

**HM THE SULTAN GREETES
PRESIDENT OF MALAWI**

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



**HM SENDS GREETINGS TO
PRESIDENT OF COMOROS**

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Azali Assoumani of the Union of Comoros on the occasion of his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sincere sentiments and best wishes of good health and happiness to President Assoumani, and the brotherly people of Comoros further progress and prosperity. **-ONA**



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RATIFICATION OF PACT

**His Majesty the Sultan issues
Royal Decree ratifying Oman-
Poland visa waiver agreement**

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik yesterday issued Royal Decree No. 49/2023 on the ratification of the agreement between the government of the Sultanate of Oman and the government of the Republic of Poland on mutual waiving of visas for holders of diplomatic, special and service passports. The

agreement was signed in Warsaw on 13 June 2023.

Article (1) ratifies the above mentioned agreement in accordance with the version attached to this decree.

Article (2) says that this decree shall be published in the Official Gazette and enforced from its date of publishing. **-ONA**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



OMAN

**Oman's Fatek claims
gold in high jump**

1 Oman's Fatek Beit Jaaboub made the Sultanate proud when he won the gold in the high jump event at the Pan Arab Games on Tuesday night. The Pan Arab Games were officially inaugurated in Algiers on Wednesday. **>A4**

OMAN

**New app for sickle
cell anaemia patients**

2 An app designed for patients suffering from sickle cell anaemia has been launched in Oman. The app named 'For You', aims to improve the quality of life of patients. **>A3**

WORLD

**Nearly 1mn sought
asylum in EU last year**

3 Applications for asylum in the European Union in 2022 soared to nearly one million, the European Union Agency for Asylum said. The agency said there were 996,000 applications last year. **>A7**

**OMAN TO BRIDGE GAP BETWEEN
JOB-SEEKERS AND EMPLOYMENT**

The platform will keep pace with the requirements of Oman Vision 2040

Times News Service

MUSCAT: A first-of-its-kind vocational guidance platform named Khuta ('Steps') has been launched in Oman that will provide a bridge between the job seekers and the number of employment opportunities available in the market.

In addition to sharpening the skills of students for jobs, the platform will keep pace with the requirements of Oman Vision 2040 in the fields of education, research, innovation and job market.

The platform is meant for students, job-seekers, employees, business owners, entrepreneurs, teachers, academics and guardians of students.

The inaugural ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Khamis Saif Al Jabri, Chairman of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit.

Dr. Abdullah bin Khamis Am-



busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education, said that it would be a comprehensive and integrated platform, not limited to job opportunities only, but will provide training courses for job seekers, school and university students and hone their talents.

He hoped that everyone will benefit from it in terms of training and vocational guidance, as the platform will complement the work of the Ministry of Education in giving advice to students on their careers, training courses and consultations.

Engineer Azhar bin Ahmed Al Kindi, Technical Director of

the National Employment Programme, confirmed that the adoption and implementation of the 'Khuta' platform came as one of the strategic initiatives for raising the efficiency of the vocational guidance service in the Sultanate of Oman, as it's one of the main components that enhances integration and harmony between the output of the educational system and the actual needs of the labour market.

Al Kindi added that the platform seeks to improve career guidance programmes and ensure that its services reach the

widest possible segment of society, confirmed by the results of scientific research.

Al Kindi stressed that the electronic platform will give guidance to children on their interests, skills and talents.

Dr. Badr bin Hammoud Al Kharousi, Head of the Development Team for the National Employment Programme and supervisor of the Khuta platform for career guidance, reviewed the services provided by the platform, namely: my studies, my profession, future skills, training, resources and tools. **>A5**

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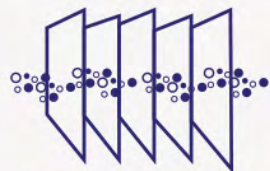
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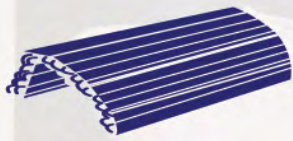
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PRAYER
TIMINGS



Dhuhr.....12:17pm

Asr.....3:35pm

Maghrib.....7:03pm

Isha.....8:25pm

Fajr (Tomorrow).....3:59am

MEETINGS

Foreign Minister receives copies of credentials of Libyan, UK envoys

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, received on Wednesday a copy of credentials of Hager Amru Khalifa Al Namy, Ambassador-designate of Libya to the Sultanate of Oman.

Sayyid Badr wished the ambassador success in carrying out her duties.

He also wished the relations between Oman and Libya further development and growth.

Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, also received a copy of credentials of Dr. LianeSaunders, Ambassador-designate of the United Kingdom (UK) to the Sultanate of Oman. The Foreign Minister wished the ambassador success in carrying out her duties and the bilateral relations further development and growth. **-ONA**



Al Ashkharah tourism activities to focus on local culture, heritage

The forum is aimed at enhancing the local tourism and supporting the national economy



South Al Sharqiyah Governorate in view of its richness in cultural and heritage fields. The function will lead to a qualitative addition to the tourism destinations in the Sultanate of Oman, which will help in encouraging domestic tourism, especially during the summer.

He added that the forum is aimed at enhancing the local tourism and supporting the national economy as well as an endeavour to integrate with the cultural and economic aspects through the diversification and comprehensiveness of events, and to sustain tourism activities by preparing permanent sites to host them.

He explained that the forum aims to increase tourism activities in the governorate on systematic and sustainable basis by the utilisation of its promising tourism potential.

The head of the organising committee said that Al Ashkharah atmosphere forum includes a package of diversified heritage, tourism and entertainment activities including the heritage corner, pioneers exhibition, in which entrepreneurs and small and medium establishments are participating. Additionally, there will be entertainment and beach games corner, cultural and other activities. In addition, a kites festival will be held throughout the period of gathering. **-ONA**



Oman's Steel Industry Booming Under the Jindal Group

An industrial powerhouse with a dominant presence in steel, Jindal Group is a prominent player in the global steel manufacturing sector. It is bolstering its commitment to the Sultanate of Oman by undertaking several strategic investments aimed at fostering socio-economic growth and supporting the nation's transition to a green, circular economy. Working in tandem with His Majesty Sultan Haitham's Vision 2040 plan to reduce the country's dependency on the oil and gas sector while diversifying into non-oil-based manufacturing, the group is flying the flag high. These investments under the Vulcan International Holding Company include Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel, Sohar Steel, and Vulcan Pelletizing Plant in Sohar, and in Duqm Vulcan Green Steel.

Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel (JSIS), a revered steel manufacturer in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) region, continues to strengthen its position as a catalyst for the Sultanate's development. The company's facility in Sohar has expanded its value chain to reach a production capacity of 2.4 million metric tons per annum (MTPA). With new projects announced at the Sohar facility, Vulcan's total investments in the area will exceed USD 1.5 billion, emphasising its commitment to in-country value creation and job opportunities.

Commenting on the company's ICV strategies, Harssha Shetty, Chief Executive Officer of JSIS, said, "Since the commencement of operations in Oman in 2010, the company has kept pace with the dynamically evolving goals of the country and established itself as a reliable partner that is invested in building a resilient, self-reliant nation. As such, with the operations of the proposed new projects in full swing, the benefits to the nation will be unparalleled. We are working towards aligning a comprehensive ICV agenda with national priorities, apart from the ongoing investments in assets and technology. This encompasses a gamut of initiatives across a wide spectrum, including generating employment and business opportunities, nurturing a skilled workforce, and supporting local industries. JSIS is driven by innovation and progressive thinking at its core, which extends to how we do our part to create a more sustainable local ecosystem."

Jindal Shadeed's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs are complementary to these initiatives. Through the 'Steel of Oman' campaign, the company has demonstrated its support for Oman's passion for football and its potential in the global football arena. Partnerships with the Oman Football Association (OFA) and Ali Al-Habsi's Academy for Football have led to the establishment of nine under-14 football training centres, fostering the development of young talent. JSIS CSR policy actively engages in community initiatives related to the youth development, SME partnerships, and safe home construction practices. With its exceptional track record in steel manufacturing and strong community-centric values, JSIS continues to drive the Sultanate's progress and competitiveness on the global stage.

The group has also committed USD 3 billion to develop a mega Green steel project in the Sultanate of Oman. The project, known as Vulcan Green Steel, will be established in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAC) and will encompass a 5 million metric tons per annum (MTPA) green hydrogen-ready steel plant. It is a marquee initiative to combat climate change and produce green steel on a large scale. The plant will be powered entirely by renewables and green hydrogen, making it one of the largest green steel facilities globally.

In addition to Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel and Vulcan Green Steel, the group is actively involved in other ventures in the Sultanate's steel industry. Notably, the company is developing the Sohar Pelletising Plant, equipped with Metso Outotec technology, with a 6 million metric tons production capacity per annum. Civil piling work is underway, and the plant is scheduled to commence production by end of 2024.

Furthermore, the group is investing in a pilot Carbon Capture Plant at the Jindal Shadeed Iron and Steel facility in Sohar. The plant, expected to be completed by the end of 2023, will have a maximum capacity to capture 7 tons of CO2 per day at a pilot scale. This initiative showcases the group's dedication to environmental stewardship and reducing carbon emissions.

With these strategic investments, Vulcan Investments and the Jindal Steel Group is poised to strengthen Oman's steel industry, drive economic growth, and contribute to the nation's sustainability goals. The company remains committed to its partnership with the Sultanate and its vision for a prosperous and environmentally conscious future.



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App for sickle cell anaemia patients launched in Oman



The app named 'For You', is being supervised by the Ministry of Health and aims to improve the quality of life of patients afflicted with the disease

Times News Service

MUSCAT: An application designed specifically for patients suffering from sickle cell anaemia has been launched in the Sultanate of Oman.

The app named 'For You', is being supervised by the Ministry of Health and aims to improve the quality of life of patients afflicted with the disease.

Dr. Yusra bint Sulaiman Al Nasser, an academician at the Oman College of Health Sciences, said that the health application 'For You' is one of the integrated applications that are specially designed for patients with sickle cell

anaemia, but all segments of society can benefit from it.

"The application aims to raise the level of knowledge and enhance the self-efficacy of patients, as well as improve the quality of life by identifying vital indicators of pain attacks in patients," Dr. Yusra Al Nasser said.

Dr. Al Nasser added that the application includes seven icons represented by an interactive pain scale, educational videos, interactive games, a doctor for you, a weekly notification service, question and answer, and a chat service.

The academician at the Oman College of Health Sciences stated that the effectiveness of using this

application, and the ease of access to icons, was studied on patients suffering with this disease at the Royal Hospital and Sultan Qaboos University Hospital, stressing the importance of using smart technologies to reduce the complications of chronic diseases.

Shifa application

Al Nasser said that she is working on developing the application 'For You' to further improve its quality of services, such as activating the "Doctor for You" and the possibility of linking it to the Shifa application to monitor patients with sickle cell anemia. Work is also being conducted on creating a sensor for biochemical and chemical indicators that may detect pain attack in children with sickle cell anemia.

