



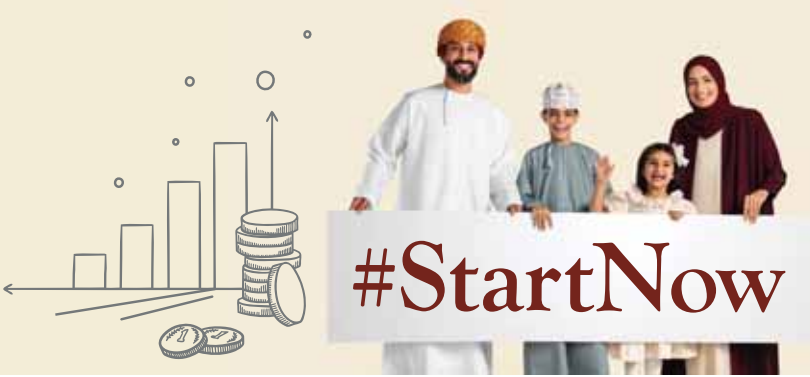


بنك مسقط
bank muscat

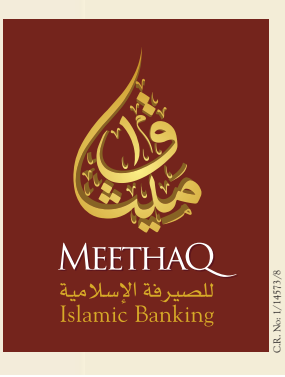


Open an account

Your child's financial journey starts with Meethaq



#StartNow



MEETHAQ
للصيرفة الإسلامية
Islamic Banking

WILAYAT OF ADAM



HH Sayyid Asa'ad patronises Al Bashayer annual camel festival

ADAM: The seventh edition of Al Bashayer Annual Camel Racing Festival concluded at Al Bashayer Racecourse in the Wilayat of Adam on Saturday under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tariq Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Co-operation Affairs and Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan.

The five-day festival was organised by Al Bashayer Racecourse Department for Arabian Pure-bred Camels.

The festival saw the participation of camel owners and breeders from various governorates of Oman and the GCC States.

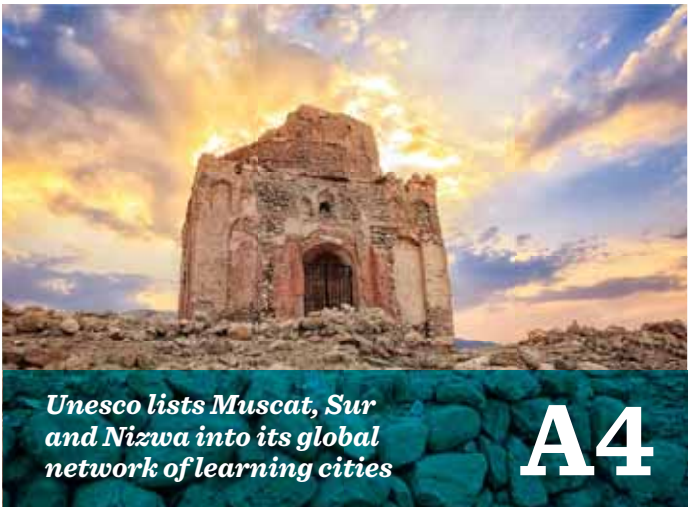
The ceremony comprised four main rounds for eight kilometres wherein camel Samha for the Presidential Camel Corps of the UAE secured the Al Bashayer

Gold Sword and the first place.

The first round of the race was dedicated to the category of 'Al Thanaya' (two-year-old camels) wherein the first place was secured by Durrah camel of the Presidential Camel corps of the UAE.

The first place in the second round was secured by camel Al Tamas for owner Hilal Abdullah Al Shedi and the second place was secured by camel Dalal of owner Nasser Al Affari.

The third round was dedicated for the category of 'Al Hawl'. The first place and the silver sword prize was secured by camel Al Dhabi for Mohammed Sultan Al Katabi, while camel Samha for the Presidential Camel Corps bagged the first place in the fourth round (main round) of Al Hawl category to win the gold sword and the car. **>A2**



OMR5.6BN TRADE SURPLUS IN THIRD QUARTER OF 2023

Oman's service activities led the increase in non-oil activities recording a growth of 9.7 percent at the end of the third quarter of 2023

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The total value added by non-oil activities in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 1.9 percent to OMR21.8 billion at the end of the third quarter of 2023 compared to the corresponding period of 2022.

An analysis of the economic situation in Oman at the end of the third quarter of 2023 issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) further showed that the service activities led the increase in non-oil activities recording a growth of 9.7 percent at the end of the third quarter of 2023 compared to the same period in 2022.

However, the added value of agriculture, forestry, and fishing decreased by 0.2 percent along with a decrease in value added of industrial activities by 16 percent, of manufacturing industries by 26.3 percent and construction by about 6.8 percent.

Despite these fluctuations, the NCSI report said that Oman's



21.8bn

Omani rials was the total value added by the non-oil activities in the Sultanate of Oman

16.6bn

Omani rials was the total value of merchandise exports from the Sultanate of Oman

9.4bn

Omani rials was the total value of personal loans at an average interest rate of 5.5 percent.

petroleum sector witnessed a marginal downturn in its added value, with petroleum activities dipping by OMR1.9 billion to OMR10.6 billion at the end of the third quarter of 2023. Contributing to this decline, crude oil recorded a notable 17.4 percent decrease to OMR 9 billion, while natural gas saw a 1.7 percent drop to OMR1.5 billion.

The total value of surplus in trade balance at the end of the third quarter of 2023 was about OMR5.6 billion, a decrease of about OMR2.3 billion compared to the end of the same quarter of

2022. The value of merchandise exports decreased by 13.6 percent to reach about OMR16.6 billion.

Monetary indicators

In monetary indicators, the purchasing power of the Omani rial decreased by 0.7 percent at the end of the third quarter of 2023 compared to the end of the same quarter of 2022.

Additionally, the total value of loans and financing via commercial banks and Islamic windows rose by 5.7 percent to OMR30.4 billion, with private sector deposits witnessing a

notable 6.3 percent increase. The report further stated that the total value of personal loans amounted to OMR9.4 billion at an average interest rate of 5.5 percent.

The NCSI analysis tracks the current economic situation of the country in light of the financial policies taken by the Sultanate of Oman in order to reduce the impact of global economic fluctuations through a set of the most important economic indicators that constitute a reflection of the financial policies taken by the government. **-ONA**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Sayyid Badr meets CEO of BMW

1 Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi met with Oliver Zipes, CEO of BMW, on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference. Saturday. **>A2**

OMAN Over OMR600,000 collected for Gaza

2 Dar Al Atta'a Association has collected more than OMR600,000 under the campaign 'For Palestine.4' to support brothers in the Gaza Strip. **>A3**

WORLD ISRO successfully launches satellite

3 The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) conducted a successful launch of its meteorological satellite INSAT-3DS aboard GSLV F14. **>A6**



CAA ANNOUNCEMENT

Plan to transform old Seeb Airport into Aviation Museum

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Embark on a journey down memory lane, where citizens and long-time residents can reminisce about their adventures at the historic Seeb International Airport.

As the new Muscat International Airport took flight in 2018, the old Seeb International Airport took on various roles, even serving as a field hospital during the pandemic.

In an exciting announcement on Saturday, the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) unveiled plans to breathe new life into the old airport by transforming it into an Aviation Museum. This ambitious project aims to chronicle nine decades of aviation development



in the Sultanate, offering visitors a captivating glimpse into Oman's rich aviation heritage.

During a programme on Oman TV, Engineer Nayef bin Ali Al Abri, President of the Civil Aviation

Authority, said, "The old airport will serve multiple purposes, with our foremost ambition being to establish an aviation museum that preserves the legacy and history of Oman's aviation sector,

spanning 94 years."

Al Abri elaborated, "In addition to the museum, we envision creating a vibrant destination where people of all ages can indulge in recreational activities."

Highlighting the significance of repurposing the airport, Al Abri noted, "Retaining a portion of the old airport for parking vintage planes will provide an authentic aviation museum experience."

"Alongside classic aircraft, the museum will showcase cutting-edge aviation technology and aerospace science projects. With state-of-the-art multimedia displays and a captivating collection of artefacts, the museum will bring Oman's illustrious aviation history to life, celebrating the milestones that have shaped

Oman Air into the globally recognised brand it is today."

Nearly a century in the skies

The journey of Oman's aviation spans nearly a century, marked by pioneering achievements and significant milestones that have shaped the nation's aerial landscape.

In 1929, the skies above Oman witnessed their first commercial plane landing, an event etched into the annals of history, as an aircraft touched down on a makeshift airstrip in the Bait Al Falaj area. This momentous occasion heralded the dawn of aviation in the Sultanate, albeit primarily for military and sporadic civilian flights. **>A3**



Sayyid Badr discusses tech transfer with CEO of BMW

The foreign minister expressed his appreciation for the strong friendly relations between the Sultanate of Oman and the Federal Republic of Germany

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman's Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi met with Oliver Zipes, CEO of the German automobile manufacturer BMW, on the sidelines of the Munich Security Conference, which began on Saturday.



During the meeting, opportunities for partnership and cooperation in the transport sector, transfer of manufacturing and technological knowledge, and ways to develop smart infrastructure were discussed. The foreign minister expressed his appreciation for the strong friendly relations between

the Sultanate of Oman and the Federal Republic of Germany, and the importance of enhancing economic cooperation and exchanging experiences in various fields. For his part, the CEO of BMW expressed his interest in expanding its global presence and enhancing cooperation with leading companies and governments in

the automotive sector and the logistics sector in general, and the company's readiness to explore investment opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman and provide its expertise and advanced technologies in the field of luxury and sustainable cars. The meeting was attended by a number of officials from both sides.

POLITICAL CONSULTATIONS

Oman, EU discuss ceasefire in Gaza

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The 4th round of the political consultations between the Sultanate of Oman and the European Union (EU) was held in Brussels on Thursday. The Omani side was chaired by Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs, whilst the EU side was chaired by Enrique Mora, Deputy Secretary General for Political Affairs. During the session, the two sides discussed relations and affirmed to continue promoting joint cooperation in various areas. They also touched on a set of regional and international issues of common concern, including the repercussions of the Israeli war on the Gaza Strip. In this context, the two sides stressed the importance of backing political endeavors and efforts to reach a ceasefire in Gaza and delivering the humanitarian aid. It is worth mentioning that these consultations comes within the framework of the cooperation



arrangements signed in 2018 between Oman and the EU, which reflect the commitment of both sides to enhancing cooperation and mutual understanding in light of the current challenges on the international arena. The session was attended by Ambassador Munthir Mahfoud Al Manthri, Head of Europe Department, Ambassador Rua'a Issa Al Zadjali, Head of Oman's Mission to the EU and a number of officials from both sides.

OMANI TEACHER'S DAY

Holiday for educational bodies on 25 February

Times News Service

MUSCAT: On the occasion of Omani Teacher's Day, which falls on 24 February annually; it has been decided that Sunday, 25 February, will be an official holiday for all educational bodies in public and private schools in Oman. Dr. Madiha Ahmed Al Shaibani, Minister of Education, said: "Regarding the Omani Teacher's Day holiday, which falls on 24 February, His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has requested that this day every year will be an official off for all male and female teachers



and those holding related teaching and administrative positions in public and private schools. If this day coincides with a vacation

day, it will be replaced by another day." Following the decision, it has been decided that Sunday, February 25, 2024, will be an official holiday for all educational bodies in public and private schools in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Minister of Education added: "I take this happy occasion to extend greetings and blessings to His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq, appreciating his keenness and interest in the status of the teacher and his effective role in raising the generations of this generous nation, praying to the Almighty to grant him health, wellness and a long life, and our dear country enjoy more progress and prosperity under his wise leadership."

MINISTRY OF INFORMATION

First show of film 'House of Wonders' to be launched

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Information, represented by Nizwa Magazine, will launch the first show of the documentary film House of Wonders (Bait Al Ajaib) at the House of Musical Arts in the Royal Opera House Muscat tomorrow. It is a 3-part film that talks about the Omani presence in Zanzibar and East Africa, in addition to a book documenting the cultural role of Oman in the region. The House of Wonders is the main theme of the three-part film. Each part of the film lasts for 50

minutes and has been produced in three languages: Arabic, English and Swahili. The film highlights the pioneering cultural contribution of Omanis in the political, commercial, social and cultural fields, represented by the spread of Islam and Arab culture in East Africa. Each part of the film presents a main character within related political, social, and cultural events. The film was shot in various locations around the world, such as Zanzibar, a number of African and Asian countries, and locations in Europe, America, and the Sultanate of Oman.

OHI

MARINE MOTORS

YAMAHA

Revs Your Heart

YXZ1000R SS XT-R

TAKE YOUR OFF-ROAD EXPERIENCE TO THE EXTREME

PURE SPORT

Experience extreme fun while conquering trails. Every detail of the YXZ1000R SS XT-R is crafted for unmatched performance and pure off-road exhilaration.

