate and unconditional end to all activities, policies and laws that prevent and impede Palestinian self-determination principally by ending the occupation of the Palestinian Territory. The Court should recognise the clear responsibility on all States to support the establishment of Palestinian self-determination in line with UN resolutions and the UN Charter.

Oman's Ambassador to the Kingdom of the Netherlands added that the Prolonged Occupation, Settlement and Annexation of Palestinian Territory, the consistent and systematic unlawful transfer of Israeli citizens to settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territories over decades is designed to perpetuate the occupation and make it permanent.

Related to this policy, he said, is the displacement of Palestinians and the establishment of a coercive system of discriminations, zoning, planning, unlawful land appropriation, arbitrary arrest, and arbitrary violence since 1967.

Additionally, Al Harthy reiterated that this forcible displacement of the occupied people and the transfer of citizens of the occupying power to the occupied territory is prohibited under article (49) of the Fourth Geneva Convention on the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. Article (1) of that Convention stipulates that every High Contracting Party to the Convention is under an obligation to ensure compliance in all circumstances.

The United Nation General Assembly, United Nations Security Council and United Nations Human Rights Council have consistently and repeatedly condemned Israel's efforts to alter the demographic character and status of the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

He pointed out that the International Community has an obligation to prevent unlawful annexation of Palestinian land. A fundamental principle of international law as reflected in the Charter of the United Nations is that the use of force in any form is prohibited. Consequently, acquisition of territory by use of force is illegal.

The (75) year occupation and settlement policy of the State of Israel is preventing the establishment of a contiguous, viable Palestinian State and is an affront to international law.

The Court should find that the legal consequences for the Government of Israel in this regard should include the immediate cessation of all illegal acts including settlements and associated legal and administrative frameworks. Clearly, reparations for, and dismantling of, illegal structures and legal frameworks is also an imperative.

He added that the Third States are under a clear obligation not to recognize or assist the illegal situation present in the Occupied Palestinian Territory. State parties to the Geneva Convention relative to

the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War are under obligation to ensure Israeli compliance with international humanitarian law as embodied in the convention, including the unlawful transfer of citizens in occupied territories.

The UN General Assembly Resolution (77/25) called upon all states consistent with their obligations under the Charter and relevant Security Council resolutions to a policy of non-recognition, non-cooperation, non-assistance to the Israeli occupation and to ensure respect for international law in this regard.

Al Harthy added that the primary legal consequences arising from Israel's behaviour is that there is now a de facto annexation by Israel of the Palestinian territories.

He pointed out that there is no legal justification for continuing the Israeli occupation and denying the Palestinian people right to self-determination.

The Sultanate of Oman concluded its oral proceedings by affirming that the conduct and practices of an occupying power are well-documented and strictly regulated in international law. The 4th Geneva Convention is clear that an Occupying Power may not transfer its civilian population to occupied territories. In addition, international law does not provide for permanent occupation or occupation legitimised through establishment of demographic change through settlement.

The Sultanate of Oman reaffirmed that the (75) year duration of Israeli presence in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and the persistent policy of settlement renders the Israeli occupation illegal and in breach of the UN Charter. The Court should determine that Israel should bring to an immediate and unconditional end to this unlawful situation. Third States should support these efforts. -ONA

AL BUSTAN PALACE HOTEL

World Travel Week to enhance Oman's tourism potential around the world

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, will host on Sunday, the third edition of the "World Travel Week - Middle East" event, at the Al Bustan Palace Hotel for a period of four days.

Around 31 Omani tourism institutions, and 94 specialists in the field of tourism from various countries of the world will take part in the event.

This ceremony comes within the efforts of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism to enhance the tourism sector in the Sultanate of Oman, as it gives an opportunity to tourism companies and workers in the tourism sector from various countries of the world to meet their counterparts and work on joint cooperation between them.

During the event, introductory trips will be organised for major international tourism companies to learn more about the tourist attractions and tourist experiences in the various governorates of the



Sultanate of Oman to provide a comprehensive picture of these companies. Its role will later be reflected in its promotion of the Sultanate of Oman, as 14 tourism companies were chosen to conduct familiarization trips in the Dhofar Governorate.

Haitham bin Muhammad al Ghassan, Director General of Tourism Promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said: "This event is a valuable addition to the list of luxury tourism companies and has proven through its previous editions that it adds high value to businesses and companies."

The Director General of Tourism Promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism added that the hosting of this event will

strengthen international cooperation in the field of luxury tourism, exchanging experiences and knowledge, and strengthening the position of the Sultanate of Oman as a luxury tourist destination on the global stage. This event enjoys wide participation from experts and specialists in the field of luxury tourism from various countries of the world. -ONA

CORRECTIONAL FACILITY

OHRC team visits Sumail Central Prison

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A team from the Oman Human Rights Commission (OHRC), led by the Commission's Chairperson, Prof. Rashid Hamed Al Balushi, accompanied by several members of the Coordinating Committee for Justice and Coordination Affairs visited Sumail Central Prison.

This visit was part of the consultative assessment of diversity, given to the General Administration of Prisons by officers and sup-

porters of models for the youngest workers in prisons.

The guests were also informed about the support, health and social services in the prison, and the correctional facility available for offenders.

The visit came within the scope of the committee's numerous tasks in Article 11 of the system, which contains undertaking field visits to prisons and detention centres, in addition to building bridges of participation and cooperation.





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FRENCH TOURIST BODY FOUND IN OMAN

Search and rescue teams found the body of a missing person in the wilayat of Jabal Al Akhdar. The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) said: "Search and rescue teams of the Royal Oman Police, the Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority were able to find the body of the second missing person (a French tourist), in the wilayat of Jabal Al Akhdar. "His vehicle drifted while trying to cross a valley on February 13, 2024, during the rough weather conditions affecting Oman," CDAA added.



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SEA LION

Royal Navy of Oman exercise continues

MUSCAT: The Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) continues its naval exercise (Sea Lion 1/2024) in the Sea of Oman with crews from its fleet ships, and with the support of the Royal Air Force of Oman and the Maritime Security Centre. The exercise will continue until the twenty-ninth of this month.

On Saturday, the ships and crews took part in the exercise, heading to the naval theatre of operations during which many maritime military exercises will take place between the participating ships and crews in accordance with the drawn up plan. -OMA

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49-YEAR JOURNEY

TIMES OF OMAN DEDICATED TO PROVIDING TIMELY AND ACCURATE NEWS TO ITS VALUED READERS

<FROM A1 The Times TV channel provides diverse video clips to a wide range of news connoisseurs.

Besides, Times FM (TFM), continues to provide a kaleidoscopic option for receiving regular updates both from Oman and the world.

The *Times of Oman* has been dedicated to providing its readers with timely and accurate news on local, regional, and international events. As the Sultanate has grown and developed over five decades, the Times of Oman has been there to document the changes and meet the challenges by grabbing the opportunities that have arisen.

In fact, the newspaper would not have come into existence if that one single telex from Singapore had not reached the founder of Times of Oman, Late Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali's desk, while he was serving as director in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The telex came from a company called Flying Tiger Corporation based in Los Angeles, USA, asking for an overflight permission and as the director of the department, it was part of his duty to give permission to commercial flights, military flights and personal flights flying over Oman.

They sent the telex to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs addressing the country as, 'Muscat, Oman, Saudi Arabia'. This infuriated the late Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali so much that he kept it [telex] on hold for three days. That's when he thought why can't Oman have an English newspaper that would put this beautiful nation, which remained happy on its own, on the global map?

After having received the necessary approval from the Ministry of Information and intense hard work of ten months, the Times of Oman was born on February 23, 1975.

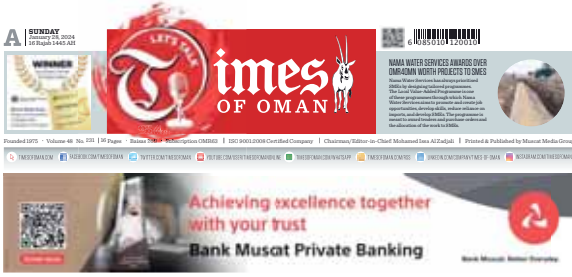
Since then there has been no looking back. From giving an insight into events and trends, both national and international, and maintaining its credibility and reliability, relevance and high standards, Times of Oman grew by leaps and bounds.

While the newspaper has had its share of trials and tribulations, it has been able to weather the storm and sail in this media ocean, always ahead. The past years can be summed up as a kaleidoscope of memories, friendship and relationships and how our organisation has undergone changes from time to time to be stronger and certainly more efficient than ever before.

Today, as Times Of Oman celebrated its 49th anniversary, it stays strong in its unwavering efforts to connect the glorious past to a brighter future. Also, technology has played a significant role in the evolution of the news and media industry.

With the landscape of journalism witnessing a sea-change, the newspaper also evolved successfully from being just a print media to the digital platform early with the extensive use of online resources. This has led to the expansion of its reach on social media, and also public engagements.

Presently, checking for news online through search engines, social media platforms and smartphone alerts has become almost a habit. While the Internet and social media platforms have made news more accessible, the news cycle also continues to move incredibly fast. This has also planted seeds for fake news to flourish where any information can go viral without any fact-checking.



Sohar Industrial City attracts 55 new investment offers



Indian embassy marks Republic Day



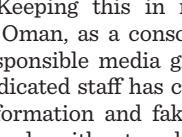
First partial anterior corneal transplant



Netherlands surprise India 2-2 in the final



Al Muscat Museum reopens



OMANI BANKS' PROFITS JUMP TO OMR453.5 MILLION IN 2023

The preliminary financial results showed an increase in the profits of all seven banks listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange.



Bank Muscat has reported a 10 per cent increase in its profits for 2023, reaching OMR453.5 million. The bank's assets grew by 15 per cent to OMR1.2 billion, while its capital base increased by 12 per cent to OMR1.1 billion.



Bank Dhofar has also reported a 10 per cent increase in its profits for 2023, reaching OMR150 million. The bank's assets grew by 10 per cent to OMR800 million, while its capital base increased by 8 per cent to OMR750 million.



Bank Sohar has reported a 10 per cent increase in its profits for 2023, reaching OMR100 million. The bank's assets grew by 10 per cent to OMR500 million, while its capital base increased by 8 per cent to OMR450 million.



Bank Baluchistan has reported a 10 per cent increase in its profits for 2023, reaching OMR50 million. The bank's assets grew by 10 per cent to OMR250 million, while its capital base increased by 8 per cent to OMR225 million.



Bank Oman has reported a 10 per cent increase in its profits for 2023, reaching OMR30 million. The bank's assets grew by 10 per cent to OMR150 million, while its capital base increased by 8 per cent to OMR135 million.



Bank Al-Faraj has reported a 10 per cent increase in its profits for 2023, reaching OMR20 million. The bank's assets grew by 10 per cent to OMR100 million, while its capital base increased by 8 per cent to OMR90 million.



Bank Al-Hajj has reported a 10 per cent increase in its profits for 2023, reaching OMR15 million. The bank's assets grew by 10 per cent to OMR75 million, while its capital base increased by 8 per cent to OMR67.5 million.



Bank Al-Nahdha has reported a 10 per cent increase in its profits for 2023, reaching OMR10 million. The bank's assets grew by 10 per cent to OMR50 million, while its capital base increased by 8 per cent to OMR45 million.



Bank Al-Taqwa has reported a 10 per cent increase in its profits for 2023, reaching OMR5 million. The bank's assets grew by 10 per cent to OMR25 million, while its capital base increased by 8 per cent to OMR22.5 million.

WEDNESDAY
October 6, 2022
9 Rials Al Awdi 1444 AH

OMAN, INDIA REVIEW BILATERAL COOPERATION
Soyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister received V. Narasimham, Minister of State for External Affairs of India on Tuesday. The two sides reviewed aspects of cooperation between Oman and India. >A2

LET'S TALK
imes OF OMAN

KING OF JORDAN ARRIVES IN OMAN
King Abdullah II of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Queen Rania Al Abdullah arrived on Tuesday on an official visit to the Sultanate of Oman lasting two days. His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq led the welcoming party for the Jordanian Monarch. When the jet of King Abdullah II touched ground at the Royal Airport, the Majesty the Sultan met the guest at the foot of the ramp, welcoming him and wishing him and the accompanying delegation a pleasant stay in Oman. >A4

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HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN, JORDAN KING DISCUSS REGIONAL AND GLOBAL ISSUES

His Majesty the Sultan hailed the King's visit to the Sultanate of Oman

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq held an official session of talks with King Abdullah II bin Al Hussein of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan at Al Alam Palace on Tuesday.

