



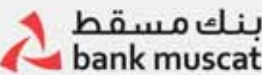
HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN GREETES PRESIDENT OF MOLDOVA

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



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SAYYID SHIHAB RECEIVES PAKISTANI MILITARY OFFICIAL

HH Sayyid Shihab bin Tarik Al Said, Deputy Prime Minister for Defence Affairs received in his office at Al Murtafaa Garrison yesterday General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The meeting reviewed the advanced relations between Oman and Pakistan. The two sides also discussed a set of topics of mutual interest. The meeting was attended by Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces. — **ONA**

BILATERAL TIES

Oman foreign minister conveys greetings of HM the Sultan to Mongolia's president

ULAANBAATAR: Ukhnaagiin Khürelsükh, President of Mongolia yesterday received Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister at the parliament's headquarters in the Mongolian capital city of Ulaanbaatar.

During the meeting, Sayyid Badr conveyed greetings of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik and his best wishes of continuous growth and prosperity to the President and people of Mongolia. His Majesty also wished bilateral relations further development.

In his turn, the Mongolian President asked the Foreign Minister to convey his heartfelt sentiments to His Majesty the Sultan. The president also expressed his best wishes to His Majesty and the Omani people, wishing the bilateral



relations further development and growth.

Moreover, the two sides highlighted the march of bilateral relations and underscored the joint keenness to boost those relations in various fields. They also touched on issues and developments on the regional and international arenas. The meeting was attended by

Nasser Mohammed Al Busaidi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the People's Republic of China and non-resident ambassador to Mongolia. It was also attended by Sheikh Abdulaziz Mohammed Al Hosni, Head of the Asia and Pacific Department at the Foreign Ministry and several officials from both sides. — **ONA**

TRAGEDY



Bodies of six citizens airlifted from Dhofar

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) airlifted the bodies of six citizens who died in a traffic accident in Dhofar Governorate.

An official statement said that a number of their relatives were also transported from the Salalah Air Base to Seeb Air Base in cooperation with various departments of the Ministry of Defence.

According to sources, the accident occurred in the Raysut area of Dhofar Governorate which resulted in the death of six members of the Nakhal Shooting

Team. The dead were identified as Younis bin Salem Al Hadhrami, his son Anas bin Younis Al Hadhrami, Musa bin Ahmed Al Salami, his son Fahm bin Musa Al Salami, Mohammed bin Salem Al Buraiki, and Nasser bin Saif Al Siyabi.

They had gone to Dhofar to participate in the Khareef Dhofar Traditional Weapons Shooting Competition, while one of them was critically injured. Khareef Dhofar, on its official account, announced the postponement of the Dhofar Khareef Traditional Weapons Shooting Competition until further notice.

OMAN TO PREPARE FLOOD RISK MAPS TO SAVE LIVES, PROPERTY

The company will also prepare emergency management plans for handing flood risks in Oman

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources assigned a specialised company with the tasks of drafting consultancy services project to update and prepare flood risk maps.

The company will also prepare emergency management plans for handing flood risks in the Sultanate of Oman from 2024 to 2026.

The project seeks to update earlier flood maps and cover the full range of their risks in open plains and main valleys, as well as areas of chances for the formation of all water bodies in the Sultanate of Oman. It identifies floods geographically and classifies them in terms of risks, as posing "maximum", "medium" or "minor" danger.



During different climatic conditions, these maps will help facilitate the operations of the National Emergency Management Committee, thereby saving lives and property in areas adjoining valleys. The maps also include the urban planning requirements that must be considered when allocating sites for residences or other structures.

The project consists of three main stages, the first of which is related to the analysis of rainfall and surface runoff data, which

will last for 12 months and includes the evaluation and analysis of the available hydrological data for rain stations and valleys in all governorates.

It involves the preparation of tables and curves of the recurrence rainfall intensity for each governorate, as well as the preparation of a flood design guide for each governorate, to achieve a sound hydrological understanding of the nature of relationship between rainfall and surface runoff for each watershed. >**A5**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Strategic fuel reserve project in Dhofar

1 OQ, the global integrated energy group, celebrated the groundbreaking ceremony of the strategic fuel reserve project in the Dhofar Governorate, marking an investment of over OMR47 million. The ceremony was held under the patronage of HH Sayyid Marwan bin Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar. >**A3**

OMAN

Oman, Mongolia to boost cooperation

2 Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, held a meeting with Batmunkh Battsetseg, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia in the city of Ulaanbaatar. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing them in various fields, particularly trade and investment. >**A4**

SPORTS

Shahid Afridi slams Pakistan team

3 Former Pakistan skipper Shahid Afridi slammed Shan Masood's side for "lack of awareness" after their defeat in the first Test match against Bangladesh in Rawalpindi. Pakistan conceded a massive 10-wicket loss against Bangladesh in the first match of the two-game Test series. >**B6**

GAZA DEATH TOLL

as of August 26, 2024



Deaths
40,435
Injured
93,534



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PRODUCTION
JOURNEY

1



Production Highlights

246,000
barrels of oil equivalent



Daily Production

89 million
barrels of oil equivalent



Annual Production

2



81
million barrels
Processed



530,000+
barrels/day

Total Refining
Capacity



198,000
barrels/day
Sohar Refinery



116,000
barrels/day
Mina Al Fahal Refinery



230,000
barrels/day
Duqm Refinery
(JV with Q8)

3



Refinery and
Petroleum Industry
Products



15,705,600+ barrels
91-Octane Gasoline



11,044,300 barrels
95-Octane Gasoline



32,425,900 barrels
Diesel



7,861,000 barrels
LPG



9,866,500 barrels
Jet Fuel

4



216,700 cubic metres
Fuel Storage Capacity

19,700
cubic metres

Sohar

Jifnain

160,000
cubic metres

Raysut

37,000
cubic metres



☆ All Data is for 2023

oq.com

DHOFAR GOVERNORATE

OQ celebrates groundbreaking of strategic fuel reserve project valued at \$124 million

MUSCAT: OQ, the global integrated energy group, on Monday celebrated the groundbreaking ceremony of the strategic fuel reserve project in the Dhofar Governorate, marking an investment of over OMR47 million (equivalent to \$124 million). The ceremony was held under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki Al Said, the Governor of Dhofar, and attended by various officials and dignitaries from the governorate.

The strategic fuel storage facility aims to enhance the local fuel supply in Dhofar and ensure preparedness for emergency situations by storing key petroleum derivatives, including MOGAS-91, MOGAS-95, Gas Oil and jet fuel. With a storage capacity exceeding 110,000 cubic metres, the facility is designed to secure a 30-day fuel supply for Dhofar, thereby enhancing the governorate's resilience to potential energy crises.

This initiative is part of OQ's broader efforts to meet the nation's demand for petroleum products, aligning with the growing population and the surge in commercial and investment activities.

Commenting on the occasion, His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar, stated: "This project is a culmination of the efforts by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals and OQ to enhance Dhofar's energy infrastructure and ensure its growing needs for petroleum derivatives are met. We are confident that this investment will significantly contribute to sustainable economic development in the governorate and secure essential fuel supply during emergencies."



THE STRATEGIC FUEL STORAGE FACILITY AIMS TO ENHANCE THE LOCAL FUEL SUPPLY IN DHOFAR AND ENSURE PREPAREDNESS FOR EMERGENCY SITUATIONS BY STORING KEY PETROLEUM DERIVATIVES, INCLUDING MOGAS-91, MOGAS-95, GAS OIL AND JET FUEL

His Excellency Eng. Salim bin Nasser Al Aufi, Minister of Energy and Minerals, emphasised that: "The groundbreaking of the strategic fuel reserve project in Dhofar is a significant step in reinforcing Oman's strategic fuel reserves, ensuring the availability of essential products, and securing supplies during emergencies. This development is crucial in guaranteeing our petroleum product needs are met."

His Excellency further highlighted that a similar strategic fuel reserve project is scheduled to commence soon in the Musandam Governorate, with a planned capacity of 14,536 cubic metres. Upon completion, this initiative will elevate the nation's total fuel storage capacity to over 350,000 cubic metres, encompassing key facilities such as the 160,000 cubic metre Jifnain station in Muscat Governorate, the 19,700 cubic metre Suhar station in North Al Batinah Governorate, and the 37,000 cubic metre Raysut station.

In a speech delivered at the ceremony, Ashraf Hamed Al Mamari, Group CEO of OQ, stated: "The strategic fuel storage facility, with a capacity of 110,000 cubic metres, is another milestone in OQ's investments in Dhofar Governorate, complementing our existing projects such as the liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), ammonia, methanol plants, and gas pipelines."

He explained that "The strategic fuel reserve project in Dhofar has been initiated under the directive of the Omani government, represented by the Ministry of Energy and Minerals, which places great importance on ensuring the supply of petroleum products across all governorates in the Sultanate."

He noted that all aspects related to the project's commencement, such as engineering contracts and land usufruct agreements in the Salalah Free Zone, have been finalised. Al Mamari further em-



phasised that OQ is committed to securing the supply of petroleum derivatives for Oman, with a total refining capacity of 530,000 barrels per day. This includes the production capacity of the Duqm Refinery at 230,000 barrels per day, the Mina Al Fahal Refinery at 116,000 barrels per day, and the Suhar Refinery at 198,000 barrels

per day. The project consists of three key components: a fuel reserve facility within the free zone, a pipeline connecting the pumping station at Salalah Port to the fuel storage tanks in the free zone, and the expansion of the existing pumps at Salalah Port. Additionally, the new Salalah station will

be connected to the existing Raysut station. The reserve facility will be built on an area of 150,000 square metres, with the construction phase set to span 36 months, encompassing engineering works, procurement, and construction activities, culminating in the initial operation. The facility will feature tanks,

a warehouse, a control room, an administration building, a maintenance workshop, a pump area, a tanker loading zone, firefighting and safety facilities and other complementary components. Provisions for future expansion and increased storage capacity have also been considered. OQ continues to secure the pro-

duction of petroleum derivatives, which play a vital role in supporting Oman's industrial sector. In 2023, OQ Refineries and Petroleum Industries produced over 15.7 million barrels of MOGAS-91, 11 million barrels of MOGAS-95, 32.4 million barrels of gas oil, 9.8 million barrels of jet fuel, and 7.8 million barrels of LPG.



Oman and Mongolia to boost cooperation

The two sides reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing them in various fields, particularly economic, trade and investment

ULAANBAATAR: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, held a bilateral meeting with Batmunkh Battsetseg, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia in the city of Ulaanbaatar. During the meeting, the two sides reviewed bilateral relations and means of enhancing them in various fields, particularly augmenting economic, trade and investment cooperation.



