

HM SENDS GREETINGS TO MOZAMBIQUE

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Filipe Nyusi of the Republic of Mozambique on the occasion of his country's Independence Anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere congratulations and best wishes to the President and the friendly people of Mozambique. **-ONA**



HM SENDS GREETINGS TO QATAR

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Sheikh Tamim bin Hamad Al Thani, Emir of Qatar on the occasion of the anniversary of his accession to the throne. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere sentiments to Emir of Qatar, wishing him good health, happiness and a long life. His Majesty also prayed to Allah the Almighty for the return of this and similar occasions on Sheikh Tamim while the people of Qatar realise further aspirations of progress and prosperity. **-ONA**



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SWISS CONFEDERATION

Omani delegation learns work culture, tech used in medicine production

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The delegation accompanying His Highness Sayyid Bilarab bin Haitham Al Said, Honorary President of the Programme for Promising Omani Start-ups, visited specialised institutions and centres in the Swiss Confederation.

While visiting Novartis and Roche Pharmaceutical Industries, the two pioneering companies in the field of pharmaceutical industries and scientific research in the world, the delegation learned about their work culture and the advanced technologies used in production of medicines.

In addition to close cooperation

with a number of private health institutions, ways of establishing clusters data processing units in the Sultanate of Oman and methods of attracting investors to them were discussed and the companies affirmed their commitment to expand in the Sultanate of Oman, employ Omani competencies and expertise and give them scholarships and provide training through programmes.

The meeting concluded with an invitation to the company to visit the Sultanate of Oman to hold workshops to bring together experts in the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector, and to activate cooperation with the Ministry of Health.

The delegation was briefed on the innovative products and modern technologies used by the two companies and their continuous efforts to manufacture and innovate new medicines.

Ways to enhance cooperation with small and medium enterprises and emerging companies in this promising sector, and to develop the business environment, were highlighted during the visit. The delegation also held a meeting with Seedstars, which is one of the world's leading institutions in supporting startups through business accelerators and investment programmes in high-growth companies in Latin America, Africa, the Middle East, Europe and Asia. A

discussion was held on ways to cooperate with the promising Omani startups programme.

The delegation concluded its visits with a tour of the business centres and joint work offices (Impact Hub) and got acquainted with a group of Swiss startups to benefit from their experiences and ways of transferring knowledge and technology to the Sultanate of Oman.

It is worth noting that Novartis has legal representation in 140 countries around the world, including an office in the Sultanate of Oman, where a memorandum of understanding was signed with the Ministry of Health in 2019, and then the first workshop was held in the Sultanate of Oman.



TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Over 15,000 apply for job rotation plan

1 There has been an encouraging response to the job rotation initiative with thousands of applicants registering for the second edition of the programme. **>A3**

OMAN

Oman Air's Salalah bookings up 20%

2 Oman Air confirmed a 20 percent rise in bookings to Dhofar compared to 2022 after the Royal directives of His Majesty to provide direct support to the fuel prices at Salalah Airport. **>A5**

WORLD

Probe into Titan submarine begins

3 The Canadian Transportation Safety Board said on Friday it has launched an investigation into the loss of the Titan submersible during a deep-sea voyage to the Titanic shipwreck. **>A7**

OMAN'S GDP AT CURRENT PRICES TOPS OMR10.4BN



The rise was mainly supported by the growth of non-oil activities, which increased by 6.7%

MUSCAT: The gross domestic product (GDP) at current prices of the Sultanate of Oman increased by 7.4 percent to OMR10.42 billion at the end of the first quarter of 2023 compared to the corresponding period of 2022, according to preliminary data issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). According to the NCSI data the GDP at current prices at the end of first quarter of last year was OMR9.71 billion.

This increase was mainly supported by the growth of non-oil

activities, which increased by 6.7 percent, to OMR7.26 billion at the end of the first quarter of 2023, compared to OMR6.58 billion at the end of the first quarter of 2022.

The total industrial activities recorded a growth of 4.6 percent to OMR1.92 billion at the end of first quarter of 2023 compared to OMR1.83 billion at the end of the first quarter of 2022.

While the activities of agriculture, forestry and fishing recorded a growth of 8.4 percent from OMR215.70 million to OMR233.90 million, service activities recorded a growth of 7.4 percent, from OMR4.53 billion to reach OMR4.86 billion.

Oil activities increased by 6.1 percent to OMR3.58 billion at the end of the first quarter of 2023 compared to OMR3.37 billion at the end of the first quarter of 2022.

Crude oil activities grew by 6 percent, reaching OMR3.84 billion, while natural gas activities increased by 6.5 percent, reaching 500.60 million. **-ONA**

SPECIAL CARE FROM HM

Omani women: Spearheading the Sultanate's growth

MUSCAT: Omani women are breaking the glass ceiling with their efforts and due care taken by the government in the Sultanate of Oman. They are creating benchmarks in literary, medicine, educational and scientific fields through their sincere efforts.

Omani women have received special care since the beginning of the blessed renaissance which led to their advancement in every field and helped them become equal partners in the progress of the Sultanate of Oman. With due care received from the blessed renaissance and favourable government policies, they have made remarkable contributions in scientific fields and got international recognition as scientists and innovators.

"Omani Woman Day" which falls on 17 October, reflects their achievements in different fields and also gives them incentives to exert more efforts for the nation building process. During the era of renewed renaissance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Omani women are receiving



continuous support through the enactment of new laws and regulations.

The keenness of His Majesty the Sultan to guarantee them freedom and rights led to the involvement of Omani women in development, and are creating an inspiring reality for a bright and sustainable future at various levels.

Her Highness the Honourable Lady Assayida Ahd Abdullah Hamed Al Busaidi, Spouse of the

Sultan of His Majesty the Sultan, has praised the efforts made by Omani women in the Sultanate of Oman to build, develop and support their family and their effective contributions to the betterment of social and national lives.

Today, Omani women through their right of education are contributing in the decision-making process and carrying out duty towards their family and society.

Women are occupying top posi-

During the era of renewed renaissance of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, Omani women are receiving continuous support through the enactment of new laws and regulations

tions in many sectors and are also important ministers in the Council of Ministers. They are present in both Shura and State Councils. Many are appointed in the diplomatic corps and carry the message of peace of the Sultanate of Oman in different parts of the world. According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information for the year 2021, educated Omani women at the Diploma level were 313,745, while 53,232 had Higher

Diploma degrees and 152,422 had Bachelor and above degrees.

The number of women working in the public sector was 89,164, and in the private, family and domestic sectors were 126,737 while the number of women associations was 64 with 8,483 members. However, the number of those who benefited from social security was 86,633 i.e. equivalent to 67% of the total beneficiaries.

Omani poet Aisha Al Saifi won the award for 'The Prince of Poets' in its tenth season, and she became the first woman to get this honour in the field of poetry at Arab level.

Omani innovator Sonya Said Al Siyabia, bagged first prize in the programme of 'Sciences Stars', one of the most famous Real TV programmes organised by the Qatar Foundation. She was not only the first Omani woman, but also the first Arab woman to win the title. She was awarded for her innovative work in the environmental field Bioanalysis of microplastics' by a new method using nanotechnology. **>A3**

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WEATHER

Oman sizzles as temperatures approach 50 degrees Celsius

Omani medical team ready to serve pilgrims

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Meteorology has warned of high temperatures in some coastal areas of the Sultanate of Oman, reaching nearly 50 degrees Celsius.

The Directorate General of Meteorology said: “The high temperature felt in coastal areas overlooking the Sea of Oman is due to the high relative humidity and air temperature. Many areas in Muscat, Sohar and Saham regions also recorded high temperatures.

The Directorate General of Meteorology has advised people to avoid exposure to direct sunlight, especially during the afternoon, to avoid sunstroke and heat exhaustion.

Doctors have also advised people to drink lot of water and remain hydrated while going out in the sun. Drinking citrus juices are helpful in avoiding sunstrokes. Additionally, the Directorate has



warned of the activity of the north-west winds on Saturday that may lead to the rise of dust and sometimes low horizontal visibility in

the governorates of Al Buraimi and Al Dhahirah, as well as parts of the governorates of Al Dakhiliyah, Al Wusta and Dhofar.

The Hajj delegation team will follow up on the health conditions of the Omani pilgrims and ensure all facilities are provided to them



Times News Service

MAKKAH AL-MUKARRAMAH: The medical team of the Omani Hajj delegation is prepared to provide round the clock health services to pilgrims coming from the Sultanate of Oman.

The team will keep track of the health conditions of the pilgrims and ensure all facilities are provided to them.

In a statement to Oman News Agency, Dr. Ali bin Abdullah Al Balushi, deputy head of the medical delegation at the Omani Hajj mission, said: “The medical delegation, upon its arrival in the Holy Land, had set up the medical clinic at the mission’s headquarters in Makkah Al-Mukarramah to receive visitors and provide necessary services.”

He added that the delegation, during the past few days, completed all the arrangements and installed equipment at the clinics in Makkah Al-Mukarramah and in Mina and Arafah, in coordination with the competent medical authorities.

The clinics include an emergency unit, treatment facilities for men and women in Makkah Al-Mukarramah and other holy sites, and medicines for Omani pilgrims, he added.

He explained that the delegation includes a number of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, and an infection control team, as well as a number of administrators to provide appropriate treatment and follow up on cases that need medicare.

He pointed out that the mission’s medical clinic has developed a plan to deal with emergency cases and chronic disease patients, pointing out that coordination has been established with the concerned authorities in Saudi Arabia to transfer critical cases



to hospitals if the need arises, and to follow up cases on a daily basis through field visits to hospitals and through electronic platforms.

He stressed the need for pilgrims coming from the Sultanate of Oman to follow the preventive measures by taking antiviral and other vaccinations before arriving in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in addition to wearing masks and avoiding crowds in anticipation of transmitting any infection.

In his statement, Abdullah bin Khalaf Al Toubi, a pharmacist in the mission’s medical delegation, said: “The mission’s pharmacists are prepared to provide all medical services to Omani pilgrims by reviewing the lists of medicines and working to transfer them to the Holy Land in cooperation with the Ministry of Health in the Sultanate of Oman.”

He added: “The pharmacy in the Makkah Al-Mukarramah Clinic at the mission’s headquarters is equipped to receive visitors, indicating that the pharmacy has all the medicines that pilgrims coming from the Sultanate of Oman may need during their Hajj rituals.”

Iman Al-Balushi, a nurse in the medical delegation of the mission, said: “The nursing team of the delegation performs the initial examination of patients and provides support to doctors in following up on disease cases and providing assistance to patients.”

She added: “The nursing team provides emergency medical services in cardiopulmonary resuscitation to patients and provides first aid to those who visit the medical clinic at the mission headquarters. Regarding the delegation’s role in infection control, Humaid bin Suhail Al Amri, infection prevention and control specialist in the mission’s medical delegation, said: “The infection control team in the delegation supervises the mission’s headquarters and the pilgrims’ campaigns with regard to housing cleanliness, cooking places and food preservation, in addition to educating pilgrims about prevention of infectious diseases that may be caused by food poisoning, respiratory diseases.”

And he indicated that the medical delegation supervises isolation cases of all kinds, daily investigation of cases of infectious diseases, supervises clinics on a daily basis, and ensures the implementation of prevention and infection control policies, in addition to communicating with Hajj companies with the team in emergency cases to take the necessary measures.

For her part, Fatima bint Salim Al Musharafi, who supervises the Shifa system in the medical delegation of the mission, explained: “The Shifa programme through which we enter the patient’s civil number in the system to collect his personal data, and then the visit is activated so that the doctor can follow up on his file in the Sultanate of Oman to diagnose the case.”

She added: “The readiness of the devices in which the healing system is activated and verified daily, and the network used in the connection process is verified. The data of the auditors is also verified to provide the best medical services to the pilgrims of the Holy Land.”

