

HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN SENDS CABLE OF CONGRATULATIONS TO PRESIDENT OF MEXICO

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of congratulations to President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador of the United States of Mexico on his country's Independence Day anniversary. In his cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere greetings and wishes of good health and happiness to the president and to his country's people for further progress and prosperity. -**ONA**



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HM THE SULTAN ISSUES ROYAL DECREE

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik on Thursday issued Royal Decree No. 63/2023 adding a member to the Supreme Judicial Council's structure. Article (1) adds the Secretary General of the Supreme Judicial Council to the Supreme Judicial Council's structure stipulated in Article (1) of Annex (1) on the Supreme Judicial Council attached to Royal Decree No. 35/2022. Article (2) cancels all that contradicts this decree or contravenes its provisions. Article (3) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced on its date of issue. - **ONA**



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PRIVATE VISIT

KSA Crown Prince concludes his visit to Oman



MUSCAT: HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman Al Saud, Crown Prince and Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) left Oman on Saturday following his private visit to the Sultanate during which he met with His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik.

During the meeting, His Majesty and HRH Prince Mohammed bin Salman reviewed the historic, firm, fraternal ties between the two countries.

They also reiterated their determination to move forward in promoting aspects of the existing bilateral cooperation between the two countries. - **ONA**



CUBAN PRESIDENT RECEIVES SAYYID BADR

On the sidelines of G77 and China Summit held in the Cuban capital of Havana, Dr. Miguel Díaz Canel, President of the Republic of Cuba, received Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister of Oman. **>A3**

OMAN FORMULATES ROADMAP TO FOSTER SUSTAINABLE FINANCING

CBO is encouraging financial institutions to develop policies that promote green financing

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) has formulated a preliminary roadmap aimed at fostering sustainable and green financing within the domestic financial system, a recent report revealed.

The CBO's Financial Stability Report (FSR) 2023 published recently said, "CBO is also actively encouraging financial institutions to develop policies that facilitate and promote green financing."

"Moreover, CBO is working on improving its analytical capabilities to better manage and deal with climate-related risks," the report added.

Climate change poses micro prudential and macroprudential risks for the financial system in the form of direct physical shocks and risk from transition to a low-carbon economy, the CBO report said.



"The transition risks and shocks emanating from climate change and the shift towards net-zero emissions are among the key emerging risks for financial stability."

As part of national climate risk mitigation efforts, the CBO has taken an active role in fulfilling its responsibilities. "It has advised

banks and financial leasing companies to enhance their risk management policies and practices in accordance with the international best practices on climate-related financial risks," the report added.

Moreover, the financial institutions have been encouraged to develop policies that facilitate and promote green financing.

The CBO in its latest FSR said that embracing new technology is indispensable for the financial sector.

With the increasing use of technology, the frequency of cyberattacks is also on the rise. After a surge in 2020, the number of cyber-attacks declined in 2021, but in 2022 they reached a new peak,

with reported cyber incidents showing a significant 46 percent increase. The financial sector is a prime target for cybercriminals due to the potential for large gains.

In 2022, globally the reported cyberattacks on financial institutions doubled compared to 2021. This marked the highest cyberattacks in recent years.

This renewed surge, especially targeting financial institutions, could negatively impact customer trust in digital financial services and the financial sector as a whole.

The CBO elaborated further that Oman has also not experienced any significant disruptions from cyber risks in recent times.

However, like any other jurisdiction, the Omani financial sector is vulnerable to such risks.

"Therefore, cybersecurity remains a top strategic priority for CBO. Despite the increased demands on payment and settlement systems (PSS) since the pandemic, Oman's PSS infrastructure has remained resilient and robust."

The CBO is actively monitoring developments in various emerging areas and has established task forces dedicated to studying Central Bank Digital Currencies (CBDCs) and other digital innovations.

This proactive approach allows the CBO to equip itself with the expertise required to navigate the evolving landscape of digital finance and stay prepared to take appropriate action when necessary.

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Oman's space sector to get a big boost



1 Oman's space sector will take a big step forward when the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) will host the inaugural Middle East Conference from January 8-10, 2024. **>A3**

WORLD

Libya floods death toll soars to 11,300

2 The death toll in Derna, a coastal city in Libya, has risen to 11,300 as search efforts continue in the wake of a catastrophic flood caused by the breaching of two dams after heavy rains. **>A6**

MARKET

Annual inflation rate in Oman reaches 0.82%

3 The annual inflation rate in Oman reached 0.82 percent at the end of August 2023, according to data from the monthly survey of consumer prices issued by the NCSI. **>B1**



SUDDEN CARDIAC DEATH

'SCD is a traumatic event and has a large impact on society'

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The news of a 38-year-old Indian expat working in Oman collapsing midair during his flight to the southern Indian city of Chennai from Muscat on September 10 has sent shockwaves across the society.

The sad incident comes days after a Pakistani amateur cricketer collapsed on the ground in Muscat.

The incidents of young people and sportspersons succumbing all of a sudden also sent a stark reminder about another incident of a badminton player dying while playing on indoor courts earlier this year.

Physical activity is considered a faithful reflection of the state of



health and quality of life of a society, which is why public opinion finds it hard to understand how an apparently healthy young person can die while showing great

vitality in his or her usual athletic activities.

Cases of sudden death fill the headlines of the press, especially when they occur in well-trained

athletes or with healthy recreational athletes or young people.

Unfortunate incidents

These unfortunate incidents are not uncommon and in recent times, we have heard of many incidents where a person has collapsed all of a sudden and passed away.

It has happened on sports grounds, offices, roads, in air and at homes. And the common term for such an incident is Sudden Cardiac Death (SCD).

Renowned Muscat-based cardiologist Dr K P Raman told *Times of Oman*: "In middle aged and elderly people, the commonest cause of SCD is atherosclerosis which means cholesterol (fat) blocks in

heart arteries.

"It is also known as Coronary Artery Disease (CAD). But in young adults (age 35 or less) the cause is often genetic and congenital heart diseases.

"A disease called Hypertrophic Cardiomyopathy (HCM) in which there is a genetic defect, resulting in disorganised overgrowth of heart muscles, seems to be the commonest cause of SCD in young people with reports of 36 out of 100 deaths. The other causes are heart arteries arising from abnormal locations in the aorta and taking abnormal courses (17 out of 100 deaths). Only about 4 out of 100 deaths are due to abnormal electrical generation and propagation." **>A3**

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Oman’s space sector to get a boost with international forum

Sultanate of Oman partners with Euroconsult to launch Middle East Space Conference

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman’s space sector will take a big step forward when the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) will host the inaugural Middle East Conference from January 8-10, 2024.

The conference aims to promote the space sector in the Middle East and Oman’s role as a strategic gateway for attracting investments in space applications and technologies into the region.

Organised by Euroconsult, the French-based space advisory firm, the conference is expected to focus on all key issues for the development of the space sector in the Middle East including space strategies, space sector’s financing, market trends and opportunities across the space industry, satellite communications, Earth observation and more.

Running alongside conference activities will be an exhibition dedicated to local and global companies specialising specifically in space technologies and sciences, with the aim of attracting investment, establishing new business partnerships through networking,



and raising awareness in technological developments occurring throughout the sector.

The conference is expected to welcome leading space executives from government agencies and private sector companies around the world.

The conference will be delivered in collaboration with leading global space and satellite strategy consulting and market intelligence firm Euroconsult, leveraging their proven expertise and reputation for delivering informative and executive satellite events for C-level executives since 1997.

The Middle East Space Conference will continue Euroconsult’s established method of securing top level speakers from across the satellite and space sectors, including government agencies, private companies and investors, to share knowledge with the event participants. More than 350 experts are expected to attend the event in Oman from across the Middle East and around the globe.

Dr. Ali bin Amur Al Shidhani, Undersecretary for Communica-

tions and Information Technology at MTCIT, said, “By organising this event, the ministry aims to achieve many goals, the most prominent of which is strengthening the position of the Sultanate in the sector and placing it on the global and regional space map due to the country’s competitive advantages and elements that would add value to the space industry.

“This conference aims to raise awareness among the international space community about the regional space sector. It is a unique platform for all partners from government and the industry to communicate directly and establish areas for collaboration.”

During the event in Paris, Euroconsult’s CEO Pacome Révilion said, “We are delighted to be working with the Sultanate of Oman to organise and deliver the first Middle East Space Conference. The region is a vibrant hub of space activity and investment, with huge potential for growth. We’re looking forward to helping to highlight Oman’s role as a gate-

way for space activity across the Middle East and promoting the region’s current and future space activity to a global audience.”

At the beginning of this year, the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology outlined its space policy alongside an executive programme for the sector that seeks to stimulate space activity locally, whilst ensuring its prominence on the global space map by helping to attract new services and applications into the Middle East region.

The conference to be held January will take place exactly one year after the Ministry stated its policy objectives and will act as a key platform for the Oman Space Programme to inform the international community on the range of space activities planned in Oman and the wider Middle East region.

Euroconsult was established in 1983 and has provided strategic decision-making assistance to over 1,200 clients across 60 countries to date, including ESA, NASA, CNEX, and JAXA.

BILATERAL RELATIONS



Cuban President receives Sayyid Badr in Havana

HAVANA: On the sidelines of G77 and China Summit held in the Cuban capital of Havana, Dr. Miguel Díaz Canel, President of the Republic of Cuba received Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister of Oman.

Sayyid Badr conveyed greetings and wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to the president and for his country’s people further progress and prosperity.

The Cuban president asked Sayyid Badr bin Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister to convey his greetings and wishes of good health and happiness to His Majesty the Sultan and for the Omani people further progress and prosperity.

The president also valued the Sultanate’s participation in the activities of the G77 and China Summit. – **ONA**

NCSI DATA



Over 530,000kg of honey produced in Sultanate of Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman’s total production of honey by the end of 2022 amounted to about 533,701 kilograms, compared to 947,841 kilograms by the end of 2021, according to statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The Governorates of North and South Al Sharqiyah topped the production quantities with 147,088 kilograms, followed by the Governorates of North and South Al Batinah with 131,269

kilograms, then the Governorate of Al Dakhiliyah with 126,470 kilograms.

These governorates account for 75.8 percent of the total production of the Sultanate of Oman.

Honey production in Oman has been receiving growing attention through scientific research and marketing.

The total number of bee units in production farms, research stations, agricultural development centres and nurseries in the Sultanate of Oman has reached six units, in addition to two units for bee research stations.

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Pact signed for a new luxury hotel in Duqm

Valor Hospitality has been appointed by Ezz Asass International to operate the 85-key Four Points by Sheraton branded property located in Duqm, Oman

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Valor Hospitality Middle East, a leading global full-service hotel management company has signed an agreement with owning company Ezz Asass International to manage the Four Points by Sheraton branded property.

This agreement also marks the second collaboration between Valor Hospitality Middle East and Marriott International in Oman.

Scheduled to open in 2024, the 85-room hotel is in the city of Duqm, on the southern coast of Oman. The hotel is strategically located within the Special Economic Zone of Duqm (Sezad), and



within minutes from the Sezad headquarters and opposite the Police Training Centre.

With recent projects announced in Duqm, the hotel will offer a convenient choice for corporate travellers and a slowly growing leisure segment are being drawn by stunning beaches.