"There is no doubt that a quantum leap will occur in the health sector, which will help in reducing recurring complications in patients and early intervention to deal with symptoms to reduce the financial cost of treatments," Dr. Yusra Al Nasser said.

Unit for manufacturing dental aligners opened



MUSCAT: A facility for an Omani startup company in the field of manufacturing transparent dental aligners "BClear Aligner" with specialised Omani cadres was inaugurated on Tuesday in Ghala, the Governorate of Muscat. The company is considered a first-of-its-kind in the Sultanate of Oman in this field.

Eng. Yumna Ahmed Al Sharji, founding partner of 'BClear Aligner', told Oman News Agency (ONA) that the company is one of the emerging Omani companies in the field of medical technology. It was established in the third quarter of 2021, and aims to localise and develop the transparent orthosis industry and provide the products to beneficiaries locally and regionally.

She stated that the transparent

orthodontic aligners are made of bio-acceptable materials approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (FDA) for use in the human body.

She added that the company's team consists of specialised doctors, engineers and technicians, and the percentage of Omanis in the company stands at 85. The company is working to localise all the necessary expertise to develop its products, depending on national human resources.

Moreover, the inauguration ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Hilal Ali Al Sabti, Minister of Health.

Al Sabti toured the facility and he was briefed on its various sections and the method used in the manufacturing process. -ONA

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IN ALGERIA

Oman’s Fatek claims gold in high jump at Pan Arab Games

MUSCAT: Oman’s Fatek Beit Jaaboub made the Sultanate proud when he won the gold in the high jump event at the Pan Arab Games on Tuesday night.

The Pan Arab Games were officially inaugurated at Algiers’ Stade du 5 Juillet on Wednesday but events like athletics, football and para athletics have already started. Approximately 3,800 athletes are competing in the Games.

Qusay wins silver in 100m para athletics event

It was a productive day for Oman as they claimed two medals with young Qusay Al Rawahi clinching a silver in the 100m para athletics event.

Oman are participating in five events – football, athletics, sailing, weightlifting and para athletics.

Meanwhile, Oman’s top sprinters Barakat Al Harthy and Ali Al Balushi were in action in the

preliminary round of 100m. Both qualified for the final with Barakat finishing second in Group 1 with a time of 10.46s and Ali also coming second in Group 2, with a time of 10.67s.

The Pan Arab Games returned for the first time in 12 years as Algeria welcomed 22 nations and territories. Besides the capital, events are also taking place in Oran, Constantine, Annaba, and Tipaza. It is the first time that five cities are hosting the Games.

Algiers hosted once before the Pan Arab Games in 2004.

The opening ceremony of the Games coincided with Independence Day in Algeria after the nation was liberated from French rule on the date in 1962. The Games will conclude on July 15. The last edition of the Games was in Doha in 2011. It is the 13th edition following the inaugural event in Alexandria in 1953.



OMAN SAIL’S OPTIMIST AND ILCA TEAMS PREPARE FOR 2023 PAN ARAB GAMES

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Seven sailors from Oman Sail’s youth sailing squad will join over 3,800 athletes from 18 countries at the 15th edition of the Pan Arab Games, being held in Algeria for the first time since 2004 from July 5-15 July 2023.

Racing begins on 7 July with Omani sailors competing in Optimist, ILCA 4 and ILCA 7 classes under the guidance of coaches Sultan Al Balushi and Munther Al Kindi.

Competition will be held over 12 races in all classes at the Promenade Les Sablettes in Algiers following a practice day to acclimatise to the conditions.

Oman will also be providing two senior officials to the sailing event after the Union of Arab National Olympic Committees selected Abdulaziz Al Shidi to be a member of the Technical Committee team and Nawaf Al Ghadani to be part of the Jury Committee Team, which will also demonstrate Oman’s capabilities off the water.

On the sailing side, Oman will be represented by a talented group of sailors in various categories. In the Optimist class, Hassan Nasser Al Wahaibi, Tamim Suleiman Al Balushi, Feras Haitham Al Nabhani, and Soud Talib Al Shaqsi. For the ILCA 4 category, Abdullatif Zaid Al Qasmi and Hatem Mohsen Al Oreimy will be competing. Finally, Ahmed Hassan Al Balushi will represent Oman in the ILCA 7 class.

Ahmed Al Qasmi, National Team Manager, said, “The team has been taking part in a training camp at Ras Al Hadd since mid-June to prepare and will now travel to Algeria to represent Oman. We are confident in our abilities and look forward to competing alongside talented sailors from across the region.”

ILCA 4 and ILCA 7 National Team Coach, Munther Al Kindi, added, “We have selected seven of the top prospects in our youth squad for this championship and have supported them to take another step forward in their careers. This is a great opportunity to test their knowledge and technique against their peers from different nations and engage in high-level



Ahmed Al Qasmi, National Team Manager, said, “The team has been taking part in a training camp at Ras Al Hadd since mid-June to prepare and will now travel to Algeria to represent Oman. We are confident in our abilities and look forward to competing alongside talented sailors from across the region.”

competition. This is part of a busy season for our teams, and it will be a very valuable experience for everyone involved.”

This will be the first staging of the Pan Arab Games since Doha 2011. There will be 20 sports featured, including three events for people with disabilities.

At the conclusion of the 2023 Pan Arab Games, the team will turn its attention to preparing for the Oman Sailing Championship in Ras Al Hadd from 24-28 August 2023, and Mussanah Race Week at Barceló Mussanah Resort from 18-24 October 2023. -OMA



BOOST FOR TOURISM

Salalah Airport receives first SalamAir flight originating from Kingdom of Bahrain

SALALAH: Salalah Airport on Wednesday received the first SalamAir flight originating from the Bahrain. SalamAir's programme of operating flights from Bahrain seeks to enhance tourism during Dhofar Khareef 2023.

Eng. Mohammed Ahmed Al Rawas, Acting Deputy Chairman of Salalah Airport, said that the existence of a route line between Salalah and Manama supports tourism in Dhofar Governorate and cements fraternal ties with the people of Bahrain. Al Rawas hoped that this direct route will act as another source for activating tourism in the governorate during the monsoon. Captain Mohamed Ahmed, CEO of SalamAir said that the first flight received a large turnout of travellers from Bahrain to Salalah. - ONA



NATIONAL DEFENCE COLLEGE

US Military Academy delegation visits NDC

MUSCAT: A delegation from the United States Military Academy at West Point on Wednesday visited the National Defence College (NDC).

Upon the delegation's arrival at the college, they were greeted by Rear Admiral Ali Abdullah Al Shidi, Commandant of the NDC.

Training field

During the meeting, the two sides discussed several matters of mutual interest, especially in academic and training fields.

The visiting delegation were also briefed on the college's facilities and equipment.

They also toured its various departments and halls that are designed according to the latest specifications and equipped with modern educational systems and training aids. -ONA



MEETING

Maj. General Hamid Ahmed meets US military delegation

MUSCAT: Major General Hamid Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies received yesterday at Bait Al Falaj Garrison a delegation from the United States Military Academy at West Point. During the meeting, the two sides discussed several academic and training matters of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by several high ranking officers from the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies. -ONA

GUIDANCE PLATFORM

A roadmap for students

Mahmoud bin Khalifa Al Saqri, Director of Social Responsibility at Khimji Ramdas Group, explained that the platform will be a roadmap for students at all levels of study, whether at the general diploma level or at the university level, in addition to job seekers.

Al Saqri said: "This platform will provide a bridge between job seekers and students on the availability of jobs in the public or private sectors and the level of specialisation among students."

MILITARY DRILL

Annual strategic exercise 'Al Hazm' inspected

MUSCAT: Maj.Gen Hamid Ahmed Sakroon, Chairman of the Academy for Strategic and Defence Studies on Wednesday inspected the implementation of the annual strategic exercise 'Al Hazm' which is ongoing till 12 July 2023. Al Hazm is implemented by the Joint Staff and Command College.



Honing the skills

This exercise comes within the framework of honing the skills of officers at the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and various other military and security units.

Al Hazm is implemented in parallel with the annual strategic exercise 'Decision Making-10', which is currently being implemented by the National Defence College (NDC). -ONA

MEETING

RNO commander meets UK official

MUSCAT: Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO) received at Al Murtafa'a Garrison on Wednesday Commodore Philip Dennis, Commander of the United Kingdom (UK) Maritime Component and Deputy Commander of the Combined Maritime Forces. During the meeting,



the two sides exchanged views and discussed several matters of mutual interest. -ONA

Royal Oman Police

ANNOUNCEMENT

Royal Oman Police – Directorate General of Traffic - announces a tender for the supply and installation of (318) traffic light cameras. Companies and institutions specialized in this field wishing to bid for this tender may visit the Royal Oman Police website, Tenders section (www.rop.gov.om).

NOTICE

Phoenix Technology Solutions LLC (Securado) cautions that as of May 24, 2023, the services of that **Mr. Abdul Hakim bin Amer bin Salem Al-Muslehi** have been terminated, and the company's work relationship with him has come to an end. He no longer represents the company, and it is cautioned that the company disclaims any responsibility for any direct or indirect consequences arising from her involvement in any business activities related to the company.

NOTICE

Phoenix Technology Solutions LLC (Securado) cautions that as of June 11, 2023, the services of **Ms. Iman Muhammad Niaz Sheeran Al Balushi** have been terminated, and the company's work relationship with her has come to an end. She no longer represents the company, and it is cautioned that the company disclaims any responsibility for any direct or indirect consequences arising from her involvement in any business activities related to the company.

OMAN AGRICULTURE DEVELOPMENT COMPANY SAOC

NOTICE OF THE INVITATION TO THE ANNUAL ORDINARY GENERAL MEETING

The Board of Directors of Oman Agriculture Development Company/ SAOC (the "Company") is pleased to invite all shareholders to the Annual General Meeting, which will be held on Monday, 24/07/2023 at 10.30 am through the electronic platform specified for convening General Meetings, which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company S.A.O.C (www.mod.gov.om). In the event that the quorum for the first Meeting is not completed, the second Ordinary General Meeting will be held on Monday, 31/07/2023 at 10.30 am through the electronic platform specified for convening General Meetings, which can be accessed through the website of Muscat Clearing & Depository Company S.A.O.C to discuss the following agenda:

1. Studying and approving the report of the Board of Directors for the financial year ended 30 April 2023.
2. Studying the auditor's report and approving the balance sheet and profits and losses account for the financial year ended 30 April 2023.
3. Informing the Meeting of the transactions that the Company had with the related parties during the financial year ended 30 April 2023 (as attached).
4. Informing the Meeting of the transactions that the Company will carry out with the related parties during the financial year ending 30 April 2024.
5. Studying and approving a proposal to distribute dividends to shareholders as of the date of the Meeting, with amount of 200 Baizas per share of the retained earnings for the financial year ended 30 April 2023.
6. To elect the members of the Board of Directors from shareholders or others. Anyone who wishes to nominate him/herself must fill the relevant form and hand it over to the company at least five days before the meeting by Thursday 20/07/2023, no form will be accepted after that.
7. Appointing an auditor for the financial year ending 30 April 2024, and determining their fees.