TENDER
ANNOUNCEMENT

The Internal Tender Committee at the Ministry of Labour announces the following tender:

Tender No.	Tender title	Last date for tender purchase online	Bid submission date
6/2023 Re-floated	Maintenance of Marmul Labour Department	Tuesday 11/07/2023 2:00 pm	Monday 31/07/2023 10 a.m.

- Specialized establishments may obtain the tender's documents online through the following link, starting from **Thursday 22/06/2023 at 08:00 am:** <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>
- Each bid shall enclose a tender bond for 1% of the total bid value in the form of a bank guarantee or certified cheque issued by a local bank in favor of the Ministry of Labour and valid for 90 days from the date of bid submission.
- Bids shall be submitted online along with the bank guarantee by the bank, provided that the original bank guarantee shall be submitted upon request by the Ministry.
- Bids shall be opened at 11:00 am on Monday 31/07/2023.

(The Ministry shall not be bound to accept the lowest or any other bid)

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HOLY LAND

Grouping of pilgrims for Hajj completed



MAKKAH AL-MUKARRAMAH: The grouping of 14,000 pilgrims from the Sultanate of Oman to the Holy Land to perform the rituals of Hajj was completed on Saturday.

The head of the delegation supervising the Hajj companies in the Omani Hajj delegation, said: “The grouping process took place smoothly, according to an accurate and planned schedule in cooperation with the brothers in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.”

He pointed out that all Omani pilgrims coming from the Sultanate of Oman to the Holy Land were guided by the end of the sixth day of Dhul Hijjah 1444.

He added that the Omani Hajj delegation visited the headquarters of Hajj companies in Makkah Al-Mukarramah to find out the quality of services provided to them, and to check on the pilgrims, stressing that everyone is working round the clock in order

to facilitate the rituals for the guests and for their comfort.

He explained that this comes in light of the keenness of the Omani Hajj mission to follow up and meet the needs of Omani pilgrims to ensure the provision of all means and provide them with comfort during the performance of the Hajj rituals,

The military pilgrimage mission arrived in Makkah Al-Mukarramah from Al-Madinah Al-Munawwarah, and all its members and administrators are healthy and well.

The military mission is accompanied by an administrative team to provide the best services to the members of the mission and to maintain it easier for pilgrims to perform their rituals in the holy sites with ease, according to established administrative plans, in a way that achieves the goal of this blessed journey.

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More than 15,000 applicants for job rotation scheme

Job rotation is a management strategy in which employees are shifted at regular intervals on assignments among departments to make them versatile

Times News Service

MUSCAT: There has been an encouraging response to the Ministry of Labour's job rotation initiative (JRI) with thousands of applicants registering for the second edition of the programme.

According to Khalsa bint Habib Al Farsi, Director of the Job Rotation Initiative at the Ministry of Labour, more than 15,500 requests have been received for the 3,251 opportunities. Registrations were open from April 15 – May 6 for employees in government units through the Ejada platform.

She said that government units are still finalising procedures for accepting employees who have applied for more than 3,000 job rotation opportunities.

Khalsa said that more than 100 people had benefited from the 1,130 opportunities that were offered in the first announcement from December 4-24, 2022. A to-



tal of 3,860 people had applied for the initiative.

Job rotation is a management strategy in which employees are shifted at regular intervals on assignments between departments to make them versatile within an organisation. It helps in testing employee skills to assign them tasks in line with their competencies as well as reduces monotony of job.

Khalsa said, "The targeted units in job rotation are the civil units in the state's administrative apparatus, and public bodies and institutions."

Several benefits

She added: "The initiative has several benefits, including improving the quality of government services by raising efficiency of human capital, achieving administrative reforms, preparing empowered leaders, and raising institutional performance.

"Employee is evaluated during the job rotation period through a tool available on the job rotation platform and also through a performance measurement proficiency system."

She explained that job rotation is applied according to the organisational and procedural controls for all employees of the unit, provided that it does not lead to a breach of the work interest and the regularity of the functioning of the public facility.

Khalsa said: "The Ministry of Labour is working in cooperation with government units to consider job rotation as an effective strategy in increasing diversity in skills, backgrounds and knowledge among workers in organisations, which enhances creativity and innovation, and helps in finding new and effective solutions to complex problems in work environments."

She added: "The scheme helps in developing and motivating employees by providing opportunities for professional growth and new task experience, which leads to higher job satisfaction and continuity."

"Job rotation strategy enables the second row of leaders by acquiring leadership skills and capabilities that qualify them to be ready to take on various tasks and jobs in the future," she concluded.



TENDER NOTICE

Oman Water & Wastewater Services Company (NAMA WATER SERVICES) hereby announces the following Tenders: -

Tender No.	Description	Eligibility	Tender Fee (RO)	Last Date of Sale Tender Documents	Bid Submission Date
T/2459831/ 2023	Construction of Sewer Network for C3B Area in A'Seeb Catchment	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	13/07/2023	21/08/2023
T/2460835/ 2023	Construction of Water Distribution Networks for Ibri, Yanqul and Dank Wilayats in Ad Dhahirah Governorate (Package 1)	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	13/07/2023	21/08/2023
T/2460837/ 2023	Construction of Water Distribution Networks for Ibri, Yanqul and Dank Wilayats in Ad Dhahirah Governorate (Package 2)	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	13/07/2023	21/08/2023
T/2459840/ 2023	Construction of Water Distribution Networks for Izki Wilayat in Al Dakhliya Governorate	Local Companies registered with Government Tender Board in Excellent Grade and International Companies specialized in the works mentioned	R.O. 2500/- (Plus 5% VAT) Non-refundable	13/07/2023	21/08/2023

The tender document can be purchased from Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) e-tendering page (Supplier Login) from the date of publication of this announcement until 13/07/2023. The applicants shall pay the tender fee through electronic payment gateway through Supplier Login. Applicants who are not registered with Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) shall register from <https://owwsc.nama.om/Business-with-Us/Vendor-Registration> to have the login credentials of Supplier portal. All applicants who have paid the tender fee shall have access to the Tender Documents through Nama Water Services e-tendering page (Supplier Login).

All participating Companies shall submit a Bid Bond of 1% of the bid value in a sealed envelope to Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) Chairman of Tender Committee not later than 3:00 pm on the bid submission date. Bid Bond must be obtained from a Bank registered in the Sultanate of Oman and it should be addressed in favour of Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services).

The bid along with all required documents shall be uploaded through Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company (Nama Water Services) e-tendering page not later than 3:00 pm on the date specified above. For more details refer to Tender Page of our website www.owwsc.nama.om or Email to: tender@owwsc.nama.om





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WOMEN POWER

Women leading from the front in many fields

< FROM A1 Omani poet Badriya Al Badri won the first place in the category of eloquent poetry for her title 'A Lamp of Laurel' in the fifth edition of the Katara Prize under the title 'Beautifying Poetry with the Good of Human Beings'. She was the first poet to win this title in the history of the prize.

Also, Omani women are occupying leading positions in many fields at various levels.

They have supervised many researches, scientific and innovative projects which reflect their efforts in building Oman.

In the medical field, Dr. Maha Zakariya Al Riyami, Assistant Professor at the Department of Biochemistry, College of Medi-

cine and Health Sciences, has received the award of "L'Oréal-UNESCO for Women in Science" in recognition of her scientific research in the field of diabetes.

Dr. Amira Saeed Al-Kharousi, Associate Professor at the Department of Physiology, College of Medicine and Health Sciences, was selected among the distinctive young scientists of the World Academy of Sciences "TWAS 2022-2027".

Dr. Maha Mubarak Al-Khad-houri, associate professor at the College of Medicine and Health Sciences, won the award for the best scientific paper presented at the American Association of Endocrinology Societies in the Middle East and North Africa 2022.

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Oman Air sees 20% rise in bookings to Salalah



FIXED PRICE: Fixing ticket prices for citizens to Salalah will address the issue of high prices on the economy class that was witnessed in the past during the peak season.



Oman Air will add - starting next July - 7 flights per day to Salalah, so that the total number will reach 11 flights per day, which can be increased in the event of more demand

Times News Services

MUSCAT: Oman Air confirmed a 20 percent rise in bookings to Dhofar Governorate compared to last year after the Royal directives of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to provide direct support to the prices of fuel at Salalah Airport.

The ticket price between Muscat and Salalah has been fixed at OMR54 for citizens throughout the Khareef season. Adel bin Ahmed Al -Zadjali, the regional vice president of the Oman Aviation Commercial Affairs Department, said that after the HM di-

rectives, prices have been fixed for Omanis from June 15 to September 15, coinciding with the Khareef season in Dhofar.

The prices are OMR54 for adults, OMR36 for children and OMR10 for infant, provided that they are issued from the sales outlets or booked from the Oman Airlines website. These prices will be studied and evaluated, and the possibility of their extension will be studied after the Khareef season, he said.

Fixing ticket prices for citizens to Salalah will address the issue of high prices on the economy class that was witnessed in the

past during the peak season, he said, adding it will contribute to strengthening of domestic tourism and support the movement of citizens between Muscat and Salalah.

He pointed out that the Oman Air will add - starting next July - 7 flights per day to Salalah, so that the total number will reach 11 flights per day, which can be increased in the event of more demand, indicating that these flights provide more than 1,782 seats per day on the fleet of Boeing 800-737 aircraft.

He explained that the Omani aviation is currently focusing on strengthening flights to Salalah in conjunction with the Khareef season and the rising demand for this destination.

After the study of a number of flights, the company found that several destinations were not currently witnessing high demand, therefore, some fights were directed to Salalah to meet the demand of travellers between Muscat and Salalah, especially during weekends and on official holidays.

Adel Al Zadjali confirmed that the company provides services

and facilities to all travellers to various internal, regional and international destinations according to an integrated system, taking into account the travel procedures through the availability of 14 check-in counters at the Muscat International Airport and 12 check-in counters at Salalah Airport, in addition to two check-in counters for business class travellers.

He expressed hope that tourism during Khareef season will witness steep rise due to the exceptional atmosphere and moderate temperatures during this season in the Dhofar Governorate.

SalamAir flights

SalamAir, the fastest growing airline in the Sultanate of Oman has announced two direct flights weekly from Muscat to Fujairah in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), from July 12, 2023.

"SalamAir will operate direct flight from Muscat Airport to Fujairah on Mondays and Wednesdays from July 12, 2023."

The statement added that bookings are available via SalamAir.com or 24272222.

His Majesty sends greetings to presidents of Slovenia, Croatia

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to Dr. Nataša Pirc Musar, the President of the Republic of Slovenia on the occasion of her country's Independence Anniversary.

Croatia

His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Zoran Milanovic of the Republic of Croatia on the occasion of his country's National Day.

Sincere and best wishes

In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere congratulations and best wishes to the President of Slovenia and the friendly people of her country.

Sincere congratulations

In his cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere congratulations and best wishes to President Zoran Milanovic and the friendly people of his country. -**ONA**

UN COUNTER-TERRORISM WEEK

Oman showcases its experience in tolerance and coexistence

NEW YORK: The Sultanate of Oman on Thursday outlined its experience in tolerance, coexistence and combating terrorism at the third UN counterterrorism week held in New York. Oman's event was titled "Towards a Society Free of Terrorism: The Omani Experience in Combating Terrorism and Extremism".

During the event, Dr. Mohammed Said Al Ma'amari, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs, presented a paper themed "Peaceful Coexistence in order to Promote Tolerance and Mutual Respect to Combat Terrorism".

The paper dealt with Oman's policy on international relations, which is typically based on peace-

ful coexistence among nations and peoples, good neighborliness, non-interference in the internal affairs of others and respect for the sovereignty of states.

