

INDUCTION PROGRAMME FOR NEW TEACHERS HELD

The Ministry of Education held on Tuesday a preparatory meeting to implement the second phase of the induction programme for new teachers for the academic year 2023/2024. **>A2**



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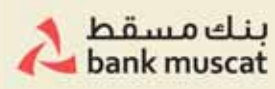
HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN GREETES KING OF ESWATINI

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to King Mswati III of Eswatini, on the occasion of his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his best sentiments to King Mswati III, wishing him good health and happiness and the friendly people of Eswatini further progress and prosperity. — **ONA**



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OMINVEST

Pact inked to establish lab for people with disabilities

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Social Development on Tuesday signed an agreement with Oman International Development and Investment Company (Ominvest) for the establishment of a laboratory for developing services and programmes for persons with disabilities.

The agreement was signed at the ministry's premises by Dr. Laila Ahmed Al Najjar, Minister of Social Development, and Abdulaziz Mohammed Al Balushi, CEO of Ominvest Group.

The agreement is an inseparable part of efforts to implement Oman Vision 2040 and develop initiatives and projects that are compatible with the strategic priorities and objectives of the vision.

Speaking at the event, Dr. Laila said that the programme embodies the existing partnership between the Ministry of Social Development and private sector institutions.

The Minister of Social Development added that the establishment of such laboratories enhances the integration of efforts with partners in the disability service sector and complements previous efforts.

For his part, Abdulaziz Al Balushi, CEO of Ominvest Group, said that Ominvest's vision is based on selecting sustainable initiatives that support Omani society in a manner that consolidates the pillars of Oman Vision 2040. **-ONA**



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34°
MUSCAT

FINANCIAL DEVELOPMENTS

GCC central bank governors discuss framework to combat money laundering and terror financing

SALALAH: The GCC Committee of Central Banks Governors held its 81st meeting under Oman's presidency in Salalah on Tuesday.

The meeting was chaired by HH Sayyid Taimour bin As'ad Al Said, Chairman of the Board of Governors of the Central Bank of Oman (CBO), with participation of Governors of GCC central banks and the GCC Secretary-General.

During the meeting, a number of topics related to monetary and financial developments in the GCC states were discussed, in

addition to issues related to supervision and surveillance of the banking sector, payment systems, FinTech in the GCC banking sector and GCC Central Banks Digital Currency (CBDC).

Anti-money laundering

The committee also addressed issues related to latest developments within the framework of anti-money laundering and combating the financing of terrorism (AML/CFT), cybersecurity in the banking sector and common topics between GCC Afaq Payment

System and the Arab Regional Payment System (Buna).

Moreover, the committee reviewed the GCC Secretariat's General report on implementing its decisions at the previous meetings. The committee was also briefed on updates on the progress of the signature and ratification of the agreement on linking GCC payment systems and other monetary and banking issues, in addition to the topics listed in the committee's agenda, on which appropriate decisions were taken. **-ONA**



ALTERNATIVE ROAD ROUTE FOR JABAL AKHDAR GAINS MOMENTUM



Ministry floats tender for consultancy services for design of the separate route

Times News Service

MUSCAT: An ambitious project to provide an alternative access by road to the picturesque Jabal Akhdar took a major step forward on Monday with the Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology

(MoTCIT) floating a tender for consultancy services for design of a road connecting Jabal Akhdar to South Al Batinah.

The ministry put up the tender notice on its official website seeking interested parties to submit the tender before 15 October, 2023.

The bid is for the preparation of tender documents for the design and building of the road linking Jabal Akhdar with South Al Batinah. The tender documents will be available for sale from September 17.

The scope for work includes evaluation of submitted financial and technical bids, providing clarification support to the bid enquires, preparing the contract document, and carrying value engineering exercises for the offers.

The road project is expected to provide easier access to Oman's most popular and prominent city

with the rest of the country without four-wheel drive vehicles, ultimately enhancing tourist traffic to the scenic green mountains.

