



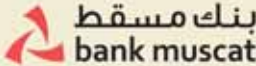
HIS MAJESTY GREETES PRESIDENT OF DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

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



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41ST SESSION

Sayyid Hamoud takes part in Tunis meeting

TUNIS: The Sultanate of Oman took part in the 41st session meeting of the Arab Interior Ministers Council, which was held in Tunis yesterday under the auspices of President Kais Saied of the Tunisian Republic.

Oman's delegation was led by Sayyid Hamoud Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior.

The meeting discussed a number of projects, including the 11th Arab security plan, the 9th Arab media plan for security awareness and crime prevention, and the 8th interim plan for the Arab strategy of traffic safety.

It reviewed topics listed on the agenda, including the report of the Secretary-General of the Council on the work of the General Secretariat. — **ONA**



NATIONAL PLATFORM TO MONITOR AIR QUALITY LAUNCHED IN OMAN

The platform has been designed to enhance public health and improve Oman's Environment Indicator

MUSCAT: The national platform 'Naqi' (Pure) for monitoring air quality indicators was inaugurated on Monday. The platform has been designed to enhance public health and improve Oman's Environment Indicator.

The three-day conference was inaugurated under the auspices of HH Sayyid Asaad bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for International Relations and Cooperation Affairs, Personal Representative of His Majesty the Sultan.

The conference will discuss carbon-neutrality-related research, the best practices, global experiences and environmental laws and



regulations.

The conference seeks to coordinate environment-action efforts of government, academic and research institutions, as well as regional and international organisations, private sector companies, civil society organisations and individuals.

The conference activities include an environmental roadshow that showcases the latest innova-

tions, techniques, solutions and technologies in different environmental fields.

On the sidelines of the conference, the Environment Authority and the GCC Accreditation Centre signed a Cooperation Programme in the field of ensuring environmental safety in the Sultanate of Oman.

The Programme is aimed at consolidating joint action, com-

munication and coordination in the field of accreditation, quality assurance, environment safety and related services in Oman, in line with international practices.

The Cooperation Programme was signed by Dr. Abdullah Ali Al Amri, Chairman of the Environment Authority, and Eng. Mutib Al Mizani, Director-General of the GCC Accreditation Centre.

The Cooperation Programme

stipulates that the two sides shall exchange information, legislations, plans, expertise and the best practices they undertake in the areas of accreditation, quality assessment procedures and database for service providers. It also introduces a mechanism for appointing and registering companies, recruiting specialised experts and conducting research and studies related to environmental laboratories.

The Programme also provides for developing inspection and control mechanism, training inspectors in accordance with international standards, supporting small and medium enterprises and co-organising training and awareness events.

The conference is organised by the Environment Authority in co-operation with the United Nations Environment Programme, Sultan Qaboos University, the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

It discusses 160 scholarly papers from different countries of the world. Tasks of Oman Conference on Environmental Sustainability began at Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre. — **ONA**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Sayyid Badr holds talks on Gaza

1 Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister received in his office on Monday Ambassador Wolfgang Amadeus Bruehlhart, Swiss Envoy to the Middle East and North Africa. The meeting reviewed bilateral relations and means of promoting them, as well as ways to diversify cooperation in the economic, trade and cultural fields. The meeting was attended by a number of officials from both sides. **>A2**

OMAN

Tunisian President meets Interior Minister

2 President Kais Saied of the Tunisian Republic received Sayyid Hamoud Faisal Al Busaidi, Oman's Minister of Interior, at the presidential palace in the capital Tunis, on Monday. During the meeting, Minister of Interior Sayyid Hamoud conveyed greetings and best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to President Kais Saied and the people of Tunisia. **>A3**



SPORTS

Gill, Jurel steer India to win over England

3 Indian youngsters Shubman Gill and Dhruv Jurel's effort with the bat took them across the finishing line and clinched the series with a five-wicket victory in the fourth Test against England on Monday. This victory has allowed them to gain an unassailable lead in the five-match series. Gill and Jurel's unbeaten 72-run stand played a vital role after Shoaib Bashir and Tom Hartley inflicted a flurry of wickets in a quick session. **>A8**



Oman hotels gear up with Iftar delicacies

A4

MINISTRY OF HERITAGE AND TOURISM

Record-breaking 4mn tourists visited Oman in 2023

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A record-breaking 4 million tourists visited Oman in 2023, a senior official at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said on Monday.

Speaking at the 3rd edition of the World Travel Week Middle East, Azzan Qasim Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism, said: "Tourism in Oman has gone from strength to strength. Last year, a record-breaking 4 million visitors - luxury travellers, adventurers, nature enthusiasts, cruise ship passengers, sports fans and event attendees amongst them - experienced the warmth of Oman's legendary hospitality, the breathtaking beauty of our spectacular landscapes, our rich heritage, vibrant living traditions and the delights of our cuisine."

Tourism Strategy 2040

He also said: "At Oman's Ministry of Heritage and Tourism as we unroll our National Tourism Strategy 2040 and bring to life the ambitions of Oman Vision 2040 under



the wise leadership of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik, we are laser focused on creating an environment where Tourism can flourish and grow."

Activities of the 3rd edition of the World Travel Week Middle East, organised by the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, kicked off at the Al Bustan Palace Hotel on Monday.

More than 180 companies from the Sultanate of Oman and



abroad are taking part in the event, titled "Connections Luxury Middle East". The conference aims to enhance partnership and communication between international luxury travel and tourism companies and their Omani counterparts.

The partners include hotel establishments and tourism service providers using innovative communication methods to develop relations and exchange

experiences.

Al Busaidi stressed the importance of the event as it will be fruitful, based on the success of last year's gathering.

"We are achieving this through the introduction of tourism-friendly legislation and enterprise-driven initiatives, investment in infrastructure and attractions, capacity building, the creation of specialised investment zones for Tourism develop-

ment and more," he said.

In his turn, Haitham Mohammed Al Ghassani, Director-General of Tourism Promotion at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said that Oman's hosting the third edition of the event offers an ideal opportunity for partners to meet and organise introductory visits through which tourists could explore landmarks in Muscat Governorate and other governorates of Oman.



23rd
MUSCAT



OMAN

PRAYER
TIMINGS



Dhuhr.....	12:25pm
Asr.....	3:45pm
Maghrib.....	6:13pm
Isha.....	7:24pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....	5:15am



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MEETING

REVIEW RELATIONS

SAF Chief of Staff receives Arizona National Guard Commander

MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) received in his office at Al Murtafa'a Garrison on Monday Maj. Gen Kerry L. Muehlenbeck, Adjutant General of Arizona and Director of the Arizona Department of Emergency and Military Affairs in the United State of America(USA).

Military topics
During the meeting, the two sides exchanged viewpoints and discussed a set of military topics of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Commodore Issa Salim Al Owaisi, SAF Assistant Chief of Staff for Administration and Supply and the US Ambassador-designate to the Sultanate of Oman.

-ONA

Royal Office Minister meets Indian Deputy National Security Advisor

MUSCAT: Gen. Sultan Mohammed Al Nu'mani, Minister of the Royal Office received in his office here today Vikram Misri, Deputy National Security Advisor of India and his accompanying delegation, currently visiting the Sultanate of Oman as part of the 9th round of the Strategic Dialogue between Oman and India.

During the meeting, the two sides reviewed areas of cooperation and underlined the historical friendship relations binding the two countries.

The meeting was attended by the Ambassador of the Republic of India to Oman. -ONA



TENDER
ANNOUNCEMENT

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

Tender No.	Tender title	Last date for tender purchase online	Bid submission date
06/2024	Providing cleaning services for the building of the Directorate General of Labour in North Al Sharqeyah Governorate	Sunday 17/03/2024 2:00 p.m.	Thursday 04/04/2024 10 a.m.

- Specialized establishments may obtain the tender's documents online through the following link, starting from Tuesday 27/02/2024 at 08:00 a.m. /https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om
- Bids shall be submitted online.
- Bids shall be opened at 11:00 am on Thursday 04/04/2024.

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

labour_OMAN

Oman, India hold strategic dialogue



The meeting reiterated the deep-rooted relations and strategic partnership between the two countries in various fields



REVIEW TIES: The Omani side was led in the meeting by Major General Idris Abdulrahman Al Kindi, Secretary General of the National Security Council while the Indian side was headed by Vikram Misri, Deputy National Security Advisor. -ONA



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MEETING

Sayyid Badr holds talks on Gaza with Swiss envoy

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister received in his office here on Monday Ambassador Wolfgang Amadeus Bruelhart, Swiss Envoy to the Middle East and North Africa.

The meeting reviewed bilateral relations and means of promoting them, as well as ways to diversify cooperation in the economic, trade and cultural fields.

The meeting underscores the importance of following up the agreements and MoUs signed between the two countries during the visit of President Dr. Alain Berset of the Swiss Confederation to the Sultanate of Oman in November 2023.

The two sides also exchanged views on the regional and international developments, most importantly the repercussions of the catastrophic humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip and the necessity of achieving an immediate ceasefire, as well as opening the crossings for the flow of all relief needs and necessary living materials for the population.

This, the two sides believe, will help reduce the escalation, contain the expansion of the conflict in the region and activate the initiatives and efforts to achieve a just peace based on the two-state solution. The meeting was attended by a number of officials from both sides. -ONA



REVIEW TIES: The meeting reviewed bilateral relations and means of promoting them, and ways to diversify cooperation in the economic, trade and cultural fields. -ONA



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RECEPTION
Tunisian President
conveys greetings
to His Majesty



GREETINGS: During the meeting, Sayyid Hamoud conveyed greetings and best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to President Kais Saied and the people of Tunisia. -ONA

TUNIS: President Kais Saied of the Tunisian Republic received at the presidential palace in the capital Tunis on Monday Sayyid Hamoud Faisal Al Busaidi, Minister of Interior.
This came during his reception to the Arab Interior Ministers who are taking part in the 41st session meeting of the Arab Interior Ministers Council.
During the meeting, Sayyid Hamoud conveyed greetings and best wishes of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik to President Kais Saied and the

people of Tunisia.
In his turn, the Tunisian President asked Sayyid Hamoud to convey his greetings and best wishes to His Majesty the Sultan and the Omani people.
During the reception, President Kais Saied underlined the effective and important role of the Arab Interior Ministers Council in coordinating the security cooperation between the Arab states. He wished them success in their meeting to come up with all that meets aspirations of the Arab leaders and peoples. -ONA

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Kempinski Hotel Muscat
SULTANATE OF OMAN

TENDER NOTICE

Kempinski Hotel Muscat is pleased to invite you to become a business partner and share your tender proposal for food and non food items for the following categories:

Food & Beverages:
F0009 - Fresh Fruits & Vegetables
F00010 - Groceries & Other Dry Items

Tender Invitation and Tender form are available in the Purchasing Office ground floor next to the Receiving Area.

