

HM SENDS CONGRATULATIONS

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Daniel Noboa on the occasion of being elected as a new President for Ecuador. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his heartfelt sentiments to President Noboa, wishing him success in achieving the aspirations of the Ecuadorian people. His Majesty also wished relations between Oman and Ecuador further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**



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HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN GREETSPRESIDENT OF AZERBAIJAN

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



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HIS MAJESTY CALLS FOR GLOBAL EFFORTS TO STOP ESCALATION OF VIOLENCE IN GAZA

His Majesty the Sultan gave an audience to GCC foreign ministers, in the presence of the GCC Secretary General at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik gave an audience to GCC Foreign Ministers, in the presence of the GCC Secretary General at Al Barakah Palace on Tuesday evening. The audience reviewed the current developments in Gaza and the occupied Palestinian territories. His Majesty stressed the importance of intensifying regional and international efforts to stop the escalation and violence, and provide protection to the civilians.

His Majesty also touched on the march of the GCC joint action, as well as the fruitful cooperation and coordination among member states and means of promoting it to serve the GCC peoples. During the audience, the GCC Foreign Ministers conveyed the greetings and best wishes of their countries' leaders to His Majesty and the Sultanate of Oman. In his turn, His Majesty the Sultan asked them to convey his greetings to their countries' leaders. His Majesty also wished the GCC peoples further progress and prosperity. Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman Al Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar; Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia; Sheikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the United Arab Emirates; Dr. Abdul Latif bin Rashid Al Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bahrain; Sheikh Salem bin Mohammed Al Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait and Jas-sim bin Mohammed Al Budaiwi, Secretary-General of the GCC arrived in the Sultanate attended the audience. -**ONA** **See also >A4**



GAZA STRIP

GCC Ministerial Council flays indiscriminate Israeli bombing



MUSCAT: The GCC Ministerial Council's 43rd extraordinary session, held in Muscat on Tuesday, was dedicated to the situation in Gaza Strip. The session was chaired by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Chairman of the current GCC Ministerial Council. It was attended by the

GCC Secretary General. The meeting dealt with current developments in the occupied Palestinian territories, the escalation of violence and the indiscriminate Israeli bombing of residential neighbourhoods in Gaza Strip, which left thousands of civilians dead or injured. It also looked into the

immediate challenges facing the region as a result of the escalation. The GCC Ministerial Council stressed joint determination of member states to provide urgent humanitarian relief to the Palestinian people and ensure the delivery of the aid to the population in Gaza. -**ONA**

PROTECT CIVILIANS

\$100 million aid announced to support Palestinian people

MUSCAT: The GCC Ministerial Council has demanded an immediate ceasefire and Israeli military operations in the Gaza Strip, an end to the illegal Israeli blockade, ensuring the provision of humanitarian and relief aid and basic needs, the resumption of electricity and water lines, and allowing the entry of fuel, food and medicine for the residents of Gaza. This came during a joint press conference held in Muscat yesterday by Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi and Jas-sim Mohammed Al Budaiwi, GCC Secretary General, in Muscat. Then, the GCC Secretary General delivered the statement of the GCC Ministerial Council's 43rd Extraordinary Meeting. The statement reads as follows: "The GCC Ministerial Council held its 43rd extraordinary meeting on Tuesday, October 17, 2023, in Muscat, Sultanate of Oman, chaired by His Excellency



Sayyed Badr bin Hamad bin Humoud Al-Busaidi, with the participation of: • His Highness Shaikh Abdullah bin Zayed Al-Nahyan, Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of the United Arab Emirates, • His Excellency Dr. Abdulatif bin Rashed Al-Zayani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Bahrain,

• His Highness Prince Faisal bin Farhan Al-Saud, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, • His Excellency Shaikh Mohammed bin Abdurahman Al-Thani, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar, • His Excellency Shaikh Salem Abdullah Al-Jaber Al-Sabah, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Kuwait **>A4**

MINISTRY OF HERITAGE AND TOURISM

Local firms to manage 15 tourism sites in Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism has assigned the management of 15 historic landmarks in Oman to the local companies. This step comes within the framework of the Ministry's strategy that aims at employing local people and using cultural heritage to enhance economic growth. In addition, it will help in sustaining the national heritage, enhance the tourism sector's contribution to the economic activities, and increase the number of tourist attractions. A total of 80,317 tourists visited the heritage sites in the Sultanate of Oman by the end of September 2023. It is worth noting that among the most important heritage sites whose management have been entrusted to companies and establishments are: Nizwa Fort in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah,



Jabreen Castle in the Wilayat of Bahla in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah, Muttrah Fort in the Governorate of Muscat, Koot Bait Al Askar in the Wilayat of Taqah in the Governorate of Dhofar, the waterfront shops of the archaeological site of Al Baleed Cafés in the Wilayat of Salalah, Nakhal Fort in the Governorate of South Al Batinah, the Wadi Dawka Reserve in the Wilayat of Thumrait in the Governorate of Dhofar, Al

Khamis Wall and Tower in the Governorate of South Al Batinah, Koot Hamran in the Governorate of Dhofar, the Rakhyut Fort in the Governorate of Dhofar, Beit Al Rudaydah Fort in the Governorate of Dakhiliyah, Bahla Fort in the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah and Al Khaboura Fort in the North Al Batinah Governorate, Al Mirani Fort in the Governorate of Muscat, and Liwa Fort in the Governorate of North Al Batinah.

PRaises Omani Women

The Honourable Lady extends greetings on Omani Women's Day

MUSCAT: Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed Al Busaidi, Spouse of the Sultan of Oman, has sent a message of greetings on the occasion of Omani Women's Day, which falls on 17 October every year. The message reads as follows: "On the occasion of Omani Women's Day, the 17th of October, I am delighted and honoured to express my pride and commendation for Omani women who demonstrated firm resolve and constant strive to shoulder their responsibilities in shaping family and society and promoting our dear nation's glory. "The ever-present influence of women on the national arena is manifest and self-explanatory. The Omani women have undertaken outstanding roles across different sectors. Their valuable contributions establish them as an essential partner in

building our homeland, Oman, and advancing its Renewed Renaissance. "On this auspicious occasion, we congratulate ourselves and all Omani women, celebrate their accomplishments and pray for them to pursue the course of success in realising the good of the nation, under the wise leadership of His Majesty the Sultan. "Yet, on this day, we also express our solidarity with our sisters in Gaza and all of Palestine as they undergo adverse circumstances. We salute their stance and steadfastness amid the bombing and the scourge of destruction. We pray to Allah the Almighty to rid them of all harms and grant them peace, security and stability. We pray to the Almighty to liberate Palestine so that our sisters there could resume their desired role in nation building. "I wish you all many happy turns of the occasion." -**ONA**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Duqm showcased as global business hub

1 Duqm Economic Forum highlighted the economic scene in Oman and the future prospects of SEZAD. **>A2**

OMAN RAO Commander visits Pakistan

2 Maj.Gen Mattar Salim Al Balushi, RAO Commander meet with Army Chief of Pakistan. **>A3**

WORLD US, Israel agree on aid plan for Gaza

3 US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he agreed with Israeli PM on a plan for aid to Gaza civilians. **>A7**

PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....	11:57pm
Asr.....	3:16pm
Maghrib.....	5:44pm
Isha.....	6:55pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	4:50am

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DUQM ECONOMIC FORUM CONCLUDES

Forum to spur major investment, create opportunity for SMEs

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The First Duqm Economic Forum, an impactful gathering of investors, industrialists, decision-makers and entrepreneurs, concluded on Tuesday.

Held under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Theyazin bin Haitham Al Said, the forum was organised by the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones & Free Zones (OPAZ).

This important event showcased how the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD), one of the main drivers of the economy of the Sultanate of Oman, is leading change in renewables, green manufacturing, global trade flows and the wealth of opportunities this is generating for investors and entrepreneurs along the value chain.

Attracting over 400 participants, the highly-successful two-day Forum was sponsored by 17 leading domestic and international organisations.

Speaking at the closing ceremony for the landmark event, Eng. Ahmed Al Dheeb, OPAZ Deputy



Chairman expressed his thanks to His Highness Sayyid Theyazin for his invaluable support of the event, noting: "This First Duqm Economic Forum has been a significant platform for sharing the game-changing potential of SEZAD as it brings to life the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040, the dynamic strategy for development and growth that underpins the renewed renaissance we are experiencing under the enlightened



leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik."

Significant investments

Eng. Al Dheeb added: "Utilising solar and wind-generated green energy, Duqm is adding new dimensions to Oman's competitive offer and creating exciting possibilities for free zones and industrial cities across the country. I am confident that as a result of this Forum, we will see new major partnerships

formed, ventures initiated and significant investments in Oman's economy. Indeed, with the establishment of world-leading green industry here on SEZAD, we are already seeing the growth of other businesses along the value chain, generating quality long-term jobs for our young people and prosperity for our communities."

With a strong focus on investment and the green transition, the Forum provided insights into the vast po-

tential of Oman's green hydrogen industry, its role in the decarbonization of heavy industry and how Duqm will help Oman fulfill its commitment to Co2 neutrality by 2050.

Expert panels also discussed Oman's position as a future renewable superpower and the role Duqm is already playing in positioning Oman as a world-scale producer and exporter of zero-carbon fuels to international markets. Particular focus was given to the development of a large-scale green steel industry cluster in Duqm and the downstream opportunities this will create in the automotive industry, the manufacturing of solar panels, wind turbines and more.

The Forum also looked into emerging roles for the petrochemicals industry including the manufacture of many of the parts required for today's modern renewable energy system, including solar panels, wind turbines, thermal insulation and electric vehicles.

Industrial epi-centre

A further key theme was the evolution of Duqm as a multi-purpose

economic, commercial and industrial epi-centre, as a major hub for global trade flows and the distribution of new energy.

Of significant interest to attendees were discussions on the wealth of possibilities offered by the Duqm Refinery project and the Markaz Crude Oil Storage Terminal - the largest oil storage and export project in the Middle East - as the petrochemicals industry moves forward with its new business models. This was followed by a visit to the state-of-the-art facilities themselves and a tour of key areas of interest on SEZAD.

The two Duqm Dialogues with Haider Al Zaabi, Co-founder, Mays EV and Eng. Bahiya Al Shuaibi, Founder & CEO, Global Space & Technology Company shone the spotlight on the innovative spirit and inspirational ambition of Oman's young entrepreneurs. Their world-class projects, and other emerging enterprises like them, are considered cornerstones of Oman's economy in the years to come and drivers of exciting new opportunities along the value chain.

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Duqm showcased as emerging hub for global business

Duqm Economic Forum sessions focused on the role of transformation to green energy in the production of petrochemicals and related industries



of petrochemicals and related industries. It also highlighted investment opportunities related to Duqm Refinery and Ras Murkaz oil storage terminal.

Eng. Ahmed Hassan Al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) said that the forum showcased the rich opportunities of Duqm Refinery project and the Raz Markaz Crude Oil Storage Terminal - the largest oil storage in the Middle East - as the petrochemicals industry moves forward with its new business models.

He added, "Our two Duqm Dialogues showed clearly the innovative spirit and inspirational ambition of Oman's young entrepreneurs." Al Dheeb further said

that that the forum demonstrated how Duqm is leading change in green industry.

It has provided a window on the rich possibilities of SEZAD, its exceptional appeal as an investment destination and its outstanding competitive offer, which is based on sustainable growth and a bold innovative spirit, Al Dheeb said.

On his turn, Eng. Khamis Mohammed Al Shamakhi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology for Transport said that SEZAD is an enabler towards achieving the Sultanate of Oman's approaches, such as the Logistics Strategy, reaching net zero emissions by 2050, and Oman Vision 2040, as well as developing hydrogen and green energy projects.

He added that global changes require working on making supply chains more resilient and flexible amid any possible disruptions.

His Highness Sayyid Dr. Adham Turki Al Said pointed out that the forum reflects the economic development in SEZAD. He explained that the forum brought together many experts, investors, CEOs and investment companies who are interested in investing in the zone. Such forums, he added, contribute to increasing the tourism and business movement. -ONA



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MEETING

Oman and Saudi Arabia discuss Palestine issue



MUSCAT: Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs received in Muscat on Tuesday Dr. Saud Mohammed Al Sati, Deputy Foreign Minister for Political and Economic Affairs in the

Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). The two sides touched on the repercussions of the Israeli war on Gaza and the coordination of stands ahead of the GCC Ministerial meeting.