AGREEMENT: A memorandum of understanding (MoU) was signed between the foreign ministries of Oman and Mongolia. - **ONA**

Further, the two sides highlighted regional and international developments of mutual interest. They also reiterated the importance of jointly working on achieving security and stability in the region and the world at large. Moreover, a memorandum of

understanding (MoU) was signed between the foreign ministries of Oman and Mongolia. The memorandum of understanding deals with bilateral consultations. The meeting was attended by Nasser Mohammed Al Busaidi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of

Oman to the People's Republic of China and to Mongolia. It was also attended by Sheikh Abdulaziz Mohammed Al Hosni, Head of the Asia and Pacific Department at the Foreign Ministry and officials from both sides. - **ONA**

Oman, Belarus review bilateral relations

MUSCAT: Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion yesterday received Bogdanov Alexei, Minister of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade in the Republic of Belarus. The meeting, held at Invest Oman lounge, reviewed the bilateral cooperation. It also highlighted indicators of inter-trade growth and means of augmenting trade and investment exchange. The meeting looked into means of facilitating shipment methods,

as well as boosting exports and imports in various fields of joint interest. **Invest Oman lounge** Further, the visiting delegation went on tour of Invest Oman lounge. During the tour they were briefed about the services and facilities offered by the lounge to those interested in investing in the Sultanate of Oman. They were also introduced to prominent opportunities in various economic sectors in Oman. - **ONA**



DISCUSSION: Qais Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion with Bogdanov Alexei, Minister of Antimonopoly Regulation and Trade in Belarus. - **ONA**

TRAINING COURSE

Joint Command and Staff College starts 38th course

MUSCAT: The Joint Command and Staff College at the Academy of Strategic and Defence Studies, yesterday marked the opening of the 38th training course for student officers. The ceremony was held under the auspices of Brigadier Saif Hamad Al Yousufi, Commandant

of the Joint Command and Staff College. The course brings together officers from the Ministry of Defence, the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) and other military and security units, in addition to officers from armed forces of the GCC states, Arab and foreign countries. - **ONA**



MEETING

SAF Chief of Staff holds meeting with Pakistani military official



MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF), received yesterday General Sahir Shamshad Mirza, Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in the Islamic Republic of Pakistan. The meeting took place at SAF Chief of Staff's office at Al Murtafa'a Garrison. An official reception ceremony

was held in honour of the Pakistani official upon his arrival at Al Murtafa'a Garrison, where the Guard of Honour gave the military salute to the accompaniment of a military music. Then, the guest inspected the guard of honour. Vice Admiral Abdullah welcomed the guest. During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views about matters of common interest.



The meeting was attended by Brigadier Badr Nassir Al Kharousi, Director General of the Joint Military Intelligence and Preventive Security at COSAF. It was also attended by the Military Attaché at the Pakistani Embassy in Muscat. General Sahir Shamshad Mirza and his accompanying delegation visited the Maritime Security Centre (MSC). The delegation was

greeted upon their arrival at the MSC by the Head of the Centre. Members of the visiting delegation were briefed on the tactical roles and tasks carried out by the centre in the safety of the maritime environment. They toured the centre's facilities and viewed its latest equipment and technologies used in carrying out its national duties. - **ONA**

AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES

Enrolment of students in Duqm increases as investments grow

Times News Service

DUQM: The Special Economic Zone at Duqm (SEZAD) has recorded growth in the number of students enrolled in general and basic education, coinciding with an increase in investments in the area. This growth is also due to many Omani and foreign families relocating to Duqm, encouraged by the availability of various services and facilities that promote a stable living environment. Over the past five years, the SEZAD has seen an increase in the number of students attending both public and private schools. In the 2023/2024 academic year, student enrollment rose to over 1,740, compared to 1,181 in the 2018/2019 academic year, marking a growth of 47.3 per cent. This growth coincided with the opening of A'Soud Global School (AGS) in 2021. Ahmed Ali Akaak, Acting CEO of the SEZAD, said that the Zone is poised for further investments in the education sector, reflecting the growth of projects being implemented in the area. He added in a press statement, "The Zone's administration is working to attract more investments that support the stability of both local and foreign workforces and is implementing numerous projects that make Duqm a preferred destination for living, and working residents." There are a total of 8 schools in Duqm, including 6 public schools



and 2 private schools, AGS and the Indian School Duqm. In addition, there are several kindergartens that cater to students in the pre-school phase. Ms. Amandine Guofart, Principal at AGS, said that the school has experienced significant growth since its establishment. It began as an elementary school only but now offers education from kindergarten through to Grade 12, following the globally recognised British curriculum accredited by the University of Cambridge. She noted that AGS focuses on developing students and preparing them to become future leaders. In this context, she highlighted that the school recently signed a memorandum of understanding with the Middle East College to foster collaboration between students and teachers, allowing them access to shared teaching facilities to enhance their experience and overall development. She praised the support the school receives from the SEZAD's administration, saying, "The de-

velopment of Duqm and the exceptional support from the Zone's team over the past few years have contributed to this significant growth in a short period." The total number of students enrolled at AGS last academic year was over 200, representing more than 22 different nationalities. In comparison, the Indian School had a total of 52 students from 5 different nationalities. The Indian School Duqm is the newest addition to the network of Indian schools in the Sultanate of Oman. It was established to meet the growing demand from Indian and other expatriate families residing in Duqm. The school aims to provide a modern and comprehensive educational environment from kindergarten through primary school, with plans to expand in the future to include higher educational levels. It follows the curriculum approved by the Central Board of Secondary Education (CBSE) in India, ensuring high-quality education for its students.

SALALAH

Sales centre inaugurated for Al Shorouk neighbourhood

SALALAH: An Integrated Services Centre (ISC) was opened on Monday in the Wilayat of Salalah, Governorate of Dhofar, to receive bookings for residential units in the Al Shorouk neighbourhood project in Sahalnout area. The project constitutes part of the "National Initiative for Integrated Residential Neighbourhoods". The ISC programme's launch ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Khalfan Said Al Shuaili, Minister of Housing and Urban Planning. The ISC seeks to provide support and information to all beneficiaries, investors and beneficiaries of the "Government Residential Land Grants System". It reflects the efforts being made by Al Dhahab Real Estate Services Company, acting in cooperation with Al Dhahab Construction Foundation and operating under the supervision of the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning. The minister and the attendees were briefed about the designs and envisaged facilities of Al Shorouk neighbourhood model and the project's implementation stages. The event also saw the signing of partnership agreements with small and medium enterprises (SMEs) that will contribute to the project works. Al Shorouk Residential neighbourhood is the first of its kind in Salalah. The project comprises villas of different sizes, apartments, ser-



vice and entertainment centres and other amenities. The neighbourhood contains more than 558 residential units designed in accordance with the highest specifications. It covers an area of 324,000 square metres, including 40,000 sqm for green spaces. A cooperation agreement was also signed with Oman Housing

Bank (OHB) to provide financing to those eligible for the grants and those wishing to own property in Al Shorouk neighbourhood. Being one of the partners in the housing and construction sector, the OHB plays a vital role in promoting sustainable economic development in the Sultanate of Oman. - **ONA**

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JOINT COOPERATION

Dr. Madiha meets British envoy

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Dr. Madiha bint Ahmed Al Shaibaniyah, Minister of Education, received on Monday Dr. Lianne Saunders, the UK Ambassador to the Sultanate of Oman, and her accompanying delegation, in the presence of a number of ministry officials.

During the meeting, areas of joint cooperation in educational aspects were reviewed, as well as ways of strengthening relations between the two countries, in addition to reviewing the joint bilateral relations between Oman and the United Kingdom in the fields of education, and the programmes and initiatives provided by the

British Council for the teaching staff and students in studying the English language. The two sides stressed the importance of boosting relations between the two countries and the keenness to enhance and expand the scope of this cooperation. The ambassador thanked the Ministry of Education for its support.

BUSINESS, ECONOMY CLASS

Oman Air launches its biggest global sale campaign

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman Air has launched its biggest ever Global Sale campaign, offering discounts of up to 25% on Business and Economy Class tickets across its entire network. Running until 5 September 2024, the sale offers travellers the perfect opportunity to explore some of the world's most popular destinations, starting from as little as OMR31. With a choice of stunning cities across Europe, the Far East, Indian Subcontinent and more, guests can experience Oman Air's award-winning service, signature Omani hospitality, and convenient connectivity through its Muscat hub. The promotion includes one-way and return fares and is valid for travel from 1 September 2024 to 31 March 2025. The offer however, does not include domestic flights, interline flights, or codeshare partners. Other terms and conditions also apply.

MAPPING PROJECT



Assessing severity of flood risks through hydrological analysis

<FROM A1 The second phase of the project is the flood mapping phase in floodplains and flood risk areas, which extends for seven months and includes mapping flood risks and assessing their severity through hydrological analysis using latest technologies, and identifying the main channels of wadis and their areas of spread during low, medium and large floods. The final phase, which will last for five months, will include preparing plans to manage flood risks and emergency plans in areas expected to be exposed to flood risks, preparing necessary scenarios and procedures to be followed to control floods in the event of their occurrence based on approved flood risk maps, developing scenarios and proposals for waterway demarcations, and recommendations related to emergency plans to be followed during exceptional climatic conditions. — ONA

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- Submissions must include certified check, or a bank guarantee issued by one of the banks operating in Oman, in the amount of 10% of the bid amount.
- Asyad Ports reserves the right to accept or refuse any bids without providing explanation.
- The successful bidder is obligated to sign the lease agreement and pay the agreement value in advance within 7 days from signing. Failure to comply will result in a fine of OMR10/day.
- The deadline for bids submission is Thursday 5th September 2024.

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Media, rights groups urge EU to sanction ‘Israel’, suspend treaty

More than 100 Palestinian journalists and three Lebanese journalists were killed in the ongoing aggression, making it the deadliest period for journalism in decades

GAZA: Some 60 media and rights organisations on Monday urged the the European Union to suspend a cooperation accord with Israel and impose sanctions, accusing it of “massacring journalists” in Gaza.

The organizations urged the European Union's Foreign Minister Josep Borrell and Trade Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis to sus-



pend the partnership agreement, which specifically deals with trade exchanges with Israel, and to impose “targeted sanctions on those responsible” for human rights violations.

The organisations stated in their letter, “More than 100 Palestinian journalists and three Lebanese journalists were killed in the ongoing aggression, making it the deadliest period for journalism in decades.”

The organisations pointed to the practical prevention of foreign

journalists from entering the Gaza Strip and the “arbitrary detentions” of media workers, with at least 49 of them detained.

They called for the urgent need to preserving media freedom, protecting the lives of journalists, and putting an end to impunity, as a meeting of European Union foreign ministers approaches on August 29 in the capital, Brussels.

Since the start of the comprehensive aggression against the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank on Octo-

ber 7, 2023, 161 journalists have been killed, 186 have been injured, and 51 others have been detained, according to the Palestinian Journalists Syndicate.

Spanish Foreign Minister: All-out war in the region can be avoided by ceasefire in Gaza

Spanish Foreign Minister José Manuel Albares said on Monday that a comprehensive war in the Middle East can be avoided, despite the extreme tension the re-

gion is witnessing.