Earlier, this year, the ministry had said that a preliminary feasibility study for an alternative route from South Al Batinah to Jabal Akhdar was completed.

Additionally, plans are underway to lay a 32km road to Jabal Shams to improve tourism in this popular hill station.

The ministry said that the preliminary feasibility study for the road was completed in collaboration with the Ministry of Housing and Urban Planning. **>A5**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Reading competition winners announced

1 Bait Al Zubair Foundation announced names of the winners of the 3rd edition of the School Reading Initiatives Competition. The contest was organised by Bait Al Zubair Foundation along with the Ministry of Education. First place went to Ras Madrasah School for Basic Education. **>A2**

MARKET Oman's oil exports hit 178.9mn barrels

2 The total quantities of Oman's crude oil exported as at the end of July 2023 stood at 178,956,300 barrels. The average oil price calculated at \$80.5 per barrel. Oil production hit 223,544,500 barrels. Data released by the NCSI showed that the crude oil production dropped by 1.5 percent to reach 174,642,500 barrels. **>B1**

SPORTS Al Harthy all set for Japan debut

3 Ahmad Al Harthy will make his debut in Japan when he competes in the 6-hour race of the round six in the FIA World Endurance Championship at the Fuji Speedway on September 10. Al Harthy and Oman Racing will be in action with free practice sessions on September 8. **>B6**

INVENTORS

Omani researchers get global recognition for environment-friendly innovation

MUSCAT: Two Omani researchers have got global recognition for their environment-friendly product used in the drilling of oil wells. Omani inventors Tasneem bint Mohammed Al Dawoodi and Salma bint Salim Al Sidairi worked on date seeds oil and used cooking/kitchen oil to manufacture the product.

Tasneem Al Dawoodi said that the idea of the project was to use the waste and recycle date seeds into a material used for drilling oil wells. This material is environment-friendly, low cost and highly efficient, she added.

After graduating from the col-



lege and training at Mohammed Al Barwani Petroleum Services Company, she said that success came after eight months of hard work. She added that she has applied for the patent of the product.

The work on the project started in April 2018 and included technical, economic and development aspects in order to maintain the standards necessary for the product to become available in the mar-

ket, she said. On the challenges the project faced, Salma bint Salim Al Sidairi said that we faced many difficulties for almost five years which included lack of technical support and required labs but we managed to keep our calm and continued with the project.

Among the difficulties in upgrading the project to the international standards, she said that initially we lacked support but following the success of the idea, the labs of Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), Mohammed Al Barwani Petroleum Services Company and PDO extended their helping hands.



Omani trail running champions shine at 2023 UTMB Mont Blanc

A4

PRAYER
TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....12:10pm
Asr.....3:38pm
Maghrib.....6:26pm
Isha.....7:37pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....4:34am

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بريد عمان
OMAN POST

Winners of Bait Al Zubair contest for school reading initiatives announced

The competition seeks to contribute to developing the reading aspect, enriching it, and finding solutions to existing educational, administrative, or community problems

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Bait Al Zubair Foundation, in partnership with the Ministry of Education, announced last February the launch of the third edition of the Bait Al Zubair Competition for School Reading Initiatives, and the dissemination of its guide to all schools in the Sultanate.

The competition seeks to contribute to developing the reading aspect, enriching it, and finding alternatives and solutions to existing educational, administrative, or community problems through the act of reading.

The closing ceremony of the third edition of the Bait Al-Zubair Competition for School Reading Initiatives was held under the patronage of Pro. Dr. Abdullah bin Khamis Ambosaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Education for Education.

The ceremony included a speech



tion supervisor, said: “Unlike previous editions, there were no local committees in the governorates that received entries from the governorate’s schools, sorted and evaluated and then sent to the central committee in the Ministry of Education for the final sorting. Rather, entries were received from all governorates directly in Bait Al-Zubair. The first screening took place last May, then the initial evaluation in June, and finally the final evaluation, which took place one day before the closing ceremony, where the five qualified initiatives were allowed to make a final presentation before the jury.”