The meeting also reviewed relations between Oman and KSA, and means of promoting them in various areas. It was attended by Sheikh Ahmed Hashil Al Maskari, Head of Gulf Cooperation Council and Regional Neighborhood Department. -ONA

MEETING

RAO Commander meets Pakistan military officials

ISLAMABAD: Maj.Gen. Mattar Salim Al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), held a meeting on Tuesday with Gen. Syed Asim Munir, Chief of the General Staff of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan, within the context of his official visit to Pakistan. RAO Commander also met Lt. Gen. Ahsan Gulrez, Assistant Chief of Staff of the Army of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The two meetings discussed military topics of common interest. -ONA



13 TO 23 OCTOBER

Oman's participation in Lebanon book fair to boost cultural bond



LITERARY HERITAGE: The book fair identifies Oman's publications and its cultural, historical and literary heritage. -ONA

BEIRUT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, is taking part in Lebanon International Book Fair 2023, held in Beirut from 13 to 23 October 2023. Oman's participation in the event is intended to enhance cultural bonds within the context of a strategy to disseminate Omani culture. The approach highlights Omani intellectual products and consolidates Oman's presence in such expositions that attract many intellectuals, researchers and knowledge seekers.

The book fair identifies Oman's publications and its cultural, historical and literary heritage. **Cultural contact** Participation in the event augments the rate of cultural contact between Oman and other countries of the world, while at the same time highlighting the special nature of Omani culture. On 19 October, the Ministry will organise, on the sidelines of the fair, an Omani poetry evening that will see the participation of renowned Omani female poet Aisha Al Saifi and Hisham Al-Sagari. -ONA

MUSKA

Oman takes part in theatre festival

BAGHDAD: A drama titled "Muska" marked the Sultanate of Oman's participation in the 4th round of Baghdad International Theatre Festival, which will conclude on 18 October 2023. Oman is represented at the theatre festival by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. Presented by Mazoon Theatre

Group, Muska derived insights from a novel bearing the same title, authored by Mohammed Al Shehri. Muska is the only Gulf Cooperation Council theatrical entry at Baghdad International Theatre Festival, which competes with Arab and international cultural extravaganzas. -ONA



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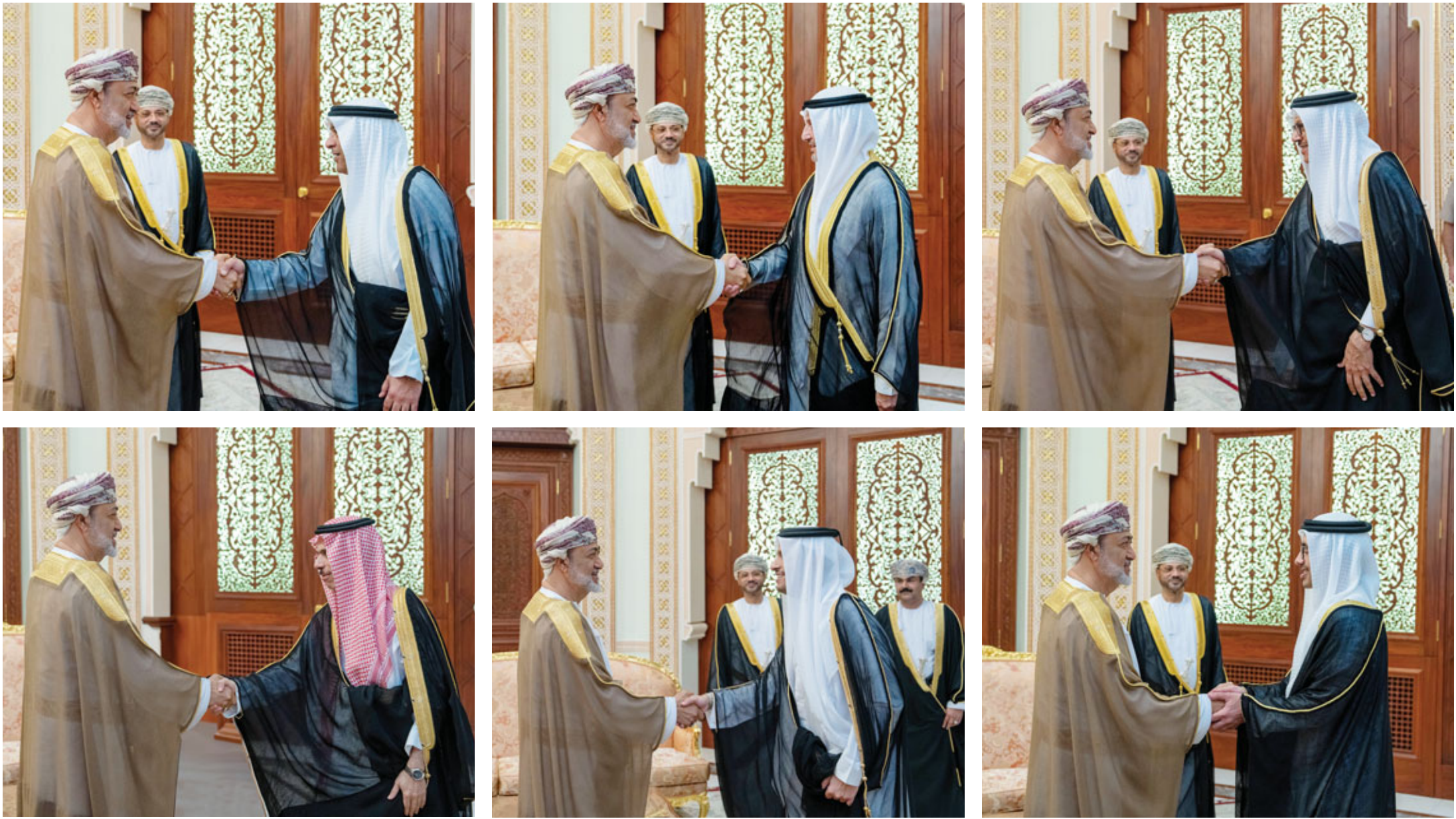
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AL BARAKAH PALACE

HM the Sultan gives audience to GCC foreign ministers



PROTECT CIVILIANS

\$100 million aid announced to support Palestinian people

<FROM A1 And His Excellency Jassem Muhammed Al-Budaiwi, the GCC Secretary-General.

The Ministerial Council opened its deliberations by expressing appreciation and gratitude for His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, Sultan of Oman, for the gracious audience His Majesty granted to their Highnesses and Excellencies the foreign ministers of GCC member states and the GCC Secretary-General, where they listened to His Majesty's vision regarding current conditions and his wise and astute instructions toward the good and mutual benefit for all, and for strengthening the foundations of security, stability and prosperity.

The Ministerial Council discussed developments in the Palestinian territories in light of the

escalation of violence and illegal bombing of residential areas in the Gaza Strip, which has resulted in the death and injury of thousands of innocent civilians. The Ministers discussed Israel's intentions to invade the Gaza Strip and displace civilian population, as well as the urgent and serious challenges facing the region as a result of these events. The Ministerial Council agreed on the following:

1. The Council urgently demanded an immediate ceasefire and an end to Israel's military operations in Gaza and its illegal blockade, to ensure access for humanitarian aid and relief supplies and other basic necessities, as well as the restoration of electricity, water, and allow the delivery of fuel, food, medicine, to the people of Gaza.

2. The Council stressed its support for the steadfastness of Pal-

estinian people in their homeland and warned against any attempts to displace or transfer them.

3. The Council called on all parties to the conflict to protect civilians, refrain from targeting them and to abide and implement by international law and international humanitarian law in every respect without exception. And called for the release of innocent hostages and detainees, especially women, children, the sick and elderly. The Council called for providing international protection for the Palestinian people.

4. The Council reaffirmed its resolve to activate an urgent humanitarian aid operation to help meet the needs of the Palestinian people in Gaza. It announced immediate financial contributions of \$100 Million for this relief operation. It stressed the need for

this aid to reach Gaza urgently.

5. The Council reaffirmed its support for the initiative of Saudi Arabia, the European Union and the League of Arab States to revive the Middle East peace process in cooperation with Egypt and Jordan.

6. The Council reaffirmed its position on ending Israel's illegal occupation of Palestinian Territories, affirming the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and their right to establish an independent Palestinian state based on 1967 borders, with East Jerusalem as its capital, in accordance with international law, the Arab Peace Initiative and all relevant UN Security Council and UN General Assembly resolutions, stressing the responsibility of the International Community to deal with the Palestinian issue

without double standards.

7. The Council reiterated its position of urging the international community to take the necessary measures, within the boundaries of International law, in response to the Israeli government's illegal actions, including its policy of collective punishment it inflicts on the civilian population of Gaza and other parts of Palestinian Territories.

The Council concluded its meeting by urging the United Nations Security Council to implement its previous resolutions concerning the Arab-Israeli conflict, and to adopt a new resolution to ensure Israel's compliance with international law and the United Nations Charter, and rejecting any Israeli plans or intentions to invade Gaza or other Palestinian Territories or displace

their Palestinian populations.

Speaking at the press conference, Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi stressed the need for uncompromised demand to stop the violence and Israeli military operations. He also called for immediate efforts to implement the provisions of the GCC Ministerial Council's statement and put an end to the Israeli crimes, while at the same time engaging in dialogue with all international and regional parties.

Sayyid Badr explained that GCC states are acting wisely and rationally and are gradually endorsing political and diplomatic efforts.

GCC states are focusing on the termination of military action and the delivery of relief aid to the Palestinian people, he added. -OMA



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Nearly 700 youngsters compete in Muscat International Unity Cup



A total of 12 academies, including teams from Saudi Arabia, Qatar and UAE, entered the tournament that featured five main categories



Oman's Win A Dream claimed the titles in the under-13 and under-15 categories respectively. MFA were on the losing side in another final, when they went down to Forza Club in the under-17 title clash. The teams that took part were Evolution Academy and Premier League Football Academy (PLFA) from Qatar, Juventus Saudi Arabia, Manchester City, Forza Club, Fursan Hispania (all three academies from the UAE), MFA, ESG, Juventus, Alegria, Brazil and Win A Dream (all academies from Oman). Jointly organised by the Muscat Football Academy (MFA) and Muscat Media Group, the Muscat International Unity Cup proved to be a platform to bridge cultures as it brought young footballers together in the spirit of unity and friendly competition. The event was held at two venues with the initial matches played at Cheltenham Muscat and the grand finale concluding with a full-day affair at the Seeb Sports Stadium. Except for the under-17 and under-15 competitions, which were played on 11-a-side and nine-a-side formats respectively, the other categories were eight-a-side format. Besides the winning teams, individual awards were handed to the best player in each category, best goalkeeper and top goal-scorer.



DEVELOPMENT PLAN FOR EZAD

EZAD discusses establishment of Omani-Saudi Company

DUQM: The Executive Committee overseeing the development of the Integrated Economic Zone at Al Dhahirah Governorate (EZAD) yesterday held its second meeting in 2023 under the chairmanship of Eng. Ahmed Hassan Al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (OPAZ) and Chairman of the committee. During the meeting, the Committee discussed the status of the establishment of the Omani-Saudi Company, which will manage and operate EZAD. It also addressed the development plan for EZAD infrastructure facilities, the In-Country Value, and how to identify investment opportunities for EZAD targeted sectors. It also highlighted the most important developments in the EZAD project, the proposed incentives, benefits, and facilities. The Committee also revised the plan for the management and operation of the EZAD land port and customs station, and discussed the request submitted by

Al Dhahirah Company to set up a one-stop shop at the port. The Committee also tackled the proposal for floating the tender for setting up a one-stop shop at the commercial centre for Omani companies or the joint Omani-Saudi business alliance. The meeting was attended by some officials from the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion. It is worth mentioning that the Executive Committee overseeing the Development of the Integrated Economic Zone at Al Dhahirah Governorate was established by resolution No. (49/2023) issued by OPAZ in April 2023. The Committee oversees the implementation of the terms and conditions of the Memorandum of Understanding signed between OPAZ in the Sultanate of Oman and the Economic Cities and Special Zones Authority (ECZA) in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia with regards to economic development

of the special economic and free zones. The Executive Committee overseeing the development of the Integrated Economic Zone at Al Dhahirah Governorate (EZAD) is also working on a plan for the development and management of EZAD. This plan will include all programmes and initiatives and follow up their implementation and the establishment of the Omani-Saudi Company, which will manage and operate EZAD. The committee includes a number of officials from OPAZ and from the Saudi side members from the Ministry of Investment, Economic Cities and Special Economic Zones Authority (ECZA) and the Saudi Development Fund. On the other hand, the Committee works to promote knowledge sharing and case studies of successful economic zone management and operation between the two countries. Additionally, it arranges for EZAD introduction courses to be held for investors and company owners in both countries. -ONA

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OMAN/WORLD

THREE-DAY EVENT

Effective solutions to cut down volume of carbon from fertiliser factories discussed



MUSCAT: Activities of the 35th edition of the Fertiliser Industry Technology Conference and Exhibition began in Muscat on Tuesday.