At the outset of the session, His Majesty the Sultan hailed the King's visit to the Sultanate of Oman.

He wished King Abdullah II and his accompanying delegation a pleasant stay. In his turn, the Royal guest expressed his sincere

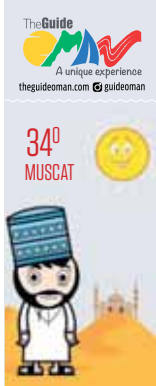
sentiments and appreciation for the warm reception and hospitality accorded to him by His Majesty the Sultan.

During the session, the two monarchs reviewed the march of deep-rooted relations binding Oman and Jordan. It also touched on various aspects of cooperation with a view to enhancing international ties and the Omani and Jordanian people's aspirations for progress and prosperity.

The two leaders also discussed regional and international developments. The official session of talks was attended from the Omani side by HH Sayyid Fahd bin Mahmoud Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for the Council of Ministers, HH Sayyid Asaad bin Turki Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan, HH Sayyid Shihab bin Turki Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs, HH Sayyid Thawain bin Haitham Al Said, Minister of Culture, Sports and Youth, Sayyid Khalid bin Haid Al Busaidi, Minister of the Diwan of Royal Court, Gen. Sultan bin Mohammed Al Nu'mani, Minister of the Royal Office, Sayyid

Hamoud bin Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior, Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister (Head of the Mission of Honour), Dr. Hamad bin Said Al Othbi, Head of the Private Office and Sheikh Hilal bin Marhoon Al Ma'amari, Ambassador of Oman to Jordan.

Meanwhile, it was attended from the Jordanian side by Prince Al Hussein bin Abdullah II, Crown Prince of Jordan, Dr. Baber Al Khasawneh, Prime Minister, Ayman Sufadi, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs and Expatriates, Jadir Hassan, Director of the King's Office and Amjad Al Qatwani, Ambassador of Jordan to Oman. >A5



Historic triumph for Seeb as they storm into AFC Cup final

Times Service

MUSCAT: Oman football fans erupted in joy as Muscat-based Seeb Club wrote a historic chapter in club football history of the Sultanate as they booked a place in the final of the 2022 AFC Cup on Tuesday. This is the first time that any Omani club has reached the final of AFC Cup, a continental competition.

Cherished by a large crowd of home fans, Seeb routed Bahrain's Al Riffa Club 4-0 at the Seeb Sports Stadium.

Seeb will meet the winner of the other zonal final between PFC Sogdiana and Kuala Lumpur City FC at the Sogdiana Sporting Complex in Jizzah, Uzbekistan. The AFC Cup final will be played on October 22.

The deadlock but a splendid second half performance saw the hosts record a convincing win. The hosts broke the stalemate with a strike soon after the resumption.

Led by newly-appointed coach Rashed Jaber, a former national team coach and winner of many domestic titles, Seeb drew the first blood two minutes into the second half when experienced striker Abdulaziz Al Mughal found the back of the net beating Al Riffa's goalkeeper Ahmed Al Fardan, who had a busy night.

The opening goal spurred the hosts as they went for the kill

and the introduction of Ahmed Al Siyahi turned out to be a successful one. A minute after Siyahi replaced an injured Mohammed Al Habsi, he scored the team's second goal. Al Mughal turned from scorer to provider, latching onto a long ball and outmuscled his marker before squaring for Siyahi to sweep home the second.

Talented Salal Al Yahyai seemed to have got the victory sealed with a calm finish in the dying minutes as Al al Busaidi sent a defence-splitting pass down the left.

Substitute Cosmos Dauda put the cherry on the cake to spark massive celebrations with the fourth goal of the night to complete the rout in added time. The Ghanaian forward found space inside the box and powered home a diving header past Al Fardan to sign off on the victory.



As Times Of Oman celebrated its 49th anniversary, it stays strong in its unwavering efforts to connect the glorious past to a brighter future



Keeping this in mind, Times of Oman, as a conscientious and responsible media group, and its dedicated staff has combated disinformation and fake news judiciously without undermining the benefits of digital media.

The Sultanate of Oman's largest and oldest English newspaper still continues and ensures to deliver high quality journalism and remains at the helm as the most trusted media house in Oman and the world.

Adding another feather to its media cap, Muscat Media Group won the Best ePaper-Concept Award at the 2023 edition of WAN-IFRA's Digital Media Awards Middle East. Following rigorous evaluation, nine winners were announced across diverse categories on December 5, 2023, with Muscat Media Group proudly standing as the sole victor from Oman.

A judge from WAN-IFRA's panel commended the award-winning concept, noting, "Great use of the digital platform, providing an interactive experience surpassing traditional print."

As Times of Oman celebrated its 49th anniversary, the newspaper assures its readers, well-wishers and friends its continued commitment to upholding the highest standards and ethics of journalism in the country.



Symposium on children’s theatre held at Muscat International Book Fair

The seminar tackled the concept of children theatre, its characteristics and significance it has on children

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani Theatre Association, in cooperation with the Cultural Committee of the 28th edition of Muscat International Book Fair, organised a seminar at the Children Theatre of Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on Saturday.



The seminar saw the participation of a number of personalities concerned with theatre including Dr. Kamla bint Al Waleed Al HInai, Yousef bin Mohammed al Balushi, Dr. Emad bin Mohsin Al Shanfari and Dr. Rahima bint Mubarak Al

Jabri. The seminar tackled the concept of children theatre and its characteristics and its significance for children. The participants in the seminar discussed the development of theatre in the Sultanate

and its association with education and sciences such as psychology and sociology among other fields. The seminar recommended several things including planning and finance of the children theatre in the Sultanate.



Earlier on 23 February, the Ministry of Information in cooperation with the Cultural Committee of Muscat International Book Fair organised two discussion sessions on the cultural achievements of Nizwa magazine 1994-2023 in which a number of personalities from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman participated. The participants discussed the services offered by Nizwa Magazine in the field of research and

studies among other issues. The participants also stated that Nizwa Magazine has created awareness for the various generations and discussed the role of social media in creating a new generation different from earlier generations. On the same day, Sultan Qaboos University (SQU) organised a discussion session at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre on the signatures of artists on their artworks in Mecca Region. -ONA

EMBASSY OF PAKISTAN IN MUSCAT

Achievements of Pakistani women in Oman celebrated

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Embassy of Pakistan in Muscat hosted an event to honour the accomplishments of Pakistani women residing in Oman. The event was the first of the three events that the Embassy plans to celebrate the Pakistan National Day 2024.

HH Sayyida Hujaija Jaifer Al Said was the Guest of Honour at the event and distributed certificates among the ladies.

The historic event, which was the first-of-its-kind, was organised to recognise the contributions and successes of Pakistani women across different spheres of life. Around 60 women from all walks of life, representing academia,



healthcare, entrepreneurship, arts and community service were recognised by the Embassy. During the ceremony, distinguished Pakistani women were accorded special recognition and presented with certificates as a

token of appreciation for their outstanding contributions to their respective fields and to the community in general. Ambassador of Pakistan to Oman, Imran Ali expressed his admiration to the Pakistani women



who excelled in their fields. He said that Pakistani women continue to inspire and lead in all spheres of life. He emphasised Pakistan Government’s unwavering commitment to promote gender equality, and enhancement of opportunities for women, both domestically and internationally. He was hopeful that such recognition of achievements at Embassy’s level would encourage more women to go beyond their conventional role in the society. Students of Pakistan School Muscat presented inspirational performance during the event.

FEBRUARY 27

Mwasalat announces new bus service to Sharjah from Muscat

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman National Transport Company (Mwasalat) has announced a new bus service to Sharjah, set to begin from February 27.

The bus service will be routed via Shinas and fares will begin from OMR10 (one-way) and OMR19 (return) with a baggage allowance of 7 kg for hand-carry and 23 kg for check-in.

The first bus will depart Muscat at 06.30 am from Azaiba bus station and reach Al Jubail bus station in Sharjah at 3.40 pm. The second service will start at 4 pm from Azaiba and reach Al Jubail at 1.10 am.

From Sharjah, the first bus will depart at 6.30 am from Al Jubail bus station to reach Azaiba bus station at 2.30 pm.

The second bus will start at 4 pm from Al Jubail bus station to reach Azaiba bus station at 11.50 pm.

The new service aims at ex-



panding the international network of bus transportation between Oman and the UAE, as well as boost tourism between the two countries and provide travel options for people.

Mwasalat, a subsidiary of ASYAD Group, signed an agreement with the Sharjah Roads and

Transport Authority (SRTA) of the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to operate daily bus trips between Muscat and Sharjah.

The agreement was signed by Badr Mohammed Al Nadabi, CEO of Mwasalat and Eng. Yousif Khamis Al Athmane, Chairman of SRTA.

JAPANESE MISSION

Digital heritage inventory project

MUSCAT: The Japanese mission began its supplementary season for the digital heritage inventory project.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism said: “In continuation of its efforts in documenting archaeological sites and establishing a database of sites, the Japanese mission began its supplementary season for the digital heritage inventory project with the participation of those concerned in the Department of Archaeological Sites in Bat, Al-Khutim, and Al-Ain in the Wilayat of Ibbi.”

In addition, the Department of Heritage and Tourism in North Al Batinah Governorate, in cooperation with the Sohar Fort Museum Department, organised a lecture on the results of surveys and excavations.

TOGETHERNESS COMPANY ANNOUNCES SELLING THE FOLLOWING LANDS AND PROPERTIES:

- 1 R/C Land with an area of 2934 m 2 in Ghala Heights.
- 2 5 Agricultural plots in Barka, a total area of 84,000 square meters, each plot with an authorized well.
- 3 R/C Building with an area of 1883 square meters in Saham, with a commercial Showroom on it.
- 4 R/C Building with an area of 547 square meters in Buraimi, a building containing 8 shops and 10 apartments.
- 5 Residential Plot in the state of Bidiyah - area 96,847 square meters.
- 6 Farm with Well & Tourism permit with area 45,000 square meters at Bidiyah.
- 6 R/C shops, with an area of 1944 square meters, it includes a market consisting of 19 shops in wilayat bidiyah.
- 7 R/C Land with an area of 1044 square meters and an existing Running hotel in the Wilayat of Mahut/Hajj.
- 8 R/C building, with an area of 1,572 square meters, it includes hotel apartments and shops (running condition) in wilayat bidiyah.
- 9 R/C Land in Masairah located at centre with area 600m 2.
- 9 4 Industrial plots in Duqm, total area 30,000 square meters.
- 10 R/C Land with an area of 750 square meters in Duqm.

Contact at: - + 968 92822040, +968 97365897
www.togethernessrealestate.com



MUSCAT MUNICIPALITY
Advertisement No.(7/2024)

Muscat Municipality invites interested companies to the following biddings :

Sl. No	Bidding No.	Bidding description	Document fee	Deadline for obtaining bidding docs.	Deadline for inquires submission	Deadline for submission
1	1/2024	Investing of Plot No. (2939) at Wilayat Al-Amerat	150/- OMR	25/04/2024	30/04/2024	25/05/2024
2	2/2024	Investing Of Plot No. (2380) at Wilayat Al-Seeb	150/- OMR	10/03/2024	12/03/2024	02/04/2024
3	3/2024	Managing & Operating of Sales Outlet (kiosk) in Mabella South at Al Seeb	25/- OMR	10/03/2024	12/03/2024	02/04/2024
4	4/2024	Managing & Operating of a Container-style café at Directorate of Muscat Municipality - Seeb	25/- OMR	10/03/2024	12/03/2024	02/04/2024
5	5/2024	Constructing, Managing & Operating of Sports fields in Wady Kabeer Garden – Matrah	150/- OMR	10/03/2024	12/03/2024	02/04/2024
6	6/2024	Managing & Operating of Sports Fields (Football, Basketball, Volleyball) at Al - Mabella - Al Seeb	150/- OMR	10/03/2024	12/03/2024	02/04/2024
7	7/2024	Constructing, Managing & Operating of sports fields (Padel) in Mabella South at Seeb	150/- OMR	10/03/2024	12/03/2024	02/04/2024
8	8/2024	Managing & Operating of Skating Field at Al -Mabella - Seeb	150/- OMR	10/03/2024	12/03/2024	02/04/2024
9	9/2024	Supply, Install & Operate of a Cafe Container in Madenat Sultan Qaboos - Boshier	25/- OMR	10/03/2024	12/03/2024	02/04/2024
10	10/2024	Managing & Operating of (4) Containers Located in Plot No. (651) Phase (1) at Boshier	25/- OMR	10/03/2024	12/03/2024	02/04/2024

Registered companies with Muscat Municipality which are Specialized in above bid are invited to participate as per the following procedures:

1. Company registration with Muscat Municipality have to be valid as per note number one below, to be able to get the bid document.