Since its inception, the competition was designed to honour and celebrate reading initiatives in the Arabic language and encourage them to compete in the field of reading, whether in the context of implementing the initiative itself, or by pushing them to launch purposeful initiatives in the future that can compete in the upcoming sessions, benefiting from the potential energy of the students and various employees in the school. It also aimed to enhance and encourage the culture of reading and to strengthen the school’s relationship with the local community.

It is worth noting that the Bait Al Zubair Competition for School Reading Initiatives is one of the projects adopted by the Bait Al Zubair Foundation with the aim of raising the level of competitiveness and recognising individual and collective efforts in various cultural fields, in addition to a series of other projects of a competitive nature, such as the Sadiq Jawad Award for Intellectual and Philosophical Studies, the winners in which will be announced next November.



by the Children’s Laboratory of Bait Al-Zubair, delivered by the competition supervisor, Fatima Al-Shukri, and a speech by the Ministry of Education delivered by Idris Al-Nabhani, Assistant Director of the Department of Educational Activities in which he praised the efforts made by both parties, stressing the importance of continuing this partnership that is consistent with Oman Vision 2040 in achieving community partnership with educational institutions to build a knowledge society.

The ceremony also included a speech by the jury, presented on

behalf of it the committee member Awad Al-Luwaihi, in which he thanked all those who applied to participate in the competition, while praising the great development in the tools and methods adopted by those in charge of the initiatives that submitted to the competition.

The ceremony also included visual presentations about the competition and its stages.

In this edition, in the first place was the “Read to Be” initiative from Ras Madrakah School for Basic Education (1-12) in Al-Wusta Governorate, and received

OMR1,000, and in second place was the initiative (Implementing the Nour Al-Bayan Methodology) from the Hudhayfah Bin Al-Yaman School for Basic Education (5-12) at Al Dhahirah Governorate and won OMR700.

In third place was the initiative (By Reading I Rise) from Kabara School for Basic Education (1-12) at Al Dhahirah Governorate and received OMR600, and in fourth place was the initiative (I am Skilled Reader and Author) from Al-Ahed School for basic education (1-4) at South Al Batinah Governorate and received OMR500.

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION



Induction programme for new teachers held

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education, represented by the Directorate-General of Educational Supervision “Human Sciences Supervision Department,” held on Tuesday a preparatory meeting to implement the second phase of the induction programme for new teachers for the academic year 2023/2024, which included 20 general supervisors and heads of supervision units of study materials. The meeting took place at the Ministry’s General Diwan.

Dr. Ibrahim bin Mohammed Al Ramahi, Chairman of the Committee for Managing and Implementing the Induction Programme for new teachers for the academic year 2023/2024, headed the meeting during which accomplishments of the first phase of the programme, and

the mechanism for implementing the plan for the second phase were discussed.

The second phase is planned to be implemented online from September via the (Teams) platform.

During the meeting, the time-lines for the implementation were reviewed, by setting one day for each subject and presenting the most important specialised topics that the new teachers need in their specialty.

It is worth noting that the induction programme for new teachers aims to form positive attitudes towards the teaching profession, providing teachers with knowledge, attitudes, and job skills to prepare them towards the practice of teaching, in addition to introducing them to educational developments, and arousing their motivation towards the teaching profession.

CAPTIVATING EVENTS

Oman Automobile Association wraps up events at Khareef Dhofar Festival

Times News Service

SALALAH: As the Khareef Dhofar Festival sweeps through the serene landscapes of Salalah, the Oman Automobile Association (OAA) is set to rev up the festivities with a series of thrilling and captivating events. The association’s commitment to promoting motorsports and adventure tourism is on full display as they organised a variety of exciting activities during this year’s festival.

The festival, known for its lush greenery and pleasant climate, provides the perfect backdrop for automotive enthusiasts and adventurers to unite and celebrate their passions.

August saw a month full of excitement as the OAA hosted a series of events:

Karting Circuit Experience: (July 15 to September 2): At Salalah Celebrations Square, the motorsport extravaganza kicked off with the Karting Circuit Experience, which was an exhilarating adventure for individuals aged 5 and above.