Albares said in an interview with the Spanish radio station Cadena Ser that avoiding such a war begins with a ceasefire in Gaza, allowing humanitarian aid to pass without hindrance to civilians in the Strip, and then establishing a framework for dialogue between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

He stressed in this regard that a ceasefire in Gaza and preventing the war from spreading to Lebanon should be among the priorities of Europe and the international community.

The Spanish Foreign Minister pointed out that his country “has warned for many months of the danger of the expansion of the scope of the catastrophe that the Gaza Strip is experiencing and its extension to Lebanon, and then its transformation into a destructive regional war.”

He said, “the formula that Spain is looking forward to is launching a dialogue process with Israel, the result of which is the establishment of a Palestinian state living in security and peace, while the other formula is war.”

Albares further stressed that “the international community knows very well the formula for achieving peace in the region,

and what it needs is the political will and political courage to implement it.”

Israeli forces detain at least 15 Palestinians across West Bank

Israeli occupation forces have conducted a series of detentions since Sunday evening until this morning, detaining at least 15 individuals from the West Bank, including former prisoners.

In a joint statement, the Palestinian Prisoner's Society (PPS) and the Authority of the Prisoners and Ex-Prisoners disclosed that the detentions took place in Nablus, Qalqilya, Hebron, Bethlehem, and Jerusalem.

PPS and the Commission affirmed that the occupation continues to primarily target former prisoners, as the occupation re-detained the former prisoner Hassan Al-Safadi from Nablus, who was released on July 30, after spending 9 months in administrative detention.

The statement explained that ongoing Israeli incursions involve widespread raids, severe beatings, threats against detainees and their families, as well as instances of property destruction and sabotage in civilian homes. — **WAPA**

1 killed in ice cave collapse

REYKJAVÍK: An ice cave in Iceland collapsed while a tourist group was visiting, leaving one person dead, one seriously injured, and two others missing, police said on Monday. The incident occurred while a group of 25 people were touring the Braidamerkurjökull glacier along with a guide.

Braidamerkurjökull, located in the south-east of the country, extends from southern Vatnajökull into the glacier lagoon Jökulsárlón, one of Iceland's popular tourist destinations.

“Four people got stuck under the ice, two people have already been rescued from the ice and are seriously injured,” Sudurland police said in a statement on Sunday. — **bw**

Clashes erupt between students, Ansar members

DHAKA: Violent clashes erupted between students and Ansar members near the Secretariat in Bangladesh's capital Dhaka on Sunday night. The confrontation left several people from both sides injured, the Dhaka Tribune reported.

The clash broke out after 9 pm, with both sides engaging in a series of chases. During the turmoil, police intervened in an attempt to restore order.

Earlier, students from various dorms of Dhaka University began gathering at the Raju Memorial Sculpture to march to the Secretariat to confront Ansar members, whom they were calling “agents of autocracy,” according to Dhaka Tribune.

This escalation followed re-



ports that a group of Ansar members were detaining Nahid Islam, an adviser in the interim government and coordinator of the Students Against Discrimination movement, along with coordinators Sarjis Alam, Hasnat Abdul-

lah, and others, at the Secretariat.

Blockade of the Secretariat

Student Protest Coordinator Hasnat Abdullah in a Facebook post blamed former director general of Ansar, Maj Gen AKM Aminul

Haque, for a continued blockade of the Secretariat, even after the demands of protesting Ansar members were met. Hasnat also urged everyone to gather in front of the Raju Memorial Sculpture at Dhaka University, Dhaka Tribune

reported.

AKM Aminul Haque is the elder brother of former deputy minister of water resources AKM Enamul Haque Shamim.

Hasnat Abdullah on his Facebook wrote, “Everyone, come to Raju. The autocratic forces are trying to make a comeback through the Ansar force. Even after their demands were met, we were kept locked in the Secretariat.”

Earlier in the day, Ansar members ended their protest after receiving assurances from Lt Gen (Retd) Jahangir Alam Chowdhury, the interim government's adviser for home affairs. The members had been demonstrating for two days, calling for the nationalisation of their jobs. — **ANI**

Africa CDC warns of rising mpox cases, limited diagnostics

ADDIS ABABA: The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) has warned of the high burden of mpox cases, limited diagnostic capabilities, and the disease's high fatality rate as some of the pressing challenges hindering the continent's mpox response efforts as the number of cases surges across Africa.

Africa CDC Director-General Jean Kaseya, in an update on the multi-country mpox outbreak in Africa issued Friday, said the challenges are also related to the rapid spread of the disease to new countries and disparate attempts to address mpox amid the greater need to improve coordinated efforts.

Data from the Africa CDC show that from the beginning of 2024 to Aug. 23, a total of 21,466 potential cases of mpox, formerly known as monkeypox, and 591 deaths have been reported from 13 African Union (AU) members.

The 13 AU members that have reported mpox cases so far include Burundi, Cameroon, the Central Africa Republic, the Republic of the Congo, Cote d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Gabon, Liberia, Kenya, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, and Uganda.

A child who caught mpox gets treatment at a hospital on the outskirts of Goma, North Kivu province, eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), on Aug. 19, 2024. (Str/Xinhua)

“The cases and deaths seen are just the tip of the iceberg, given that mpox is mostly a mild condition and due to limited surveillance, testing, contact tracing, and reporting,” Kaseya said in an update letter to African health ministers concerning the ongoing mpox outbreak in Africa.

He also warned of the high case fatality rate of mpox, which he said is mostly between 3 and 4 percent, adding that the disease's link to



HIV is also of particular concern for Africa.

According to Kaseya, several previously unaffected African countries have recently reported their first imported cases of mpox, and there is a high risk that the virus could spread beyond Africa.

“Even as I wrote this letter, Gabon has confirmed its first case, while Sierra Leone and Malawi are now testing their suspected cases,” Kaseya said, who insisted that a negative test result in the laboratory does not mean there is no mpox epidemic.

On Aug. 13, the Africa CDC declared the ongoing mpox outbreak in Africa as a Public Health Emergency of Continental Security (PHECS), citing “the clear and present danger that the onslaught of mpox is posing to the continent.”

A day after the Africa CDC declared PHECS, the World Health Organization (WHO) also declared mpox a public health emergency of international concern, activating its highest level of global alert for mpox for the second time in two years, amid an increasing

number of cases of a deadlier new variant reported across and outside Africa.

Kaseya said the AU's specialised healthcare agency, in declaring the PHECS, has consulted “African best epidemiologists and lab experts” as well as international experts and appropriate bodies, including the China CDC, US CDC, European CDC, and the WHO.

“The conclusion is that relying solely on laboratory test results for diagnosing mpox is not advisable. We need a holistic approach that integrates laboratory testing with clinical assessment and epidemiological data that is essential for accurately diagnosing and managing mpox. The diagnosis and management of mpox should involve a comprehensive approach,” he said.

Earlier this week, the Africa CDC disclosed that mpox vaccination could start “in the coming days” as the number of cases surges across the continent.

The Africa CDC chief said by working closely with African countries, the WHO, and various partners, as well as by leverag-



ing the AU's political, policy, and advocacy capacities in responding to the outbreak, the agency is supporting African countries in their preparedness and response activities.

He also disclosed that the Africa

CDC is deploying around 200 epidemiologists and logisticians in all mpox-affected African countries. This is against the backdrop of the deployment of 24 experts to support the response in the DRC and other most affected countries.

Noting that a continental strategy for mpox was developed to mobilize resources and coordinate the outbreak response, Kaseya said an incident management team was established under the leadership of the Africa CDC. — **xinhua**

SPORTS

West Indies secure 30-run victory against South Africa in T20I series

An all-round show saw the Caribbean side clinch their third successive T20I series win over the Proteas

TAROUBA: West Indies clinched the T20I series against South Africa with an emphatic 30-run win in the second match here at the Brian Lara Stadium. An all-round show saw the Caribbean side clinch their third successive T20I series win over the Proteas. South Africa's entertaining show in the powerplay went in vain as the West Indies took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the series. While chasing down 180, South Africa got off to a flier with Reeza Hendricks going all guns blazing. He smashed a barrage of boundaries in the powerplay. Despite losing Ryan Rickelton early in the



chase, the Proteas raced to 67/1 in five overs. West Indies introduced right-arm pacer Romario Shepherd into the attack, and he instantly repaired the damage in the final over of the powerplay. Hendricks's eyes lit up when

he saw Shepherd bowling a short-length delivery that landed outside off. He tried to go after it but ended up chopping it back onto the

Skipper Aiden Markram, who got off to a promising start, also fell to Shepherd. Tristan Stubbs and Rassie van der Dussen tried to pull South Africa back into the mix by forging a 43-run partnership. The spin duo of Akeal Hosein and Gudakesh Motie combined to pick three wickets to put the visitors back against the wall. South Africa lost the plot and collapsed from 129/3 to 149. Earlier in the innings, after being put to bat, the opening duo of Shai Hope (28) and Alick Athanaze (41) raced to 41 before the former's dismissal. Rovman Powell and Sherfane Rutherford went berserk towards the final couple of overs, which propelled West Indies' score to 179/6. In the three-match series opener, the hosts hunted down South Africa's total of 174 convincingly and secured a 7-wicket win. South Africa and the West Indies will square off in the final T20I on Tuesday at the same venue. **Brief Score:** West Indies 179/6 (Shai Hope 41, Rovman Powell 35; Lizaad Williams 3-36) vs South Africa 149 (Reeza Hendricks 44; Shamar Joseph 3-31, Romario Shepherd 3-15). **-ANI**

INTROSPECT

Captain Aiden Markram pinpoints moment when South Africa lost 2nd T20I, series against West Indies

TAROUBA [TRINIDAD]: South Africa captain Aiden Markram pinpointed their performance in the middle overs, which resulted in their second T20I and the series defeat against the West Indies. After failing to trouble the hosts in the first T20I, the Proteas stepped into Brian Lara Stadium to keep the series alive. With stakes running high, the 2024 T20 World Cup finalists set out to chase down 180 after putting the West Indies to bat. South Africa enjoyed a fiery start, with Reeza Hendricks unleashing a barrage of boundaries in the powerplay. However, after his dismissal, South Africa lost its entire momentum and crumbled from 129/3 to 149. The collapse ensured the West Indies took away the series with an emphatic 30-run win. "In the middle overs (where we lost). They bowled really well in the back end of the middle overs. They made scoring tough. Learning for us as a squad," Markram said in the post-match presentation. Markram stated his intention to analyse the areas in which South Africa fell short and put on a better show than their previous two outings. "We'll identify areas where we



can get better at. Looking forward to the next game, hopefully, we can put up a better show," he added. Apart from their batting collapse, South Africa had some positives to take away from the game. Right-arm quick Lizaad Williams picked up a three-wicket haul and dealt crucial blows to the Caribbean side in his four-over spell. "I have known him for quite a while, a proper fighter, puts in a lot of work behind the scenes, glad he could grab his opportunity today," Markram noted. South Africa will look to avoid a series whitewash after the West Indies took an unassailable 2-0 lead in the 3rd T20I on Tuesday. **-ANI**