The Four Points by Sheraton Duqm is anticipated to reflect the brand's promise of 'travel reinvented', providing everything that matters most to today's travellers seeking balance on the road.

A timeless style coupled with comfort and genuine service allows guests to kick back and relax.

The hotel will feature guest rooms with abundant daylight, an airy atrium lobby, two dining venues, indoor pool and gym, meeting rooms and private car parking space.

"Since announcing our first property in Oman last year, we are so pleased to grow our presence with a second Four Points by Sheraton, in Duqm this time", said Julien Bergue, Co-founder and Managing Partner, Valor Hospitality Middle East.

Trusted and reliable

"We are fortunate to have a trusted and reliable businesses owner in Ezz Asass International. We're naturally excited to partner with Marriott once again. With 300+ keys confirmed in Oman we hope to establish a base here in the coming months" Bergue added.

Hamad Abdullah Al Harthy, Chairman of Ezz Asass International, said, "We are so pleased to bring two trusted names to our hotel project in Duqm. With a globally established and innova-

tive company, Valor Hospitality, and hotel giant Marriott International, a company that requires no further introduction, we are confident that the addition of this property to the hospitality landscape in Duqm will not only offer great options for corporate travellers but also greatly support and contribute to the tourism vision of Oman".

"We are excited to expand our footprint in Oman and strengthen our relationship with Valor Hospitality Middle East and Ezz Asass" said Saahil Lalit, Vice President, Development - UAE and Oman, Marriott International. "We are confident that with its blend of stylish comfort and genuine service at good value, the hotel will meet the rising demand for high-caliber lodging in the market," he further added.

FROM SEPTEMBER 23 TO OCTOBER 8



Oman's delegation arrives at Olympic Village in Chinese city of Hangzhou

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The administrative delegation of the Sultanate of Oman arrived in the Chinese city of Hangzhou.

The delegation will be participating in the 19th Asian Games that will be held from September 23 to October 8.

They will be completing the administrative procedures and requirements necessary for representatives of the national teams participating in the tournament to enter the Olympic Village.

As many as 12,000 athletes from 45 countries will participate in the Asian Games, competing in 40 games, distributed in 5 integrated Olympic villages for various sporting events.

Salem bin Mohammed Al-Busaidi, Director of the Sultanate of Oman's delegation, said: "Since our arrival at the Asian Games Village, several meetings have been held with the organising body to ensure its readiness to receive the official, administrative and sports delegation, and all necessary arrangements have been completed."

"China has benefited from postponing the tournament from last year 2022 due to coronavirus pandemic and the measures taken at the time, and therefore all the fa-

cilities — starting from the sports village, stadiums and sub-villages — are ready. They were used and for sporting events that were held in last year at the local level and proved their readiness, knowing that Chinese President Xi Jinping himself inspected the sports facilities. This is an indication of the interest of the Chinese government and its leadership in hosting the Asian Games," he added.

The Sultanate of Oman is participating in this tournament in seven sports: athletics, weightlifting, swimming, shooting, sailing, beach volleyball, and hockey.

On the other hand, the Asian Games Village, which was established by the committee to host visitors from all Asian countries, was opened on Saturday.

The village, designed in an innovative, sustainable style, is located in the north of the city of Qianjiang.

The village accommodates 20,000 people and includes 37 residential buildings and 2,696 rooms for delegations of countries participating in the Asian Games.

The village provides transportation services to the train station, the airport, and venues for games and competitions, and is equipped with all the services that athletes and delegations need.

MINISTRY OF LABOUR

909 job vacancies announced

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Labour announced 909 job vacancies under employment contracts and financial grades in various public units. Applying for the job vacancies will be open for a duration of two weeks from the announcement. The jobs are distributed for holders of various degrees, including 871 for bachelor's degree holders and above, 13 for Post General Education Diploma (Post GED) holders and 25 vacancies for holders of GED and below. — **ONA**





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Libya floods death toll climbs to 11,300

A looming concern is the potential outbreak of cholera, which could pose a significant threat to survivors. Reports have already emerged of several children falling ill



TRIPOLI: The death toll in Derna, a coastal city in Libya, has risen to 11,300 as search efforts continue in the wake of a catastrophic flood caused by the breaching of two dams after heavy rains, Al Jazeera reported citing The Libyan Red Crescent.

Another 10,100 individuals are listed as missing in the Mediterranean city, said Marie el-Drese, the secretary-general of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) in Libya.

The previous death toll estimate from health authorities for Derna was 5,500. About 170 additional individuals were killed by the storm elsewhere in the nation.

The figure could reach 20,000, according to Derna's mayor, Abdel-Moneim al-Ghaithi, given how many neighbourhoods were affected.

On Sunday night, flooding in Derna carried away entire families, exposing vulnerabilities in the oil-rich nation, which has been embroiled in strife ever since a 2011 uprising that deposed long-reigning autocrat Muammar

Gaddafi.

One injured victim described how he and his mother were swept away during the late-night experience before they both managed to crawl into an empty building downstream. "Within seconds the water level suddenly rose," he recalled.

"The water was rising with us until we got to the fourth floor," the unidentified man said from his hospital bed, in testimony published by the Benghazi Medical Center.

"We could hear screams. From the window, I saw cars and bodies being carried away by the water. It lasted an hour or an hour and a half – but for us, it felt like a year."

More than 3,000 deaths were reported in Derna, according to Interior Ministry spokesman Tariq al-Kharaz.

"The catastrophe is massive and as a result, access to many areas is not possible. Many areas suffered total damage. Many dead bodies are still under the debris, others washed away into the sea," al-Kharaz told Al Jazeera.

Aid groups called for increased global support in the wake of devastat

ating floods in eastern Libya.

"The humanitarian situation in Libya is nothing short of catastrophic," said Bashir Omar, spokesperson for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) in Libya.

"The needs far exceed the capabilities of all international organizations operating in Libya and the local authorities. Consequently, international support is imperative to overcome this catastrophe."

Water-borne diseases could spread easily

Rescue groups also said the possibility of finding any more survivors seemed bleak, as they warned that the spread of disease could exacerbate the humanitarian crisis.

A looming concern is the potential outbreak of cholera, which could pose a significant threat to survivors. Reports have already emerged of several children falling ill.

The Health Ministry of the Tripoli-based government of Libya has indicated that the rapid spread of this deadly bacteria is a significant risk due to groundwater contamination resulting from the presence of corpses, decaying animal carcasses, waste, and chemicals.

"We strongly advise people to avoid approaching the wells in Derna," cautioned Libyan Health Minister Ibrahim Al-Arabi, referring to the city most severely impacted by the storm.

"Thousands of people don't have anywhere to sleep and don't have food," said Salah Aboulgasem, the deputy director of partner development from the Islamic Relief organisation. In conditions like this, diseases can quickly spread as water systems are contaminated. The city smells like death. Almost everyone has lost someone they know."

UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Martin Griffiths stressed that the top priorities for Libya are "shelter, food, key primary medical care because of the worry of cholera, particularly in Libya the worry of lack of clean water."

The floods were caused by a powerful storm, which overwhelmed two dams, sending a wall of water several metres high through the eastern city of Derna, destroying entire neighbourhoods and sweeping people out to sea. -ANI

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78TH SESSION

Vice President of China to attend UN General Assembly session

BEIJING: Chinese Vice President Han Zheng will represent China at the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, China's Ministry of Foreign Affairs spokesperson Mao Ning announced on Friday, suggesting that the country's most senior diplomat, Wang Yi, will not attend.

In a statement, Mao Ning said, "Vice President Han Zheng will attend the General Debate of the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly from September 18 to 23."

She said that Han Zheng will attend the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals Summit, the Climate Ambition Summit and the high-level meeting on Global Development Initiative (GDI) Cooperation Outcomes hosted by China. Mao Ning said that he will also have a bilateral meeting with UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres.

Mao Ning said, "On the margins of the General Debate, Vice President Han will attend the UN SDG Summit, the Climate Ambition Summit and the high-level meeting on Global Development

Initiative (GDI) Cooperation Outcomes hosted by China.

He will also have bilateral meetings with the UN Secretary-General, and leaders of relevant countries."

Addressing a press briefing on Friday, Mao Ning noted that the world has entered a new period of disorder and transformation with increasing instability, uncertainties, unpredictable factors and rising global challenges. She called the General Debate of the 78th session of the UNGA "an important opportunity" for the international community to build up political consensus, enhance solidarity and coordination and jointly respond to challenges. -ANI

BREAKING WITH HISTORY

Georgetown University in Qatar holds conference on Iraq for a future without war and conflict

DOHA: Bridging global and regional perspectives, Georgetown University in Qatar has concluded its timely conference to mark the 2003 invasion of Iraq with reflections on the prospects of shaping a better future for the country, its society, and its youth.

"The Invasion of Iraq: Regional Reflections" conference was convened by Dr. Safwan Masri, Dean of GU-Q, in collaboration with the Center for International and Regional Studies (CIRS) at GU-Q. Conceived as a platform for diverse voices and community engagement on shared global challenges, the conference encouraged collective and individual perspectives on lessons learned over the past two decades.

Current and former Iraqi ministers, officials, and government advisors, senior diplomats, journalists, authors, and academics from the region, joined international experts in sharing first-hand experience and knowledge, spanning historical retrospectives and analyses of Iraq's progress and the complex challenges ahead.

Former president of Iraq, H.E. Dr. Barham Salih, highlighted the Iraqi people's aspirations for stronger leadership, a strong state, and an accountable government: "We should acknowledge that we have very serious problems in the country – corruption, bad governance, sectarianism. I'm not diminishing those. But...Iraqis want to live in peace and enjoy the resources of the country. They genuinely want to integrate into the region," he said, recalling "...young people came out on the street in 2019 chanting 'Nurid Watan' ('We want a homeland'), and it was the most elegant statement about the dynamics of a society that wants to see a country reformed and that offers them opportunities."

Discussions over the three days created a sense of shared responsibility to usher in positive changes that will offer the Iraqi people, especially the new generation, a better future. Highlighting the significance of GU-Q leading such a dialogue, Dean Safwan said: "As we approach the university's twentieth anniversary, Georgetown University in Qatar is reflecting on where we've been, where we are, and where we want to go. Our eyes are focused on the next 20 years. We are embarking on an ambitious strategy to become the preeminent global campus in the region. We are investing in and expanding our academic offerings, and strengthening and growing our faculty. We are creating and innovating, and engaging with our communities locally, regionally, and globally. This weekend's event offers a preview of what is to come."

Linking discussions on the upheavals and Iraq's democratic transition within the past 20 years with the nation's future, the conference deepened understanding of deeply interconnected national, regional, and global themes.

Speakers discussed the need for economic and infrastructure development, given the country's growing population and high youth unemployment. The role of youth activism, civil society, social mobilisation, and the media, led into debates on inclusive governance solutions, climate change, and natural resource management, as well as durable solutions to land degradation and water scarcity.

On the regional front, in-depth panels delved into Iraq's evolving relations with its immediate neighbors, the Arab Spring, and commonalities in the economic

and governance challenges facing countries across the Middle East.