The paper also underlined Oman's contributions to resolving disputes by peaceful means.

In a similar gesture, Dr. Mohammed Awadh Al Hassan, Permanent Representative of the Sultanate of Oman to the United Nations, presented a paper entitled "The Omani Experience in Combating Extremism and Terrorism". The paper highlighted the salient features of Oman's national strategy on combating terrorism. It unveiled the measures undertaken by Oman to protect

society from extremism and terrorism, as well as efforts exerted by the country in combating terrorism and terrorism financing in the domestic and international arenas. Organised by the National Counter-Terrorism Committee in cooperation with the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, the event was held under the auspices of Vladimir Voronkov, Under Secretary-General for Counter-Terrorism at the UN Office. It was attended by Miguel Moratinos, UN High Representative for the Alliance of Civilizations, heads of states and representatives of permanent missions accredited to the United Nations in New York. - **ONA**

ROYAL OMAN POLICE



Two arrested for stealing air conditioners in North Al Batinah

Times News Service

Muscat: Two people have been arrested on charges of stealing air conditioners in North Al Batinah, said the Royal Oman Police (ROP).

Royal Oman Police said: "North Al Batinah Governorate Police Command arrested two people on charges of stealing air conditioners from a company in the Wilayat of Saham."

The legal procedures are being completed against them.



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TENDER

The company invites offers for the following tender:

Sl. #	Tender ID	Description	Tender Fee	Deadline for Purchasing of Tenders	Deadline for Submission of Offers
1.	36589	TRANSPORTATION OF RAW MATERIALS	RO. 105	13th, July 2023 1700 hours	18th, July 2023 2359 hours
2.	38367	SUPPLY OF GRINDING MEDIA	RO. 52.500	13th, July 2023 1700 hours	18th, July 2023 2359 hours
3.	38565	SUPPLY OF GRINDING AID	RO. 52.500	13th, July 2023 1700 hours	18th, July 2023 2359 hours
4.	38704	SUPPLY OF POWER PLANT GAS TURBINE SPARE PARTS	RO. 52.500	13th, July 2023 1700 hours	18th, July 2023 2359 hours

1. All specialized and interested companies that are registered with the Tender Board participate and get the specifications and conditions of the tender from the website; <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.

2. Tenders Bond to be applied electronically as per Esnad system procedure on the given website before the specified time of Submission. Electronic Tender Bond will be of not less than (1%) of the Total Tender Value of the highest offer (incase have multiple offers), valid for (120) days from the offers submission date and addressed to Chairman of the Tender Committee. Please note that without Tender Bond will not complete the submission of tender process as per Esnad procedure.

3. The tender clarification and queries will be directly on the on tender itself on Esnad system.

4. OCC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other bid, and reserves the right to accept or reject any offer without giving reason.

For Clarifications on e-Tendering, you may contact via

Telephone : 24402200 Email Id: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om

MERGER NOTICE

HSBC Bank Oman SAOG ("HSBC Oman") registered with commercial registration number 1080849 announces that it is in the process of dissolving and merging by way of incorporation with Sohar International Bank SAOG, ("Sohar International") registered with commercial registration number 1014333, pursuant to a resolution passed at an Extraordinary General Meeting of HSBC Oman held on 20th June 2023 and a Merger Agreement dated 15th November 2022 entered into between HSBC Oman and Sohar International.

In accordance with Article 37 of the Commercial Companies Law (Royal Decree No. 18/2019), any creditor who has an objection to this merger is invited to submit their objection with the supporting documents within thirty (30) days from the date of this notice to the Secretariat of the Commercial Registry at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, with copies of the objection filed with (1) HSBC Oman (the details of which are provided below), and (2) the Capital Market Authority.

HSBC Bank Oman SAOG

Attention: Chief Executive Officer
HSBC Bank Oman S.A.O.G.
PO Box 1727 Seeb, PC 111,
Sultanate of Oman
E-mail: hsbcbankomanmerger@amjoman.com



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ISWKi siblings qualify for World Robot Olympiad final in Panama

The duo is among four teams that will represent Oman at the international final in November, 2023

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Creativity comes to the fore as teenagers' design robots in a competitive set-up with the best in the country picked to contest the World Robot Olympiad (WRO).

A sibling pair from Indian School Wadi Kabir International (ISWKi), Atharv Yadav and Ira Yadav, have qualified for the WRO as Team Laddoo in the senior category (RoboMission category) for the second successive year and will be among the four teams to represent the Sultanate of Oman at the WRO final 2023 in Panama later this year.

The WRO brings together hundreds of teams from several countries and is a platform for young people all over the world to develop their creativity, design and problem-solving skills through challenging and educational robot competitions and activities.

Besides Team Laddoo, three other teams will represent Oman in Panama following a successful national level competition, which saw a total of 30 teams compete at Cheltenham School Muscat, recently.

The other qualified teams were Sultan Qaboos School, Salalah (Nabil Bait Jaboo and Azzam Mubarak) in RoboSport category, OmanTech (Reem Al Harrasi and Mohammed Al Harrasi, elementary age group), and Bin Hamid (Retaj Al Abri and



Faisal Al Abri, junior age group) in RoboMission category.

The WRO organises global robotics competition in four different categories for students aged 8-19 years and is dedicated to promoting robotics in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) education worldwide.

At the WRO International final, scheduled to be held in Panama City from November 7-9, 2023, the four Oman teams will be among 400 expected teams that will compete for coveted awards.

An excited Atharv of Laddoo team, who is a student of class 11th at ISWKi, said: "Working on robots gives us an opportunity to make a product from scratch. It requires patience and perseverance to refine and make the robot work according to the challenge at hand, and also shows the importance of teamwork, which gives us unlimited potential."

Atharv's younger sister, Ira, is in class 7th at the same school and the siblings thanked their teachers and mentors in the school for providing them full support and guidance.

The brother-sister duo initially learned robotics under Vahid Jourabchi, who organises the WRO national qualifier in Oman through his company Roboticktick.

Atharv said: "It all started as

a hobby in early 2022 when I attended weekly classes of Vahid Jourabchi but soon realised the potential and importance of the STEM field. Along with my sister, we decided to pursue the subject more seriously.

"As we continued to expand our knowledge of robotics through the Lego EV3 and Spike Prime kits, we got a chance to compete in the WRO national competition in Oman last year. We qualified for the WRO final and participated in the WRO 2022 RoboMission (junior category) in Dortmund, Germany. It gave us valuable experience on competitive robotics and allowed us to exchange and learn new ideas from our international colleagues from more than 70 plus nations."

Recollecting the Dortmund event, the ISWKi student said: "Although we were from different ethnicities and cultures, our robots spoke the same languages - Scratch and Python. WRO 2022 also gave us valuable insights on solving problems with different methods/approaches, adapting to last minute changes and learning to stay longer with the problem. We now are more determined to take up the RoboMission Senior challenge in the upcoming WRO 2023 in Panama."

He added: "I plan on expanding my robotics knowledge outside of LEGO through structured and



specialised learning in The Da Vinci Engineering Enrichment Program (DEEP) and CREATE High School Summer Programs held in the University of Toronto in July-August 2023."

Atharv also runs the school Robotics Club for the current school year, comprising 20 students from Grade 7 to Grade 11. He has also assisted in teaching at the Abqari Lab artificial intelligence educational programme done by aitechom (Omani company specialising in the field of artificial intelligence) based on VEX Robotics to young, talented and energetic Omani children.

Atharv believes that it is important to promote robotics within the young generation in Oman and wishes that in future robots could replace human jobs that are considered unhygienic, dangerous or unhealthy (garbage sorting,



disease-infected areas, and in extreme conditions).

Ira has been a valuable member of Team Laddoo. "Her natural analytical thinking along with her skills in numbers and being a good coder has been a great asset," said her brother.

The duo's father, Amit Yadav said: "We are lucky to have world class mentors for our hardworking and talented Atharv and Ira for sports, music, robotics, and other scholastic activities. We want to thank ISWKi, the people of Oman and Oman for providing ample opportunities for our kids."

WRO founded in 2004

The WRO was founded in 2004. The first annual WRO international final was hosted by Singapore and 12 countries participated. In 2019, fifteen years later,

teams from 73 countries travelled to Győr in Hungary for the international final. Today, the competition has expanded to over 85 countries spread over all continents.

Speaking about WRO Oman, Vahid Jourabchi, organiser of WRO Oman, said: "We organise robotics competitions through World Robot Olympiad. Each season they have a new theme, and they have challenges that are tailored to the age of the participants, starting as young as 6 or 7 years old up to university level."

In 2020 and 2021 due to Covid-19 Pandemic, WRO was held online. But in 2022 it was held in person in Dortmund, Germany from November 17-19.

There were encouraging results as Oman's OmanTech (Reem Al Harrasi, Mohammed Al Harrasi and Penelope Saunders - elementary age group) and Team Laddoo (Atharv and Ira - junior age group), won bronze certificates respectively in the RoboMission category. And, Team LegOman (Hamed Al Ali, Alexander Fisher and Lara Walters) finished ninth in the world in the RoboSport category.

Jourabchi expressed his thanks to Petrogas Company for supporting WRO Oman and hoped the selected teams for Panama will make the Sultanate proud with good results.

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SPECIALISTS AND EXPERTS



Artificial intelligence set to create new industries, jobs

MUSCAT: Global practices show the ability of artificial intelligence to develop a good working environment and its contribution to raising productivity and efficiency by automating procedures in a way that it shortens many procedures in various stages of work, in addition to simulating human capabilities of performing various tasks.

A number of specialists and those interested in an interview with the Oman News Agency see the ability of artificial intelligence to create new industries and jobs through creation of products and services, and solve many dilemmas and highly complex obstacles through analysing data and extracting accurate conclusions and recommendations, in addition to providing moral motivation to the employees by developing their abilities and professionalism to find innovative goals.

Abdul Rahman Abdullah Al



Busaidi, Director of Studies and Researches Programme at the National System for Institutional Innovation and Changing Management at the Ministry of Labour said: "The applications

of the artificial intelligence in institutional fields in can contribute in improving safety, health and training aspects and this can be done through practical utilisation which has been revealed in its abilities in health field as it enables workers to easily diagnosis many diseases and suggest remedies and discover new types of medicines to help in care of patients."

In the education field, he stated that artificial intelligence has made remarkable developments through the possibility of allocating learning processes individually, evaluating students and providing observations and lectures in the transportation sector through self-driven vehicles and traffic management smart systems and transportation by strengthening efficiency in conducting tasks, safety aspects and environmental sustainability.

— ONA



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د. بالافي توداس
أخصائية الأطفال و حديثي الولادة



Dr. Abdul Razziq
Pediatrician

د. عبد الرزاق
أخصائي الأطفال و حديثي الولادة

Canadian transport regulator opens Titan submarine probe

The body said it would ‘conduct a safety investigation regarding the circumstances of this operation’

NEWFOUNDLAND: The Canadian Transportation Safety Board said late on Friday it has launched an investigation into the loss of the Titan submersible during a deep-sea voyage to the Titanic shipwreck.

The body said it would “conduct a safety investigation regarding the circumstances of this operation” because the ship that the submersible was launched from — the Polar Prince — was a Canadian-flagged vessel.

The Transportation Safety Board has already dispatched investigators to the port of St. John’s on Newfoundland “to gather information, conduct interviews, and assess the occurrence.”

“In the coming days, we will co-ordinate our activities with other agencies involved,” it added in a statement

The Transportation Safety Board is an independent agency that routinely probes air, rail, maritime and pipeline accidents. However, it does not assign fault or determine civil or criminal liability.

US Coast Guard declares ‘major marine casualty’

The United States will also probe the loss of the Titan, authorities said on Friday, after finding debris that indicated a “catastrophic implosion of the vessel.”