IN 2025

ICC may introduce a dedicated fund to boost Test cricket

NEW DELHI [INDIA]: The International Cricket Council (ICC) is considering introducing a dedicated fund starting in 2025 to bolster Test cricket, enabling countries outside the "Big Three" (India, Australia, England) to better compete with lucrative franchise leagues. The initiative, primarily driven by Cricket Australia chair Mark Baird and supported by the BCCI and ECB, aims to establish a central fund that would provide a minimum standard match fee for players, reportedly around US \$10,000 (approximately £7,600). The goal is to finalize the proposal by Christmas, allowing it to be implemented next year. This initiative is intended to make Test cricket more appealing to players who often choose shorter formats for higher earnings. It would also help financially constrained cricket boards cover the costs associated with red-ball cricket, which often operates at a loss for the nine Test-playing nations outside the Big Three. For example, Cricket West Indies' outgoing CEO, Johnny Grave, disclosed that their tour of Australia earlier this year cost the board US \$2 million. The proposed fund, expected to be about US \$15 million (approximately £11 million), has garnered the support of BCCI secretary Jay Shah and ECB chair Richard Thompson. Although it is still in the early stages and has yet to be formally



discussed by the ICC board or its executive committee, Baird remains optimistic. He told the Sydney Morning Herald, "It's fantastic to see some momentum behind the Test-match fund," as quoted by ESPN-cricinfo. "We need to remove the barriers and ensure Test cricket remains the pinnacle of the sport, preserving its history and legacy alongside the newer white-ball formats," he said. In a related effort to support financially struggling cricket boards, ECB chief executive Richard Gould announced that Zimbabwe would receive a "touring fee" for their one-off Test at Trent Bridge next May. This marks a concrete step towards implementing Gould's idea, suggested a year earlier, of host countries paying fees to visiting teams. The global cricket landscape is economically imbalanced, with some boards already engaging in reciprocal agreements. For instance, the ECB agreed to play three additional T20 internationals during their 2023 limited-overs tour of the Caribbean, which generated significant revenue for the region. To further support the West Indies, the ECB will facilitate a tour of the UK by the West Indies Under-19 team, as a goodwill gesture following the West Indies Test series in England last month. **-ANI**

SECOND ROUND

Lewandowski decisive for Barcelona

MADRID: The second round of games in La Liga saw Kylian Mbappe make his home debut for Real Madrid, while Robert Lewandowski was decisive for Barcelona, and Atletico Madrid impressed against Girona. Here are some things we learned this weekend in Spain. **1. Endrick becomes winner on Mbappe's debut** All the focus was on Kylian Mbappe's home debut for Real Madrid in their Sunday win at home to Valladolid, but in the end it was Endrick who claimed the headlines as the 18-year-old celebrated his debut with his side's third goal of the game, deep into injury time. In truth Real Madrid again looked unbalanced in midfield and struggled to break down a well-drilled rival who have just returned from the second division for much of the game. Mbappe missed a hat-trick of chances and it wasn't until Brahim Diaz scored their second goal in the 88th minute - after Mbappe



had been replaced, that the home fans could finally relax.

2. Lewandowski vital as Barca win Lewandowski scored the decisive goal 15 minutes from time as FC Barcelona won 2-1 at home to an Athletic Club Bilbao side that still looks short of the sharpness that made them so tough to play against last season. Lewandowski hit the post twice and was denied by an impressive save by Athletic's third goalkeep-

er, Alex Padilla, before scoring from a loose ball. Barca were again unable to include Dani Olmo in their squad due to financial fair play issues and although the departures of Clement Lenglet, Mika Faye and Ilkay Gundogan should allow him to be included this week, it's at the expense of leaving Barca's squad looking very thin. If Lamine Yamal, Lewandowski, Pedri or Inigo Martinez get injured in the coming weeks, Barca could be in trouble (and Pedri and Martinez's recent injury history doesn't exactly invite optimism). **3. Atletico impress against Girona** Atletico Madrid looked to have strengthened better than anyone this season and the feeling they could push Real Madrid closer than anyone this season, was strengthened with their 3-0 win at home to Girona. Antoine Griezmann scored a pinpoint free kick, Julian Alvarez ran his socks off (something Joan

Felix failed to do in his time at the club) and Robin le Normand made the defense stronger. Conor Gallagher also played for half an hour and gave the sort of energetic display that Diego Simeone likes to see in a well-balanced team display. **4. Celta get surprise package at start of season** Celta Vigo struggled for all last season and only managed to avoid relegation on a nervy last day of the campaign after Claudio Giraldez replaced Rafael Benitez as coach. Giraldez has worked wonders at Celta, with seven wins and two draws from his 12 games in charge. The players are clearly happier with his attacking football, led by veteran striker Iago Aspas and supported by others such as Oscar Mingueza and the impressive Williot Swedberg. There's a long way to go, but after seasons of struggle there is optimism again in Vigo. **-Xinhua**

10 MILLION EUROS

Barcelona sell defender Faye to Stade Rennes

MADRID: FC Barcelona confirmed the sale of central defender Mika Faye to French side Stade Rennes for a fee of just over 10 million euros on Sunday. "FC Barcelona and Stade Rennes have reached agreement for the transfer of the player Mika Faye for 10.3 million euros," informed the Barcelona website, adding that the club "has included a 25 million euro buyback clause and a 30 percent sell-on fee clause in the deal." Faye joined Barcelona from Croatian club NK Kustosija in 2023 and made 33 appearances for their B-team, Barca Athletic, last season, as well as making his international debut for Senegal in March this year. He was included in the first team's pre-season tour of the United States this summer, although injuries prevented him playing many minutes, and the club were always considering a sale, given there was little point in



him spending another season playing in Spain's third tier, with little chance of regular minutes with the first team. The sale will slightly help ease Barcelona's economic problems, but it's not certain if it will allow them to inscribe new signing Dani Olmo in their squad for Tuesday's league game away to Rayo Vallecano. **-Xinhua**

OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES
The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by October 2024 reaching \$78.70, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by \$2.08 from the price of Friday, which was \$76.62. - **ONA**

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER
The MSX index closed at 4,697.27 points, up by 0.2% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.02% at 444.54 points. Muscat Thread Mill, up 3.03%, was the top gainer while Dhofar Cattle Feed, down 6.67%, was the top loser

Asyad Express emerges as premier gateway to GCC and Mena region

Holding a strategic location at the crossroads of the Middle East, Africa and Asia; Oman offers unparalleled connectivity and integrated logistics solutions to businesses looking to expand their presence in the region

Times News Service



MUSCAT: Asyad Express, a member of Asyad Group, is driving forward Oman's vision of establishing itself as a leading logistics hub in the region. As the premier gateway to the GCC and Mena re-

gion for international partners, the company's expansive network is designed to provide seamless connectivity, ensuring that goods are delivered quickly and efficiently to their destinations.

Holding a strategic location at the crossroads of the Middle East, Africa and Asia; Oman offers unparalleled connectivity and integrated logistics solutions to businesses looking to expand their

presence in the region. Today, Asyad Express boasts a network that spans across the GCC and Mena region, with a strong presence in key markets such as Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait,

Bahrain, Qatar and Egypt, delivering to over 220 destinations. Asyad Express's competitive advantage lies in its ability to offer a 'one-stop-shop' solution for logistics and express delivery

needs. The company's in-house customs clearance, which significantly reduces transit times and costs for its partners, combined with its robust alliance with Oman Air to provide a comprehensive air freight solution, makes it an ideal partner for businesses looking to streamline their logistics operations in the GCC and Mena region. Employing state-of-the-art warehouse operations, Asyad Express guarantees efficient inventory management and faster order processing. The company's e-fulfillment centres leverage advanced technology for parcel security, precise labelling and temperature control, ensuring accuracy and efficiency in e-commerce logistics. Additionally, Asyad Express has implemented several digital solutions for tracking, managing and optimizing logistics operations, enhancing transparency and customer experience. Asyad Express remains committed to supporting the growth of international businesses in the GCC and Mena region, offering a range of services designed to meet the specific needs of its partners, including express delivery, land & air freight, and customs clearance. With Asyad Express, international partners can rest assured that their goods will be delivered quickly, efficiently and cost-effectively.

MINISTRY OF COMMERCE



Oman-China economic exchange forum explores investment opportunities

MUSCAT: A forum on economic and commercial exchange between the Sultanate of Oman and the People's Republic of China kicked off in Muscat yesterday. Organised by the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, the forum explored major opportunities for establishing investment projects

in vital sectors, notably technology and digital transition. The forum allowed Chinese investors and their Omani counterparts to elaborate on chances to optimise investment opportunities across different sectors, including means of supporting digital transition initiatives. Thuraya Ahmed Al Balushi,

Director of Economic Diversification Investments at the Oman Investment Authority (OIA), said that the forum provided a step forward to consolidate cooperation between business communities in Oman and China. During the meeting, the OIA outlined its investments in Oman and abroad, while the Chinese del-

egation showcased the investment opportunities available in the People's Republic of China. The forum seeks to encourage Chinese investors to utilize national initiatives aimed to attract foreign direct investment. It also explained the incentives provided by the Sultanate of Oman for investors. - **ONA**

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN

CBO issues treasury bills worth OMR50mn

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR50 million by a way of allotting treasury bills on Monday. The value of the allotted Treasury bills amounted to OMR10 million, for a maturity period of 28 days. The average accepted price reached OMR 99.635 for every OMR 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR 99.635 per OMR 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.75804 per cent and 4.77547 per cent, respectively. Whereas, the value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR18.06 million, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached OMR 98.769 for every OMR 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR 98.765 per OMR 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.93914 % and 5.00071 %, respectively. Whereas, the value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR21.94 million, for a maturity



period of 182 days. The average accepted price reached OMR 97.522 for every OMR 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR 97.520 per OMR 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.96906 % and 5.09530 %, respectively. Treasury Bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of

Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo). It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 6.00% while the discount

rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 6.50 per cent. Furthermore, treasury bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures. - **ONA**

FINANCIAL SERVICES AUTHORITY

FSA suspends Abu Timam firm from providing audit services for one year

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Financial Services Authority (FSA) issued a decision no (8/2024) suspending Abu Timam Grant Thornton Chartered Accountants for a period of one year from providing external audit services to the entities regulated and supervised by FSA. The decision also directed all entities regulated by FSA to take all necessary actions to terminate their contracts with the firm and appoint a new external auditor from among the firms accredited by FSA as of the date of the decision on Sunday, August 25. This decision was taken against the firm, due to the firm's violations of the applicable laws and regulations while providing auditing services to several companies listed on Muscat Stock Exchange and other regulated entities. The firm has accepted accounting practices that did not comply with International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs) and International Standards on Auditing (ISAs), which in turn affected the integrity of financial statements disclosed to investors. These practices include inadequate auditing procedures of the work of component auditors and lack of communication with them, issuing audit reports before completing detailed examination procedures of significant balances and transactions, conducting inappropriate tests to verify balances recognized in financial reports, and failing to address discrepancies between financial reports and non-financial reports included in the annual report. Additionally, the firm provided non-audit services to the audit clients in violation of legal requirements. It is worth noting that (FSA) had previously issued a set of regulations governing the operations of auditing firms to ensure their compliance with International Standards on Auditing (ISAs) and the requirements of International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRSs). FSA emphasizes continuous evaluation of the audit firms' performance through its regulatory examination teams, as it recog-