2. Pay the specified document fee for the requested bid via bank deposit to Muscat Municipality's Bank account as follows:
Bank Muscat 0423010702710024

3. A copy of the transaction's receipt MUST be send to the following e-mail (MM.PC@mm.gov.om), provided with the company data (name and bid number, delegate name,office phone number, mobile number, email address approved by the company and commercial registration number of the company).

4. The tender document will be provided to the company via email.

5. 12:00 PM on the above mentioned dates, is the last timing for obtaining Bidding Documents. Any bid's document request received after the specified time will not be considered, even if the fee of the document is paid.

Submitted offers must be accompanied with a bond mentioned in the tender document valid for a period not less than (90) days issued by any local bank in Oman addressed to Muscat Municipality. Bidding that do not meet the required bond will not be accepted.

Documents must be enclosed in a plain closed envelope (without any company information) and drop in the box located in bulding (A) in Muscat Municipality, Head Office, Darsait.

NOTES:

1. Companies which are not registered in Muscat Municipality or their registration has been expired shall register through the municipality's website (www.mm.gov.om). For technical support, please contact Muscat Municipality through this email (crm@mm.gov.om).

2. If the bidders have any inquiries regarding the scope of the work, they have to sent their inquiries through the following e-mail (MM.PC@mm.gov.om)

3. 10:00 AM on the above submission mentioned dates, is the last timing for receiving bids. Offers submitted after the above mentioned date & time shall not be accepted for any reason.

4. Muscat Municipality has the right to accept or reject any offer without assigning any reason.

Website: www.mm.gov.om

New Criminal Laws to come into force in India from July 1

The Laws were passed by the Indian Parliament, on 21st December, 2023, which there upon received Presidential assent on 25th December, 2023 and was published in the official gazette on the same day

NEW DELHI: The Centre Government through the Ministry of Home Affairs on Saturday notified that the three Acts - Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Sanhita shall



come into force on July 1, 2024. The Government issued three different notification for each new law which stated that “the Central Government hereby appoints the 1st day of July, 2024 as the date on which the provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Sanhita, except the provisions of the entry relating to section 106(2) in the First Schedule, shall come into force. The Laws were passed by the Indian Parliament, on 21st December, 2023, which there upon received Presidential assent on 25th December, 2023 and was published in the official gazette on the same day.

lished in the official gazette on the same day. Earlier, the Bar Council of India (BCI) issued a statement and stated that these criminal law aims to replace the existing body of criminal laws in India. BCI appreciated removing Colonial and outdated criminal laws, such as the sedition section, which fosters a more inclusive and democratic legal environment by respecting freedom of expression. The BCI recognised the introduction of provisions addressing contemporary challenges, including the categorization of mob lynching as a separate offense, encompassing hate crimes based on race, caste, community, sex,

language, or place of birth. Effective implementation and victim support will be critical. Sensitivity training for police and judiciary could help ensure unbiased and trauma-informed handling of such cases. On the issue, Dr Adish Aggarwala, President, Supreme Court Bar Association on Thursday said, many a colonial-era law had been hanging around like an albatross around the neck of the Indian legal fraternity even 75 years after Independence. Now, the soul and spirit of the Bharat have been infused into the key criminal laws Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, and Bharatiya Sakshya Sanhita that would replace the archaic and outdated Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Evidence Act. Dr Aggarwala also said, that the entire lawyer fraternity across the Bharat gratefully acknowledges and recognizes the beneficial aspects of the recast penal laws, and pledges its unstinted support and cooperation to make this historic effort of the union government a success, stated in media statement issued. —ANI

PARLIAMENT

Germany’s Bundestag overwhelmingly approves naval mission in the Red Sea

BERLIN: Germany’s parliament, the Bundestag, overwhelmingly approved a new mandate committing the Bundeswehr to deploy as many as 700 soldiers, as well as materiel including the navy frigate Hessen, to the Red Sea until at least February 2025 as part of an EU mission aimed at providing safe passage to commercial vessels under threat of attack from nearby Houthi rebels. Berlin estimates the cost of the deployment will be about €56 million (\$60.6 million). Friday’s vote saw wide support for the mandate, with 538 parliamentarians voting for it and only 31 against, with four abstentions. With that, the frigate Hessen and its 240-member crew can continue to motor from Crete to the Red Sea to join Italian and Danish sailors participating in the EU’s Greek-led Aspidos mission. The Yemen-based Houthis have



been attacking vessels in the area for months, ostensibly out of solidarity with Hamas and Palestinian civilians under counterattack from Israel in the Gaza Strip. The situation in the Red Sea has greatly disrupted global trade, some 12% of which generally crosses the Red Sea to enter and exit the Suez Canal. The security situation has caused many shipping companies to avoid the area, costing them extreme amounts of extra time and money as this means ships must round South Africa to get to and from their destinations. The EU’s current mission theater encompasses the Red Sea’s international waters as well as the

Bab-el-Mandeb Strait, the Gulf of Aden, the Gulf of Oman, the Persian Gulf and the Strait of Hormuz. The EU, which finalised the Aspidos mission on Monday, intends to send at least four warships with accompanying air support in the form of helicopters and drones, to protect shipping and gather situational intelligence. Troops are to be deployed in a solely defensive posture and are not mandated to directly attack Houthi positions. Germany’s military is of the opinion that the Hessen is well-suited for the mission, especially regarding its air reconnaissance capabilities. German naval experts expect they could be attacked with missiles, drones and explosives-laden “kamikaze boats.” Defence Minister Boris Pistorius said the mission would “help stabilise the region” and also called it “one of the most dangerous in decades.” —DW

NEW NATO CHIEF SELECTION

Eastern allies haven’t abandoned hopes for NATO post

BRUSSELS: It’s undoubtedly late in the game but supporters of Estonian Prime Minister Kaja Kallas and Romanian President Klaus Iohannis hope it’s not too late to block the outgoing Dutch prime minister’s well-paved path to the helm at NATO. The process of selecting a new NATO chief has traditionally been done away from the public eye, with consensus reached in discussion behind closed doors in various capital cities. Openly elevating one’s ambitions to become secretary general would be unseemly, even as candidates work behind the scenes to build the required support. Despite all this secrecy, it’s long been clear that Rutte is considered the “safe choice” by the majority of allies. He would replace Jens Stoltenberg, the second-longest serving secretary general in history, when he leaves in October, after a decade on the job. NATO wants its decision made before the European Union starts shuffling seats after the June elections and the United States votes in November. However the presumption that this is largely a done deal has just been rattled by a new social media push supporting the Estonian prime minister and a report by news agency Bloomberg on Thursday that the Romanian president will also throw his hat in the ring. The Dutch leader is praised for his long political career and familiarity with his counterparts, but when it comes to NATO, he doesn’t possess some of the char-



acteristics many would like to see in a new secretary general: That is, a change of gender and origin, preferably from a country meeting NATO’s targeted 2% of GDP spending on defense. The Netherlands was only at 1.7% in 2023, with a promise to do better this year. Estonia spends more than 3% of its GDP on its military; Romania, just under 2.5%. Given these previous priorities, Kallas has publicly questioned the front-runner status of Rutte, but that hasn’t propelled her into more serious consideration herself. Ben Tallis, a senior fellow at the German Council on Foreign Relations, helped fuel a bump for Kallas coming out of the Munich Security Conference last weekend. He believes her straight-talking style of leadership is necessary at NATO, tagging her in his X-post as the “best for the collective west.” Other prominent voices joined him, including Andrew Michta, Director of the Scowcroft Strategy Initiative at the Atlantic Council, who said Rutte is “not the right

candidate and it sends the wrong message,” preferring someone from one of the eastern flank allies who “understand the existential nature of the threat” from Russia. But, Michta asserts, “There is still time to course-correct.” Tallis suggests the momentum created on X, formerly Twitter, contributed to the seemingly abrupt decisions by the governments of the US, UK, France and Germany to announce their endorsements of Rutte over the last couple of days. He interprets this as an effort to discourage dissent that could delay consensus around Rutte. “The fact that such a credible candidate [as Kallas] is getting a groundswell of popular support is frightening for people who want to try and fix this in a backdoor elite kind of way,” he said. Tallis believes the opaque, unwritten traditional method of selecting a new NATO chief is a bigger problem than any single candidate’s viability. “They’re trying to put a lid on

this process, but if they do, it’s only going to stir up trouble for the future,” he said, “because people have become involved in the politics of their defense over the last two years to a greater degree than in the last generation and people have to feel represented in that process, not shut out of it. Otherwise, we’re going to face yet more problems with our democracies.” Tallis is in favor of the earlier expectations that the next secretary general would not be a northern European, after Stoltenberg from Norway, and his predecessors Anders Fogh Rasmussen from Denmark and Jaap de Hoop Scheffer from the Netherlands. “We’ve had central and eastern European countries in NATO for 25 years, and they have not once had a secretary general,” Tallis noted, adding that, with war at NATO’s doorstep, a leader who’s lived there would carry significant legitimacy. That’s a theme echoed by Cristian Dorobantu, an adviser on security and defense in the Romanian parliament who believes his country’s outgoing president would best fit the bill, given Europe’s current security context. “There is a feeling in eastern Europe regarding [NATO’s] stance on Russia,” he told DW from Bucharest. “That it’s been too tight, including the sanctions, the actions, the help that’s being sent to Ukraine and the whole situation in general.” Dorobantu notes that Iohannis’ name has been raised before, when it seemed Stoltenberg was about to leave. —DW



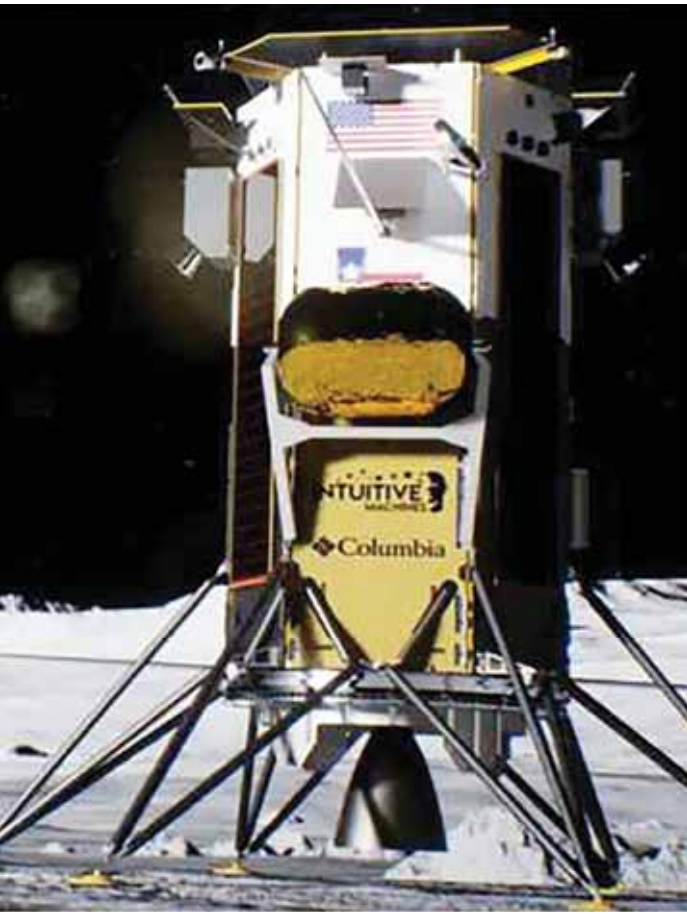
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INTUITIVE MACHINES MISSION

Private US moon lander seen tipped sideways but ‘alive’