The three-day event, held under the slogan “Achieving carbon neutrality”, aims at highlighting the latest technological developments in the field, including digital solutions and green transition efforts.

It is organised by the Arab Fertiliser Association in cooperation with the Omani-Indian Fertiliser Company (OMIFCO).

The opening of the conference and exhibition was held under the auspices of Dr. Saud Hamoud Al Habsi, Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources.

The conference deals with effective solutions to cut down the volume of carbon from fertiliser factories of all types, studies the latest innovative trends in green ammonia technology and explores solutions for the production of high-capacity blue hydrogen.

It also looks into advanced related topics, including the espousal of energy conservation initiatives, clean energy trends, water treatment technologies and emissions-free phosphate fertilisers.

The conference programme concluded with a special session on regulating supply and demand.

The closing session was attended by major international companies, senior speakers and international experts specialised in the field of fertiliser manufacturing and production technology.

The conference comes in line with the vision of the Arab Fertiliser Union and it reflects Oman's efforts to promote sustainability and keep pace with global trends in renewable energy to cut down fos-



sil fuel emissions, while at the same time preserving natural resources, without prejudice to the orderly transition strategy aimed at achieving carbon neutrality by 2050.

On the sidelines of the conference,

a technical exhibition was held to showcase the participating companies' products, in addition to the latest technologies, chemical products, spare parts and equipment related to the fertiliser industry.

The event saw the participation of more than 500 representatives of Arab and international fertiliser companies and international think tanks. — **ONA**



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BY INDIAN PM MODI

Gaganyaan mission's readiness reviewed



NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi has chaired a high-level meeting to assess the progress of India's Gaganyaan mission and to outline the future of India's space exploration programmes.

The Department of Space presented a comprehensive overview of the Gaganyaan mission, including various technologies developed so far such as human-rated launch vehicles and system qualification.

It was noted that around 20 major tests, including 3 uncrewed missions of the Human Rated Launch Vehicle (HLVM3) are planned. The first demonstration flight of the Crew Escape System Test Vehicle is scheduled for October 21 (Saturday).

ISRO is all set for the Flight Test Vehicle Abort Mission a key part of its ambitious human space mission Gaganyaan, between 7 am and 9 am this Saturday.

This flight will simulate the abort condition during the ascent trajectory. Crew escape systems with crude modules will be separated from the test vehicle at an altitude of about 17 km. Subsequently, the abort sequence will be executed autonomously commencing with the separation of crew escape systems and deployment of the series of parachutes, finally culminating in the safe touchdown of crew module in the sea, about 10 km from the coast of Sriharikota.

Meanwhile, the prime minister's review meeting evaluated the mission's readiness, affirming its launch in 2025.

Building on the success of the Indian space initiatives, including the recent Chandrayaan-3 and Aditya L1 Missions, Prime Minister Modi directed that India should now aim for new and ambitious goals, including setting up 'Bharatiya Antariksha Station' (Indian Space Station) by 2035 and sending first Indian to the Moon by 2040.

To realise this vision, the Department of Space will develop a roadmap for Moon exploration.

"This will encompass a series of Chandrayaan missions, the development of a Next Generation Launch Vehicle (NGLV), construction of a new launch pad, setting up human-centric Laboratories and associated technologies," Prime Minister's Office said in a release.

PM Modi also called upon Indian scientists to work towards interplanetary missions that would include a Venus Orbiter Mission and a Mars Lander.

US GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Why are earthquakes in Afghanistan so frequent?

KABUL: Afghanistan lies on the Alpine-Himalayan belt, a region that runs along two tectonic plates: the Indian Plate in the south and Eurasian Plate in the north.

Also known as the Alpide belt, it's a zone that puts Afghanistan at risk of frequent earthquakes.

The country's Herat region suffered four quakes in October 2023 alone, all measuring about 6 on the Richter Scale. Those seismic events have left thousands dead.

In June 2022, Afghanistan's Khost region — to the east of Herat — was hit by an earthquake that killed at least 920 people. Khost had already experienced about 50 quakes in the previous five years, according to the US Geological Survey. Three of those plates — the Arabian, Indian and Eurasian tectonic plates — meet in Afghanistan's region, along the aforementioned Alpide belt. — **DW**

EU to push for phasing out fossil fuels at COP28 summit



The European Council stressed that the transition to a climate-neutral economy will require a global phase-out of unabated fossil fuels and a peak in their consumption in this decade



BRUSSELS: European Union member states will push negotiators at this year's UN climate summit, COP28, to agree to the phase-out of “unabated” fossil fuels globally by the decade's end.

“(The European) Council stresses that the transition to a climate-neutral economy will require a global phase-out of unabated fossil fuels and a peak in their consumption in this decade,” said a statement released after a meeting of EU environment ministers.

Burning coal, oil, and gas produces greenhouse gases that are the main cause of climate change.

What does the agreement say

While putting up a united front, some EU member states opposed a complete phase-out.

A group of 10 EU countries, including Denmark, France, Germany, Ireland, the Netherlands, and Slovenia, wanted the bloc to demand a phase-out of all fossil fuels.

Another group of 10 countries, including the Czech Republic, Hungary, Italy, Malta, Poland, and Slovakia, were more cautious and endorsed for a phase-out only of “unabated” fossil fuels, which would allow countries to continue

burning coal, gas, and oil if they employ technology to capture the resulting emissions.

The EU's agreement notes that emission-capturing technologies “exist at a limited scale and are primarily designed for reducing emissions in sectors where emission reduction is challenging.”

Spain's Climate Minister, Teresa Ribera, expressed their commitment, stating, “We will take a leading role in these negotiations to demonstrate the EU's unwavering dedication to the green transition and to inspire our global counterparts to follow our lead.”

Resistance expected at COP28 summit

The next step would be to see whether nations at the COP28, which begins on November 30 in Dubai, will reach a consensus on this issue.

US DISTRICT JUDGE

Judge bars Trump from criticising prosecutors, witnesses

WASHINGTON: A federal judge overseeing the 2020 election subversion case against Donald Trump in Washington on Monday barred the former president from making public comments targeting US prosecutors, court staff and potential witnesses involved in a criminal case.

US District Judge Tanya Chutkan said she would not allow Trump, who has pleaded not guilty, to “launch a pretrial smear campaign” against people

involved in the case ahead of the historic trial scheduled to begin in Washington in March 2024.

“No other criminal defendant would be allowed to do so, and I'm not going to allow it in this case,” Chutkan said as she issued the gag order.

The order prohibits Trump and attorneys in the case from personally targeting Special Counsel Jack Smith, prosecutors working with him, and court staff.

It also prevents Donald Trump

from discussing potential witnesses as it relates to their testimony at trial.

No restrictions

However, Chutkan said there would be no restrictions on statements criticising the Justice Department generally or statements about Trump's belief that the case is politically motivated. So, in other words, his repeated references to what he likes to call a “witch hunt” are

not affected by the ruling.

Chutkan's ruling came after Jack Smith filed a motion arguing that Trump's inflammatory rhetoric threatened to undermine his trial for election subversion.

Smith's team had raised the alarm about a barrage of statements disparaging prosecutors, the judge and prospective witnesses. Trump has described Chutkan in public comments and social media posts as a “fraud” and “Trump-hating judge,” Smith's

office as a “team of thugs,” and Washington as a “filthy and crime-ridden” city with a population “over 95% anti-Trump.”

Those comments, prosecutors said, risked undermining public confidence in the court system and causing witnesses or people who might be picked as jurors for trial to feel harassed and intimidated.

Chutkan's gag order, however, is likely to be challenged by Trump's lawyers on appeal. — **DW**



US, Israel agree on aid plan for civilians in Gaza, says Blinken

US Secretary of State Antony Blinken was in talks for more than six hours with Israel's war cabinet on Monday, with the meeting extending beyond midnight in Israel

GAZA: US Secretary of State Antony Blinken said he agreed with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to "develop a plan" to enable humanitarian aid to reach civilians in Gaza.

"Today, and at our request, the United States and Israel have agreed to develop a plan that will enable humanitarian aid from donor nations and multilateral organizations to reach civilians in Gaza," Blinken told reporters.

"If Hamas in any way blocks humanitarian assistance from reaching civilians, including by seizing the aid itself, we'll be the first to condemn it. And we will work to prevent it from happening again," Blinken said.

A timeline for implementing the plan was not announced. The UN has warned of a humanitarian crisis as Gaza is running out of drinking water, food, diesel and medical supplies.

Since Gaza-based Hamas rebels carried out attacks killing 1,300 Israeli civilians, Israel has responded with a massive bombing campaign, while enforcing a total blockade of the



Palestinian enclave.

Israeli retaliatory strikes have killed at least 2,778 Palestinians, health officials in the blockaded enclave say.

Blinken was in talks for more than six hours with Israel's war cabinet on Monday evening, with the meeting extending beyond midnight in Israel.

White House National Security Council spokesperson John Kirby said, "We've been crystal clear about the need for humanitarian aid to be able to continue to flow into Gaza. That has been a consistent call by President Biden and certainly by this entire administration."

Humanitarian aid remains stuck at Rafah border crossing

The UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) renewed calls to open the Rafah border crossing between Gaza and Egypt, which is the only viable way for humanitarian aid to enter the Gaza Strip.

The Egyptian government stated on Monday that the Rafah crossing was not officially closed but had become inoperable due to Israeli retaliatory airstrikes on Hamas militants in Gaza.

In a report released on Monday, OCHA the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs emphasised that the siege of Gaza is ongoing.

Rafah Crossing

"The Rafah Crossing has remained closed, preventing the entry of desperately needed humanitarian aid, including food, water and medicines awaiting on the Egyptian side," it said.

Gaza has been under full electricity blackout for the sixth consecutive day, it said, adding that hospitals were on the brink of collapse.

Authorities in Gaza said there was a "very severe" shortage of water. Citizens were forced to drink unsuitable water, they said, warning of "a dangerous health crisis that threatens citizens' lives."

Israel announced a total blockade on the entry of food, water and diesel, as well as the cutting of electricity, to Gaza after the Hamas terror attacks on October 7.

Scholz and Biden plan back-to-back trips to Israel

German Chancellor Olaf Scholz is set to visit Israel on Tuesday, becoming the first head of state to visit the nation since the October

7 Hamas terror attacks claimed more than 1,400 Israeli civilians and troops.

Scholz said it was important to "express my solidarity with Israel very practically with my visit," as the visit will be the strongest message yet about the German government's commitment to stand with Israel.

The German leader told reporters the agenda included discussions on "concrete practical issues" with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Israel's war cabinet. Other topics include the organisation of humanitarian aid to Gaza and steps to minimize the conflict from spilling into other arenas, like along the Israel-Lebanon border.

US President Biden is also set to visit Israel the following day. Biden's visit was announced by US Secretary of State Antony Blinken early Tuesday following extensive talks with Netanyahu and Israel's war cabinet.

Biden will "reaffirm United States solidarity with Israel and our ironclad commitment to its security," Blinken told reporters after the meeting.

Kirby said Biden will meet with Jordanian King Abdullah, Egyptian President Abdel Fattah el-Sisi



and Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas in Jordan following talks in Israel.

Turkey in contact with Hamas over hostages

Turkey's foreign minister said Tuesday that his country is in contact with Hamas regarding hostages being held in Gaza.

"So far, we have received requests from various countries for the release of their citizens. As a result, we started to discuss these issues, especially with the political wing of Hamas," Turkish Foreign Minister Hakan Fidan said during a press conference on a visit to Lebanon.

The Israeli military has said nearly 200 hostages are being held in Gaza. Hamas, meanwhile, has claimed 200 to 250 people are held captive.

Although Turkey has strong economic ties with Israel, Turkish leaders, such as President Recep Tayyip Erdogan, have earlier expressed sympathies for Hamas. This means Turkey could play a mediating role in the Israel-Hamas conflict.

Turkey does not recognise Hamas as a terror organisation, unlike the United States, Germany and other countries.

UN Security Council rejects Russian resolution on Gaza

The UN Security Council rejected a Russian resolution that condemned violence and terrorism against civilians but made no mention of Hamas.

Hamas, considered a rebel group by the European Union, United States, Germany, Israel and others, carried out a wide-scale attack against Israelis after breaching border defences on October 7.

The attack, which killed more than 1,400 Israeli civilians and troops, was the worst Jewish massacre since the World War II Nazi Holocaust.

Only four countries joined Russia in voting for the resolution — China, United Arab Emirates, Mozambique and Gabon.