For inquiries and order get in touch with us today +968 2471 2240 / 2471 1312

Or visit www.ohimarine.com

AL BASHAYER

Camel race

<FROM A1 On the conclusion of the event, His Highness Sayyid Asa'ad bin Tariq Al Said, gave away the prizes to the winners of the four rounds. The conclusion of the festival was attended by a number of ministers, undersecretaries, sheikhs and dignitaries and lovers of camel racing from the various governorates. -ONA

KR

كيمجي رامداس KHIMJI RAMDAS

Sale of Used Vehicles

Toyota Yaris, Nissan Sunny, Mazda 6, Suzuki Ciaz, Toyota Hiace, Ford Pickup, Isuzu Pickup, Isuzu Truck

We invite offers from VAT registered Companies and Individual Nationals having Tax Identification number for purchase of vehicles.

Tender form can be collected from our Head Office, Gr. Muttrah

Contact: Mr. Gopi Tel: 247 65 557

Banking that grows with you

Apply for Minor Account today

2477 5777 | www.maisarah-oman.com

[f/MaisarahOman](#) [@MaisarahIslamic](#) [@MaisarahIslamic](#) [Maisarah-Islamic](#)

البنك الإسلامي الإسلامي
Islamic Banking Services

ميسرة
MAISARAH
للبنوك المصرفية الإسلامية
Islamic Banking Services

Over OMR600,000 collected for Gaza by Dar Al Atta’a



In cooperation with the Omani Charitable Organisation, the Dar Al Atta’a has worked on many campaigns and this was the fourth campaign for Palestine

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Dar Al Atta’a Association collected more than OMR600,000 under the campaign ‘For Palestine_4’ to support brothers in Gaza. Started on October 15, the campaign was launched under ‘Disaster Relief Programme’ which is concerned with providing aid to those affected in crises such as wars and natural disasters, locally and internationally.

In cooperation with the Oman Charitable Organisation, the campaign included collecting cash donations through Dar Al Atta’a various marketing outlets, including, text messages via telecommunications companies Omantel Communications and Ooredoo, and through the association’s bank accounts, and various applications, including Thawani, Talabat, and Tam Den. In addition, contacts were established with about 30 SMEs who allocated a percentage of their sales proceeds to Palestine during the charitable campaign period. Dar Al Atta’a also carried out supporting activities, including an open day event in cooperation with the Omani Automobile Association, with the participation of Omani biker teams under the supervision of Harley Davidson owners, providing an opportunity to citizens to help their brothers in Palestine. The total proceeds collected for the ‘For Palestine campaign’ is OMR600,599,620. This amount was delivered to. Muhammad Al Dhaili, Chairman of the Omani Charitable Organi-

zation by Mrs. Maryam bint Issa Al Zadjali, founder and president of the Dar Al Atta’a Association. Mrs. Maryam bint Issa Al-Zadjali said that dear Palestine is witnessing a humanitarian catastrophe that requires support from everyone. She also added that Omani citizens from all sectors and positions have shown their big support to this campaign and without them, the goals won’t be achieved. In cooperation with the Omani Charitable Organisation, the Dar Al Atta’a has worked on many campaigns and this was the fourth campaign for Palestine. In the past, collaborations had resulted in equipping a blood laboratory in Nabis and providing medical equipment in Jerusalem and Gaza. Dar Al Atta’a Association takes this opportunity to extend its sincere thanks to the Ministry of Social Development, Oman Charitable Organisation, and everyone who supported this campaign. The association seeks the Almighty support for our brothers in Palestine to give them a clear victory.

MAJOR MILESTONE

Air cargo handling at Salalah airport rises

SALALAH: The air cargo building at Salalah Airport achieved a major milestone in terms of the number of times of handling and clearing air cargo during the first month of this year. The data showed a huge jump in the volume of air cargo handling last January, at a rate exceeding 310 percent over the volume of shipments for the same period last year, and at a rate exceeding 185 percent over the same month in 2022. The number of shipments handled in January 2024 exceeded the numbers for the same period in 2019 - that is, before the pandemic - which gives a positive indication of the steady growth of air cargo traffic through Salalah Airport. The data provided and analysed by the air cargo business development team at Oman Airports also indicated a steady increase in cargo handling volumes since the end of the last quarter of last year. The growth rate exceeded 48 percent over the last quarter of 2022 and exceeded 13 percent over the total freight handling of the same year. -ONA

idp
STUDY ABROAD **Seminar**
AUSTRALIA | UK | CANADA | USA

You dreamed. It's time for **ACTION**

IDP Education invites you to join the Study Abroad Seminar where you can meet with the world's prestigious institutions in person.

Oman
Monday, February 19th
04:00 PM - 09:00 PM
Grand Millennium - Crystal Ballroom

2409 1800
info.muscat@idp.com
idpOMAN Visit: idp.com

Latest Updates from **Canada**
03:00 PM - 03:45 PM

IELTS Information Session
05:00 PM - 06:00 PM

Scan to register

SEEB INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

Vital role in connectivity

<FROM A1 On December 23, 1973, a new chapter unfolded as Seeb International Airport ceremoniously opened its gates to the world, becoming the primary gateway to Oman’s skies. Renowned for its strategic location and modern facilities, Seeb International Airport played a pivotal role in bolstering Oman’s connectivity with the global avia-

tion network. In a symbolic gesture reflective of the nation’s progress and aspirations, Seeb International Airport was rechristened as Muscat International Airport on February 1, 2008. This renaming ceremony not only reaffirmed the capital’s status as a vital aviation hub but also underscored Oman’s commitment to embracing modernity while preserving its rich heritage.

SALES REPRESENTATIVE

REQUIRED FOR A LARGE DIVERSIFIED GROUP IN MUSCAT

FOR OTC & COSMETIC PRODUCTS WITH:

- Appropriate professional qualification
- Minimum of 2 years’ experience as a Sales Rep in this specific field
- Proficiency in English and Arabic
- Must possess a valid Oman driving license

Interested candidates, please send your CV, age and a recent photograph to omanjobs968@gmail.com with “Pharma Sales” in the subject line

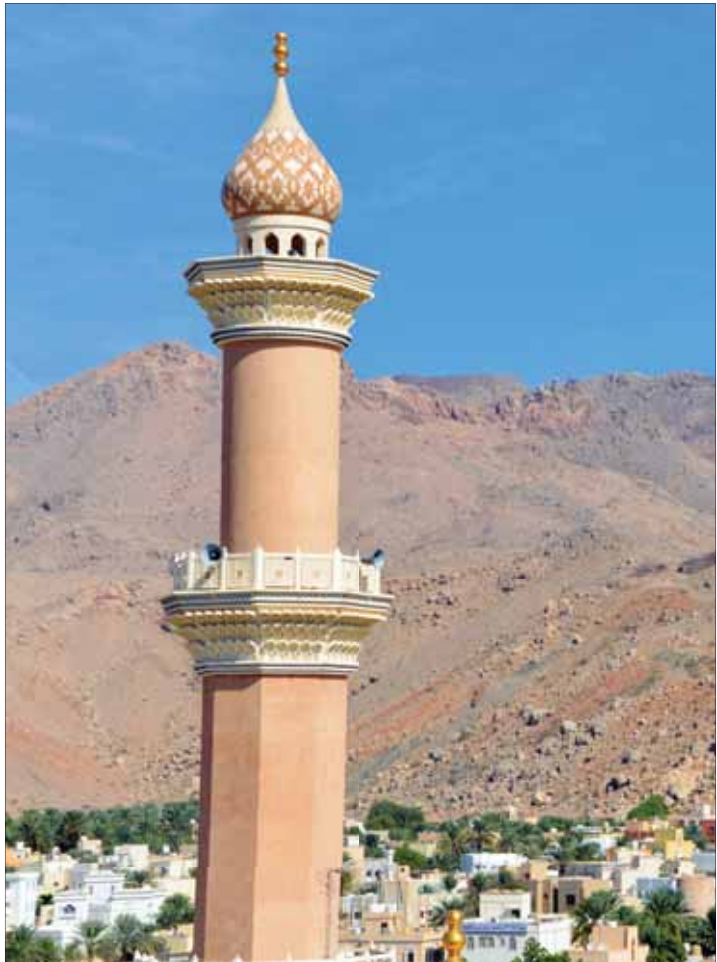
ENJOY YOUR RIDE; YOU ARE PROTECTED

PROVIDING FLEXIBLE INSURANCE SOLUTIONS SINCE 1985
FOR ALL YOUR INSURANCE NEEDS, CHOOSE US

OMAN UNITED INSURANCE COMPANY SAOG
Post Box 1522, Ruwi, PC 112 Sultanate of Oman
24477300 | info@omanutd.com | www.omanutd.com

Oman United Insurance Co.
S.A.O.G.

Unesco lists Muscat, Sur and Nizwa into its global network of learning cities



The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (Unesco) announced the inclusion of three Omani cities into the Unesco Global Network of Learning Cities. The three cities are the Wilayat of Muscat, the Wilayat of Nizwa and the Wilayat of Sur. This falls within the Ministry of Education's vision, represented by the Oman National Commission for Education, Culture and Science, in partnership with the Ministry of Interior, to promote Omani cities on the global stage, looking at its tourism and cultural potential, to spread awareness about education for sustainable development in the local community, and to raise the Sultanate of Oman's ranking in international indicators, including the Sustainable Development Goals.

The announcement took place during a virtual ceremony organized by the Unesco Institute for Lifelong Learning on Wednesday, with the participation of representatives of the newly listed cities from various countries of the world. Joining this network is an acknowledgment of the efforts undertaken by these

cities to achieve the principle of lifelong learning in practice.

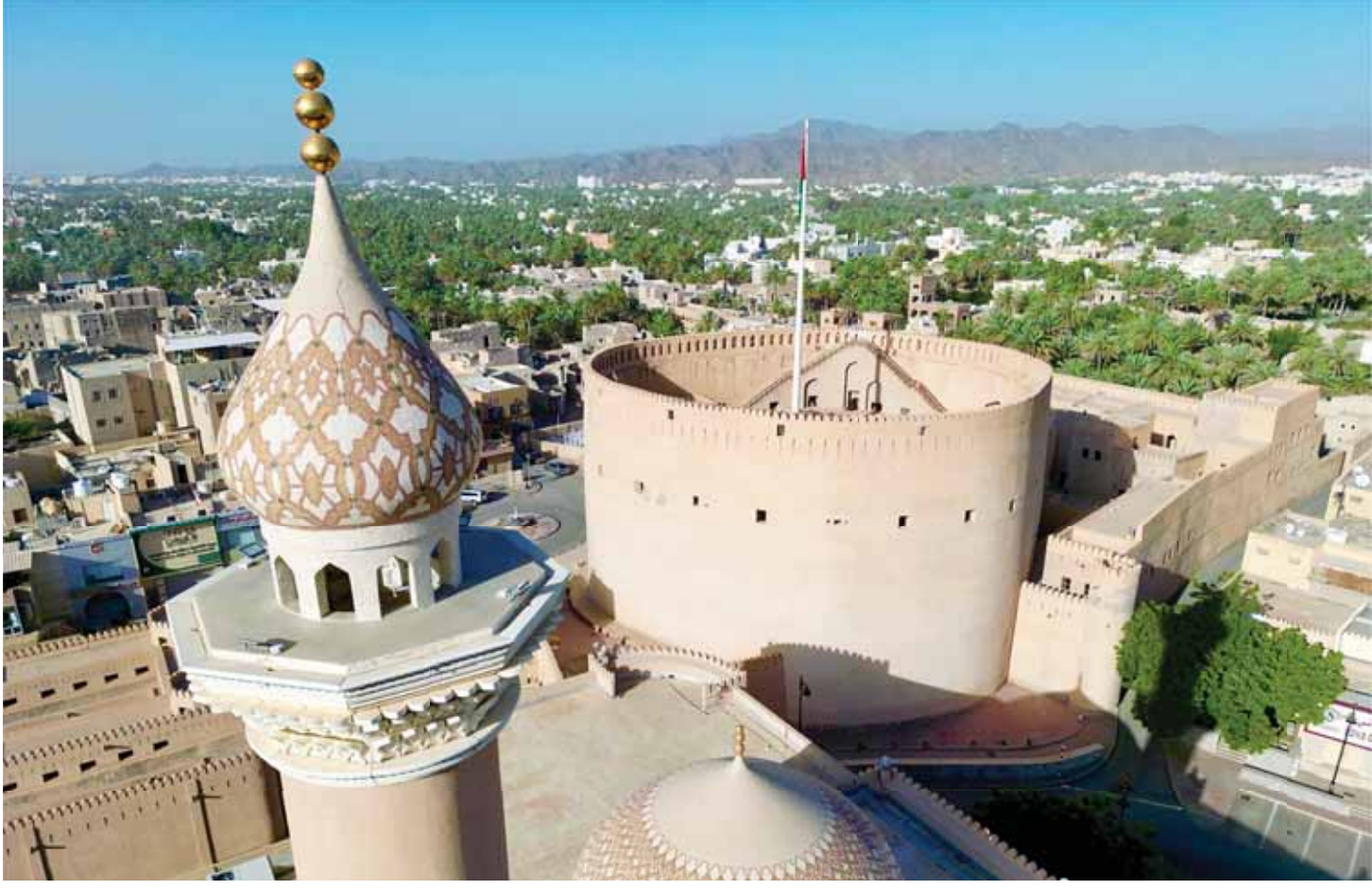
Lifelong learning

The Unesco Global Network of Learning Cities – established by the Unesco Institute for Lifelong Learning in 2012 – aims to support and improve lifelong learning practices in cities around the world.