FLORIDA: The Odysseus moon lander — now the first private spacecraft to reach the lunar surface — tipped over on landing but is “alive and well,” the company behind the vehicle said. The lander is said to have caught one of its six feet on the moon’s surface during its final descent, tipped over and come to rest sideways, possibly leaning against a rock, an analysis by flight engineers showed, according to Houston-based Intuitive Machines. It was initially thought to have landed upright after Thursday’s nail-biting touchdown. **First US lunar lander in over 50 years** Odysseus — the first US lunar lander in over 50 years — is currently close to its intended landing site near the Malapert A crater, some 200 miles (300 kilometres) to the south pole. NASA, Intuitive Machines’ main customer, aimed for it to get as close as possible to the pole to scout out the region before astronauts attempt a landing later this decade. “Odysseus is alive and well,” the company’s account said earlier on Friday on the social media website X, formerly Twitter. Despite being in a far from ideal position, five of the six NASA science and technology payloads

were mounted on portions of the vehicle left exposed and receptive to communications, “which is very good for us,” chief executive officer Stephen Altemus said. “We do have communications with the lander,” he said, adding that ground crew were working to obtain the first photo images from the lunar surface from the landing site. However, the communication was limited since two of the lander’s antennas were pointing toward the surface. “We think we can meet all the needs of the commercial payloads” as well, Altemus said. Intuitive Machines mission director Tim Crain said he believed that the payloads aboard the lander would be able to operate for about nine or 10 days, after which solar power would run out when the sun sets on the landing site. A total of five countries, including the United States, Japan and India, have managed to land on the lunar surface so far, with several others like South Korea trying. Japan was the latest country to score a landing, but its lander also ended up on its side last month. Last August, India landed its Chandrayaan-3 probe near the moon’s south pole, marking a historic touchdown. The country has announced plans to set up a space station by 2040. —DW

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TENDER NOTICE

Ref: ISB/Tender/2023-24 dated 25/02/2024

Bids are invited from interested parties for the following tenders:

Sl. No	Name of Tender	Tender No.	Tender Documents available from	Tender Submission Date	Tender Fee. (R.O.)
01	Civil / modification work for 4 new additional rooms.	A0019/2023-24	25/02/2024	05/03/2024	10.000
02	AMC contract for swimming pool maintenance	A0019/2023-24	25/02/2024	05/03/2024	10.000
03	AMC contract for generator, de-watering pump, ups maintenance.	A0021/2023-24	25/02/2024	05/03/2024	10.000
04	AMC contract for RO fillers system	A0022/2023-24	25/02/2024	05/03/2024	10.000

- Tender documents can be collected from the ISB office, till a day before the date of submission.
- Inquiries and requests for clarifications regarding the above Tenders shall be submitted through **emails to PURCHASE@ISBOMAN.COM**
- Sealed tenders, inscribing the tender Name and Number only, on the envelope to be dropped in the tender box placed in ISB, on/before 01.00 PM of the tender submission date; along with all necessary details and supporting documents. ISB reserves the right to reject any or all tenders without assigning any reasons whatsoever.

US condemns Israel plan to build more West Bank settlements

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said at a press briefing on a visit to Buenos Aires that he was disappointed by the Israeli announcement, adding that the settlements were “inconsistent with international law”

WEST BANK: The US has condemned an Israeli proposal to build more than 3,300 new homes in settlements in the occupied West Bank in response to a fatal Palestinian shooting attack.

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said at a press briefing on a visit to Buenos Aires that he was disappointed by the Israeli announcement, adding that the settlements were “inconsistent with international law.”

“Our administration maintains a firm opposition to settlement expansion, and in our judgment this only weakens, doesn’t strengthen Israel’s security.”

Israel’s far-right finance minister Bezalel Smotrich announced plans for the new settlements late Thursday, after three Palestinian gunmen opened fire on cars near the Maale Adumim settlement, killing one Israeli and wounding five.



“The serious attack on Maale Adumim must have a determined security response but also a settlement response,” Smotrich wrote on X, formerly Twitter. “Our enemies know that any harm to us will lead to more construction and more development and more of our hold all over the country.”

UN figures have shown a spike in incidents of settler violence in the occupied West Bank since the Israel-Hamas war began on October 7.

UN rights chief slams ‘entrenched impunity’

The United Nations Human Rights Office has said that gross human rights violations are being committed by all parties in the conflict between Israel and the Palestinian group Hamas in the Gaza Strip.

In its annual report, covering the 12 months to October 31, 2023, the agency said clear violations of international humanitarian law, “including possible war crimes, have been committed by all par-

ties” since the start of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza.

The report cited unlawful killings, hostage-taking, the wanton destruction of civilian property, collective punishment, strikes on civilian infrastructure, forced displacement, incitement to hatred and violence, sexual assault and torture.

Volker Türk, the UN body’s chief, condemned “entrenched impunity” and demanded accountability for the perpetrators’ actions.

“The entrenched impunity reported by our office for decades cannot be permitted to continue,” he said.

UN experts call for arms embargo against Israel

Experts from the United Nations have called on the international community to immediately stop all exports of weapons and ammunition to Israel.

They said any transfer of arms that would be used in Gaza “is

likely to violate international humanitarian law” and “must cease immediately.”

“The need for an arms embargo on Israel is heightened by the International Court of Justice’s ruling on 26 January 2024 that there is a plausible risk of genocide in Gaza and the continuing serious harm to civilians since then,” the experts, who included over 30 UN special rapporteurs, declared in a statement distributed by the UN Human Rights Office in Geneva.

The statement pointed to the suspension of arms transfers to Israel by Belgium, Italy, Spain, the Netherlands and the Japanese company Itochu Corporation.

The US and Germany are by far the biggest exporters of weapons to Israel. And arms shipments to the country have increased since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza, which was sparked by a deadly Hamas attack on southern Israel on October 7. —dw

8 YEARS IN ABSENTIA

Tunisia court sentences ex-president

TUNIS: A court in Tunisia sentenced former President Moncef Marzouki to eight years in prison on Friday after he was found guilty in absentia of seeking to “provoke disorder.”

Marzouki, who was Tunisia’s first democratically elected head of state after the country’s 2011 Arab Spring revolution, lives in France and was not present at the hearing. A spokesperson for the court said the verdict was based on statements by Marzouki that included incitement in a speech he gave in Paris.

Marzouki was previously sentenced to four years in absentia in 2021 after he called for France to end its support for strongman President Kais Saied.

Saied, who was elected democratically in 2019, began a crackdown in 2021 that saw him dismiss the prime minister and dissolve parliament. —dw

FORMER AUSTRALIAN PRIME MINISTER

‘India is the world’s emerging democratic superpower’

NEW DELHI: Former Australian Prime Minister Tony Abbott heaped praise on India, calling the nation the world’s emerging democratic superpower and saying that India, right now, is roaring down the runway to a full economic takeoff.

Abbott said that the relationship between India and Australia is a very strong one, and added that the great thing about doing business with India is that no one is going to suddenly stop the trade for capricious reasons.

While speaking to ANI, Abbott said, “The relationship at present. It’s a very strong relationship, and it’s getting stronger all the time...India is, as I keep saying, the world’s emerging democratic superpower. I think right now India is roaring down the Runway to a full economic takeoff. You only have to look at the way infrastructure is being built in all of India’s major cities to know that.”

On the vandalisation of Hindu temples in Australia, Abbott said that he is conscious of the fact and



it is done by a tiny minority.

“It is a solid relationship and getting stronger all the time. Yes, I am conscious of the fact that there has been a bit of graffiti and other ugly defacements of temples, but I think this is just by a tiny minority... It’s been a little bit of dis-

agreement inside the Australian-Indian community rather than any difficulty between Australia as a whole and our Indian immigrants,” he emphasised.

Various Hindu temples were reportedly vandalised in Australia in the recent past.

India condemned the incidents of vandalism at Hindu temples in Australia, saying the matter has been raised with the Australian government in Canberra.

New Delhi also sought an expeditious investigation to nail the perpetrators. Abbott also stated

that India, currently, is a far more business-friendly place than it was a decade ago.

“The great thing about doing business with India is that no one is going to suddenly stop the trade for capricious reasons. The great thing about investing in India is no one is going to suddenly nationalise your investment or prevent you from taking profits from out of the country,” Abbott told ANI.

“India is a wonderful place to do business. Today, India is a far more business-friendly place than it was a decade ago...” he said.

Notably, India and Australia have several commonalities, which serve as a foundation for closer cooperation and multifaceted interaction. The two countries cooperate in various multi-lateral forums.

India and Australia have commercial ties dating back to the 18th century, and the Defence Cooperation between India and Australia has also expanded significantly in recent years. —ANI

CENTRAL AFRICAN NATION

The root causes of Cameroon’s youth brain drain

YAOUNDE: Cameroon’s government officials say that more than 6,000 teachers, doctors and nurses have left their jobs in public service within the past three months. Europe has long been a destination for most Cameroonians, but increasing numbers are finding opportunities in Canada, where immigration schemes favor young migrants.

The impact in Cameroon has been bad enough to gain the attention of President Paul Biya.

The 91-year-old president, who has led Cameroon since 1982, released a statement lamenting the youth’s increasing desire to leave the Central African nation for greater opportunities. In laboured sentences, Biya appealed to young Cameroonians’ sense of patriotism and duty to remain in Cameroon, saying leaving was “not the solution” to Cameroon’s problems.

The message has been broadcast in the capital, Yaounde, by state media ever since Cameroon celebrated its National Youth Day on February 11. At the Government High School Nyom, it blasts through speakers each morning.

But Biya’s words seem to fall on deaf ears. Not even teachers like 37-year-old Josian Minta are listening. She already tried leaving Cameroon once for Thailand two years ago. But she was turned away at the Thai airport due to an invalid visa.

“We went to Nigeria, to Abuja. I had to send my passport to Kenya. An agent told me, ‘Okay, everything is ready, your visa is ready,’” she told DW. “So, when I went to Thailand, at the airport, the immigration officers took my passport, and they were asking how I got the visa.” Even though Minta said she was happy Biya addressed the issue, primarily due to her unpleasant experience emigrating, she said she would not obey Biya’s ad-



vice for youths to remain in Cameroon and serve their fatherland. In fact, Minta said she would raise money to legally travel to Canada, where she believes many opportunities and better pay await.

Tumenta F. Kennedy, a Cameroon-based international migration consultant, said poor working

conditions and low salaries have been a significant push factor. “You can’t use moral appeal or patriotism to make people stay,” Kennedy told DW, adding that humans are driven by their dignity and ability to meet their basic needs.

“Addressing the mass movement requires efforts on address-

ing the root causes of migration, such as political instability, economic hardships, lack of job opportunities and last but not the least, security concerns.”

Cameroon faces three humanitarian crises: In the far North near Lake Chad, there is insecurity due to the presence of Nigeria’s militant Islamist group Boko Haram. In the Northwest and Southwest regions, Cameroon is grappling with the Anglophone crisis, where separatists are clamouring for independence. The country also has to contend with instability in neighboring Central African Republic.

In addition, Cameroon faces high unemployment, and many other national challenges. Currently, the nation hosts over half a million refugees, and the European Commission estimates that around 4 million people in Cameroon need humanitarian assistance.

Angeline Fua, a 32-year-old



pharmacist, says her desire to leave Cameroon increases daily because her salary is way below what other pharmacists earn abroad.

“As a pharmacist, they pay you 80,000 CFA francs (\$132, €121). Meanwhile, in other countries like Canada and the United States, you hear of people being paid 500,000 CFA francs and above,” Fua told DW, as she complained about the rising cost of living.

“I am a mother. I should take care of my children, pay their fees; I have my plans, and projects, but with what we earn in Cameroon, it is really not possible.”

Kennedy says traditional European destinations have closed their doors to would-be immigrants. “Going to Germany, France or Belgium to study is a nightmare,” Tumenta noted, stressing that many Cameroonians now pre-

fer North America. He added that the “best young brains” are leaving Cameroon.

“We have seen an aggressive advertisement coming up in the last few years from Canada and the United States, and this has been done through a very appealing approach,” Kennedy said. “You don’t see Canadians advertising study in Canada, but you see Cameroonians that have made their life, they now open an agency back in Cameroon facilitating legal migration to Canada.”

Canada has also specifically targeted francophone Africans to work in its French-speaking province of Quebec. And with respect to the US, Cameroon said 2023 saw a 70% increase in people applying for the US Diversity Visa Lottery, also known as the Green Card Lottery, which awards immigrant visas. —dw

SPORTS

Jaiswal led India from the front as England spinners dominate

India were 219/7 at the close of play on second day with the runs coming in 73 overs. Dhruv Jurel (30) and Kuldeep Yadav (17) were unbeaten on the crease

RANCHI : England spinners Shoaib Bashir and Tom Hartley dominated proceedings on the second day of the fourth Test but Yashasvi Jaiswal's 73 and an unbroken 42-run partnership between Dhruv Jurel (30) and Kuldeep Yadav helped India stage a partial comeback.