According to the Company's Articles of Association and the General Meeting procedures using modern technology issued by the Authority, we would like to draw your attention to the following:

A- A legal person, exclusively, has the right to delegate a natural person to attend the General Meeting and vote on their behalf through technical means, provided that this natural person has an investor number in Muscat Clearing and Depository Company.

B- Voting on any of the agenda items shall begin no more than three days before the date of the Meeting and until the end of the voting process on the day of the Meeting. In the event that the shareholder's balance of shares increased or decreased, the voting process shall be canceled, and he/she must vote again on the day of the Meeting.

-In case of any inquiries, please contact Mr. Rajith Januka on the phone number: 95615272.

Chairman Auditor Legal Advisor

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhofar Services invites the specialize companies to participate and submit their offers for the below said tender in Dhofar Governorate

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Tender Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/2023/088	SUPPLY OF DISTRIBUTION TRANSFORMERS	20th July 2023	3rd August 2023	RO. 26.250
DISC/2023/089	SUPPLY OF WOODEN POELS	20th July 2023	3rd August 2023	RO. 52.500
DISC/2023/090-2	REPLACEMENT OF EXISTING BELT CONVEYORS AT SOLID PROCESS BUILDING WITH SCREW CONVEYORS IN WRP	20th July 2023	3rd August 2023	RO. 52.500
DISC/2023/111	CONSULTANCY SERVICES FOR THE CONSTRUCTION (UPGRADING) SUPERVISION OF WRP-PHASE III -STAGE 1 IN SALALAH	20th July 2023	9th August 2023	RO. 525.000
DISC/2023/116	UNE-LOT 06 C-2023	20th July 2023	30th July 2023	RO. 52.500

- To view the tender details, you can visit www.dhofarservices.nama.om / scan the QR code
- The deposit at the last day of purchasing should be before 3.00pm.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using "supplier portal". No hard copies are accepted.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.
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EU rethinks regulations on genetically modified crops

The thinking is that relaxed genetically modified organisms (GMO) crop laws could push the development of more resistant crops in an effort to guarantee food security



BRUSSELS: Scientists are finding more and more causal links between climate change and frequent extreme weather events that affect food production.

So, the European Union is looking at whether it should relax its legislation on genetic engineering and genetically modified organisms (GMO) crops.

The thinking is that relaxed GMO laws could push the development of more resistant crops in an effort to guarantee food security.

Experts say it could also help Europe stay up-to-date with scientific developments in genome editing techniques.

European Union governments have been pushing for less strict regulations on genetically modified plants, including those produced with "new genomic techniques" (NGT).

Any gene editing technology developed after 2001, such as CRISPR-cas9, is considered a new genomic technique. CRISPR-cas9 is like a molecular scalpel that can make precise modifications in a DNA sequence.

"Plants produced by new genomic techniques can support sustainability," said Stella Kyriakides, the EU's health commissioner, in April 2023.

A draft of the proposed legislation was leaked in June 2023 and published by the Agricultural and Rural Convention, ARC2020, a political organisation in Europe.

According to the leaked document, the proposal removes some NGT plant varieties from existing

regulations on GMOs, based on two main criteria.

First, the NGT should not contain any genetic material from other organisms. And second, they should not differ from conventionally bred plant varieties.

These plants would be classified as NGT-1.

The draft also allows for NGT plants that do not fall into this new NGT-1 category when they meet sustainability criteria set out in the European Green Deal. These include resistance to droughts or heat, pathogens, higher yield or "improved" nutrient content.

However, the legislation excludes from any exemptions herbicide-resistant NGT plants, such as glyphosate-resistant plants, which would continue to be handled by existing GMO laws.

Experts comment on EU's proposed GMO law

Ahead of the publication of the draft legislation, the Science Media Center Germany (SMC) asked several experts for their opinions.

The comments appear to suggest a mostly positive consensus among those scientists who were asked by the SMC, but some raised doubts about the science behind the draft legislation.

Experts who have read the draft say the new legislation aims to differentiate clearly between genetically modified plants that have been grown using "new techniques" and those plants grown with classic plant-breeding techniques.

Classic plant breeding is when humans selectively choose plants with desired characteristics and reproduce them. Those traits or characteristics are predetermined by a plant's genes. For example, if you select a big banana-bearing plant, you are indirectly selecting the genes responsible for that.

"These are small genetic changes that could in principle also be caused by natural mutations," Martin Qaim, professor of agricultural economics and director at the Center for Development Research at the University of Bonn, told SMC. "These plants are just as safe as conventionally grown ones."

What genetic changes are allowed?

The leaked documents suggest the new law would allow NGT plants that do not carry genetic material from other organisms, such as a bacterial gene that contributes to making plants resistant to glyphosate.

NGT plants are not allowed to differ from conventionally-bred plants by more than 20 genetic alterations in what scientists refer to as "predictable DNA sequences."

Some experts have commented that it's difficult to tell at this stage whether the new criteria will work in practice. Andreas Weber, head of the Institute of Plant Biochemistry at Heinrich Heine University in Düsseldorf, said they will only know once they have worked with the new regulations whether it will limit their ability to do research on new crops.

"Compared to conventional

breeding methods, [...] 20 modifications are very few... the regulations [may] have to be readjusted and adjusted upwards again in a few years," Weber told SMC.

Two limits on genetic modification

It's important to understand that we're talking about two different kinds of limits.

The proposal includes one limit on the number of genetic modifications in a crop.

In order to perform a genetic modification, scientists alter nucleotides, which are the building blocks of DNA.

And the proposal sets a second limit on the number of nucleotides that can be replaced or inserted to complete the genetic modification.

Most of the scientists asked by SMC accepted the limit as OK, but it did not go without criticism.

"There is no robust scientific evidence or justification for an arbitrary limit of 20 nucleotides," said Angelika Hilbeck, a researcher at the Institute of Integrative Biology, Swiss Federal Institute of Technology Zurich (ETHZ), in Switzerland.

The 20-nucleotide limit also doesn't apply to DNA sequences that already exist in the plant's "gene pool." A gene pool is the combination of all the genes that exist in the whole population of a species.

"Sequences within the gene pool of a species can also be recombined through classical breeding — after all, that is the principle of breeding," said Weber. — **rw**



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Over a dozen dead amid torrential rains

CHONGQING: Heavy downpours have killed 15 people in the southwestern Chinese city of Chongqing, state media reported on Wednesday.

President Xi Jinping has called for greater efforts to protect the public from extreme weather conditions.

"The latest round of torrential rains since Monday has killed 15 people and left four others missing in southwest China's Chongqing Municipality as of 7 a.m. Wednesday," state news agency Xinhua said, citing the local authorities.

Chongqing floods have forced thousands to move out of their homes, with around 85,000 people having been evacuated amid heavy rains.

Chinese officials have warned that China is set to face "multiple natural disasters in July, including floods, severe convection weather, typhoons and high temperatures."

Xi Jinping urges action

Meanwhile, Chinese President Xi Jinping ordered that "authorities at all levels must give top priority to ensuring people's safety and property," Chinese state media said.

"Xi underlined that leading officials at all levels must take the lead in fighting the floods, put the people's safety and property first, and strive to minimise all kinds of losses," the agency added.

Floods have caused 227.8 million yuan (\$31.5 million, €28.9 million) worth of economic losses in the Wanzhou district located in the northeast of Chongqing.

Xi called on the State Flood Control and Drought Relief Headquarters and the ministries to improve their coordination and warnings.

Extreme weather in China bring devastation

In recent weeks, China has been witnessing torrential rains that triggered devastating floods and deadly mudslides, while hail storms and unusually high temperatures have brought misery to many parts of the country. — **rw**





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G20 meeting serves as catalyst for tourism resurgence in J&K

SRINAGAR: The successful "Tourism Working Group Meeting" of G20 delegates held in Srinagar from May 22 to May 25 this year marked a turning point for the tourism sector in Jammu and Kashmir.

The summit, which saw the participation of representatives from the world's most influential economies, has not only strengthened international relations but also served as a catalyst for the resurgence of tourism in the Himalayan region. In the first six months of this year, as per official figures, over 15000 foreign tourists arrived in Kashmir, which was more than the last year. The visitors also included tourists from European countries.

Pertinently, after 1990, when a Pakistan-sponsored insurgency broke out in J-K, tourists stopped visiting Kashmir as the gun-toting terrorists wreaked havoc in the region.

Kashmir, once known for its picturesque landscapes and warm hospitality, became shrouded in a cloud of fear, with concerns about terrorism and instability dominating global perceptions.

Abduction of five Western trekkers--two American nationals, Don Hutchings and John Childs, two Briton Keith Mangan, and Paul Wells, and a Norwegian national Ostro in 1995 from Pahalgam in South Kashmir--by a terror outfit, Al-Faran led to most of the countries issuing advisories to their residents to stay away from visiting the terrorism hit region.

Among the five kidnapped foreign nationals, only John Childs could escape from the clutches of his captors while four others were murdered by the terrorists.

Till August 5, 2019 -- when the



Centre announced its decision to abrogate J&K's so-called special status and bifurcate it into two Union Territories -- countries like the US, Australia, Britain, and others used to issue advisories to its citizens, asking them to refrain from visiting J-K.

However, during the past three years, the scenario has changed. J-K has witnessed the arrival of millions of domestic tourists, who have become unofficial ambassadors of the region. They have showcased the region's rejuvenated tranquillity to the world.

The government's sincere and dedicated efforts in restoring peace and stability to Kashmir after decades of Pakistan-sponsored turmoil have not gone unnoticed. As a result, tourists are now venturing into far-flung areas, including the frontier regions, which were once considered out of bounds due to the fear of terrorists.

The government has put in determined efforts to revive the tourism sector and dispel the negative image surrounding the region.

For the past three years, the authorities have worked tirelessly to restore peace and stability, ensuring the safety and security of both locals and tourists. Their efforts have yielded positive results.

The fear of Pakistan-sponsored terrorists and separatists that used to prevail in Kashmir has diminished significantly.

G20 summit renews interest:

The improved security situation combined with the successful hosting of the G20 summit has instilled confidence in foreign countries.

The positive message conveyed by the participants of the G20 meeting has had a far-reaching impact, generating a renewed interest in the region.

The G20 summit in Srinagar served as a platform for international delegates to discuss important global issues, including economic cooperation, climate change, and international security. — **ANI**



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EDUCATION MINISTRY

Dutch government to ban mobile phones, tablets in classrooms

AMSTERDAM: The Dutch government is banning mobile phones, tablets and smartwatches from classrooms to minimise distractions, unless the electronic devices are of solid need to the students.

The Education Ministry of the Netherlands said on Tuesday the ban will be enforced starting January 1, 2024. Exceptions will be made for lessons on digital skills, or if students with disabilities or other medical conditions need the devices.



What did the ministry say? The ban has been agreed on by the Education Ministry, schools and other related organizations.

Dutch Education Minister Robert Dijkgraaf said mobile phones don't belong in the classroom, even though they "are intertwined with our lives."

"Students need to be able to concentrate and need to be given the opportunity to study well. Mobile phones are a disturbance, scientific research shows. We need to protect students against this," he added in a statement.