The network achieves this by enhancing dialogue on education policies, establishing links between those in charge of city administration and various educational institutions, as well as strengthening partnerships between global cities.

A Learning City works to mobilise its resources in all sectors to promote comprehensive learning for all from basic to higher education, stimulates learning within families and local communities, facilitates learning for work, and expands the use of modern educational tools to promote a culture of lifelong learning.

This enhances the capabilities of individuals, social cohesion, and the economic and cultural growth of societies, in order to achieve sustainable development goals.



OXFORD CENTRE FOR ISLAMIC STUDIES

Oman’s foreign minister calls for establishment of Palestinian state

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman’s Foreign Minister Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al-Busaidi called for the establishment of a Palestinian state as an existential necessity, and without their own state, the Palestinians are under a constant threat of destitution, extermination and death. He reviewed the Palestinian issue, the historic developments and the obstacles in the way to reaching a comprehensive settlement based on the two-state solution.

While giving a lecture at the Oxford Centre for Islamic Studies entitled “Talking with Everyone for the Interest of Everyone: Diplomacy in a Multipolar World,” he pointed out the need to expedite finding a permanent solution that guarantees the establishment of an independent Palestinian state.

For saving the Palestinian people from the suffering of destitution, genocide, and the human tragedy they face daily, he stressed the importance of holding an urgent international conference to bring warring parties together and ensure a quick and effective solution.

“A solution to the Palestinian issue can and must be reached, but to achieve this, there must be a shift in thinking, as the ef-



forts made to deal with the current crisis are still stuck in the past,” he said.

He added, “For more than thirty years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, many of us are still living with a Cold War mentality, speaking mainly with our friends, and refusing to speak on principle with people who they believe are enemies. This is a serious obstacle, and we see it today in the face of the horrific humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, there is a refusal to do the only thing that might open a path to peace. Hamas cannot be eliminated.”

“Therefore, if peace is to be achieved one day, its makers will have to find a way to talk to them and listen to them as well. This will require a shift in thinking and the development of practi-

cal forms of diplomacy suitable for a multipolar world, as we all must talk to anyone for the good of everyone.”

He added, “We cannot marginalise the sectarian division in the region except by establishing the Palestinian state, and this just solution is a first step and a necessity in a longer process of change for the peoples of the region.”

He explained, “A Palestinian state will allow us to see ourselves alongside an Israeli state, as people with complex social and cultural identities, rather than identities defined mostly on the basis of religious affiliations. In other words, we can return to the hopeful path of the Arab renaissance and Jerusalem can be one of its homelands.”

To achieve the two-state solu-

tion, His Excellency proposed the establishment of an urgent international conference charged with agreeing on the necessary arrangements for establishing a Palestinian state and developing mechanisms for its implementation. The conference must include the presence of all components of Palestinian society, including Hamas, and be held in the presence of the leaders of a group of countries that properly represent the global majority.

The Foreign Minister also pointed out the necessity of abolishing the veto power from the United Nations Security Council.

Because voting at the present time is based on political calculations from five parties who have the authority to prevent the decision, even if it is unanimous. He pointed to the importance of reforming international institutions based on managing international relations so that these institutions are appropriate to today’s events instead of focusing on finding solutions to yesterday’s problems.

“This process can be made now, by taking urgent collective action to establish a Palestinian state, and taking practical steps to ensure that the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination and the will of the international community are quickly achieved.”

MEETING

Oman and Qatar reaffirm strong, deep-rooted ties



MUNICH: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al-Busaidi, Foreign Minister met on Saturday with Sheikh Mohammed bin Abdulrahman bin Jassim Al Thani, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the State of Qatar during his participation in Munich Security Conference, in Federal Republic of Germany. During the meeting, the two sides reaffirmed the deep-rooted and strong brotherly relations between the two countries and their joint keenness for continuation of the cooperation and coordination in the various fields for mutual interests of both the countries. The two ministers expressed

their support to the Palestinian people and their right to live in peace and dignity.

The meeting between Sayyid Badr and Mariya Gabriel, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Bulgaria discussed the bilateral relations and ways of enhancement of existing cooperation between the two countries. The two sides also tackled the current condition in the region and reaffirmed the significance of reaching an immediate and sustainable solution to the Palestinian cause. The meetings were attended by a number of officials from the two sides. — OMA

FDO seeks diversification in line with Vision 2040



The company accords priority to the development of local economy through purchase from the SMEs and local fishermen



States to ensure sustainability and enhancement of the efforts of economic diversification in line with Oman Vision 2040.

Among the exhibitions FDO Group seeks to participate is the Gulf Food Exhibition, which will be held at Dubai World Trade Centre on Monday through its subsidiaries, including Blue Waters Company; Natural Shrimp Agriculture Company, Oriental

Shrimp Aquaculture Company and the International Sea Food Company (ISFC).

The exhibition will acquaint the representatives of the companies with the sea products and exchange of information in the field.

FDO participation in the exhibition is characterised this year by the participation of the International Sea Food Company (ISFC), which owns the state-of-the-art specialised utilities in fish industries at the Special Economic Zone-Duqm.

The Seafood Cannery Plant of the International Sea Food Company processes 30,000 tonnes annually and produces over 100 million cans annually; that is over 16,000 tonnes of high-quality seafood products.

The processing capacity of the plant is the highest in the GCC States. The plant is located in the Special Economic Zone-Duqm

and accommodates modern facilities for processing and storage.

The plant has access to the sources of raw materials and enjoys low cost of production as it is close to the local suppliers and emerging markets.

Zakariya Al Hassani, Chief Executive Officer of the International Seafood Company, said that the company offers several opportunities in the field of commercial partnerships including White label products to the retail stores and the regional brands with the aim of serving the consumers in the markets of the Middle East, North Africa, the USA, the European Union and West Africa.

He said that the company accords priority to the development of the local economy through purchase from the small and medium enterprises and local fishermen along with empowerment of the local community. With OMA inputs

MUNICH CONFERENCE

Oman and Romania discuss bilateral ties

MUNICH: Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al-Busaidi, Oman’s Foreign Minister on Saturday met with Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Romania Luminita Odobescu, on the sidelines of Munich Security Conference. The event was inaugurated on 16 February in Munich, Germany.

During the meeting, the two sides reaffirmed their joint interest for development of the bilateral relations and mutual interests between the two countries.

They also stressed the significance of adopting dialogue as the way for achievement of understanding, security and stability along with actual implementation of the provisions and rules of the international law and justice for all. The two sides also stressed according utmost priority for resolving the global humanitarian disaster in Gaza through immediate ceasefire and entry of relief items.

Sayyid Badr also met with a number of senior members of the Elders Group in the presence of Ban Ki Moon, Former UN Secretary General; Juan Santos, Former Colombian President; Gro Harlem Brundtland, Former Director General of the World Health Organisation; and Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland and former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. — OMA



IT'S NOT SMART ENOUGH TO HELP YOU DRIVE

A TIMES OF OMAN HANDS-FREE DRIVING INITIATIVE



INDIAN SCHOOL SALALAH

Po Box 2305, Salalah 211, Sultanate of Oman
Phone: 23235700 / 23235701, Fax: 2323537
Email: Contactus@Indianschoolsalalah.com Website: www.indianschoolsalalah.com



TENDER NOTICE

Tender Ref No :ISS/017 - 18/02/2024

GENERAL INSURANCE RENEWAL

Fidelity Insurance, Comprehensive general liability, Money Insurance, Group personal accident – Students, Group personal Accident – Staff & Dependent, Life Insurance – Staff & Dependent, Property all risk, Work men compensation.

PRINTING WORKS Students Dairy – 4500 Nos, Souvenir- 4500Nos.

Indian School Salalah reserves the right to accept or reject any Tender

Interested parties shall remit a non refundable Tender fee of OMR 10/- each at School fee counter (Main Building) and can collect the Tender document between 9 am to 3 pm (Sunday to Thursday) from 19th February 2024 to 27th February 2024.

Last Date for submission of Sealed Tender is 29-02-2024 on or before 3 PM



SULTANATE OF OMAN
Governorate of Muscat
Wilayat Seeb | Wali Office

FOR RENT

A residential/commercial building located in the commercial market at south Ma'bella, block (NE/46) consisting of:

FIVE SHOPS – SIXTEEN APARTMENTS – GUARD ROOM

Those interested to rent the whole building should contact Khalifa Ahmed Al Mazroui within 30 days, Phone 24420000, 92595901.

The Committee is not bound to accept the biggest of any other tender offer

TENDER

SALVAGE VEHICLES FOR SALE

Sealed offers are invited for sale of Salvage vehicles on contract basis for One Year. Please contact urgently at Email: Iman.H@omanutd.com for details and offers documents, before 1/3/2024.



OMAN UNITED INSURANCE CO. SAOG

P.O. Box 1522, Ruwi, P.C. 112, Sultanate of Oman
Tel: 24477300, Fax: 24477323, Email: info@omanutd.com

TOGETHERNESS COMPANY

ANNOUNCES SELLING THE FOLLOWING LANDS AND PROPERTIES:

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

Contact at: - + 968 92822040, +968 97365897

www.togethernessrealestate.com



Announcement

Vendor Registration Announcement

Oman Flour Mills Co. invites SMEs holding a Riyada card to join our network of suppliers.

Established in 1977, Oman Flour Mills Co. SAOG began its journey with a wheat milling capacity of 150 metric tons per day, gradually expanding to today's impressive capacity of 800 MT per day.

From a humble milling company, we have evolved into a diversified Group with over 15 entities, operating across various industries.

We believe in empowering SMEs. Together, we can contribute to their growth and foster a resilient business ecosystem.

To be a part of this endeavour, follow the guidelines on our Vendor Registration Page and complete the registration process: www.omanflourmills.com/VendorRegistration

For any inquiries or more information, you can contact our Vendor Management team at vendor.r@omanflourmills.com or call us on 24717329

The deadline for submissions is **29th February 2024**



PARLIAMENTARY ELECTIONS

Rishi Sunak’s conservative party loses two seats

LONDON: In a setback for the UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak, his ruling Conservative Party suffered crushing defeats in two parliamentary elections held to replace two conservative lawmakers who had quit parliament.

According to the report, the election results showed the conservative party lost seats they had held in Kingswood, near Bristol

and in Wellingborough in Northamptonshire, a district that had been regarded as one of the party’s more impregnable strongholds.

With a general election expected later this year, the defeats are likely to compound Rishi Sunak’s difficulties at a time when the British economy is shrinking, interest rates are high and Britain’s health service seems to be in a state of

almost permanent crisis. Opinion polls show his party trailing the opposition Labour Party by double-digit margins.

The first result came from Kingswood, where Labour defeated the Conservatives by 11,176 votes to 8,675. In Wellingborough, Labour performed even better by securing a seat that, in the last general election, the Conservatives won by

more than 18,000 votes. This time, Labour claimed victory by 13,844 votes to 7,408.

Earlier this year a former cabinet minister, Simon Clarke, called on the prime minister to quit, and analysts will be watching closely to see if more Conservative lawmakers are alarmed enough about their electoral prospects to press for a change of leader. — ANI



Printed and published by:
Muscat Media Group
Post Box 770,
Postal Code: 112



Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
Chairman / Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali
Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali
Chief Executive Officer: Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali

EDITORIAL: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24813153, E-mail: editor@timesofoman.com
ADVERTISING: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24812624, E-mail: advertising@timesofoman.com
CIRCULATION: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24818270, E-mail: circulation@timesofoman.com

Japan successfully launches H3 rocket after two failed attempts

The country's space agency, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency, said the rocket's initial flight has been smooth as planned



TOKYO: Japan successfully launched its next-generation H3 rocket on Saturday, almost one year after two failed attempts previously.

The country’s space agency, Japan Aerospace Exploration Agency (JAXA), said the rocket’s initial flight has been smooth as planned.

The H3 rocket launched from Tanegashima Space Centre at

9:22am local time (0022GMT).

The announcement of the rocket’s successful orbit was met with cheers throughout the space agency’s control centre.

The rocket has released all its payloads, which includes two microsatellites, the space agency said.

“We feel so relieved to be able to announce the good results,” JAXA President Hiroshi Yamakawa told

a news conference.