Four countries voted against it — the United States, Britain, France and Japan.

The other six countries abstained. For a resolution to be adopted it needs a minimum of nine "yes" votes in the 15-member council.

The UK Ambassador to UN, Barbara Woodward, said it would be "unconscionable for this council to ignore the largest terror attack in Israel's history."

CONFLICT ZONE

What's happening in the key Israel-Lebanon border region?

GHAJAR: There has been a steady exchange of fire between Israel and Hezbollah in Lebanon over the past few days.

It began after the rebel group Hamas launched a large-scale attack on Israel on October 7.

On October 8, Lebanese sources reported Israeli strikes on southern Lebanon and a fallen shell in the village of Khiam.

The Iran-backed Lebanese group Hezbollah has since claimed responsibility for several rocket attacks on northern Israel.

The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) have responded by shelling more targets in southern Lebanon, killing several Hezbollah militants. The recent clashes are

the most critical escalation since the 2006 Lebanon War, which left some 250 Hezbollah and over 1,000 Lebanese civilians, as well as about 160 Israeli soldiers dead.

Hezbollah, which operates as a political party with over 60 seats in Lebanon's parliament, also has an armed wing that possesses a vast arsenal of rockets and comprises thousands of experienced fighters.

Several countries, including the US and Germany, have designated Hezbollah a terrorist group.

"We are observing intense exchanges of fire between Lebanese territory and Israel," the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) said in a statement

on October 15, after its headquarters in the Lebanese town of Naqoura was hit. "Regrettably, despite our efforts, military escalation continues."

"Our peacekeepers were not in shelters at the time. Fortunately, no one was hurt," the statement said. Earlier the same day, Hezbollah claimed responsibility for launching a missile into Israel, killing a man in the border town of Shtula. The said the attack was retaliation for an Israeli strike that hit a group of journalists near the village of Alma-al-Shaab. A video journalist was killed in the attack, prompting the London-based news agency to file an investigation. — DW

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DUTCH DEMOLISH SA



38-RUN TRIUMPH

The Netherlands register a 38-run upset victory over unbeaten South Africa in Dharamshala



DHARAMSHALA: The Netherlands caused one of the biggest upsets in the history of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup with an emphatic 38-run triumph over South Africa in Dharamshala on Tuesday.

Inspirational skipper Scott Edwards led from the front with an unbeaten 78* as the Netherlands posted a decent total of 245/8 in a match reduced to 43 overs per side because of early rain and a determined bowling outfit saw the previously unbeaten Proteas fall well short in reply.

Edwards combined well with veteran all-rounder Roelof van der Merwe (29) and No.10 Aryan Dutt (23 off nine balls) to propel the Dutch late in their innings and South Africa's reply never gathered much momentum as their high-profile top-order was ripped apart by some quality bowling.

Colin Ackermann (1/16) got the ball rolling with the key wicket of Quinton de Kock (20) and the likes of Logan van Beek (3/60), Paul van Meekeren (2/40), Bas de Leede (2/36) and van der Merwe (2/34) all chimed in at various times as South Africa were bowled out for 207 as they were defeated by a non-Test playing nation for the first time in an ODI.

It continues the Netherlands recent domination of South Africa, after they also tasted success against the Proteas in the ICC Men's T20 World Cup in Australia last year.

The loss robs South Africa of the chance to leapfrog unbeaten sides India and New Zealand at the top of the World Cup standings, with Temba Bavuma's side remaining in third following their first defeat at the tournament.

South Africa lost two crucial

WORLD CUP 2023 GROUP STANDINGS							
TEAM	P	W	L	N/R	T	NRR	PTS
India	3	3	0	0	0	+1.821	6
New Zealand	3	3	0	0	0	+1.604	6
South Africa	3	2	1	0	0	+1.385	4
Pakistan	3	2	1	0	0	-0.137	4
England	3	1	2	0	0	-0.084	2
Afghanistan	3	1	2	0	0	-0.652	2
Bangladesh	3	1	2	0	0	-0.699	2
Australia	3	1	2	0	0	-0.734	2
Netherlands	3	1	2	0	0	-0.993	0
Sri Lanka	3	0	3	0	0	-1.532	0

wickets of de Kock and Bavuma by the end of the first powerplay.

Paul van Meekeren made sure that the pace department opened its account in the very next over, when he castled Aiden Markram. Van der Merwe struck once more when Rassie van der Dussen (4) went for an ambitious reverse sweep and ended up finding point fielder.

David Miller (43) and Keshav Maharaj (40) put up a semblance of fight but with the run-rate climbing and the Proteas losing the top half at 109/6, it was always going to be a challenge.

Earlier, South Africa stifled the Netherlands innings with regular breakthroughs. A brisk 31-run stand between Sybrand Engelbrecht and Teja Nidamanuru stabilised the Dutch innings after they were 50/4 at one stage. Van der Merwe's arrival at the crease saw a spike in scoring and together with Edwards added 64 runs for the eighth wicket. Edwards came good against a capable South Africa attack and scored a brilliant fifty. His unbeaten knock included 10 fours and a six.

Brief scores: Netherlands 245/8 in 43 overs (Scott Edwards 78 n.o.; Lungi Ngidi 2/57, Marco Jansen 2/27, Kagiso Rabada 2/56) beat South Africa 207 in 42.5 overs (David Miller 43, Keshav Maharaj 40; Logan van Beek 3/60, Paul van Meekeren 2/40, Roelof van der Merwe 2/34, Bas de Leede 2/36). (cricketworldcup.com)

SEVERAL PLAYERS AFFECTED

Shafique in quarantine as viral infection hits Pakistan cricket team



BENGALURU: The Pakistan cricket team has been struck by a viral infection in their World Cup camp in India, with several players affected by flu and high fever, *ESPNCricinfo* reported on Tuesday.

Most are understood to be on the mend, but several did not attend Tuesday's optional training session. Abdullah Shafique is currently in quarantine in his room with flu and fever, while Shaheen Shah Afridi, Saud Shakeel and Zaman Khan have also been affected.

Usama Mir was also unwell with flu when Pakistan took on India on Saturday in Ahmedabad. Afridi is expected to be fit for Pakistan's next game on Friday against Australia in Bengaluru. It has learnt

none of the players have dengue symptoms.

"Some players got fever in the past few days and most of them have fully recovered from it," the PCB said in a statement. "Those who are in the stage of recovery remain under the team medical panel's observation."

Earlier this tournament, Shubman Gill missed India's first two games with dengue, only just recovering in time for the match against Pakistan.

The Pakistan team arrived in Bengaluru on Sunday after the game against India. Pakistan won their first two games, against Netherlands and Sri Lanka in Hyderabad, before succumbing to India.

AFGHANISTAN OPENER

Gurbaz reprimanded for breach of Code of Conduct

NEW DELHI: Afghanistan's famous upset victory over England at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup has been soured with news that opener Rahmanullah Gurbaz has been reprimanded for breaching Level 1 of the ICC Code of Conduct during the match.

Gurbaz was found to have breached Article 2.2 of the ICC Code of Conduct for Players and Player Support Personnel, which relates to "abuse of cricket equipment or clothing, ground equipment or fixtures and fittings during an international match."

The incident occurred during the 19th over of Afghanistan's innings, when Gurbaz slammed his bat on the boundary rope and chair when leaving the field after being run out for 80.

Gurbaz admitted the offence and accepted the sanction proposed by Jeff Crowe of the Emirates ICC Elite Panel of Match Referees,



with one demerit point added to the opener's disciplinary record, for whom it was the first offence in a 24-month period.

When a player reaches four or more demerit points within a 24-month period, they are converted into suspension points and a player is banned. The victory over England was Afghanistan's first at the World Cup, with their next match coming against unbeaten New Zealand in Chennai on Wednesday. (cricketworldcup.com)

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS
The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by December 2023 reaching \$90.73, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by 43 cents from the price of Monday, which was \$91.16. - **ONA**

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER
The MSX index closed at 4,723.47 points, up by 0.19 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.72 per cent at 459.72 points. Oman Qatar Insurance, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Salalah Mills, down 10.00 per cent, was the top loser.



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World oil demand growth estimate for 2023 unchanged at 2.4mb/d

Demand growth estimates for 2024 were also kept unchanged at 2.2 mb/d and total demand is expected to reach 104.31 mb/d led by expected healthy growth in global economy

Times News Service

MUSCAT: World oil demand growth estimate for 2023 was kept unchanged at 2.4 million barrels per day (mb/d) with aggregate demand expected to reach 102.06 million barrels per day, according to a new report. However, down-



ward adjustments were made to demand data mainly for the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) region (OECD Americas, Other Asia and Africa) for the first three quarters of the year that was offset by upward revision to Q2-2023 and Q3-2023 demand data for the non-OECD region, especially China. Demand growth estimates for 2024 were also kept unchanged at 2.2 mb/d and total demand is expected to reach 104.31 mb/d led by expected healthy growth in the global economy coupled with continued improvements in China, Kamco Invest said in its

latest report. Near term expectations for the US showed healthy economic growth as the labour market remains tight resulting in strong support for private household consumption with sustained robust disposable income levels. Air travel activity is expected to remain healthy in Q4-2023 driving demand for jet fuel, while gasoline demand is expected to be hit by a drop in driving activity owing to the winter season. Weak manufacturing activity is also expected to impact demand for industrial fuels, including diesel. Meanwhile, the services sector in the US, which had remained resilient this year,

witnessed a slowdown in September-2023 with new orders falling to a 9-month low. Nevertheless, the sector showed growth with the associated non-manufacturing PMI at 53.6 during September-2023. Meanwhile, oil demand in China remained upbeat with the country releasing its fourth batch of import quotas. The total volume for 2023 is expected to reach 203.64 million metric tonnes, indicating an increase of 14 percent from last year's 179 million tonnes, according to Reuters. A separate report from Reuters showed that China raked in savings of nearly \$10 billion through record purchases of

oil from Russia, Iran and Venezuela that are placed on sanctions by the US. The lower-priced crude oil imports also boosted refinery throughput and margins, especially for small independent operators known as "teapots". On the other hand, oil imports in India declined for the second consecutive month during September-2023 to reach 4.19 mb/d as compared to 4.34 mb/d during August-2023 mainly due to the autumn refinery maintenance season and lower demand in monsoons.

World oil supply
Global liquids production once again remained unchanged in September-2023 as compared to August-2023. According to preliminary data, global oil supply averaged at 100.6 mb/d. According to Opec, the month saw a decline in supplies from non-Opec suppliers by 0.3 mb/d that averaged at 72.9 mb/d as higher production in Other Euroasia and the UK was offset by drop in production in Russia and the US. This decline was offset by an increase in Opec production during the month. Non-Opec oil supply growth estimates for 2023 witnessed an

upward revision of 0.1 mb/d in the latest Opec monthly report to a growth of 1.7 mb/d with aggregate supply now expected to reach 67.49 mb/d. The upward revision mainly reflected higher supplies from Russia (+80 thousand barrels per day (tb/d), the US (+49 tb/d) and Brazil (+45 tb/d) partially offset by downward revision to supply forecast for Norway and UK (-25 tb/d each), Azerbaijan and Kazakhstan. Forecast for 2024 was kept unchanged at a growth of 1.38 mb/d with non-Opec supplies reaching 68.88 mb/d. The latest STEO from the US EIA showed production in the country reaching a record high of 13.13 mb/d in Q3-2023 while forecast for Q4-2023 showed even higher production of 13.16 mb/d. However, oil rig count data did not corroborate with higher output data as rigs have shown consistent declines over the last few months reaching the lowest since February-2022 during the week ending 6-October-2023 at 497 rigs. Oil executives in the US indicated that \$90 per barrel is the new trigger point for adding oil rigs in the United States.