Beyond regional issues, the transnational challenges posed by the emergence of IS, and the emerging global order, garnered attention. The conference explored the nature of Iraq's future relationship with the US, how the invasion reshaped global diplomatic relations, and its profound impact on democracy in the US, including the ability of the US to exert moral authority.

GU-Q brought to the fore its strong academic leadership, and the university's strong connections in the region attracted eminent experts and partners from within Georgetown's wider network. Faculty members spoke on critical topics, while GU-Q students presented their research on youth and activism in Iraq.

"In keeping with the intent of the Hiwaraat, the conference has brought together a variety of perspectives, and not always complementary views on difficult and challenging topics. We have heard from scholars and practitioners and had lots of forthright engagement from the audience. These conversations are not always easy, but they are necessary. Under Hiwaraat we hope to continue providing the space for these sorts of discussions on important regional and global affairs," said Zahra Babar, Associate Director for Research at CIRS.

Full story @ timesofoman.com/world

NORTHEASTERN UNIVERSITY

US varsity to award degree to Indian student posthumously

SEATTLE: The Northeastern University will award Jaanhavi Kandula – the Indian-origin student who was killed after being struck by a Seattle police patrol vehicle – her degree posthumously.

The announcement was made by Chancellor of the University, Kenneth W Henderson who affirmed hope that the ongoing investigations will bring a measure of justice and accountability.

Months after her demise, the shocking incident gained widespread attention when a recording from a body-worn camera surfaced, exposing two union leaders from the Seattle Police Department callously joking about her

tragic death.

"The university plans to award Jaanhavi her degree posthumously and present it to her family," the university stated on its Facebook page.

Jaanhavi hailed from Andhra Pradesh. She was pursuing a master's degree from the Northeastern University campus in South Lake Union and was set to graduate in December this year.

The Northeastern University added that the friends and loved ones of Jaanhavi are enduring the "additional pain" of new developments related to this tragedy. It also called the remarks by the Seattle police officer "callous and insensitive".

"We also recognize that our Indian student community—across all Northeastern campuses—has been especially impacted by this tragedy and its aftermath. We stand in solidarity with you and have every expectation that the ongoing investigations will bring a measure of justice and accountability," the statement read.

The university remembered the time when the Seattle campus community joined together in a vigil of remembrance and solidarity, after the incident earlier this year.

It further stated that it will be convening campus gatherings to allow our community to join together in harmony next week. -ANI

FIGHT AGAINST CARTELS

Mexico extradites drug lord El Chapo's son to US

WASHINGTON, DC: Mexican drug lord Joaquin 'El Chapo' Guzman's son Ovidio Guzman Lopez has been extradited to the United States, according to the US Department of Justice.

US Attorney General Merrick Garland praised the United States' and Mexican law enforcement and military service members for their fight against the cartels.

"The fight against the cartels has involved incredible courage by United States law enforcement and Mexican law enforcement and military servicemembers, many of whom have given their lives in the pursuit of justice," he said.

He further said, "I am grateful to them and to the Department's prosecutors for their work and their sacrifice. I am also grateful to our Mexican government counterparts for this extradition. The Justice Department will continue to hold accountable those responsible for fueling the opioid epidemic that has devastated too

many communities across the country." Northern District of Illinois Assistant US Attorney Joseph D Fitzpatrick said Guzman was flown to Chicago and landed Friday afternoon, CNN reported.

Guzman was arrested by Mexican authorities in January this year following a dramatic operation in the northern state of Sinaloa that led to 29 deaths and has been in custody since then.

Previously, Guzman was arrested in October 2019, CNN reported. However, he was released after the orders of Mexican Presi-

dent Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador to avoid bloodshed and subsequently went into hiding until his arrest in 2023.

His extradition comes after the release of El Chapo's wife Emma Coronel Aispuro from a US prison on Wednesday.

She had served nearly two years for drug trafficking and money laundering charges, according to CNN report.

The US State Department believes that Guzman and his brother, Joaquin Guzman-Lopez, "inherited a great deal of the narcotics proceeds" after the death of another brother, Edgar Guzman-Lopez.

In 2015, Guzman's father, "El Chapo," escaped from Altiplano prison through a tunnel that featured a motorcycle on tracks, CNN reported.

He was later captured and convicted in the US on 10 counts, including engaging in a continuing criminal enterprise, drug trafficking and firearms charges. -ANI

ANOMALOUS PHENOMENA

‘No evidence’ of UFO having extraterrestrial origins: NASA

WASHINGTON, DC: A NASA panel, formed to study ‘unidentified anomalous phenomena’ more widely known as UFOs, said on Thursday that it has found no evidence that any of the reported objects were extra-terrestrial in origin, *The Washington Post* reported.

Notably, these remarks come days after 1000-year-old fossils of alien corpses were displayed in the Mexico Congress.

“It is increasingly clear that the majority of UAP observations can be attributed to known phenomena or occurrences,” NASA’s 16-member expert panel wrote in its report.

However, the panel also concluded that the ability to study UAPs is hampered by “poor data collection and a lack of uniform



standards”, which must be remedied if research is to proceed on a credible basis.

“The top takeaway of the study is that there’s a lot more to learn,” NASA Administrator Bill Nelson said in public remarks at the agency’s headquarters in Washington.

While there was no evidence that the objects were not of this Earth, Nelson said that he is keeping an open mind and following science toward a potential conclusion and that he personally believes that intelligent life exists elsewhere in the vastness of the universe, *The Washington Post* reported.

While the panel’s report was short on findings, it represents NASA’s first steps into serious UAP research.

David Spergel, the chair of NASA’s UAP independent study team, said that the experts did not come up entirely empty-handed, and most events they studied could

be identified as “planes, balloons, drones, weather phenomena and instrument features,” *The Washington Post* reported.

However, NASA’s efforts to bring scientific rigour to a historically undisciplined field are unlikely to quell speculation that the US government is hiding information about the existence of extraterrestrial life. Notably, a former US intelligence analyst, David Grusch recently alleged in congressional testimony that for decades the government has run a classified programme that retrieves alien spacecraft and even bodies.

In another major development, in Mexico City this week, a self-described “ufologist” displayed for lawmakers what he claimed were two alien corpses discovered in

Peru in 2017, alleged to be about 1,000 years old.

Referring to the alleged display of ‘alien corpses’ in Mexico’s Congress, Spergel said that anyone who claims to have discovered evidence of extraterrestrial life “ought to provide samples to the scientific community for analysis”.

“There’s a lot of folklore out there,” Nelson said. “That’s why we entered the stage...We, NASA, are trying to shift it from sensationalizing to science,” *The Post* quoted him as saying.

Meanwhile, the US Defence Department is also spearheading a government-wide effort to analyse UAP sightings. After an examination of more than 800 sightings based on information collected over nearly three decades, the de-

partment has reported that only 2 to 5 per cent could be described as “anomalous,” or unexplained. Its work is separate from NASA’s and includes additional classified information.

NASA announced on Thursday afternoon that Mark McInerney had been put in charge of UAP research for the agency. He had been NASA’s liaison to the Defence Department covering UAP activities.

The NASA panel has recommended the body to “play a prominent role” in the broader government effort to understand UAPs, using “existing and planned Earth-observing assets to probe the local environmental conditions associated with UAP that are initially detected by other means.” -ANI

Russian Soyuz spacecraft docks at space station

Cosmonauts Oleg Kononenko and Nikolai Chub and US NASA astronaut Loral O’Hara lifted off on Friday onboard the Soyuz MS-24 spacecraft



MOSCOW : Two Russian cosmonauts and an astronaut from the United States have docked with the International Space Station (ISS) after taking off from Baikonur Cosmodrome in Kazakhstan amid raging tensions between Moscow and Washington over the invasion of Ukraine, Al Jazeera reported.

Russia’s Roscosmos space agency said cosmonauts Oleg Kononenko and Nikolai Chub and US NASA astronaut Loral O’Hara lifted off on Friday onboard the Soyuz MS-24 spacecraft.

The crew docked at the ISS three hours later, at 18:53 GMT, the Russian space agency said.

The trio will join the crew of three Russians, two Americans and one Japanese, along with a representative of the European Space Agency at the orbiting station.

The ISS remains a rare venue for cooperation between the US and Russia, whose ties broke down after Moscow unleashed its offensive in Ukraine last year, as per Al Jazeera.

Russia’s Kononenko alluded

to the strained geopolitical tensions during a pre-flight press conference on Thursday, saying that “unlike on earth” cosmonauts and astronauts took care of each other in space, according to Al Jazeera.

He said: “We hear each other there, and we understand each other, and we are very sensitive to our relationships. We always take care of each other.”

The US’s O’Hara praised the station’s “legacy” and said it had been bringing the countries together.

“The arrival of three new crew members to the existing seven people already on board for Expedition 69 temporarily increases the station’s population to ten,” NASA said after the Soyuz docked with the ISS.

Kononenko, 59, and Chub, 39, are scheduled to spend a year on the ISS, while O’Hara, 40, is to spend six months on board. It was the first mission to space for O’Hara and Chub.

Kononenko, the mission com-

mander, is on his fifth trip to the orbiting space station. By the end of his yearlong stay, Kononenko will set a new record for the longest time in space, more than a thousand days.

Chub said that travelling to space was his “childhood dream” and he had dedicated “all his life” to reaching that goal.

Friday’s launch was the first by Russia since last month’s loss of Russia’s Luna-25 module, which crashed on the Moon’s surface after an incident during pre-landing manoeuvres, in a huge embarrassment for Moscow, as per Al Jazeera.

The Luna-25 mission was meant to mark Russia’s return to independent Moon exploration in the face of financial troubles and corruption scandals, and its growing isolation from the West amid its war on Ukraine.

Moscow last landed a probe on the Moon in 1976, before shifting away from lunar exploration in favour of missions to Venus and building the Mir space station. -ANI

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TRIBUTE

South Africa holds state funeral for Zulu leader

JOHANNESBURG: Thousands of mourners gathered in eastern South Africa on Saturday for the state funeral of Mangosuthu Buthelezi, a Zulu leader.

Buthelezi, a veteran South African politician, Zulu prince and controversial figure during the apartheid liberation struggle, died last week aged 95.

Mourners attended a stadium in the town of Ulundi wearing traditional Zulu outfits made of leopard and other animal skins.

They sang and danced ahead of the service. The eulogy was set to be delivered by President Cyril Ramaphosa. His predecessor, Jacob Zuma, was also in attendance.

South African media reported that two giraffes and six impalas had been slaughtered as part of the ritual preparations.

Buthelezi was a traditional Zulu prince who founded the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) in 1975.

Since the 1970s, he had served

as premier of the nominally independent homeland of KwaZulu — a political creation of the apartheid government that was used to deprive Black South Africans of their rights elsewhere in the country.

Buthelezi was dogged by allegations of being an ally of the apartheid government, which he furiously denied.

In the 1980s and 1990s, Buthelezi’s Zulu nationalist movement became entangled in a bloody conflict with the African National Congress, led by Nelson Mandela.

Some 20,000 people died in the fighting and hundreds of thousands fled their homes.

The two movements put aside their differences when Buthelezi agreed to run in South Africa’s first multi-racial elections in 1994.