“We made a big first step today toward achieving that goal,” Yamakawa said.

Saturday’s launch comes two days later than planned due to weather-related delays.

Last year in February, the launch was abandoned due to ignition issues. Then the following month, the launcher’s engine did not ignite in space and a destruct

command had to be issued.

JAXA president Hiroshi Yamakawa saying that he was happy and “never felt so relieved.”

Jointly built by JAXA and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries (MHI), the rocket is designed to carry heavier payloads for cheaper to space.

The next-generation H3 is seen as a cost-effective competitor to Space X’s Falcon 9.

“The H3 rocket has a unique and novel first-stage engine that delivers greater thrust compared to state-of-the-art rockets,” Michele Trenti, director of the Melbourne Space Laboratory at the University of Melbourne, said.

The latest success bolsters Japan’s credentials as the global space race heats up.

In 2025, the H3 rocket is slated to deliver a lunar explorer for the joint Japan-India LUPEX project and, at a future date, will carry a cargo spacecraft for the US-led Artemis moon exploration program.

Japan successfully landed its SLIM spacecraft, nicknamed the “Moon Sniper,” on the lunar surface last month although its solar panels being misaligned.

The H3, which was developed with Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, is designed to carry a 6.5 metric tonne payload into space for as little as five billion yen (\$33 million) per launch, about half the cost of its predecessor, Al Jazeera reported.

JAXA hopes that the H3’s lower

costs and greater payload capacity will attract global clients for missions, such as delivering supplies to the International Space Station and supporting the US-led Artemis moon exploration programme.

Tokyo has said it intends to launch about 20 satellites and probes with H3 rockets by 2030.

The H3’s successful launch follows back-to-back failures last year, including a botched launch in March that ended with ground control utilising the rocket’s self-destruct function shortly after blast-off after the second-stage engine failed to ignite, Al Jazeera reported.

JAXA identified three possible electrical faults in a subsequent review of the launch, but could not determine the direct cause of the failure, which caused significant delays to its space plans.

Japan last month successfully landed its unmanned probe SLIM on the moon, becoming the fifth country to place a craft on the lunar surface.

— Agencies

IRNA REPORT

Iran unveils air defence systems, anti-ballistic missile

TEHRAN: Iran has unveiled a new anti-ballistic missile system and a new low-altitude air defence system, the country’s state news agency reported on Saturday.

The Islamic Republic News Agency (IRNA) said that the two new systems developed by the Iranian Defence Ministry were unveiled on Saturday in the presence of Defence Minister Brigadier General Mohammad Reza Gharaei Ashtiani.

The new anti-ballistic missile system has been named “Arman” which means aspiration in English while the low-altitude air defence system has been named “Azaraksh” which means lightning.

The newly unveiled systems will significantly boost Iran’s air defence capabilities once they are added to the country’s military

fleet, Irna said. The missiles used in the Arman system belong to the domestically-made Sayyad 3 class, which can simultaneously confront six targets at a distance ranging from 120km to 180km.

Azaraksh can simultaneously use radar and electrooptic systems to detect and intercept targets. In addition, the missiles used in the Azaraksh system are heat-seekers, meaning that they use infrared seeking systems.

Meanwhile, *The New York Times* in a report alleged Israel was behind a pair of attacks on major gas pipelines inside Iran this week, which disrupted the flow of gas to millions of people.

The US-based daily cited two Western officials and a military strategist affiliated with Iran’s Revolutionary Guards Corps. — ANI

METEOROLOGICAL SATELLITE LAUNCHED

ISRO achieves another milestone

SRIHARIKOTA: The Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) on Saturday conducted a successful launch of its meteorological satellite INSAT-3DS aboard GSLV F14 at 5:35 pm from the Sriharikota spaceport.

The satellite will study weather forecasts and natural disaster warnings.

In its 16th mission, the GSLV deployed the INSAT-3DS meteorological satellite into the Geosynchronous Transfer Orbit (GTO). Subsequent orbit-raising maneuvers will ensure that the satellite is positioned in a Geo-stationary Orbit.

The INSAT-3DS Satellite is a follow-on mission of Third Generation Meteorological Satellite from Geostationary Orbit.

The mission is fully funded by the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES).

It is designed for enhanced meteorological observations and monitoring of land and ocean sur-



faces for weather forecasting and disaster warning. The satellite will augment the Meteorological services along with the presently operational INSAT-3D and INSAT-3DR satellites. Indian Indus-

tries have significantly contributed to the making of the Satellite.

Various departments of the Ministry of Earth Sciences (MoES) such as the India Meteorology Department (IMD), Na-

tional Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasting (NCMR-WF), Indian Institute of Tropical Meteorology (IITM), National Institute of Ocean Technology (NIOT), Indian National Center for Ocean Information Services (INCOIS) and various other agencies and institutes will be using the INSAT-3DS Satellite data to provide improved weather forecasts and meteorological services.

The primary objectives of the mission are to monitor Earth’s surface, carry out oceanic observations and its environment in various spectral channels of meteorological importance -- to provide the vertical profile of various meteorological parameters of the Atmosphere.

Among others, it will provide the Data Collection and Data Dissemination capabilities from the Data Collection Platforms (DCPs), and to provide Satellite Aided Search and Rescue services. — ANI

CONSTITUTIONAL COUNCIL

Will Senegal’s election delay U-turn appease protesters?

DAKAR: Senegal’s Constitutional Council overturned the postponement of this month’s presidential election, creating a sense of uncertainty across the West African nation.

Senegalese President Macky Sall had announced the delay on February 3, just one day before the election campaign was scheduled to get underway.

But the council invalidated Sall’s decree to postpone the vote from February 25 to December 15.

It acknowledged that it was “impossible to organise the presidential election on the initially scheduled date” but invited “the competent authorities to hold it as soon as possible.”

The Constitutional Council’s decision has left many like Yousoupha Diaw, a member of the coalition backing anti-establishment candidate Bassirou Diomaye Faye, euphoric and determined.

“Now that the Constitutional Council has restored justice, we can only rejoice,” Diaw told DW. “Whatever date is chosen for the presidential election, we are ready. Our best weapon is our voter card that we all hold.”

President Macky Sall’s deci-



sion to postpone the vote caused significant public anger and led to deadly protests.

The postponement was seen by many as an effort by Sall to prolong his term beyond the two-limit mandate — a claim the president strongly refuted.

As Sall seeks to appease public opinion after the crisis, more than 130 opposition and civil society members in Senegal have been released from prison since Thurs-

day, according to Ministry of Justice figures sent to the AFP news agency, and around 90 more were due to be freed.

However, the Constitutional Council’s ruling and the release of prisoners have not completely stemmed the discontent.

Gagne Demba Gueye, a 32-year-old who had just been released from the Rebeuss prison in Dakar, said the protests would continue.

“They simply told us to get out.

We’re seen as bargaining chips — our release is a trade-off for the stability of the country,” he said.

“We are ready to resume the fight; we have never given up.”

Sall said that he respects the Constitutional Council’s decision and pledged to organise presidential elections “as soon as possible.”

“The president of the republic intends to fully implement the decision of the Constitutional Council,” the presidency said in a



statement. “To this end, the head of state will without delay carry out the consultations necessary to organize the presidential election as soon as possible.”

Nina Penda Faye, a journalist and civil society activist, highlighted that between the demonstrations and both national and international pressure, there was no shortage of people standing up to Sall and no indication that they would give up soon.

“Several personalities and members of civil society from different entities have only one objective, to have peaceful, free, and transpar-

ent elections, to see a Senegal of peace,” Faye said.

While opposition figures and civil society groups celebrate the Constitutional Council’s decision, the ruling coalition has expressed concerns about the lack of a firm election date, potentially prolonging the political limbo.

Lawmaker Mamadou Ndiaye urged for caution and advised against premature celebrations following the council’s decision.

Ndiaye highlighted that the responsibility of determining a new date for the presidential election lay with Sall himself. — DW

SPORTS

Five-time world champions Brazil survive Oman scare

Oman nearly pulled off the biggest upset in the 2024 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup in Dubai as it gave heavyweights Brazil a stern test in their opening Group D game on Friday

MUSCAT: Oman, coached by Talib Hilal, nearly pulled off a major upset on Friday as they began their campaign in the 2024 FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup at the Dubai Design District Stadium in the UAE on Friday.

Up against heavyweights and five-time world champions and world No.1-ranked Brazil, Oman put their best foot forward before going down 5-3 in Dubai.

Talib Hilal's men trooped out of the field with their heads high despite the defeat as Brazil just scraped through the victory to earn full points.

Oman have been clubbed with two world champions in the group as Portugal, two-time winners, are also in Group D.

It took Brazil's Edson Hulk double to down Oman. The stern test by Oman was ultimately not enough to get off to a winning start. Mauricinho, Catarino, and Rodrigo were the other scorers for Brazil while for Oman, goals came from Abdulrahman Al Fazari, Abdullah Al Sauti, and Khalid Al Orami.

Hulk flexed his muscle as Brazil overpowered the nagging challenge of Oman

The Asian underdogs silenced the pro-Seleção crowd with the first goal, and traded blows with their illustrious opponents for the first two periods.

Brazil took over in the third and Hulk's second of the game made sure of all three points.

Speaking after the match, Al Orami said: "We did very well against the No.1-ranked team in the world. Nothing is impossible. We're dreaming of the title, but we are taking it step by step. Now we will focus on Mexico and then Portugal. We will give it 100 percent in each game."



Brazil's Rodrigo said: "We're very happy. The first game at a World Cup is never easy, but we got what we wanted: three points. Now it's Portugal. It's the biggest fixture in the sport, the one everyone wants to see."

This is Oman team's fifth participation in the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup with the maiden participation in 2011. The team then

qualified for the 2015, 2019 and 2021. This is the third successive participation at the continental showpiece by Talib Hilal's team.

In the same group, Leo Martins turned Dubai Design District Stadium into his personal theatre as Portugal ran riot as they routed Mexico 8-2.

Martins scored five, while Jordan, Andre Lourenco, and Be Mar-



tins were the other scorers. For Mexico, goals came from Hector Acevedo and Ramon Maldonado. Martins was utterly unplayable. The Portugal No.11 was on the score-sheet after just 47 seconds and finished the game with five goals, a breathtaking elastic dribble making a cameo in between to the thrill of his adoring audience.

Martins has astonishingly



scored five goals in back-to-back appearances in the FIFA Beach Soccer World Cup. He registered a quintet in Portugal's 7-6 defeat by Uruguay in their last outing at Russia 2021. Leo has netted 20 goals in his last nine run-outs in the competition.

Martins' teammate Andre Lourenco said after the game, "Leo is amazing. He's absurdly talented.

Five goals in a World Cup, the first game, is incredible."

Mexico's Edgar Portilla said: "Portugal are one of the best teams in the world. We can take confidence from the last two periods. It was very competitive. Now we need to play like that from the start against Oman [on Sunday]."

Other results on Friday: Colombia 2 Japan 3, Senegal 4 Belarus 6.

FIA-JUNIOR WORLD RALLY CHAMPIONSHIP

Oman's Al Rawahi makes impressive start to FIA JWRC campaign in Rally Sweden

MUSCAT: Oman Rally Team's Abdullah Al Rawahi and his co-driver Ata Al-Hmoud overcame their lack of experience of winter rallying conditions and the difficulties of heavy snowfall to make an impressive start to their FIA Junior World Rally Championship (JWRC) campaign at Rally Sweden in Umeå, Sweden, on Saturday.

After Saturday morning's ninth of the event's 18 special stages at Vännäs, the crew were progressing well in their M-Sport Poland Ford Fiesta Rally3 on the opening round of the five-event JWRC. They recovered strongly from hitting a banking on SS7 on Friday evening and incurring time penalties that pushed them down to 16th position by setting the 12th quickest time.

Al Rawahi said: "It was tough and there were so many changes with the weather and the conditions. It was pretty new to me and a new challenge. We had a lot of moments and we lost so much time. The good thing was that we did all the stages until the last one (Friday) when we hit a bank and we broke the radiator. We had to stop. Otherwise, I was happy with the day."

Co-driver Al-Hmoud added: "We stopped five kilometres from the finish of the seventh stage when we hit a snowbank. It was a tough experience coming to a WRC and start-



ing with Sweden. This was tough and driving at night was also new to Abdullah and for me as well. Anyway, we hope to gain more experience over the weekend. The pace has been okay."

Al Rawahi started strongly on Thursday's shakedown stage and carded a couple of impressive runs on a section of track where he was able to adjust his driving style to pushing hard between snow banks

on studded tyres. Even before the event had begun in earnest, his Bolivian rival Bruno Bulacia succumbed to an accident. The South American was sidelined and the list of JWRC starters was reduced to 18.

After finishing the opening 5.16km sprint stage in Umeå on Thursday evening in 16th position, the real meat of the action began on Friday morning with the first

of two passes through the famous Bratby stage. Predictably, local driver Mikke Johansson used his local knowledge to full effect and posted the fastest time: Al Rawahi was 14th and moved up two places in the rankings.