The US National Transportation Safety Board said it would join an investigation led by the US Coast Guard, which declared the loss a “major marine casualty.”

The various investigations highlight the complex and at times unclear jurisdiction over



the incident, which happened in international waters.

The company that owned and operated the Titan, OceanGate Expeditions, is based in the US.

According to a waiver seen by the Associated Press, the submersible itself was registered in

the Bahamas.

Those killed in the tragedy were from the UK, Pakistan, France and the US.

Meanwhile, the Canadian-flagged mothership was majority owned by the Miawpukek First Nation.

Scientist and journalist Michael Guillen, who made his own journey to the Titanic shipwreck aboard a Russian research submersible in 2000, said all such deep sea tourism voyages should be halted until an investigation is complete.

“The Titan was designed so that the ballast would automatically jettison after 24 hours whether the mission was successful or not,” Guillen told DW’s Nicole Frölich.

“Plus, there were two backups to that — one electronic and one manual using compressed air. So when I learned that this vessel hadn’t popped to the surface within 24 hours, I knew that this wasn’t just a communications failure, this was a failure that involved the entire vessel.”

Guillen said the Titan’s descent needs to be mapped and debris must be recovered, if possible, in order to determine where the weak spot on the vessel was.

“And once we know that information, then we cannot jump to conclusions, but then we can make intelligent conclusions, well-reasoned conclusions, and then try to fix it so that in the future, if we allow this tourism to continue, we can ensure the safety of its passengers,” he said. — DW

ELECTION OFFICIALS



Mali voters approve changes to constitution in referendum

BAMAKO: Citizens of the West African nation of Mali have overwhelmingly approved changes to the constitution, the country’s election body said on Friday.

The changes were passed in a referendum, with 97% of those who cast their ballots approving the new constitution, according to Mali’s electoral authority. Voter turnout for the referendum, which was held last Sunday, was 39.4% according to election officials.

What will the constitutional changes do?

The amendments are believed to facilitate the country’s transition to civilian leadership, with the nation currently ruled by a military junta. Elections are anticipated to take place in February 2024.

Opponents say the changes will enable the military to stay in power beyond elections next year. The amendments will expand the role of the president and the military.

Local observers expressed concerns regarding the June 18 referendum, reporting that the vote was marred by irregularities.

Despite criticism of the constitutional changes themselves, the United Nations and regional bodies view the junta’s decision to hold the referendum as an important test for the junta.

International and regional bodies were concerned about the junta following through on holding a referendum and sticking to a transition process to a civilian government — particularly at a time of increased extremist attacks in areas of Mali. — DW

GOLD MINE

31 dead in methane blast at abandoned mine in South Africa

JOHANNESBURG: At least 31 people are believed to have died in a methane explosion at an abandoned gold mine in South Africa last month, officials said on Friday.

The incident occurred on May 18 in a ventilation shaft at the Virginia gold mine outside Welkom, some 260 kilometres (160 miles) from Johannesburg.

But the details of what the government called “a unique and strange situation” are only now coming to light.

South Africa’s Department of Mineral Resources and Energy (DMRE) determined that methane levels were abnormally high in the ventilation shaft of the mine and an explosion had occurred.

“It is currently too risky to dispatch a search team to the shaft. However, we are considering various options to speedily deal with the situation,” the DMRE said.

The victims are believed to be “zama zamaz,” or illegal gold miners, from neighbouring Lesotho.

Thousands of “zama zamaz” work in South Africa, scouring abandoned mines for gold and other minerals. They often work in dangerous conditions.

“We are receiving reports that other suspected illegal miners have assisted in retrieving in at least three bodies, so 28 are believed to still be underground,” a DMRE spokesperson told the AFP news agency.

According to the mineral resources department, the mine was previously owned by Harmony Gold — chaired by Patrice Motsepe, one of South Africa’s richest men and the brother-in-law of South African President Cyril Ramaphosa — but has been abandoned since the 1990s.

Lesotho’s Foreign Ministry said it had alerted South Africa’s High Commission in Maseru as early June 10, but it was unclear why South Africa only announced the incident weeks later.

— DW

TWO-DAY VISIT

Indian Prime Minister Modi lands in Cairo for first state visit to Egypt

CAIRO: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi arrived in Egypt’s capital Cairo for the first state visit on the second leg of his two-nation tour.

PM Modi arrived in Cairo for after wrapping up a “successful visit to the US.” The visit is at the invitation of Abdel Fattah El-Sisi, President of Egypt, which he extended to PM Modi in January when he attended the Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi as chief guest.

This is PM Modi’s first visit to Egypt as Prime Minister and the first bilateral visit by an Indian Prime Minister after 26 years.

Upon arriving in Cairo, PM Modi was greeted with a ceremonial welcome and guard of honour and in a special honour was received by his Egyptian counterpart Mostafa Madbouly at the airport.

PM Modi will also inspect a guard of honour on his arrival.

During his two-day June 24 to 25 State visit, he will hold a roundtable meeting with the



Egyptian PM and also meet President El-Sisi.

Later on, PM Modi will interact with the Indian community.

PM Modi is scheduled to meet the Grand Mufti of Egypt, Dr Shawki Ibrahim Abdel-Karim Al-lam, today and will also interact with Egyptian thought leaders.

On Sunday, PM Modi will visit Al-Hakim Mosque. The Prime Minister will spend nearly half an hour at the Al-Hakim Mosque — a

historic and prominent mosque in Cairo named after Al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (985-1021), the 16th Fatimid caliph.

During his Egypt tour, Prime Minister Modi will also visit the Heliopolis War Grave cemetery to pay tribute to the Indian soldiers who made the supreme sacrifice fighting for Egypt during the First World War.

The visit is of significance as Egypt has traditionally been one

of India’s most important trading partners in the African continent. India-Egypt Bilateral Trade Agreement has been in operation since March 1978 and is based on the Most Favored Nation clause, according to the Egyptian Central Agency for Public Mobilization and Statistics (CAPMAS).

Furthermore, India and Egypt share a close political understanding based on a long history of contact and cooperation in bilateral, regional and global issues.

Meanwhile, in the United States, Prime Minister Narendra Modi attended various events and met top Indian and American CEOs including Tesla CEO Elon Musk. He received a ceremonial welcome and guard of honour at the White House upon his arrival.

He was hosted by US President Joe Biden as well as First Lady Jill Biden for a state dinner at the White House, as well as a State Luncheon by the US Secretary of State Antony Blinken, and US Vice President Kamala Harris.

— ANI

SPORTS

Al Rawahi bags third title in a row at Jordan National Rally



Just over a month since the Omani rallying ace won the Jordan Rally, the 26-year-old and his co-driver Ata Al Hmoud clinched the Jordan National Rally title on Friday

MUSCAT: Jordan seems to be a happy hunting ground for Oman's talented rally driver Abdullah Al Rawahi. It has been just over a month that the 26-year-old created history by becoming the

first Omani to win the prestigious Jordan National Rally, the third round of 2023 FIA-Middle East Rally Championship (MERC), along with his co-driver Ata Al Hmoud from Jordan.

On Friday, Al Rawahi and Al Hmoud wrote another glorious chapter as they claimed their third successive Jordan National Rally title. The hat-trick of title triumphs in Jordan National Rally underlines the command and control the pair has on the challenging circuit, situated around the Dead Sea. Al Rawahi and his navigator led through all the stages of the 2023 Jordan National Rally and the victory comes almost a month after they finished rallying stalwart Nasser Saleh Al Attiyah of Qatar. Jordanian driver Shaker Jweihan and his navigator Mustafa

Juma finished second behind Al Rawahi and Hmoud on Friday while the third place was claimed by Sheikh Bader Al Fayezi and his navigator Imad Juma. Speaking after the victory, Al Rawahi said: "It's been a great result. To win a rally three times in a row is not easy. I have to thank my co-driver Ata Al Hmoud and my hard-working team for this title. It is extra sweet as this comes after just over a month of my title win at the prestigious FIA MERC Jordan Rally." He added: "To be back on the podium with the cup is an amazing feeling. I began my rallying career in Jordan, so success here is

always close to my heart." The Jordan National Rally comprised four stages: the Jordan River stage 1 and 2 and the Baptism stage 1 and 2. The total distance of the rally was 276.48 kms, of which 104.26 kms were special stages. During the first stage (40.79 kms), Al Rawahi topped the stage with a time of 28.11 minutes, and Jwaihan was second with a time of 31.31 minutes. Al Fayezi was third with a time of 32.03 minutes. In the second stage (11.34 kms), Al Rawahi maintained the lead and topped the stage with a time of 6.49 minutes, and Jwaihan remained in second place with a time of 6.50 minutes. Sami Fleifel took third

place with a time of 6.52 minutes. Al Fayezi finished fifth with a time of 6.56 minutes. Al Rawahi was unstoppable as he clinched the third stage (40.79 kms) with a time of 30.24 minutes while Jwaihan was second with a time of 31.37 minutes. Fleifel remained in third place with a time of 32.38 minutes, and Al Fayezi came fourth with a time of 32.46 minutes. During the last stage (11.34 kms), Al Rawahi continued his impressive display and topped the stage with a time of 6.31 minutes while Jwaihan was second (6.53 minutes) and Al Fayezi came in third with a time 6.57 minutes.

ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP QUALIFIER

Zimbabwe down Windies; Netherlands in Super Six

HARARE: An all-round performance helped Zimbabwe stun two-time champions West Indies by 35 runs to register their third successive win in the ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifier while Netherlands booked their spot in Super Six with a convincing win over Nepal in Group A games on Saturday. Chasing 269, West Indies got off to a good start with Brandon King (20) and Kyle Mayers (56 off 72 balls). Shai Hope and Mayers then shared a crucial third-wicket stand of 64 to take West Indies get past 100. Wellington Masakadza dismissed Mayers for the crucial breakthrough and then Sikandar Raza cleaned up Hope (30). Nicolas Pooran (34) struck a 41-run partnership with Roston Chase (44), but his dismissal in the 32nd over tilted the game in hosts' favour and West Indies was bowled out for 233 in 44.4 overs. Earlier, an important 87-run stand between Sikandar Raza and Ryan Burl helped Zimbabwe to a respectable total. West Indies'



Keemo Paul (3/61), Alzarri Joseph (2/42) and Akeal Hosein (2/45) were among the wickets. In the other match, an explosive half-century from Max O'Dowd led Netherlands to a seven-wicket win over Nepal in Harare. After their bowlers had bowled out Nepal for 167, Max O'Dowd and Vikramjit Singh blasted 86 runs off the first 13 overs. Along with Bas de Leede, O'Dowd added 62 for the third wicket to get Dutch near the finishing line. O'Dowd was bowled for 90 in 75 balls. Earlier high-quality new-ball

spell from the Logan van Beek (4/24) and Ryan Klein restricted Nepal to a modest target. **Brief scores: Zimbabwe 268 in 49.5 overs** (Sikandar Raza 68, Ryan Burl 50, Craig Ervine 47; Keemo Paul 3/61) **beat West Indies 233 in 44.4 overs** (Kyle Mayers 56, Roston Chase 44; Tendai Chatara 3/52). **Nepal 167 in 44.3 overs** (Rohit Paudel 33; Logan van Beek 4/24) **lost to Netherlands 168/3 in 27.1 overs** (Max O'Dowd 90; Bas de Leede 41*; Sandeep Lamichhane 2/60).