NEW BRAND IDENTITY OF NLGIC

Liva Group celebrates its inception with ticker change and bell-ringing ceremony at MSX

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Liva Group, the new brand identity of National Life and General Insurance (NLGIC) Group, a leading insurer in the Middle East listed on Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), has celebrated its inception with a bell-ringing ceremony and ticker change at MSX. Emerging from the tradition of RSA Middle East, Liva Group is the newly formed entity offering personal & commercial, and life & health insurance products across the GCC market with a strategic ambition to build the region's leading multi-line insurer delivering value to all its stakeholders. The bell-ringing was attended by Sheikh Abdullah Al Salmi, President of the Capital Market Authority (CMA), Ahmed Al Maamari, Vice President of CMA, Haitham Al Salmi, CEO of MSX, and Mohamed Said Al Abri, CEO of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company (MCD). Senior company officials from the Liva Group including Chairman Sheikh Khalid Al Zubair, Group CEO Martin



Rueegg, Group COO Dr. Dhafir Shanfari, and Liva Insurance Oman CEO Hanaa Al Hinai attended the ceremony. Sheikh Khalid Al Zubair, Chairman of the Board of Directors for Liva Group said: "Our new identity as Liva is born from a promising idea to build one of the largest insurance companies in the region. An insurance company that strived to meet the needs of its evolving customer base through innovative solutions and a strong level of service. Aligned with the national objectives outlined in Oman Vision 2040, the

group's strategies and ambitions are aligned with the collective goal of enhancing social well-being and building a sustainable future across the GCC region and beyond. "We are proud of the continuous support given by all regulatory authorities, throughout the integration journey across the region, the fruits of which, we look forward to reaping in the coming years." Group CEO, Martin Rueegg shared, "Today marks a special moment as we debut our new brand name on MSX. Liva is more than a combination of two well-

established insurance players. The new Liva brand reinforces the company's purpose of instilling confidence in people to live the lives they want, well prepared for the unexpected. We aim to do this by creating ecosystems beyond insurance which hold our customers' needs at its core. Our growth strategy aspires to bring in evolution with our next generation of insurance solutions, enhancing the lives of a globally connected community." Liva Group is a leading insurer in the region with strong technical capabilities and customisable solutions across all lines of insurance, underpinned by exceptional service. With an employee strength of 1200 employees, and serving more than 1.5 million customers, Liva has established operations across GCC markets, including Oman, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait, and Bahrain, with entry plans in Qatar. The Group also includes wholly owned subsidiaries NSSPL providing shared services, based in India as well as TPA services via Inayah based in the UAE to support its business growth.

SUCCESSFUL ADVISE

Kekst CNC advises OQGN on global financial communications for delivery of historic IPO on MSX

Times News Service

DUBAI: Kekst CNC, a leading international strategic communications consultancy, worked with OQ Gas Networks (OQGN) and the OQ Group on the landmark transaction. The firm was appointed to develop a global and regional communications strategy, support the equity story development in close collaboration with banks and legal advisers, media train the executive team, speech writing, analyst/investor meeting preparation, corporate narrative creation for the website and IPO page, and delivering strategic media relations with global media and financial newswires resulting in unprecedented international coverage for the IPO. The success of this project reflects Kekst CNC's core competency of delivering financial communications advisory on complex transactions requiring carefully regulated disclosure. The global team, consisting of Kevin Soady, Katherine Fennell, Gregor Riemann, Victoria Douglas, Christopher Deifuss, and Stephan Götzel, worked closely with Kekst CNC partner agency OHI Leo Burnett in Muscat, which supported creative content, design, media buying and branding. The team provided a blend of close on-the-ground support in Muscat with remote advisory from London, Frankfurt, and Dubai, providing OQ and OQGN with regional best practices, combined with global know-how and expertise. The OQGN IPO was a complex endeavour, marked by bilingual requirements, and a significant number of stakeholder groups involved. These included leading banks, local/international law firms, and regulatory bodies. In addition, the focus on the retail investment tranche enhanced the requirements to deliver and roll out an integrated marketing campaign which engaged investors in Oman and



across the Gulf. The overall success reflects the well-managed coordination between Kekst CNC and its partners to deliver and execute an integrated global communications strategy. Kevin Soady, Partner at Kekst CNC, said, "We are proud of what we have achieved together with OQGN and OHI Leo Burnett, truly working as one team and delivering success on such an important project. We expect to see increasing demand for this type of support as the Oman Investment Authority continues to bring companies to public markets. The Sultanate of Oman is on a significant transformative journey, with many companies on their route to privatisation – and it has been a privilege to have been involved in the advisory of OQGN's IPO." Kekst CNC has had a presence in the region since 2005, with over 30 employees based in the Gulf working on mandates across the Sultanate of Oman, the United Arab Emirates, the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Lebanon, Egypt, Morocco, and Bahrain. Kekst CNC is a leading adviser for financial communications and transactions, it is a corporate member of the Middle East Investor Relations Association, and the firm was recently ranked as the #2 Global M&A adviser in Merger Market's 2022 league table.

TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

Bank Muscat participates in career fair

MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to create rewarding internship and job opportunities for Omani youth, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in Oman, participated in the career and training opportunities fair organised by the College of Banking and Financial Studies. The event witnessed the participation of 25 different institutions from both the government and private sectors. Within the Fair, the bank dedicated a special stall where it introduced students to the training and job opportunities, benefits given to employees and initiative aimed at creating a positive work environ-



ment. Students learnt about specialisations required by the bank in different departments. Such career fairs represent an opportunity to

introduce employment and training policies in the bank and mechanism of applying for these opportunities which the bank offers annually.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Oman Qatar Insurance, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Salalah Mills, down 10.00 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,723.47 points, up by 0.19 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.72 per cent at 459.72 points. Oman Qatar Insurance, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Salalah Mills, down 10.00 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Oman Telecom were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 359 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR4.26 million, with more than 8.56 million shares changing hands. Out of 38 traded securities, 9 advanced, 15 declined, and 14 remained unchanged.

Financial Index closed at 7,744.14 points, up 0.27 per cent. Prices of Oman Qatar Insurance, Al Madina Investments, National Life & General Insurance, National Bank Oman, Ominvest were up

by 10.00 per cent, 7.90 per cent, 4.48 per cent, 2.99 per cent, 2.44 per cent respectively. Prices of United Finance, Sohar International Bank were up by 5.26 per cent, 0.94 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,519.73 points, up 0.2 per cent. Prices of Oman Chlorine, Raysut Cement were up by 9.88 per cent, 1.55 per cent respectively. Prices of Salalah Mills, Oman Cement, Oman Cables Industry were up by 10.00 per cent, 4.41 per cent, 2.50 per cent respectively.

Services Index was down by 0.5 per cent before closing at 1,631.60 points. Prices of Al Jazeera Services, Renaissance Services were up by 9.81 per cent, 1.71 per cent respectively. Prices of Phoenix Power, Al Batinah Power, Muscat Desalination, Barka Water & Power Company, OIFC were up by 4.92 per cent, 4.17 per cent, 3.57 per cent, 2.50 per cent, 2.44 per cent respectively. – **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,729.144	4,694.773	4,723.471	4,714.585	8.886	0.19
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,759.989	7,703.435	7,744.141	7,722.966	21.175	0.27
Industry Index	5,545.052	5,519.730	5,519.730	5,508.921	10.809	0.20
Services Index	1,647.928	1,630.530	1,631.600	1,639.834	-8.234	-0.50
MSX Shariah Index	460.201	455.719	459.722	456.426	3.296	0.72
MSX TR INDEX	6,226.486	6,181.233	6,219.018	6,207.317	11.701	0.19
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,467.574	8,405.863	8,450.280	8,427.174	23.106	0.27
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	5,923.495	5,896.445	5,896.445	5,884.899	11.546	0.20
SERVICES TR IDX	1,820.049	1,800.834	1,802.016	1,811.110	-9.094	-0.50

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
8,561,858	4,261,713	359	23,798,007,616	9	15	14	38

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, OCTOBER 17

SN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PD	LAST BD	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	SECURITY SYMBOL	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																	
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	7,006	2,106	19	0.299	0.310	0.295	0.310	0.301	0.009	2.990	0.309	0.331	0.309	0.100	NBOB	504,043,370
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	2,200	924	1	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.410	0.010	2.439	0.420	0.400	0.420	0.100	OMVS	280,713,479
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	5,583	1,814	3	0.325	0.325	0.325	0.325	0.340	-0.015	-4.412	0.325	0.325	0.325	0.100	OCOI	107,533,631
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	4,800	864	2	0.180	0.180	0.180	0.180	0.180	0.000	0.000	0.180	0.162	0.181	0.100	AACT	39,600,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	500	118	1	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.214	0.021	8.813	0.235	0.206	0.235	0.100	AJSS	14,383,004
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	100	5	1	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.054	0.057	-0.003	-5.263	0.054	0.055	0.061	0.100	UFCI	19,230,874
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,968,056	544,178	123	0.275	0.279	0.275	0.277	0.277	0.000	0.000	0.277	0.304	0.277	0.100	BKMB	2,079,271,986
OM0000003000	ALMAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MARKETING	950	950	2	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.060	-0.060	-5.660	1.000	1.000	1.100	0.100	MHAS	69,000,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	720,700	734,405	42	1.020	1.020	1.000	1.018	1.020	-0.002	-0.196	1.018	1.122	1.018	0.100	OTEL	763,500,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	5,310	2,216	19	0.418	0.418	0.417	0.417	0.410	0.007	1.707	0.417	0.451	0.417	0.100	RNSS	98,582,970
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	876,812	92,065	13	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.106	-0.001	-0.943	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.100	RKSB	574,128,293
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	115,255	42,068	34	0.365	0.365	0.365	0.365	0.365	0.000	0.000	0.365	0.401	0.365	0.100	ORDS	237,594,644
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	91,938	7,907	4	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.000	0.000	0.086	0.085	0.086	0.100	AMAT	15,050,000
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	3,246	763	2	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.235	0.000	0.000	0.235	0.235	0.258	0.100	AMCI	12,925,000
Total	14	3,802,456	1,430,382	266													
Parallel Market																	
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	2,110	274	3	0.125	0.131	0.125	0.131	0.129	0.002	1.550	0.131	0.125	0.134	0.100	RCCI	26,200,000
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	2,970	149	1	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.050	0.050	0.055	0.100	MFCI	15,357,316
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	17,500	34,125	9	1.950	1.950	1.950	1.950	2.000	-0.050	-2.500	1.950	1.900	1.950	0.100	OCAI	174,915,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	11,370	887	2	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.000	0.000	0.078	0.077	0.078	0.100	AAIC	16,068,000
OM0000001889	SALALAH MILLS	50	29	1	0.585	0.585	0.585	0.585	0.650	-0.065	-10.000	0.585	0.585	0.640	0.100	SFMI	29,228,392
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	100	4	1	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.038	0.003	7.895	0.041	0.036	0.041	0.100	AMUI	3,485,000
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	7,000	1,155	2	0.170	0.170	0.163	0.163	0.163	0.000	0.000	0.163	0.163	0.166	0.100	ABOB	382,994,167
OM0000002341	OMAN CHLORINE	1,000	531	2	0.520	0.534	0.520	0.534	0.486	0.048	9.877	0.534	0.520	0.534	0.100	OCHL	38,185,721
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	35,000	1,365	2	0.039	0.039	0.039	0.039	0.040	-0.001	-2.500	0.039	0.039	0.039	0.100	BWPC	6,240,000
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	161,777	19,413	12	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.000	0.000	0.120	0.115	0.120	0.100	VOES	9,768,330
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	414,200	41,006	6	0.100	0.100	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.000	0.000	0.099	0.099	0.100	0.100	BKNZ	221,458,350
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	167,770	20,980	5	0.126	0.126	0.125	0.125	0.126	-0.001	-0.794	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.100	SHSQ	12,225,270
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	5,246	121	1	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.023	0.024	-0.001	-4.187	0.023	0.022	0.025	0.100	BATP	15,522,411
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	21,127	500	8	0.024	0.024	0.023	0.024	0.024	0.000	0.000	0.024	0.026	0.024	0.100	SUWP	17,145,752
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	19,757	1,175	8	0.060	0.061	0.058	0.058	0.061	-0.003	-4.918	0.058	0.058	0.060	0.100	PHPC	94,830,885
OM0000006979	OMAN QATAR INSURANCE	20,000	3,740	2	0.187	0.187	0.187	0.187	0.170	0.017	10.000	0.187	0.000	0.187	0.100	OQIC	30,147,873
OM0000007043	LIVA GROUP	50,890	17,307	5	0.336	0.350	0.336	0.350	0.335	0.015	4.478	0.350	0.340	0.360	0.100	LIVA	139,431,020
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	1,000	81	1	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.084	-0.003	-3.571	0.081	0.082	0.084	0.100	MCDE	12,225,582
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	10,000	850	1	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.090	-0.005	-5.556	0.085	0.000	0.085	0.100	OMRF	40,050,843
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	250,129	73,760	11	0.291	0.295	0.291	0.295	0.295	0.000	0.000	0.295	0.295	0.295	0.100	ABRJ	227,209,000
Total	20	1,198,996	217,452	63													

OMAN HOUSING BANK

Nizwa University acknowledges OHB's commitment to partnership programme

MUSCAT: Nizwa University has recognised Oman Housing Bank (OHB) for its invaluable participation in the dynamic partnership programme fostering collaboration between the academic and business sectors.

This acknowledgment was presented during the 12th edition of the programme, held under the distinguished patronage of Engineer Mohsen Bin Zahran Al Hinaï, General Manager of the Industrial City of Rusayl.