Runs through the Noorby and Floda specials completed the morning's loop and Al Rawahi emerged unscathed from his first ever snow action in the World



Rally Championship and returned to the service park in Umeå in 14th position after posting the ninth quickest JWRC time in SS4. Germany's Fabio Schwarz led Johansson by just 0.6 seconds.

The three stages were repeated in the afternoon before competitors tackled the sprint stage in Umeå for a second time. Heavy snowfall hampered crews running at the front of the field through Bratby and made for horrific driving conditions on the already challenging stages. Al Rawahi continued his impressive form and the 10th quickest time saw the Omani climb to 13th in JWRC.

Al Rawahi was running strongly on the re-run of Noorby until he

stopped in the latter part of the stage after hitting a banking and was unable to continue on to the final sprint stage in Umeå for fear of risking damage to the Fiesta's engine after breaking the radiator. Johansson leads the JWRC category from Estonian Romet Jürgenson.

Further competition takes place in the Vännäs, Sarsjöleden and Bygdsiljum specials and a new stage at Umeå on Saturday afternoon.

Action then concludes on Sunday morning with two passes through the 25.50km Västervik stage and a second run through the 10.08km Umeå special that acts as the event's power stage finale.

US WHOLESALE INFLATION
Wholesale prices in the United States picked up in January, the latest sign that some inflation pressures in the economy remain elevated. The Labor Department reported Friday that its producer price index which tracks inflation before it reaches consumers rose 0.3% from December to January. > **B2**

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



NAMA WATER SERVICES
Nama Water Services recently accomplished a major feat in Wilayat of Al-Mudhaibi, Al-Sharqiyah North Governorate by completing the construction of a new water distribution network in record time and commencing operations ahead of schedule. > **B2**

Dividend announcements attract more investors on MSX

The past week witnessed an increase in the number of shares traded by 44 percent, exceeding 85 million compared to 59 million shares traded in the previous week.

MUSCAT: The dividends announced by public joint stock companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) during the week attracted more investors which pushed the main index and sectoral indices to record new gains. It also saw an increase in traded shares and transactions executed as well as a rise in value. The stock market saw gains of OMR89 million to OMR23.85 billion at the end of the week's trading session. The past few days of the week also witnessed more than 20 public joint-stock companies listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange announcing their recommendations for distributing profits. Most notably Oman Cable Industry Company announced a cash dividend of 85 percent, or 85 baisas per share, Shell Oman Marketing announced a dividend of 36 percent, Sahara Hospitality announced a 25 percent dividend, Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles announced a



20 percent dividend. Also, several companies have moved to distributing bonds convertible into shares, such as the Oman Arab Bank, National Bank of Oman (NBO) and Bank Nizwa, that are expected to distribute and pay dividends to its shareholders in the coming days after the boards of directors approve the financial results for the year ending December. The past week witnessed an increase in the number of shares traded by 44 percent, exceeding 85 million compared to 59 million shares traded in the previous week. The number of transactions executed also increased from 3,542 to 3,554 deals. The past week's trading value recorded a decline of 7 percent from OMR11.8 to about OMR11 million. This coincided with investors' interest in stocks with low market value such as Al Suwadi Energy, Al Anwar Investments, Sohar International Bank, and OQ Gas Networks. OQ Gas Networks topped the most traded companies in terms of trading value after witnessing trades worth OMR2.46 million,

representing 22.4 percent of the total trading value. Sohar International Bank came next with trades amounting to OMR1.95 million, Bank Muscat's perpetual bonds came next with trades valued at OMR1.14 million, Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles came next with trades valued at OMR998,000 and Al Anwar Investments reported trades worth OMR622,000. During the week, the prices of 27 securities rose, most notably Al Batinah Energy, whose shares rose by 40 percent and closed at 42 baisas, Al Suwadi Power shares rose by 31.4 percent and closed at 46 baisas, Al Anwar Ceramic Tiles, shares rose by about 18 percent and closed at 191 baisas. During the week, the prices of 27 securities declined, most notably Musandam Power shares, which fell by 9.2 percent and closed at 295 baisas, Oman Mills shares fell by 6.5 percent and closed at 460 baisas, and Dhofar Electricity Generation shares fell by 6.2 percent and closed at 45 baisas. The Oman National Engineering and Investment Company

Strong performance seen in weekly trading

Times News Service

Muscat: The Omani stock market exhibited a strong performance this week, with the main index closing up by 1.83 percent, rebounding significantly compared to the previous few weeks, according to an analyst. "This uplift was observed across all sectors, effectively reversing the decline witnessed in the previous four weeks," said Hani Abuagla, Senior Market Analyst at XTB. "Despite the ongoing volatile trading of the last three months, indicating some level of uncertainty, the market's outlook remains cautiously optimistic as the market remains above the lows recorded late last year," he added. Trading volumes saw a significant increase this week although the value traded remained unchanged. The services sector demonstrated the strongest performance in the market, recording a 2.10 percent increase. Ooredoo saw a 3.61 percent rise, marking its third consecutive week of gains, buoyed by the



announcement of its dividend. Al Suwadi Power and Al Batinah Power also continued their strong performance, with gains of 31.43 percent and 40 percent, respectively, continuously buoyed by optimism toward the last announcement of a successful refinancing of their commercial loans and anticipation of future dividend distributions. These factors helped both companies rebound from a prolonged decline, making them the top performers over the past two weeks. The financial sector also performed well, with a 1.95 percent increase after two weeks

of declines, led by Sohar International Bank, which saw a 0.91 percent gain and accounted for the majority of the sector's traded volume. Alanwar Investment also saw a notable increase of 2.68 percent. National Bank of Oman (NBO) recorded an 11 percent increase while Oman Arab Bank (OAB) rose 9 percent on thin volumes. The Industrial sector reported positive results, with a 1.51 percent improvement. Al Anwar Ceramic was among the top performers, with a 17.90 percent increase following the announcement of a 20 percent cash dividend, contributing to the highest trade volume in the sector. Voltamp Energy also experienced a significant uptick, with a 10 percent increase. "Regionally, other stock markets also had a strong week, as traders reacted to corporate earnings and dividend distribution announcements," said Hani Abuagla. "However, Geopolitical tensions remain a source of risks and could affect sentiment in addition to the fluctuating oil markets," he further added.

NOVEMBER 2023



Total electricity generation rises by 6.6% in Oman

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman's total electricity generation increased by 6.6 percent to reach 41,591.2 gigawatts per hour at the end of November 2023 compared to 39,030.5 gigawatts per hour during the same period in 2022. Statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that the governorates of North and South Al Batinah and Al Dhahirah recorded a total generation of 26,542 gigawatts per hour, while the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate recorded the highest increase in electricity generation by 96.9 percent, reaching 164.4 gigawatts per hour. Total electricity generation in Muscat Governorate increased by 55.2 percent, reaching 560.3 gigawatts per hour, and Dhofar Governorate saw electricity generation rise by 13.5 percent, reaching 4,362.1 gigawatts per hour. The total electricity generation

in the North and South Al Sharqiyah Governorates increased by 8.5 percent to reach 9,321.1 gigawatts per hour, while the total electricity generation in the Al Wusta Governorate decreased by 28.1 percent, reaching 187.4 gigawatts per hour and in the Musandam Governorate, the total electricity generation increased by 6.2 percent, recording 453.9 gigawatts per hour. Statistics indicated that the Sultanate of Oman's net electricity generation until the end of November 2023 increased by 6.8 percent to reach 40,344.6 gigawatts per hour. On the other hand, statistics showed that the total amount of water produced in the Sultanate of Oman increased by 1.8 percent to reach 478.182 million cubic metres by the end of November 2023, compared to 469.899 million cubic metres in the same period in 2022. - **ONA**

KEY PROJECTS

Samail Industrial City attracts 24 new projects, surpassing OMR155mn investment in 2023



Times News Service

MUSCAT: Samail Industrial City, which falls under the umbrella of the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), witnessed substantial progress in its performance indicators throughout 2023. The year saw the successful attraction and localisation of 24 new projects, bringing the total to 157 projects in Samail Industrial City and a total investment surpassing OMR155 million. The projects in the industrial city are spread over an area exceeding 2.2 million sqm, out of the total area of the industrial city, which exceeds 11 million sqm. Eng. Yasser bin Ibrahim Al Ajmi, Director General of Samail Industrial City, highlighted Madayn's ongoing efforts in implementing key projects within the industrial hub. Notable among these is the water connection project with Oman Water and Wastewater Services Company. Al Ajmi also emphasised the array of investment opportunities in the industrial city, including the management and operation of the medical fitness examination centre, aimed at delivering top-tier healthcare services to the work-



force in Samail Industrial City and the surrounding population. The prime location of the centre facilitates easy access, thanks to its proximity to the entrance gate and the highway. The centre covers an area of 1100.71 sqm and comprises various facilities, including laboratories, clinics, X-ray facilities and offices, among other facilities. Al Ajmi also informed of an investment opportunity to develop, operate and manage a residential city for the workforce on a 100,000 sqm area within Samail Industrial City. Additionally, Al Ajmi highlighted that Madayn has divided the industrial city into several sectors. Notably, the food sector currently

boasts an occupancy rate exceeding 17 per cent, while the logistics sector surpasses 34 per cent. The construction materials sector sees an occupancy rate of over 26 per cent, while the steel and wood sector shows remarkable demand with an occupancy rate exceeding 60 per cent. The plastic and paper sector registers a high occupancy rate of over 85 per cent, the marble sector stands at over 78 per cent, and the space dedicated to SMEs currently sees an occupancy rate exceeding 34 per cent. It is essential to highlight that significant investment opportunities are available in Samail Industrial City, each supported by preliminary feasibility studies. These opportunities encompass diverse sectors including dairy and juice production, date products manufacturing and packaging, break-fast cereal production, dolomite processing, water leakage prevention solutions, copper bars and sheets manufacturing, gypsum production, electrical conductors manufacturing, glossy ceramics production, HVAC equipment manufacturing, electrical switch manufacturing, marble product manufacturing, and prefabricated building production.

FOREIGN EXCHANGE



India's forex reserves decline \$5.2bn to come off 1-month high

MUMBAI: India's foreign exchange reserves declined by \$5.240 billion to \$617.230 billion in the week that ended on February 9, coming off a month high it hit the prior week, latest data released by the Reserve Bank of India showed. During the week that ended on February 9, India's foreign currency assets (FCA), the biggest component of the forex reserves, declined by \$4.807 billion to \$546.524 billion, the central bank's weekly statistical data showed. Gold reserves during the week declined by \$350 million to \$477.739 billion. In the calendar year 2023, the RBI added about \$58 billion to its foreign exchange kitty. In 2022, India's forex kitty slumped by \$71 billion cumulatively. Forex reserves or foreign exchange reserves (FX reserves), are assets that are held by a nation's central bank or monetary authority. It is generally held in reserve currencies, usually the US Dollar and, to a lesser degree, the Euro, Japanese Yen, and Pound Sterling. In October 2021, the country's foreign exchange reserves touched an all-time high of about \$645 billion. Much of the decline, though marginal on a cumulative basis, since then can be attributed to a rise in the cost of imported goods in 2022. - **ANI**

MARKET

Nama Water accomplishes major milestone in Al Mudhaibi

This OMR65 million project is a key part of Nama Water Services' strategic development plan and represents a significant step towards improved water security for the region

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Nama Water Services recently accomplished a major feat in Wilayat of Al-Mudhaibi, Al-Sharqiyah North Governorate by completing the construction of a new water distribution network in record time and commencing operations ahead of schedule.

This OMR65 million project is a key part of Nama Water Services' strategic development plan and represents a significant step towards improved water security for the region. Originally slated for completion in March 2024, the network became operational in November 2023, exceeding expectations and showcasing efficient project execution. Utilising



a design-build-finance model, the initiative aims to bring reliable water supply to tens of thousands of people in Al-Mudhaibi. Projections estimate it will benefit 130,000 residents by 2025, rising to 154,000 by 2040.

Speaking about the water distribution networks in Al-Mudhaibi, Eng. Abdullah bin Salim Al-Rasbi, Chief Project Officer at Nama Water Services highlighted that this project underscores company's strategic vision to bridge the gap between water resources and service delivery across Oman. Leveraging its proven strategies, Nama Water Services aims to achieve sustainable development, aligning perfectly with the key priorities outlined in Oman Vision 2040.

Nama Water Services has embarked on a multi-year strategic plan, launched in 2023 and stretching to 2027, with the ambitious goal of transforming its op-



erations and service delivery. This phased roadmap outlines several key objectives, all aimed at securing a brighter future for water management in Oman, and meeting the aspirations of Nama's customers," he added.