Tender Submission: Tender form shall be sealed in A4 size envelope (with details of quotations with company stamps endorsement on each page) must be submitted to Kempinski Hotel Muscat Finance department and address to: -

Purchasing Department:
Usman Al Dari - Purchasing Manager
T +96824985112 · M +968 90189649/+968 95135399
Email Add: usman.aldari@kempinski.com

LEBANANI
مطعم البرج اللبناني

Unity International for restaurants & Coffee Shops have opened the second branch of their most famous "Lebanese Cuisine" restaurant "Burj Al Lebanani" in Muscat Hills at Omnivest Building.
H.H AlMuthanna Adham Tariq Al said was invited as Chief Guest at the Inauguration Ceremony.
This is the 3rd restaurant for unity International- Tex-Mex grills being the First one famous for its "Mexican Cuisine" located at Souq Al Madina.
Other two outlets "Burj Al Lebanani" are located at Al Mouj Street & Muscat Hills.

OMAN HOTELS GEAR UP WITH IFTAR DELICACIES

Hoteliers say that Arabic specialities, traditional Omani cuisine and western delicacies will again dominate the Iftar offers at various hotels this Ramadan.

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As the holy month of Ramadan approaches, the hotels in Oman, are all set to welcome it with a range of exciting offers.

Hoteliers say that Arabic specialities, traditional Omani cuisine and western delicacies will again dominate the Iftar offers at various hotels this Ramadan.

Nestled in an oasis of thirty acres of gardens, enclosed by sprawling greens and clusters of mango trees, Al Nahda Resort & Spa, which provides the ultimate in tranquility and relaxation, will be offering a captivating experience, blending the essence of Ramadan, where guests can enjoy both Iftar and Suhoor

starting from OMR 10.

Located in the heart of the desert, the luxury hotel in the South Batinah region of the Sultanate of Oman - where luxury meets adventure, Dunes by Al Nahda is delighted to unveil its exclusive Iftar and Suhoor menus at Fleur Restaurant at Dunes, the enchanting outdoor haven that captivates guests with its scenic views of the deserts.

Throughout the holy month, the Fleur Restaurant welcomes diners to indulge in gastronomic excellence as it showcases exceptional set menus tailored just for the occasion. Up in the mountains, Sahab Resort and Spa culinary wizards have crafted a world-class Iftar experience that showcases the rich diversity of cui-

sine, culture, and craftsmanship.

From traditional Middle Eastern delicacies to exotic Far Eastern flavors, guests can indulge in a feast that transcends time and place.

The iftar spread will comprise multiple attractive live stations, tantalising soups, salads and appetisers along with a delectable selection of traditional and international sweets and desserts.

Built on the canyon edge of Al Hajar Mountain range at 2000 mts. above the sea level, the guests will experience heightened pleasures in everything they do during the Holy Month!

"The hypnotic trance of the waves emerging from the subtle sound of water, the canyon flowing through the gorges

and the breeze of pure air will bring you even closer to nature. Allow yourself to enter the deep levels of relaxation as you meditate on the yoga ground at the edge of green mountains, also a site for infinite sunlight this Ramadan," said Arup Singh Deo, Director of Operations and Projects at Al Nahda Hotels & Resorts.

He also said Ramadan is a time for prayers, and there's no better place to celebrate it than in Oman.

As the holy month of Ramadan dawns, many other hotels in the city extend a warm invitation to travelers seeking a distinctive and serene Ramadan experience.

During these 30 days, individuals engage in fasting, prayer, reflection, and community activities.



OFFICIAL TALKS

Oman and Mauritania explore means of promoting cooperation, integration in endowments sector



MUSCAT: An official session of talks was held in Muscat on Monday between the Sultanate of Oman, represented by the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, and the Islamic Republic of Mauritania, represented by the Ministry of Islamic Affairs and Original Education.

The Omani side was chaired by Dr. Mohammed Said Al Ma'amari, Minister of Endowments and Religious Affairs, while the Mauri-

tanian side was chaired by Dah Ould Sidi Ould Amar Taleb, Minister of Islamic Affairs and Original Education.

During the session, the two sides stressed the advanced relations between the two countries and the level of coordination and integration in areas of endowments and religious affairs.

They also discussed topics related to means of promoting co-operation in religious fields and

benefiting from the experiences in endowments sector.

A presentation was given during the session on the strategy of the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs in Oman and the Ministry's experiences in digital transformation, endowments and funds, rebuilding mosques and Holy Quran schools, preaching and guidance, planning and studies.

— ONA

OMAN CHARITABLE ORGANISATION



Oman sends third relief consignment to Palestinians in Gaza

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has operated the third air bridge carrying tonnes of relief, food and medical materials to Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.

Oman Charitable Organisation (OCO) said in a statement: "In continuation of the Omani

aid, the Oman Charitable Organisation continues to operate the third air bridge carrying tonnes of various relief, food and medical materials, on board Royal Air Force of Oman aircraft, presented to the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, in coordination between the Embassy of Oman in Jordan."

THIRD QUARTER OF 2023

Import price index declines 4.7%

MUSCAT: The general import price index (IPI) in the Sultanate of Oman went down by 4.7 percent at the end of the third quarter of 2023, compared to the corresponding period in 2022, due to a collective decline in most segments that make up the general index.

The IPI decline was quoted as follows: 0.8 percent in group of machinery and transportation equipment, 5.4 percent in the group of manufactured goods, 3.1 percent in the group of food and livestock,

16.2 percent in the group of mineral fuels, mineral lubricants and similar materials, 2 percent in the inedible raw materials group (excluding fuel) and 2.9 percent in beverages and tobacco group.

On the other hand, the group of chemicals and related materials posted a 3.8 percent rise in their IPI, while the group of miscellaneous manufactured products went down by 1.4 percent in their IPI.

Compared to the second quarter of 2023, the IPI dropped by 7.2 per-

cent. The group of machinery and transportation equipment experienced 16.1 percent decline in their IPI, while manufactured products' IPI went down by 9.9 percent, followed in the decline trend by miscellaneous products (5.3 percent), mineral fuels, mineral lubricants and related materials (6.2 percent) and beverages and tobacco (3.2 percent).

In contrast, the index for the food and livestock group posted a 4.1 percent rise. — ONA



Royal Oman Police

Announcement

The Directorate General of Customs at the Royal Oman Police announces to the commercial community that it has stopped activating the service of submitting the shipping document (manifest) manually using the Bayan system, as of Sunday, 3 March 2024. The service will be available through the electronic integration channels only to ensure the accuracy of the information provided directly by shipping lines and shipping companies through their systems.

Companies that do not have flexible electronic systems can use the "Jisr" platform to communicate with the Directorate General of Customs to register and subscribe to the appropriate packages through the following link: <http://www.customs.gov.om/ar/jisserregistration>.



Ministry of Health

ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Health - Directorate General of Health Services At Al Dhahira Governorate- invites specialized companies to participate in the following Tender: -

Tender Ref.	Description	Last date for Collection of tender Document	Closing Time/ Day/ Date	Eligibility	Tender Fee (Non-Refundable)
886/2024	Hiring of Bus for the Transportation of medicine at Al Dhahira Governorate	13/MARCH /2024	Before 9 am on TUESDAY 02/APRIL/2024	Specialized Companies registered with Tender Board	R.O 25.000

Notes:-

- All Specialized and interested Companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender documents from the E. Tendering website: etendering.tenderboard.gov.om against non-refundable payment as mentioned above.
- The DGHS is not bound to accept the lowest tender and reserves the right to accepts or reject any tender.

Any Clarification, you may contact via
Telephone: 24402200, Email: etenderhd@mtcit.gov.om



VISION AL KHAIR GCC FUND

NOTICE TO UNIT HOLDERS

The Fund Management Body of Vision Al Khair GCC Fund in their meeting held on 22th February' 2024, approved to pay cash dividend of 6% i.e.) 60 baiza per unit (for the financial year ended 31st December 2023, to the unit holders as of record date of 31st March 2024.

In case of any queries, Please contact:
Mrs. Oula AL Rahbi at
+968-24760052 or
Email: fundoperations@visioncapital.om



VISION REAL ECONOMY GCC FUND

NOTICE TO UNIT HOLDERS

The Fund Management Body of Vision Real Economy GCC Fund in their meeting held on 22 February' 2024, approved to pay cash dividend of 5% i.e.) 50 baiza per unit (for the financial year ended 31st December 2023, to the unit holders as of record date of 31st March 2024.

In case of any queries, Please contact:
Mrs. Oula AL Rahbi at
+968-24760052 or
Email: fundoperations@visioncapital.om



VISION FOCUSED FUND

NOTICE TO UNIT HOLDERS

The Fund Management Body of Vision Focused Fund in their meeting held on 22 February' 2024, approved to pay cash dividend of 5% i.e.) 50 baiza per unit (for the financial year ended 31st December 2023, to the unit holders as of record date of 31st March 2024.

In case of any queries, Please contact:
Mrs. Oula AL Rahbi at
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Email: fundoperations@visioncapital.om

AFTER A PROLONGED ILLNESS

Indian ghazal singer Pankaj Udhas passes away

MUMBAI: Globally renowned Ghazal maestro and Padma Shri recipient Pankaj Udhas passed away on Monday at the age of 72.

Taking to Instagram, Pankaj Udhas' daughter Nayaab shared a statement on Instagram which read, "With a very heavy heart, we are saddened to inform you of the sad demise of Padmashri Pankaj Udhas on 26th February 2024 due

to a prolonged illness."

The legendary singer passed away after a prolonged illness.

Soon after Nayaab shared the news of the singer's demise, his fans swamped the comment section and posted their condolences.

A fan wrote, "May his soul rest in peace."

"I'm so sorry to hear of your loss, stay strong and please accept my

condolences," another user wrote.

"Deepest Condolences and Prayers," another user posted.

Among the evergreen ghazals that Pankaj Udhas lent his vocals to were 'Chitthi Aayi Hai', 'Chandani Raat Mein', 'Na Kajre Ki Dhaar', 'Aur Ahista Kijiye Baatein', 'Ek Taraf Uska Ghar' and 'Thodi Thodi Piya Karo'.



- ANI

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NORTH AL BATINAH



FUNCTION: The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik Al Said, in the presence of Royal Family members, government officials, private sector representatives, businessmen and investors. - OMA

Over 20 countries take part in Sohar Investment Forum

SOHAR: More than 20 countries took part in Sohar Investment Forum 2024, organised by the branch of Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in the Governorate of North Al Batinah.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of HH Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik Al Said, in the presence of Royal Family members, government officials, private sector representatives, businessmen and investors.

Mohammed bin Suleiman Al Kindi, Governor of North Al Batinah, spoke about the investment incentives that abound in the Governorate of North Al Batinah. He pointed out that the governorate accounts for 16% of the Sultanate of Oman's non-oil domestic product (valued at approximately RO 4.3 billion).

Reports show that the domestic product in the governorate grew by 16.3% between 2021 and 2022, said Al Kindi. He added that the services sector's volume makes up more than OMR2.65 billion, followed by the industrial sector (OMR 1.5 billion) and the agricultural sector (OMR 165 million).

For her part, Ibtisam Ahmed Al Farooji, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry

and Investment Promotion for Investment Promotion, underscored the significance of opening local and foreign investments and consolidating their value in the local economy. This, she said, reflects the Ministry's efforts to streamline procedures and support progress in economic growth through investments.