The decision directed all entities regulated by FSA to take all necessary actions to terminate their contracts with the firm and appoint a new external auditor from among the firms accredited by FSA. This decision was taken against the firm, due to the firm's violations of the applicable laws and regulations while providing auditing services to several companies listed on MSX

nises the importance of the role played by these firms, and believes that audit firms are the main pillar for protecting investors and other stakeholders in providing accurate and reliable information to make the right decisions. FSA urges all audit firms to follow high professionalism and integrity when reviewing and auditing the financial accounts of the companies. The Authority urges these firms to conduct continuous internal quality reviews in accordance with ISQM-1, ISQM-2, and ISA-220 standards to ensure compliance with regulatory and professional requirements and to avoid any legal repercussion.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Muscat Thread Mill, up 3.03%, was the top gainer while Dhofar Cattle Feed, down 6.67%, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,697.27 points, up by 0.2% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.02% at 444.54 points. Muscat Thread Mill, up 3.03%, was the top gainer while Dhofar Cattle Feed, down 6.67%, was the top loser. Shares of OQGN were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 745 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 1.98 million, with more than 10.52 million shares changing hands. Out of 44 traded securities, 13 advanced, 12 declined, and 19 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net buyers for RO 217K while domestic investors were net sellers for RO 116K, followed by foreign investors for RO 101K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,604.74 points, up 0.22%. Prices of Oman Arab Bank, Al Shar-

qia Investment, Bank Muscat, OMINVEST were up by 2.84%, 1.37%, 0.39%, 0.30% respectively. Prices of Muscat Finance, Al Madina Investments, United Finance, Oman & Emirates Investment were down by 2.22%, 1.79%, 1.75%, 1.35% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,861.83 points, down 0.12%. Prices of Muscat Thread Mill, Galfar Engineering were up by 3.03%, 0.74% respectively. Prices of Dhofar Cattle Feed, Al Maha Ceramics were down by 6.67%, 0.64% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.06% before closing at 1,825.35 points. Prices of OQ Gas Networks, Al Jazeera Services, Sembcorp Salalah, Al Maha Marketing, Musandam Power were up by 2.11%, 1.42%, 0.96%, 0.94%, 0.40% respectively. Prices of Phoenix Power, Ooredoo, Al Suwadi Power, National Gas, Abraj Energy were down by 1.72%, 1.39%, 1.32%, 0.95%, 0.33% respectively. — United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,709.09	4,684.07	4,697.27	4,687.70	9.57	0.20
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,619.44	7,584.13	7,604.74	7,588.04	16.70	0.22
Industry Index	5,868.72	5,853.31	5,861.83	5,868.72	-6.88	-0.12
Services Index	1,831.03	1,822.94	1,825.35	1,824.23	1.12	0.06
MSX Shariah Index	445.82	444.54	444.54	444.65	-0.11	-0.02
MSX TR INDEX	6,544.89	6,510.12	6,528.46	6,515.16	13.30	0.20
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,656.47	8,616.35	8,639.77	8,620.80	18.97	0.22
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,771.10	6,753.33	6,763.16	6,771.10	-7.94	-0.12
SERVICES TR IDX	2,130.68	2,121.28	2,124.08	2,122.78	1.30	0.06
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap.....	Up.....	Down.....	Equal.....	Sec. Traded
10,529,219.....	1,976,536.....	745.....	24,475,019,744.....	13.....	12.....	19.....	44.....

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, AUGUST 26

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PD	LAST BD	LAST OFFER	PREV VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	2,943,248	424,718	272	0.142	0.146	0.141	0.145	0.142	0.003	2.113	0.144	0.144	0.145	0.100	627,940,468
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	226,000	16,724	16	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.073	0.001	1.370	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.100	6,660,000
OM0000004735	SEBMCORP SALALAH	30,500	3,188	5	0.104	0.105	0.104	0.105	0.104	0.001	0.962	0.105	0.104	0.105	0.100	100,230,055
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	21,357	5,403	2	0.253	0.253	0.253	0.253	0.252	0.001	0.397	0.253	0.253	0.253	0.100	17,808,670
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	2,186,185	566,938	62	0.259	0.260	0.258	0.260	0.259	0.001	0.386	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.100	1,951,663,236
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	176,077	58,816	13	0.334	0.335	0.334	0.335	0.334	0.001	0.299	0.335	0.335	0.335	0.100	223,902,418
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	180,439	180,261	26	0.998	1.002	0.998	1.000	0.998	0.002	0.200	1.000	1.000	1.010	0.100	750,000,000
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	7,622	2,938	4	0.385	0.388	0.385	0.388	0.388	0.000	0.000	0.388	0.388	0.388	0.100	46,560,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	72,199	5,415	6	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.075	0.076	0.100	15,000,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	52,000	20,800	23	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.000	0.000	0.400	0.394	0.400	0.100	94,564,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	1,419,256	190,691	61	0.134	0.135	0.134	0.134	0.134	0.000	0.000	0.134	0.134	0.134	0.100	747,351,000
OM0000004788	MADINA TAKAFUL	97,400	7,500	3	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.077	0.000	0.000	0.077	0.077	0.000	0.100	13,475,000
OM0000004925	ALBARTINAH POWER	308,700	23,130	11	0.075	0.075	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.074	0.075	0.100	49,941,670
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	318,871	95,794	36	0.300	0.302	0.299	0.299	0.300	-0.001	-0.333	0.299	0.298	0.301	0.100	230,289,800
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	109,760	8,236	11	0.076	0.076	0.075	0.075	0.076	-0.001	-1.316	0.075	0.075	0.076	0.100	53,580,476
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	36,600	2,672	2	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.074	-0.001	-1.351	0.073	0.073	0.000	0.100	8,896,875
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	130,311	37,328	23	0.284	0.288	0.284	0.284	0.288	-0.004	-1.389	0.284	0.284	0.288	0.100	184,868,161
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	429	24	1	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.057	-0.001	-1.754	0.056	0.057	0.052	0.100	19,943,129
Total	18	8,316,954	1,650,574	577												
Parallel Market																
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	134	14	1	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.102	0.099	0.003	3.030	0.102	0.099	0.107	0.100	1,672,199
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	94,629	13,655	13	0.143	0.145	0.143	0.145	0.141	0.004	2.837	0.145	0.144	0.146	0.100	242,064,450
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	7025	1,509	4	0.214	0.215	0.214	0.215	0.212	0.003	1.415	0.215	0.214	0.215	0.100	13,158,919
OM0000003000	ALMAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MARKETING	4,000	4,280	3	1.070	1.070	1.070	1.070	1.060	0.010	0.943	1.070	1.070	1.075	0.100	73,830,000
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	702,215	95,752	60	0.136	0.138	0.135	0.137	0.136	0.001	0.735	0.137	0.138	0.137	0.100	27,800,143
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	36,892	2,767	3	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.075	0.077	0.100	15,913,500
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	7032	494	4	0.071	0.071	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.100	1,470,000
OM0000002077	AL OMANIYA FINANCIAL SERVICES	126,526	21,003	1	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.166	0.000	0.000	0.166	0.000	0.166	0.100	35,359,222
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	283	42	1	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.000	0.000	0.150	0.150	0.150	0.100	352,448,620
OM0000003141	BAHKA WATER AND POWER	50,000	12,000	1	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.240	0.000	0.000	0.240	0.230	0.247	0.100	38,400,000
OM0000002385	NATIONAL DETERGENT	97,871	57,116	5	0.650	0.650	0.650	0.650	0.650	0.000	0.000	0.650	0.630	0.650	0.100	13,000,000
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	60,000	6,350	6	0.106	0.106	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.000	0.000	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.100	234,880,068
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	163,080	10,763	10	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.066	0.000	0.000	0.066	0.065	0.066	0.100	32,395,201
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	127,592	14,928	15	0.117	0.117	0.117	0.117	0.117	0.000	0.000	0.117	0.117	0.117	0.100	59,448,115
OM0000005006	ALMAHA CERAMICS	78741	12,520	9	0.158	0.158	0.156	0.156	0.157	-0.001	-0.637	0.156	0.158	0.158	0.100	8,580,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	11,000	1,153	4	0.105	0.106	0.104	0.104	0.105	-0.001	-0.952	0.104	0.104	0.106	0.100	8,840,000
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	18,000	1,026	3	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.057	0.058	-0.001	-1.724	0.057	0.057	0.061	0.100	83,368,283
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	34,839	1,916	3	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.055	0.056	-0.001	-1.786	0.055	0.054	0.055	0.100	4,675,000
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	20,000	880	1	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.045	-0.001	-2.222	0.044	0.044	0.046	0.100	13,514,438
OM0000001301	DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	8,000	560	1	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.075	-0.005	-6.667	0.070	0.070	0.072	0.100	13,837,885
Total	20	1,638,859	258,729	148												
RESERVE BANK OF INDIA																

RBI to introduce Unified Lending Interface for friction-less credit

BANGALORE: The technology platform for providing “friction-less credit” launched by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) last year as a pilot project will be introduced nationwide soon, said Reserve Banks of India Governor, Shaktikanta Das on Monday.

This technology platform will be named “Unified Lending Inter-

face (ULI)”, Das said while speaking in Bengaluru at the event of the Global Conference on Digital Public Infrastructure and Emerging Technologies.

Governor Dassaid “Just like UPI transformed the payments ecosystem, we expect that ULI will play a similar role in transforming the lending space in India. The ‘new

trinity’ of JAM-UPI-ULI will be a revolutionary step forward in India’s digital infrastructure journey.”

The ULI platform facilitates a seamless and consent-based flow of digital information, including even land records of various states, from multiple data service providers to lenders.

The technology platform intro-

duced last year as a pilot projects cuts down the time taken for credit appraisal, especially for small and rural borrowers.

Das stated that the ULI architecture has common and standardised APIs, designed for a ‘plug and play’ approach to ensure digital access to information from diverse sources. -ANI

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MADAYN

‘Industrial Innovation Specialist’ programme launched to empower F&B entrepreneurs

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn), represented by the Industrial Innovation Academy, has launched the ‘Industrial Innovation Specialist’ programme in Raysut Industrial City under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Marwan bin Turki Al Said, Governor of Dhofar.

This programme, which targets entrepreneurs and owners of SMEs in the Food and Beverage (F&B) industry in Dhofar Governorate, is part of ongoing efforts to enhance national competencies in the knowledge economy through a series of training courses developed by the academy in collaboration with various global organisations including the World Packaging Organisation, National Registry of Food Safety Professionals, and the Global Innovation Management Institute in the United States.