Eng. Al-Rasbi has further noted that "The project is carried out together with the main transmission pipeline stretching from Al-Sharqiyah South Governorate to different cities of Al-Sharqiyah North Governorate. It covers nearly 90% of the residential neighbourhoods, villages, and the sprawling population communities across Al-Mudhaibi, starting from the city towards the Al-Rawdha area, and connecting the villages of Samad Al-Shan, Al-Akh-dar, and Khadra Bani Dafa'a.

This 820-kilometre project, exceeding the planned 800 kilometres, ensures the sustainability of water services and caters to the growing urban population and ex-

panding industrial activity. Aligned with the extended water transmission line feeding both Al-Sharqiyah Governorates, this initiative represents a significant step forward. Utilising both wrought iron and polyethylene pipes, the total length extends to 880 kilometres, delivering water directly to homes, businesses, and industrial facilities.

It also entails the installation of water booster pumps and several emergency shutdown valves, connections, and fire hydrants. Over 14,000 household connections have been established, reaching various key areas, including (6,113) connections in the urban areas of Al-Mudhaibi along with (1,541) connections in Al-Rawdah and (2,862) connections in Al-Akhdar village. Connections made in Samad Al-Shan and Khadra Bani Dafa'a are totalled 2,113 and 1,128 respectively.

Nama Water Services has been



working diligently to execute several projects in Al-Sharqiyah North Governorate, namely the project of upgrading the water transmission line which feeds both Al-Sharqiyah Governorates and stretches from the new desalination plant in Asila, Jalan Bani Bu Ali to Al-Mudhaibi with a total length of 312 km and cost around OMR120 million. The projects also include the establishment of 17 tanks with a total capacity of 265,000 cubic metres besides 4 main pumping stations. Looking forward, Nama Water Services pursues to implementation of many projects in Al-Sharqiyah North Governorate, including the Al-Jarda - Mahla'h water transmission line with a total estimate for the first stage at OMR22 million, incorporating 1 main pumping station and 8 main collection tanks with a total capacity of 34,000 cubic meters. Besides the

establishment of the water distribution network for Wadi Bani Khalid which will cover 11 regions, the contract for the water networks in Wadi Indam, Al-Mudhaibi has been already awarded along with 4 other projects as part of the third phase of the future small-scale development projects in Ibra, Al-Qabil, Al-Mudhaibi, and Wadi Bani Khalid. This is in addition to the second phase of the future small-scale development projects, particularly the water distribution network in Ibra.

Importantly, the total cost of managing the water services sector in Al-Sharqiyah North Governorate is estimated at over OMR 143 million, including the existing and under-construction projects as well as small, medium, and large development projects and annual contracts for water tankers, aligned with the increased population covered by the governorate's water networks.

ACROSS CHINA

Entrepreneurial city shifts gears amid evolving economic landscape

JINAN: When discussing energy storage, Chi Tongsheng, a resident of east China's coastal city of Longkou, is so familiar with the emerging technical field that many might mistake him for an engineer.

What's even more surprising is that Chi, currently serving as the board chairman of Shandong Dejin New Energy Science and Technology Co., Ltd., used to run a property developer for roughly a decade before starting the current company about five years ago. "At that time, we foresaw a turning point in the real estate market, so we decided to shift to a new industry offering broader growth prospects," Chi said.



Due to its strong competitive edge in the niche market, the company has experienced rapid growth. Its energy storage cells and equipment have garnered

popularity not only among domestic clients but also in 55 overseas markets.

"Green electricity, energy conservation and emission reduction

are the future of the energy industry. As China's economy undergoes a green transformation, the industrial and commercial energy storage market presents huge potential for development," Chi said.

Chi's transition to a different field is not an isolated case in Longkou, a city renowned for its longstanding entrepreneurial culture. Longkou has been rated as the most economically developed county-level region in Shandong Province and stands out among China's 2,800-plus county-level regions, contributing to the vitality of the world's second-largest economy. -Xinhua

BANK OF KOREA

Money supply up for 7th month in December amid restrictive policy

SEOUL: South Korea's money supply rose for the seventh consecutive month in December amid tightening policy, central bank data showed Friday.

The country's M2, a key gauge of the money supply, stood at 3,925.4 trillion won (\$2.95 trillion) in December, up 0.8 percent from a month earlier, according to preliminary data from the Bank of Korea (BOK).

The M2 is a measure of the money supply that counts cash, demand deposits, and other easily convertible financial instruments, Yonhap reported.



The central bank has been implementing its restrictive mode, as it delivered seven consecutive hikes in borrowing costs from April 2022 to January 2023 to tame soaring inflation in Asia's fourth-largest economy. -BNA

WHOLESALE PRICES

US wholesale inflation accelerated in January in latest sign that prices picked up last month

WASHINGTON: Wholesale prices in the United States picked up in January, the latest sign that some inflation pressures in the economy remain elevated.

The Labor Department reported Friday that its producer price index which tracks inflation before it reaches consumers rose 0.3 per cent from December to January after having fallen -0.1 per cent from November to December. Measured year over year, producer prices rose by a mild 0.9 per cent in January.

Excluding volatile food and energy costs, "core" wholesale prices rose 0.5 per cent, the most since last July. Compared with a year ago, core prices climbed 2 per cent, up from 1.7 per cent in the previous month, the Associated Press (AP) reported.

Public frustration with inflation has become a central issue in President Joe Biden's re-election bid. Measures of inflation have plummeted from their heights and are nearing the Federal Reserve's target level. Yet many Americans remain exasperated that average prices are still about 19 per cent higher than they were when Biden took office.

Some of the January rise in producer prices was driven by measurement quirks. They include an increase in the cost of financial management services, which jumped 5.5 per cent just from December to January. In addition,



many companies impose price increases early in the calendar year, which often boosts overall inflation measures in January.

At the same time, though, the costs of hospital care, doctor visits and hotel stays also jumped last month, a sign that inflation in travel, health care and other service industries also remains elevated.

Friday's figures will likely underscore the Fed's caution about when to begin cutting its benchmark interest rate. Fed officials will likely want to monitor several more months of data to ensure that a downward trend in inflation will continue.

The wholesale figures follow a surprisingly hot report this week that showed that consumer prices eased less than expected last month, signalling that the pandemic-fuelled inflation surge is only gradually and fitfully coming under control.

Some of Friday's data is used to calculate the Fed's preferred price measure, which will be reported later this month. That gauge has been running well below the better-known consumer price index. In the second half of 2023, the Fed's favored measure, showed that prices rose at just a 2 per cent annual rate, matching its inflation target.

But after Friday's release of wholesale prices, economists forecast that when core prices in the Fed's preferred gauge are reported later this month, they will have jumped by as much as 0.4 per cent or 0.5 per cent, a pace much faster than would be consistent with the Fed's inflation target.

Fed officials have expressed optimism that inflation is headed lower, and in December they forecast that they would cut their benchmark rate three times this year. Last year, the Fed hiked its rate to a 22-year high of about 5.4 per cent to extend its concerted

drive to conquer high inflation. Its rate hikes, which were intended to cool borrowing and spending, have made it far more expensive to obtain mortgages, take out auto and business loans or use credit cards.

Should inflation return to the Fed's 2 per cent target, high borrowing rates would likely no longer be deemed necessary. Instead, the Fed would be expected to cut rates, which would make consumer and business loans more affordable.

Still, some officials remain cautious. Late Thursday, Raphael Bostic, president of the Federal Reserve Bank of Atlanta, said he was "not yet comfortable that inflation is inexorably declining to our 2 per cent objective."

But other Fed policymakers said they were still optimistic, even after the release of the hot consumer inflation report Tuesday. Austan Goolsbee, president of the Chicago Fed, said Wednesday that by assessing data over longer periods than just one month, "it's totally clear that inflation is coming down."

Some Wall Street traders and economists had expected the Fed to implement its first rate cut as soon as March. But two weeks ago, Powell made clear that a cut that month was unlikely and said the Fed needed "greater confidence" that inflation is sustainably returning to its 2 per cent target before it would start reducing rates. -BNA

oman
OASIS
BALANCED DRINKING WATER

HELLO
Winter

SEASON'S SPECIAL DEAL

50% OFF

HOT & COLD DISPENSER

PLUS 2 FULL BOTTLES

PLUS 30 REFILL COUPONS

20% OFF

WHITE TAP DISPENSER OR TAP DISPENSER OR MANUAL WATER PUMP OR CRADLE WITH TAP

PLUS 2 FULL BOTTLES

PLUS 15 REFILL COUPONS

Offer valid from 1st January to 29th February 2024.



800 71 222
9275 5522

C.R. No.: 1365452 | MM: 06/1194/2023



LIFESTYLE



Great Apes tease each other just like humans do: Study

Cognitive biologists and primatologists have observed playful teasing in four species of great apes.

Babies start teasing one another as early as eight months of age. Because language is not required for this activity, nonhuman animals may engage in similar playful teasing.

Ape teasing, like human joking, is provocative and persistent, incorporating elements of surprise and play. Because all four great ape species engaged in playful teasing, the elements of humour likely developed in the human lineage at least 13 million years ago.

Joking is a crucial aspect of human connection that requires social intelligence, the ability to anticipate future acts, and the ability to identify and appreciate violations of others' expectations.

Teasing has much in common with joking, and playful teasing may be seen as a cognitive precursor to joking.

The first forms of playful teasing in humans emerge even before babies say their first words, as early as eight months of age. The earliest forms of teasing are repetitive provocations often involving surprise. Infants tease their parents by playfully offering and

withdrawing objects, violating social rules (so-called provocative non-compliance), and disrupting others' activities.

In a study published in the Proceedings of the Royal Society B, scientists from the University of California Los Angeles, the Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior, Indiana University, and the University of California San Diego (Isabelle Laumer, Sasha Winkler, Federico Rossano, and Erica Cartmill) reported evidence of playful teasing in the four great ape species: orangutans, chimpanzees, bonobos and gorillas.

"Great apes are excellent candidates for playful teasing, as they are closely related to us, engage in social play, show laughter and display relatively sophisticated understandings of others' expectations," said Isabelle Laumer (UCLA/MPI-AB) a post-doctoral researcher and the first author of the study.

The team analyzed spontaneous social interactions that appeared to be playful, mildly harassing, or provocative. During these interactions, the researchers observed the teaser's actions, bodily movements, facial ex-

pressions, and how the targets of the teasing responded in turn.

They also assessed the teaser's intentionality by looking for evidence that the behaviour was directed at a specific target, that it persisted or intensified, and that the teaser waited for a response from the target.

The researchers found that orangutans, chimpanzees, bonobos and gorillas all engaged in intentionally provocative behaviour, frequently accompanied by characteristics of play. They identified 18 distinct teasing behaviours. Many of these behaviours appeared to be used to provoke a response, or at least to attract the target's attention.

"It was common for teasers to repeatedly wave or swing a body part or object in the middle of the target's field of vision, hit or poke them, stare closely at their face, disrupt their movements, pull on their hair or perform other behaviours that were extremely difficult for the target to ignore," explained UCLA and IU professor Erica Cartmill, senior author of the study.

Although playful teasing took many forms, the authors note that it differed from play in several ways.

THE ANIMALS ALSO RARELY USE PLAY SIGNALS LIKE THE PRIMATE 'PLAY FACE', WHICH IS SIMILAR TO WHAT WE WOULD CALL A SMILE, OR 'HOLD' GESTURES THAT SIGNAL THEIR INTENT TO PLAY.

"Playful teasing in great apes is one-sided, very much coming from the teaser often throughout the entire interaction and rarely reciprocated," explained Cartmill.

"The animals also rarely use play signals like the primate 'play face', which is similar to what we would call a smile, or 'hold' gestures that signal their intent to play."

Playful teasing mainly occurred when apes were relaxed, and shared similarities with behaviors in humans. "Similar to teasing in children,

ape playful teasing involves one-sided provocation, response waiting in which the teaser looks towards the target's face directly after a teasing action, repetition, and elements of surprise," Laumer explained.

The researchers noted that Jane Goodall and other field primatologists had mentioned similar behaviours happening in chimpanzees many years ago, but this new study was the first to systematically study playful teasing.

"From an evolutionary perspective, the presence of playful teasing in all four great apes and its similarities to playful teasing and joking in human infants suggests that playful teasing and its cognitive prerequisites may have been present in our last common ancestor, at least 13 million years ago," explained Laumer.

"We hope that our study will inspire other researchers to study playful teasing in more species to better understand the evolution of this multifaceted behaviour. We also hope that this study raises awareness of the similarities we share with our closest relatives and the importance of protecting these endangered animals." -ANI

SPORTS

Jaiswal hits century as India take control of Rajkot Test



India's bowlers fight back to bowl out England for 319 despite Ben Duckett's 153 in first innings on Saturday

RAJKOT: Opener Yashasvi Jaiswal continued his brilliant run of form with third Test century and Shubman Gill hit an unbeaten half-century to help India secure a 322-run lead against England on the second day of the third Test at Rajkot on Saturday. India ended the day at 196/2, with Shubman Gill (65*) and Kuldeep Yadav (3*) unbeaten.