He went on to serve two terms as minister of home affairs in the post-apartheid government ushered in by Mandela. -aw

Sultanate of Oman Ministry of Health

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tenders: -

Tender Ref	Description	Last date for Collection of tenders Document:	Bid Submission Closing Date on/ Before 10:00 am Wednesday	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
3422/2023/ MOH/NIZH-7	For loading and unloading work for Nizwa Hospital	26/SEP/2023	22/OCT/2023	Specialized Companies registered with the General Secretariat of the Tender Board	R.O 25.000 Per set

Tenders should be submitted on line on <https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>.

Ministry is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

For any Clarification, you may contact via Telephone: 24402200 , Email id etenderhd@ita.gov.om

SPORTS

Keen tussle on cards as India take on Sri Lanka for Asia Cup crown

Rohit Sharma's Men in Blue face underdogs and hosts Sri Lanka in Sunday's clash, a crucial momentum-builder heading into the ODI World Cup next month

COLOMBO: The finalists, India and Sri Lanka, have 13 Asian titles between them, and both will be aiming for another crown on Sunday when they meet in the 2023 Asia Cup final as they try to take the momentum ahead of next month's ICC ODI World Cup.

Bangladesh ended India's unbeaten run in the 50-over tournament after edging them out by six runs in Friday's last Super Four match. Shubman Gill hit 121 but his knock went in vain after India faltered in their chase of 266 in Colombo, where Sunday's final will also be held.

"I don't think it has broken our momentum," Gill told reporters after the narrow defeat.

"We have played good cricket. Sometimes it happens on these wickets. I was set and should have finished off the game."

Gill said clinching India's eighth Asia Cup title would give them "confidence" ahead of the World Cup starting back home on October 5.

India began with a washed-out match in Pallekele against Pakistan, whose fast bowlers rattled their top order and bowled them out for 266 in the only innings possible due to rain.



Big guns Virat Kohli and returning batsman KL Rahul hit back with centuries in their next outing against Babar Azam's team to

rack up 356-2 and crush Pakistan by 228 runs. India then prevented a gutsy Sri Lankan chase to book their place in the final, but Gill said their opponents were still a threat.

"We will have to pull up our socks and be at our 100 percent to beat them," he said.

Hosts without key players

Sri Lanka who won the previous edition of the Asia Cup played in the T20 format, came in as underdogs and snuck into the Super Fours with a dramatic win over Afghanistan.

They soon got into their groove on home soil and, despite going down to India, edged out Pakistan in a knockout match for their 11th Asia Cup final. "We came without our key players, but still we man-

aged to make the finals," skipper Dasun Shanaka said.

Injuries sidelined Dushmantha Chameera and Wanindu Hasaranga, but others stood up at crucial junctures. Kusal Mendis and Charith Asalanka hit match-winning knocks to take the team over the line in a rain-shortened match and push a much-favoured Pakistan out of the tournament.

Up-and-coming fast bowler Matheesha Pathirana and left-arm spinner Dunith Wellalage have impressed and led the tournament's bowling chart with 11 and 10 wickets respectively. Wellalage rattled India's batting with five wickets, including Kohli and Rohit's prized scalps in their Super Four match.

Twice before in the Asia Cup Sri Lanka has lost to India in the Su-

per Four stage only to beat them in the finals, in 2004 and 2008.

Theekshana out of final

Sri Lanka spinner Maheesh Theekshana has been ruled out of the final against India because of a hamstring injury, but he will "definitely be ready" for the World Cup starting next month. Theekshana injured himself in Sri Lanka's last-ball win against Pakistan.

While captain Dasun Shanaka said Theekshana had a grade three injury, the chair of SLC's medical committee said the bowler did not have a big tear and could have even been risked for the final on Sunday had a World Cup not been around the corner.

The Sri Lanka selectors have, meanwhile, added Sahan Arach-

chige into the squad in place of Theekshana, who will return to the high performance centre to commence rehabilitation work.

With 31 wickets in ODIs, Theekshana is Sri Lanka's most successful bowler in 2023.

Sundar called as back-up

India have called up spin bowling all-rounder Washington Sundar as a back-up for all-rounder Axar Patel ahead of the title clash against Sri Lanka.

During India's final Super Four Asia Cup clash against Bangladesh, Axar received a blow to his hand while batting.

However, the team management has not taken a final call regarding Axar's status for the final yet. - Agencies

PAKISTAN PACER'S SHOULDER INJURY

Shah likely to miss entire World Cup

LAHORE: Pakistan fast bowler Naseem Shah is likely to miss the entire World Cup after scans revealed an injury to his right shoulder that is worse than was initially suspected, according to an *ESPNcricinfo* report on Saturday.

The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) is understood to be seeking a second opinion, but scans from tests in Dubai appear to show the injury could rule him out for the rest of year.

Should secondary results back up the initial ones, Naseem could be looking at a long layoff. His participation in the Test series in Australia at the turn of the year is in doubt, and he could also miss the next Pakistan Super League in 2024.

Naseem walked off in the middle of the 46th over during Pakistan's second game against India at the Asia Cup last week on the reserve day organised for that game, and was ruled out of the tournament soon after.

The PCB had, ironically, pushed for that reserve day for the game against India, as a hard-won concession after the games weren't moved to Hambantota, which was expected to be drier.

It was on that reserve day that Naseem sustained the injury to a muscle just below his bowling



shoulder, one that *ESPNcricinfo* understands is not a recurrence of any previous shoulder injuries.

Naseem's absence from the World Cup, as well as the subsequent series in Australia, will come as a huge blow for Pakistan.

Over the past year, Naseem has gone from a red-ball specialist to an all-format bowler for

Pakistan, and on current form is the best of Pakistan's much-vaunted triumvirate of Naseem, Shaheen Shah Afridi and Haris Rauf.

The PCB is expected to make an official decision once it has results from his secondary scans in a few days. He was replaced at the Asia Cup by Zaman Khan, while Mohammad Hasnain, another possible replacement,

is currently also injured.

Naseem has had injury issues in these early stages of his career. A back injury he sustained one year into his international career, when he was 17, kept him out of cricket for 14 months. Six weeks after his return, he was sidelined for a month with a shoulder injury he suffered on his debut in the County Championship with Gloucestershire.

In the 18 months since, his workload has increased significantly. While he was only a red-ball player at the time, Naseem has become a crucial bowler for Pakistan across all formats. He is their most potent bowler since making his ODI debut, with 32 wickets in 14 matches while averaging just under 17.

But that workload, especially with someone as young as Naseem, has built up quite steeply. Since July 2022, only eight fast bowlers have bowled more international deliveries than Naseem's 2246, none of them nearly as young as Naseem. Afridi and Haris Rauf combined have only bowled 2732 balls. In addition, Naseem has also been in demand on the T20 circuit, recently coming off the LPL. On Friday he was included in the SA20 auction shortlist, a tournament he is now almost certain to miss.

SKIPPER SHAKIB SPEAKS

'Bangladesh will be a dangerous side at World Cup'



COLOMBO: Bangladesh skipper Shakib Al Hasan feels that the Tigers will be a "dangerous side" for the upcoming ODI World Cup after they ended their Asia Cup campaign with a remarkable six-run victory over India at the R Premadasa Stadium on Friday.

India walked in as the only team who managed to remain unbeaten throughout the competition. Shubman Gill's 121 and Axar Patel's valiant 42 almost took the entire game away from Bangladesh.

But the Tigers dug deep to clinch an exceptional victory and end their tournament on a high note.

Shakib played a crucial hand in Bangladesh's victory and after the match, he sent a strong message to other teams, "I think we will be a dangerous side in the World Cup."

He further went on to reflect on his performance and other players who played a crucial role in keeping the momentum in their favour.

"Yes, we gave the guys who haven't played much a chance. After the last couple of games here,

we thought spinners would do well. Today, I went early and had time to spend on the crease.

"It was a challenging wicket. It was seaming a bit and it got easier when the ball got older. (On Mahedi Hasan) It wasn't an easy time to bowl, he came to bowl and got us the breakthrough. He also bowled five overs at the end which is not easy for a spinner. Also, Tanzim bowled well at the start and took two wickets. We have got a very good team. A lot of players injured and some going in and out, that didn't help us," Shakib said.

Coming to the match, Gill hit 121 off 133 while Axar Patel scored 42 off 34 deliveries for India. For Bangladesh, Mustafizur Rahman bagged three while Tanzim Hasan Sakib scalped 2 wickets.

Shakib Al Hasan and Towhid Hridoy scored remarkable half-centuries, while the Bangladesh pacers demonstrated their mettle with great precision in their deliveries to successfully defend the total of 265. - ANI

NEW ZEALAND ALL-ROUNDER

NZ's Southee fractures thumb bone during Lord's ODI

LONDON: Tim Southee will fly home to New Zealand with his World Cup involvement in doubt, after scans revealed he had dislocated and fractured a bone in his right thumb while dropping a catch during the fourth ODI against England on Friday.

The all-rounder suffered the injury trying to take a catch off Joe Root (on 8 at the time) while fielding at a wide first slip off the last delivery of the 14th over at Lord's, bowled by Ben Lister. He signalled his discomfort immedi-

ately before being escorted off the field by a member of the touring medical team.

After leaving the ground for a scan, he did not play any further part in New Zealand's 100-run loss - Trent Boult replaced him as a substitute fielder, while he didn't come out to bat in the latter stages of the innings.

With just 20 days before New Zealand begin their World Cup campaign, against England in Ahmedabad in the opening game of the tournament, New Zealand

will hope the further assessment can allow Southee to keep his place in the 15-man squad for what will be his fourth ODI World Cup.

"It's not ideal for Timmy," Tom Latham, New Zealand's captain, said. "He's a massive leader amongst the group and obviously he'll be assessed over the coming days when we get back home to see how bad it is, but we do have a bit of time leading into those first couple of games, so we'll know more over the next couple of days," he added.