India were 219/7 at the close of play on second day with the runs coming in 73 overs. Dhruv Jurel (30) and Kuldeep Yadav (17) were unbeaten on the crease and patiently negotiated England's attack. Earlier in the day, England were bowled out for 353 with Joe Root unbeaten on 122. The visitors



still have a lead of 134 runs.

India resumed the post-Tea session at 131/4 with Yashasvi Jaiswal and Sarfaraz Khan unbeaten on scores of 54(96) and 1(7) respectively. Both the batters were able to add on another 30 runs before the hosts lost the wicket of Jaiswal.

His 73 runs came from 117 balls and included eight fours and a six.

Inside 16 runs, the Rohit Sharma-led side lost the two wickets of batters Sarfaraz Khan (14) and Ravindra Jadeja (12) at 171 and 177 runs respectively.

The highest wicket-taker for the

Three Lions was young off-spinner Shoaib Bashir who snapped four wickets in his spell of 32 overs while conceding 83 runs. Two wickets were grabbed by left-arm spinner Tom Hartley in his spell of 19 overs.

In the post-lunch session, Shub-

man Gill and Jaiswal sought to steady India's innings after skipper Rohit Sharma went to the pavilion early after scoring only two runs.

After drinks, Bashir entered the fray and trapped Gill (38) front of the stumps. Gill challenged the on-

field decision but the call did not go in his favour.

Jaiswal continued his form for his third Test half-century. Rajat Patidar, who replaced Gill, tried to rotate the strike and was out after scoring 17 runs. Ravindra Jadeja, who was next on the crease, sent Tom Hartley for back-to-back sixes to announce his arrival but eventually lost his wicket to Bashir. Sarfaraz, who scored two half-centuries, in his debut match could score only 14 runs.

England resumed the day at 302 for 7 and Ollie Robinson went on to score his maiden Test half-century in 81 balls. Robinson and Joe Root's partnership for the eighth wicket went past 100 runs.

India desperately needed a breakthrough as England looked on track for a big first innings total. Jadeja struck for the hosts breaking a 102-run partnership dismissing Robinson caught behind for a well-made 58.

Jadeja struck again in the same over dismissing Shoaib Bashir, who was caught by Rajat Patidar for a duck. The left-arm spinner went on to wrap up the English team dismissing James Anderson's leg before wicket for no score ending up with four wickets.

Brief Score: India 219/7 in 73 overs (Yashasvi Jaiswal 73, Shubman Gill 38, Shoaib Bashir 4/84) vs England 353 (Joe Root 122*, Ollie Robinson 58; Ravindra Jadeja 4/67, Akash Deep 3/83). -ANI

CROATIAN BRANKO IVANKOVIC

Ivankovic appointed coach of China men's football team

BEIJING: The Chinese Football Association (CFA) announced on Saturday that Croatian Branko Ivankovic has been appointed head coach of the Chinese men's national team, replacing Aleksandar Jankovic of Serbia following the poor results from the Asian Cup.

"In order to prepare for the upcoming 2026 World Cup qualifiers, the CFA decided, after the assessment of experts, to hire Branko Ivankovic as the new head coach of China's men's national team," read a CFA statement.

Ivankovic, who turns 70 next week, had coached several European clubs, including Germany's Hannover 96 and Croatia's GNK Dinamo Zagreb, as well as the national teams of Iran and Oman.

The veteran coach also led Shandong Taishan to lift the Chinese Super League trophy in the 2010 season.

Jankovic was named China coach in February last year, and then led the Chinese team to overturn Thailand 2-1 in the opening match of 2026 World Cup qualifiers last November.



But the honeymoon period ended shortly as China failed to survive the group stage in the Asian Cup in January this year with two goalless ties and a 1-0 loss.

"Due to the Chinese team's failure to enter the knockout stage in Asian Cup, the contract between CFA and Jankovic terminated automatically," the CFA said. "The CFA is thankful for the hard work of coach Jankovic and his coaching team, and wish them all the best."

Ivankovic is set to make his debut in March, when China play against Singapore in back-to-back World Cup qualifiers. -Xinhua

FOOTBALL

I am behind their ambitions: Erik Ten on ManU takeover

MANCHESTER: Manchester United manager Erik Ten Hag stated that he isn't feeling any pressure following Jim Ratcliffe's partial takeover of the club.

Manchester United officially announced the sale of 25 per cent of the club to Ratcliffe's INEOS group. The deal was struck in December but it was made official this week.

The new ownership has vowed to restore the status of the club that the Red Devils has been struggling to maintain since the departure of Alex Ferguson in 2013.

Ten Hag stated that the same ambition is shared by the two and he doesn't feel any pressure since the arrival of the new ownership.

"We speak a lot and I have had many conversations with him and Dave Brailsford about this club and about the team and structures. We are very aligned, and I am behind their ambitions. I think it totally fits with the ambitions I have and with the ones I had when I came in. We are in that project and for me I am now



18/19 months in, and I see we are going in the right direction," Ten Hag told reporters as quoted from the club's official website.

Manchester United had an underwhelming start to the season. They were struggling to get wins and got knocked out of the UEFA Champions League. However, in the past few weeks, they have shown signs of improvement as they clinched four consecutive victories in the Premier League.

"Yes, we have had setbacks in the second season, but you can see the team coming. You

see the squad progressing and developing. We need to keep going with that process, work hard on the training pitch and work hard during games. Of course, it is very important to have the players fit but also to construct a squad which is robust. I'm sure we will be very strong and will be even stronger when we add to this squad, even more quality," Ten Hag added.

Manchester United will look to extend their unbeaten run as they gear up to face Fulham at the Old Trafford. -ANI

RED DEVILS

Antony has to prove a point: Manchester United manager

MANCHESTER [UK] : Manchester United manager Erik Ten Hag admitted that the Brazilian winger Antony is yet to prove a point since signing for the club in 2022.

Antony was brought in by the Red Devils for a hefty price tag of \$109 million. In his 44 Premier League appearances, he has scored just four goals and two assists.

He is currently struggling to find form and is currently down the pecking order with the likes of Alejandro Garnacho, Marcus Rashford and Amad Diallo.

"He has to prove a point, that he will do. And he has big potential. He hasn't shown it lately, but I know what his talent is, and it's about proving his talent, and it's about him. And, yeah, he will probably get his opportunities, right? But, yeah, I think that was always the idea," Ten Hag said.

"You have competition, and now he has to show himself on the training pitch, but also others be-



cause we have opportunities there. With [Amad] Diallo returning from an injury, he's doing well in the training. Omari Forson is doing well. So we have options to fill in those positions. And it's not set that Marcus Rashford has to play as a center forward," he added.

Antony has scored just a goal in the last 25 appearances and will be looking to make the most of the opportunity.

The Brazilian could be in contention to feature in the next coming games after United on Friday confirmed that Rasmus Hojlund will miss out the next two to three weeks due to a muscle injury. -ANI

FULL-SET THRILLER

China edge host South Korea to reach men's table tennis final

BUSAN, SOUTH KOREA: China withstood huge pressure from hosts South Korea to triumph in a full-set thriller here on Saturday, moving one win away from achieving its 11th straight men's title at the ITTF World Team Table Tennis Championships Finals.

In the semifinal clash which lasted over three hours, world No. 1 Fan Zhendong picked up two wins and saved China from the brink of defeat, while Wang Chuqin made amends for his opening loss with a straight-game victory in the decisive matchup.

Amid the loud cheers from the crowd at the full-packed Busan Exhibition and Convention Center, Wang stepped up to the table first, facing off against Jang Woojin, the highest-ranked player in South Korea's squad.

Fueled by the home crowd's support, the 14th-ranked Jang raced ahead by one game at 11-7, but Wang pocketed eight points in a row on his way to an 11-2 victory in the second game to restore parity.

As both players focused on their



first three strokes, quite a few rallies were seen for the most part of the match. Down 1-4 in the third game, Wang went neck and neck with his rival for an 11-all tie, before the home paddler scored two straight points to prevail.

Facing a 1-4 deficit in the fourth game, Wang called a timeout, while Jang's two catch-net points thwarted the comeback effort from the world No. 2, who fell 11-6 as it marked the first dropped set for the reigning champions in the Busan event.

"His play went beyond my expectations," admitted Wang. "He had a tight grip of the match, and

I was a little impatient when I had some chances."

Fan was next to hit the court, with the 18th-ranked Lim Jonghoon across the table. Fan went ahead 7-4 in the opening game, but Lim put it on level terms at 7-all, before Fan kept his cool to win the game 11-8.

China's top-ranked paddler had a perfect winning record in his previous four encounters with Lim, and he gained the upper hand throughout their duel, prevailing 11-6, 11-8 in the next two games to put his side level on the scoreboard.

The two sides turned to their

veterans in the third set. 33-year-old home paddler Lee Sang-su took the initiative with an 11-7 victory in the first game. However, 35-year-old Olympic champion Ma Long, who had a 7-1 win-loss record in their head-to-heads, soon evened the match at 11-4.

In a pivotal third game, after the two players tied at 10-all, Lee snatched two late points to move ahead again.

Despite emerging victorious 11-6 in the fourth game to level the score again, Ma fell 11-4 in the deciding game as South Korea gained a 2-1 advantage.

"Lee was more resolute than me in the deciding game. As I didn't grasp the opportunity when I led in the third game, I began to lose my momentum from there," said Ma.

Stepping on the court again, Fan and Jang put on their duel between the two sides' No. 1 paddlers. With the defending champions' hope of forcing the decisive matchup resting on his shoulders, Fan lived up to his task, prevailing 11-6, 11-7, 12-10 with both teams returning to level terms. -Xinhua

OIL SPILL RESPONSE DRILL
The Port of Duqm organised an extensive Oil Spill Response training programme for all relevant stakeholders and an Oil Spill Mock Drill, in the presence of Dr Ali Al Sunaidi, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones at Duqm.

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



INVESTORS' FOCUS
Investors focused on shares of energy companies on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) during the week amid positive expectations of improved financial performance of companies that have faced many challenges over the past two years.



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Credit granted by banks rises to OMR30.4 billion

The CBO report further reveals that credit granted to the private sector recorded a growth of 4.7 percent reaching OMR25.5 billion by the end of December 2023



MUSCAT: The total credit granted by the banking sector in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 4.3 percent to reach OMR30.4 billion by the end of December 2023, according to the data issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO).

The CBO report further reveals that credit granted to the private sector recorded a growth of 4.7 percent reaching OMR25.5 billion by the end of December 2023.

Data related to its distribution among various sectors indicated that the personal loan sector received the largest share of loans at 45.2 percent, followed by non-financial companies at 45 percent, while the remaining share of loans was distributed among the financial companies sector at 6 percent and other sectors at 3.8 percent.

The total deposits in the banking sector of man recorded a growth of 12.4 percent to reach OMR29.1 billion by the end of December 2023. Within this total, private sector deposits in the banking sector witnessed an increase of 10.6 percent to reach OMR19.2 billion by the end of December 2023.

When looking at the distribution of the total deposit base of the private sector among the various sectors, the numbers show that the individual sector held the largest share, which amounted to about 49.3 percent, followed by the non-financial companies sector and the financial companies sector with a share of 32.4 percent and 15.4 percent, respectively, while the remaining percentage was 2.9 percent and was distributed among the other sectors. - **ONA**

Development Bank appoints new CEO

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Development Bank has announced the appointment of Hussein bin Ali Al Lawati as its new CEO, effective from Sunday, 25 February 2024.

Al Lawati brings with him over 18 years of experience in the banking and finance sector with expertise in planning, innovation, growth and strategic partnerships.

His most recent role was as the Chief Executive Officer of Muscat Finance Company. Prior to that, Al Lawati held senior management positions at Bank Dhofar, serving as Deputy General Manager and Chief Corporate Banking Officer.



In these roles, he managed substantial assets and fostered strong relationships with partners and customers.

In response to the new appointment, Eng. Mohamed bin Abu Bakr Al Ghassani, Chairman, Development Bank, highlighted Al Lawati's extensive banking experience, particularly in project finance, asset management and corporate transition.

Eng. Al Ghassani emphasised Al Lawati has the depth of experience to lead Development Bank during a period of breakthrough in finance, management and operations.

The Board conveyed their trust in Al Lawati and underlined their confidence in his ability to lead the bank at this important time.

Noting the significant trust placed in the bank by His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Al Lawati thanked the Board for

their confidence and expressed his absolute commitment to the bank's goals and objectives as well as to the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040. In this regard, he highlighted in particular the importance of increasing lending activity and diversifying financial services in alignment with the objectives defined in Royal Decree No. 84/2023 as Development Bank builds on its 47-year track record of success and leverages the considerable experience and expertise of its staff.