Mahmoud Bin Badr Al Nasserî, Sr. Officer -Talent Attraction from the Human Capital Department, graciously accepted the award on behalf of Oman Housing Bank, underscoring the bank's ongoing dedication to nurturing talent and facilitating professional growth.

The programme featured an engaging presentation by Ayman Bin Ali Al Shuhi, Head of Talent Development and Management at Oman Housing Bank. His presentation



provided valuable insights to university students about their transition from the academic realm to the professional world. The focus was on success factors that drive this transition, including the development of practical and specialised skills aligned with the dynamic demands of the labour market. It also emphasised on the practical applications that enhance students' proficiency, the importance of social interaction, and bridging the gap

between academic theory and real-world practice.

Al Shuhi's lecture sparked a high level of interest among students eager to understand the intricacies of professional networking, making the most of industry events and conferences to expand their knowledge and gain a competitive edge in the job market. The significance of workplace training in expediting job placement was also highlighted, along with the idea

that education serves as a conduit for values and principles, equipping students with essential skills that propel them into advanced educational and professional realms. The alignment of these skills with contemporary trends was emphasized, emphasising the necessity of staying current and adaptable.

OHB's Human Capital Department is resolute in its mission to provide practical and professional programmes for both its employees and various universities. This commitment is realized through a series of engaging lectures and comprehensive training courses in partnership with academic institutions. The bank firmly believes that investing in human capital is paramount, as it significantly contributes to the development of high-quality, skilled markets. In the past, OHB has executed a diverse range of training programs aimed at providing the tools for success through ongoing training and qualifications.

NEW PORTAL

Egypt issues Mena's first sustainable Panda bonds at \$500 million

CAIRO: Egypt issued the first sustainable Panda bonds in the Middle East and North Africa at ¥3.5 billion (\$500 million) with a yield of 3.5 per cent over three years, according to a statement by the Ministry of Finance.

The recent bond issuance is guaranteed by international banks including the Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB) and the African Development Bank (AFDB), said Minister of Finance Mohamed Maait.

He noted that the issuance has been receiving high demand from Chinese investors, according to the Mena news agency.

"This issuance serves as a new portal aiming to increase bilateral cooperation, share experiences, and facilitate opportunities to achieve sustainable development goals (SDGs) and Egypt Vision 2030," Maait commented.



Egypt aims to reduce carbon emissions and promote using renewable and alternative energy sources, including green hydrogen, as part of its National Climate Change Strategy 2050.

Earlier this week, Maait announced that Egypt has a financial gap ranging between \$6 and \$8 billion for FY2023/2024, which can be narrowed by issuing Samurrai and Panda bonds. -BNA

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RECOGNITION

Omantel wins Lead Award: Best 5G Adoption award at Samena Telecom Awards in Dubai

MUSCAT: Omantel, the leading provider of integrated telecommunication services in the Sultanate of Oman, was recently declared the winner of the Lead Award: Samena Telecom Award for Best 5G Adoption at a ceremony held in Dubai last week.

The award was in recognition of Omantel's outstanding success in adopting and rapidly extending the 5G network, since the launch of the advanced technology in Oman at the end of 2019.

Omantel's 5G network now accounts for more than 68.18% of total wireless traffic and 88.03% of total fixed wireless access traffic – making it the only operator in Oman to achieve these figures in 5G deployment and among the best 5G operators in the region.

Talal Al Mamari, CEO of Omant



CYCLING AT SCHOOL HELPS MENTAL HEALTH OF TEENAGERS: STUDY

WASHINGTON: Physical activity improves mental health, yet activity levels are dropping. This is especially concerning because teenagers' mental health continues to deteriorate. In the United States, one out of every six school-age children has a mental condition.

Riding bikes is a potential way to promote physical activity to school-aged youngsters. Researchers in the United States have now looked into how teenagers' psychological well-being changes after taking part in a school-based cycling programme.

"Participation in a school cycling education programme during the Covid-19 pandemic was associated with improved psychosocial well-being amongst middle schoolers in the US," said Dr Esther Walker, research director at the non-profit organization Outride.

"While we saw promising increases in some student subgroups, certain groups had higher levels of self-reported mental well-being both before and after participating in the programme."

"It was really encouraging to see such a positive student response to a cycling-specific physical education programme,"

said Fletcher Dementyev, a research assistant at Loma Linda University and first author of the study published in Frontiers in Sports and Active Living.

"This motivates us, and hopefully others, to continue investigating and developing cycling as a pathway to improved health and well-being in adolescents."

Outside is a not-for-profit organisation partnering with schools to provide cycling programmes. "The Riding for Focus (R4F) programme aims to equip students with basic cycling knowledge and experience, so that they may ride safely and confidently," Walker explained.

"A bicycle can be used for leisure activities, competition, and transportation. Thus, not only are students participating in an activity that improves their health and well-being, but also one that empowers them to explore the world," said Dr Sean Wilson, a researcher at Loma Linda University and the study's senior author.

More than 1,200 middle schoolers, aged 11 to 14 years, participated in the programme's surveys. Before and after cycling, they completed two surveys that included measures of current mental

More than 1,200 middle schoolers, aged 11 to 14 years, participated in the programme's surveys. Given the improvement in teenagers' mental well-being scores, short-term physical activity programmes hold promise of having a positive influence on mental health and well-being in adolescents, the team said.



well-being and psychological functioning. Given the improvement in teenagers' mental well-being scores, short-term physical activity programmes hold promise of having a positive influence on mental health and well-being in adolescents, the team said.

Next to overall well-being, the scientists

examined social risk factors that influence well-being pre- and post-programme participation. "We focused on a number of key risk factors that affect mental health and well-being in middle school-aged children in the US, including socio-economic status, gender, and race," Wilson explained.

Relative risk assessments indicated that males, white students, and those from high socio-economic status families still had reduced relative risk of developing psychosocial disorders post-intervention. For example, female students' well-being improved significantly; male students, however, still had higher well-being scores compared to females after the programme.

"While participating can certainly contribute positively to one's day-to-day life, ultimately, to see large-scale improvements, changes in policy, reductions in systematic disparities in access to nutrition, health services, safe environments, and beyond the need to be put in motion," said Walker.

The authors also pointed to limitations of their study, one being a study population that is different from the country-wide student population.

"This means that our results, though insightful, aren't fully reflective of the national youth physical education context," said Dementyev. "We see this study as the beginning of a national dialogue surrounding investment in cycling education and its potential returns." **ANI**

SPORTS

Al Zubair-Schiller duo aims to end International GT Open on a high

Al Faisal Al Zubair also confirms his participation in the upcoming Asian Le Mans Series

MUSCAT: The pair of Oman's Al Faisal Al Zubair and his German teammate Fabian Schiller have been on podiums in both the rounds they competed in the 2023 International GT Open this season. The pair now heads to their third event and the final round of the International GT Open series at the 4.657km Circuit de Barcelona-Catalunya in Spain, which will be held on October 21-22.

Having two race wins, a second and a third place finish under their belt so far in the Pro class, the Al-Manar Racing by Getspeed Mercedes AMG GT3 duo heads to Barcelona high on confidence and is aiming for victories to maintain a 100 percent podium-finish record and end the series on a glorious note.

Al Zubair and Schiller competed in Portugal in May and Hungary the following month, but took a break from the circuit as other competitors competed in Belgium, France, Austria and Italy rounds.

Al Zubair and Schiller had claimed a first and second place in Portimão, Portugal and followed it up with another win and a third place at the Hungaroring.

Al Zubair said: "I am looking forward to racing in Barcelona for the finale of the International GT Open. Together with Getspeed and Fabi (Fabian Schiller), we have a great package that we proved this



season. Out of the two race weekends we have done so far, we have two wins, one second place and a third. This is a 100 percent podium-finish record.

"We are both excited to get back to the championship and end the European season with wins. Unfortunately, we will have a 20-second handicap because of our previous success but, nonetheless, I hope that we can still achieve great results this weekend."

fortuna-

thirty-four cars have been entered across the various classes for the final races in the International GT Open in Barcelona and potentially four teams and four different brands of race car will be challenging for the title.

Sam de Haan and Charlie Fagg head into the weekend in the Optimum Motorsport McLaren with 103 points and a cushion of four over Diego Menchaca in the Motopark Mercedes. In Barcelona, the Mexican teams are up with the 2019 GT Open champion Albert Costa. Christopher Haase and Simon Reicher are a further

four points adrift in the Eastalenet Racing Audi.

International GT Open drivers are sharing the race weekend with entrants in the Euro 4 Championship, GT Cup Europe and Euroformula Open. They will take to the Catalan circuit for a pair of one-hour free practice sessions on Friday.

The first 30-minute qualifying session takes centre stage on Saturday morning and precedes the opening 70-minute race that gets underway with a rolling start.

Q2 takes place for the second driver on Sunday morning and is followed by a second one-hour race.

ALMS confirmed Meanwhile, Al Zubair has confirmed that he will take part in the forthcoming Asian Le Mans Series (ALMS), teaming up with Fabian Schiller and Austrian racer Martin Konrad.

The three-event calendar includes two races at the Sepang International Circuit in Malaysia on December 2-3, one race at the Dubai Autodrome on February 4 and a back-to-back finale at the Yas Marina Circuit in Abu Dhabi on February 10-11.

Speaking about the Asian Le Mans Series, Al Zubair said: "Hopefully it will be a very strong championship for us. We have a strong line-up and will be aiming for the win. We will be well prepared for the series. It will be great to be back in that series again after finishing second last year."

OMAN RACKET SPORTS COMMITTEE

Series of activities held to mark World Squash Day



MUSCAT: The World Squash Day, which falls on the second Saturday of October every year, was celebrated by the Oman Racket Sports Committee (ORSC).

As part of celebrations to mark the day, ORSC arranged a series of activities from October 14-17 at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex (SQSC) in Muscat and at the Sohar Sports Complex.

The main event took place on Saturday at the SQSC in presence of Dr. AbdulRahim Musallam al Droushi, Chairman of ORSC, and a large number of squash lovers.

The event also featured a friendly match while the winners of Muscat Squash League, which concluded in August were feted. Rashid Ali won the Premier League title in June while Joseph Fighali claimed the First Division honours. In July, Hussain Ahmed won the Premier League crown while Tahir al Barwani emerged as First Division winner. Salim al Maqbali was crowned champion in August's Premier League while Said al Hajri took the top honours in the First Division League.

On Sunday, school students from Muscat were provided basic training sessions.

On Monday and Tuesday, ORSC organised activities for the students in Sohar under supervision of coach Hamed al Maqbali along with fellow coaches, Ali al Rubaei and Abdullah al Maqbali.

Al Droushi, ORSC chief, said: "We organised these activities on the World Squash Day to introduce and spread the sports to different age categories in the community. School students were our main focus category as we wish to nurture the young players. During the forthcoming period, ORSC will arrange squash festivals to promote the game in the Sultanate."



ferent age categories in the community. School students were our main focus category as we wish to nurture the young players. During the forthcoming period, ORSC will arrange squash festivals to promote the game in the Sultanate."

Tahir Taghlib al Barwani, ORSC general secretary, said, "We were surprised by the enthusiasm shown by the students towards the sport. This is a positive indicator for us as we continue to work to develop young stars for the future."

UNOFFICIAL ODI SERIES

Afghanistan A win both matches against Oman

MUSCAT: The visiting Afghan Abdalyan (Afghanistan A) cricketers made a 2-0 clean sweep against hosts Oman, winning both the unofficial ODI matches, which were played at the Oman Cricket Academy grounds last week.

The Afghan Abdalyan players are currently on their maiden tour to Oman and will also feature in five T20 games, which begins on Tuesday night.

The series comprising unofficial ODI and T20 matches is also providing the hosts a much-needed match practice ahead of the 2023 ICC Men's T20 World Cup Asia Regional Final in Nepal later this month.

Duleep Mendis' men will be among the eight nations vying for the sole spot for the 2024 ICC Men's T20 World Cup, co-hosted by the USA and West Indies.

In the first unofficial ODI match, Afghan Abdalyan won by 28 runs. Batting first, the visitors were restricted to 223 in 46.4 overs with Oman skipper Zeeshan Maqsood, Samay Shrivastav, Mohammed Nadeem and Ayaan Khan picking up two wickets apiece.

For Afghanistan A, Zubaid Akbari (76) and Mohammed Ishaq (57) slammed half-centuries in their total of 223 and the bowlers defended the modest target as they bowled Oman out for 195 in 47.5 overs.