INVESTMENT PARTNERSHIP

Ithea Group's company 'Innotech' signed an investment partnership with Saudi company 'Forming Future'. Forming Future will join the investment round in Innotech Company to develop 3D printing technology in the real estate field. >B2

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MIRAI HYDROGEN VEHICLES



Saud Bahwan Automotive and Oman Shell signed a contract for the purchase of 16 Toyota Mirai Hydrogen vehicles recently. This milestone is part of Oman Shell's '6th Gift to the Nation' initiative - a Green Hydrogen for Mobility project. > B2

Annual inflation rate in Oman reaches 0.82%

The inflation rate was driven by an increase in most of the main groups that make up the consumer price index, led by the group of foodstuffs and non-alcoholic beverages, which rose by 2.9 percent



MUSCAT: The annual inflation rate in the Sultanate of Oman reached 0.82 percent at the end of August 2023, according to data from the monthly survey of consumer prices issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). The inflation rate was driven by an increase in most of the main groups that make up the consumer price index, led by the group of foodstuffs and non-alcoholic beverages, which rose by 2.9 percent. The increase was due to an increase in the prices of most of the components of the group, led by fish and seafood, by 11.65 percent, and milk, cheese, and eggs, by 8.87 percent. percent, vegetables by 5.5 percent, oils and fats by 4.92 per-

cent, other foodstuffs by 4.07 percent, sugar, jam, honey, and sweets by 3.49 percent, bread and cereals by 1.82 percent, non-alcoholic beverages by 0.93 percent, and fruits by 0.4 percent, while meat prices decreased by 1.64 percent. The prices of furniture, fixtures, household equipment, and regular home maintenance rose by 2.63 percent, miscellaneous goods and services by 2.61 percent, restaurants and hotels by 2.46 percent, tobacco by 2.36 percent, culture and entertainment by 1.41 percent, health by 0.63 percent, education by 0.05 percent, and a group of

Clothing and shoes rose by 0.35 percent, and housing, water, electricity, gas and other fuels rose by 0.03 percent. While the prices of the transportation group decreased by 1.54 percent and communications by 0.2 percent. The inflation rate rose by 0.28 percent compared to the previous month, as a result of an increase in food and non-alcoholic beverages groups by 1.11 percent, restaurants and hotels by 0.15 percent, furniture, fixtures, household equipment, and regular home maintenance by 0.08 percent, culture and entertainment by 0.04 percent, and clothing and

shoes by 0.01 percent. In exchange for a decrease in transportation group prices by 0.05 percent. Dhofar Governorate recorded the highest inflation rate among the governorates at 1.01 percent, compared to the lowest inflation rate in Buraimi Governorate at 0.4 percent. Muscat Governorate recorded an increase in inflation of 1 percent, while North Al Batinah Governorate recorded 0.93 percent, Al Dakhiliyah 0.73 percent, Al Dhahirah 0.6 percent, and the Governorates of North Al Sharqiyah and South Al Sharqiyah. By 0.47 percent. -ONA

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

Omani stocks rebound but remain exposed to downside

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Omani stock market was able to recover to a certain extent this week after a significant fall during the previous week, according to an analyst. "However, the main index could remain exposed to another round of price corrections as it failed to return to the levels seen during July and August, a period during which it traded horizontally although with some volatility," Daniel Takieddine, CEO Mena BDSwiss, said. "The market's rebound could be faced with resistance at the bottom end of its previous trading range and could move toward the lows of the year," he added. The Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) 30 recorded a positive performance of 0.77 percent this week supported by the financial and services sectors which recorded 0.85 percent and 0.82 percent increases respectively. However, the industry sector continued to decline with a 0.51 percent loss over the week, extending more than two months of negative performances. "Overall, the market benefited from an improvement in the value



traded during the week compared to the previous week although trading volumes declined slightly over the same period," Daniel Takieddine said. Within the financial sector, gains were recorded by banks mostly with Ahli Bank leading with the strongest performance while other segments were recording losses. Banks also dominated trading volumes with Bank Muscat, Ahli Bank, Sohar International Bank, and Ahli Bank recording the highest volumes this week. Banks could continue to see strong performances if loan growth remains at strong levels in particular while interest rates are

elevated and stable. In this regard, traders' attention should be focused on the Federal Reserve's meeting and its president's speech in the coming days for hints about the evolution of its monetary policy. "While the Federal Reserve is widely expected to maintain its rates unchanged, some doubts remain regarding another rate hike this year which could affect the Omani economy and the stock market to a certain extent if it materialises," Daniel Takieddine said. US economic data releases have consistently been stronger than expected and could affect the Federal Reserve's stance. At the same time, the developments in oil markets have been positive for the Omani economy and stock market and could continue to drive sentiment to the upside, Daniel Takieddine said. Crude prices could extend their climb as supply level concerns dominate as Saudi and Russian production cuts could continue to limit available volumes. Stronger Chinese economic data could also help drive prices up as new economic measures prop up activity and demand for oil.

MSX rises by 35 points in weekly trading

MUSCAT: Shares listed on the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX) rose last week by 35 points and closed at 4,725 points. Benefiting from the rise in banking and telecommunications stocks and a number of other stocks included in the index sample. Local investment funds and institutions tended to buy to absorb the surplus selling by individual investors. Trading data issued by the Muscat Stock Exchange showed that purchases by local investment institutions accounted for more than 79 percent of the total trading value, compared to sales of 62 percent of the total trading value, while Omani individual investors tended to purchase more than 79 percent of the total trading value. To sell, with the aim of providing liquidity to subscribe



to shares of OQ Gas Networks, which is expected to be offered for public subscription during the next few weeks, individual investors reduced their purchases to 10.3 percent of the total trading value, compared to sales of 23.2 percent. The movements of local investment institutions spread an atmosphere of optimism in last week's trading, despite the fluctuation in stock movement. The stock market witnessed

an increase in the prices of 20 securities, compared to only three securities whose prices had increased in the previous week, and the number of losing securities decreased to 29 securities, compared to 50 securities whose prices had declined in the previous week. The market capitalisation of the MSX rose at the end of last week to OMR23.74 billion recording weekly gains of OMR68.1 million. -ONA

UN SURVEY

Survey underlines need for inclusive policies, greater international cooperation to ease trade

GENEVA: A new UN survey underlines the need for inclusive policies and greater international cooperation to ease trade for the benefit of all. Despite geopolitical tensions and supply chain disruptions, countries continue to improve the trading environment by simplifying and digitalising trade processes. According to the UN's fifth global survey on digital and sustainable trade facilitation, an average of 68.6 percent - up by 6 percent since 2021 - of the general and digital trade facilitation measures outlined in the landmark Trade Facilitation Agreement of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) have been implemented by countries worldwide.

The survey analyses trade facilitation progress across 161 countries worldwide, as outlined in the 'Digital and sustainable trade facilitation: Global report 2023' launched on September 15. It covers some 60 trade facilitation measures grouped under 11 categories. These include transparency, formalities, institutional arrangement and cooperation, transit facilitation, cross-border paperless trade, trade facilitation for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), agricultural trade facilitation, women in trade facilitation, trade finance and trade facilitation in times of crisis. The survey shows that developed economies have imple-

mented the most trade facilitation measures, leading the global pack with an overall rate of 85.3 percent. In comparison, 54 out of 90, or 60 percent of developing countries with a GDP per capita below \$10,000 have achieved implementation rates of over 50 percent. The average implementation rates for least developed countries, landlocked developing countries and small island developing states are similar, ranging between 53 percent and 61 percent - significantly below the global average. This is in part due to persisting challenges related to weaker digital infrastructure and a lack of adequate legal framework to support cross-border data and docu-

ments exchanges. The results reaffirm the need to step up technical assistance and capacity-building efforts to help these vulnerable economies bridge the existing implementation gap in trade facilitation. On the different categories of measures, countries scored highest in efforts to enhance transparency, with an implementation rate of nearly 80 percent. With digitalisation on the rise, paperless trade has improved the most over the past two years, averaging globally at 68.8 percent. Globally, SMEs on average have implemented 43.33 percent of trade facilitation measures. The average rate for agricultural entities is about 64 percent. -WAM

CURRENCY RATE

Dollar down after data but set for ninth straight weekly climb

NEW YORK: The US dollar was lower on Friday, after data showed a dip in consumer sentiment, but the greenback was still poised for a ninth straight week of gains, while the yen weakened to a 10-month low. The University of Michigan's preliminary reading of its Consumer Sentiment Index dropped to 67.7 this month from a final reading of 69.5 in August and below the forecast of 69.1 among economists polled by Reuters. However, consumers saw inflation lower on both a one-year and five-year basis. Earlier data from the Labour Department showed import prices increased 0.5 per cent last month as fuel prices jumped, but underlying price pressures stayed subdued while a separate

report from the New York Fed showed factory activity picked up in the state in September. The Federal Reserve will hold a policy meeting next week on September 19-20 and the central bank is largely viewed as keeping interest rates unchanged, with a 97 per cent expectation for no action, according to CME's Fed-Watch Tool. After edging higher earlier in the week, expectations for a 25 basis-point hike at the November meeting have declined to 30.6 per cent from 43.6 per cent a week ago, with a small chance of a cut being priced in as early as January. The US dollar index was down 0.08 per cent at 105.32 but was still poised for its ninth straight weekly gain. -BNA

MARKET

Saud Bahwan Auto, Shell Oman sign pact for Toyota Mirai hydrogen vehicles

This milestone is part of Oman Shell's '6th Gift to the Nation' initiative - a Green Hydrogen for Mobility project

MUSCAT: Saud Bahwan Automotive and Oman Shell signed a contract for the purchase of 16 Toyota Mirai Hydrogen vehicles recently.

The event was attended by Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Managing Director - Corporate, Saud Bahwan Group as well as Walid Hadi, Oman Shell's Senior Vice President and Country Chairman, besides other senior management officials from Oman Shell.

This milestone is part of Oman Shell's '6th Gift to the Nation' initiative - a Green Hydrogen for Mobility project. Towards this, Oman Shell has signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Oman Airports Management Company (Oman Airports) where Oman

Shell will provide Oman Airports with 15 Toyota Mirai Hydrogen vehicles for corporate usage. This project comes in line with Oman Vision 2040 priorities related to decarbonisation and supporting Oman's energy transition.

The project will include development of hydrogen production units that will be powered by photovoltaic solar plants and installing it at a state-of-the-art fuelling station near Muscat International Airport.

The Toyota Mirai is a hydrogen vehicle that has advancements to its core. The purest expression of elegance, the Mirai - a premium rear-wheel drive sports-luxury Fuel Cell Electric Vehicle (FCEV) boldly displays exceptional craftsmanship in every detail. While consistently delivering an exciting zero emissions drive.

The Toyota Mirai is a fully electric vehicle that produces electricity for its own usage through an onboard Fuel Cell which converts hydrogen and oxygen into electricity, which in turn powers the electric motor.

This exciting introduction builds on Toyota Motor Corporation's proven and reliable Hybrid architecture. This architecture replaces the fuel tank and engine with hydrogen tanks and a fuel cell stack, respectively.



3D PRINTING

Two Ithca group firms ink investment partnerships with Saudi company

MUSCAT: Ithca Group's company 'Innotech' signed an investment partnership with Saudi company 'Forming Future'.

As per this agreement, Forming Future will join the investment round in Innotech Company to develop 3D printing technology in the real estate field, as well as expand in the Gulf and regional markets in the fields of building automation and manufacturing with 3D printing technology.

The agreement was signed by Eng. Othman Maktoum Al Mandhari, Founder and CEO of Innotech, and Eng. Sattam Ali, CEO of the Saudi Forming Future Company.

Moreover, Codeline Company, an affiliate of Rihai Company which is part of Ithca Group, signed an investment agreement with the Saudi company Forming Future.

As per this agreement, Codeline Company will provide training services in advanced software to the Saudi Forming Future Company in a bid to serve the expan-



sion of this field and the exchange of expertise and experiences for both parties.

The agreement was signed by Eng. Azzan Qais Al Kindi, Chairman of Codeline's Board of Directors and Eng. Sattam Ali, CEO of the Saudi Forming Future Company and Engineer Sultan Al Anazi, CEO of Codeline Saudi Arabia.

This agreement is considered a

strategic start for the localisation of young cadres in the field of computer programming, which will be in the interest of both countries and will contribute to accelerating the growth and sustainability of emerging companies, which in turn will create many job opportunities.

Eng. Said Abdullah Al Mandhari, CEO of Ithca Group said that Ithca Group always seeks to support and

motivate Omani companies to enter regional and global markets by obtaining investments from strategic investors from outside the Sultanate of Oman. This is to gain high technical capabilities to expand the operational business of Omani companies in new markets.