Dijkgraaf said schools will be given the space to implement the ban as per their own plans, but

warned that legal rules would apply if the ban was not implemented by the summer of 2024.

The Dutch decision follows a similar one in Finland announced last week.

In Germany, only the state of Bavaria formally banned mobile phones in schools until the last academic year, when the ban was relaxed.

German freedom laws generally contradict a ban on mobile phones, though schools have the freedom to issue their own regulations. — DW

Nearly 1mn sought asylum in EU in 2022

People from Syria, Afghanistan, Turkey, Venezuela and Colombia were among the largest groups to have applied for asylum



BRUSSELS: Applications for asylum in the European Union in 2022 soared to nearly one million, the European Union Agency for Asylum (EUAA) said on Tuesday.

The agency said there were 996,000 applications last year, 53% more than in 2021.

People from Syria, Afghanistan, Turkey, Venezuela and Colombia were among the largest groups to have applied for asylum.

Germany received the largest number of applications at 244,000, followed by France, Spain, Austria and Italy.

People who fled the war in

Ukraine have been granted special temporary protection status.

Some 4 million live in EU Some 4 million live in the European Union. They are not part of the nearly million asylum applications filed last year.

The agency said the number of asylum seekers was putting "acute pressure on already strained reception places in many countries."

New EU migration plan The report comes as European Union leaders debate a new migration plan, especially for those who have reached European shores without a legal pathway.

The EU recently agreed to a plan allowing states to either accept a certain number of migrants or pay up to €20,000 (\$21,000) for each person they refuse. Hungary and Poland, however, have objected to the plan. Hungarian Prime

Minister Victor Orban told state television last week they would not implement it. German Chancellor Olaf Scholz has expressed confidence in the plan, saying it presents member countries with several options. The migration plan has been especially in focus after a migrant boatwreck, believed to be one of the most tragic disasters in the Mediterranean sea in recent times, shone a light on the refugee crisis. — DW

US INDEPENDENCE DAY

US President and First Lady watch fireworks with family

WASHINGTON: As the US celebrates its Independence Day, also known as the Fourth of July, President Joe Biden and first lady Jill Biden enjoyed the fireworks which adorn the sky over the National Mall in Washington DC on Tuesday.

Sharing the video of fireworks, President Biden tweeted, "Today, we celebrated independence, liberty, and freedom at your house -- the People's House." First son Hunter Biden joined his father and other members of the Biden family at the White House and watched in awe, The New York Post reported.

Attendees were also treated to musical performances by the United States Military's Premier

Bands, Grammy award-winning country musicians Brothers Osborne and three-time Grammy award-winning musician NE-YO, among other artists, according to the White House.

Music can make us feel better "It's amazing what a difference music makes. No, no, I really mean it. Think about how music can change moods. Music can make us feel better," Biden said during his remarks at the event before Jill Biden introduced the next musical act.

The president and his wife hosted a barbecue for active-duty military families on the White House

lawn Tuesday evening ahead of the nighttime fireworks.

The United States is celebrating its 247th independence day on July 4, 2023.

Meanwhile, New Yorkers also watched in awe Tuesday night as Macy's 47th annual Fourth of July fireworks show lit up the sky in a dazzling display of colours, said The New York Post.

Crowds gathered along either side of the East River to get a view of the spectacular 25-minute extravaganza that featured 60,000 shells exploding into the night sky to celebrate Independence Day.

The show included a special tribute to Tina Turner and many who watched from Gantry Plaza

State Park in Long Island City were particularly impressed by the golden display of explosions honouring the "Queen of Rock 'N Roll," who died in May at the age of 83.

The special section of the Macy's show featured Turner's song "The Best" as thousands of shells cast the night sky in gold hues and cascading shimmer.

On this historic day, US leaders and its citizens commemorate the sacrifices of the nation's revolutionaries who fought for independence from the British in 1776 and also acknowledge the efforts of US soldiers and military in safeguarding the nation.



AFGHANISTAN

India donates 10,000 metric tonnes of wheat

KABUL: As Afghanistan continues to grapple with the extreme food crises, India has donated 10,000 metric tonnes of wheat to the landlocked country. The 10,000 metric tonnes of wheat reached the Herat city of Afghanistan on Tuesday, the United Nations World Food Programme said in a tweet.

For hungry families "Wheat donated by the Government of India arrived in Herat where it was milled for distribution to hungry families across Afghanistan. This wheat is part of an in-kind contribution of 10,000 metric tonnes from India on top of 40,000 tonnes in 2022," UN WFP stated in the tweet.

Last month, the Indian government sent another 20,000 metric tonnes of wheat to Afghanistan amid a humanitarian crisis in the country using Iran's Chabahar port, Afghanistan-based Khaama Press reported.

— ANI

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SPORTS

Oman conclude Qualifier campaign on a losing note

Suraj Kumar and Shoaib Khan hit fifties in team's seven-wicket defeat to West Indies

MUSCAT: Oman concluded their Super Six round at the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier 2023 on a losing note as their campaign came to an end at the Harare Sports Club in Zimbabwe on Wednesday.

Oman were outplayed by a much-experienced side and two-time World Cup winners West Indies, who cruised to a seven-wicket win for their first success in the Super Six stage.

Brandon King's century (100 from 104 balls) stood out for the Windies, who for the first time failed to reach the World Cup after defeat to Scotland in their previous match.

Romario Shepherd took three wickets as Oman were restricted to 221 for nine from their 50 overs, and King led from the front in reply as the Windies got home with 10.2 overs to spare.

The Windies ended their run of three straight defeats with skipper Shai Hope sealing the win with an unbeaten half-century.

West Indies will now look to finish their campaign with another win against Sri Lanka to leave the Qualifier with some consolation.

After winning the toss, the



Windies elected to field and made early inroads as Shepherd (3/44) removed Jatinder Singh (8) with a short ball before Kyle Mayers bowled stand-in skipper Aqib Ilyas for one. Some fine work in the field from Roston Chase saw Kashyap Prajapati run out for 31 before another run out accounted for Mohammad Nadeem (20).

When Shepherd then dismissed Ayaan Khan (30), with Sandeep Goud (5) following soon after, Oman found themselves in real strife at 116 for six.

Shoaib Khan (50) and wicket-keeper Suraj Kumar (53 not out) started to rebuild, adding 85 for the seventh wicket only for another miscommunication to lead to a third run out of the innings.

Suraj kept going, taking Oman to 221 for nine from their 50 overs,

but it soon became clear that it would not be enough.

Even though Johnson Charles was bowled by Kaleemullah in the second over for four, the Windies were always in control of the chase thanks to King.

He and Keacy Carty (29) added 80 before catching Oman's running bug, Carty paying the price for trying to run on a misfield.

That brought skipper Hope to the wicket, and he and King settled any nerves with a 96-run stand, the opener bringing up his century with the target in sight.

While he was caught behind immediately after reaching three figures, it came with just 39 still needed from 15 overs.

Hope and Nicholas Pooran quickly saw their side home, needing just five overs to complete the



victory, with the captain fittingly finishing the job on his way to an unbeaten 63.

For Oman, it was their fifth consecutive defeat in the Super Six round. Duleep Mendis' men did remarkably good to qualify for the Super Six round, having shocked Test-playing Ireland in their opening group match before recording their win over the UAE to advance to the next round.

Brief scores: Oman 221/9 in 50 overs (Suraj Kumar 53*, Shoaib Khan 50; Romario Shepherd 3/44, Kyle Mayers 2/31) lost to West Indies 222/3 in 39.4 overs (Brandon King 100, Shai Hope 63*; Kaleemullah 1/49, Bilal Khan 1/54).

Scots, Dutch chase final qualification berth

The identity of the team joining

Sri Lanka in qualifying for the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup 2023 will be revealed on Thursday when Scotland take on the Netherlands in Bulawayo.

Scotland's victory over Zimbabwe eliminated the hosts from contention, leaving it as a straight shootout with the Dutch for the final spot.

Should Scotland avoid defeat, they are guaranteed a top two spot and a place in India, while the Netherlands need to win, while overhauling Scotland's superior net run-rate, to qualify at the expense of their opponents.

The other game of the day takes place in Harare as the USA and UAE face off with both teams still seeking a first win of the competition in the ninth-place play-off. (Inputs from icc-cricket.com)

INDIA SQUAD

Jaiswal and Varma named in T20I side for WI tour



MUMBAI: Yashasvi Jaiswal and Tilak Varma's stellar performances in the IPL have paved a way to the Indian T20I squad with the two quick-scoring left-handers chosen as part of a 15-member squad to play against West Indies from August 3.

It is their first-call up to the senior side in short-form cricket.

Hardik Pandya captains the side which will play five games in the Caribbean and the USA, with Suryakumar Yadav named his deputy. Some of the other heavy hitters are missing though. Rohit Sharma and Virat Kohli haven't represented India in T20Is since their semi-final exit at the 2022 T20 World Cup.

India T20I squad: Ishan Kishan (wk), Shubman Gill, Yashasvi Jaiswal, Tilak Varma, Suryakumar Yadav (vice-capt), Sanju Samson (wk), Hardik Pandya (capt), Axar Patel, Yuzvendra Chahal, Kuldeep Yadav, Ravi Bishnoi, Arshdeep Singh, Umran Malik, Avesh Khan, Mukesh Kumar.

WIMBLEDON



Medvedev marches into second round

LONDON: Russia's Daniil Medvedev countered a home-grown serve-and-volley barrage to reach the second-round Wednesday at Wimbledon, where the third seed downed Briton debutant Arthur Fery 7-5, 6-4, 6-3 at the grass-court major on No.1 Court.

Ninth seed Taylor Fritz finally booked his spot in the second round on Wednesday when he overcame Yannick Hanfmann in a five-set thriller 6-4, 2-6, 4-6, 7-5, 6-3 that began on Monday.

After coming off for bad light

with Fritz leading 3-2 in the fifth set on Monday night, the American and his German opponent had to wait until Wednesday to complete their clash due to rain.

The 25-year-old will next meet Mikael Ymer after the Swede beat Alex Molcan 6-3, 6-3, 6-4.

Fritz's countryman Frances Tiafoe also advanced, defeating China's Wu Yibing 7-6(4), 6-3, 6-4.

Competing at The Championships for the first time since 2019, Milos Raonic made a winning return when he downed Dennis Novak 6-7(5), 6-4, 7-6(5), 6-1. Former Wimbledon semi-finalist Grigor Dimitrov advanced to the second round on a rain-disrupted Wednesday, beating Japanese qualifier Sho Shimabukuro 6-1, 6-2, 6-1.

Home favourite Andy Murray maintained his perfect record in the first round as the two-time champion defeated fellow Briton Ryan Peniston 6-3, 6-0, 6-1 to set up a clash with either Greece's fifth seed Stefanos Tsitsipas or 2020 US Open champion Dominic Thiem.

in the women's division, Ons Jabeur, runner-up at last year's tournament, beat Poland's Magdalena Frech 6-3, 6-3.

In another match played on Centre Court, second seed and reigning Australian Open champion No.2 seed Aryna Sabalenka beat Hungary's Panna Udvardy 6-3, 6-1 to advance.