During the forum, 14 agreements were signed, among them six inked by "Madayn" with investors, for implementing projects in the industrial sector to the tune of OMR17.85 million.

The agreements included one worth \$225 million inked with Sanvira Carbon company. The agreement provides for the setting up of a ready-made anode manufacturing unit at Sohar Free Zone (capacity: 300,000 cubic metres).

This was in addition to 7 agreements signed by the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning for leasing usufruct lands with an investment value of about OMR1,754,000.

A roadshow, opened on the sidelines of the forum, showcased the services of various government and private establishments operating in the investment sector.

- OMA

This will contribute in more than one way to the bloc's drive to become climate neutral by 2050, the primary goal of the European Green Deal

BRUSSELS: The European Union's citizen energy movement is growing — albeit in fits and starts — particularly in southern and east-central Europe, where clean energy collectives were until recently unknown quantities.

The driving force behind this growth is the groundbreaking 2019 EU legislation that stipulates that by 2024, clean energy communities, like the many thousands already scattered across the north of the continent, must be able to operate in every member state. By the end of this year, every EU country should have adopted legislation that enables collectives of renewable energy activists to own and operate their own energy parks and sell and share the energy they produce.

This will contribute in more than one way to the bloc's drive to become climate neutral by 2050, the primary goal of the European Green Deal.

But even though turning energy consumers into prosumers (people who produce and consume their own energy) is central to clean energy collectives, these communities are about more than just generating green electricity.

The citizen energy movement was born in Germany and Denmark in the 1980s and is about democratising energy — long a sector with rigid hierarchical structures and opaque processes.

In the past, consumers paid energy bills and accessed heat and power at the flip of a switch — no questions asked. The dirty business of mineral extraction and power generation usually happened far away from populations and was often outsourced to other countries. Utilities reaped massive profits — no questions asked there either. But air pollution, the risks of nuclear power and then climate change propelled concerned citizens into action.

In Germany, pioneers relied on the 19th century model of "Genossenschaften" (cooperatives) to organise citizens and raise money to buy solar farms, wind parks and even whole electricity grids. In the 1990s, they won the right to sell their product to the utilities, and in 2000 to receive set prices that ensured the repayment of their investment.

The proliferation of coopera-



tives was a critical, first step in the "Energiewende," Germany's clean energy transition, the fruits of which now supply the country with over half its electricity.

Various types of energy collectives now exist across Europe. Today, however, they don't just focus on zero-carbon solar and wind power, but also on energy efficiency, storage, biomass, sustainable transportation and flexibility.

Some are tiny — just a handful of members — but others, such as EWS Schönaun in Germany and Ecopower in Belgium, provide tens of thousands of homes with renewable energy. The Brussels-based NGO Rescoop.eu, a staunch supporter of citizen energy, estimates that there are 2,250 energy cooperatives run by 1.5 million citizens across the continent.

Energy cooperatives are non-profit, grassroots projects that are democratically organised. Members may share in some of the proceeds and can usually purchase their homegrown energy for less than the market price. In many cooperatives, each member has a single vote, regardless of how many shares they own.

The EU legislation that is part of the Clean Energy for All Europeans package takes the citizen

energy phenomenon in Europe to another level, even though in some countries much remains to be done if clean energy collectives are to flourish.

This was the finding of five journalists in Bulgaria, Croatia, Germany, Greece and Poland who collaborated on DW's cross-border clean energy communities series 2024. In Germany, the focus was on the Rhein-Sieg citizen energy cooperative located in Siegburg in western Germany. This co-op of 350 members boasts 14 photovoltaic sites in and around the city as well as an e-car sharing enterprise.

Even though 900 such energy cooperatives exist in Germany, the EU legislation implies that Germany's legal definition of energy cooperatives is not as enabling as it should be.

The Rhein-Sieg co-op wants to start "energy sharing," which means making its clean electricity directly available to other co-op members or interested local consumers at a reasonable price. Thus far, this has been impossible because the co-op requires cost-effective access to the local grid.

- DW
Full story @ timesofoman.com/world

EUROPEAN UNION

Why are farmers across European countries protesting?

BRUSSELS: Over the past weeks, around half of the European Union's member states have seen farmers protesting against their respective national and European agricultural policies. On Monday, agricultural ministers from the bloc are meeting in Brussels to address the protests.

The reasons for the demonstrations vary significantly, though. In Germany, for instance, farmers are upset about a planned reduction in subsidies for diesel fuel. In Poland and other Eastern European countries, they are blocking roads and border crossings because they want to prevent cheap imports from Ukraine.

The European farmers' association, COPA, calls for less stringent environmental regulations, less bureaucracy in EU agricultural policy and better conditions in international competition.

Ursula von der Leyen, the president of the European Commission, the EU's executive branch, has already reacted and withdrawn a proposed law that would have halved the use of pesticides in Europe.

But most farmers want more than that — more exceptions and fewer regulations. Last year, the head of the farmers' and citizens' movement in the Netherlands, Caroline van der Plas, pointed to an even more fundamental issue.

"The people who provide our daily food ... are dismissed as animal abusers, poisoners, soil destroyers and environmental



polluters," she told the Dutch parliament. Last week, the European Commission made new proposals to take the wind out of the sails of the protests. Rules are to be relaxed, and exceptions are made to make it easier to obtain subsidies.

The pressure "currently felt by our hard-working farmers must be alleviated so that food safety is guaranteed," von der Leyen said. "Simplification of our agricultural policy remains a priority."

Yet agriculture ministers and the European Parliament have jointly approved the so-called "Farm to Fork" strategy, which brings a lot of new regulations for farms. The representation of farm-

ers' interests in the member states and in the EU capital, Brussels, is influential. Center-right conservative MEPs have sided with the farmers, and the centre-left group also signals understanding.

But it's not like the rules, against which farmers are rebelling, are all ecologically and environmentally wrong, or that they came out of nowhere, German agricultural politician Maria Noichl warned in a debate in the European Parliament. However, she still called for supporting the farmers in their concerns.

"Let's go with them into a difficult time of climate change," Noichl said.

There's no doubt among EU politicians that the agricultural sector needs climate protection, emissions reduction and structural change. But how is this to be done?

Structural change in European agriculture has been underway for years, as the number of farms is declining rapidly — by a third to 9.2 million since 2005. However, the cultivated area has not shrunk. This means that there are fewer farms, but they are getting bigger. That's not just a matter of economic viability. Many farmers retire, and there's simply a lack of successors and young farmers, even though they'd be supported by special subsidies from the EU.



European agriculture produces large surpluses, and those are successfully exported. According to statistics from the German Ministry of Agriculture, the average income of farmers in Germany has risen sharply in recent years. Inflation led to higher prices for customers in supermarkets, and production costs rose less sharply.

An agricultural worker in Germany earned an average income of €43,000 (\$46,650) in 2022. However, incomes in the sector fluctuate considerably across the EU. The incomes of farmers in Spain or Romania are significantly lower. In the Netherlands, they are significantly higher.

The EU is injecting a lot of money into agriculture. Since 1962, all member states have jointly made decisions in the agricultural sector,

and agricultural policy is at the core of the bloc. The largest part of the common budget, around a third, goes to grants to farmers and rural development.

Although agriculture only accounts for 1.6% of economic output in the EU, it receives around a quarter of all subsidies from the regular budget. In 2022, €243 billion in subsidies were pumped into all sectors of the economy, €57 billion of which went to farms.

The high subsidies ensure that food prices in the EU are relatively low and stable. If farmers were to pass on their actual production costs without subsidies, prices would rise sharply and fluctuate greatly depending on the harvest situation. Preventing this was and is the declared aim of EU agricultural policy. - DW

HUMAN RIGHTS WATCH



Israel is ignoring UN court ruling on Gaza, HRW says

GAZA: New York-based rights group Human Rights Watch (HRW) has accused Israel of failing to provide urgently needed aid to people in the Gaza Strip as ordered by the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

The ICJ, the judicial branch of the United Nations, said last month that Israel must take “immediate and effective measures to enable the provision of urgently needed basic services and humanitarian assistance to address the adverse conditions of life faced by Palestinians in the Gaza Strip.”

“The Israeli government has simply ignored the court’s ruling and, in some ways, even intensified its repression, including further blocking lifesaving aid,” said Omar Shakir, Israel and Palestine director at Human Rights Watch.

Israel denies it is restricting the entry of aid. It has blamed aid organisations operating inside Gaza instead, saying hundreds of trucks are sitting idle on the Palestinian side of the main crossing.

The UN says reaching the trucks at the crossing is sometimes too dangerous.

The ICJ’s order was a preliminary response to a South African petition accusing Israel of genocide. The court did not go as far as to order Israel to end its offensive, which the Israeli government

says is a legitimate war fought in self-defence.

Gaza death toll at least 29,782

The Health Ministry in the Gaza Strip said on Monday that at least 29,782 people have been killed in the Palestinian territory since Israel launched an offensive on October 7.

Ninety of the deaths occurred in the past 24 hours, the ministry said in a statement.

It said some 70,043 people have also been injured in the conflict.

The United Nations and multiple humanitarian organisations consider the death toll and casualty numbers to be broadly reliable.

Around half of Gaza’s 2.3 million inhabitants are children, and the UN says the majority of civilians killed have been women and children.

West Bank government resigns

Palestinian Prime Minister Mohammad Shtayyeh says he has handed his West Bank government’s resignation to Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas.

Shtayyeh added that he resigned last Tuesday but handed in the written resignation on Monday.

“I submit the government’s

resignation to Mr. President [Mahmoud Abbas],” Shtayyeh said. He added that it came in the wake of the “developments related to the aggression against the Gaza Strip and the escalation in the West Bank and Jerusalem.”

Shtayyeh added that he was resigning to allow for Palestinians to form abroad consensus among Palestinians about political arrangements amid Israel’s war against Hamas, a Palestinian militant group, in Gaza.

The US has been pressuring Abbas to shake up the Palestinian Authority, which rules parts of the occupied West Bank. This comes amid international efforts to stop the war and work toward a political structure to govern Gaza afterward.

The Palestine Red Crescent Society (PRCS) said that, with prior coordination by the United Nations Office of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), it was able to evacuate 24 people on Sunday from Al Amal Hospital, including 18 patients and wounded, 8 of whom needed urgent surgical operations.

The organisation added in a brief statement on Monday that its crews, in cooperation with OCHA, were able to bring logistical materials, food and water to the hospital.

— Agencies

DRIVE SLOWER LIVE LONGER

A TIMES OF OMAN PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT



Sultan Qaboos University

ANNOUNCEMENT

Selling used Electromechanical materials, Motors and A/C chillers and their in sealed envelopes.