Development Bank (DB) is at the forefront of financing development and economic diversification in the Sultanate of Oman. Through the provision of tailored business loans and working capital for start-ups, SMEs and large enterprises in sectors key to Oman Vision 2040, DB plays a vital role in promoting sustainable economic growth and prosperity across the nation.

Inflation in Oman falls by 0.1% in January

MUSCAT: The inflation rate in the Sultanate of Oman in January 2024 fell by 0.1 percent compared to the same month in 2023 for the base year 2018, according to the latest data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) on consumer price index numbers.

The decrease in the price index in January 2024 compared to the same month in 2023 was due to a fall in the prices of the main groups. The transportation group fell by 3.4 percent, education group by 0.4 percent, restaurants and hotels group by 0.2 percent, clothing and footwear group by 0.2 percent, and the communications group by 0.2 percent.

The food and non-alcoholic beverages group rose by 1.4 percent, miscellaneous personal goods and services group rose by 2.3 percent and the tobacco group rose by 2.4 percent, while the prices of the remaining groups remained stable,



according to the latest NCSI data.

In the food and non-alcoholic beverages group, the prices of fruits increased by 9.2 percent,

sweets by 3.6 percent, oils and fats by 2.3 percent, bread and cereals by 1.5 percent, and vegetables by 1.3 percent. Meat by 0.7 percent and non-alcoholic beverages by 0.7 percent, while fish prices decreased by 10.3 percent.

Muscat Governorate recorded the highest rate of decline in inflation at the end of January 2024 compared to the same period last year by falling by 0.4 percent.

The Governorates of Al Dakhiliyah and North Al Batinah also saw a drop in inflation rate by 0.1 percent. In contrast, the inflation rate rose by 0.7 percent in the Dhofar Governorate and by 0.5 percent in the North Al Sharqiyah Governorate. The inflation rate was 0.3 percent in Al Dhahirah Governorate, 0.2 percent in Musandam Governorate and 0.1 percent in each of the Al Sharqiyah South, Al Batinah South and Buraimi governorates. The inflation rate also stabilised in Al Wusta Governorate. - **ONA**

Real estate general index valued at OMR163mn in fourth quarter

MUSCAT: Residential land prices led the general index of residential real estate prices in the Sultanate of Oman registering one percent increase in the fourth quarter of 2023 valued at OMR163.3 million, according to statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

Land price index
The residential land price index registered a growth of 5.5 percent, amounting to OMR112.3 million, while the residential apartment price index decreased by 10.2 percent, to OMR18.2 million. The villa price index also decreased by 6.2 percent to OMR25.2 million and the index for other homes fell by 7.6 percent to OMR7.6 million.

The general residential real estate price index saw an increase of 0.7 percent compared to the third quarter of 2023, where the residential land price index registered an increase of 0.2 percent. The prices of residential apartments also increased by 1.9 percent, villas



dential land price index registered an increase of 0.2 percent. The prices of residential apartments also increased by 1.9 percent, villas

by 0.7 percent and other homes by 6.1 percent.

On the other hand, the number of residential real estate sales

transactions increased by 3.9 percent in the fourth quarter of 2023, compared to a decrease of 26 percent in the fourth quarter of 2022.

The highest percentage of change in the residential land value index in the governorates was in the Muscat Governorate, with an

increase of 4 percent in the fourth quarter of 2023 compared to the third quarter of 2022.

This was followed by an increase of 2.9 percent in the North Al Sharqiyah Governorate, 1.2 percent in the Buraimi Governorate. The percentage land value index registered a decrease of 19.9 percent in the Musandam Governorate and by 8 percent in Al Wusta Governorate, 4.9 percent in Al Dhahirah Governorate, 3.3 percent in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, 2.7 percent in South Al Sharqiyah Governorate, 2.2 percent in North Al Batinah Governorate, and 1.6 percent in Dhofar Governorate.

Residential lands accounted for 88.1 percent of real estate transactions in the fourth quarter of 2023, compared to 5.1 percent for residential apartments, 3.9 percent for villas, and 2.9 percent for other homes. - **ONA**

MARKET

Investors focus on shares of energy companies on Omani stock market

Shares of electricity, water and power services were supported by positive expectations of increased demand for these utilities with the launch of several modern real estate development projects

MUSCAT: Investors focused on shares of energy companies on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) during the week amid positive expectations of improved financial performance of companies that have faced many challenges over the past two years. Shares of energy companies were supported by positive expectations of increased demand for electricity with the launch of several modern city projects such as Sultan Haitham City, Al Khuwair Downtown, the Waterfront, and a number of other real estate development projects. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning had signed 35 development and partnership agreements for the Sultan Haitham City project for the first phase (2024-2030) on February 14. The pacts were signed for the future city projects for housing and urban planning with strategic partners, with an investment value exceeding OMR1 billion.



This news supported positive expectations of economic and urban growth and high demand for many services, including electricity, water and power services. During the week, energy company shares witnessed strong purchase orders from investors, especially Al Suwadi Energy and Al Batinah Energy shares, which announced cash dividends of 14 percent and 12 percent, respectively, and will be paid to shareholders in two stages in June and December. During the week, energy companies accounted for about 49 percent of the total number of shares traded and 28 percent of the total number of deals executed. The number of shares traded for energy companies during the week reached 56.7 million shares and 1,282 deal executions were seen. Al Suwadi Power topped the most traded energy companies in terms of number of shares after witnessing the trading of 13.74 million shares, Phoenix Energy came in second place with trades amounting to 13.74 million shares, while Sembcorp Salalah witnessed the trading of 13.53 million shares, Al Batinah Energy shares recorded a record increase was 54.7 percent and closed at 65 baisas. Al Suwadi Energy came in second place, ris-

ing 41.3 percent and closing at 65 baisas as well. Last week, the Muscat Stock Exchange witnessed an increase in trading value, which rose to OMR14.1 million compared to about OMR11 million in the previous week. The number of transactions executed increased by 29 percent from 3,554 deals to 4,588 deals, and the number of shares traded also increased from about 85.1 million to more than 116 million shares. Shares of banks and financial companies put pressure on the main index of the stock market and the financial sector index, with the main index declining by about 59 points and closing at 4,570 points. The financial sector index declined by 159 points and closed at 7,190 points. The industrial sector index recorded a decline of 65 points, and the Sharia index declined by two points. Energy companies supported the services sector index, rising 33 points, continuing its gains for the fifth week in a row. The Muscat Stock Exchange witnessed a decline in the prices of 35 securities, compared to 22 securities whose prices rose and 18 securities that stabilised at their previous levels. The recorded de-

MSX index declines in weekly trading

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market experienced a decline this week, with the main index sliding by 1.27 percent, and continued to see strong volatility, according to an analyst. "The outlook remained bearish, as the market struggled to overcome the resistance level last reached in January of this year and remains below its previous peaks, amid ongoing uncertainties," said George Khoury, Global Head of Education and Research at CFI. Other stock markets in the region presented a mixed picture this week with UAE markets closing in the negative territory and Qatari and Saudi markets ending on the upside. Geopolitical tensions remained a source of concern and affected investor sentiment and certain industries, particularly those related to energy, despite a generally positive earnings season in the region that supported market performance and prospects, he added.



Sector-wise, performances were mixed but leaned towards the negative. The financial sector concluded the week down by 2.17 percent. Within this sector, Sohar International Bank and Bank Muscat saw declines of 1.80 percent and 1.85 percent, respectively, while the National Bank of Oman faced a drop of 5.93 percent. Al Anwar Investment also recorded a decrease of 2.78 percent. However, Oman United Insurance reported a noteworthy increase in annual net profit by approximately 12 percent, closing the

week with a marginal gain of 0.38 percent, amidst a week of fluctuating stock prices. The industrial sector also reported a downturn, led by Al Anwar Ceramic, which fell by 5.24 percent, partially reversing gains from the previous week. Other declines included Galfar Engineering and Contracting and Oman Cables Industry, with drops of 3.23 percent and 6.67 percent, respectively. Conversely, the services sector showcased a robust performance, increasing by 2.02 percent and leading in trading activity for the week. Notably, Al Suwadi Power surged by 41.03 percent, continuing its impressive rally over the past four weeks, and was among the top five most traded stocks. Similarly, Al Batinah Power experienced a significant jump of 54.76 percent. Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing also saw an increase of 3.77 percent following its announcement of a 90 percent dividend distribution based on the 2023 results.

JORDAN VISIT

Opaz delegation explores investment opportunities in Jordan



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Eng. Ahmed bin Hassan Al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones, led a delegation to Jordan. Accompanied by Yaqoub bin Badr Al-Ruqayshi, Deputy Ambassador at the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and Hilal bin Mubarak Al-Rashidi from Opaz Investment Development Sector, the delegation met with Nayef Hamidi Al-Fayez, Chairman of the Board of

Commissioners of the Aqaba Special Economic Zone Authority. This visit comes within the programme of the visit of Qais bin Mohammed Al-Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion to the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan. In addition to discussing investment and commercial matters, the meeting covered environmental activities, port systems, logistics, renewable energy projects, and green industries. It also covered topics of economic and investment cooperation between the two brotherly countries.

Al Dheeb also shed light on the volume of investments in industrial cities, free zones, and special economic zones, as well as the area allotted to artificial intelligence and renewable energy sectors in Sezad. In addition, he examined initiatives related to modern industries, mining, gypsum, pharmaceutical, medical, and petrochemical sectors, as well as projects involving the generation of green hydrogen and its derivatives in collaboration with global multinational corporations. A presentation on Al Rawdha SEZ, Wilayat Mahdah, in the gover-

norate of Al Buraimi, and the growth of the integrated economic zone on the Saudi Arabian border - which was created with the intention of integrating the industrial and logistical movement - were also included in the agenda. The two zones feature land ports that will make it easier for goods to be moved between different countries. These zones will be integrated with the existing free zones in Salalah, Sohar, Mazayouna, Muscat International Airport, Duqm Port, and the adjacent port of Salalah and Sohar for the project of linking a railway with the Arab Gulf countries.

OIL SPILL MOCK DRILL

Port of Duqm enhances preparedness with oil spill response training programme

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Port of Duqm organised an extensive oil spill response training programme for all relevant stakeholders and an oil spill mock drill, in the presence of Dr Ali Al Sunaidi, Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones at Duqm. This initiative reflects the port's commitment to sustainability, environmental responsibility and collaboration with stakeholders. The Oil Pollution Preparedness, Response, and Cooperation (OPRC) training objectives include developing multiple scenarios, and corresponding strategies, identifying challenges in the implementation of plans and deploying oil spill response equipment (OSRE) during emergencies. The training also addressed various stakeholders' Oil spill response plans and the importance of collaborative efforts in effectively responding to minimise the environmental impact. The drill was efficiently concluded professionally by coordinating efforts across various teams within the Port of Duqm and stakeholders like Sezad, OTTCO, Asyad Drydock, ATD, CTOM, ACT & LAMOR. The exercise also acts as a test for the reliability of oil spill response equipment like containment booms, deflection booms,



skimmers and accessories. The port's spill response team demonstrated high efficiency in handling spill incidents, highlighting the readiness of employees and equipment for such situations. The equipment used in the drill included various pollution barriers designed to protect sensitive areas, oil extraction equipment from seawater, oil-water separation units, and secure oil storage equipment to prevent pollution. The response time for deploying the equipment and activating the required teams adhered to the best global practices. In response to the training and drill, Eng. Hashem Bin Tahir Al Ibrahim, the chief business support officer at the Port of Duqm, stated, "The crisis management and oil spill response training aim to support the port's development efforts and enhance its efficiency,

thus maximizing the port's potential and strengthening its competitiveness among regional ports. The simulated training ensures the implementation of potential scenarios for dealing with oil pollution incidents, utilising the latest pollution control techniques." He added, "This training reflects the Port of Duqm's commitment to maintaining the highest levels of emergency response readiness, ensuring the safety of our operations alongside protecting the surrounding environment." Al Ibrahim also praised the cooperation and coordination among the participating entities in the training within the oil spill response plan, emphasising the port's commitment to environmental standards and taking all necessary security and safety precautions in line with sustainable development goals in Oman's



development strategies and plans. This was achieved through a comprehensive evaluation session to review the results and lessons learned which will contribute to improving the port's readiness to face any future challenges. It is worth noting that the Port of Duqm continuously updates its practices to prepare for unforeseen events, ensuring business continuity, enhancing competitiveness, and protecting biodiversity. This underscores the port's capacity to manage crises and respond to oil spill incidents in coordination and full cooperation with relevant authorities to support the port's development efforts.