Also Just Stop Oil protesters interrupted play twice at Wimbledon by throwing orange-coloured confetti and jigsaw pieces onto court 18 on Wednesday. - Agencies

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COMMENTARY

The spirit of cricket debate



Anis Sajan, Vice-Chairman, Danube Group

SPIRIT OF cricket? That's what every cricket fan and player has been talking about since the stumping of England's Jonny Bairstow by Australian wicketkeeper Alex Carey on the final day of the second Ashes Test at the Lord's.

Australian skipper Pat Cummins was adamant that Bairstow's dismissal was within the rules of the game and that's why he did not withdraw the appeal. His English counterpart, Ben Stokes, said he would have withdrawn the appeal in that situation.

Bairstow had no business to leave the crease till the umpire had declared the over completed. It was a smart piece of work by Carey as he had noticed Bairstow leaving the crease often. Carey threw the ball as soon as he collected and his underarm throw hit the stumps with Bairstow out of the crease.

Had Carey did a stumping standing up to the stumps for a spinner, not many would have talked about. But Bairstow's dismissal was different.

As for the spirit of the game, it may be argued that Bairstow was not trying to steal a run and stepping out of the crease after a delivery is his habit.

So every English supporter is asking if Cummins could have withdrawn the appeal since Bairstow was not trying to take a run. I remember Indian opener Kris Srikanth had wandered out of his crease on his debut Test against England in Mumbai in 1981 and was run out by John Emburey, who was fielding in gully even though he was not trying to take a run. The dismissal is legal according to the rules of the game.

In the 1987 World Cup West Indies' Courtney Walsh refused to 'Mankad' Pakistan's Saleem Jaffer and it cost West Indies a place in the 1987 World Cup semi-final.

At times, it depends on player and the skipper. As long as it's in the rules, a batsman can be dismissed in such a manner and the captain can't be blamed for not withdrawing the appeal.

That's how it is and will be. There will always be diverse opinions. It's like the No. 9. If one sees from one angle it looks No. 9 but it may look like No. 6 from the other angle. The team that wins the game believes that the spirit of the game is upheld, while the losing team doesn't agree. I leave it to the readers to decide if the spirit of the game was upheld in this incident.

OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by September 2023 reaching \$75.52, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 25 cents from the price of Tuesday, which was \$75.27. - **ONA**

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,786.02 points, down by 0.19 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.27 per cent at 478.81 points. Arabia Falcon Insurance, up 9.09 per cent, was the top gainer while Al Madina Investments, down 1.92 per cent, was the top loser.

New integrated electronic database system launched to support SMEs

The system, to be available via the ASMED website, constitutes a digital reference for information on companies and establishments, their locations, their activities, population information and economic activities



MUSCAT: Acting in cooperation with the Royal Oman Police (ROP), the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) launched a new electronic information system code-named "Information Plus".

The system, to be available via the ASMED website, constitutes a digital reference for information on companies and establishments, their locations, their activities, population information and economic activities.

The system seeks to enable SMEs to develop an entrepreneur

neural environment and to establish an integrated electronic information database for supporting their business activities within the framework of the national approaches of Oman Vision 2040.

Besides promoting entrepreneurship as one of the pillars of the national economy in Oman, the system enhances decision-making that is based on open data of economic and strategic sectors.

The system encourages the use of open data and makes it available to SME owners who wish to launch their projects and access innovative

solutions to various challenges. It provides grounds for building a digital economy informed by knowledge society and innovation. The information is shared and reused appropriately so that it could be converted into tools and applications that help in research, innovation and smart solutions.

The system forms a cornerstone for ASMED's strive to help achieve proactive operations, notably by making open data easily available in digital form and realising ease and speed of response.

ASMED will organise a series of workshops for entrepreneurs and owners of SMEs and startups who

wish to establish their projects.

The system helps explore markets before starting a project. It emerges as an effective tool for integrating efforts and encouraging integration between SMEs and large companies. It helps entrepreneurs to identify projects that represent promising opportunities for them in governorates and urban communities.

It provides a wide range of information about establishments of the government and private sectors within the context of an interactive map within an entrepreneur's governorate, wilayat and urban community. - **ONA**



OPAZ MEETING

Khazaen Economic City to create new investment opportunities and enhance business environment

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Board of Directors of the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) held yesterday its second meeting for the year 2023, chaired by Dr Ali bin Masoud Al Sunaidy, Chairman of the Board, at the Authority's headquarters in Muscat. During the meeting, the Board valued the Royal Decree No. (44/2023) establishing Khazaen Economic City, which will be overseen by Opaz.

The board stressed that the city will serve to enhance the business environment and create new investment opportunities in Al Batinah South Governorate, along with other economic zones, free zones, and the existing and under-construction industrial cities in the various governorates.

During the meeting, the Board touched on the current progress of the master plans of the Economic Zone in Al Rowdah in the Wilayat of Mahdah in Al Buraimi Governorate. In this regard, the Board discussed the protection alternatives from potential flood risks, in addition to highlighting the opportunities for direct connection between the Zone and the roads leading to the ports of Sohar and Shinas. The Board was briefed on



the existing coordination, through the Omani-Saudi joint Executive Committee, on the project for the Integrated Economic Zone in Al Dhahirah Governorate. In addition, the meeting included discussing the linking locations with the road leading to the Empty Quarter borders. Furthermore, the Board approved the incentives for the usufruct agreement and stressed continuing the cooperation with the governor's offices in the two zones.

With regards to the free zone project at Muscat International Airport, the Opaz Board of Directors approved extending the concession agreement for the operating

company (Asyad) for 50 years renewable, in addition to the other advantages of the agreement.

On the other hand, the Board commended the progressive results achieved by the various departments of Opaz in the field of automating procedures and digital transformation in line with the government evaluation system for digital transformation and highly praised the steps taken to combat the use of paper transactions within and outside Opaz by none sending and receiving paper documents except correspondences of a special nature, starting from July 1.

Opaz Board of Directors was familiarised with the initial results of using artificial intelligence technologies and introducing employee qualification programmes. Hence, the board directed to increase the adoption of new technologies and provide more spatial information to investors, artificial intelligence techniques and business intelligence in line with converting electronic basic environment systems to locally approved cloud platforms, and continue enhancing and updating information security software and systems.

Moreover, the board was also briefed on the future programmes aimed at improving and speeding up the transactions between the economic zones, free zones and industrial cities, including the central services portal and the system for managing shipments and goods between the zones affiliated with Opaz, in cooperation with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology and the Royal Oman Police.

It is worth mentioning that the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones was established by Royal Decree No. (105/2020) on August 18, 2020. It oversees 14 economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities. It also supervises the establishment of a group of new economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities.

PLATFORM FOR ENTREPRENEURS

Ominvest supports SMEs in attending Leadership and Management Forum

Times News Service

MUSCAT: As part of its ongoing commitment to support local businesses, Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest), the leading investment company in Oman, supported several SMEs to facilitate their participation in the 2nd edition of the Leadership and Management Forum 2023.

Themed 'Financial Management and Investment', the forum took place at the Oman Convention and Exhibition Centre (OCEC) and was organised by the Oman Academy for SMEs.

Ominvest, staying true to its purpose of "Transforming Businesses to Enrich Societies," actively seeks to empower entrepreneurs and provide them with the necessary tools to excel, achieve sustainable growth, and expand both locally and regionally. By supporting this initiative, Ominvest underscores its belief in the importance of the SME sector and its vital role in developing Oman's economy.



The Leadership and Management Forum 2023 serves as an effective platform for entrepreneurs and SME owners to benefit from the experiences of globally notable speakers and exchange knowledge with them. It also enables participants to interact with business-

men, investors, and decision-makers from the public and private sectors, strengthening their network of professional relationships.

The forum offers valuable opportunities for sharing experiences, making connections, and learning about business growth. It provides the latest insights for

SMEs in leadership, financial management, strategic planning, and investment, ultimately aiding businesses in achieving sustainable development and drawing inspiration from success stories.

The forum participants were all successful entrepreneurs, carefully selected to attend this prestigious event. Among the guests this year was Enda Kenny, the former prime minister of Ireland, who held the role between 2011 and 2017. This presented an excellent opportunity for participants to benefit from his leadership and business development insights.

In addition to facilitating the participation of these SMEs in the Leadership and Management Forum 2023, Ominvest has also been actively supporting Injaz Oman in some of its programmes. By undertaking, participating in and supporting such initiatives, Ominvest aims to enhance SMEs' businesses and contribute to the growth and development of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Oman.

STOCK MARKET REPORT



MSX index sees growth of 3.1% in monthly trading

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The MSX 30 index witnessed a monthly growth of 3.1 percent during June-2023 to close the month at 4,768.22 points recording three consecutive months of gains, according to a new report.

"In terms of sector performance, two out of three sector indices recorded gains during June-2023," the Kuwait-based Kamco Invest said in its latest GCC stock market report for June 2023.

The Financial Sector Index, which recorded the biggest monthly fall of 4.9 percent during May-2023 recovered and witnessed the biggest monthly gain among the indices with 3.6 percent growth closing the month at 7,830.13 points.

The growth was primarily driven by the significant share price growth of certain companies such as Dhofar International Development and Investment Holding (+43.9 percent), National Finance Co (+11.1 percent) and Ahli Bank (+6.7 percent).

The Industrial Index followed, recording a gain of 2.6 percent during June-2023 while the Services Index registered a marginal decline of 0.4 percent during the month to close the month at 1,695.3 points. Significant share price declines of companies like Arabia Falcon Insurance (-9.1 percent), Majan College (-8.7 percent) and Oman Oil Marketing Co (-14.2 percent) contributed to the overall decline of indices' monthly drop.

In terms of company performance, Dhofar International Dev. & Inv. Holding Company topped the gainers list with a share price gain of 43.9 percent followed by Dhofar Cattle Feed and Al Omaniya Financial Ser-

vices Co with 14.1 percent and 13.7 percent monthly share gains, respectively.

On the decliner's side, Barka Water and Power topped the monthly losers list with a share price drop of 34.5 percent followed by Oman Investment & Finance Co and Oman Oil Marketing Company which recorded 18.7 percent and 14.2 percent share price declines during the month, respectively.

Trading activity on the exchange decreased for the second consecutive month. The total volume of shares traded in the exchange fell 41.9 percent to 137.1 million shares as compared to 235.9 million in May-2023. Similarly, the total value traded in the exchange declined by 41.2 percent to OMR31.5 million against OMR53.6 million in May-2023.

Bank Muscat topped the monthly value traded chart with trades at OMR16.3 million followed by Sohar Bank, Galfar Engineering and Contracting with total value traded at OMR9.9 million and OMR7.8 million, respectively. In terms of monthly volume traded, Oman Telecommunications Company topped the table with 7.2 million shares followed by Bank Muscat and Oman Qatari Telecommunication Company with volumes at 4.4 million shares and 1.6 million shares, respectively.