Sultan Qaboos University announces their desire to sell used Electromechanical materials, Motors and A/C chillers and their in sealed envelopes. Those wishing to enter the auction must adhere to the following conditions:

- Interested parties can view used Electromechanical materials, Motors and A/C chillers in auction yard and receive the bidding on Tuesday and Wednesday 03-04/02/2024 from 03:00 pm to 05:00 pm.
- Deposit of (200) Omani riyals in cash as an insurance. This amount will be refunded to the unsuccessful bidders.
- Submitting the offer in a sealed envelope after viewing the used Electromechanical materials, entitled by the name of the head of the committee for selling used Electromechanical materials, and put the envelope in bid box.
- The presented offer is binding on its owner if it is placed on it, and in the event that the buyer does not pay the purchase price on time, the insurance amount will be forfeited, and the sale will be awarded to another applicant.
- Those who win the bidding will be contacted. They must pay the remaining sum, and they are responsible for moving their items within one week from 09:00 am to 02:00 pm.
- The Used Electromechanical materials are sold in their current condition and SQU is not responsible for any loss or damage to the sold material if the moving is not completed after the end of the sale (10) Omani riyals will be imposed for each day after 12/03/2024.

Note:

- Prices are sorted according to groups and the higher price is taken.
- Funds will be collected electronically through visa cards.
- Entering the auction stores through Hospital Gate No (2).
- For more information contact on 24142611 /94094918.



GULF HOTELS (OMAN) COMPANY LIMITED SAOG

P O Box: 1455, P C 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman

C.R. No. 1059459

DIRECTORS' REPORT

Dear Shareholders,

We welcome you to the annual general meeting of Gulf Hotels (Oman) Company Limited SAOG to present to you a report on the company's activities, the annual financial statements, a report on corporate governance and the auditor's report for the financial year ended 31st December 2023.

Financial Results for the year

The company recorded total revenue of RO 7.448 Million (2022: RO 6.329 Million) and net profit after tax of RO 0.668 Million for the year 2023 (2022: RO 0.319 Million). For the financial year 2023, the hotel witnessed an increase of 17.68% in total revenue and 109.37% in net profit after tax compared to last year due to increase in business & leisure travel and better performance of restaurants and banqueting facilities.

Future outlook

We hope for the end of Middle east conflict, stability of economies and better airline connectivity to key source markets like UK and Europe, which would increase leisure travel and benefit the hotels in Oman. The room rates of hotels in Oman may trend lower due to stiff market competition and the new hotel properties in coming years.

The company is considering plans to upgrade / renovate the guest rooms and other facilities of the hotel in coming years. We believe this will enhance our customer experience, add value to the hotel property and withstand competition from new hotel properties.

Dividend

Considering the results of the financial year 2023 the Board of Directors are pleased to recommend a cash dividend of 10% on paid up equity capital (100 Baizas per share) subject to its due approval by the shareholders.

This is based on the policy of the company to recommend dividend taking into consideration the prescribed legal limits, funds available at the disposal of the company and estimated future cash flow.

Performance appraisal of the Board

In line with the requirement under the code of corporate governance issued by the Capital Market Authority, the appraisal of the Board of Directors was carried out during the year 2023 by MGI Vision, independent board evaluators appointed at the AGM of shareholders held on 23rd March 2023. The appraisal was done for the Board as a whole and conducted based on the criteria approved by the AGM of shareholders. As per their report the performance of the Board has been 'very satisfactory' for the year 2023. The executive summary report by independent consultant on performance appraisal of the Board for the year 2023 is enclosed.

Omanization

The company values its employees as one of the important stakeholders in its business. The hotel has been pursuing Omanization plan to recruit, train and develop local Omani talent in hospitality sector. Going forward, the hotel would continue its efforts and focus in recruitment and nurturing of young Omani people and help them in their career advancement.

A Note of thanks

We express our deep appreciation and gratitude to His Majesty Sultan Haitham Bin Tariq Al Said for His Majesty's inspiring leadership and vision. We pray to Almighty Allah to shower his everlasting blessings on His Majesty and give His Majesty the strength to lead our nation to further growth and prosperity. We thank the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for implementing right policies to encourage growth in tourism sector.

We wish to take this opportunity to thank the hotel staff, management of Intercontinental Hotels Group, customers, suppliers, bankers and the shareholders for their continued support.

Ali Ahmed Abdullah Al Najjar
Chairman

NOTE:

- The complete accounts will be sent by mail to any shareholder or other interested party who requests them, either in Arabic or English, within 7 days from the receipt of the request at company's address: Gulf Hotels (Oman) Co. Ltd. SAOG, P O Box: 1455, P C 112, Ruwi, Sultanate of Oman.
- The above Directors' report and Audited annual financial statements would be presented for the approval of the shareholders at their forthcoming Annual General Meeting proposed to be held on 21st March 2024.

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION AS AT 31 DECEMBER 2023

	31 Dec 2023 RO	31 Dec 2022 RO
ASSETS		
Non-current assets:		
Property, plant and equipment	28,508,490	28,903,903
Total non-current assets	28,508,490	28,903,903
Current assets:		
Inventories	59,757	85,565
Trade and other receivables	594,592	541,075
Financial assets at fair value through profit or loss	-	1,000
Cash and cash equivalents	1,282,259	734,105
Total current assets	1,936,608	1,361,745
Total assets	30,445,098	30,265,648
EQUITY AND LIABILITIES		
Equity:		
Share capital	3,428,322	3,428,322
Share premium	58,574	58,574
Legal reserve	1,142,774	1,142,774
Revaluation reserve	18,619,520	18,619,520
Retained earnings	1,349,724	681,260
Total equity	24,588,914	23,930,450
LIABILITIES		
Non-current liabilities:		
Term loan	-	799,389
Staff terminal benefits	412,376	302,851
Deferred tax liability	3,554,042	3,442,814
Total non-current liabilities	3,966,418	4,545,054
Current liabilities:		
Term loan	399,389	460,000
Trade and other payables	1,480,377	1,317,958
Provision for income tax	-	12,186
Total current liabilities	1,879,766	1,790,144
Total liabilities	5,846,184	6,335,198
Total equity and liabilities	30,445,098	30,265,648
Net assets per share (RO)	7.175	6.980

STATEMENT OF PROFIT OR LOSS AND OTHER COMPREHENSIVE INCOME FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 DECEMBER 2023

	Year ended 31 Dec 2023 RO	Year ended 31 Dec 2022 RO
Revenue	7,447,604	6,328,535
Cost of materials consumed	(1,433,209)	(1,194,066)
Salaries and wages	(2,479,626)	(2,243,872)
Service expenses	(1,195,387)	(1,079,946)
Other operating expenses	(997,672)	(801,329)
Depreciation of property, plant and equipment	(565,414)	(574,487)
Profit from operations	776,296	434,835
Finance income	12,147	5,684
Finance costs	(47,757)	(86,745)
Reversal of provision for expected credit losses	708	15,884
Profit before tax	741,394	369,658
Income tax expense	(72,930)	(50,390)
Profit for the year	668,464	319,268
Other comprehensive income	-	-
Total comprehensive income for the year	668,464	319,268
Basic and diluted earnings per share (RO)	0.195	0.093



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SPORTS

Gill, Jurel see India through in nervy chase, clinch series win

India managed to get the better of England on Day 4 and this victory has allowed them to gain an unassailable lead in the five-match series

RANCHI: Indian youngsters Shubman Gill and Dhruv Jurel's remarkable effort with the bat took the hosts across the finishing line and clinched the series with a five-wicket victory in the fourth Test against England on Monday.

Once again, India managed to get the better of England on Day 4 and this victory has allowed them to gain an unassailable lead in the five-match series (3-1).

Gill and Jurel's unbeaten 72-run stand played a pivotal role after Shoaib Bashir and Tom Hartley inflicted a flurry of wickets in a quick session.

The second session saw momentum shift like a pendulum, in favour of both teams. Ravindra Jadeja and Shubman Gill continued to drive India's score but Shoaib Bashir's arrival forced India to go on the backfoot.

He dismissed Jadeja for 4 and, on the next ball, got Sarfaraz Khan for a golden duck. Jurel came in and had a few nervous moments but settled on quickly.

As England made India work hard for each run, both batters showed grit throughout their stay as the equation slowly started to come down. With 20 runs needed, Gill opened his arms and struck back-to-back sixes to bring India within touching distance of victory.

He raised his bat for a well-deserved half century and the crowd stood up to applaud the 24-year-old for his valiant effort.

Jurel scored a boundary and then picked up a double to get India across the finishing line and seal the series.

Gill and Jurel remained unbeaten with scores of 52 and 39, respectively.

In the first session, England managed to blow the game wide open by picking up three wickets.

The opening duo of skipper Rohit Sharma and young gun Yashasvi Jaiswal showed signs of taking the game away within a blink of an eye after a slow start to the game.

Rohit started to accelerate after he cleared the boundary line in James Anderson's over. Jaiswal joined the party as he followed up with a four.

Confidence was a factor that was evident during their stay, but Jaiswal's in a moment of rush sliced the ball in Joe Root's over and Anderson took a brilliant diving catch to break the 84-run stand.

Rohit went on to complete his fifty but was caught behind, while Rajat Patidar's misery continued as he got dismissed for a six-ball duck.

Earlier in the Test, England won the toss and elected to bat first. Joe Root's 122* propelled the visitors to a score of 353. In reply, India succumbed to a score of 177/7 but Jurel and Kuldeep Yadav stitched up a 76-run stand to take the hosts to a competitive score of 307.

England walked out with hopes of taking a strong lead, but Ravichandran Ashwin spun England to restrict them on 145.

Brief Score: England 353 & 145 (Zak Crawley 60, Jonny Bairstow 30, Ravichandran Ashwin 5/51) vs India 307 & 192/5 (Shubman Gill 52*, Dhruv Jurel 39*, Shoaib Bashir 3/79). -ANI



FOURTH TEST

Shubman Gill told Jurel to play with first innings mindset during match

RANCHI: Shubman Gill, who played a match winning knock for India in the fourth Test against England, revealed the piece of advice that he gave to Dhruv Jurel.

Jurel and Gill's unbeaten 82-run stand sealed a famous series win for India and a five-wicket victory in the fourth Test. This was India's 17th series win in home conditions.

After the game, Gill opened up about the advice that he gave to Jurel during their match winning partnership and disclosed that he asked him to play with the same mindset that he played with in the first innings which saw him score 90.

"I just told him (Jurel) you batted beautifully in the first innings and to have the same mindset, try to use the feet to negate the off-spinner. The way he came down and played was beautiful," Gill said while speaking to the host broadcaster during the post match presentation.

England throughout the day made India work hard for each run, especially after India were reduced to 120/5.

"We were put under pressure by them, but we got a good start by our openers, losing couple of wickets put pressure. But Jurel came out and took the pressure



off. You have to see the situation and play accordingly - they were bowling well and protecting the boundaries, also not giving maidens and keep picking the singles (was the mindset)," Gill stated.

Throughout his knock of 52*, Gill effortlessly used his feet to pick up singles and rotate the strike. His footwork was evident when he struck back-to-back sixes in Shoaib Bashir's over to take India close to the finishing line.

Gill spoke about his approach and revealed that he used his feet to avoid getting trapped in front of the stumps.

"The first innings the ball was not turning much and hence I didn't use my feet, but second innings I decided to take the LBW out of the equation by using my feet. It means the world to us, coming here and having to play the series with not much batting experience, having lost KL after the first Test.. but Rohit Bhai backed us and gave us the confidence to go out and play with freedom," Gill signed off saying.

India now head to Dharamshala for the last test of the 5 Test series with the series under their belt.