He added that the signing of the two agreements today comes as part of the group's endeavour to increase exports to Omani technology companies; it will also have a positive impact in increasing the contribution of this sector to the gross domestic product (GDP) of the Omani economy.

It is worth noting that the "Forming Future" company is a company specialised in research and development services and empowering communities in innovation and entrepreneurship, headquartered in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and it invests in emerging technology companies in the region, especially in the field of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR). - OMA

TAXATION STRUCTURE

Indian government hikes windfall tax on domestic crude, reduces levy on diesel export

NEW DELHI: In a bid to maintain equilibrium in the domestic and international fuel markets, the Central Government announced changes in the taxation structure for crude oil and petroleum product exports, effective from Saturday.

As per the Gazette of India, the Ministry of Finance, Department of Revenue, issued two notifications, amending previous taxation rates. According to the notifications, the windfall tax on domestic crude oil production has been increased significantly, while levies on the export of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) and diesel have been reduced.

A tax levied on an unforeseen or unexpectedly large profit is called windfall tax. The windfall tax on domestic crude oil production has been raised from Rs 6,700 per ton to Rs 10,000 per ton. This move aims to capture a larger portion of profits from the surging crude oil prices, providing additional rev-

enue for the government.

The windfall tax on the export of aviation turbine fuel (ATF) has been decreased from Rs 4 per litre to Rs 3.50 per litre. This reduction is expected to make Indian ATF exports more competitive in the international market.

The tax on the export of diesel has been reduced from Rs 6 per litre to Rs 5.50 per litre. This adjustment is aimed at boosting the export of diesel, potentially increasing revenue from international sales. These changes come as India navigates the complexities of fluctuating global oil prices and aims to strike a balance between reaping benefits from high crude oil prices and ensuring competitiveness in the international fuel market.

The notifications, No. 30/2023-Central Excise and No. 31/2023-Central Excise, issued by the Ministry of Finance, will come into effect on September 16, 2023. -ANI

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CHINA NEW GROWTH

New occupations create job opportunities

BEIJING: A number of new occupations have emerged amid China's shift to higher-quality growth, reflecting the vitality of the country's new economy and creating promising job opportunities.

These occupations, ranging from robot engineering technicians to building energy conservation consultants, offer a glimpse into how far China has gone in pushing for development that is innovation-driven and low-carbon, and meets the public's demand for better lives.

Fu Linghui, spokesperson with the National Bureau of Statistics (NBS), told a press conference Friday that China is seeing continued economic transformation and upgrading with innovation impetus continuing to grow in August. The spokesperson added that the fast recovery of the service sector contributed more to economic growth last month.

Powered by the emergence of innovative industries, new business forms and models, China's new growth driver index, compiled by the NBS, jumped by 28.4 percent in 2022 from a year ago to hit 766.8, according to the bureau.

Robot engineering technician

Thanks to Zhang Shourong and other R&D technicians from the logistics robot company Geek+ in Beijing, robots have remarkably enhanced warehouse efficiency.

"The type of warehouse work that used to require hard manual labour, such as moving and pick-



ing cargo, can now be increasingly handled by robots," said Zhang. "It's my job to make these robots more efficient and stable to meet clients' demand."

Robot engineering technician was among the 18 new occupations announced by the Ministry of Human Resources and Social Security in June 2022.

China's robot industry logged an annual average growth rate of 22 percent from 2017 to 2022, according to an industry report published by the Chinese Institute of Electronic. Robot application scenarios have also expanded fast.

NBS data shows that in the first eight months, investment in high-tech industries grew by 11.3 percent year on year, and invest-

ment in scientific research and technological services surged by 22.3 percent.

With the robust development of the robotics sector, the demand for talent is surging, said Dong Kai, who is in charge of policy research with the China Center for Information Industry Development under the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT).

From 2015 to 2025, a total of 4.5 million people are needed in the CNC machine tools and robots sectors to close the talent gap, according to a manufacturing talent development guide released by the MIIT and two other departments.

The energy of innovation in China's robotics industry is palpable for Zhang, who observes

new ideas and products emerging frequently in the sector.

"I believe the career outlook for robotics engineering technicians is promising. I hope I can improve my skills and knowledge to ride the tide of the times," Zhang said.

Building energy conservation consultant

Zhang Chong, an engineer with an energy and environment design and research company based in Zhejiang Province, east China, is tasked with making the air-conditioning control system of an industrial building more energy efficient. His work could help the cooling system save more than 30 percent of energy and reduce its annual electricity charges by 60 percent.

A building energy conservation consultant can reduce the energy use of buildings with better planning and architectural designs, increased use of renewable energy and energy storage facilities, and smart energy networks, according to Zhang.

China has announced that it will peak carbon dioxide emissions by 2030 and achieve carbon neutrality by 2060. Under the ambitious dual carbon goals, it has vowed to accelerate building energy efficiency.

By 2025, over 350 million square meters of existing buildings will be renovated to conserve energy, and over 50 million square meters of ultra-low and near-zero energy consumption buildings will be built, according to the country's top housing department. -Xinhua



LIFESTYLE

TURMERIC HAS THE SAME ANTI-ACID PROPERTIES AS MEDICATION: STUDY



Researchers discovered that a natural component found in the culinary spice turmeric may be as effective as omeprazole, a medication used to treat gastrointestinal symptoms by decreasing excess stomach acid.

The research was published in the journal BMJ Evidence-Based Medicine. Turmeric is extracted from the root of the Curcuma longa plant. It contains curcumin, a naturally active substance with anti-inflammatory and antibacterial properties that have long been utilised in South-east Asian medicine, particularly for the treatment of dyspepsia. However, due to a lack of head-to-head studies, it is unknown how well it compares to traditional drugs for this application. As a result, the researchers randomly allocated 206 individuals aged 18-70 with recurring upset stomach (functional dyspepsia) of unknown cause recruited from Thai hospitals between 2019 and 2021 to one of three therapy groups for a 28-day period.

Turmeric (two big 250 mg curcumin capsules four times per day) and one small dummy capsule (69 patients); omeprazole (one small 20 mg capsule daily and two large dummy capsules four times per day (68 patients); and turmeric plus omeprazole (69 patients). Omeprazole is a proton pump inhibitor, sometimes known as a PPI. PPIs are used to treat functional dyspepsia, a condition characterised by symptoms such as feeling overly full after eating (postprandial fullness), feeling full after only a small amount of food (early satiety), and discomfort and/or burning sensations in the stomach and/or food pipe (epigastric pain). However, long-term PPI use has been associated with increased fracture risk, nutritional deficiencies, and an increased risk of infections, according to the study. The trial had 151 participants,

with 20 in the curcumin group, 19 in the omeprazole group, and 16 in the combined treatment group dropping out. At the outset of the research, patients in all three groups had identical clinical features and indigestion scores, as measured by the Severity of Dyspepsia Assessment score, or SODA. Patients were evaluated again after 28 days and again after 56 days. SODA scores showed substantial reductions in symptom severity by day 28 for pain (4.83, -5.46, and 6.22) and other symptoms (2.22, -2.32, and 2.31) in the combination, curcumin alone, and omeprazole alone groups. After 56 days, these improvements were considerably stronger for pain (7.19, -8.07, and 8.85, respectively) and other symptoms (4.09, -4.12, and 3.71, respectively). SODA also records satisfac-

tion scores, which barely changed over time among curcumin users and may be connected to its taste and/or fragrance, according to the researchers. According to the researchers, no major side effects were detected, while liver function tests showed slight worsening among curcumin users who were overweight. They acknowledge the study's modest size, as well as various other limitations, such as the brief intervention time and absence of long-term monitoring data. They believe that larger, longer-term investigations are required. Nevertheless, they conclude: "This multicentre randomised controlled trial provides highly reliable evidence for the treatment of functional dyspepsia," adding that "the new findings from our study may justify considering curcumin in clinical practice." -ANI

Sainz bags pole in Singapore

Shock double Q2 exit for Red Bull's Verstappen and Perez

SINGAPORE: Ferrari's Carlos Sainz edged out George Russell's Mercedes for pole position as Max Verstappen qualified a disappointing 11th at the Singapore Grand Prix on Saturday.

Sainz beat Russell by 0.072 seconds, while the Englishman was just 0.007secs ahead of Charles Leclerc's Ferrari.

McLaren's Lando Norris was fourth, ahead of Mercedes' Lewis Hamilton.

Haas driver Kevin Magnussen beat Fernando Alonso's Aston Martin to sixth place, with Esteban Ocon's Alpine, Magnussen's team-mate Nico Hulkenberg and Alpha Tauri's Liam Lawson Lawson – who made it into Q3 for the

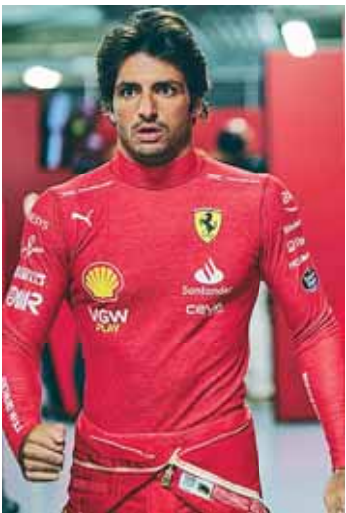


first time in his short F1 career – rounding out the top-10.

Already on provisional pole, the Spaniard improved on his final run to narrowly beat rival Russell and team-mate Leclerc to seal a P1 start.

It was a frantic session, one that will see several drivers investigated for impeding after qualifying and one that was red flagged after Lance Stroll's hefty crash in the final stages of Q1.

But Sainz stayed out of trouble and continued to set the pace, with



a rapid final sector seeing him improve on his provisional pole lap by over four-tenths, with a time of 1m 30.984s good enough to take his second consecutive P1 start. In second was Russell, as he narrowly missed out on pole.

Lawson's place in Q3 came at the expense of a Red Bull, with Verstappen a surprise victim at the Q2 hurdle. The Dutch driver quali-

fied 11th, and was less than pleased with his car's performance, while his team-mate Sergio Perez also found himself knocked out in 13th.

Verstappen swore over the team radio as he struggled with his unexpectedly uncompetitive Red Bull, which threatens to end his record-breaking run of wins.

Sandwiched between the Red Bull pair is Alpine's Pierre Gasly in 12th, while Alex Albon was down in 14th for Williams, with Yuki Tsunoda in 15th after failing to set a time for AlphaTauri in Q2.

Due to Stroll's crash at the end of Q1, several drivers were unable to complete their final laps. But the unlucky few to be knocked out early included the Alfa Romeo of Valtteri Bottas in 16th, as well as the McLaren of Oscar Piastri, who was right behind Stroll when he crashed, down in 17th.

Logan Sargeant went another race unable to out-qualify his Williams team mate Albon, as the rookie ended up 18th, ahead of the second Alfa Romeo of Zhou Guanyu, as Stroll brought up the rear of the field. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Liverpool earn late win at Wolves

LONDON: Liverpool scored two late goals to earn a come-from-behind 3-1 victory against a battling Wolves side at Molineux on Saturday and go top of the Premier League.

Andy Robertson marked his 200th Premier League appearance by putting the Reds ahead for the first time on 85 minutes, before substitute Harvey Elliott's shot deflected off Hugo Bueno for an own goal to seal the victory in stoppage time.