Speaking at the programme’s launch event, Eng. Abdulqadir Al Balushi, Director General of Raysut Industrial City, emphasised that this programme aligns with Madayn’s efforts to support the local community and empower youth and entrepreneurs in Dhofar Governorate. “This programme is designed to develop innovative ideas and transform them into viable products that benefit the industrial sector in particular and economic sectors in general. At Madayn, we recognise that human resources and knowledge economy are key pillars of the industrial economy amidst global evolutions,” he pointed out.

To keep pace with these evolving changes and boost the contribution of the SMEs to the national economy, the ‘Industrial Innovation Specialist’ programme in the F&B sector aims to elevate the competencies of the youth and entrepreneurs in Dhofar especially given the governorate’s abundance of agricultural and animal prod-



ucts. The programme features 30 participants who will receive comprehensive guidance from international experts, equipping them with specialised skills in innovation, packaging, manufacturing, brand identity, and digital marketing, to effectively bring their food products to market.

The programme aims at equipping participants with an understanding of innovation and its application, developing their innovations and initial products, and promoting these products through available marketing tools. Upon completion, participants will receive an ‘Industrial Innovation Specialist’ certificate, a Level-1 Innovation Certificate from the Global Innovation Management Institute in the United States, a certification from the World



LIFESTYLE

STUDY FINDS NEW GENE IN PROGRESSION OF
HUNTINGTON'S
DISEASE

The researchers discovered that mutations in the Huntington gene HTT also impact CHCHD2, which is necessary to preserve the proper function of mitochondria, in a brain organoid model of the illness

A NOVEL gene has been linked by researchers in Berlin and Dusseldorf to the development of Huntington's disease in a brain organoid model. Earlier than previously believed, the gene may play a role in brain disorders.

Researchers have discovered the gene CHCHD2 as a possible novel treatment target and have linked it for the first time to Huntington's Disease (HD), an incurable inherited neurological illness.

The researchers discovered that mutations in the Huntington gene HTT also impact CHCHD2, which is necessary to preserve the proper function of mitochondria, in a brain organoid model of the illness. Nature Communications published the study.

Six different labs at the Max Delbruck Center participated in the study, led by Dr. Jakob Metzger of the "Quantitative Stem Cell Biology" lab at the and the "Stem Cell Metabolism" lab of Professor Alessandro Prigione at Heinrich Heine University Dusseldorf (HHU).

Each lab contributed their unique expertise on Huntington's disease, brain organoids, stem cell research and genome editing. "We were surprised to find that Huntington's disease can impair early brain development through defects associated with mitochondrial dysfunction," said Dr Pawel Lisowski, co-lead author in the Metzger lab at the Max Delbruck Center.

Moreover, "the organoid model suggests that HTT mutations damage brain development even before clinical symptoms appear, highlighting the importance of detecting the late-onset neurodegenerative disease early," Selene Lickfett, co-lead author and a doctoral student in the Faculty of Mathematics and Natural Science in the lab of Prigione at HHU adds.

An organoid is a three-dimensional, organ-like structure that researchers grow in a laboratory from stem cells. Depending on the disease and research question, organoids can be grown from different types of tissue.

Only a few millimeters in size, they serve as a model for how different cell types interact. No other bench-top model provides such a detailed look at the function of cells in the human body.

Huntington's disease is caused when the nucleotides Cytosine, Adenine and Guanine are repeated an excessive number of times in the in the Huntington gene HTT. People with 35 or less repeats are generally not at risk of developing the disease, while carrying 36 or more repeats has been associated with disease.

The greater the number of repeats, the earlier the disease symptoms are likely to appear, explains Metzger, a senior author of the study. The mutations cause nerve cells in the brain to progressively die. Those affected, steadily lose muscle control and develop

psychiatric symptoms such as impulsiveness, delusions and hallucinations.

Huntington's disease affects approximately five to 10 in every 100,000 people worldwide. Existing therapies only treat the symptoms of the disease, they don't slow its progression or cure it.

To study how mutations in the HTT gene affect early brain development, Lisowski, first used variants of the Cas9 gene editing technology and manipulation of DNA repair pathways to modify healthy induced pluripotent stem cells such that they carry a large number of CAG repeats.

This was technically challenging because gene editing tools are not efficient in gene regions that contain sequence repeats, such as the CAG repeats in HTT, says Lisowski.

The genetically modified stem cells were then grown into brain organoids - three-dimensional structures that resemble early-stage human brains. When the researchers analyzed gene expression profiles of the organoids at different stages of development, they noticed that the CHCHD2 gene was consistently underexpressed, which reduced metabolism of neuronal cells.

CHCHD2 is involved in ensuring the health of mitochondria - the energy producing structures in cells. CHCHD2 has been implicated in Parkinson's disease, but never before in Huntington's.

They also found that when they restored the function of the CHCHD2 gene, they could reverse the effect on neuronal cells. "That was surprising," said Selene Lickfett. "It suggests in principle that this gene could be a target for future therapies."

Moreover, defects in neural progenitor cells and brain organoids occurred before potentially toxic aggregates of mutated Huntingtin protein had developed, adds Metzger, indicating that disease pathology in the brain may begin long before it is clinically evident.

"The prevalent view is that the disease progresses as a degeneration of mature neurons," says Prigione. "But if changes in the brain already develop early in life, then therapeutic strategies may have to focus on much earlier time points."

"Our genome editing strategies, in particular the removal of the CAG repeat region in the Huntington gene, showed great promise in reversing some of observed developmental defects. This suggests a potential gene therapy approach," said Prigione. Another potential approach could be therapies to increase CHCHD2 gene expression.

The findings may also have broader applications for other neurodegenerative diseases, Prigione adds. "Early treatments that reverse the mitochondrial phenotypes shown here could be a promising avenue for counteracting age-related diseases like Huntington's disease." -ANI

SPORTS

PCB chief optimistic of Pakistan’s comeback after setback in 1st Test

Bangladesh added a golden page in their history book by securing their first-ever Test victory over Pakistan on Sunday

NEW DELHI : Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) chairman Mohsin Naqvi expressed hope about the hosts making a comeback in the two-match Test series after a historic defeat against Bangladesh in the opening clash.

At Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium, Bangladesh added a golden page in their history book by securing their first-ever Test victory over Pakistan on Sunday. Pakistan’s decision to declare at 448/6 backfired, with Bangladesh walking away with a 10-wicket win on Day 5. The PCB chief congratulated Bangladesh on their momentous victory and expressed hope that Pakistan will bounce back in the second Test. “Bangladesh Cricket Team has played wonderfully, and have held their ground throughout the match. It is a historic win for they have won against Pakistan for the first time. Heartiest Congratulations to them! Unfortunately, the Pakistan Cricket Team could not perform as well as it should have. InshaAllah the men in green would make a comeback in the upcoming match!” Naqvi said on X. Bangladesh’s landmark win came after 14 encounters with Pa-

kistan, where the Tigers had suffered 12 defeats and managed just one draw. India and South Africa are now the only teams that Bangladesh has yet to defeat in Test cricket. The match had a delayed beginning caused by a wet outfield, but by the fifth day, the entire affair had transformed into an enticing action-packed thriller. The emphatic 10-wicket triumph provided Bangladesh with a significant boost in the ICC World Test Championship standings. They leapfrogged Pakistan and South Africa to the sixth spot, tied on point percentage with Sri Lanka (40 per cent). As a result of the loss, Pakistan slipped down to eighth place with a 30.56 point percentage. After trailing 1-0, with an aim to go level in the series, Pakistan will face Bangladesh in the second Test at the Rawalpindi Cricket Stadium on August 30. -ANI



IN RAWALPINDI

Shahid Afridi slams Pakistan for ‘lack of awareness’ after massive defeat in first Test



NEW DELHI : Former Pakistan skipper Shahid Afridi slammed Shan Masood’s side for “lack of awareness” after their defeat in the first Test match against Bangladesh in Rawalpindi. Pakistan conceded a massive 10-wicket loss against Bangladesh in the first match of the two-game Test series. **Four fast bowlers** Afridi took to his official X handle and said that the loss in the first Test against Bangladesh raises serious questions about selecting four fast bowlers and leaving their main spinner. “A 10-wicket defeat raises serious questions about the decision to prepare this type of pitch, select four fast bowlers and leave out a specialist spinner. This to me clearly shows a lack of awareness

about home conditions. That said, you cannot take the credit away from Bangladesh for the brand of cricket they played throughout the Test,” Shahid Afridi wrote on X. Recapping the first match of the series, the Rawalpindi Test had a damp start due to a delayed beginning caused by a wet outfield, but by the fifth day, it had transformed into an action-packed thriller. Even though only 41 overs were being played on the first day, the visitors got off to a strong start, bagging four crucial wickets. Mohammad Rizwan and Saud Shakeel stepped up for Pakistan on Day 2, each scoring a century to rescue the hosts. Rizwan was especially resilient after making an unbeaten 171 in a marathon innings that left him cramping by the day’s end. With an eye on forcing a result, Pakistan

declared their innings at 448/6. For Bangladesh, Mushfiqur Rahim (191) and Shadnam Islam (93) displayed a stupendous performance, making Pakistan toil in the field for much of Day 4. Both came agonisingly close to significant milestones but fell just short. In the beginning of Day 5 at 23/1, Pakistan crumbled, being bowled out for just 146, with only Rizwan offering resistance through a fighting half-century. Bangladesh’s spinners stole the show, with Mehidy Hasan Miraz taking four wickets and Shakib Al Hasan adding three more. The visitors needed just 30 runs for a historic win, which they achieved in under seven overs without losing a wicket. Bangladesh took a 1-0 lead in the two-match series after the historic win in the first Test. -ANI