In economic news, a consortium of companies led by the South Korean steel-making company Posco has won a \$6.7 billion hydrogen deal from Oman. The project aims to build the world's largest hydrogen plant in Oman to achieve the country's 2050 net zero goal. The consortium which consists of four Korean companies, a French company and a Thai corporate will build the plant in the port town of Duqm.

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Arabia Falcon Insurance, up 9.09 per cent, was the top gainer while Al Madina Investments, down 1.92 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,786.02 points, down by 0.19 per cent from the previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.27 per cent at 478.81 points. Arabia Falcon Insurance, up 9.09 per cent, was the top gainer while Al Madina Investments, down 1.92 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover. A total number of 432 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating a turnover of OMR1.24 million, with more than 7.81 million shares changing hands. Out of 40 traded securities, 7 advanced, 14 declined, and 19 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net sellers for OMR308,000 while foreign investors were net buyers for

OMR232,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR76,000 worth of shares. Financial Index closed at 7,866.32 points, down 0.08 per cent. Prices of Arabia Falcon Insurance, Oman & Emirates Investment, Global Financial Investments, Al Sharqia Investment, and Bank Muscat were up by 9.09 per cent, 2.67 per cent, 1.61 per cent, 1.32 per cent, and 0.36 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Madina Investments, United Finance, Al Anwar Investment, Al Madina Takaful, and Ominvest were up by 1.92 per cent, 1.56 per cent, 1.22 per cent, 1.15 per cent, and 0.78 per cent respectively. Industrial Index closed at 6,158.06 points, down 0.11 per cent. Prices of Raysut Cement were up by 1.66 per cent respectively. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,802.04	4,784.52	4,786.02	4,795.19	-9.17	-0.19
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,883.70	7,857.40	7,866.32	7,872.48	-6.16	-0.08
Industry Index	6,165.02	6,158.06	6,158.06	6,165.02	-6.96	-0.11
Services Index	1,702.07	1,694.36	1,696.09	1,701.76	-5.66	-0.33
MSX Shariah Index	480.11	478.68	478.81	480.11	-1.30	-0.27
MSX TR INDEX	6,315.32	6,292.28	6,294.26	6,306.32	-12.06	-0.19
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,602.57	8,573.87	8,583.60	8,590.32	-6.72	-0.08
SERVICES TR IDX	1,871.12	1,862.65	1,864.55	1,870.78	-6.23	-0.33
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,585.78	6,578.34	6,578.34	6,585.78	-7.44	-0.11

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
7,815,597	1,244,962	432	23,864,227,726	7	14	19	40

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, JULY 5

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (BD)	DIFF %	LAST PR.	LAST BD.	LAST OFFER	PR. VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	184,800	14,275	17	0.078	0.078	0.077	0.077	0.075	0.002	2.667	0.077	0.075	0.077	0.100	9,384,375
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	200,000	12,600	11	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.062	0.001	1.613	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.100	12,600,000
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	28,100	2,184	3	0.078	0.078	0.077	0.077	0.076	0.001	1.316	0.077	0.072	0.080	0.100	6,830,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,813,464	509,196	58	0.280	0.282	0.280	0.280	0.279	0.001	0.358	0.280	0.306	0.280	0.100	2,101,791,177
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	357,284	102,536	12	0.287	0.288	0.286	0.287	0.287	0.000	0.000	0.287	0.271	0.287	0.100	466,646,604
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	15,000	4,200	1	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.280	0.000	0.000	0.280	0.276	0.302	0.100	34,971,429
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	89,477	15,475	7	0.173	0.173	0.172	0.173	0.173	0.000	0.000	0.173	0.172	0.173	0.100	518,368,798
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	6,420	6,324	3	0.985	0.985	0.985	0.985	0.985	0.000	0.000	0.985	0.960	0.985	0.100	738,750,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	11,050	1,183	2	0.108	0.108	0.107	0.108	0.108	0.000	0.000	0.107	0.107	0.108	0.100	495,728,727
OM0000004248	SMV POWER HOLDING	147,750	12,484	15	0.084	0.085	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.000	0.000	0.084	0.084	0.086	0.100	18,769,390
OM0000003000	AL MAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MARKETING	905	995	1	1.099	1.099	1.099	1.099	1.100	-0.001	-0.091	1.099	0.000	1.099	0.100	75,831,000
OM0000003234	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	13,390	5,111	3	0.382	0.382	0.380	0.382	0.384	-0.002	-0.521	0.382	0.380	0.382	0.100	90,308,630
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	23,594	9,081	3	0.385	0.385	0.384	0.384	0.387	-0.003	-0.775	0.384	0.380	0.384	0.100	256,653,324
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	2,983	322	1	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.108	0.109	-0.001	-0.917	0.108	0.105	0.108	0.100	16,200,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	56,924	15,087	2	0.266	0.266	0.265	0.265	0.268	-0.003	-1.119	0.265	0.265	0.268	0.100	58,300,000
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	6,199	533	4	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.087	-0.001	-1.149	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.100	15,050,000
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	39,886	14,783	19	0.374	0.374	0.369	0.370	0.375	-0.005	-1.333	0.370	0.370	0.400	0.100	240,849,365
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	122,185	7,698	5	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.063	0.064	-0.001	-1.563	0.063	0.062	0.063	0.100	22,436,020
Total	IS	3,119,411	734,065	167												
Parallel Market																
OM0000007290	ARABIA FALCON INSURANCE	10,500	1,260	2	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.110	0.010	9.091	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.100	12,396,199
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	794,117	31,862	28	0.039	0.041	0.039	0.041	0.038	0.003	7.895	0.041	0.038	0.041	0.100	6,560,000
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	734,604	135,297	53	0.182	0.187	0.182	0.184	0.181	0.003	1.657	0.184	0.184	0.189	0.100	36,800,000
OM0000001020	OMAN CHROMITE	568	1,988	1	3.500	3.500	3.500	3.500	3.500	0.000	0.000	3.500	0.000	3.500	1.000	10,500,000
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	20,000	10,480	2	0.524	0.524	0.524	0.524	0.524	0.000	0.000	0.524	0.524	0.524	0.100	82,530,000
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	344,280	21,001	16	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.061	0.000	0.000	0.061	0.057	0.061	0.100	18,735,926
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	39,039	3,084	7	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.079	0.000	0.000	0.079	0.077	0.080	0.100	1,659,000
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	53,541	10,228	4	0.190	0.192	0.190	0.192	0.192	0.000	0.000	0.192	0.189	0.192	0.100	374,334,233
OM0000002338	SALALAH PORT SERVICES	553	232	1	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.420	0.000	0.000	0.420	0.420	0.000	0.100	75,531,708
OM0000003631	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	42,100	7,575	8	0.180	0.180	0.179	0.180	0.180	0.000	0.000	0.180	0.179	0.180	0.100	38,523,560
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	34,500	4,315	2	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.125	0.000	0.000	0.125	0.121	0.125	0.100	12,225,270
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	900	26	1	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.000	0.000	0.029	0.027	0.029	0.100	19,571,735
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	10,000	290	1	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.029	0.000	0.000	0.029	0.027	0.029	0.100	20,717,784
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	200	20	1	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.000	0.000	0.098	0.094	0.098	0.100	19,600,000
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	1,400	1,340	2	0.957	0.958	0.957	0.958	0.960	-0.002	-0.208	0.958	0.984	1.056	0.100	91,010,000
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	134,715	41,746	48	0.310	0.310	0.308	0.308	0.310	-0.002	-0.645	0.308	0.308	0.340	0.100	237,221,600
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	367,000	44,769	9	0.122	0.122	0.121	0.121	0.122	-0.001	-0.820	0.121	0.121	0.122	0.100	51,397,196
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	21,100	2,094	5	0.100	0.100	0.099	0.100	0.101	-0.001	-0.990	0.100	0.099	0.100	0.100	8,500,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	1,761,495	142,750	65	0.082	0.082	0.081	0.081	0.082	-0.001	-1.220	0.081	0.081	0.081	0.100	16,686,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	19,095	974	3	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.051	0.052	-0.001	-1.923	0.051	0.051	0.052	0.100	4,335,000
Total	IS	4,389,707	461,328	259												

TRADING

Dollar steady before Fed minutes as yen dithers near 145-mark

LONDON: The US dollar was treading water against other major currencies on Wednesday as traders waited for the release of minutes from the Federal Reserve's last meeting that could offer clues to the outlook for interest rates. Australia's dollar fell in line with the Chinese yuan after data showed China's services activity expanded at the slowest pace in five months in June, the latest sign of a sputtering post-pandemic recovery in the world's second-largest economy, Reuters reported. The dollar index - which measures the currency against a basket of six other major currencies including the euro and Japan's yen - was flat on the day at 103.04, having held in a range of roughly 102.75-103.75 since early June. The Federal Open Market Committee is due to release the minutes from its most recent policy meeting later on Wednesday. Markets are pricing in an 86 per



cent chance that the Fed will raise rates by another quarter-point in July and a near-20 per cent chance of another 25-basis point increase in September. Investors will scour the minutes for any indications of the Fed's thinking, but Friday's monthly employment report will almost certainly carry more weight, analysts said. "It is the incoming numbers that dominate rather than Fed-speak,"

RBC currency strategist Adam Cole said. The euro rose 0.1 per cent to \$1.0891, while sterling was steady at \$1.2715. The dollar hovered around 144.62 yen, below the 145 level that prompted intervention by Japanese authorities last autumn. The greenback had last week briefly popped as high as 145.07 for the first time since November. -BNA

SURVEY

Eurozone consumers see lower inflation ahead: ECB poll

FRANKFURT: Eurozone consumers in May cut their inflation expectations again for the following 12 months, although they still saw prices growing faster than the European Central Bank (ECB) would like for years to come, a new ECB poll showed. The ECB's monthly Consumer Expectations Survey, which also showed modest expectations for income growth, was likely to provide some relief to policymakers deploying relentless interest rate hikes to battle a bout of high inflation in the 20 countries that share the euro. The median respondent in the May edition of the survey expected prices to grow by 3.9 per cent in the following 12 months, down from 4.1 per cent in April and 5.0 per cent in March, likely reflecting in part lower realised inflation. -BNA

INCLUSIVE ENERGY TRANSITION

8th Opec International Seminar to focus on energy transition issues

VIENNA: The 8th Opec International Seminar kicked off yesterday in the Austrian capital, Vienna, with the participation of the United Arab Emirates, represented by the Ministry of Energy and Infrastructure. Held under the theme "Towards a Sustainable and Inclusive Energy Transition", the conference is hosted at the Imperial Hofburg Palace in Vienna. The event will focus on the key issues pertaining to the energy transition, such as energy security, technological innovation, environmental matters, sustainable development, energy policies, as well as broader trends in the world economy. Haitham Al Ghais, Secretary-General of Opec, emphasised that the Opec conference has a remarkable track record in terms

of the high-level participants and discussions revolving around key issues affecting the energy sector, especially given the current global circumstances. He added that the eighth edition of the conference witnesses broad international participation from ministers, ambassadors, dignitaries, moderators, heads of international organisations, and chief executives of national and international oil companies. The current session of the conference focuses on discussions regarding sustainable and comprehensive energy transition in the sector. Opec has held seminars since 1969. However, the first in the current series of International Seminars was held in 2001. The 7th Opec International Seminar took place from June 20-21, 2018. -WAM

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PAIN IN YOUR FOOT OR ANKLE? IT COULD BE ARTHRITIS



Listening to your body and seeing a foot and ankle surgeon are so important. With today's scientific advances, treatment can reduce pain and restore you to your previous mobility, strength and functionality," says Dr. Butto



LIFESTYLE



Arthritis in the feet and ankles can produce swelling and pain, deformity, loss of joint function and loss of mobility. Whereas previous generations had to accept this as a normal part of aging, an explosion of new therapies and surgical treatments is offering patients today both hope and relief. For best results however, foot and ankle surgeons urge early intervention.