Digital Motorsports: (July 15 to September 2): In the Digital Room at Salalah Celebrations Square, the Digital Motorsports event took place, from July 15 to August 31. Here, motorsport en-



thusiasts indulged in the world of virtual racing and competed against each other in thrilling driving simulators, providing an immersive experience for both casual gamers and competitive drivers. It was an unforgettable summer of motorsport excitement.

Dhofar Al Majad Caravan: 8: On August 2, the 4x4 Club did a captivating showcase of the region’s natural beauty for car enthusiasts.

Discover Salalah: From August 6 to 10, the Nizwa Bikers Team led the way in exploring Salalah’s hidden gems during the Discover Salalah event.

Dhofar International Bike Race 2: (August 10-12): Heart-pounding action unfolded from

August 10 to 12, 2023, as Dhofar Motorsports presented the Dhofar International Bike Race 2, a thrilling bike race against the festival’s scenic backdrop.

Off-Road Adventure Trip: (August 13-25): Adventure seekers got a thrilling experience from August 13 to 25, as they joined the Axis 3 Overlanders for an adrenaline-pumping journey through rugged terrains.

Promotional Tour to Salalah: (August 18-22): The GTR Club invited festival-goers on a promotional tour of Salalah, showcasing the city’s beauty.

Motorcycle Trip to Salalah: (August 25 to September 1): Oman Riders club took to the open road from August 25 to September 1

trip to Salalah stopping at the beautiful scenery.

Expressing his pride in the association’s role in making these events possible, Sulaiman Al Rawahi, Managing Director of the Oman Automobile Association, said: “We are truly honoured to be a part of the Khareef Dhofar Festival once again. These events embody our commitment to promoting motorsports and adventure tourism in Oman. We believe that the combination of our stunning landscapes and the enthusiasm of our participants will make this festival a memorable experience for all.”

The association’s dedication to creating unforgettable moments for automotive enthusiasts and adventure seekers remains unwavering.

Shell Oman

key participant in Oman’s economy and growth

Tell us briefly about your company’s journey here in Oman.

Shell Oman Marketing Company’s journey in the Sultanate of Oman has been truly remarkable since the establishment of Shell’s downstream business activities on 12 December 1958, when fuel was dispensed from the first depot in Saih Al Malih which is today, Mina Al Fahal. With more than 65 momentous years of experience in Oman and remarkable track record of serving millions of loyal customers in Oman, Shell Oman continues to serve Oman in a multi downstream-business structure providing Mobility, Commercial, Lubricants, Marine, Bitumen and Aviation fuel products and services. As a uniquely structured publicly listed company on Muscat Stock Exchange, we have a 49% ownership by Shell, while the majority is owned by investors in Oman. This unique arrangement allows us to leverage our connection with Shell’s world-class expertise, R&D and technologies, while capitalizing on the invaluable local knowledge and understanding of Oman’s business needs and practices.

The company continues to be a key participant in The Sultanate’s economy and growth by consistently delivering operational excellence with the highest practices in Health, Safety, Security and Environment as well as ethics and compliance while creating sustainable benefits for the society and In-Country Value for the Sultanate. For instance, the company owns and operates the only ISO-certified lubricants blending plant of its kind in Oman, located in Mina Al Fahal which produces Made-in-Oman Shell-branded lubricants for local and regional markets for almost 40 years now with a remarkable track record of production and achievements including winning His Majesty’s “Best Five Factories Award” in 1993. Over the years, Shell Oman has always been a pioneer in introducing new products, services, and solutions to the market. For example, in 1996 we launched Shell Select convenience store chain in Oman, becoming the first 24-hour convenience store in the country. In the same year, we also became the first fuel marketing company to launch fuel cards in Oman. This was followed by being the first to launch differentiated fuel formula in the market in 2005, and the first to launch Vehicle Recognition System and Customer Interface Screens in our mobility stations in 2016 and the first solar -powered service station in Oman in 2018. Today Shell Oman operates in the main airports and seaports in Oman and has a network of 211 Shell service stations that provide quality fuel and non-fuel convenient retailing experience for our customers, and with over 95% Omanisation, and hundreds of Omani small and medium enterprises working in our value chain, Shell Oman continues to be a role model for local talent development and commitment to serving this nation.