England are in a dire position after a dramatic collapse on Saturday and spectacular Jaiswal, who retired hurt after scoring 104 off 133 balls. A breathtaking fightback on the second evening had seemingly handed England all the momentum when they resumed on 207-2 in response to India's 445.

But the tourists lost their last eight wickets for 95 runs to be bowled out for 319, an implosion that began when Joe Root's reverse scoop at the pace of Jasprit Bumrah was caught at second slip.

Jonny Bairstow was out fourth ball for a duck and Ben Duckett tamely patted a very wide delivery from Kuldeep Yadav to cover to fall for 153. Captain Ben Stokes made 41 but then became the first in a final slide of 5-29 after lunch as England conceded a first-innings deficit of 126.

Left-arm wrist-spinner Kuldeep conjured a beguiling spell and paceman Mohammed Siraj claimed 4-84 as India's bowlers put in a huge effort following the loss of Ravichandran Ashwin, who withdrew from the Test overnight because of a family emergency.

Jaiswal rammed home India's advantage with his second hundred in as many matches, adding an increasingly damaging 155 with Shubman Gill, who remains 65 not out. England's bowlers were taken apart by India's free scoring in the evening session before Jaiswal retired hurt with a back problem on 104.

Presented with their sizable and unexpected lead, Jaiswal and Gill roasted England in the burning sunshine, and already Stokes' men face pulling off the highest pursuit by a visiting team in this country.

Bar some handy bowling in the first Test in Hyderabad, Root is enduring a tough tour. In five innings he has not made more than 29 and on the first morning of this Test dropped a crucial slip catch off Rohit Sharma.

The reverse scoop has become his trademark under Stokes' captaincy, yet in the circumstances this was a grave error of judgement. Jaiswal took a sharp catch to give Jasprit Bumrah his ninth dismissal of Root in Test cricket.

England never recovered. Jaiswal followed up his brilliant double century in the second Test with a sublime century in Rajkot.

Skipper Rohit Sharma was lbw on review sweeping Root to give England their best moment of the day, but after that rising stars Jaiswal and Gill again demonstrated why they are the future of India's batting.

They had been careful up to a point when Anderson set six field-

ers on the leg side to Jaiswal. At that stage, the left-hander had 35 from 73 balls, but flicked a switch to hit a six and two fours in three consecutive deliveries. From then on, Jaiswal was unstoppable, taking 65 from his next 49 balls and bringing up his third Test hundred with a cut for four, celebrating with what is becoming a trademark outstretch of his arms.

Gill had been quiet, only to hit Root for a straight six and pull Wood for another. All of Jaiswal's swinging put his back out, so he gave way to Rajat Patidar, who somehow misused a Hartley long-hop to mid-wicket.

Ashwin pulls out India off-spinner R Ashwin has withdrawn from India's Test side in Rajkot, effective immediately, because of a family medical emergency.

"The BCCI extends its heartfelt support to the champion cricketer and his family," the Indian board said in a media release.

The BCCI's announcement came at 11pm IST, hours after the second day's play in Rajkot had ended, during which Ashwin had provided India their first wicket of the Test.

Ashwin's withdrawal could leave India with only ten players, with three days of play left in the Rajkot Test. Ordinarily, playing substitutes are only permitted for players ruled out by concussions or Covid-19.

With his wicket on the second day, Ashwin had reached a significant milestone, becoming the ninth bowler to 500 Test wickets.

Brief scores: India 445 & 196/2 (Yashasvi Jaiswal 104*, Shubman Gill 65*; Joe Root 1/70) vs England 319 (Ben Duckett 153, Ben Stokes 41; Mohammad Siraj 4/84). - Agencies

MBAPPE TO LEAVE FRENCH CLUB

PSG manager Enrique puts club 'above any individual'

PARIS: Manager Luis Enrique said "club and team are above any individual" after Kylian Mbappe told Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) he intends to leave at the end of the season, reported.

Mbappe's deal with the Ligue 1 champions is due to expire and he has been heavily linked to Real Madrid.

Speaking at a news conference, Luis Enrique said he had "no information".

"I don't raise it until the parties involved have given their opinion," he added.

"Kylian Mbappe hasn't said anything publicly, nor has anyone else at the club. So I'm the coach. When the parties speak, I'll give you my opinion, but we're continuing to work so that we can continue to be a better team every year."

Mbappe, 25, was involved in a major stand-off with PSG last summer, leading to the France captain being exiled and left out of his club's pre-season tour of Asia.

The two parties came to an agreement to ensure PSG would not lose out when Mbappe, who joined for £165.7m from Monaco in 2017, eventually left the Parc des Princes.

The forward has a one-year extension clause, so it is expected his



departure will involve either a sale with a transfer fee or financial sacrifices on the player's part.

Kylian Mbappe has scored 31 goals across all competitions this season.

At his pre-match news conference on Friday, Arsenal boss Mikel Arteta was asked whether his club would be interested in the Frenchman.

"When there is a player of that calibre, we always have to be in the conversation, but it looks a differ-

ent way," Arteta said.

PSG stood 11 points clear of second-placed Nice at the top of the French league heading into the latest round of games, and they will also play Nice in the quarter-finals of the domestic cup.

The Parisians beat Real Sociedad 2-0 in the first leg of their last-16 Champions League encounter on Wednesday, with Mbappe scoring the opener to take his overall tally for the season to 31 goals. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Salah scores on return as Reds extend lead at top

LONDON: Mohamed Salah scored his first goal for Liverpool since New Year's Day as they beat Brentford 4-1 to open up a five-point lead at the top of the Premier League on Saturday.

Darwin Nunez put Liverpool ahead with a superb chip before Alexis Mac Allister poked in a second at the Gtech Community Stadium.

Salah, back from an injury sustained on Egypt duty at the Africa Cup of Nations, got on the scoresheet with a crisp finish.

Ivan Toney pulled a goal back for Brentford, but Cody Gakpo added the gloss for Liverpool.

Manchester City and Arsenal will move back to within two points of Liverpool later on Saturday if they beat Chelsea and Burnley respectively. The only sour points for Liverpool manager Jurgen Klopp were more additions to a lengthening injury list.

Curtis Jones and Diogo Jota limped off before half-time, while Nunez was substituted at the interval.

Klopp praises Leverkusen boss Alonso

Earlier on Friday, Liverpool boss Jurgen Klopp said that Xabi Alonso is a "standout" of the new



generation of football managers.

Alonso has been heavily linked with the job at Anfield since Klopp, 56, announced he would be leaving the club at the end of the season. The 42-year-old's Bayer Leverkusen team are top of the German Bundesliga, five points clear of Bayern Munich who have won the past 11 titles.

"Xabi is doing an incredible job," said Klopp. Alonso's success in Germany, including their recent 3-0 win over title rivals Bay-

ern, has reportedly made him one of the top managerial targets for clubs across Europe.

"How quick his team is that well-tuned, for the time it's taken, he's put his proper stamp on it," said Klopp. "The next generation is already there and I would say Xabi is a standout in that department. [He is a] former world-class player, from a coaching family as well, which helps a little, he was like a coach already when he was playing." - Agencies

ASIAN CUP EXIT

South Korea sack coach Klinsmann after just 12 months in the role

SEOUL: Jurgen Klinsmann has was on Friday sacked as head coach of South Korea after just 12 months in the role following the country's Asian Cup semi-final defeat. The German, 59, was appointed in February last year and had a contract until the end of the 2026 World Cup.

South Korea lost to Jordan in the Asian Cup on 6 February, prolonging the country's 64-year wait for the title.

The Korea Football Association (KFA) criticised Klinsmann's leadership and said a change "is necessary".

Fans, politicians and the Korean media had called for Klinsmann

to be sacked after their semi-final exit in Qatar and there were also reports of in-fighting between top players during the tournament.

South Korea captain Son Heung-min reportedly injured his finger in a dispute with teammates during a team dinner before their shock loss to Jordan.

"Coach Klinsmann failed to demonstrate leadership that we expected from the national team coach, including game management, player management and work attitude, which elevate the competitiveness of the national team," said KFA President Chung Mong-gyu.

Following the loss to Jordan,



who are ranked 64 places below South Korea at 87th in the world, Klinsmann said he had no plans to resign.

However on Thursday, the

National Team Committee, an advisory body of the KFA, recommended the sacking of the former Tottenham and Bayern Munich forward, who won the World Cup as a player with West Germany in 1990.

"We've reached a consensus that Klinsmann cannot exercise his leadership as national team head coach for various reasons and that a change of leadership is necessary," said KFA technical director Hwangbo Kwan.

Klinsmann has been an unpopular figure with fans since taking over because of the lack of time he spent in South Korea, preferring instead to remain based in California.

In his first six months in the job, a Seoul newspaper calculated Klinsmann had spent just 67 days in the country, in contrast to past foreign coaches who had all been based in the capital city.

He led Germany to third place at the 2006 World Cup and the United States to the knockout stages of the 2014 tournament, but his previous role before South Korea was a 10-week spell at Bundesliga side Hertha BSC four years ago.

South Korea's star-studded side - which included Son, Wolves striker Hwang Hee-chan and Paris St-Germain's Lee Kang-in - were one of the favourites to lift the Asian Cup but they failed to show

any real creative spark during the tournament.

They only won one match in normal time and in the second round, they were 90 seconds from elimination before a 99th-minute equaliser against Saudi Arabia and then winning a penalty shootout.

In the quarter-final, they levelled against Australia in the 96th minute before Tottenham's Son scored a superb extra-time free-kick to book their last-four spot.

However, they did not register a single shot on target in the semi-final and were surprisingly outclassed by underdogs Jordan, who were beaten in the final by hosts Qatar. - Agencies

Changan CS95 7-seater family SUV redefines luxury and family driving experience with unparalleled features

This 2024 model, equipped with an AISIN 8 AT transmission, guarantees reliable quality, smooth shifting, and excellent fuel economy

MUSCAT: Changan CS95 4WD 7-seater is touted as the pinnacle of luxury and ideal for large families, the Changan CS95 4WD is transforming the driving experience in Oman.

This 2024 model, equipped with an AISIN 8 AT transmission, guarantees reliable quality, smooth shifting, and excellent fuel economy. Featuring a range of updates, the latest CS95 provides an improved driving experience that is bound to captivate. Merging luxury with family-oriented design, the new Changan CS95 is a perfect mix of sophistication and functionality, appealing to both discerning individuals and families.

A spokesperson for Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment (AGAE), said, “The Changan CS95 combines stylish design, advanced technology, and spacious comfort, making it a standout choice for those seeking a premium SUV experience. The model has received great response from auto enthusiasts since its launch early this year.”



Equipped with a high-quality AISIN transmission, a smart grille, and an array of advanced technologies including a 540-degree HD view, Carplay, Android Auto, an induction electric back door, and a panoramic skylight, this impressive vehicle offers unmatched comfort and spaciousness for an extraordinary driving experience.

Loaded with outstanding upgrades, such as an advanced 8-speed transmission and a notable 390 torque, exceeding its previous version by 30, the 2024 CS95 is designed to raise performance standards. This model also features a larger tyre size of M20, up from the former M19, providing enhanced stability and grip on the road.

A significant feature of the new CS95 model is its intelligent technology and ADAS (Advanced Driver Assistance Systems) features. This includes a range of advanced safety and assistance

systems such as Lane Departure Warning (LDW) and Lane Change Support (LCS) to help ensure safe and controlled driving. The Traffic Jam Assist (TJA) feature assists in navigating congested traffic situations. The CS95MCA2 also includes Pedestrian Warning with auxiliary braking, which helps detect and prevent potential collisions with pedestrians. Additionally, the Blind Spot Detection (BSD), Lane Change Assist (LCA), and Rear Collision Warning (RCW) systems provide enhanced awareness and protection during lane changes and rear-end collision scenarios. These intelligent technologies and ADAS features make the CS95 a reliable and safety-focused choice for drivers.

The CS95's intelligent technology includes a 540° HD transparent chassis that offers a video resolution of 1280x960, enabling 3D display, intelligent opening, and lane

departure warning features. This provides users with a clearer picture quality and enhanced functionality. When combined with an automobile recorder, it offers comprehensive coverage and monitoring capabilities for improved visibility and safety.

A full-bodied and modish SUV Changan CS95 offers impressive dimensions measuring 4949mm in length, 1930mm in width, and 1790mm in height. Under the hood, it is equipped with a powerful 2.0 T GDI engine, delivering a maximum power of 224hp. The CS95 2024 MY also boasts a substantial maximum torque of 390 Nm, ensuring exceptional performance on the road. Its smooth transmission is facilitated by an 8-speed automatic gearbox (8AT). With a wheelbase of 2810mm, this SUV provides ample interior space for comfort and practicality. It features 20-inch wheels with 255/50

R20 tyres, further enhancing its sturdy and confident stance. Additionally, the CS95 offers both 2WD and AWD driving modes, allowing drivers to adapt to different road conditions with ease.