"When it comes to arthritis, it's important not to tough out symptoms or bear the pain," says Danielle Butto, DPM, FACFAS, a foot and ankle surgeon and Fellow member of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons (ACFAS). "Earlier treatment is not just about alleviating symptoms sooner. In many cases, we can even slow the progression of the symptoms, and use less invasive procedures to treat the condition than we would

otherwise." Understanding the early warning signs of arthritis, the progression of different forms of the disease and the new treatments available are important for getting the proper treatment and managing your symptoms.

OSTEOARTHRITIS

Osteoarthritis is a degenerative condition characterized by the breakdown and eventual loss of cartilage in the joints.

One common area where osteoarthritis occurs is the big toe. The big toe makes it possible for you to walk and run upright, absorbing forces equal to nearly twice your bodyweight when walking. With all it endures, it's no surprise that overuse can erode cartilage, causing serious pain and even physical deformities. Nevertheless, many people confuse big toe arthritis,

also known as hallux rigidus, with bunions. Early signs of hallux rigidus include pain and stiffness during use, or during cold, damp weather, difficulty with activities like running and squatting, and swelling and inflammation around the joint. Additional symptoms may develop over time, including pain during rest, bone spurs, limping, and dull pain in the hip, knee or lower back due to changes in gait.

If you notice any of these symptoms, see a foot and ankle surgeon. Conservative treatments like shoe modifications, orthotic devices and physical therapy, may prevent or postpone the need for surgery. If you have mid- to end-stage arthritis in your foot or ankle, you may require next steps, such as groundbreaking cartilage regeneration treatment, implant surgery or the surgical removal of damaged cartilage and spurs, all of which have

quick recovery periods.

"People with this disorder tend to suffer much longer than they need to," says Dr. Butto. "They're often pleasantly surprised when they find out their problem can be fixed."

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS

Rheumatoid arthritis (RA) is a disease in which certain cells of the immune system malfunction and attack healthy joints. Foot problems caused by RA commonly occur in the ball of the foot near the toes, although RA can also affect other areas of the foot and ankle. The most common signs and symptoms are pain, swelling, joint stiffness and difficulty walking, as well as a range of deformities, including rheumatoid nodules, dislocated toe joints, hammertoes, bunions, heel pain, Achilles tendon pain and flat-foot ankle pain. As part of a team

that includes a primary doctor or rheumatologist, your foot and ankle surgeon will develop a treatment plan aimed at relieving associated pain, which may include orthotic devices, accommodative shoes, aspiration of fluid build-up and steroid injections. When RA produces foot pain and deformities not relieved through other treatments, surgery may be required.

"Listening to your body and seeing a foot and ankle surgeon are so important. With today's scientific advances, treatment can reduce pain and restore you to your previous mobility, strength and functionality," says Dr. Butto.

For more information on foot and ankle arthritis or to find a foot and ankle surgeon near you, visit FootHealthFacts.org, the patient education website of the American College of Foot and Ankle Surgeons.

— STATEPOINT

SPORTS

Woakes, Wood, Moeen return for must-win Headingley Test

Anderson, Pope, Tongue make way, as Brook moves to No.3, Bairstow to No.5

LONDON: England have made three changes for Thursday's third Ashes Test at Headingley, with Chris Woakes, Mark Wood, and Moeen Ali returning to the starting XI in place of James Anderson, Josh Tongue and the injured Ollie Pope, ESPNcricinfo reported on Wednesday.

The XI was confirmed shortly before England's captain, Ben Stokes, addressed the media at Headingley, where his team must win to begin to claw back their 2-0 deficit after defeats at Edgbaston and Lord's.

Of the three changes, Anderson's was the most anticipated. He has so far claimed three wickets at 75.33 in an off-colour start to his tenth Ashes campaign, and after declaring the Edgbaston pitch to be "kryptonite", England's short-ball approach at Lord's also went away from his preferred swing-bowling methods.

He makes way for the return of Woakes, who has not played a home Test since September 2021, but whose record of 94 wickets at 22.63 in England makes him the obvious like-for-like replacement.

Plus, in the absence of Pope - whose dislocated right shoulder has ruled him out of the summer - Woakes' prowess with the bat (he averages 35.25 at home, with one hundred and five fifties) is a bonus after England fielded an unusually lengthy tail at Lord's.

"We're obviously devastated for



Popey," Stokes said. "He's been a huge part of what we've managed to achieve over the last 18 months and obviously, being vice-captain, it's a real shame not only for us, but also for him in such a big series."

Moeen's return provides even more ballast in the lower-middle order, and is further reason why England have opted not to replace Pope with an additional batter,

with Essex's Dan Lawrence the one spare option within their squad.

Harry Brook has been handed Pope's role at No.3, in a show of faith in spite of his quiet series to date, but Stokes admitted that his own workload as an allrounder - after a gruelling 12-over spell in the second innings at Lord's - had been a key reason for packing the side with extra bowling options.

"Obviously Dan was in the squad as the next batter in, but there were a few more things to consider," Stokes said.

"I'm not gonna lie, last week took it out of me a little bit, so a big part of it was what would be the best team if I wasn't to bowl a ball in this game, in the worst case scenario?"

"That doesn't mean I'm not going to bowl, but that was a huge

part of the thinking about the team that we picked."

Brook has so far made 132 runs at 33 in four innings of the series, but attracted criticism for a soft dismissal at Lord's after reaching his half-century. Stokes, however, said that his promotion to 3 - and Bairstow's to No.5, the position he filled in his remarkable run of form in 2022 - had been "pretty simple" decisions.

"Last summer, Brookie was in the squad and was the next player in, and when you've got a player like Brookie, from one to six, he would have come in in any position," Stokes said. "We feel that Brookie is a type of player who will just take the responsibility and just crack on with it."

"We obviously want to keep Joe [Root] at four because he's a remarkable player, and Jonny moving up to five was just to get him into the game earlier. The things he did last summer from the No.5 position are quite hard to look past."

Moeen missed the Lord's Test after sustaining a cut to the knuckle of his spinning finger, but he has been deemed fit to resume his comeback to the format. His appearance in the first Test at Edgbaston had been his first since retirement at the end of the India series in 2021, and he resumes needing two more wickets to reach 200 in Tests.

Stokes, however, was adamant that Wood's inclusion ahead of Anderson did not spell the end of the road for England's greatest fast bowler, a point that he had made to the whole bowling group before the start of the series.

"We were very open and honest, and clear with each other before the series started, that it's going to be very tough to ask all the bowlers to play every game this summer," Stokes said. "It's a good chance for Jimmy to have a rest and then get ready to charge in from the Jimmy Anderson End at Old Trafford next week. "But it's great to have Woody fit. He's firing and really ready to go this week, and we're looking forward to seeing him get going."

England squad: Zak Crawley, Ben Duckett, Harry Brook, Joe Root, Jonny Bairstow (wk), Ben Stokes (capt), Moeen Ali, Chris Woakes, Ollie Robinson, Stuart Broad, Mark Wood.

ICC MEN'S TEST PLAYER RANKINGS

Smith surges ahead but Williamson climbs to top

DUBAI: Australia batter Steve Smith has made rapid progress towards the top after the second England-Australia Test at Lord's, but Kane Williamson has replaced Joe Root as No.1 in the ICC Men's Test Player Rankings on Wednesday.

Smith's 'player of the match' effort of 110 and 34 has lifted him four places to second position. Smith was last at the top in June 2021, when he had replaced Williamson for a couple of weeks before being overtaken again by the New Zealand batter.

Root, who could only manage scores 10 and 18, slipped to fifth position, allowing Williamson to regain the top spot. This is the sixth stint at the top for Williamson, who first attained No.1 position in November 2015 and was last at the top in August 2021.

The race for the top positions in the list is bound to remain interesting in the coming days as Smith is just one point behind Williamson's 883 rating points after the latest weekly update, while third-placed Marnus Labuschagne (873) and Travis Head are also separated by just one point.

England batter Ben Duckett has



shot up 24 places to reach the top 20 for the first time in his career after scores of 98 and 83 in the second Ashes Test while his captain Ben Stokes is up nine places to 23rd after a valiant 155 in the second innings.

Australia captain Pat Cummins has moved up to second position among bowlers after grabbing four wickets in the match while left-arm fast bowler Mitchell Starc is up two places to 14th with six scalps. Opener David Warner is 26th among batters after scores of 66 and 25 lifted him four places.

In the ICC Men's ODI Player Rankings, Ireland batter Harry Tector has inched up one slot to joint-sixth position after scoring



60 against Nepal in the seventh place play-off match of the ICC Men's Cricket World Cup Qualifier 2023 in Harare. Scott Edwards of the Netherlands (up five places to 35th) and Pathum Nissanka of Sri Lanka (up eight places to 38th) are the other players to move up the batting rankings.

In the bowling rankings, Nepal leg-spinner Sandeep Lamichhane, who picked up three wickets against the United Arab Emirates, is up five places to 24th. Sri Lanka off-spinner Maheesh Theekshana (up 21 places to 32nd) and Scotland seam bowler Chris Sole (up 23 places to 39th) have also made notable progress after impressive performances in the Qualifier. - ANI

BCCI APPOINTMENT

Agarkar named India chairman of selectors

MUMBAI: Ajit Agarkar, the former India fast bowler, has been named chairman of selectors for the Indian men's team on Tuesday.

Agarkar, 45, filled the position which had been vacant since February after Chetan Sharma stepped down in the wake of a sting operation conducted on him by an Indian television network.

Agarkar is the fifth member of the India men's selection panel which already includes Shiv Sunder Das, Salil Ankola, Subroto Banerjee and S Sharath.

Having played 26 Tests and 191 ODIs, Agarkar is the senior-most member of the panel and as per BCCI rules becomes its chairman. First on their plate is selecting the side for the five T20Is against West Indies starting August 3.

This will be the second time Agarkar, who has also played four T20Is for India, will play the role of chairman of selectors, having performed the job at a smaller level for Mumbai between 2017-19.

Agarkar was part of the coaching staff at Delhi Capitals for the last two years but they have since parted ways.

India are a team in transition,



and the uncertainty around their selection panel has only added to that feeling. It all began last year when the BCCI moved away from the convention of giving a chairman two terms and asked for new applications for Chetan's role following the semi-final loss in the T20 World Cup.