RANJI TROPHY

Rohit takes veiled dig at Shreyas, Ishan

RANCHI: Relieved after India ached a nervy chase to post a series-clinching win over England in Ranchi, skipper Rohit Sharma, took a veiled swipe at Shreyas Iyer and Ishan Kishan, who are in the crosshairs of the BCCI over their alleged unwillingness to play for their state teams in the ongoing Ranji Trophy.

Addressing the post-match press conference in the Jharkhand capital on Monday, Rohit said only players, who have the 'hunger' to succeed in Test cricket, will be given a chance to feature in the longest format for the country.

Youngsters Shubman Gill and Dhruv Jurel's remarkable efforts with the bat took the hosts across the finishing line, helping the hosts clinch a five-wicket victory in the fourth Test against England on Monday.

Following the win, Rohit made it clear that there is no dearth of players who are not hungry to don the whites for their nation, adding that it was pointless to play players, who do not have the hunger to play Test cricket.

Ishan Kishan and Shreyas Iyer have skipped Ranji Trophy matches in recent weeks despite not featuring for the national team.

Kishan was in the Indian squad for the South Africa Test series squad last year. -ANI

FOOTBALL



Liverpool beat Chelsea in English Football League Cup final

LONDON: Liverpool FC defeated Chelsea, 1-0, in the final of the English Football League Cup, to win its title for the tenth time in its history, after Virgil van Dijk scored a goal with a header in the final minutes of the second extra period.

The goalless draw remained until the 117th minute, when Van Dijk succeeded in snatching the winning goal at a time when the two teams were preparing for the match to end in a goalless draw and go to penalty kicks.

The original time of the match witnessed the cancellation of a goal for each team after returning to the video assistant referee

technology.

Liverpool achieved its third victory under the leadership of Jurgen Klopp over Chelsea in the local cup competitions in two years, defeating them in the League Cup and the FA Cup in 2022.

The two matches were decided via penalty kicks after a goalless draw.

In yesterday's match, Liverpool missed the efforts of a number of its key players, including Mohamed Salah, Diogo Jota, and goalkeeper Alisson, and within Liverpool's ranks there are several members of the second-row team. -ONA

BANGLADESH PREMIER LEAGUE

It is like a circus: Bangladesh coach Hathurusinghe on BPL

NEW DELHI: Bangladesh coach Chandika Hathurusinghe has criticised the Bangladesh Premier League (BPL), claiming that it has not improved the country's T20 cricket development.

Hathurusinghe cited a lack of local participation in critical batting and bowling roles in the BPL, with clubs frequently depending on foreign players in crucial situations.

Restrictions

He also stated that the ICC should intervene to guarantee that restrictions are in place for players who participate in various events within the same window.

T20 tournament

"We [Bangladesh] don't have a proper T20 tournament. This sounds very odd. When I am watching the BPL, I sometimes

turn off the TV. Some players are not even of the [required] class. I have a big issue with the current system. The ICC need to step in. There has to be some regulations. A player is playing one tournament and then he is playing another tournament. It is like a circus. Players will talk about opportunities, but that's not right. People will lose interest. I have lost interest," Hathurusinghe told ESPNcricinfo.

Hathurusingha stated that Bangladesh players should be given major responsibilities in the BPL.

"We need to have a tournament where our players can do things like batting in the top three... Bangladesh bowlers bowling in the death," he said. "Where will we learn these things otherwise? We have only one tournament." -ANI

REALE ARENA

Real Sociedad and Mallorca look to book first Copa del Rey final spot

MADRID: Real Sociedad and Mallorca look to book the first spot in this season's Copa del Rey final when they meet in Real Sociedad's Reale Arena on Tuesday.

A 0-0 draw in the first leg at the start of February leaves the tie in the balance, although Real Sociedad will be hopeful that a packed stadium will give them the lift they need.

Imanol Alguacil's side missed several chances to win the first leg in Mallorca, with Umar Sadiq especially guilty of some big misses, but they returned to the island a week ago and won 2-1 in La Liga, thanks to a late goal from Mikel Merino.

The team from San Sebastian's home has been poor in recent



weeks, with the league win in Mallorca sandwiched between defeats at home to Osasuna and Villarreal, as they have struggled to score goals.

One big reason for their problems in front of goal is a hamstring problem affecting Mikel

Oyarzabal and the Real Sociedad captain is unlikely to start on Tuesday night.

Ander Barrenetxea is also likely to miss out after limping out of Friday's home defeat, while Alvaro Odriozola, Carlos Fernandez, Andre Silva and Aritz Elustondo

are also injured, to limit Imanol's options as the strain of competing in three competitions takes its toll.

Mallorca has a clean bill of health, apart from long-term injury Pablo Maffeo, although they have 24 hours less to prepare for the match after drawing 1-1 away to Alaves on Saturday.

Javier Aguirre's side may lack the midfield ability of Real Sociedad but is always dangerous from set pieces and with players such as Vedat Muriqi and Matija Nastasic (who scored on Saturday), they don't need much to create chances.

The second semifinal sees Athletic Club Bilbao defend a 1-0 first leg lead at home to Atletico Madrid on Thursday. -Xinhua

OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by April 2024 reaching \$80.40, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by \$1.68 from the price of Friday, which was \$82.08. - OMA

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,594.06 points, up by 0.35 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.86 per cent at 446.65 points. Phoenix Power, up 9.80 per cent, was the top gainer while Voltamp Energy, down 6.04 per cent, was the top loser. > B2

ABU DHABI SUMMIT

WTO chief asks members to 'roll up their sleeves'

ABU DHABI: World Trade Organisation (WTO) Director-General Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala on Monday hoped that participating members of the global organisation will have to "roll up their sleeves" to show the world that it is a forum where members deliver new benefits for people through trade.

Four-day meeting

Ministers and delegates from across the world gathered in Abu Dhabi for a four-day World Trade Organisation (WTO) meeting that began on Monday, to discuss and deliberate upon global trade rules.

WTO is a global watchdog, founded about three decades ago now has 166 member countries, including India.

Speaking at the opening session of 13th Ministerial Conference of the WTO on Monday, Okonjo-Iweala, said she hoped that this year's conference would be a success which countries across the globe "deserve" during these uncertain and difficult times. - ANI

Sohar Industrial City signs pacts worth over OMR17mn

The agreements were inked during the Sohar Investment Forum - an event dedicated to spotlighting investment prospects in North Al Batinah Governorate

Times News Service

Muscat: Sohar Industrial City, which pertains to the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates



(Madayn), signed on Monday four investment pacts totalling over OMR17 million for projects spanning more than 55,000 sqm.

The agreements were inked during the Sohar Investment Fo-

rum - an event dedicated to spotlighting investment prospects in North Al Batinah Governorate.

The first investment contract was signed with the United Feeds Company for project spanning an

area of 22,500 square metres, with an investment of OMR12 million.

The second contract was signed with Sedra International Industries Company to establish a project focused on manufactur-

ing plastic raw materials across 11,757 square metres, with an investment of OMR3.7 million.

Cement project

The third pact, with Omran White Cement Company, involves establishing a cement manufacturing project covering 11,250 square metres, backed by an investment of OMR1 million.

Lastly, the fourth contract was signed with Al Madina Food Industries to establish a project of tea blending and packaging over 4,910 square metres, with an investment of OMR850,000.

The signing of these contracts further advances the objectives of Madayn, aimed at attracting investments, localising national capital, generating employment opportunities for local talents, promoting the establishment of export-oriented industries, and stimulating the Sultanate of Oman's economic sectors in alignment with Oman Vision 2040.

INTERNATIONAL EXHIBITION



Omantel to showcase its innovation-driven vision at Mobile World Congress in Barcelona

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Omantel, the leading provider of integrated telecommunication services in the Sultanate of Oman, will be showcasing its advanced services and innovation-focused strategies at the Mobile World Congress (MWC), the world's largest exhibition for the mobile industry, in Barcelona, Spain, from February 28 to March 3.

MWC Barcelona is the world's largest and most influential event for the connectivity ecosystem and attracts the leading players of the industry, including global mobile operators, device manufacturers, technology providers, vendors, content owners, and others.

Omantel will also use the event to familiarise itself with the latest trends in the field of technology, information technology, digitisation and e-services.

Omantel's strong participation in the international exhibition stems from the company's keenness to keep pace with technical developments, especially in mobile information and communication technology, through the company's constant endeavour to deploy the most prominent technologies and digital solutions that contribute to the telecommunications sector in the Sultanate, support the digital economy and highlight Oman's role in advancing the IT sector. The company will also leverage the platform to hold meetings and establish partnerships with major international telecommunications companies.

In addition, Omantel Innovation Labs is participating in the event with four Omani startups incubated in the labs. The startups will take part in 4YFN, the platform for tech startups at Mobile World Congress and explore partnerships with tech startups, investors and companies to launch joint investment projects.

Omantel's participation in MWC over the past years has led

Omantel's strong participation in the exhibition stems from the company's keenness to keep pace with technical developments, especially in mobile information and communication technology

to the creation of many partnerships with various players in the field of information and mobile communications. This year, the company aspires to conclude a number of cooperation agreements, especially those linked to the Fourth Industrial Revolution, which is based on innovative technologies such as Big Data and AI. The company's innovative approach has resulted in state-of-the-art solutions tailored for individuals, institutions and government entities alike. Omantel also supports the goals of Oman Vision 2040 by investing in emerging technologies and providing the latest solutions in the fields of information and communication technology, such as cloud solutions, ICT solutions, artificial intelligence, smart solutions, cybersecurity and much more. Omantel also harnesses all its technical capabilities and partnerships to promote innovation and leadership in new and advanced technologies in the Sultanate of Oman.

MINERALS DEVELOPMENT OMAN COMPANY

Groundbreaking ceremony for redeveloping Lasil, Al Baydha copper mines celebrated

SOHAR: Minerals Development Oman Company (MDO) celebrated on Monday the groundbreaking ceremony for redeveloping the Lasil and Al Baydha copper mines in Block 4 of the Wilayats of Sohar and Liwa.

The event was held under the auspices of Eng. Salim Nasser Al Oufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals.

The redevelopment of the Lasil and Al Baydha mines is the MDO's first copper mine project; resulted from the intensive exploration programmes carried out by MDO in 2022 revealed the potential of commercial reserves of copper ore estimated at approximately 2.78 million tons in Block 4, part of Oman Mining Company geological assets.

The project will encompass a series of phases, including the mobilization and construction of the mines, open-pit mining operations, and then the commencement of processing and concentration operations. The production of copper ore from the Lasil mine is anticipated to begin this year, while production from the Al Baydha mine is expected to commence in 2026.

The project aims to produce approximately 800,000 tons of copper ore per annum. The project's initial phase is expected to last four years based on the current reserves. However, the company is progressing exploration campaign at the surrounding areas to hopefully secure new reserves and extend the production period.

Eng. Nasser Saif Al Moqbali, CEO of MDO, said, "The redevelopment project of the Lasil and Al



Baydha copper mines marks the start of a significant journey for a series of mining projects and a crucial step towards reviving the copper mining industry in the Sultanate of Oman, which will keep up with the global demand externally and boost the local industries internally."