Cody Gakpo brought Liverpool level at the start of the second half (55th minute) when he converted Mohamed Salah's fizzing cross-shot.

The home side dominated the first half and deservedly opened the scoring when Hwang Hee-Chan fired home in the seventh minute at the far post after some excellent wing play by Pedro Neto.

The win moves Jurgen Klopp's side one point clear at the top of the table before Saturday's late kick-offs.

Liverpool again demonstrated their resilience as they recovered from a sluggish first half to win after conceding the first goal for the third time in five Premier League matches this season.



They offered little as an attacking threat in the opening 45 minutes as their midfield got consistently overrun, going into the break behind.

Klopp brought on Luis Diaz for the subdued Alexis Mac Allister at half time, before bringing on Elliott and Darwin Nunez 11 minutes after the restart.

The substitutes made an impact as Liverpool transformed, with Diaz heading just wide from Robertson's volleyed cross a mere 90 seconds after coming on.

The Colombian was then involved in the equaliser as some neat interplay on the edge of the box saw the ball eventually reach Salah, whose drilled cross-shot was tapped home by Gakpo.

Nunez then came close to putting Liverpool ahead but his shot was well blocked by a combination of goalkeeper Jose Sa and defender Max Kilman.

Wolves were looking increasingly out on their feet and it was

the visitors who looked the most likely to score.

They duly did with five minutes left when Robertson, captain in the absence of the suspended Virgil van Dijk, ran on to Salah's searching pass and side-footed home from six yards.

Elliott wrapped up the win late on but was denied the goal when it was adjudged his shot took enough of a deflection off Bueno to go down as an own goal by the Wolves defender. - Agencies

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

Leverkusen hold Bayern Munich in a four-goal thriller



BERLIN: Exequiel Palacios' late equaliser helped Bayer Leverkusen snatch one point at Bayern Munich following a fast-paced four-goal (2-2) thriller at the curtain raiser of the fourth round of Bundesliga on Friday.

The Bavarians caught a perfect start on home soil as new arrival Harry Kane opened the scoring after heading home Leroy Sane's deflected cross at the far post with only seven minutes gone. It was Kane's 300th career club goal, with 280 for Tottenham, nine for Millwall, five for Leyton Orient, four for Bayern and two for Leicester.

Leverkusen responded well and restored parity in the 24th minute when Alejandro Grimaldo drilled a free kick from 16 meters over the wall into the top right corner to stun the hosts.

The "Werkself" gained momentum and kept Bayern's defense busy as Victor Boniface forced goalkeeper Sven Ulreich into action at the half-hour mark before pulling wide from a promising position a moment later.

Boniface remained in the thick of things and thought he had made it 2-1 but his goal was ruled offside in the 33rd minute.

Bayern nearly took the lead again, but Leverkusen goalkeeper Lukas Hradecky was on guard, denying Thomas Muller and Serge Gnabry in quick succession.

Hradecky had his hands full of work but neither Sane, Leon Gortezka nor Gnabry was able to beat Leverkusen's goalkeeper despite promising opportunities in the closing period of the first half.

After the restart, Bayern should have grabbed the lead, but Kane couldn't beat Hradecky in a one-on-one.

The front runners still posed a threat as Florian Wirtz exchanged passes with Boniface and rattled the right post from inside the box in the 78th minute.

Leverkusen increased the pressure two minutes later after Boniface tested Ulreich with a close-range attempt.

Bayern then flabbergasted the visitors against the run of the play in the 86th minute when Goretzka latched onto Mathys Tel's cutback pass to make it 2-1.

Leverkusen had the last laugh though and secured a share of the spoils after Alphonso Davies felled Jonas Hofmann inside the box. Palacios stepped up and converted the subsequent penalty to stun the German giants in the dying seconds of the game.

With the result, Bayer Leverkusen defended its top spot while Bayern stayed in second position.

"It was a complicated game for us. We had golden chances in the closing stages of the first half. We thought we had the lucky punch but then we dropped points because of a VAR penalty decision in the closing stages," said Bayern coach Thomas Tuchel.

"It was an intense game by both sides. We needed some time to get into the flow. We grew into the game and created pressure. It was a tight game until the end, but we fought. The stalemate is good for us of course," said Leverkusen coach Xabi Alonso. - Xinhua

FRENCH LIGUE 1

PSG suffer first defeat under Enrique



PARIS: Paris Saint-Germain (PSG) fell to their first defeat under new boss Luis Enrique as they were beaten 3-2 by Nice despite Kylian Mbappe's double.

Terem Moffi gave Nice the lead with a deflected shot into the bottom corner but Mbappe levelled with a first-time shot from the edge of the area.

Gaetan Laborde bundled the visitors back into the lead and Nigeria's Moffi hit a fine strike from 18 yards.

Mbappe's flying volley gave PSG hope but they could not level.

It was the France captain's seventh goal in four games this season after his return to the team, which followed a disrupted pre-season in which he was frozen out of the squad over a contract dispute.

Nice, managed by 34-year-old Italian Francesco Farioli, move above PSG in the table into second behind Monaco. PSG had a presentation before kick-off for nine-time Ligue 1 title-winning midfielder Marco Verratti, who has just completed a move to Qatari side Al Arabi. - Agencies

NEW SPORTS FACILITY

ORSC chief inaugurates badminton academy

MUSCAT: In a boost to indoor sports lovers in Oman, a new badminton academy was inaugurated in Muscat on Friday.

Abdul Rahim Musallam al Darwashi, Oman Racket Sports Committee (ORSC) chairman inaugurated the Oasis Badminton Academy, boasting of international size courts and facilities, in the presence of Yogendra Singh Kati-

yar, founder of the academy.

The academy, which is located in Ghala has six avant-garde sports flooring courts and features a pro shop selling badminton essentials and kits. Three coaches - Balasubramannian N G from India, Ari Taufik and Favian Robben from Indonesia – have been hired to train the students at the academy.

Al Darwashi said: "The acad-

emy will help in the development of badminton in Oman. As ORSC, we will fully support such academies to popularise the sports in the country." It may be mentioned that ORSC was constituted in July through a ministerial decision from the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth. The committee will supervise squash and badminton sports in the country.



Rare, deadly Nipah virus: What are the symptoms?

The deadly Nipah virus has broken out again in the Indian state of Kerala. The rare virus is transmitted by fruit bats, and those who fall ill have a low chance of survival

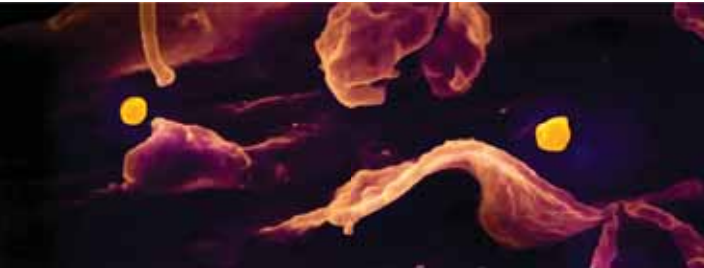
KOZHIKODE: Authorities in the southern Indian state of Kerala are working to contain a new outbreak of the Nipah virus. The state government has demarcated and cordoned off a wide containment zone around where the outbreak happened. Authorities are now trying to locate and isolate the people who came in contact with those infected. People in neighbouring regions have been alerted. The virus is believed to be a variant first discovered in Bangladesh. Humans and animals can infect each other directly through droplets or contact with contaminated surfaces. Human-to-human transmission is also possible. The infection triggers encephalitis and can lead to mild to severe illness, but also to death. In the variant first discovered in Bangladesh, the mortality rate is very high: one third of patients have died. However, this variant is considered less contagious.



How dramatic is the current outbreak? To contain a new outbreak of the dangerous Nipah virus, thousands of offices and schools have been closed in Kerala. In Kozhikode district, several containment zones have been established around nine villages. People in protective suits prepare to cremate the body of a 12-year-old boy who died of the Nipah virus in India in September 2021. Two people have already died. Kerala Health Minister Veena George confirmed another case of the Nipah virus on Wednesday, bringing the total number of infections in the state to five. A 24-year-old employee of a private hospital in Kozhikode was diagnosed with the virus, the minister said. This is the third outbreak of Nipah virus in Kerala in five years. Currently, 706 people are on the contact list, of whom 77 fall into the high-risk category and 153 are

health workers. No one in the high-risk group is currently showing symptoms. At least 13 people are currently hospitalized for observation and are showing mild symptoms such as headache. **How is the virus transmitted?** Nipah virus is commonly found in fruit bats (Pteropodidae), which feed on nectar and pollen, as opposed to vampire bats which eat insects and drink the blood of animals. Fruit bats are much bigger and use their eyes, and not ultrasound, to orient themselves. Scientists still don't conclusively know how the virus is transmitted from fruit bats to pigs, cattle or even humans. However, there are indications that both humans and animals can get infected by coming in contact with the contaminated saliva and urine of fruit bats. The 2018 outbreak in Kerala was probably due to contamination

of a drinking water source. Dead fruit bats were later found in a well belonging to the house of an infected family in Changaroth. First, many of the family members fell ill. Later, their acquaintances also got sick. **Why is the virus dangerous?** The Nipah virus aggressively inflames the brain. The US Centers for Disease Control cites an incubation period of five days to two weeks. Initial symptoms resemble those of the flu: fever, nausea and severe headache. Some patients experience respiratory problems. Later, disorientation, dizziness and confusion follow. Within one to two days, patients can slip into a coma and die. The mortality rate for Nipah disease is 70%. **How can the disease be treated?** There is no vaccination or medication against the Nipah virus



— neither for animals, nor for humans. Medications have so far only been able to alleviate the symptoms. In principle, patients must be immediately isolated and taken to an intensive care unit where vital body functions can be supported. Contact persons or suspected cases must be quarantined to stop the spread of the infectious disease. **Where does the Nipah virus come from?** Nipah virus was first discovered in 1998 in the Malaysian village of Sungai Nipah. Febrile encephalitis — an illness caused by the virus entering the brain — and, in some cases, severe respiratory infections were observed in 229 individuals. Men who worked in slaughterhouses were the first to catch the infection. It became apparent that one could contract the disease from animals.