TOUR OF WEST INDIES

Pujara dropped; Jaiswal, Gaikwad called up in India's Test squad

MUMBAI: Yashasvi Jaiswal, Ruturaj Gaikwad and Mukesh Kumar have been selected in India's Test squad for the first time for the tour of the West Indies, while Cheteshwar Pujara has been dropped and Mohammed Shami rested, the Board of Control for Cricket in India (BCCI) announced on Friday. Fast bowler Navdeep Saini has also made a comeback to the squad in place of Umesh Yadav for India's first series in the 2023-2025 World Test Championship (WTC) cycle. Ajinkya Rahane has been named vice-captain. The rest of the squad, led by Rohit Sharma, includes most of the players selected for the WTC final against Australia. Jaiswal had made the trip to London as a stand-by player along with Mukesh, after Gaikwad, who was part of the original list of back-ups, withdrew to get married. While Jaiswal and Mukesh are uncapped, Gaikwad has played ten limited-overs internationals; his most-recent an ODI against South Africa in October last year.



Cheteshwar Pujara



Yashasvi Jaiswal

India open their tour of the West Indies with the first Test in Dominica from July 12. The second Test begins on July 20 at Queen's Park Oval in Port-of-Spain. They won their previous Test series in the Caribbean 2-0 in 2019. **India's Test squad:** Rohit Sharma (capt), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Ajinkya Rahane (vice-capt), Ruturaj Gaikwad, Yashasvi Jaiswal, KS Bharat (wk), R Ashwin, Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Shardul Thakur, Mohammed Siraj, Mukesh Kumar, Jaydev Unadkat, Ishan

Kishan (wk), Navdeep Saini **ODIs: Samson called up** Sanju Samson earned a recall to India's ODI squad for the three-match series in the Caribbean in July. Samson is one of two wicketkeepers in the 17-member squad alongside Ishan Kishan. **India ODI squad:** Rohit Sharma (capt), Gill, Gaikwad, Kohli, Suryakumar Yadav, Sanju Samson (wk), Kishan (wk), Hardik Pandya (vice-capt), Thakur, Jadeja, Patel, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Unadkat, Siraj, Umran Malik, Kumar.

ICC CRICKET WORLD CUP QUALIFIER

Learnt a lot from Sri Lanka's defeat, says Oman skipper

BULAWAYO: Following a humiliating ten-wicket defeat against Sri Lanka in the ICC Cricket World Cup Qualifier on Friday, Oman's captain Zeeshan Maqsood was frank to admit that his team learnt a lot from them. The victory for Sri Lanka in a Group B match at the Queens Sports Club in Bulawayo, handed Duleep Mendis' men their first loss in the ongoing tournament. Oman had begun their campaign on a rousing note, posting two successive wins against Ireland and the UAE respectively. In his post-match comments, Maqsood said: "To play against Sri Lanka is a proud moment for us. We have learned a lot from them, the way their bowlers bowled and their batters. We lost too many wickets



Oman skipper Zeeshan Maqsood presents a memento to his Sri Lankan counterpart Dasun Shanaka ahead of their Group B match at Queen's Sports Club in Bulawayo, Zimbabwe, on Friday.

early on, in the first ten overs. "We are tested now and that is good for us. Now we know what we need to do going forward. The positive for us is we have two wins. We cannot lose hope and we have to feel pride and play well. We have to forget this game and move forward." On Ayaan Khan's innings, who scored the highest 41 runs in the team's paltry total of 98, he said: "He played very well. Unfortunately he couldn't get a 50 but hopefully he'll get more in the next games." Maqsood said: "We have to keep fighting and play well." Batting first, Oman's batting crumbled as only three batters reached a double-digit score. Sri Lanka's bowlers bundled out Oman for 98 runs in 30.2 overs. Wanindu Hasaranga was

outstanding with 5/13. Lahiru Kumara took three scalps while Kasun Rajitha claimed one. Sri Lanka's openers Pathum Nissanka and Dimuth Karunaratne chased down the target in just 15 overs. Karunaratne scored 61* off 51 balls and Nissanka smashed 37* off 39 balls. Hasaranga was named Player of the Match. He said: "This is a very good wicket to bowl for leg-spinners. I tried to bowl at the stumps. I think that's why I got wickets. "I don't know what is the reason (taking wickets) but I try to bowl at the stumps and I do my normal basic things. The fast bowlers bowled really well and bowled good areas. Lahiru Kumara bowled really well and Kasun Rajitha supported him really well. These

matches are really helpful for the World Cup tournament and are very helpful for us." Following the first defeat in the Qualifier, Oman are now third in Group B with four points. Sri Lanka and Scotland also have four points each but have played a game less than Oman. UAE and Ireland have yet to open their account in the tournament. Oman next play Scotland in their concluding group fixture on Sunday. **Brief scores: Oman: 98 in 30.2 overs** (Ayaan Khan 41, Jatinder Singh 21, Fayyaz Butt 13 n.o.; Wanindu Hasaranga 5/13, Lahiru Kumara 3/22) **lost to Sri Lanka: 100/0 in 15 overs** (Dimuth Karunaratne 61*, Pathum Nissanka 37*; Jay Odedra 0/16).

FITCH RATINGS RAISES INDIA'S GROWTH FORECAST

Fitch Ratings has raised India's growth forecast for 2023-24 to 6.3 per cent from its earlier estimate of 6.0 per cent in March - making the country one of the fastest-growing major economies in the world. > **B2**

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GROWTH OUTLOOK RAISED

Fitch Ratings has raised the global growth forecast for 2023 to 2.4 per cent from its March estimate of 2.0 and noted that economic activity the world over is holding up better than as was expected. > **B2**

MINERALS DEVELOPMENT OMAN

Oman plans to develop an integrated mining area in Dhofar

MUSCAT: Minerals Development Oman is working to develop an integrated world-class mining area in Shuwaymiyah in the Wilayat of Shalim and the Hallaniyat Islands in the Dhofar Governorate. This project consists of three main quarries that will produce 40 million tonnes of limestone, dolomite and gypsum ores.

Eng. Nasser bin Saif Al-Muqbali, CEO of Minerals Development Oman, said that the Shuwaymiyah industrial minerals project is one of the most prominent strategic projects in the production of industrial minerals that the company is working on within its concession areas, with an estimated area of 1,500 square kilometres.

He pointed out that the construction works of the Shuwaymiyah project will start in 2024, and commercial operation is expected to start in 2027.



This will encourage the development of export operations and the establishment of downstream projects, such as the manufacture of steel, fertilizers, cement and chemical industries, the CEO of Minerals Development Oman Company.

He said that the company



started the first geological study of the project in 2017, after which preliminary economic feasibility studies were conducted in 2020, which confirmed the existence of promising commercial reserves of industrial raw materials that can be developed in the upper and lower

parts, followed by detailed economic feasibility studies in the past year, which will be completed within this year. The construction work of the project will begin in 2024 while commercial operation is expected to start in 2027.

He pointed out that limestone

ore is one of the most abundant minerals in the Sultanate of Oman, with a stock of 2.5 billion tonnes and a purity of 99 percent, as limestone is used in many basic industries, including: steel, cement and chemical industries.

Engineer Nasser Al-Muqbali

said: "The project will work on producing dolomite stone, whose reserves amount to 1.3 billion tonnes, with a concentration of 19 percent of magnesium. Dolomite ore will be used in the fertilizer, steel and glass industries."

He indicated that gypsum ore is one of the industrial mineral raw materials available in commercial quantities in the Sultanate, with a stock of 960 million tonnes, with a high purity of up to 97 percent. It is a main component in the cement, gypsum board and fertilizer industries.

He pointed out that the mining port is an essential facility in the project, with a depth of 20 metres and a capacity for handling through three dedicated cranes. The port will also include three berthing areas that can accommodate two Panamax vessels and one Cape class vessel at the same time. — **ONA**

CBO DATA

Credit growth of banks in Oman rises

MUSCAT: The total credit granted by banks in Oman increased by 4.9 percent according to an analysis of the activities of traditional commercial banks during April 2022-April 2023.

The report issued by the Central Bank of Oman (CBO) showed that credit granted to the private sector increased by 4.9 percent, to reach OMR24.4 billion at the end of April 2023.

With regard to the investment item, the total investment of conventional commercial banks in securities witnessed a sharp decline of 15.4 percent, to reach about OMR4.4 billion at the end of April 2023. Within this item, investment in government development bonds (GDBs) increased by 0.2 percent to reach OMR2.1 billion at the end of April 2023 compared to the same period last year.

Investments in foreign securities increased by 8.5 percent to reach OMR900 million at the end of April 2023.

On the liabilities side, total deposits with conventional commercial banks increased by 4.1 percent to reach OMR22.2 billion at the end of April 2023. Within the total deposits, government deposits with commercial banks increased by 10 percent to about OMR5.5 billion, as well as deposits of public sector institutions which increased by 10 percent to about OMR1.5 billion during the same period. Private sector deposits increased by 2.2 percent to reach OMR14.7 billion in April 2023, constituting 66.5 percent of total deposits with conventional commercial banks. — **ONA**

MSX main index records strong performance in weekly trading

Omani stock market could benefit from the temporary pause in interest rates in the US, which could leave more breathing room for the economy to grow without additional pressures on financing costs



Times News Service

MUSCAT Oman's benchmark Muscat Securities Exchange (MSX) index recorded a strong performance this week, extending this month's gains, according to an analyst. "While the index recovered consistently during June the main index remained below May's peak, which could constitute a resistance on its way up," said Denys Peleshok, Head of Asia at CPT Markets.

However, the market remains on an uncertain trend and could be exposed to some risks while retaining the potential for growth over the short term, he added.

On a larger scale, the Omani stock market could benefit from the temporary pause in interest rates in the US, which could leave more breathing room for the economy to grow without additional pressures on financing costs. However, as mentioned by the Federal Reserve's president, new interest rate hikes could be decided in the coming months, opening the way for potential price corrections, said Denys Peleshok.

At the same time, the aggressive monetary policy could continue to push the already low inflation figures in Oman further down. Local figures contrast with inflation levels in the US which remain comparatively higher. However, as interest rates in the US approach their peak, new pressures could

be limited over the medium term in particular if rates start to come down later next year.

The stock market could continue to find some support in the positive growth the country is expected to see this year. The economy could find support in the strong performance of the non-oil sector while the energy sector could be impacted to a certain extent by the volatility in oil prices and OPEC's decisions. However, the concerns around global economic growth could contribute to some uncertainty, said Denys Peleshok.

On the energy market, oil prices have been directionless for almost two months and recorded strong volatility. Traders have been mon-

itoring economic developments in the US and Europe, where higher interest rates could affect growth, as well as in China, which continued to see a weaker-than-expected recovery, affecting demand expectations in the process.

Denys Peleshok further said that the financial sector remained a highlight for the market and performed strongly this week with banks continuing to draw attention as consolidation efforts carry on. The banking sector could see more strength with the merger of HSBC Oman and Sohar International underway.

In comparison stock markets elsewhere were seeing mixed performances in particular in the

Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) where rebounds were uneven with some markets stagnating. In the US and Europe, stocks were mostly declining with traders taking the tightening monetary policies' effect on the economy into account, said Denys Peleshok.

"While trading in the Middle East will be limited next week due to the holidays, traders will be monitoring some important figures regarding the US economy in particular the real estate sector, the job market, and the GDP growth figures as well as the manufacturing sector in China. These figures could affect local markets when they reopen the following week," Denys Peleshok said.



DIGITAL INDIA

Google plans to invest \$10 billion in India's digitisation

WASHINGTON DC: After meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Washington, DC on Friday, Google and Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai said that Google is investing \$10 billion in India's digitisation fund, adding that PM Modi's vision for Digital India serves as a blueprint for other countries.

Pichai after meeting PM Modi, said, "It was an honour to meet PM Modi during the historic visit to the US. We shared with the Prime Minister that Google is investing \$10 billion in India's digitisation fund." Pichai further added, "We are excited today that we are announcing the opening up of our global fintech operation centre in GIFT city Gujarat."

Notably, Gujarat International Finance Tec-City is a central business district under construction in Gandhinagar district in Gujarat, India.