The project strives to enrich local value addition and optimise

value chains in collaboration and partnership with the private sector. MDO has awarded the mining contract to a national contractor, and awarded the processing contract to Mawarid Mining to process the copper ore in their concentrator located in the Wadi Al Jizzi, Sohar. This initiative exemplifies the company's unwavering commitment to fostering the

mining sector in Oman through a commendable public-private partnership.

MDO's CEO added: "Since the transfer of Oman Mining Company to the group, MDO has begun implementing an ambitious turnaround strategy to revive the company and benefit from its previously unexplored geological assets. Within a short period, we managed to overcome many of these challenges with the support of our partners in the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and other Government entities.

The redevelopment of the Lasil and Al Baydha copper mines project is a significant accomplishment of the turnaround strategy. This strategy aims to enhance the company's financial performance, leverage its human resources and technical expertise, and restore the Oman Mining Company's prestigious position in the copper industry markets". - OMA

TWO-DAY CONFERENCE

Impact of AI on future of business discussed

MUSCAT: The 10th edition of "Oman Conference for Investment in Human Resources" kicked off on Monday.

The two-day conference discusses many concepts, namely studying the impact of information technology and artificial intelligence (AI) on the future of business, establishing advanced work environments and enhancing values and promoters of institutional performance. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Sheikh Sabbaa Hamdan Al Saadi, Secretary General of the Secretariat General of National Celebrations, in the presence of representatives of government departments and private establishments. The conference is organised by the Ministry of Labour in cooperation with Al-Asayel Company. Its working papers elaborate on updates in competition arenas,



the benefits of grooming talents, the culture of leadership for the future, and means of maximising the uses of human capabilities applications.

A special dialogue session will be dedicated to Oman Vision 2040.

It will be titled "Human resources, business systems and future challenges".

The conference targets chairmen and members of boards of directors, Chief Executive Officers, general managers, heads lead-

ers of the public and private sector establishments, heads of human resources departments, training specialists and talented young people interested in developing leadership skills.

Working papers and discussion panels during the second day of the conference will discuss the "Importance of measuring the outcome of investment in different business fields", "Anticipating the Future of Business", the "Impact of information technology and artificial intelligence on the jobs of the future", the "Methodology used in measuring returns from investment on the future of business", and "The role of education and training in shaping the future of business", "Empowering human resources" and the "Role of artificial intelligence in shaping the future of business". - OMA

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Phoenix Power, up 9.80 per cent, was the top gainer while Voltamp Energy, down 6.04 per cent, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,594.06 points, up by 0.35 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.86 per cent at 446.65 points. Phoenix Power, up 9.80 per cent, was the top gainer while Voltamp Energy, down 6.04 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Al Suwadi Power were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1316 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR3.2 million, with more than 33.86 million shares changing hands. Out of 48 traded securities, 18 advanced, 12 declined, and 18 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for OMR110,000 while foreign investors were net buyers for OMR98,000, followed by domestic investors for OMR12,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,184.39 points, down 0.2 per cent. Prices of Bank Nizwa were up by 1.04 per cent. Prices of Muscat Finance, Al Anwar Investment, Sohar International

Bank, and Bank Muscat were down by 4.44 per cent, 1.41 per cent, 0.92 per cent, 0.38 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,424.87 points, down 0.45 per cent. Prices of Galfar Engineering, Oman Cables Industry, Al Maha Ceramics, and Al Anwar Ceramics were up by 3.33 per cent, 1.35 per cent, 0.59 per cent and 0.56 per cent respectively. Prices of Voltamp Energy, Jazeera Steel Products, A'Saffa Foods, Oman Chlorine, and Raysut Cement were down by 6.04 per cent, 2.99 per cent, 2.82 per cent, 1.96 per cent and 0.83 per cent respectively.

Services Index was up by 2.03 per cent before closing at 1,726.00 points. Prices of Phoenix Power, SMN Power Holding, Al Batinah Power, Al Suwadi Power, and Dhofar Generating were up by 9.80 per cent, 9.57 per cent, 9.52 per cent and 9.30 per cent respectively. Prices of Renaissance Services, Muscat Gases, and Shell Oman Marketing were down by 1.19 per cent, 1.00 per cent, and 0.25 per cent respectively – **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

INDICES

MSX 30 INDEX

FINANCIAL INDEX

Industry Index

Services Index

MSX Shariah Index

MSX TR INDEX

FINANCIAL TR IDX

SERVICES TR IDX

INDUSTRIAL TR IDX

Trading Summary

Volume

Turnover

Trades

Market Cap

Up

Down

Equal

Sec. Traded

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, FEBRUARY 26

ISIN

SECURITY NAME

VOLUME

TURNOVER

TRADES

OPEN PRICE

HIGH

LOW

CLOSE PR.

PREV. CLOSE

DIFF (RD)

DIFF %

LAST PR.

LAST BD.

LAST OFFER

PRN VALUE

MARKET CAP

REGULAR MARKET

OM0000004248

SMN POWER HOLDING

4,390

444

3

0.101

0.103

0.101

0.103

0.094

0.009

9.574

0.103

0.092

0.100

0.100

20,562,467

OM0000002226

ALJAZEERA SERVICES

5,983

1,377

3

0.230

0.240

0.230

0.240

0.230

0.010

4.348

0.240

0.220

0.234

0.100

14,689,026

OM0000005005

ALMAHA CERAMICS

103,989

17,898

23

0.177

0.177

0.170

0.170

0.169

0.001

0.592

0.170

0.170

0.170

0.100

9,350,000

OM0000002188

AL ANWAR CERAMIC

192,160

34,573

22

0.179

0.181

0.179

0.180

0.179

0.001

0.559

0.180

0.180

0.182

0.100

39,600,000

OM0000003026

OMAN TELECOM

153,316

188,532

32

1.087

1.087

1.080

1.085

1.084

0.001

0.092

1.085

1.084

1.085

0.100

813,750,000

OM0000001087

OMAN UNITED INSURANCE

3,137

843

2

0.268

0.270

0.268

0.270

0.270

0.000

0.000

0.270

0.267

0.278

0.100

27,000,000

OM0000001152

OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT

125,443

14,561

18

0.116

0.117

0.115

0.116

0.116

0.000

0.000

0.117

0.116

0.117

0.100

17,400,000

OM0000001483

NATIONAL BANK OMAN

25,000

6,500

1

0.260

0.260

0.260

0.260

0.260

0.000

0.000

0.260

0.252

0.260

0.100

422,746,052

OM0000002440

AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.

389,427

28,811

18

0.073

0.073

0.072

0.072

0.072

0.000

0.000

0.072

0.071

0.073

0.100

6,480,000

OM0000003125

GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.