RECRUITED

Waqar appointed as one of 5 mentors for Pakistan team

LAHORE: Former Pakistan cricketer Waqar Younis has been recruited as one of the mentors of the five Champions Cup sides on a three-year contract. The Pakistan Cricket Board (PCB) released an official statement on Monday to confirm that Younis, alongside Misbah-ul-Haq, Saqlain Mushtaq, Sarfaraz Ahmed and Shoaib Malik, will serve as mentors in the Champions Cup, which will kick off in Faisalabad from September 12. “Misbah-ul-Haq, Saqlain Mushtaq, Sarfaraz Ahmed, Shoaib Malik and Waqar Younis were today confirmed as mentors of the five Champions Cup sides on three-year contracts following a transparent and robust recruitment process. Names of their sides and squads will be confirmed in due course,” PCB said in a statement. Before his appointment as a mentor in Pakistan’s new domestic competition, Younis served as the advisor to the PCB chairman, Mohsin Naqvi, on cricket affairs. According to ESPNcricinfo, following Younis’ appointment, his stint as the advisor ended in less than a month’s time. In July, ESPNcricinfo also reported that Younis was set to be appointed in a key role at PCB to assist Naqvi in making cricketing decisions. However, according to ESPNcricinfo, following the latest developments, it is suggested that both parties feel Younis would be better suited to a team-building role. The five Champions Cup side mentors have played 1,621 international matches, scoring a total of 32,780 runs and taking 1,503 wickets between them. Sarfaraz and Shoaib are two-time ICC Event winners, Misbah is a one-time ICC Event winner and ACC Asia Cup 2012 winning captain, while Saqlain and Waqar



were members of the side that played in the 1999 World Cup final. “I am pleased to welcome five exceptional champions as mentors for the Champions Cup teams. These individuals bring a wealth of cricketing experience, knowledge and expertise, which, combined with their passion for the game we all love, will help the Pakistan Cricket Board identify, develop and nurture the next generation of cricketers across all formats. This initiative will not only benefit the Pakistan men’s cricket team but also help bridge the gap between domestic and international cricket,” Naqvi

said in a statement released by PCB. “These five mentors will play a pivotal role in the development and progression of our emerging cricketers. They will guide strategic planning and team-building processes, while also providing support in leadership and personal development. The PCB is committed to strengthening Pakistan’s cricket through a robust domestic structure that offers a clear and competitive pathway for all cricketers. The most talented and skilled players will advance through the ranks to represent Pakistan at the highest level,” he added. -ANI

FORMULA 1 DUTCH GRAND PRIX

McLaren’s Norris dominates F1 Dutch Grand Prix

BEIJING: McLaren’s Lando Norris recovered from a bad start to overtake Red Bull’s Max Verstappen and win Sunday’s Formula 1 Dutch Grand Prix in dominant fashion. Starting from pole position, Norris lost the lead to Verstappen at the first corner, with the Dutchman soon establishing a lead of over one second to take himself out of DRS detection range. However, as the stint wore on, Norris appeared to be quicker driver, and the Briton took the lead as the pair crossed the start-finish line to begin lap 18. With the McLaren proving to be the fastest car in clear air, Norris was never subsequently threatened, crossing the line 23 seconds ahead of Verstappen, who struggled more with tyre degradation in the second half of the race. “It feels amazing. I couldn’t say a perfect race because of [losing the lead on] lap 1, but it was still



beautiful. The pace was strong, the car was unbelievable,” said Norris, who also took the bonus point for fastest lap on the race’s final tour, further underlining McLaren’s dominance around the twisty Zandvoort circuit. “I could push and get past Max. It was a straightforward race. Tough but enjoyable.”

“From quite early on, from lap six or seven, I expected Max to start pushing and open up a gap and he never did. “From that point, I felt we were in the fight. He seemed to keep dropping off and my pace was getting better. I could get comfortable and push.” This was the first time that Ver-



stappen has not won his home Grand Prix, and after having won seven of the first ten Grands Prix of 2024, the Dutchman has now gone five races without a win. Rounding out the top three was Ferrari’s Charles Leclerc, who rose from sixth on the grid and successfully fended off a late challenge from Norris’ teammate Oscar Pi-

astri, who finished fourth. Carlos Sainz took fifth for Ferrari, ahead of Verstappen’s teammate Sergio Perez. Then came the two Mercedes of George Russell and Lewis Hamilton, both of whom made two pit stops to their rivals’ one. Pierre Gasly equalled Alpine’s best result of the season with

ninth place, and Fernando Alonso rounded out the top ten for Aston Martin. For the fourth time this season, all 20 drivers were classified finishers, and unusually, there were no yellow caution flags waved throughout the race. Verstappen still leads the Drivers’ Championship with 295 points, but Norris now has 225 after having taken eight points out of the Dutchman’s lead. With nine Grands Prix and three Sprint events remaining in the 2024 season, Norris can overhaul Verstappen if he scores an average of eight points more per weekend than the Dutchman. In the Constructors’ Championship, things are much closer, with McLaren now just 30 points behind Red Bull’s leading total of 434, and on current form, the Woking squad appears likely to overtake the drinks-backed concern over the coming weekends.

Opening a Youth Account at BankDhofar is simple, convenient

BankDhofar understands the unique needs of its young customers and has designed the Youth Account to meet those needs

MUSCAT: Young people are the driving force behind societal and economic progress, essential for initiating transformative change and fuelling innovation and growth. Recognising their pivotal role, banks are crucial in empowering youth by offering services and opportunities that support their financial and personal aspirations. These services range from offering financial guidance, helping them



build a stable financial future. Additionally, banks offer accounts that enable young people to manage their money efficiently, guiding them toward sound financial planning.

Tailored for today's young achievers
BankDhofar understands the



unique needs of its young customers and has designed the Youth Account to meet those needs. The account provides numerous benefits, allowing young people to manage their finances effortlessly. Customers have praised the convenience of the ease of opening accounts through the Intilaqah app, where they can easily open an ac-



count with just a click, anywhere and anytime. The Youth Account also offers advantages like no minimum balance fees, free mobile transfers and more.

Smart way to save
The Youth Account from BankDhofar is more than just a banking option; it's a tool for building

a secure future. Abdul Rahman Mohammed Al Balushi, a satisfied customer, shared how he uses his account to save for his post-graduation plans. He sets aside a portion of his monthly income to fund his dream of starting a small business, ensuring he has the financial foundation needed to succeed.

Abdulrahman also mentioned how saving has become a part of his lifestyle, helping him achieve both professional and personal goals, including planning a fun annual vacation with friends.

Free money transfers and exclusive perks
Mohammed Maqbool Al Balushi, another happy customer, didn't think twice before opening a Youth Account with BankDhofar. He appreciates the numerous benefits that cater to young people's needs and future ambitions, such as free money transfers via mobile banking app and the freedom to deposit any amount without worrying about a minimum balance. Mohammed highlighted how

the account offers exclusive discounts at various outlets and allows him to manage most of his banking transactions via mobile banking app, including bill payments and account management. Additionally, BankDhofar's widespread branches across Oman provide easy access to assistance and services whenever needed.

Convenient mobile banking
For Hassan Al Lawati, the ease of opening a Youth Account at BankDhofar aligns perfectly with the fast-paced lifestyle of today's youth. Whether busy with university studies or personal projects, young people can open their account through the Intilaqah app from anywhere—be it a college café, a family outing, or while watching their favourite team's match. Hassan emphasized that the account also offers exclusive deals at various outlets and facilitates seamless electronic transactions, such as bill payments and money transfers, all through the mobile banking app.

SPECIAL OCCASION

Indian School Wadi Kabir marks India's 78th Independence Day

MUSCAT: Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir and Indian School Wadi Kabir Cambridge celebrated India's 78th Independence Day on August 15 on the primary school ground. Yusuf Nalwala, Chairman of Al Yusr International and former Chairman of the Board of Directors, Indian Schools in Oman graced the occasion as the Chief Guest. He was accompanied by his son, Murtaza, Managing Director of Al Yusr International Other distinguished dignitaries who witnessed the programme were Kiran Asher, Founder and Group Managing Director of Al Ansari Group, Harshendu Shah, former President of the School Management Committee of ISWK, Rajendra Ved, Executive Director of the school management committees of ISWK and ISWK Cambridge, Alkesh Joshi, Assistant Executive Director, Sachin Toprani, honorary President of the School Management Committee of ISWK, other distinguished dignitaries of the Education Cell, D.N.Rao, Principal, Vice Principals, teachers, parents, students and special invitees. The programme began with a warm welcome to all attendees. The tone for the day was set with a stirring reflection on India's journey from colonial rule to a thriving democracy, by reminding everyone of the sacrifices made by countless individuals in the fight for India's freedom. Celebrations were aligned with the theme of the year, 'Viksit Bharat,' the government's vision of transforming India into a developed nation by 2047.



The release of tri-coloured balloons was followed by the soulful rendition of the National Anthem by the senior school Hindustani Choir symbolizing freedom and unity that India cherishes. The March Past featuring contingents from ISWK and ISWK Cambridge, was a display of discipline and pride, showcasing the values of leadership and teamwork. In his address, Yusuf Nalwala inspired the gathering with his words of wisdom that resonated deeply with the audience. He spoke about the importance of education, leadership, and community service. Furthermore, he emphasized on implementing key reforms in a number of state-of-the-art institutions. Kiran Asher felicitated the Chief Guest with a memento. The programme also featured a variety of performances that captured the essence of India's rich cultural heritage. The senior school choir's rendition of "Hamara Pyara Hindustan" was a soul stirring performance. The Kindergarten and Primary students charmed the audience with

their dance moves, "Hamara Watan, Hamari Shaan". The primary school choir continued the momentum with their motivational song, "Badhte Chalo". The mime performance by the students of ISWK Cambridge titled "Aadhe Adhoore Sapne," poignantly depicted the dreams and struggles of ordinary citizens. The programme concluded with a dynamic dance performance, "Har Ghar Tiranga," reflecting the vibrancy and strength of the nation. At the close of the event, the vote of thanks was delivered, expressing gratitude to all those who contributed to the success of the celebration. The closing remarks, featuring Rabindranath Tagore's timeless poem, "Where the Mind is Without Fear," served as a powerful reminder of the values that guide the nation. The Independence Day celebration at Indian School Al Wadi Al Kabir was not just an event but a heartfelt tribute to the spirit of India. It was a day of reflection, pride, and a renewed commitment to the ideals of freedom, unity, and progress.

CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITIES

ahlibank hosts Fun Day Out at Snow Oman for children from Child Care Center, Seeb



MUSCAT: In line with its commitment to promote values of inclusivity and community spirit, ahlibank, represented by its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) team 'ahli Cares,' organized a fun day for children from the Child Care Center, Seeb, by taking a trip to Snow Oman. The outing, which was for children aged 4 to 14 years, exemplifies ahlibank's strategic and enduring commitment to empowering social responsibility and uplifting the quality of life within the communities it serves. This heartfelt gesture not only brought joy to the young participants but also reinforced ahlibank's unwavering dedication to driving positive change and fostering community engagement. Commenting on the CSR initiative, Jumana Al Hashmi, Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications at ahlibank, said, "Our

ongoing commitment to organizing these initiatives underscores our dedication to fostering inclusivity within the community. Such initiatives are of great significance to ahlibank, as it represents the Bank's role in supporting the efforts of government bodies in aiding various members of society. By providing care and attention to children's needs, ahlibank aims to enrich their childhood with joyful memories and experiences, and to contribute to establishing a more compassionate and interconnected community." "At ahlibank, we will continue to focus on leading initiatives that create meaningful impacts, promote social cohesion, and empower individuals, thereby strengthening the bonds that unite us all," she added. With a strong commitment to community service inherent in every member of ahlibank, the

children were joined that day not only by their supervisors but also by the 'ahli Cares' team. This active involvement reflects the team's dedication to supporting the community and its eagerness to engage in meaningful activities. This ensures that such initiatives create an enduring positive impact on the lives of the children involved. ahlibank takes CSR initiatives as part of its core values, serving as a foundation to being a forward-thinking bank. The Bank's commitment is underpinned by its efforts to promote values of community involvement, generosity, and sense of belonging. These initiatives embody the spirit of volunteerism among ahlibank's employees, aligning with the Bank's vision of raising awareness on the importance of volunteerism and contributing to enhancing the quality of life in local communities.