Our businesses are guided by Powering Progress strategy. It sets out our goals to accelerate the transition to net zero emissions, create value for shareholders, powering lives, and respecting nature. This is underpinned by our core values of honesty, integrity, respect for people, with the highest safety and ethical standards.

How do Shell’s Service Stations provide consumers with a differentiated experience?
At Shell Oman, we prioritize the safety of our customers, our people and operations. We also deliver top-quality products and services that exceed expectations. Shell service stations are thoughtfully designed destinations, offering diverse products and amenities to meet all needs associated with having a seamless and convenient journey.



However, we believe that our frontline staff are our heroes who make the difference real at our stations. In fact, our ‘People Make the Difference Real’ program empowers our knowledgeable staff to deliver exceptional customer service, while also upholding the highest standards in Health, Safety, Security and Environmental practices ensuring every visit is a delightful experience for our valued customers.

In addition, we have been continuously aiming to upgrade our customers’ experience by offering differentiated fuels such as Shell V-Power. This fuel is offered by Shell in over 65 countries around the world, but only in Oman when it comes to the Middle East. Our customers get to experience the benefit of this globally renowned fuel which is a result of decades of research and development (R&D) by Shell’s international team of fuel scientists, the same scientists that have developed the Shell V-Power race fuels for Scuderia Ferrari’s F1 cars. Moreover, we have also been investing significant resources in digitalization of our operations to improve network connectivity and optimise costs, which result in greater business continuity and efficiency. This is very important, especially for fleet solutions customers. As for consumers sector, we have recently launched a digital loyalty program, Shell Go+ app, for Shell customers. It promises personalized rewards, instant notifications, as well as discounts in a seamless and integrated experience at Shell service station in both fuel and non-fuel businesses.

Tell us about your Energy Transition plans?
Shell is committed to playing its part in the energy transition by helping to deliver the secure, affordable energy the world needs today while investing in a low-

carbon energy systems and technologies as the world transitions to net zero. We recognize the importance of supporting the Sultanate’s transition to cleaner energy options, and we are working closely with stakeholders in the government and private sector to achieve our common goals that are aligned with Oman Vision 2040, and Oman’s carbon neutrality targets by 2050. We firmly believe in the importance of taking concrete steps to address climate change and promote sustainability.

As a company, we are driven by a strong aspiration to be the market leader in our field. We continuously strive for excellence and aim to drive positive outcomes for our customers, employees, and the Sultanate as a whole. To achieve our ambitious goal of net-zero emissions, we have set targets in three main areas: reducing emissions from our operations, helping customers decarbonize, and investing in carbon-neutral and cleaner energy products and services.

Internally, we are implementing energy-efficient practices, optimizing processes, and investing in renewable energy solutions to minimize emissions by installing solar panels onto a number of our service stations, our head office building & parking lots in Mina Al Fahal in Muscat. We are also actively working with our customers to transition to cleaner energy alternatives, such as from cleaner fuels including Electric and Hydrogen, as well as carbon neutral lubricants. This means that we are promoting a greener mobility future for the Sultanate while also working with local SMEs as we remain committed to creating an ICV agenda in our business. Toward this objective, we have embarked on establishing various partnerships and collaborations to make a significant and positive impact on the environment while

contributing to Oman’s sustainable development goals.

By pursuing these plans, we aim to play a leading role in the energy transition and contribute to a sustainable future for Oman.

How important are the company’s partners to its operations?
We are big believers in the power of partnerships. We have always strived to be the partner of choice for the Sultanate. After all, working together helps us achieve far more. Our people are committed & passionate to developing long term relationships with customers, distributors, Original Equipment Manufacturers and prospects alike. Working with our stakeholders to solve every-day challenges, always bring new learnings and become the inspiration for our innovation. A strong relationship adds value to the performance of an individual or a business regardless of their area of expertise, whether it be increasing business productivity or an individual’s output. Partnerships represent a collaboration of two parties or people coming together to achieve success.