135,986

8,023

9

0.059

0.059

0.059

0.059

0.059

0.000

0.000

0.059

0.059

0.064

0.100

11,800,000

OM0000004788

MADINA TAKAFUL

366,931

32,069

15

0.088

0.088

0.087

0.088

0.088

0.000

0.000

0.088

0.087

0.088

0.100

15,400,000

OM0000002796

BANK MUSCAT

1,344,836

355,442

69

0.264

0.265

0.263

0.263

0.263

-0.001

-0.379

0.263

0.263

0.263

0.100

1,974,182,427

OM0000003398

SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK

1,404,389

152,507

40

0.107

0.110

0.107

0.108

0.109

-0.001

-0.917

0.108

0.108

0.110

0.100

590,531,958

OM0000003224

RENAISSANCE SERVICES

69,000

28,635

4

0.415

0.415

0.415

0.415

0.420

-0.005

-1.190

0.415

0.415

0.415

0.100

98,110,150

OM0000002176

JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS

1,300

338

1

0.260

0.260

0.260

0.260

0.268

-0.008

-2.985

0.260

0.266

0.260

0.100

32,473,470

Total

15

4,336,287

850,573

260

Parallel Market

OM0000005963

PHOENIX POWER

2,842,622

154,415

129

0.053

0.056

0.052

0.056

0.051

0.005

9.804

0.056

0.053

0.056

0.100

81,905,682

OM0000004925

ALBATINAH POWER

5,521,722

40,171

142

0.063

0.069

0.063

0.069

0.063

0.006

9.524

0.069

0.060

0.069

0.100

46,587,233

OM0000004933

AL SUWADI POWER

8,899,398

597,633

113

0.065

0.069

0.064

0.069

0.063

0.006

9.524

0.069

0.069

0.069

0.100

49,294,037

OM0000007407

DHOFAH GENERATING

1,195,964

55,305

87

0.043

0.047

0.043

0.047

0.043

0.004

9.302

0.047

0.047

0.047

0.100

10,445,280

OM0000003141

BARKA WATER AND POWER

1,665,703

84,598

73

0.049

0.052

0.048

0.052

0.048

0.004

8.333

0.052

0.052

0.052

0.100

8,320,000

OM0000008934

ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES

269,877

83,251

11

0.308

0.320

0.308

0.317

0.306

0.011

3.585

0.317

0.310

0.317

0.100

244,153,407

OM0000003521

GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING

1,123,555

162,576

91

0.145

0.155

0.140

0.155

0.150

0.005

3.333

0.155

0.145

0.155

0.100

31,482,899

OM0000007910

AMAN REAL ESTATE

213,292

20,595

19

0.095

0.097

0.095

0.096

0.094

0.002

2.128

0.096

0.097

0.096

0.100

19,200,000

OM0000004689

SHARQIYAH DESALINATION

2,412

359

2

0.149

0.149

0.149

0.149

0.146

0.003

2.055

0.149

0.147

0.149

0.100

14,572,522

OM0000008710

BARKA DESALINATION

70,767

8,372

5

0.118

0.120

0.118

0.120

0.118

0.002

1.695

0.120

0.116

0.120

0.100

9,062,640

OM0000001707

OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY

7,500

16,688

2

2.215

2.245

2.215

2.245

2.215

0.030

1.354

2.245

0.000

2.245

0.100

201,376,500

OM0000004420

BANK NIZWA

535,875

51,806

23

0.096

0.097

0.096

0.097

0.096

0.001

1.042

0.097

0.097

0.097

0.100

216,984,444

OM0000008868

THE PEARL REEF

10,000

1,230

2

0.123

0.123

0.123

0.123

0.122

0.001

0.820

0.123

0.123

0.125

0.100

62,466,736

OM0000001160

NATIONAL GAS

324

25

1

0.077

0.077

0.077

0.077

0.077

0.000

0.000

0.077

0.072

0.079

0.100

6,545,000

OM0000001301

DHOFAH FOODS AND INVESTMENT

28,352

1,578

4

0.056

0.058

0.055

0.058

0.058

0.000

0.000

0.058

0.054

0.058

0.100

11,465,262

OM0000001962

AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING

371,542

17,534

12

0.047

0.048

0.046

0.047

0.047

0.000

0.000

0.047

0.047

0.051

0.100

3,995,000

OM0000002036

MUSCAT THREAD MILLS

600

43

1

0.072

0.072

0.072

0.074

0.074

0.000

0.000

0.072

0.071

0.072

0.100

1,189,376

OM0000004735

SEMBORP SALALAH

33,900

3,279

7

0.100

0.100

0.091

0.096

0.096

0.000

0.000

0.096

0.091

0.100

0.100

91,638,907

OM0000004776

TAKAFUL OMAN

15,000

660

1

0.044

0.044

0.044

0.044

0.044

0.000

0.000

0.044

0.044

0.000

0.100

11,000,000

OM0000007084

MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION

5,000

370

1

0.074

0.074

0.074

0.074

0.074

0.000

0.000

0.074

0.071

0.074

0.100

11,510,730

OM0000009072

OQ GAS NETWORKS

3,103,492

450,136

172

0.145

0.146

0.144

0.145

0.145

0.000

0.000

0.145

0.145

0.145

0.100

627,940,468

OM0000002275

SHELL OMAN MARKETING

278

227

2

0.820

0.820

0.803

0.803

0.805

-0.002

-0.248

0.803

0.803

0.825

0.100

76,285,000

OM0000001418

RAYSUT CEMENT

154,087

18,399

29

0.120

0.120

0.119

0.119

0.120

-0.001

-0.833

0.119

0.119

0.119

0.100

23,800,000

OM0000001178

MUSCAT GASES

15,600

1,554

3

0.100

0.100

0.099

0.099

0.100

-0.001

-1.000

0.099

0.090

0.101

0.100

2,970,000

OM0000001772

ALANWAR INVESTMENT

2,988,408

212,051

110

0.072

0.072

0.070

0.070

0.071

-0.001

-1.406

0.070

0.070

0.072

0.100

14,430,000

OM0000002341

OMAN CHLORINE

541

252

2

0.459

0.500

0.459

0.500

0.510

-0.010

-1.961

0.500

0.459

0.500

0.100

35,754,421

OM0000002804

ASAFA FOODS

13,830

4,330

3

0.318

0.318

0.310

0.310

0.319

-0.009

-2.821

0.310

0.310

0.310

0.100

37,200,000

OM0000001500

MUSCAT FINANCE

22,000

946

1

0.043

0.043

0.043

0.043

0.045

-0.002

-4.444

0.043

0.043

0.049

0.100

13,207,282

OM0000003661

VOLTAMP ENERGY

353

61

3

0.180

0.180

0.171

0.171

0.182

-0.011

-6.044

0.171

0.171

0.180

0.100

13,919,870

Total

29

29,511,844

2,349,734

1,051

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN

CBO issues treasury bills worth OMR75mn

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR75 million by way of allotting treasury bills on Monday.



LIFESTYLE

BODY
TEMPERATURE
IS LINKED
TO DEPRESSION:
STUDY

A study from UC San Francisco revealed that individuals with depression may benefit from lowering their body temperatures, as they tend to be higher.

The study, published in Scientific Reports, does not clarify whether depression causes increased body temperature or vice versa. People with depression may have a higher body temperature due to impaired self-cooling, increased heat output from metabolic processes, or a combination of the two. Researchers analyzed data from more than 20,000 international participants who wore a device that measures body temperature and also self-reported their body temperatures and depression symptoms daily.

The seven-month study began in early 2020 and included data from 106 countries.

The results showed that with each increasing level of depression symptom severity, participants had higher body temperatures.

The body temperature data also showed a trend toward higher depression scores in people whose temperatures had less fluctuation throughout a 24-hour period, but this finding didn't reach significance.

The findings shed light on how a novel depression treatment method might work, said Ashley Mason, PhD, the study's lead author and associate professor of psychiatry at UCSF Weill Institute for Neurosciences.

A small body of existing, causal studies has found that using hot tubs or saunas can reduce depression, possibly by triggering the body to self-cool, for example, through sweating.

"Ironically, heating people up actually can lead to rebound body temperature lowering that lasts longer than simply cooling people down directly, as through an ice bath," said Mason, who is also a clinical psychologist at the UCSF Osher Center for Integrative Health.

"What if we can track the body temperature of people with depression to time heat-based treatments well?"

"To our knowledge, this is the largest study to date to examine the association between body temperature - assessed using both self-report methods and wearable sensors - and depressive symptoms in a geographically broad sample," added Mason.

"Given the climbing rates of depression in the United States, we're excited by the possibilities of a new avenue for treatment. -ANI

Real Madrid beat Sevilla to move eight points clear of Barcelona



Modric fired home an unstoppable effort from outside the area to end stubborn resistance from the visitors

MADRID: Real Madrid beat Sevilla 1-0 in La Liga on Sunday night to move eight points clear of FC Barcelona and nine in front of Girona thanks to an 81st-minute goal from Luka Modric. Modric fired home an unstoppable effort from outside the area to end stubborn resistance from the visitors, who had ex-Madrid captain Sergio Ramos at the heart of their much-improved defence. Ramos received a homage from Real Madrid for his 671 matches at the club, before he and his Sevilla teammates went close to frustrating the fans in the Bernabeu. Modric's strike came after the ball had been only half-cleared, although Sevilla complained the original ball into their area had been aimed at Antonio Rudiger, who was in a clear offside position. Both keepers made decent saves to keep the score at 0-0 until Modric's goal.

FC Barcelona produced arguably their best performance this season to beat Getafe 4-0 on Saturday. Goals from Raphinha, Joao Felix, Frenkie de Jong and Fermin Lopez beat a below-par Getafe to move Barca ahead of Girona, who play on Monday. Atletico Madrid, who were without the injured Antoine Griezmann, could only draw away to bottom-of-the-table Almeria, for whom Luka Romero scored spectacular brace to cancel out goals from Angel Correa and Rodrigo de Paul. Athletic Bilbao, who play Atletico in the Copa del Rey semi-final on Thursday, were unable to take advantage of Atletico's slip-up as they lost 3-1 away to Real Betis on a day when everything seemed to go wrong for them. Chimy Avila put Betis ahead with his first goal for the club, and it was 2-0 when Unai Simon made a save only for the ball to rebound off Yuri Berchiche and end up in the net. Nico Williams was then sent off for the visitors after sarcastically applauding the referee, and Yuri had to leave the pitch with a hamstring injury. Gorka Guruzeta pulled a goal back for Athletic with a header in first-half injury time, but Johnny Cardoso's 67th-minute shot made the points safe for Betis. Osasuna and Las Palmas drew a mid-table match 1-1, with Unai Garcia opening the scoring for the home side with a 48th-minute

volley, only for Kirian Rodriguez to smash home from just outside of the area in the 52nd minute to assure a point. Darwin Machis scored a 99th-minute goal that saw Cadiz come back from 2-0 down at home to Celta Vigo to claim a point that maintains their chances of avoiding relegation. Things looked grim for Cadiz when goals from Iago Aspas and Williot Swedberg made it 2-0 for the visitors, but Juanmi pulled a goal back with a smart finish and Machis saved a vital point in the ninth minute of added time following a corner. Alaves and Mallorca drew 1-1 with a result that keeps the home side well clear of the relegation zone and leaves the visitors in trouble. Carlos Benavidez headed Alaves in front after 75 minutes of a close match, but Matija Nastasic gave Mallorca a morale boost ahead of Tuesday's Copa del Rey semifinal return leg when he nodded home an equaliser two minutes from time. On Friday night, Santi Comesaña scored twice as Villarreal won 3-1 away to Real Sociedad, with a goal from former Real Sociedad forward Alexander Sorloth rubbing salt in the wounds for the home side, who are dropping a lot of points at home. The scheduled game between Granada and Valencia was postponed because of a fire in Valencia on Thursday which claimed 10 lives. -Xinhua

INJURY

Pakistan pacer Rauf in doubt for T20 World Cup after dislocating shoulder



NEW DELHI: Pakistan pacer Haris Rauf has been sidelined due to a dislocated shoulder ahead of the highly anticipated T20 World Cup. According to the ICC, Haris injured his shoulder while playing for Lahore Qalandars in the Pakistan Super League and he will need at least four to six weeks to recover from the injury after a diagnosis by medical staff. Following this injury, the 30-year-old will miss the remainder of the PSL season and could also miss out on the upcoming World Cup, which is slated to begin on June 2. His compatriot and Lahore Qalandars skipper, Shaheen Afridi, stated that it is essential to provide Rauf with enough time to recover so he can be fit in time for the much awaited tournament. "As a team, we are deeply saddened by Haris Rauf's injury. It was painful to see him missing out as he's been a pillar of

strength for us, and his absence will be felt. In the face of adversity, we stand united, and I have full confidence that the team will rise to the occasion," Afridi said as quoted from ICC. "It's indeed a setback for the franchise, but he is also Pakistan's main bowler and we have a lot of cricket coming up ahead, so a pragmatic approach was to give him maximum time to recover. Wishing him a speedy recovery and we eagerly await his return to the field stronger than ever. Our thoughts and support are with him during this challenging time," he added. Rauf's latest setback could hinder Pakistan's preparations for the upcoming tournament in the Caribbean as they look to seal their constantly changing frontline pacers ahead of the tournament. He recently featured during Pakistan's recent 4-1 T20I series loss against New Zealand. -ANI

T20 WC SQUAD AUSTRALIA

Matthew Wade worried about Smith's spot in Australia's T20 WC squad

AUCKLAND: Australia veteran batter Matthew Wade admitted that there will be some players who will be unlucky to miss out on the 15-player squad for the upcoming T20 World Cup. Australia clinched their 100th T20I win following their series whitewash over New Zealand on Sunday. Throughout the series, some players stood out for the Baggy Greens and left a strong impression with their strong individual performances. The 2021 World Cup champions have a well-set top order, with David Warner and Travis Head occupying the opening slot, while, Mitchell Marsh and Glenn Maxwell are possible alternatives for the number 3 spot. "Heady's got the X-factor, you saw in the 50-over World Cup, he can turn games so quickly and we're exciting to have him at the top of the order along with Davey (Warner) who's going to be there. And then we can load up with Stoinis and David and Maxwell, and all these guys with extreme power," Wade said, as quoted from the ICC. With the opening four slots occupied and the likes of Tim David and Josh Inglis providing the ideal middle order balance, Wade is worried that a slot for Steve Smith could be unlikely. "Obviously, Smithy hasn't played a heap of T20 cricket in the last little bit for Australia, and there will be chats around those final few positions in the 15. Fingers crossed



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he makes it, but there's always going to be someone that's unlucky and I'm not sure who that's going to be this time," Wade said. In the final match, Matthew Short won the Player of the Match award, while pacers Spencer Johnson (1/10) and Nathan Ellis (0/11) showed enough potential that they could fulfil the role if they were given the opportunity to feature in the squad. This was Australia's final bilateral series as they gear up for the T20 World Cup. Ahead of the high-

ly anticipated tournament. "It's going to be tough to squeeze in that 15, whoever you are. It's going to be tight for those last few spots, I don't envy George's (chief selector George Bailey) position," Wade said. "I wouldn't want to be picking the 15, there's going to be a couple of unlucky players. But as I said there's always injury around, guys that are outside the 15 may get opportunities as well so we're happy we've got so much depth," Wade added. -ANI

PARA CRICKETER



To Amir, the real hero, keep inspiring: Sachin Tendulkar meets para cricketer Hussain Lone

NEW DELHI: The legendary Indian cricketer Sachin Tendulkar fulfilled his promise and met the Jammu and Kashmir's Para cricket team captain Amir Hussain Lone During his recent visit to Kashmir. Cricket is more than just a gentleman's game; it's for everyone. One of the most wonderful examples of this was seen when Jammu and Kashmir Para cricket team captain Hussain Lone met his hero the Master Blaster Sachin Tendulkar. Tendulkar, widely regarded as one of the most complete batters in his heyday, has been travelling in Kashmir. The renowned Indi-

an batter finally met Amir Lone, who had previously captured Tendulkar's attention with a video of himself training in Kashmir. **Role model** The two spoke about cricket, as the Kashmir batter couldn't conceal his enthusiasm and joy at having met his role model. Tendulkar also praised Amir, calling him a great inspiration for this generation's children, citing his pure will, determination, and passion for the game that propelled him to where he is now. Tendulkar gifted a bat to Amir which has a personalised inspiring message that read "To Amir,

the real hero. Keep inspiring," with his signature. "To Amir, the real hero. Keep inspiring! It was a pleasure meeting you," Tendulkar posted on X Saturday. **Para cricketer** The 34-year-old is currently the captain of Jammu & Kashmir's Para cricket team. The cricketer met with an accident when he was 8 years old. He has a unique playing style, and he is an inspiration for everyone. Amir has been playing cricket professionally since 2013 after a teacher discovered his cricketing talent and introduced him to Para Cricket.