"PM's vision for Digital India was way ahead of his time. I now see it as a blueprint that other countries are looking to do," Pichai said after meeting Prime Minister Modi.

Pichai, who joined Google in 2004, became the CEO of the company in 2015. PM Modi had congratulated him on his



“

It was an honour to meet Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi during the historic visit to the United States. We are excited today that we are announcing the opening up of our global fintech operation centre in GIFT city Gujarat.

Sundar Pichai
Google and Alphabet CEO

appointment as CEO.

Sundar Pichai met Prime Minister Narendra Modi in New Delhi in December last year and said it is inspiring to see the rapid pace of technological change under his

leadership. Pichai, CEO, Google and Alphabet, said he looked forward to continuing strong partnerships and supporting India's G20 presidency to advance open internet that works for all.

During his India visit last year, Pichai also attended the 8th edition of the Google for India event, with Ashwini Vaishnav, minister for Railways, Communications and Electronics & Information

Technology in attendance.

The Google CEO said he is here to see progress being made from our \$10 billion, 10-year India Digitisation Fund (IDF), and share new ways helping to advance India's digital future.

"That includes our efforts to build a single, unified AI model that will be capable of handling over 100 Indian languages across speech and text - part of our global effort to bring the world's 1,000 most-spoken languages online and to help people access knowledge and information in their preferred language. We're also supporting a new, multidisciplinary centre for responsible AI with IIT Madras," said Pichai.

Notably, Project Relate is an app that can understand people with non-binary speech. It can listen, repeat, and understand, and the app is available for Hindi users in early 2023.

"Search result pages will be bilingual in India for those who want and the feature is already available in Hindi. This feature will be supported in languages Tamil, Telugu, Marathi, and Bengali in the coming days. Voice search can now understand people who speak Hinglish better. Using a new neural

network model, which takes the person's accent, context, etc into account," he added.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi, who is presently on a State visit to the US met Google and Alphabet CEO Sundar Pichai and CEOs of Amazon Andrew Jassy and Boeing David L Calhoun in Washington, DC.

Boeing CEO David L Calhoun in an exclusive interview with ANI said, "The most important takeaway is the PM's passion for India's development. He does have a specific interest in aviation, in aerospace. It is a big vision."

He emphasized the importance of India playing a significant role not only for the country but also for the broader region broadly in aviation and aerospace.

Whereas, Amazon CEO Andrew Jassy expressed his commitment to generating additional employment opportunities in India after meeting Prime Minister Narendra Modi in Washington DC.

"Very interested in helping create more jobs, helping digitise more small and medium size businesses and helping more Indian companies and products be able to be exported all around the world," said Jassy. — **ANI**



INCREASED LEVELS OF LIPOPROTEIN(A)

CAN RAISE THE RISK OF RECURRENT CORONARY HEART DISEASE: STUDY

Elevated levels of Lipoprotein(a), a subtype of “bad cholesterol,” in bloodstreams are a risk factor for recurrent coronary heart disease (CHD) in persons 60 and older, according to the results of a recent study that studied the issue over a 16-year period.

The results, published today in Current Medical Research & Opinion, suggest that current cholesterol-lowering medications may not be effective at reducing the risk of recurrent CHD - such as a heart attack - due to elevated Lp(a). “This finding adds to growing evidence of a relationship between increased Lp(a) and the risk of recurrent CHD,” says lead author Associate Professor Leon Simons, from the School of Clinical Medicine, at the University of New South Wales Sydney. “It is well-established that people who have already experienced CHD are at very high risk of another event. Our new results indicate that new therapeutics in development that aim to reduce elevated Lp(a) might help prevent recurrent disease. However, the potential clinical benefit of therapy to reduce elevated Lp(a) is yet to be confirmed.”

CHD is the most common type of heart disease. It occurs when the arteries that

supply the heart with oxygen-rich blood become narrowed by a build-up of fatty material within their walls. It is the most common cause of heart attack and was the single biggest killer of both men and women worldwide in 2019.

High levels of cholesterol in the blood can increase the risk of CHD. Cholesterol travels through the blood on lipoproteins, which are made of protein and fat. Lipoproteins include low-density lipoprotein (LDL), high-density lipoprotein (HDL) and Lp(a). LDL cholesterol is often called ‘bad cholesterol’ because it collects in blood vessel walls, increasing the chances of cardiovascular disease. Lifestyle changes and/or medications, like statins, may help to get a person’s cholesterol numbers into the healthy range.

While previous research has indicated that high levels of Lp(a) are also an important risk factor in the development of CHD, most of these studies have looked at Lp(a) levels and the risk of a first CHD event. The current study looked at whether elevated Lp(a) is predictive of a second or recurrent CHD event. It involved 607 Australians aged 60 years and over, all with prevalent CHD, who were followed for 16 years as part of the Dubbo study. There were 399 incident CHD cases.

THE RESEARCHERS FOUND THAT:

The median Lp(a) in people who had a recurrent CHD event was 130 mg/L, compared to 105 mg/L in those who did not.

26%

of people who had a recurrent CHD event - and 19% of those who did not - had Lp(a) levels of 300 mg/L.

18%

of people who had a recurrent CHD event - and 8% of those who did not - had Lp(a) levels of 500 mg/L.

In senior citizens with prior CHD, elevated Lp(a) in the top 20% of the population distribution (355 mg/L) predicted a 53% excess risk of a recurrent CHD event, compared with those in the lowest 20% of the population distribution (50 mg/L) over 16 years of follow-up. This prediction was independent of other risk factors

A key limitation of this longitudinal study is that the baseline data were collected in 1988-89. However, while there may have been other influences affecting CHD risk over the years of follow-up, especially with the use of statin therapy, it can be reasonably assumed that people with elevated Lp(a) at the start of the study will maintain that status during the whole period

— ANI



We conclude that elevated Lp(a) is an important predictor of recurrent CHD in older people. Upper reference Lp(a) levels of 500 mg/L or 300 mg/L both appear to be appropriate for identifying those at higher risk who may benefit from more intensive risk reduction interventions,” says Associate Professor Simons. **“While current medications, such as statins, are often prescribed to lower ‘bad cholesterol’ in patients at higher risk of cardiovascular disease, these do not have any major or proven impact on elevated Lp(a). But there is hope for the future - as some novel therapeutics that are designed to lower the levels of Lp(a) are currently in the advanced stages of clinical development.**

SPORTS

FLAME TO BE LIT UP IN APRIL 2024

Paris 2024 Olympic Games torch relay route unveiled

PARIS: The Paris 2024 Olympic flame will arrive in France on May 8, 2024, kicking off a torch relay across the French territories, the organisers announced on Friday. In the historical and symbolic setting of the Grand Amphitheater of the Sorbonne University, where Pierre de Coubertin made the founding speech which established the modern Olympic Games, Paris 2024 revealed the 64 territories involved in the relay and the first 165 locations

which will welcome the Olympic flame. “Today, we are proud to unveil the route of the Olympic Torch Relay, which will be more than a circuit around France in 68 days. It will showcase the incredible breadth of our country: Heritage, landscapes, museums, performing arts... And of course, its inhabitants,” declared Tony Estanguet, president of Paris 2024. The flame will be lit up in Olympia, Greece on April 16, 2024, fol-

lowed by a nine-day torch relay before sailing across the Mediterranean Sea from Athens to Marseille on May 8. A three-mast ship named Belem, which was first used in 1896, the same year the modern Olympics came back, will be used to carry the flame to finish the voyage. A journey will then officially begin taking in 64 French territories, including five overseas territories, courtesy of 10,000 torchbearers visiting some of the most iconic

and historic places in the host country. “The flame is the energy of a country, the will to be together. The Torch Relay is preparation for the opening ceremony, its national storytelling, which brings us together. In this storytelling, there are landscapes, territories, nature, the beauty of the sites and our diverse cultures,” said Anne Hidalgo, mayor of Paris. The Paris Olympic Games will open on July 26, 2024. - Xinhua



NEW SIGNING



Wolves captain Neves joins Saudi’s Al Hilal

LONDON: Wolves have sold captain Ruben Neves to Saudi Arabian side Al Hilal for a club record US\$60m, according to media reports. The Saudi club took to Twitter on Friday to announce the signing of the 26-year-old midfielder with a video of Neves posing in the new colours. The 26-year-old Portugal midfielder had a year left on his contract and left after six seasons at Molineux. Neves is the latest big-name player to leave a European club for Saudi Arabia’s Pro League. Earlier this month Karim Benzema left Real Madrid for Al Ittihad, joining former team-mate Cristiano Ronaldo who signed for Al Nassr in January. Midfielder N’Golo Kante agreed a deal to leave Chelsea and join France team-mate Benzema at Al Ittihad earlier this week. Chelsea goalkeeper Edouard Mendy is also close to signing for Saudi Pro-League side Al Ahli while Manchester City’s Portuguese midfielder Bernardo Silva is a target for Al Hilal. Neves said at the end of last season he was ambitious amid interest from Barcelona, but with the La Liga champions not able to come up with an acceptable offer Neves opted for Saudi Arabia. It is also the biggest transfer fee paid by a Saudi Pro League side, dwarfing the reported US\$ 20m deal that took Matheus Pereira from West Brom to Al-Hilal in 2021. Neves, who helped Wolves

gain promotion from the Championship in 2017-18 and then consolidate in the Premier League, described his time at Molineux as “an unbelievable journey” in an open letter to the club’s supporters. He added: “The way we worked together, the way we fought for the club, what we achieved and all the moments we spent together was unbelievable. “There are no words to describe our dressing room, with a team spirit that I’ve never experienced before. And then to become captain for the final year made me so proud. “My kids grew up in Wolverhampton and they were so happy here. Me and my lovely wife will never forget the time we had here as a family.” During his time at the West Midlands club, Neves made 253 appearances and scored 30 goals after joining from Porto in 2017. Wolves sporting director Matt Hobbs described Neves as one of Wolves’ best ever players. “Ruben is the embodiment of everything you look for when trying to bring players into a football club; a leader, a humble man and an extremely talented footballer who took Wolves to a different level,” he said. “He was part of a great era for this club and will go down as one of our best ever players. We are grateful for everything he has done for Wolves and wish him and his family the very best for the future.” - Agencies

Both were part of a Barcelona side that won three Champions League titles and eight La Liga titles

MIAMI: Inter Miami have announced the signing of Barcelona captain Sergio Busquets, reuniting him with former team-mate Lionel Messi. Busquets, 34, announced in May he would be leaving the La Liga champions after 18 years at the club. The midfielder will link up with Argentina forward Messi, 35, who confirmed this month he was moving to Inter Miami from Paris Saint-Germain (PSG). Busquets and Messi spent 13 seasons together at Barca from 2008 to 2021. They were part of a successful team which won three Champions League titles, eight La Liga crowns and six Copa del Reys. It has been reported that, like Messi, former Spain midfielder Busquets received offers from Saudi Arabia, but he has opted to move to the Miami side owned by David Beckham. Former Spain captain Busquets played 722 matches in total for Barcelona - the third-most appearances in the club’s history. Over his 15 years with the senior team he scored 18 goals and provided 40 assists. Busquets joined the club in 2005 as a youth player, progressing to Barca’s B side before making his



first-team debut under manager Pep Guardiola in a 2008 league game against Racing Santander. In announcing Busquets’ decision to leave the Nou Camp, Barcelona described him as “one of the

best players ever to represent the club”. He retired from international football in December, having won the 2010 World Cup and 2012 European Championship with Spain.