Akbari and Abdul Malik (40) provided a strong opening wicket stand of 89 but after the partnership was broken by Maqsood in the 19th over, the visitors struggled against a tidy Oman attack. Akbari was looking good to reach the triple digits but was run out in the 31st over for 76 off 90 balls. A late onslaught from Ishaq, who scored 57 off 46, which included three boundaries and four maximums took the team past the 200-mark.

Oman's chase was off to a flyer with Kashyap Prajapati and Pratik Athavale as they built a 116-run opening wicket partnership in 27 overs. Athavale's run out for 51 changed the game as Afghan Abdalyan came back strongly to rip apart the top and middle order batting lineup of the hosts. Prajapati's dismissal, yet another run out, for 80



Oman's Shoaib Khan celebrates after his 50 in the second game



Abdul Malik of Afghanistan

in the 36th over saw a major collapse as Oman were bowled out for 195. Ayaan Khan was the only other batter to score in double digits with 17.

There were four run out dismissals in Oman's innings while Naveed Zadrán picked up three for 47.

In the second match, the hosts fared much better and though there was still one run out in the innings during their chase of 273, a sparkling innings of 88 off 97 balls from Shoaib Khan stood out. In fact, Shoaib missed out on a deserving century when he was run out in the 41st over with the hosts total at 221. His exit proved to be the turning point as along with Ayaan Khan (42), the pair had put on a 108-run fifth wicket stand. Ayaan followed to the pavilion an over later with the total at 223 and despite a late charge from Siddharth Bukkapatnam with 22 off

19, Oman fell short by 15 runs as they were bowled out for 257 in 48.5 overs. Wafadar Momand was the pick of the bowlers with 3/66 while Naveed Zadrán and Shahidullah took two wickets each. Skipper Zeeshan Maqsood (38) and Kashyap Prajapati (24) were the other notable run-getters.

Earlier, Afghan Abdalyan put up a challenging total of 272/8 in 50 overs, with Abdul Malik hammering a strokeful century (117 off 128 balls). Nasir Jamal's 57 and Mohammed Ishaq's 11-ball 21 powered the tourists to a winning total. For Oman, Siddharth and Shrivastav claimed two wickets each.

Brief scores: Match 1: Afghanistan A 223 in 46.4 overs (Zubaid Akbari 76, Mohammed Ishaq 57; Zeeshan Maqsood 2/18, Samay Shrivastav 2/27, Mohammed Nadeem 2/27, Ayaan Khan 2/44) beat Oman 195 in 47.5 overs (Kashyap Prajapati 80, Pratik Athavale 51, Naveed Zadrán 3/47).

Match 2: Afghanistan A 272/8 (Abdul Malik 117, Nasir Jamal 57; Siddharth Bukkapatnam 2/28, Samay Shrivastav 2/48) beat Oman 257 in 48.5 overs (Shoaib Khan 88, Ayaan Khan 42; Wafadar Momand 3/66, Naveed Zadrán 2/47, Shahidullah 2/40).

Bank Muscat applauds role of its female staff on Omani Women’s Day

Bank Muscat is proud of the opportunities that have been provided to women employees who make up more than 48% of the total number of the bank’s employees

MUSCAT: Omani Women's Day, falling on October 17 every year, is a great reminder of the essential role women play in the stability, progress and long-term development of the Sultanate of Oman. On this occasion, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in Oman, has expressed its deepest appreciation to all Omani women, including the bank's female employees in particular for their continuous efforts and achievements. Bank Muscat is proud of the opportunities that



have been provided to women employees who make up more than 48% of the total number of the bank's employees. As part of its efforts targeted towards empowering employees and enhancing their skills, Bank Muscat is keenly implementing training and development strategy to support talented employees through various programmes, including graduates and branch managers training programmes and scholarships to complete their higher studies in reputed universities inside and outside the Sultanate. These programmes are designed to guide employees to pursue their dreams and future aspirations and continue to actively contribute to achieving the goals of Oman Vision 2040. Bank Mus-



cat's female employees proved their capability to wisely use the available resources and opportunities to leverage them for their careers. Bank Muscat has affirmed that it will continue to provide more educational opportunities and 'on the job training' to Omani women to reach the highest levels in their career.

Empowering women On this occasion, a number of Bank Muscat female employees expressed their pride regarding the fact that a day has been dedicated to Omani women, recognizing their successes and achievements in various sectors. Khairat Dhiban Al Hinai, Assistant Regional Manager, Muscat Governorate, said: "Women play



an essential role in building society and this was confirmed by late His Majesty Sultan Qaboos bin Said when he said that the country does not prosper without women. The support given to women enhances our confidence and reminds us of the importance of our contribution to society. We are proud of the inspiring examples amongst Omani women who brought about reputable achievements in various occasions, all working towards supporting Oman." Reflecting on her experience at the bank, she said: "I joined the bank in 2010 and managed through these years to expand my knowledge and develop my personal skills benefitting from the various opportunities the bank provides. There is no doubt that the bank is playing a

huge role in helping me grow and strengthen my skills through different courses related to management skills, emotional intelligence, and banking systems. Outside work, I am interested in expanding my knowledge on psychology, understanding personality types and how to best deal with them. This has enriched my work experience as a branch manager and it helped me eventually along the way."

Towards achieving dreams Tahani Saif Al Ghassani, Assistant Regional Manager, Al Dhahira Governorate, said: "I take this opportunity to extend my sincere appreciation to the Omani women for their hard work and contribution in various fields that help support the development of the country. Women are a core pillar in society and have been working relentlessly towards its progress and growth. Hats off to every woman in Oman and a special thank you to my dear mother for always believing in me and supporting me throughout the way. I encourage all women to be brave in the face of challenges and continue pursuing their dreams to achieve the best." She further explained that Bank Muscat helped in enhancing her skills through taking various re-

sponsibilities, which helped her discover her passion for work. Tahani Al Ghassani said: "The training opportunities the bank provides have proven to be a great contributor to the development of employees and helping them move up the ladder with confidence and sharper skills."

Training and development to support talents Laila Obaid Al Harasi, Branch Manager, Samail, said: "A big thank you to all Omani woman on this day. The role of women in society has only been growing. I am thankful to Bank Muscat for giving me and my female colleagues many opportunities to develop our skills and grow in our careers at the bank. Bank Muscat has always provided the best possible opportunities to its female employees and this support is a crucial part of why we have done very well." About her personal skills, she added: "I am very interested in reading and painting and have developed these skills through constant investment in widening my horizons to achieve excellence. Working in the bank, I became able to best use the opportunities that come my way to strengthen my skills and see my dreams a reality."

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

Oman Oil supports national health schools’ initiative

MUSCAT: As a part of Oman Oil Marketing Company's continuous efforts to support the community through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programmes, and as a contribution to cultivating a health and wellness culture in communities through education, Oman Oil Marketing Company (OOMCO) recently supported a competition that was part of the Health-Promoting Schools (HPS) Initiative. The Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health, initiated HPS to develop schools across Oman into learning environments that encourage healthy behaviours. Establishing healthy eating habits and being physically active among young minds increases their educational and practical achievements. Tarik Mohammed Al Junaidi, CEO of Oman Oil Marketing Company, said, "Supporting this initiative falls under the four main pillars of our Corporate Social Responsibility strategy: Education



and Youth Development, Community Quality of Life Improvement, Environment, and SME's Development. As a company, we want to lead in promoting the good health and well-being of not just our team but also our communities, and we believe that we can raise awareness through education and starting at an early age." He added, "We support creating school environ-

ments conducive to health and safety, which benefits our youth and society. By offering rewards and incentives for schools across Oman, children and communities are encouraged to choose healthier lifestyle options that will support them in achieving their goals and objectives." OOMCO contributed to the event by providing nine schools

across Oman with interactive screens as a reward for their achievements in promoting health and wellbeing in their schools. The HPS Initiative in Oman started as part of the World Health Organization (WHO) global initiative in 2004. The WHO underlines that health and education are inextricably linked and schools provide a setting that can be used to improve students' health in addition to providing education. OOMCO aims to add value to local communities through its CSR initiatives. The company supports various charitable, educational, and environmental events and initiatives, to name a few. Apart from supporting the HPS Initiative, the company recently launched Tmakon, a CSR programme to empower young Omanis to reach their full potential as emerging entrepreneurs. OOMCO also operates the Experience Hub program, which aims to train fresh graduates in the work experience.

AL MAHA ORGANISES BLOOD DONATION CAMPAIGN

As part of Al Maha Petroleum Company's efforts to encourage blood donation among employees, and in cooperation with the Oman Blood Bank, Al Maha organised a blood donation camp at the head office, which attracted a large number of employees. — Supplied picture



COMPACT SEGMENT

Mercedes-Benz strengthens position of CLA Coupé as trendsetter

MUSCAT: With numerous innovations and upgraded standard equipment, Mercedes-Benz is strengthening the position of the CLA Coupé as a trendsetter in the compact segment. The newly shaped front apron, the revised radiator grille with star pattern and the new rear diffuser sharpens the sporty character. Added to this are the modernised graphics in the LED High Performance headlamps, which are standard for the first time, and the LED rear lights. The new paint colours hyper blue (exclusive to the CLA models) and spectral blue, as well as three additional wheel-rim designs in sizes up to 19 inches, extend the choice for individualisation. As standard, the new CLA Coupé model is fitted with 17-inch five-spoke alloy wheels in vanadium silver or a five-double-spoke design in high-gloss black with high-shine finish. Exclusive interior with hi-tech look, fresh colours and new trims. The highlight of the interior is the free-standing double screen. It now includes two 10.25-inch displays with a wide-screen look as standard. They offer a holistic high-tech experience and create an exceptionally open spatial architecture. The steering wheel of the current generation is upholstered in leather Nappa as standard. Alternatively, the multifunction sports steering wheel is available in ARTICO man made leather for the first time. The new trim elements in a dark carbon look, open-pore brown lime wood or brown MICROCUT microfibre



(AMG Line only) further enhance the interior. The comfort seats are also part of the new high-quality standard in the CLA Coupé. They are fitted as standard with a combination of ARTICO man-made leather and three-dimensionally embossed fabric in black. They are also optionally available in trendy sage grey. In the AMG Line, the standard seat upholstery in ARTICO man-made leather/microfibre MICROCUT is now also available in bahia brown. A total of five upholstery colours are available in the AMG Line: black, bahia brown, sage grey, titanium grey pearl/black and, for the first time, red pepper/black. In the ARTICO/MICROCUT seat cover, this proportion is 65% in the seat mirror and 85% in the bottom fabric. The use of recycled materials is an important measure on the way to CO2 neutrality. As early as the end of this decade, Mercedes-Benz aims to at least

halve the CO2 emissions per passenger car in the new vehicle fleet over the entire life cycle compared to 2020. From 2039 onwards, the passenger car and van fleet aim to be CO2-neutral with offsets across the entire automotive value chain. Significantly upgraded equipment and simplified offer logic. Mercedes-Benz has significantly upgraded the standard equipment and tailored the offer logic even more precisely to specific customer wishes. For example, the basic equipment of the new CLA model already includes Highbeam Assist, a reversing camera and the USB package in addition to the leather steering wheel and LED front headlamps. Other functional equipment is bundled into packages based on real customer behaviour. In terms of design scopes such as colours, upholstery, trims and wheels, customers can configure vehicles as individually as possible.

EMPOWERING FUTURE OF FASHION

Sohar International collaborates with Dar Al Aseel to nourish Omani fashion talent

MUSCAT: In alignment with its steadfast dedication to human development and the empowerment of young talent in the job market, Sohar International signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Dar Al Aseel, represented by the esteemed Omani designer, Amal Al Raisi. Under this memorandum, Sohar International will exclusively fund the year-long training of a select group of Omani graduates in the fashion industry, equipping them with the practical experience necessary to advance their professional journey. The signing ceremony took place on the sidelines of a remarkable fashion show organized by Dar Al Aseel at the Oman Across the Ages Museum on Saturday, October 14. This splendid event elegantly captured the essence of Oman's rich maritime heritage, which has had a profound and enduring impact on Omani culture. Mohamed Mahfoodh Al Ardhi, Chairman of Sohar International, commented, "In cultivating excellence and fostering the growth of Omani talent, we are privileged to embark on this transformative journey. Our partnership with Dar Al Aseel marks a pivotal moment in our commitment to empowering the youth and enhancing our community. Our vision extends beyond the immediate horizon, as we seek to shape a future where Omani culture and the creative industries not only flourish but also serve as symbols of distinction, both within the Sultanate and on the global stage. We believe that by nurturing talent



and promoting cultural expression, we are crafting a legacy that will inspire generations to come." This holistic training initiative is tailored to the aspirations of emerging Omani designers. It will train talented women in the fashion industry, enhancing their skills and enabling them to become masters in their skills. In response to Sohar International's remarkable commitment to nurturing Oman's creative industries and cultural heritage, Amal Al Raisi expressed her deep gratitude, saying, "I extend my heartfelt appreciation to Sohar International for their unwavering support. It is a privilege to partner with an institution that shares our passion for preserving

Omani culture and empowering local talent. The launch of this transformative one-year program sponsored by Sohar International signifies a significant step towards a brighter future for our nation. Through this collaboration, we aim to radiate the beauty of our culture and creative industries on the global stage." Sohar International is deeply honoured to be actively engaged in initiatives of such magnitude, resonating strongly with the ambitions of the Sultanate and its people. The bank firmly believes that joint commitment and collaborative efforts will pave the way for a future in which Omani culture and the creative industries shine as beacons of excellence.