The all-new Changan CS95 stands out with its latest generation Blue Core Engine, incorporating four key technical points. These include the utilization of double-cycle high-pressure direct injection AGILE combustion technology, low friction loss control technology, intelligent thermal management technology, and ultra-clean NVH (noise, vibration, and harshness) control technology. These advancements contribute to the CS95's exceptional performance, fuel efficiency, intelligent temperature regulation, and reduced noise levels, ensuring a smooth and comfortable driving experience.

The Changan CS95 features an intelligent grille that offers several benefits to enhance fuel economy and cold start performance. This active intake intelligent grille adjusts its state based on the external environment and car conditions. It ensures the engine remains in an efficient operating range for extended periods, optimizing fuel efficiency. Additionally, at high speeds, the grille intelligently closes to minimize air resistance, leading to improved fuel economy. Moreover, during cold starts, the intelligent grille closes to prevent cold air from entering the heat emission system, ensuring efficient heat management. Overall, the intelligent grille in the CS95 contributes to better fuel economy and improved performance in various driving conditions.

Showing off an impressive exterior design, the new CS95 features Changan's largest body size and 20-inch brand tyres that add

a sense of dignity. The updated family dot matrix grille enhances the overall appearance, creating a more concise and atmospheric styling. The revised front face shape appears fuller and more refreshing, aligning with the evolving design trends. Furthermore, the decoration design of the fog lamp area has been simplified, presenting a simple and tough aesthetic. The inclusion of arrow symbols adds a touch of dynamism, signifying the CS95's readiness for any adventure. Overall, the CS95's exterior design showcases a blend of sophistication, simplicity, and a strong presence on the road.

The through-taillight serves as a finishing touch, adding a touch of sophistication to the CS95's exterior design.

The model has a simple and sharp tail shape, complemented by the through-type taillight that resembles a magnificent red horizon. This design element conveys a visually striking and dynamic experience, enhancing the overall aesthetics of the vehicle.

Furthermore, the 2024 CS95 offers a comfortable space with a large-size panoramic skylight, providing a bright and spacious interior environment. With a skylight area of 1.14 square meters, it enhances visibility and provides a panoramic view of the sky, adding to the overall sense of openness and freedom inside the vehicle.

The CS95 boasts an oversized trunk space, where the third row can be completely flattened, creating a generous 465L of storage capacity to cater to long-distance travel needs. Moreover, folding down both the second and third rows creates a flat space exceeding 2000L, ensuring ample room to accommodate various storage requirements.

IMPRESSIVE FEATURES



Enjoy your routine journeys in stylish all-new Kia Seltos

MUSCAT: Kia's popular all-new Seltos SUV is making waves with its stylish design and impressive features and technology. The Seltos SUV is a perfect choice for those looking to make even the most routine journeys exciting.

The Seltos is designed with a long hood, a strong, character line on the front bumper, and sharp lines pressed into the bodywork. Adding to its eye-catching appeal is a diamond pattern radiator grille garnish, body colour outside mirror, side repeater lamp in outside mirror, electric folding mirrors, 2-tone colour bumper, body colour door handles, halogen lamps, daytime running lights, front and rear fog lamp, roof rack and alloy wheel.

The Seltos boldly takes you places with its power-packed 1.5-liter gasoline engine that dishes out 113 HP and which is

paired to a CVT transmission. To further elevate the driving experience, the Seltos is equipped with a Drive Mode Select system that lets drivers adapt the car to their preferred style or the road conditions. Drivers can choose from 'Normal', 'Eco' and 'Sport' mode. The Eco mode is tuned to maximize vehicle range by using fuel-saving measures, while Sport mode increases responses from the steering and electric motor to maximize the dynamic driving feel of the car. Normal mode provides a careful balance between the two.

The Seltos has an impressive interior equipped with a range of features to maximize convenience, connectivity and ease of use. They include power windows, driver's seat height adjuster, split folding rear seats, auto AC, rear AC vent, steering audio control, rear view

camera, 8" audio display and more.

Contributing to make every drive a delight are a range of technological features including a Smart Key with Button Start, Auto Cruise Control, Terrain Mode System (Snow, Mud, Sand) and more.

In terms of safety, the Seltos SUV impresses on all fronts. The features include engine immobiliser, driver and front passenger airbags, anti-lock braking system, electronic stability program, tyre pressure monitoring system, keyless entry system and rear parking system.

Reliable International Automotive (RIA), the distributor for Kia in Oman provides a rewarding ownership experience for customers. Excellent product attributes and unmatched facilities easily ensure their absolute satisfaction, every mile of the way.

⋮

20% Off

On Total Bill

⋮

Special for Circlee Subscribers

→

DOWNLOAD NOW

ROUND-UP

Joy Alukkas presents autobiography to British parliamentarians

The event, organised by the British South India Council of Commerce (BSICC), took place at Grimond hall in the UK Parliament, London and showcased Joy Alukkas's remarkable journey in the jewellery industry

LONDON: Visionary Indian entrepreneur and jewellery mogul, Joy Alukkas, recently presented his autobiography 'Spreading



Joy', to a distinguished gathering of Members of Parliament at the British Parliament. The event, organised by the British South India Council of Commerce (BSICC), took place at Grimond hall in the UK Parliament, London and showcased Joy Alukkas's remarkable journey in the jewellery industry.

Joy Alukkas, Chairman and Managing Director of the Joyalukkas Group, was warmly received by several MPs, including Martyn Day, Virendra Sharma and Stephen Timms, who recognised the significance of his visit in fostering economic and cultural exchange, between India and the UK. Baroness Uddin also graced the event,

representing the Bangladeshi community and adding to the diversity of attendees. The autobiography delves into Joy Alukkas's entrepreneurial journey, from humble beginnings in Kerala's 'gold town' to establishing a global presence with over 160 showrooms across 11 countries. Attendees were treated to real-life

stories, including his innovative marketing triumphs and commitment to philanthropy. Reflecting on the event, Joy Alukkas expressed gratitude for the warm reception and emphasised on the importance of fostering stronger ties between India and the UK. "It was an honour to share my story with Members of

Parliament, and to highlight the cultural and economic significance of our shared heritage." The event underscored the global acclaim and interest in Joy Alukkas's inspiring story, following a recent presentation of his autobiography in New Delhi to Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

PETROLEUM

Win big promotion with special prizes from Al Maha

MUSCAT: Al Maha Petroleum Products Marketing Company has launched its new petrol promotion from February 15 to April 1, to reward their loyal customers. The draw promises a chance to win a range of exciting prizes, including 5 grams of gold for 5 winners, 5 iPhone 15s for 5 winners, 50 OMR of free fuel for 20 winners, and one Jetour Dash-

ing SUV car as the grand prize for one lucky winner. Until April 1, customers can enter this promotion by informing and registering their phone number with the station's staff while filling petrol. The promotion does not include non-fuel or diesel purchases. Each OMR5 spent on petrol will double the chances of winning the raffle.

COLLABORATION



MCBS and Bank Nizwa sign MoU

MUSCAT: The Modern College of Business & Science (MCBS) and Bank Nizwa recently signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) aimed at fostering collaboration and innovation in the field of Islamic banking and finance. The signing ceremony, held on February 5th at the MCBS Campus in Bausher, marks a significant step forward in the partnership between the two organisations. The MoU outlines several key areas of cooperation, including collaborating on research initiatives and innovation projects in areas of mutual interest, organising joint visits, workshops, lectures, and conferences to promote knowledge sharing and best practices, designing student

internships programs, participating in advisory and executive councils to provide insights and expertise, collaborating on organizing and implementing community service events to contribute to the social welfare and development of the community. Commenting on the partnership, Dr. Moosa Al-Kindi, the Dean of the Modern College of Business and Studies, stated, "We are thrilled to partner with Bank Nizwa and we believe this collaboration will enable us to leverage our collective expertise and drive innovation in the industry, providing our students with greater access to practical on-the-job training as well as subject-matter expertise in the finance and banking industry."

SHARIA-COMPLIANT

ahli islamic opens its first dedicated centre for Al Shumookh customers

MUSCAT: Providing nothing but the best to its high-net-worth customers, ahli Islamic officially inaugurated a brand-new Al Shumookh center exclusively crafted to cater to its esteemed clientele under the patronage of Azzan Qasim Al Busaidi - Undersecretary of Tourism at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, in the presence of the Bank's officials. Strategically located at Shatti Al Qurum in Muscat, this state-of-the-art centre embodies ahli islamic's commitment to providing unparalleled banking services adhering to Sharia-compliant principles, offering a luxurious haven for its discerning patrons. Al Shumookh, ahli islamic's bespoke offering, presents a comprehensive banking solution tailored for those seeking an extraordinary financial experience. It offers a range of exclusive products and services to enhance the everyday banking experience for the bank's premium, private and wealth management clients. The meticulously designed Al Shumookh Center integrates cutting-edge technology with top-tier products and services, epitomizing a new era of



exclusive banking. On the occasion, Noora Sultan, AGM - Head of Retail Banking at ahliislamic, expressed, "Innovation fuels progress, and the culmination of our efforts at the new Al Shumookh Center reflects our dedication to serving customer's every need. Al Shumookh caters to financially astute, high-net-worth individuals, who seek prudent investment avenues. Our focus lies in providing tailored advice that safeguards and augments their

hard-earned wealth within a comfortable and discreet setting. This falls within our strategic plans to enhance our presence in the country with newer branch networks and to meet everyday banking needs of our growing customer base with relevant and timely products." ahli islamic's Al Shumookh offers a personalised relationship manager to address specific customer requirements. Exclusive branded chequebooks and debit/

credit cards, accompanied by discounts at select premium merchants, are among the privileges extended to Al Shumookh customers. Additionally, a 24/7 concierge service and complimentary chauffeur services further enhance the premium experience. The segment distinguishes itself by offering redeemable pearl points, along with a remarkable 1% cashback on credit card expenditures. Moreover, customers gain access to over 1,000 airport lounges worldwide up to 12 times annually, coupled with comprehensive multi-travel insurance coverage. Noora added, "Our commitment to providing tailored solutions remains unwavering. The Al Shumookh Center is a testament to our dedication in ensuring our premium clientele receive unparalleled privileges and services, setting new benchmarks in exclusive banking experiences." The inauguration of the Al Shumookh Center marks a significant milestone for ahli islamic in its quest to redefine Sharia-compliant superior banking services, further solidifying its position as a leader in the industry.

ACADEMICS

IS Muladha hosts graduation ceremony for Class XII

MUSCAT: Indian School Muladha organised graduation ceremony on February 11 to mark the passing out of class XII students. It was an evening filled with nostalgia and memories. The chief guest of the ceremony, Dr. Mahmoud Al Subhi, Director, Rustaq Hospital, Ministry of Health, Sultanate of Oman attended the occasion. The president, SMC members, principal, vice-principal, assistant vice principals, coordinators, heads of various departments, teachers and parents of Class XII students attended the function. The ceremony began with the ceremonial procession of the class XII students fully clad in their customary gowns. The chief guest was given a floral welcome by the



convener of School Management Committee M.T. Musthafa. The president of School Management Committee A Anilkumar welcomed the gathering. In the ceremony of transferring the light of knowledge to the graduands, the chief guest ignited the light and

passed it on to the teachers which was further transferred to the outgoing students. This was followed by the pronouncement of oath. Niharika Sharma of Science stream and Khasif Khan of Commerce stream reflected on their life as a student at Indian School Mulad-

ha. Students received graduation testamur and memento from the chief guest. The principal gave the convocation wisdom to the students wishing them success and advising them not to forget their Alma Mater, which has laid a strong foundation and also to bring laurels to the school and their family. Addressing the gathering, the chief guest mentioned that graduation is a new chapter in student's life. He advised the students to try out their best until they receive satisfaction and face failures boldly while pursuing their dreams. Anilkumar felicitated the chief guest by offering a memento. The ceremony concluded with the vote of thanks proposed by Vice Principal Ashick K.P.

mai alkaline

pH 9.1 to 9.5

Alkaline Ionized Drinking Water

OmanOasis OmanOasisOfficial OmanOasisWater

HYDRATE SMARTLY

- ✓ Ultra-hydrating
- ✓ Revitalizing
- ✓ Energizing
- ✓ Electrolytes

800 71 222 9275 5522

oman OASIS



COOLRAY

UNLEASH-YOUR ENERGY



**AUTONOMOUS
PARKING ASSISTANT**

**ADAPTIVE INTELLIGENT
CRUISE CONTROL**

540 DEGREE VIEW CAMERA

AND MORE...

**Book a Test Drive
TODAY!**



مركز تاول للسيارات ش.م.م
Towell Auto Centre LLC

Visit the showroom and view it to believe it.

• Al Hail • Wattayah • Barka • Sohar • Nizwa
• Sur • Salalah

Vehicles shown for illustrative purposes. Accessories shown not part of standard equipment. Specifications subject to change without notice. Conditions apply.

[geelyoman.com](https://www.geelyoman.com)

9444 0666

[f](#) [@](#) [/geelyoman](#)