In 16 seasons, Busquets has played 714 official matches and over 55,956 minutes, during this period he has scored 18 goals. He has won 33 trophies for the Spanish giants. - Agencies

32-TEAM EVENT

USA to host FIFA Club World Cup in 2025



ZURICH: World football governing body FIFA announced on Friday that its Council has appointed the United States to host the first edition of 32-team Club World Cup in 2025. “[This is] because it would allow FIFA to maximise synergies with the delivery of the FIFA World Cup 2026, to the benefit of both tournaments and the development of football in the North American region,” read a

FIFA statement on Friday. In December 2022, FIFA confirmed that the Club World Cup, a current yearly tournament with seven participants, would be expanded to 32 teams in 2025 and take place every four years. “The FIFA Club World Cup 2025 will be the pinnacle of elite professional men’s club football,” said FIFA President Gianni Infantino. “With some of the world’s top

clubs already qualified, fans from every continent will be bringing their passion and energy to the United States in two years’ time for this significant milestone in our mission to make football truly global.” In addition, FIFA Council also discussed the FIFA World Cup 2030 bidding process on Friday and the appointment of the host(s) will be announced in the fourth quarter next year. - Xinhua

SEVEN STAGES HELD ON DAY TWO

Frenchman Ogier takes commanding charge in Safari Rally

NAIVASHA: Record eight-time world champion Sebastian Ogier placed himself among the favorites to win the 2023 World Rally Championship (WRC) Safari Rally in Kenya when he opened up a commanding lead on Day 2 of the event on Friday. The drivers tackled seven stages in Naivasha, 90km northwest of capital Nairobi. Ogier, who won this event in 2021 when it returned to the WRC circuit, made a huge statement of intent in his Toyota GR Yaris Rally1 machine. The Frenchman recovered from a minor setback in the morning exchanges to power to a cumulative time of 1:14:38.7 to open up a 22.8-second lead over Safari titleholder and Toyota teammate Kalle Rovanpera (1:15:01.5), who is also the reigning world rally champion.



“So far, so good! It’s good to be in the lead even if it’s only a small step done. We know we have a long day tomorrow and very tough conditions to go through. Let’s keep focused!” the overnight leader posted on Twitter later on Friday. Welshman Elfyn Evans (1:15:22.2) rounded off the GR Yaris

top three, ahead of Safari debutant Esapekka Lappi (1:15:32.7), who brought his Hyundai i20 Rally1 car in fourth to break the Toyota stranglehold as action swept through the Rift Valley plains. Japanese ace Takamoto Katsuta, who rolled his car during Wednesday’s shakedown in Na-

ivasha, rounded off the top five in yet another GR Yaris Rally1 to put Toyota in a good position to repeat their top sweep from last year. From the off, a hybrid unit fault hindered Ogier late in the morning, but he roared back to cut the deficit over Kalle Rovanpera to just 2.5 seconds before the

midday service in Naivasha. However, in the repeated afternoon loop, the Frenchman attacked to win three stages in a row after choosing to reduce the weight of his car by only carrying one spare wheel. Rovanpera kept it steady to hold on to second despite the double-digit deficit he had to overhaul his main rival on Saturday and Sunday. The Finn, who leads the WRC standings coming to the seventh round of the 2023 season in Kenya, was hampered by understeer issues in the second half of Friday. Thierry Neuville had been Hyundai’s leading light for much of the day, but retired in the penultimate test when a heavy compression destroyed the front-left suspension on his i20 N. The Belgian, who lies second on the WRC standings, has

now been forced to retire from his second Safari in a row. Behind the front runners, sixth-placed Hyundai driver Dani Sordo is just nine seconds behind Katsuta despite clipping a tree branch and tyre damage. It was a day to forget for M-Sport Ford Puma Rally1 drivers Ott Tanak and Pierre-Louis Loubet as they finished seventh and eighth overall respectively. Estonian Tanak, who opened his Safari by taking the overnight lead on Thursday, was forced to change his tyre mid stage, the same fate that befell his Puma teammate Loubet from France. Saturday sees the event continue in stages around Naivasha’s Lake Elementaita with the monster 150.88km route, the longest of the event. - Xinhua

BMW announces plan to launch electric cars in Oman by 2023 end

Globally, BMW offers electric cars in all segments and has sold 200,000 electric cars last year, witnessing a double growth

MUSCAT: World-renowned car brand BMW is “actively working to bring electric mobility to Oman because it is very strongly supported and desired by the government,” announced Jean-Philippe Parain, Senior Vice President Sales Region Asia-Pacific, Eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa – BMW Group. Parain was talking at a media interaction in Muscat on a recent visit to celebrate 20 years of partnership with BMW’s official importer Al Jenaibi International Automobiles. He was joined by Rachid Zamani, Managing Director, Al Jenaibi International Automobiles and Dr. Hamid Haqqarwar, Managing Director, BMW Group Middle East at the roundtable that focused on BMW’s vision for the Sultanate of Oman. Parain added “The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) is still in a very early phase in the adoption of electric vehicles. Globally, BMW offers electric cars in all segments and has sold 200,000 electric cars last year, witnessing a double growth. BMW is aiming to sell 400,000 electric cars in 2023, roughly 15% of worldwide sales.”

Electric cars in Oman
Emphasising BMW’s endeavour to contribute to Oman’s goal of achieving zero neutrality in the transportation sector, Parain re-



vealed that the company is working on the homologation of electric cars in Oman at an advanced level and added “We are really working on it to have it roughly by year end.” He also disclosed that the company is investing in developing hydrogen technology. Applauding the Omani Government’s recent decision to completely exempt electric cars from customs tax and registration fees as well as VAT for the electric cars and their spare parts from July 1 this year, Zamani said the company was hopeful for “incentive on electric cars because they are good for the environment and for the future generations.” Dr. Haqqarwar pointed towards the importance of creating an ecosystem for smooth

transition to electronic vehicles. “In order to have a quick adoption, you need three things. First, infrastructure like charging stations and destination charging stations. Second, we need the government’s support as demonstrated by Oman’s vision to have 80% net zero until 2035. Third, manufacturers like BMW to offer electric vehicles. While we have the supply of the cars and the products, the government has the vision. With investment in infrastructure, Oman can really be at the forefront of the nurture and adoption of electric vehicles,” he said.

Charging points at home
Explaining, how the company assists the customer’s transition to

electric vehicles Dr. Haqqarwar mentioned, “Together with Al Jenaibi, BMW would establish a wallbox at the customer’s home on purchase of the i7, iX1 or iX models. This will ease the customer’s anxiety on the charging front.” He added, “We have to talk with the government and other players. We call them CPos -- Charging Providers to identify charging places where even we as a manufacturer are willing to extend support.”

Pathbreaking products
Reminiscing how he has seen BMW products evolve in his 25 year-long-career, Parain said “On the technology side, we have been quite the pioneers. Our futuristic products like Jeeps, iDrive, were

we criticised at the beginning and then became the norm.” Parain further added, “BMW is a great innovation machine. Our engineers are constantly working to anticipate the trends or creating them.” Interestingly, BMW’s latest offering in Oman – the 7 Series was launched as the ‘Face of Forwardism’ in January 2023. Emphasising that the car was an attempt to set up new benchmarks, Parain pointed out that it was no coincidence that the 7 Series was launched globally with the i7 – a luxury electric sedan. Marking it to be a symbol of Forwardism, going beyond a luxurious drive, Parain added “The main topic is sustainability in the choice of the material we use. We have driven today in a car that has seats made with Cashmere. Of course, CO2 footprint of Cashmere is very different than that of leather.”

Autonomous driving
Referencing to the recent decision of BMW’s advanced driver assistance system, Autobahn Assistant, becoming the first system of its kind to be approved in Germany for speeds of up to 130 km/hr from the German Federal Motor Transport Authority, Parain said “We got the permission to have autonomous driving hands off 130 km/hr. It means you can drive until this speed without putting back

your hands on the wheel.” In Germany, BMW’s ADAS system will combine with BMW’s active lane change assistant – that can automatically change lanes at speeds up to 180 km/h to deliver the experience of autonomous driving.

Future plans
Alluding to the futuristic features in the upcoming models, Parain revealed “Probably at the International motor show (IAA) in Munich in September, we will showcase the future of the interaction between the car and the driver and how the driver finds information without any more the high drive, but with another kind of interaction -- Projection Touch, something that has not been seen so far.” Hinting at innovation in battery technology, Parain added “We will launch in 2025-26, the Neue Klasse, that’s a new architecture, purely electric, that is really revolutionary for BMW.” “More of it in the IAA in Munich in September. This Neue Klasse will also be built around a new battery technology. It will be really a game changer.” Al Jenaibi International Automobiles is the official importer of BMW cars in Oman and has won 5 awards at BMW Middle East Aftersales Conference in Malaysia in December 2022 and again this year at the BMW Group Middle East & Sales Conference 2022. Talking about the positioning of the BMW cars in Oman, Rachid Zamani, said “We target Opinion Leaders because they are the best brand ambassadors for our vehicles. The other category is the GKL Plus (Grand Klasse), which is the ultra-luxury segments such as the 7 Series, the X7 and the 8 Series.” Affirming BMW’s 20-year-strong partnership with Al Jenaibi International Automobiles, Parain concluded, “Our partner has the intention to invest in additional service facility. There’s really a strong belief that this market will steadily, positively develop.”

CC ENERGY DEVELOPMENT



CCED continues to unlock the potential of youth with Outward Bound Oman

MUSCAT: Focusing on education, training and capacity-building in its Corporate Social Responsibility strategy, CC Energy Development (CCED), and its partners in Blocks 3 & 4, Mitsui E&P Middle East B.V. and Tethys Oil Block 3 & 4 Limited, renewed their support to the Must’a’ed Programme in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Outward Bound Oman. The programme focuses on unlocking the potential of local young people through outdoor experiential learning and problem-solving activities. CCED’s commitment to giving back locally includes providing young people with valuable training opportunities. As part of this effort, CCED sponsored 500 out of more than 1,000 participants joining the Must’a’ed Programme in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth and Outward Bound Oman. Provided with a non-classroom-based learning environment, participants are challenged to step out

of their comfort zones. Thanks to the Must’a’ed Programme, they will develop essential life skills, gain a sense of accomplishment, and are empowered to thrive in diverse environments. Walter Simpson, Managing Director of CC Energy Development, said, “We are a diverse, ethical and responsible organisation that believes people are key to our success. We aim to give back to the communities we work with and our purpose-built Corporate Social Responsibility strategy covers a variety of themes including education, health and the environment. We focus on supporting initiatives that are aligned with our core values and we are committed to achieving sustainable socio-economic development for Oman and its people.” Mohammed Al Zadjali, Chief Operations Officer at Outward Bound Oman commented, “The impact of Outward Bound Oman’s courses in developing the nation’s talent in line with Vision

2040 is a result of the sustained hard work and commitment of many people, and of a genuinely productive and positive partnership between government, the private sector and the not-for-profit community.” Through innovation, training programmes and investing in initiatives benefitting the communities and environment in which it operates, CCED facilitates local capacity-building and environmental stewardship to deliver sustainable outcomes for future generations in Oman. CC Energy Development S.A.L. (CCED) is a dynamic, independent international oil & gas operator with a growth mindset that thinks globally but acts locally. We are a diverse, ethical and responsible organisation that believes people are key to our success and we ensure we benefit the communities we work in. CCED has growth as a core mindset and we are developing our capability to increase our production significantly.