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LIFESTYLE

NEW MULTI-COLOUR 3D PRINTING TECHNOLOGY IS INSPIRED BY CHAMELEONS: STUDY

Researchers created a sustainable approach for 3D-printing various, dynamic colours from a single ink, inspired by chameleons' colour-changing abilities.

“BY DESIGNING new chemistries and printing processes, we can modulate structural colour on the fly to produce colour gradients not possible before,” said Ying Diao, an associate professor of chemistry and chemical and biomolecular engineering at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign and a researcher at the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology. The proceedings of the study were published in the journal PNAS. “This work is a great illustration of the power of collaboration,” said coauthor Damien Guirounet, an associate professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering. In this study, Diao and her colleagues presented a UV-assisted direct-ink-write 3D printing approach capable of altering structural colour during the printing process by tuning light to control the evaporative assembly of specially designed crosslinking polymers. “Unlike traditional colours which come from chemical pigments or dyes that absorb light, the structural colours abundant in

many biological systems come from nano-textured surfaces that interfere with visible light. This makes them more vibrant and potentially more sustainable,” said Sanghyun Jeon, the lead author and a graduate student in the Diao Lab. It was found that structural colours can be produced in the visible wavelength spectrum from deep blue to orange. While an artist might use many different paints to achieve this colour gradient, the research team uses a single ink and modifies how it is printed to create the colour gradient. “The work shows the benefit of us all having learned from each other by sharing our successes and challenges,” said coauthor Simon Rogers, an associate professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering. “Only by working together can we design this system at the molecular level to yield such fascinating properties,” said coauthor Charles Sing, an associate professor of chemical and biomolecular engineering and materials science and engineering.



Chance for Man City and Arsenal to narrow gap at top of Premier League

Manchester City travels to Bournemouth after a narrow 1-0 win at home to Brentford on Tuesday night in which Erling Haaland showed that rumours of his loss of form were exaggerated

LONDON: The Carabao Cup final between Liverpool and Chelsea on Sunday offers Manchester City and Arsenal an opportunity to narrow the gap at the top of the Premier League table, though both teams face challenging fixtures this weekend.

Manchester City travels to Bournemouth after a narrow 1-0 win at home to Brentford on



Tuesday night in which Erling Haaland showed that rumours of his loss of form were exaggerated.

Tiredness could be a factor for Pep Guardiola's side, who is playing its fifth game in 15 days ahead of an FA Cup visit to Luton on Tuesday and a visit to Old Traf-

ford next Sunday.

Guardiola's side thrashed Bournemouth 6-1 when the two teams met in November, but the home side has increasingly adapted to Andoni Iraola's style of play since then and is currently eight points above the bottom three and

with a game in hand over Luton.

The game will also give us a chance to see if Bournemouth striker Dominik Solanke is in with a chance of an England call-up after netting 14 league goals this season.

Arsenal hasn't had much time

to recover from Wednesday's Champions League defeat away to Porto, which left it with work to do in Europe, after a flat display was punished with an injury time goal against it.

Gabriel Jesus remains out for Arsenal, although Newcastle is likely to travel to London without Alexander Isak, Callum Wilson, and influential defender Fabian Schar.

Arsenal's last two Premier League games have seen it score six goals away to West Ham and five away to Burnley, but Newcastle is likely to be tougher rivals as it looks to return to Europe next season.

Four consecutive wins have lifted Manchester United to within three points of fifth place Tottenham, and although the headlines have been filled with stories of backroom changes in the club, since the confirmation of Sir Jim Ratcliffe as owner of 27 percent of the club's shares, on-field consistency seems to be returning.

Luke Shaw could miss the rest of the season with a muscle injury, but Manchester United, with 18-year-old Kobbie Mainoo impressing in midfield, is a favorite to make it five consecutive wins against a Fulham side that tends to be more effective at home than away.

Fourth place Aston Villa can

open a gap on Tottenham if it wins at home to Nottingham Forest, although the visitors will hope that pace of Morgan Gibbs-White, Anthony Elanga and Callum Hudson-Odoi, along with Taiwo Awoniyi, whose return has given more bite to the Forest attack.

Oliver Glasner will make his debut as Crystal Palace's coach with a home game against struggling Burnley. Although Palace has players such as Michael Olise, Eberechi Eze and Marc Guehi likely to miss out, it will be interesting to see if the Austrian has had time to impose his aggressive style on a team that had become too reactive under veteran Roy Hodgson.

Everton visits Brighton and will rely on another dogged defensive display to try and take the points from the south coast.

Sean Dyche's side has scored just five goals in eight matches since the start of 2024, and is likely to see a low percentage of possession against Roberto De Zerbi's ball-playing side.

Sunday's only league game gives Wolverhampton a great chance to press its claim for a place in Europe next season when it takes on bottom of the table Sheffield United, who is likely to sit deep and make the home side chase the game. -Xinhua

MEGA EVENT



Pakistan School Muscat organises annual sports event

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Annual Sports Gala 2023-24 was held at Pakistan School Muscat on February 18 and 19.

The most awaited mega event was held in the evening on February 19, 2024. The Ambassador of Malaysia, Shaiful Anuar Mohammad, graced the occasion as the chief guest along with Ambassador of Pakistan Imran Ali Chaudhry, Deputy Head of Mission Pakistan Embassy Bilal Hassan, Guest of Honour Malith Kumarasinghe, the Principal of Sri Lankan School Muscat, Chairman Board of Directors Ameer Hamza and board members.

The karate display and aerobics show were appreciated and athletic competitions including sprint events, relay, and tug of war were held.

The Tug of War final was the most interesting event while another Tug of War contest was

held between the teams of parents and teachers which was won by the teachers' team.

Overall, among the Juniors, Sir Syed House was the winner and among the Seniors, Johar House was the winner and received the annual sports champion trophy.

The chief guest gave away the awards to the winners among cheering slogans. The winning teams' captains collected trophies while the players were awarded with individual medals for participating in the games.

The skills of the participants were appreciated by the school management, faculty, administration, staff and media team, especially sports in-charges for putting up a good show. They were awarded with certificates in recognition of their services. Important guests were honoured with souvenirs by the Chairman of Board of Directors Ameer Hamza along with the Senior Principal Abdul Raheem.

CRICKET

We have been backed into corners: Mitchell Marsh after winning T20I

AUCKLAND: Following a 72-run victory over New Zealand at Eden Park on Friday, skipper Mitchell Marsh opined that Australia have been backed in the corners in the last 12 months and they have found a way to get out of such situations.

"Great win for Australia. Our backs were against the wall. I thought we were 50 short. But the way our bowlers came out and performed was outstanding. A collective effort. It's one of those grounds where you get lured into the short boundaries. The wicket was good. Had steep bounce which we should be used to," Marsh said in the post-match presentation.

"One of our mantras as a batting unit is to keep taking the game on and trusting our skills. I was proud of the fact we did that. I think all of our teams have been backed into corners in the last 12 months and we've found a way to get out of them. Tonight was another great example of that," the all-rounder added.

Coming to the match, leg spinner Adam Zampa and speedster Pat Cummins guided Australia to victory over the Blackcaps in the second match of the series.

The Kiwis were bundled out for 102 runs in the 17 overs they played in response to Australia's 174. The highest run-getter for the hosts was Glenn Phillips who scored 42 runs off 35 balls with the help of three fours and two sixes.

For the Men in Yellow, the pick of the bowlers was Zampa who snapped four wickets in his spell of four overs where he conceded 34 runs. Two wickets were grabbed by right-arm pacer Nathan Ellis in his three overs where he leaked just 16 runs in his spell.

One wicket each was bagged by Josh Hazelwood, Cummins and



Mitchell Marsh in their spells where they conceded 12, 19, and 18 runs respectively.

Earlier in the first innings, the visitors were asked to bat first after the New Zealand skipper Mitchell Santner won the toss.

The Australian side was bowled out for 174 runs on the penultimate ball of the 20th over. Opener Travis Head was the highest scorer for the side

as he scored 45 runs from 22 balls which was laced by five sixes and two boundaries in his innings.

For the Kiwis, the highest wicket-taker was Lockie Ferguson who took four wickets in his spell of 3.5 overs where he conceded just 12 runs. Two wickets each were taken by bowlers like Adam Milne, Ben Seares, and Santner in their respective spells.

THUMB INJURY

It's not broken: Santner gives update on Conway's injury

AUCKLAND: Following a 72-run victory over New Zealand at Eden Park on Friday, New Zealand skipper Mitchell Santner issued an update regarding wicketkeeper-batter Devon Conway, who suffered a thumb injury during the second T20I of the three-match series at Eden Park on Friday.

"We were pretty happy at halfway, especially after the start they got off to. Credit to the boys. To get wickets through the middle was key, it was the only way to slow them down really. Lockie showed his class again tonight. I thought Sears bowled extremely well. It was Gary [Stead's] decision [batting at No.3]. It was unfortunate with Dev. But some good news, it's not broken," Santner said in the post-match presentation.

"We'll see how he goes in a couple of days but obviously the Test matches coming up are pretty important as well. Wickets in the powerplay, they way they hit their hard lengths, playing those cross-bat shots were quite difficult. Maybe we could have soaked it up a bit longer," the left-arm spinner added.

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For the Men in Yellow, the pick of the bowlers was Zampa who snapped four wickets. -ANI

GEARED UP

Oman U19 cricketers ready to put their best foot forward in Thailand



MUSCAT: Oman U19 cricketers are all geared up to put up a good performance at the upcoming ICC U19 Men's CWC Division 2 Asia 2024 event, which will be held in Thailand from February 26-March 5.

Oman, coached by Syed Aamir Kaleem, will be hoping to book a spot in the ICC U19 CWC Men's Division 1- Asia as one of the two finalists from the eight-nation tournament in Thailand.

Oman have been placed in Group B along with Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong, and Bhutan while Group A comprises Bahrain, Thailand, Kuwait, and Malaysia.

Rahil Habibulla has been named skipper of Oman and his deputy will be Saumya Sampat.

Oman launch their campaign on February 26 and play Hong Kong on February 28 before concluding their Group engagement with a match against Bhutan on March 1.

Speaking before the team's departure to Thailand, Oman U19 head coach Aamir Kaleem said, "We have had quite fresh bunch of boys forming the squad on this tour. We have had our camp since early January, working meticulously on various aspects such as skill, fielding, strength and conditioning."

He added, "During the camp, we played quality senior sides and also held intra-squad match scenarios to pick our right combination for the tournament. I am pleased with the progress and the boys are confident."

A former Oman International, Aamir Kaleem said, "The good thing is that the boys are in positive space and we are looking forward to playing quality cricket in the coming few days. We certainly aim to do well and bring glory, more importantly, qualify for the next stage. I hope the boys bring out their best on the field and perform as a unit. The key would be

for them to adapt to the match conditions quickly."

In the past, Oman U19 boys participated at home when the ICC U19 CWC Men's Division 2 Asia was hosted in Muscat in 2022.

However, the boys lost in the semi-finals to Hong Kong and failed to qualify. Recently, the boys played in the ACC U19 Premier Cup. They had finished second in their group and failed to make it to the semi-finals.

Aamir Kaleem's boys will hope to end the recent disappointments, this time, at the Thailand tournament and qualify for the ICC U19 Men's Division 1 Asia.

ROUND-UP

Kia Middle East and Africa unveils ‘Platform Beyond Vehicle’ business



Set to be available in the MEA region from 2026, the Platform Beyond Vehicle (PBV) business will combine fit-for-purpose EVs with advanced software technology, going beyond traditional automobiles

DUBAI: Kia Middle East and Africa announces the forthcoming introduction of its revolutionary ‘Platform Beyond Vehicle’ (PBV) model in the MEA region, scheduled for 2026.

To celebrate the announcement, Kia is hosting an event to introduce the modular vehicles on February 20 and 21, 2024, at Banyan Tree, Bluewaters Island, Dubai. Guests, including media representatives, governmental entities, fleet customers, and business owners from

key markets across the region, will be in attendance to witness the unveiling of Kia’s latest total mobility solution.

Kia’s PBVs represent the brand’s vision to be a Sustainable Mobility Solutions Provider beyond the traditional concept of automobiles. As such, PBVs are a powerful combination of fit-for-purpose EVs with advanced software technology designed to open the door to new businesses and lifestyles—by reimagining the concept of space thanks



to advanced, tailored interiors that provide flexibility and freedom.