Around the same time, a comparatively mild outbreak of a respiratory infection caused by an unknown pathogen was observed in pigs in Malaysia. Only later did scientists find that the workers and the pigs had been infected by the same virus. As a precaution, more than 1 million pigs — half the country's total pig population — were culled in Malaysia. Since then, infection cases of the highly contagious virus have been spotted only sporadically, for example in Bangladesh in 2001 and 2003, and in Kerala in 2018 and 2021. **Is the Nipah virus threatening a new pandemic?** The latest Nipah outbreak in Kerala is in remote rural area. If a spread or an epidemic in the region can be prevented, a spread of the Nipah virus to other countries and continents and thus a pandemic is very unlikely. -aw

DISCRIMINATION

Zimbabwe's women decry political underrepresentation

HARARE: Women comprise 54% of Zimbabwe's population, but one can hardly tell from the country's new cabinet. President Emerson Mnangagwa appointed his new cabinet earlier this week, retaining many of his old members and including several young members of his ZANU-PF party, including his son, Kudakwashe. More significantly, he gave men the lion's share of ministerial positions — out of the 26 ministers, only six are women. Madrine Chiku, the chairperson of the Women's Coalition in Zimbabwe, told DW that women remain underrepresented in decision-making. "I am not very pleased with the [cabinet] outcome," Chiku said, stressing that there were very few women appointments. "When we look at the presidium, we do not have any representative." She pointed to Section 17 of Zimbabwe's constitution, which calls for the state to promote full gender balance and rectify gender discrimination in Zimbabwean society. She said having a woman in the presidium and more women in the cabinet would have been ideal. "But we don't see this happening, and we continue to experience the suppression of women in occupying decision-making portfolios." No female vice president for Zimbabwe Linda Masarira, the founder of the opposition Labour, Economists and African Democrats (LEAD), told DW she is concerned about the absence of a female vice president. "Section 17 of the Constitution of Zimbabwe has been violated yet again as the women appointed only constitute 26% of the cabinet ministers," Masarira said, adding that this happened even though women constitute 52% of the voting population in Zimbabwe. "As a pan-African feminist transformation leader, I demand 50-50 in all organs of the state as enshrined in the Constitution



of Zimbabwe. Arise, women of Zimbabwe, arise!" **Mnangagwa shrugs off critics** Mnangagwa, declared winner of August's disputed general election, wants the cabinet to stir Zimbabwe from its economic crisis as he serves his full second and final term. When asked if he felt any pressure from gender activist organizations to increase the number of women in his cabinet, the 80-year-old responded with laughter. "Some names can be female, some can be surnames. Some can be male or female," Mnangagwa mused. "So I am just making it very clear: No pressure, clarity. The demand is that of clarity." According to Alexander Rusero, a politics professor at the Africa University in Zimbabwe, the cabinet is nothing short of power consolidation. "That is serious in issues of gender equality and gender equity. Politics in Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular is still pretty much patriarchal," Rusero told DW. "The women that are appointed are actually men's women. They are not women appointed or mar-

ried or on their own terms." Rwanda leads the world in women's representation in politics. The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU), a global organization of national parliaments, collected data in 2023 showing that women are underrepresented at all levels of decision-making worldwide and achieving gender parity in political life is far off. Nevertheless, over 60% of the seats in Rwanda's national parliament were held by women as of December 2022. The country is ranked first globally, with the highest proportion of women in parliament. Other African nations, such as Senegal, South Africa, Namibia, and Mozambique, have a progressive record regarding women's political representation. In 2018, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed was praised for appointing a 50-50 gender-balanced cabinet. However, the number of seats held by women in parliament as of 2022 dropped to 41.3%. Women tend to lead policy areas related to gender equality, human rights, and social affairs, while men dominate policy areas like defense and economy. -aw

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ROUND-UP

Update your KYC details through Bank Muscat Internet and mobile banking

Know Your Customer (KYC) is the process of verifying and maintaining the identity, information and documents of the customers, at all times to serve them better

MUSCAT: In line with its customer-centric vision ‘To serve you better, everyday’ and to meet customers’ expectations for seamless experience, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate of Oman, has recently launched a new service through its Internet and Mobile banking channels. Customers can now update their Know Your Customer (KYC) details without having to visit the branches.

KYC is the process of verifying and maintaining the identity, information and documents of the customers, at all times to serve them better. The addition aims to ease the process for customers to update their details on time to avoid any



delays in their transactions.

The new service further expands the list of options available to customers through the bank’s various digital channels and enhances banking convenience leading to reduce waiting times when visiting branches.

The new feature enables customers to update their KYC details online by logging in to their Mobile or Internet Banking account and navigating through the app via <Requests / Customer Services < KYC < Update KYC and follow the on-screen instructions.

After uploading the required documents, the details are instantly updated in the bank records and customers will receive a confirmation SMS and Email notification.

Customers can also update their civil or resident ID details and passport details through this service.

Bank Muscat is committed to provide innovative services that are in line with the latest technological developments.

Thus, it continues to update services offered through Internet and Mobile banking to enable customers to experience the power of banking convenience. This comes in line with the bank customer-centric strategy, which is one key pillar that Bank Muscat have initiated to enhance its continuing efforts to improve customer experience through focusing on their current and future needs.

The new service is yet another addition to the bank’s growing portfolio of customer-centric products, services and features, which are being constantly launched. Recent additions include Soft Token App for the approval of Internet Banking transactions, instant opening of Themaar Savings Plan, view access for minor accounts, payment to Pakistan and Bangladesh wallet, Speed transfer to Egypt, Friendi Mobile Top Up, payment to government for Value added Tax (VAT), Excise Tax and Corporate income Tax, VAT statement for Corporate customers, Group Bill Payments which allows user to submit multiple Bill Payment transactions in single click, setting SMS Language instantly by Internet Banking & Mobile Banking, performing QR payment by doing a phone shake, MEDC electricity prepaid & post-paid payment, Muscat Finance and National Finance Loan Installment payment and payments to new educational institutes. In addition, customers can also apply for loan products and a variety of credit cards online and much more.

IMMERSIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE

Omantel Innovation Labs empowers aspiring game developers with transformative game development bootcamp



MUSCAT: Omantel Innovation Labs has concluded the eagerly anticipated Game Development Bootcamp – a transformative five-day programme that was set to empower aspiring game developers and take their skills to the next level.

More than 760 applications were received, from which 74 participants were selected to take part in an immersive learning experience that covered game design, development, and marketing.

Designed to nurture creativity and prepare technical compe-

tence, the bootcamp was a valuable opportunity for participants to immerse themselves in a dynamic environment of learning and growth.

Including more than 20 workshops and 15 esteemed speakers and trainers coming from industry leaders, the first-of-its-kind bootcamp featured speakers from Unity, Ubisoft, Epic Games, HTC VIVE, and more, aiming to provide participants with a unique platform for learning, teamwork, and engagement with industry-

thought leaders in the heart of Omantel’s headquarters.

Speaking about the bootcamp, Her Highness Al Sayyida Ghada Al Said, Senior Manager of Omantel Innovation labs said, “Gaming Development is a rapidly growing, highly competitive, and attractive market, where we believe that our local talent can create value given the right access to technology and knowledge. We’ve been so inspired by the engagement and commitment from our participants and are eager to see how they use what

they have learned to create quality games that are creative, entertaining and have global appeal.”

The Omantel Game Development Bootcamp has been designed to enhance both individual and team-based skills. For five enriching days, participants went through a diverse range of training exercises spanning gameplay mechanics, development techniques, and cutting-edge game marketing strategies. Participants had the unique opportunity to engage with industry giants such as Ubisoft, Tamatem,

Unity, The Gaming Lab, and HTC VIVE. These speakers shared invaluable insights and provided attendees with a deeper understanding of the industry’s trends, challenges, and opportunities.

Aya Al Sabahi, a 3rd year computer science student said: “The programme was amazing. I got to meet a lot of people, I’m definitely on the right path. I thank Omantel for organising this event; it was a step forward, and it inspired me to continue on this path.

The Omantel Innovation Labs

was created to leverage Omantel’s expertise, partnerships, reach, and access to technology to contribute to Oman’s Vision 2040 and promote innovation and entrepreneurship in new and emerging technology. Located in a 1,100 sqm facility in the heart of the Omantel headquarters in Madinat Al Irfan, the Omantel Innovation Labs actively engages with the local start-up ecosystem through various programs and activities including the Omantel Accelerator, hackathons and bootcamps.





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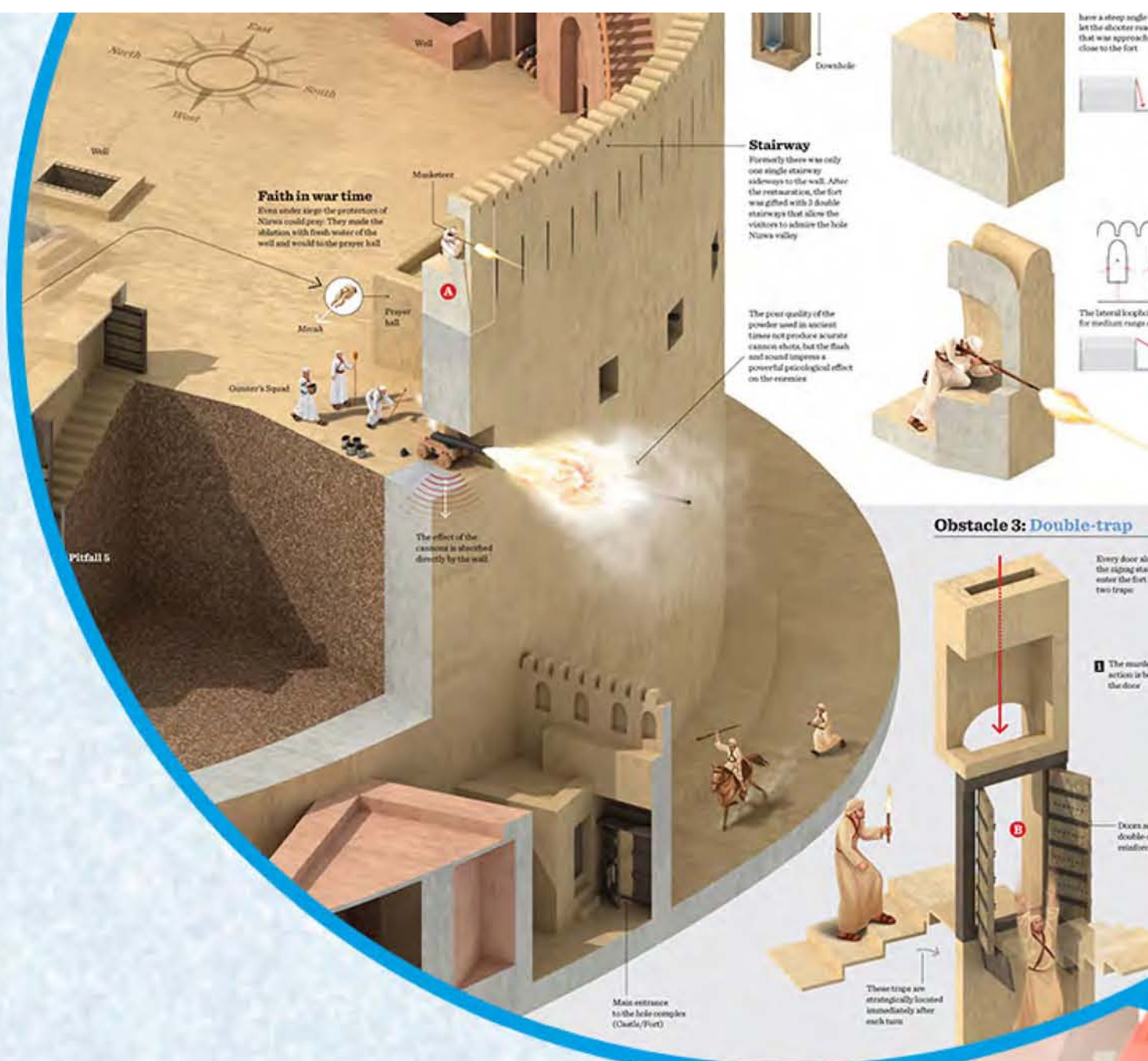
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