Amir lost both his arms in an accident at his father's mill when he was eight years old. Last month, the former India batter was amazed after watching the video, nad hoped he would meet Hussain Lone in the future and congratulated him for inspiring millions. "Amir has made the impossible possible. I am so touched watching this! Shows how much love and dedication he has for the game. Hope I get to meet him one day and get a jersey with his name. Well done for inspiring millions who are passionate about playing the sport," Tendulkar had posted on X. -ANI

IN PICTURES



People wait to leave for Egypt via Rafah crossing in southern Gaza Strip
People wait to leave for Egypt via the Rafah crossing in the southern Gaza Strip. Xinhua



Prada's re-see event during Milan Fashion Week
People view creations of Prada women's Fall/Winter 2024 collections at Prada's re-see event during Milan Fashion Week in Milan, Italy. Xinhua

Highlight of 14th National Winter Games
An aerial drone photo shows athletes compete during the cross-country skiing junior women's 4X5km relay (2 classic + 2 free) at the 14th National Winter Games in Ulanqab, north China's Inner Mongolia Autonomous Region. Xinhua



Bollywood actress Yami Gautam Dhar with Aditya Dhar attends the screening of their film 'Article 370'
Bollywood actress Yami Gautam Dhar with her husband and filmmaker Aditya Dhar pose for a photo during the screening of their film 'Article 370', in Mumbai. ANI Photo



Chinese fishermen work at marine ranch
An aerial drone photo shows fishermen working at a marine ranch in Lidao Bay of Rongcheng City, east China's Shandong Province. Xinhua



People walk amid snow in Tehran, Iran
A woman takes photo amid snow at a park in Tehran, Iran. Xinhua

ROUND-UP

Dhofar Islamic offers bonus points for credit cardholders

All customers who apply for a new Gold or a Titanium credit card will have their annual fees reimbursed in the form of reward points (points equal to the paid card annual fee)

MUSCAT: Dhofar Islamic, Bank-Dhofar's leading Islamic banking window, is presenting the "Bonus Points" promotion campaign for credit cardholders. All customers who apply for a new Gold or a Titanium credit card will have their annual fees reimbursed in the form of reward points (points equal to the paid card annual fee). Dhofar Islamic cardholders will have a chance to be part of the credit card "Bonus Points" promotion campaign. During this campaign for spend of OMR 200, Titanium cardholders can earn 3,000 bonus reward points (worth of OMR 30 which is equivalent to the card's annual fee) and for spend of

OMR 100 Gold credit card holders will have the opportunity to earn 2,000 bonus points (worth of OMR 20 which is equivalent to the card's annual fee). The campaign is valid till 31 March 2024. The points will be available at the rewards program, which is a seamless and user-friendly experience, making it easy for cardholders to track their points, browse the rewards, and redeem their points through Dhofar Islamic mobile app or website. Along with the Rewards program, credit cardholders are able to earn and collect points on every purchase, which can easily redeemed instantly across groceries, essentials, electronics, jewelry,

dining categories and many more. Cardholders can even choose to redeem points for flight tickets at over 900 airlines, book a holiday, stay in more than 700,000 hotels or redeem at the Bank's partner outlets in the Sultanate of Oman. All that a cardholder needs to do to earn reward points is use the credit card for every day essentials, both locally and abroad as more points are accrued for purchases made using the card while travelling. This feature is designed to enhance the convenience and flexibility of our credit card rewards program. It empowers our customers to access, choose and redeem the rewards earned by spending using Dhofar Islamic credit cards.



WRC CHALLENGE PROGRAMME



Toyota Gazoo Racing's Kogure and Yamamoto complete Rally 2 Challenge

MUSCAT: Toyota Gazoo Racing WRC Challenge Program drivers Hikaru Kogure and Yuki Yamamoto successfully completed their first events in the Toyota GR Yaris Rally2 at the Arctic Rally on February 2-3. Representing the second generation of the WRC Challenge Program, Kogure and Yamamoto have made the step up to faster four-wheel drive Rally2 machinery for 2024 after competing in two-wheel drive Rally4 cars during their first two years on the Program. For their debut at this higher level, the pair took on the famous Arctic Rally, round two of the Finnish Rally Championship. Based in Rovaniemi in Finland's northernmost region of Lapland, the rally features fast stages on snow and ice, some of which must be driven in darkness. Both Kogure and Yamamoto already experienced the event one year ago, but the increased performance level of their new GR Yaris Rally2 cars would provide them with many new challenges

to adapt to. The main goal was to complete the full distance and gather as much experience as possible – and both drivers achieved this, reaching the finish in eighth and ninth positions in the highly competitive SM1 category. After 199.95 kilometres of rallying, they were separated by only 1.7 seconds, with Kogure finishing just ahead of Yamamoto. Kogure, co-driven by Topi Luhtinen, showed good performance already on Friday's opening leg, which he finished in ninth position. On Saturday morning, a technical issue meant he lost some time but this was resolved in service so that he could drive strongly to the finish in a challenging last loop that featured long stages and fresh snowfall. Yamamoto, who links up with Marko Salminen as his new co-driver for this year, also dropped some time on Saturday morning with a couple of overshoots, but recovered well to set good times in the afternoon.

UNIQUE PRODUCT

Bank Nizwa's buyout offering redefines financial empowerment for customers

MUSCAT: Committed to providing cutting edge banking solutions, the Sultanate of Oman's leading Islamic bank, Bank Nizwa's buyout offering allows customers to seamlessly transfer their loans and financing acquisition products to the bank, and benefit from a distinctive banking experience that is compliant with Islamic Sharia principles. The buyout facility encompasses all financing products such as personal and housing finance from both Islamic and conventional banks. It is worth noting that customers seeking to benefit from buyouts will be granted exclusive advantages, including a competitive profit rate of 5% and a waiver on the Titanium credit card annual subscription fees for the first year. In addition, customers can also



multiple repayments and provide a simplified approach to financial management." He added, "At Bank Nizwa, we understand that managing finances can be overwhelming and time-consuming. Therefore, the Buyout Facility serves as a practical tool that enables our customers to streamline their financial obligations, ultimately fostering a sense of control and stability in their financial journey, and affording them peace of mind." Bank Nizwa has always prioritized customer-centric products and services that align with Islamic finance principles, and the Buyout Facility's competitive profit rate is yet another testament to the bank's dedication to empowering customers with Sharia-compliant solutions.

ISLAMIC BANKING

Meethaq extends support to traditional shooting contest

MUSCAT: Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat extended its support to the annual traditional shooting competition recently concluded in Wadi Bani Omar, in the Wilayat of Saham. The event was held under the auspices of the Salim bin Muslem Qatan, Vice Chairperson of the State Council, and was attended by a numerous dignitary, including their excellencies, sheikhs and enthusiasts from various governorates. This year's competition boasted a remarkable turnout,

with over 1000 participants. The tournament garnered significant attention, with participants, being duly honoured by the chief guest during the closing ceremony. In acknowledgment of Meethaq's unwavering support, Sultan Saif Al Mamari, Branch Manager of Meethaq Islamic Banking Saham, received recognition from the chief guest on behalf of Meethaq. Meethaq's support for such events underscores its dedication to preserving and promoting the country's traditions, heritage and culture.



HEALTHCARE

Burjeel Hospital launches first-of-its-kind Paediatric Haematology Clinic

MUSCAT: Burjeel Hospital Al-Khuwair, Muscat is proud to announce the expansion of its Centre of Excellence - Paediatric Department, with the launch of an exclusive Paediatric Haematology Clinic. This clinic is the first of its kind in the private healthcare sector in Oman and aims to provide specialized care for children with blood-related disorders. Paediatric haematology disorders have a significant prevalence in Oman. Recognizing this need, Burjeel Hospital Al-Khuwair has established the Pediatric Haematology Clinic to address these conditions comprehensively. The clinic will offer early detection, accurate diagnosis, and advanced treatment modalities for a range



of blood-related disorders including anaemia (iron deficiency anaemia, sickle cell anaemia, and thalassemia), bleeding disorders (hemophilia, von Willebrand disease, platelet disorders), and blood cancers (leukemia, lymphoma, myeloma). Dr Zainul Aabideen, a

renowned Pediatric Hematology Oncologist, from Burjeel Medical City Abudhabi has joined Burjeel Hospital Al-Khuwair as a visiting consultant. With his extensive expertise and experience, Dr.Aabideen will play a pivotal role in leading the Pediatric He-

matology Clinic and ensuring that young patients receive the highest quality of care. Burjeel Hospital Al-Khuwair and Burjeel Medical City Abu Dhabi are now aligned to provide affordable pricing and services for advanced treatments, ensuring patients in Muscat have

access to follow-up care. This collaboration aims to deliver comprehensive and accessible healthcare options to patients, emphasising Burjeel's commitment to delivering high-quality and affordable medical services. In a recent Continuing Medical Education (CME) event held on February 25, 2024, Dr Aabideen conducted a session titled "Updates in Pediatric Hematology." Eminent doctors attended the event, where they discussed advanced diagnosis and treatment modalities for blood-related disorders. Dr Ibrahim Al Ghaithi, Consultant Pediatric Hematology Oncology from The Royal Hospital, Oman graced the event as the guest of honour. The event provided a plat-

form for sharing knowledge and insights into the latest developments in the field. Dr. (Major) Pankaj Chawla, Regional Director of Burjeel Hospital Oman, emphasised the hospital's commitment to advancing pediatric care. He highlighted the significance of the Paediatric Haematology Clinic and its contribution to improving healthcare services for children in Oman. Dr Achini De Silva, the Head of the Pediatric Department at Burjeel Hospital, conveyed her excitement about the expansion of pediatric services. She expressed the hospital's commitment to delivering patient-centric care and services while working collaboratively with the Ministry of Health Oman to prioritize the well-being of children.



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