The newly established model aims to address the unmet requirements of a diverse customer base within the MEA fleet vehicle segment. It will provide tailored mobility solutions optimised for the region’s specific market and business conditions, helping to overcome challenges related to limited transportation options and one-dimensional product offerings that currently exist.

SooHang Chang, President, Kia Middle East & Africa, commented on the new model: “The introduction of Kia’s PBV to the Middle East and Africa signifies our commitment to pioneering future-forward mobility solutions for fleets across the region. Operating on a customer-centric model, the PBV business is dedicated to delivering freedom and flexibility through modular, customisable vehicles

catering to the diverse needs of businesses and individuals alike. Above all, Kia’s aim is to ensure all PBV vehicles are simple to operate and intuitive to engage with, regardless of where, when and how they are used.”

“The debut of this product marks a significant milestone for Kia Middle East and Africa since our brand relaunch in 2021, and we will continue to meet the rapidly evolving needs of the market reiterating our position as the leading sustainability mobility solutions provider in the region,” he added.

Simplifying user journeys: Kia PBVs

Utilising ‘Easy Swap’ technology to flexibly address the diverse demands of customers, a single vehicle chassis can be utilised to fulfil multiple mobility needs. The PBV can operate as a taxi during the day to a delivery van at night with the integration of a variety of interchangeable upper bodies or life modules. Further customisation is

possible with the PBVs ‘Dynamic Hybrid’ weldless body structure assembly, which permits adjustments according to the required vehicle purpose.

The brand has plotted three distinct phases that make the Kia PBV roadmap to offer tailored solutions according to customer usage patterns. Phase one will oversee the introduction of Kia PV5, a versatile EV for major domains such as hailing, delivery, and utilities. Phase two will see the completion of the dedicated PBV line-up, with PBVs evolving into AI mobility platforms that interact with users using data, consequently ensuring vehicles are always up to date. Finally, phase three will oversee Kia PBVs evolving into highly customisable, bespoke mobility vehicles that integrate the future mobility ecosystem; this will lead to the nurturing and thriving of an automated environment for driving, advanced air mobility, and more.

Kia PBVs will be available in the MEA region from January 2026.

AT UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY AND APPLIED SCIENCES



Sohar International sponsors ‘Sustainable Innovation Hackathon for a Better Future’

MUSCAT: In alignment with its commitment to contribute to the national innovation strategy aiming to position the Sultanate among the top 20 countries in the Global Innovation Index, Sohar International, the fastest-growing bank in Oman, recently sponsored the “Sustainable Innovation Hackathon for a Better Future,” hosted by the University of Technology and Applied Sciences in Muscat.

The event, took place from February 19 to February 21, served as a platform for young entrepreneurs and innovators to collaborate, ideate, and contribute to a more sustainable future. With a focus on harnessing the creativity and ingenuity of Oman’s youth, the event aimed to drive positive change and foster sustainability.

The event was attended by the presence of Abdulsalam bin Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Murshidi, Chairman of the Oman

Investment Authority. Representing the bank, Khalil Salim Al Hedaifi, Chief Government and Private Banking Officer at Sohar International, attended the event as the guest of honour for the closing ceremony.

Khalil Salim Al Hedaifi, stated, “We are proud to sponsor the ‘Sustainable Innovation Hackathon for a Better Future’, as it embodies our commitment to nurturing local talent and driving positive change in Oman. The passion and creativity demonstrated by the participants throughout the event are truly remarkable. The Sustainable Innovation Hackathon has not only provided a platform for young entrepreneurs to showcase their ideas but also fostered meaningful connections between stakeholders across sectors. By empowering the youth and fostering innovation, we contribute to the realisation of Oman Vision 2040 and the nation’s long-term development goals.”

During the event, The hackathon was accompanied by a student entrepreneurship fair and a lecture delivered by Abdulsalam bin Mohammed bin Abdullah Al Murshidi, Chairman of the Oman Investment Authority. This reflected the cooperation and partnership between the university, government and private sector institutions.

Sohar International has continuously demonstrated an unwavering commitment to strengthening the national economy and fostering the holistic development of Oman. This steadfast dedication is exemplified by the bank’s consistent support for initiatives aligned with these values. Such actions serve as a testament to Sohar International’s resolute efforts to drive growth in the business landscape, promote entrepreneurship and innovation, and advance the cause of sustainable development.

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ROUND-UP

Meethaq Islamic Banking opens its new branch in Al Rustaq

With this new addition, Meethaq strengthens its remarkable network to 28 branches across different governorates, reinforcing its preeminent standing in offering Islamic banking services and establishing itself as the largest Islamic window with branches in Oman

MUSCAT: Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat inaugurated its newest branch in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq in the Governorate of South Al Batinah.



The opening ceremony was held under the patronage of Sheikh Dr. Yahya bin Suleiman Al Nadabi, Wali Al Rustaq and was attended by guests, customers and officials from Meethaq Islamic Banking. During the ceremony, Sheikh Dr. Yahya, Wali of Al Rustaq was introduced to Meethaq's comprehensive suite of Islamic Banking services and facilities. It also highlighted Meethaq's strategic vision to maintain its leadership position within the sector and outlines forthcoming steps in expanding its branch network to new locations. With this new addition, Meethaq strengthens its remarkable network to 28 branches across different governorates, reinforcing its preeminent standing in offering Islamic Banking services and establishing itself as the largest Islamic

window with branches in Oman. On this occasion, Sami Bait Rashid, Assistant General Manager - Meethaq Personal Banking, said: "The opening of Meethaq's latest branch in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq reflects our commitment as a foremost Islamic financial services provider in the Sultanate. Meethaq continually enhances and diversifies its services and facilities to deliver good-quality services through our branches, meeting the evolving needs and aspirations of our customers. This new branch extends our reach, ensuring accessibility for our valued customers in Al Rustaq and neighboring areas. They can benefit extensively from all our banking services and products available through this branch, including opening accounts, provi-

sion of cards and financing facilities. Meethaq remains steadfast in its strategy to expand its network and offer the best Islamic Banking services in the Sultanate." The new branch offers various Sharia-compliant services and facilities for individuals, catering conveniently to customers in the Wilayat of Al Rustaq. Staffed by proficient Omani cadres, the branch operates on weekdays from Sunday to Thursday, from 8 AM to 2 PM, ensuring optimal service delivery. Meethaq Islamic Banking has witnessed remarkable growth since its inception, boasting the largest Islamic branch network in Oman with 28 branches, a dedicated network of over 50 ATMs/CDMs, and free access to more than 850 ATMs and CDMs of Bank Muscat across the country.



YEAR-ON-YEAR



Chery brand monthly sales reach 201,000 units

MUSCAT: In January, Chery Group sold 200,992 units of its independent brand vehicles, marking year-on-year growth of 107.5% and the fourth consecutive month of surpassing 200,000 units in monthly sales, establishing a great start for sales in the new year of 2024. Notably, the Chery brand achieved sales of 135,130 units in January, reflecting a year-on-year growth of 93%. Aiming to secure a position at the forefront of China's new energy vehicle sector, Chery Group launched or released multiple new energy models in January. This move highlighted the technological prowess of "Tech Chery" in the PHEV and BEV domains, offering users a fresh and innovative experience with new energy vehicles. Benefiting from its comprehensive strength accumulated over the long term in technology, products, and internationalisation, Chery Group received four prestigious awards at the 4th China Automotive Summit Awards Ceremony hosted by China Central Television on January 28. From "only exporting" to "get users' favour" and then "enhancing brand strength," Chery has maintained its position as the China's top passenger car exporter for 21 consecutive years. Yin Tongyue, Chairman of Chery Group, representing Chery's "going global" team, was honoured as the "Outstanding Leader in Global Expansion" at the CCTV

China Automotive Summit. As the new year started with great sales figures, Chery Group is gearing up for a proactive and ambitious year ahead. In 2024, the company continues to persist in "Brand Upward, Market Outward, Technology Forward, and Industry Toward the Entire Value Chain." Chery aims to maintain its comprehensive leadership in the areas of ICEV, BEV and PHEV, surpassing industry growth rates and targeting a sales growth rate that exceeds the industry by 10 to 20 percentage points, propelling the company into a fast track of high-quality. In 2024, Chery brand continues to lead the group's sales efforts, with a focus on expanding into the African market and right-hand drive markets in the Asia-Pacific region. In terms of model launches, the company will globally promote PHEV models and the BEV model, eQ7, offering global users efficient, eco-friendly, and intelligent vehicles. Regarding ICEV, a high-end model of Chery's Tiggo series is set to be launched globally. This vehicle encompasses global user demands, leading technological prowess, and adheres to global five-star safety standards. With its debut in international markets, it promises to comprehensively meet the utmost expectations of global users for a driving experience, making it highly anticipated. In Oman, Chery vehicles are distributed by Saud Bahwan Group.

RAMADAN SPECIAL

Limited-time offers on new Mercedes-Benz E-Class and GLC Coupé models

MUSCAT: This holy month of Ramadan, customers who purchase a brand-new Mercedes-Benz E-Class or GLC Coupé will enjoy complimentary services with limited-time exclusive offers from Mercedes-Benz Oman. Available from March 1 until April 10, the exclusive offers include a five-year/75,000 km service package, four years of Mobilo on roadside assistance, three years of unlimited mileage warranty, and free registration for the first year of vehicle ownership. "At Mercedes-Benz, all touch-points that form the customer ownership journey are important to us, including after-sales service. We always aim to offer a personalised and seamless experience for our customers in Oman, especially during the Holy Month of Ramadan. We want our customers to cherish every mile in their new Mercedes-Benz E-Class or GLC Coupé" said Shaun Michael, Chief Executive



Officer at Mercedes-Benz Oman. This Ramadan, the exclusive offers extend across the new Mercedes-Benz E-Class and GLC Coupé. The latest GLC Coupé combines sporty performance with high efficiency. Meanwhile,

the Mercedes-Benz E-Class is an exemplary and redesigned version of its prestigious kind with its executive comfort, effortless style, new dimensions of digital customisation, and spaciousness. To find out more about the exclu-

sive offers that are available during the Holy Month of Ramadan, the unrivalled Mercedes-Benz lineup, or to book a test drive with the new Mercedes-Benz E-Class and GLC Coupé, visit the website of Mercedes-Benz Oman.

TRIATHLON RACE

Lulu Exchange participates in Ironman 70.3 Oman

MUSCAT: Team Lulu Exchange participated in the Ironman 70.3 Oman, Muscat, showcasing exceptional teamwork and determination. The team, led by Captain Lathish Vichitran, General Manager, Lulu Exchange Oman, completed the three demanding disciplines - swimming, cycling, and running in the time frame, covering a total distance of 113.1 kilometres (70.3 miles). The Ironman competition is a long-distance triathlon race consisting of a swim, cycling, and a marathon run, raced in that order and without a break. The race is known for its challenging nature, requiring participants to display a high level of endurance and fitness.



The relay kicked off with a formidable 1.9 km swim, expertly handled by Niren Philip. Following the swimming leg, Lathish Vichitran took charge, navigating the

demanding 90 km cycling route with precision and vigour. The final stretch of the race, a rigorous 21.1 km run, was seamlessly completed by Venu Gopal, bringing the

team to a triumphant finish within the stipulated time frame. Lathish Vichitran, serving as the Team Captain, expressed his pride in the team's accomplishment. "Participating in the Ironman 70.3 Oman, Muscat was a challenging yet rewarding experience. Our collective effort and determination propelled us through each leg of the relay, and I am immensely proud of the team's success," he commented. The dedication and resilience displayed by Team Lulu Exchange not only reflect the organisation's commitment to excellence but also underscore the importance of fostering a healthy and active lifestyle within the workplace.



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من مراكش إلى القاهرة

استمتع بتجربة المزيج الأسر من المطبخ المغربي والمصري في شهر رمضان هذا في احتفالنا الساحر بالإفطار، انضم إلينا في مطعم ذا كيتشن المزين بأناقة، حيث تبقى الروائح المحيرة للتوابل المغربية والعطريات المصرية في الهواء، مما يدعوك إلى رحلة حسية لا مثيل لها. من الطاجين المغربي اللذيذ إلى الكشري المصري العطري، كل طبق هو احتفال بالنكهات والتقاليد الغنية لكل بلد. انضم إلينا في أمسية لا تُنسى من النكهة والثقافة والاحتفال، حيث تنبض التقاليد بالحياة في كل لحظة.

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