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ROUND-UP

JCDecaux, McDonald’s innovate together

Taking centre stage in one of Muscat’s bustling streets, an eye-catching giant coffee cup has been strategically placed, captivating the attention of all onlookers, and enticing them to visit McCafé locations throughout Muscat to indulge in their delightful coffee offerings



MUSCAT: In a remarkable collaboration with Al Daud Restaurants, JCDecaux Oman has unveiled an extraordinary innovation that is set to revolutionise the coffee-drinking experience for residents and visitors in Muscat. Taking centre stage in one of Muscat’s bustling streets, an eye-catching giant coffee cup has been strategically placed, captivating the attention of all onlookers, and enticing them to visit McCafé locations throughout Muscat to indulge in their delightful coffee offerings. The giant coffee cup installation is ingeniously designed to illuminate, creating a stunning visual display that is sure to catch the eyes of both pedestrians and drivers passing by. Its strategic positioning in a crowded walkway ensures maximum visibility and exposure, making it an irresistible invitation for coffee enthusiasts to explore the McCafé experience. “We are thrilled to introduce the McDonald’s 3D Coffee Cup in Muscat,” said Ali K Daud, Owner, McDonald’s Oman. “This groundbreaking initiative allows

us to merge art and technology to highlight the beautiful cup of McCafé Coffee! We are sure that the customers will find this work as unique as the cup of McCafé high-quality coffee, handcrafted from 100% Arabica beans by expert baristas. We are proud to support local artists for making this piece of art” With its lit-up design, this remarkable creation serves as a symbol of JCDecaux’s commitment to innovation and creativity. By seamlessly integrating technology and aesthetics, JCDecaux Oman has once again demonstrated its ability to transform ordinary advertising spaces into extraordinary experiences. The giant coffee cup not only serves as a testament to the power of outdoor advertising but also highlights the importance of sustainable design in today’s world. Mohammed Al Bahri has shared, “As the Operations Manager at JCDecaux Oman, I take immense pride in this innovative execution, which exemplifies our relentless pursuit of pushing beyond conventional posters on our panels, captivating commuters, and deliver-

ing enhanced value to advertisers. With a keen focus on seamlessly blending design and size with the environment, our creation authentically represents the client’s product through the cup design and the captivating smoke it emits.” JCDecaux’s dedication to sustainability is reflected in every aspect of this installation. From its energy-efficient lighting system to its minimal environmental impact, the giant coffee cup embodies the company’s commitment to reducing its carbon footprint and contributing to a greener future. By utilising environmentally sustainable materials and technologies, JCDecaux Oman continues to pave the way for responsible advertising practices. This groundbreaking initiative is a testament to the power of collaboration between JCDecaux and Al Daud Restaurants. By joining forces, they have created a visually captivating masterpiece that not only promotes the McCafé brand but also adds vibrancy and charm to the streets of Muscat. The giant coffee cup serves as a symbol of indulgence, inviting coffee lovers to savour the rich flavours and invit-

savour the rich flavours and inviting ambience of McCafé. Bechir Chehab Managing Director of JCDecaux Oman commenting “JCDecaux Oman’s partnership with Al Daud Restaurants has once again pushed the boundaries of outdoor advertising. Through its innovative design, sustainable practices, and strategic placement, the giant coffee cup has stolen the show in Muscat, captivating the attention of passersby and encouraging them to embark on a delightful coffee experience at McCafé. This remarkable installation exemplifies JCDecaux’s global leadership in outdoor advertising and its commitment to engaging audiences through creativity, technology, and sustainability which comes aligned with Oman’s 2040 Vision. I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Muscat Municipality for their unwavering support and encouragement, demonstrating how advertising innovation can not only beautify spaces but also foster meaningful engagement with city residents and Al Daud Restaurants for entrusting us with building OOH disruptive executions.”



National Finance honoured with ‘Excellence in SME Financing’ award

MUSCAT: National Finance, a leading financial institution in Oman, has been honoured with the prestigious ‘Excellence in SME Financing’ award at the esteemed Oman’s leading women’s forum, Muntada Al Mar’a event held at Salalah Rotana Resort. The event was attended by His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar as the chief guest. The award highlights the company’s outstanding commitment and exceptional services in supporting the growth and development of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in the region. National Finance has consistently remained at the forefront of empowering SMEs, recognising their pivotal role in driving economic growth and job creation. The company’s commitment to understanding the unique challenges faced by SMEs and its proactive approach to offering flexible financing options have contributed significantly to its success. Commenting on the achievement, Tariq Al Farsi, CEO of National Finance, expressed his gratitude and said, “We are immensely proud and honoured to receive the prestigious ‘Excellence in SME Financing’ award. This recognition serves as a testament to National Finance’s commitment to

supporting the SME sector and empowering entrepreneurs to realise their business aspirations. We believe in fostering strong relationships with our SME clients, providing them with the necessary financial tools, guidance and personalised assistance to thrive in a competitive market. This award reaffirms our position as a leading financial institution dedicated to driving the growth and success of SMEs in Oman. We will continue to innovate and enhance our financial solutions, enabling us to better serve the evolving needs of our valued clients and contribute to the economic prosperity of the region.” National Finance’s success in SME financing is a result of its customer-centric approach, industry expertise and robust financial solutions. The company offers a wide range of services, including business loans, equipment financing, working capital facilities and trade finance solutions, all designed to address the unique needs of SMEs at every stage of their growth journey. As it continues to drive innovation and excellence in SME financing, the company remains dedicated to helping entrepreneurs build sustainable businesses and contribute to the economic prosperity of the region.

EXPANSION

Bank Muscat inaugurates new branch in Wilayat of Amerat

MUSCAT: In line with Bank Muscat’s customer-centric vision “To serve you better, everyday”, and to enhance the branches’ network already counted to 178 branches all over the Sultanate, a new branch was inaugurated at Madinat Al Nahdha in the Wilayat of Amerat recently in the presence of Sheikh Salem bin Rabie bin Khamis AlSunnaidi, Wali of Amerat and senior bank’s officials. The new branch is characterised by a modern design and distinctive space that provides customers comfort while completing their banking transactions. It is also located in a privileged location and closes to the population density, shops and commercial institutions. The new branch features several unique facilities including dedicated Sayyarati, Baituna, and Najahi desks. Also, as part of the bank’s focus on improving access to persons with disabilities, the branch has implemented access ramps, teller counters and ATMs, which are disabled-friendly. Speaking on the occasion, Abdulnasir N. Al Raisi, General Manager – Personal Banking, Bank



Muscat, said: “We are pleased today to open this new branch for Bank Muscat in Amerat. This branch is featured a modern design to keep abreast of developments in the banking sector and provide the best banking services and facilities for valued customers. This step comes as part of Bank Muscat’s strategy to strengthen the branch network in all governorates of the Sultanate and translate the bank’s vision “We work to serve you better every day”. The bank will con-

tinue to open more of these new branches with a wonderful design and large space and also equipped with the latest modern technologies to meet the needs of the bank’s growing customer base”. He added: “Over four decades of operations in Oman, Bank Muscat has earned a name for its customer-centric vision, backed by the largest branch and ATM-CDM-FFM network, a state-of-the-art Mobile and Internet banking platform, and several world-class financial products



and services. The opening of the new branch in Amerat will further help serve our customers better every day in line with our aim to provide an enhanced Customer Experience. I take this opportunity to thank all our customers for their confidence and trust in the bank, and for being our partners in the progress and development of the Sultanate. Bank Muscat will continue to open more such high-tech branches in the future to meet the needs of our ever-growing customer family.”

Taya Eid Bait Sabeeba, Deputy General Manager - Regional Branches, Bank Muscat said: “We are delighted to open our new branch in Amerat as this will help us serve different customer segments in the Wilayat. The new branch adds to the 55 branches which are already present in the Capital Region to serve our customers. I invite all our customers to take advantage of the largest branch and ATM-CDM network in the country. The current branch

was chosen to meet current and future customer needs and is an implementation of the bank’s vision to serve its customers better, every day. We thank all our customers for their strong confidence in the bank and look forward to continuing to launch new products and services that address their aspirations.” As the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, Bank Muscat has an extensive branch network of 178 and more than 820 devices including ATMs and CDMs installed across the country. Thanks to this strong and extensive network, Bank Muscat is the first choice for more than two million customers in the Sultanate and plays a major role in enhancing financial inclusion in the country through the innovative products it develops for customers. The bank also constantly updates its digital channels to enhance customer experience. Today, more than 1.6 million customers are using the wide range of benefits offered through digital channels, including bill payments, local and international fund transfers, and applying for new products and services.

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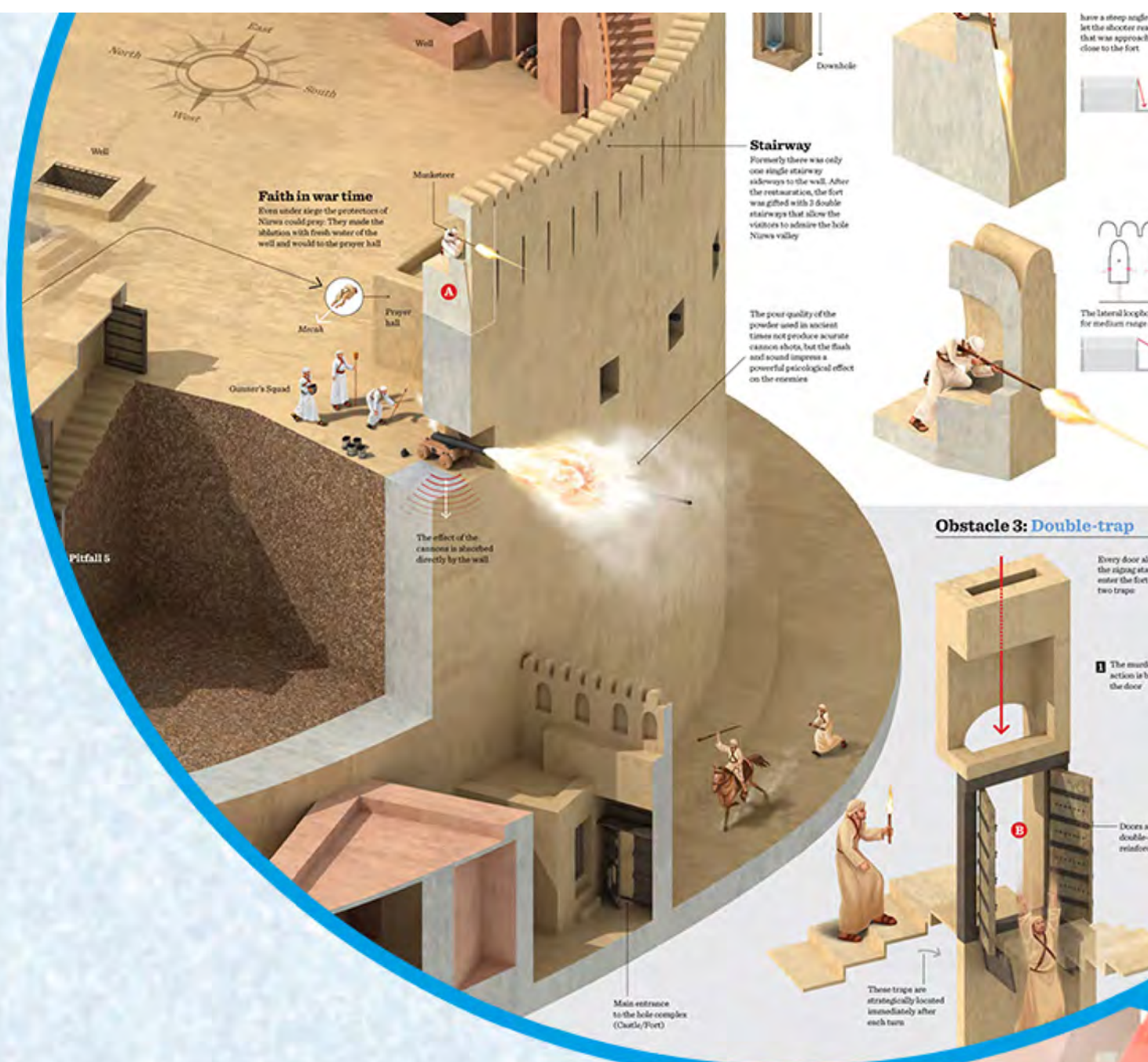
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