ROUND-UP

Malabar Gold & Diamonds unveils its festive jewellery collection

Festive jewellery collection consist of exquisite designs in gold, diamonds & precious gem jewellery

MUSCAT: The last few weeks have witnessed a significant rise in the number of people looking to buy jewellery.

The approaching festive season and the fall in gold prices have contributed to the gold & diamond jewellery sector experiencing unparalleled customer influx. Adding to this phenomenon and in light of the upcoming celebration season, Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 335 showrooms across 11 countries, has recently unveiled their festive jewellery collection.

Embracing the spirit of the season, the Festive jewellery collection puts forward an exquisite and mesmerizing array of new designs in gold, diamond & precious gem jewellery. The special designs have been made available across a wide range of sub-brands such as Mine, Era, Precia, Viraaaz, Ethnix and Divine. Elegant designs crafted in contemporary fashion have also been introduced in the 18K gold category as well.

Making this the best ever time to invest in gold, the brand is also offering gold rate protection offer, wherein customers can block the gold rate by paying just 10% of the amount as advance.

"It is the festive season and every festival celebrated by our diverse



customer base holds a distinctive cultural significance, which is what we've embraced through our Festive Jewellery collection. It has been carefully curated by considering the plethora of preferences that exist amongst customers looking for the perfect piece of jewellery to enhance their festive

attire. The exquisite designs in gold, diamond and precious gem jewellery ensure that jewellery lovers needn't look any further for their festive adornments," commented Shamlal Ahamed, MD - International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds. "The gold prices are fluctuating and is on a

lot of interest and enquiries from customers looking for 22K gold jewellery and considering the festive period, the collection has been enriched and launched with designs that are specifically crafted to cater to the spirit of the celebration season.

By availing the gold rate protection offer from Malabar Gold & Diamonds, customers can block the current low gold rate by paying just a 10% advance, valid till November 12. If the gold price increases during the booked period, customers can purchase jewellery at the blocked rate and if the price falls further, they can take advantage of the lower rate. The advance option can be availed by visiting any of Malabar Gold & Diamonds outlets or online through their mobile app.

CAMPAIGN

FOOD & HEALTH OMAN

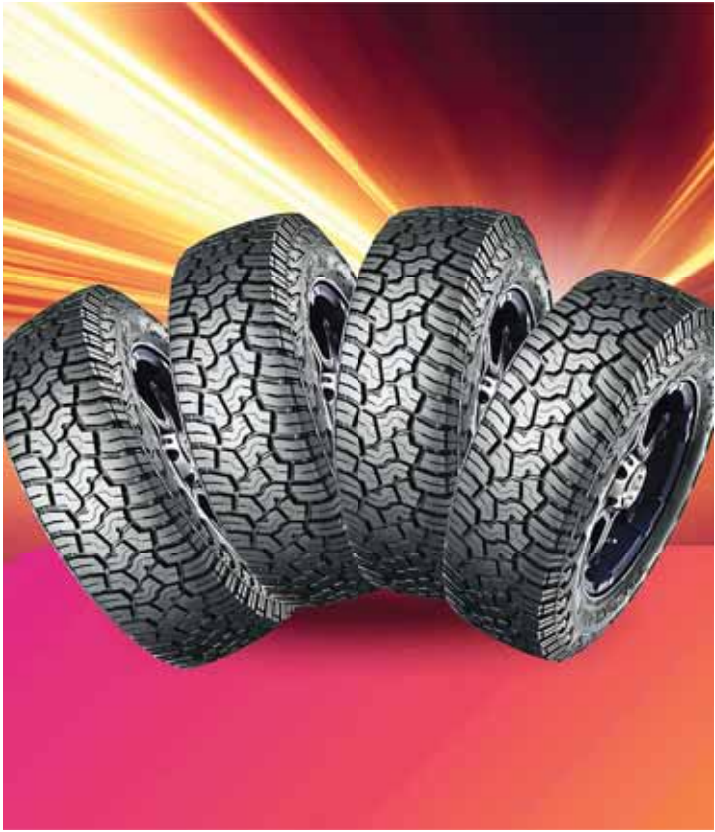
Start happy journey and enjoy better savings with Yokohama

MUSCAT: Saud Bahwan Automotive is offering the perfect opportunity to enjoy savings with Yokohama Tyres. Customers can benefit with OMR20 discount on purchase of four tyres of rim 17 and below and OMR30 discount on purchase of four tyres of rim 18 and above. The campaign will end on December 14 (Conditions apply. Please visit Saud Bahwan Automotive tyre retail outlets.)

With Yokohama tyres, customers can rest assured of some of the finest and safest journeys on the road. Yokohama's vast range of high quality, world-class tyres is the result of advanced research and technology for increased safety. Each of them is engineered to withstand harsh climate and diverse terrains making them ideal partners for any journey.

Yokohama tyres have always stood out when it comes to safety and reliability. Every Yokohama tyre is engineered to offer excellent road grip and comfortable smooth drive, in addition to extended tyre life.

The Yokohama Rubber Co. Ltd. is one of the world's leading manufacturers of rubber products, offering an extensive range of tire, rubber and adhesive products. Established in 1917, Yokohama Rubber in its 100th centennial, has expanded its worldwide business scope with a line-up of high-technology products meeting customer needs in the fields



of automobiles, civil engineering, construction, marine engineering, aerospace and sporting goods.

In Oman, Saud Bahwan Automotive markets Yokohama Tyres with a nationwide network of 40 branches and over 300 dealers. The company's complete product line includes tyres for high-perfor-

AVOD generates significant buzz at FHO expo

MUSCAT: Areej Vegetable Oils and Derivatives (AVOD), whose brands such as Minara, Sohar and Areej recognised as Oman's Most Trusted Brands, garnered an enthusiastic response from both visitors and trade partner during the 16th edition of the Food & Health Oman (FHO) Exhibition, held at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) from September 18 to 20.

FHO 2023 sought to elevate the role of the private sector in the local economy, seizing the opportunity to meet new brands, forge partnerships, establish business deals and promote cultural interactions within the food, hospitality, and tourism industries.

Presided over by Dr. Saud bin Hamood bin Ahmed al Habsi, the Minister of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources, the FHO Exhibition featured a diverse array of participants, including exhibitors from 13 different countries including China, India, the UAE and Belgium. The 3-day long event, backed by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries, and Water Resources emphasized on innovation and collaboration, showcasing many new products and services in the food and hospitality industry.

AVOD participated in FHO this year with the goal of fostering connections with businesses and forming new business agreements, a practice it has been consistently engaged in for several years.

AVOD holds the distinction of being one of the most established organizations specialising in the



refinement, processing, packaging, and distribution of premium Trans Fat Free Cooking oils under brand Minara, Sohar, Areej, Khafeef, Jabal Akhdar brand names and Non-Hydrogenated Margarines, Vegetable Ghee, Fats, and Mayonnaise that were developed to meet the specific needs of bakers and chefs, as well as consumers and they offer excellent consistency, texture, and taste. AVOD also showcased its newly launched Minara Canola oil and Minara corn oil along with its successful sunflower oil, and olive oil line up under its flagship brand Minara.

Eng. Salem bin Nasser Al Bortmany, CEO - AVOD reiterated, "We are humbled and honoured to have received a tremendous response from our partners and visitors alike. Platforms such as FHO are the perfect avenue for AVOD to not just increase our visibility and trade, but also to showcase our standing as a leading Omani brand that offers innovative, sustainable, and healthy products."

He added, "Our success as a

heritage brand with over thirty years of expertise and experience is fuelled by our unwavering commitment to transforming along with our consumers.

"Over the years, to match our consumers' evolution, AVOD has continued to evolve its transformation strategy to create products that exceed their expectations, while ensuring that every AVOD product enhances culinary experiences and enriches lives. And we have always walked with our consumers in all stages of their lives, and continue to endeavour to do so by creating products that are not just value for money but also focused on building healthier and happier individuals and communities."

At the forefront of both business and environmental sustainability stands AVOD. The company holds prestigious certifications such as ISO 14001 for environmental management system and ISO 22000 for Food Safety Management, demonstrating its dedication to responsible practices.





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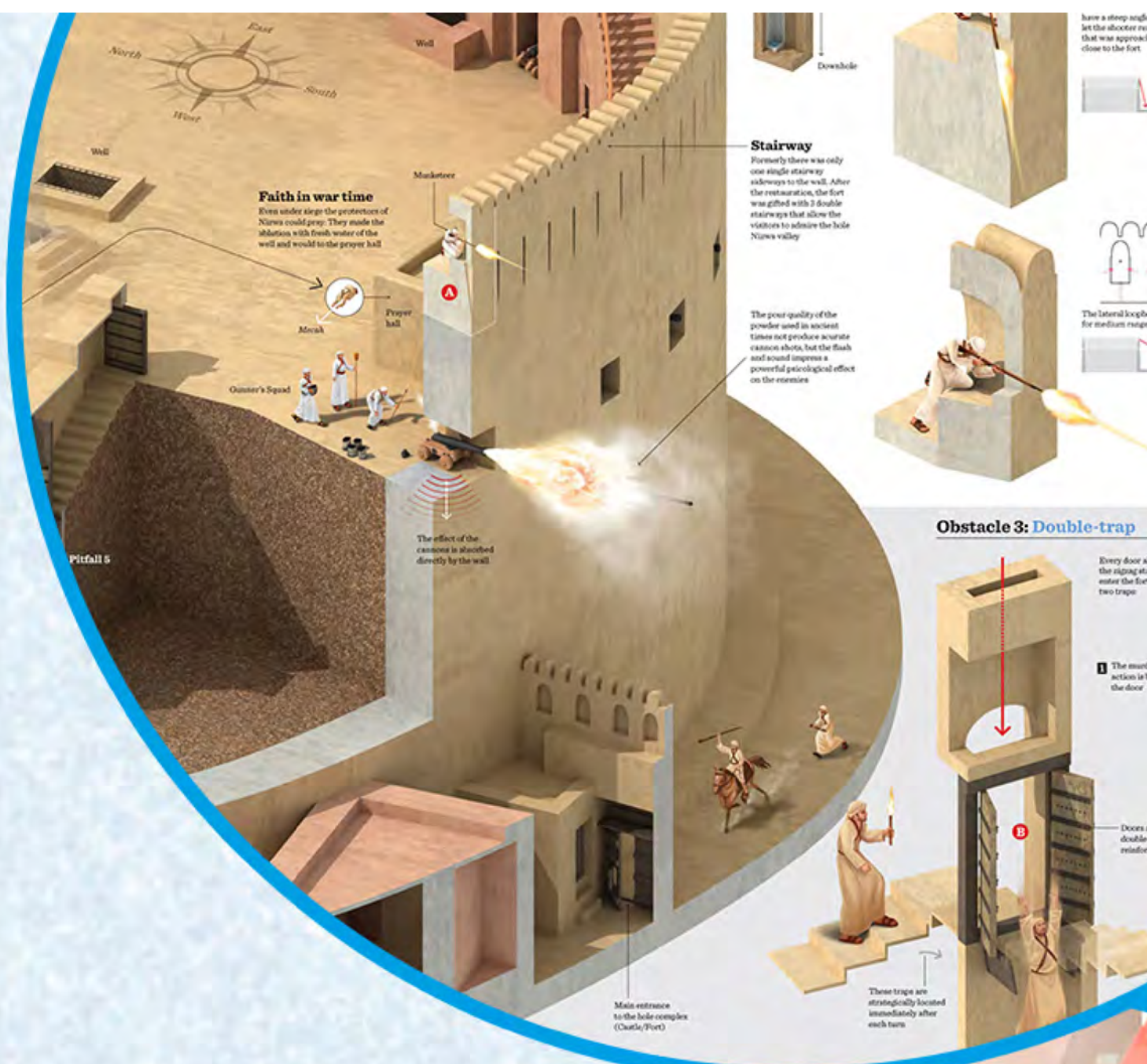
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