INDIA GOLD CONFERENCE

Malabar Gold & Diamonds wins Responsible Jewellery House Award

MUSCAT: Malabar Gold & Diamonds, the 6th largest jewellery retailer globally with over 355 showrooms across 13 countries, has been honoured with the prestigious India Gold Conference (IGC) Responsible Jewellery House Award for 2023-24. This accolade, one of the most esteemed in the Indian jewellery sector, recognizes Malabar Gold & Diamonds for its unwavering commitment to ethical sourcing and sustainability. The award acknowledges Malabar Gold & Diamonds' dedication to procuring responsibly mined gold and diamonds from legitimate sources, ensuring that every piece of jewellery is crafted with the highest standards of purity and integrity. O. Asher, Managing Director of India Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds received the award from Dr. Sundaravalli Narayanswamy, Chairperson of the India Gold Policy Centre, at a function held at Bangalore, India. Also in attendance were Sitaraman Varadarajan, Business Development Head at Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Dileep Narayanan,



Bullion Head at Malabar Gold & Diamonds, Sunil Kashyap Director of Finmet PTE Ltd, Praveen Baijnath, CEO of Rand Refinery and Filsor Babu, Karnataka Regional Head at Malabar Gold & Diamonds. Speaking on the occasion, Malabar Group Chairman, M.P. Ahammed, expressed his gratitude and reaffirmed the company's commitment to ethical practices. "We are deeply honored

to receive the Responsible Jewellery House Award from IGC. Gold and diamonds are treasured gifts, often exchanged during life's most joyful moments, such as weddings and birthdays. We are committed to ensuring that these precious materials are sourced ethically, from legitimate origins, free from exploitation. Only then can these gifts truly embody the sanctity, purity, and brilliance they symbolize. We uphold this commitment

from the moment gold is mined to the final product reaching our customers." "The tenets of ethical and responsible business practices are something we have strongly adhered to here at Malabar Gold & Diamonds since our inception. From using only the most sustainably sourced raw materials in our jewellery to incorporating numerous environment-friendly features across our showrooms and offices,

we have strived to be a model organization that embodies the spirit of a responsible brand," commented Shamal Ahamed, Managing Director of International Operations at Malabar Gold & Diamonds. Malabar Gold & Diamonds currently operates over 355 showrooms across 13 countries, employing around 21,000 people from 26 different nationalities. With more than 15 million satisfied customers from over 100 countries, the company offers world-class facilities in all its showrooms. O. Asher, Managing Director of Malabar Gold & Diamonds India Operations, said, "We ensure that the gold bars we buy and sell are responsible and fully legal. We use London Bullion Market Association (LBMA) quality certified London Good Delivery Bars (LGDB), Dubai Good Delivery Bars (DGDB) and HUID Hallmarked Indian Good Delivery Bars. Malabar Gold and Diamonds has already become a trusted jewellery brand in the world", O. Asher said. "Throughout all of the 13 countries that Malabar Gold & Dia-

monds currently operates in, we have taken great care to ensure that the entirety of our operations is in strict compliance to the rule of land. The policies we have enacted in the avenues of Anti-Money Laundering (AML) and Combating the Financing of Terrorism (CFT) have enabled us to position ourselves as a brand that is an integral part of society. These policies are routinely strengthened to remain a socially conscious and responsible organization", commented Abdul Salam K.P, Vice-Chairman of Malabar Group. ESG (Environmental, Social & Governance) initiative has been the primary commitment of Malabar Group since its inception in 1993, with 5% of net profits set aside towards such initiatives in each country of operations. The key focus is in the areas of Health, Hunger Free World, Housing, Education, Women Empowerment & Environment. The ESG goals of the organization are periodically strengthened to remain a socially conscious and responsible organization.

ROUND-UP

BYD, Uber’s multi-year partnership to accelerate global EV transition

Beginning first in Europe and Latin America, the partnership is expected to offer drivers access to best-in-class pricing and financing for BYD vehicles on the Uber platform and will expand to include markets across the Middle East, Australia, and New Zealand

MUSCAT: BYD, the world’s leading manufacturer of new energy vehicles and power batteries, recently announced a multi-year strategic partnership with Uber, designed to bring 100,000 new BYD electric vehicles onto the Uber platform across key global markets.

Beginning first in Europe and Latin America, the partnership is expected to offer drivers access to



best-in-class pricing and financing for BYD vehicles on the Uber platform and will expand to include markets across the Middle East, Australia, and New Zealand.

Both companies are EV leaders in their respective categories: Uber has the most widely available on-demand EV network in the world, and BYD is a global leader in EV production. By working together, the companies aim to bring down the total cost of EV ownership for Uber drivers, accelerating the uptake of EVs on the Uber platform globally, and introducing millions of riders to greener rides.

While Uber drivers are going electric five times faster than private car owners, driver surveys show the price of EVs and availability of financing remain the key barriers to switching.

In addition to their affordability, BYD vehicles have lower costs of maintenance and repair, and are well suited to ride-share due to the wide range of models, superior battery performance, and excellent build quality.

To support drivers going electric, the companies’ joint efforts may also include discounts on charging, vehicle maintenance, or

insurance, as well as financing and lease offers, based on what works best for drivers in a given market.

The two companies will also collaborate on future BYD autonomous-capable vehicles to be deployed on the Uber platform.

As the largest on-demand mobility and delivery platform in the world, Uber is well-positioned to bring autonomous vehicle technology to a global audience at scale.

“Uber and BYD share a commitment to innovate towards a cleaner, greener world, and I am excited to work together towards that future,” said Chuanfu Wang, Chairman and President of BYD.

“As the largest global agreement of its kind, we’re thrilled about the benefits this partnership will deliver for drivers, riders, and cities,” said Dara Khosrowshahi, CEO of Uber. “When an Uber driver makes the switch to an EV, they can deliver up to four times the emissions benefits compared to a regular motorist, simply because they are on the road more. Many riders also tell us their first experience with an EV is on an Uber trip, and we’re excited to help demonstrate the benefits of EVs to more people around the world.”

Stella Li, Executive Vice President of BYD and CEO of BYD Americas, also commented, “We are elated to join forces with a global leader like Uber not only to accelerate the transition to electric vehicles but also to make green transportation accessible and affordable for everyone. This collaboration marks a new era in the electrification of urban mobility, and we look forward to seeing our cutting-edge EVs become a common sight on the streets of cities worldwide.”

In Oman, BYD vehicles are distributed by Saud Bahwan Group.

SUPPORT



Meethaq boosts Khareef Dhofar festivities with participation in Salalah Eat

MUSCAT: Meethaq Islamic Banking from Bank Muscat has once again extended its strong support to the third edition of the Salalah Eat festival, scheduled from August 22 till 31.

The event was recently inaugurated at Al Hafa beach market, Salalah, with participation of a number of small and medium enterprises. Meethaq is facilitating the participation of several MSMEs customers in the festival this year, in line with its commitment to support small businesses.

Visitors to the festival can explore Meethaq’s stall to learn more about its diverse range of Sharia-Compliant products and services, including financing products, cards, takaful insurance, and various banking accounts such as children accounts,

savings account, company account, among others.

Speaking on the occasion, Ali Ahmed Al Lawati, Assistant General Manager - Meethaq Corporate Banking, said: “We are delighted to participate in the Salalah Eat festival this year, aligning with Meethaq’s role in supporting tourism promotion initiatives. I extend my sincere appreciation to the organisers for creating an enjoyable experience for visitors.

“We invite everyone to visit Meethaq’s stall to learn more about our latest products, services and offerings. Meethaq is committed to develop its services that meet our customers’ needs and aspiration and we thank them for their continuous trust.”

Since its inception, Meethaq

Islamic Banking has been dedicated to providing comprehensive sharia implemented banking services and solutions to customers, while supporting various initiatives and events that enhance the role of various sectors, including tourism, in the Sultanate.

Every Meethaq product undergoes Shari’a Compliance certification by the Shari’a Supervisory Board and is developed in accordance with the guidelines of the Central Bank of Oman.

Meethaq’s adoption of AAOIFI standards (Accounting & Auditing Organisation for Islamic Financial Institutions) further distinguishes it’s Islamic banking practices, ensuring the standardisation of its products and services to deliver a world-class Islamic banking experience.

OFFICIAL SPONSOR

Al Amerat Club unveils new 2024-2025 kit, continuing partnership with MG Motor

MUSCAT: Al Amerat Club has officially unveiled its new kit for the 2024-2025 season, with MG Motor continuing its role as the official sponsor. This collaboration highlights MG Motor’s commitment to supporting local sports and fostering community engagement throughout Oman.

The new kit is more than just a jersey; it symbolizes unity, pride, and the team’s relentless pursuit of excellence. Designed with both tradition and modernity in mind, it embodies the spirit of Al Amerat Club and their dedication to success on and off the field.

As the official sponsor, MG Motor is deeply invested in the success of Al Amerat Club. This partnership goes beyond brand visibility; it represents our commitment to nurturing local talent, empowering youth, and promoting a healthy, active lifestyle in Oman.

The unveiling of the new kit comes on the heels of several remarkable achievements by Al Amerat Club. They demonstrated their dominance in the Khareef Dhofar Bowling Championship by taking both 1st and 2nd place. The team secured a Bronze Medal at the Moscow International Beach Soccer Cup 2024. Additionally, they earned a Bronze Medal at the Oman Clubs Badminton Championship and achieved an impressive haul at the 2024 Oman Athletics Federation Shield Championship, with 11 Gold, 8 Silver, and 4 Bronze medals. These accomplishments underscore the club’s commitment



ment to excellence, making MG Motor’s partnership with Al Amerat Club even more significant.

Mohsin Hani Al Bahrani, CEO of MHD ACERE, remarked, “We are incredibly proud to continue our partnership with Al Amerat Club as they unveil their new kit for the 2024-2025 season. This collaboration reflects our dedication to nurturing local talent and promoting a strong sense of community through sports. At MG Motor, we believe in the transformative power of sports to inspire, unite, and

elevate. The new kit embodies the spirit of Al Amerat Club—a spirit of resilience, pride, and relentless pursuit of excellence. We look forward to supporting the club in their journey and witnessing their success this season.”

The launch of the new kit marks a significant milestone in our journey with Al Amerat Club. MG Motor remains committed to supporting the club, not just as a sponsor, but as a partner in their mission to elevate the standards of sports in the region.



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Indian School Sohar



Indian School Al Seeb

The internet abbreviation ICYMI is useful to update a friend who joined the conversation a bit late. What does it stand for?

What is the name of Oman's traditional manmade irrigation system?

Can you match wits with the participants?



Be sure to answer the audience question of the week



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