But, the board failed to attract a better option, and re-elected Chetan Sharma the chairman of selectors only for the sting operation leading to his resignation, which has never been acknowledged by the BCCI. - ANI

QUALIFIER FALLOUT



Balbirnie steps down as Ireland captain

HARARE: Ireland's limited-overs captain Andy Balbirnie has decided to step down after his team's failure to qualify for the ICC Cricket World Cup.

Cricket Ireland on Tuesday issued a press release to announce Balbirnie's decision of leaving captaincy. In his absence, Paul Stirling will take interim command of the limited-overs teams with Balbirnie still remaining available for selection.

"I feel this is the right time for me, but more importantly the team. I will continue to do my best for this team and work hard to contribute towards what I hope will be a successful period over the next number of years," he concluded.

Ireland finished seventh in the ICC World Cup Qualifier. - ANI

CONTRACT TO RUN UNTIL NEXT YEAR

Diniz appointed Brazil manager on interim basis

RIO DE JANEIRO: Fluminense manager Fernando Diniz has been appointed head coach of Brazil on an interim basis, the Brazilian Football Confederation (CBF) said on Tuesday.

The 49-year-old agreed to a contract that runs until after the 2024 Copa America, to be played in the United States next June and July.

"I made a choice worthy of what our fans deserve," CBF president Ednaldo Rodrigues said in a statement published on the entity's official website.

Diniz replaces Ramon Menezes,

who was also appointed on a caretaker basis after the departure of Adenor Bacchi, better known as Tite, following last year's World Cup in Qatar.

Rodrigues said Diniz would remain in charge of Fluminense throughout the duration of his Brazil contract.

"I have followed Fernando Diniz's career since the beginning and I believe that he is part of a new and promising generation of coaches that is making an impact in Brazil," Rodrigues said.

"I admire his way of seeing foot-

ball, which resembles the style of the most important coaches in the world."

CBF officials are understood to be in talks with Carlo Ancelotti about the position beyond next year, though the Italian has made clear his intention to see out the remaining 12 months on his Real Madrid contract.

Local media reported that Ancelotti could assume the position when Diniz's contract expires in September 2024.

Diniz, who has also had spells in charge of Sao Paulo, Santos,

Vasco da Gama and Athletico Paranaense, among other clubs, described his appointment as a dream come true.

"I am ready to put my best foot forward for the CBF and for Brazilian football," he said in the same statement.

"I am fulfilling a dream by working alongside these great players, some of whom I coached when they were younger."

"It will be a source of great pride to be able to participate [in the national team] and I will try to help in every way possible." - Xinhua



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MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to offer various services and benefits to meet customers' aspirations, especially during summer, Bank Muscat, the leading financial services provider in the Sultanate, launched a special offer on its credit cards when used internationally.

During the offer period, customers will get the chance to enter a monthly draw to get 100 per cent cashback on their spends (capped at OMR 100) for every OMR100

spent using Bank Muscat credit cards internationally on POS machines or online. For every OMR100 spent, customers get another 1 chance to win.

The higher the spending, the higher the chances to win. There will be 100 winners every month with a total of 700 winners by the end of the campaign. The offer continues until December 31, 2023. It comes as part of Bank Muscat's strategy to provide special offers to customers and users of Bank Muscat cards in general and Credit Cards in particular.

It comes as part of Bank Muscat's strategy to provide customers with the best value proposition for its products to enhance their experiences. Bank Muscat credit card customers enjoy curated discount offers across a wide range of categories including, lifestyle, health and beauty, entertainment, travel and hotel stays. This is in addition to card usage benefits such as free travel insurance and rewards on spend. Bank Muscat is also currently offering customers who apply for all eligible Bank Muscat credit cards a waiver of annual fees for the first year.

On this occasion, Abdullah Tamman Al Maashani, General Manager – Products, Bank Muscat, said: "We are pleased to see the positive feedback Bank Muscat's Credit Cards get. The bank is keen to provide various offers to meet customers' needs and aspirations. We hope that these added benefits will give our valued customers the chance to enjoy the added value the cards provide during their

travel plans this summer.

"I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our valued customers for their continuous confidence in the bank's products and services. We will continue to develop our services and facilities to offer the best banking experience for all customers."

In line with its customer-centric vision 'To serve you better, everyday', Bank Muscat has launched a new service within its Internet and Mobile banking channels, which enables customers to submit applications for Credit Cards digitally. The new service further expands the list of options available to customers through the bank's various digital channels and enhances banking convenience leading to reduce waiting times when visiting branches.

The new features enable customers to apply digitally for a variety of Credit Cards including Visa Gold credit card, Visa Classic Credit Card, Bank Muscat Oman Air Visa Platinum credit card, Bank Muscat Lulu Titanium Mastercard credit card, Al Jawhar Visa Platinum credit card, Asalah Visa Signature credit card and the Private Banking Visa Infinite credit card according to the eligibility norms for the same. After selecting the desired product and submitting the application form, the customer will receive a confirmation letter with the reference number of the form on the registered mobile phone number and e-mail. The bank also delivers Credit Cards to the customer's doorstep through courier services.



INSURANCE



Shifa Hospital strengthens healthcare network with strategic MoU signing with MedNet (TPA)

MUSCAT: Shifa Hospital Oman, a leading healthcare institution dedicated to providing exceptional medical services, announces the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with MedNet (TPA), a renowned third-party administrator and managed care provider in the Mena region's health insurance industry.

This collaboration marks a significant milestone in Shifa Hospital's continuous commitment to expanding its network of esteemed partners to offer comprehensive and high-quality healthcare solutions to its patients.

Dr Salim Al Ghannami, Chief Executive Officer at Shifa Hospital Oman, expressed his enthusiasm regarding the newly formed alliance, stating, "At Shifa Hospital, we are dedicated to providing the highest standards of healthcare to our patients. The collaboration with MedNet (TPA) reinforces

our commitment to expanding our network and enhancing access to quality medical services. By expanding our network and resources, we reaffirm our commitment to the health and well-being of the communities we serve."

With more than 25 years of experience, MedNet has consistently taken a leading role in shaping the health insurance landscape of the region. As a highly trusted intermediary and health insurance claims management organisation, MedNet has been instrumental in fostering seamless connections between insurance companies and healthcare providers.

Through its extensive expertise and unwavering commitment, MedNet has played a pivotal role in ensuring the provision of quality healthcare services to individuals and communities in Oman and across the region.

Shifa Hospital Oman has con-

sistently demonstrated its commitment to excellence by partnering with leading insurance providers, ensuring that patients receive optimal care and seamless billing processes. This strategic alliance with MedNet (TPA) further strengthens Shifa Hospital's position as a preferred healthcare provider for a wide range of insurance companies.

Shifa Hospital, a premier healthcare institution, is firmly dedicated to delivering comprehensive medical services to patients through its nine Centres of Excellence. Guided by a commitment to excellence, Shifa Hospital combines cutting-edge technology with compassionate care to uplift the well-being of individuals and communities. With a diverse array of medical specialities and services, the hospital stands as a beacon of hope and healing for patients seeking exceptional healthcare.

THIRD MEETING

Alizz Islamic Bank Sharia Supervisory Board presents Sharia-compliance report



MUSCAT: The Sharia Supervisory Board of Alizz Islamic Bank held its third meeting for the current year with a full quorum under the chairmanship of Sheikh Dr Essam Al-Enezi, Chairman of the Sharia Supervisory Board.

It was held in the presence of the members of the Board, Sheikh Dr Ahmed Subhi Ayadi and Sheikh Dr Ibrahim bin Nasser Al-Sawafi, and the sheikhs from the Tamkeen Programme for empowering the second level of Sharia Supervisory Boards members attended the meeting, where they participated alongside the members of the Sharia Supervisory Board as part of their practical training.

The meeting was attended by Alizz Islamic Bank's GM Ali bin Saif Al Mani and senior executive management. The GM gave a visual presentation on the bank's Q2 performance this year and the expectations for the bank moving forward.

The Sharia Compliance and Audit Department also presented

a report on Sharia compliance and the risks of Sharia non-compliance, in which the indicators of periodic review and assessment of potential risks were mentioned. The Sharia audit report for the second quarter of the current year was presented, which reflected the Sharia review of executed transactions.

The Sharia Board provided appropriate solutions for procedural processes. It also discussed a number of issues raised and new products, and the Sharia Board issued its decisions regarding them, in addition to considering a number of restructuring requests for corporate financing and issuing the appropriate decisions for them.

Issa bin Salim Al Riyami, Head of the Sharia Audit and Compliance Department, said, "The Sharia Supervisory Board plays an indispensable role in terms of providing Sharia-compliant solutions to the bank's customers, especially in terms of meeting

the needs of corporate customers, where there is a requirement for more advanced products.

The department actively participated in the development of various products that were launched during the past year, as well as the products that are scheduled to be launched in 2023. All of this was done under the supervision and guidance of the Sharia Supervisory Board.

Al Riyami added, "Additionally, the Sharia Supervisory Board of Alizz Islamic Bank performs various roles that to achieve the ultimate goal of ensuring compliance with Islamic Sharia in all areas of dealing with customers, products and services. The bank's transactions have been carried out in accordance with the principles and rules of Islamic Sharia, and it provides the necessary reports on its findings and takes the necessary steps to support the bank's products and services so that they are compatible with the principles and rules of Islamic Sharia."



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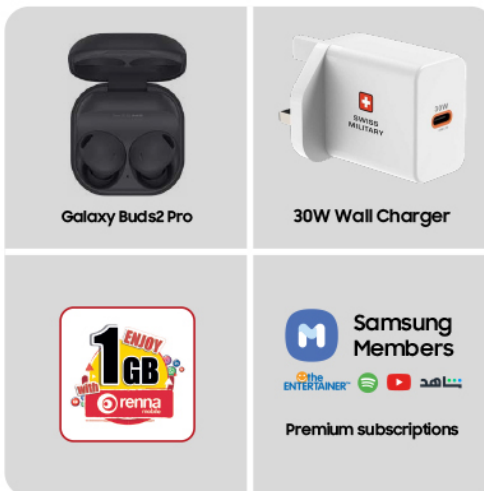
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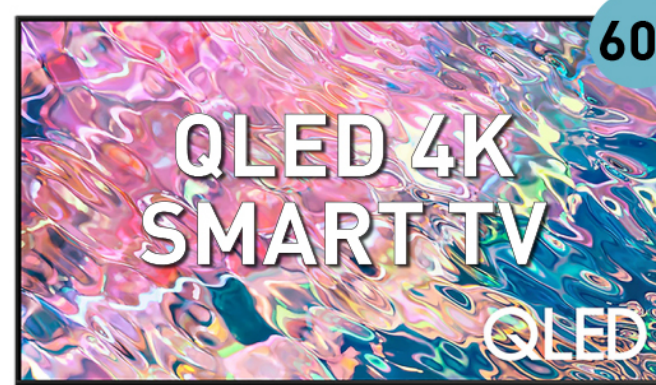
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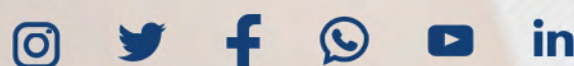


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