We recognize that a collaborative approach to doing business is essential for delivering sustainable and impactful solutions. Our partners, whether they are government entities, suppliers, or community organizations, bring their respective diverse expertise and resources that complement our own. When goals are aligned, and resources are pooled, there is a promise of greater efficiency, effectiveness, and long-term value.

Shell Oman is proud of its 65 years of strategic and long-term partnership with the Sultanate collaborating and fostering relationships based on trust, mutual respect, and shared objectives. These partnerships enable us to create a positive impact on society and help drive economic growth.

“Our businesses are guided by Powering Progress strategy. It sets out our goals to accelerate the transition to net zero emissions, create value for shareholders, powering lives, and respecting nature. This is underpinned by our core values of honesty, integrity, respect for people, with the highest safety and ethical standards.

Dr. Mohammed Al Balushi
CEO of Shell Oman

What are your plans to retain the company’s pioneer position?
We consistently maintain a competitive edge through innovative practices and customer-centric approaches. Our commitment to continuous improvement enables us to stay ahead in the Sultanate’s ever-changing market.

Having said that, the Sultanate is projected to show economic growth in line with Vision 2040 and economic diversification plans as well as the youthful population. As a result, we will continue to invest in strategic locations to serve the new highways and urban developments across the Sultanate. Our extensive network of service stations play a crucial role in our growth while supporting the economic development plans in the Sultanate. We provide convenience and accessibility while enhancing customer loyalty, through rewarding platforms

Also, we continue to invest in our people. We continue to upskill and develop our people to be future proof as we take big steps in line with our energy transition and digitalization plans. Historically, we have always had impressive local talent development, people engagement and employee relations scores, and would like to reinforce that position as we grow into the future. Our unwavering commitment to innovation, customer-centricity, and sustainability sets us apart. With a strong presence, dedication to customer satisfaction, strategic partnerships, and innovative initiatives, we maintain our competitive advantage in the market.

For us, the question is how we provide the technology that will continue to push performance but that will really optimise efficiency, and how do we continue to leverage the trust of our brand so that we can continue to provide credible and trustworthy solutions.

As customers evolve, we are proactively taking steps to optimise the customer experience, and offer them higher value. As energy evolves faster than ever before, businesses need a dependable energy partner to help navigate the complexities of decarbonization and evolving customers’ needs and expectations. Technology has a critical role to play and innovation in digital and AI is key to help us make the massive changes needed. Digital technologies can make it possible to design and operate entirely new energy systems. I believe that in a net-zero emissions world, digital technologies and solutions will be the key foundation of energy systems. The future of energy is decarbonized, decentralized, and digital, and we are continuously working on investing in the right technologies and innovations to achieve that.

Tell us about your future expansion plans.
The company has a multi-years investment program that takes into account the Sultanate’s key economic indicators. We are planning to increase our network of quality Shell service stations, especially that will serve the newly developing highways and main roads as well as the urban developments and strategic projects in Oman, while relentlessly investing in making our customers experience better and safer by introducing new products and services and continue to prioritize sustainability and innovation in our operations, invest in cleaner and digital solutions and upgrades to cater to our customers’ evolving demands. In addition, we are continuously investing in maintaining and upgrading our Shell Lubricants Blending Plant in Mina Al Fahal to offer the latest relevant technologies to our local and international customers. Meanwhile, we are further exploring opportunities for growth in our marine and aviation businesses, especially with the exciting developments in key ports such as Duqm, Sohar, Salalah and Sultan Qaboos in fuel and lubricants as well. All of this while ensuring we continuously invest in attracting, retaining and developing our people.

Why is it important to work with the communities in terms of CSR?
Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is an integral part of Shell Oman’s identity and business approach. We believe that our success is intricately connected to the well-being and progress of the communities in which we operate.

One of our primary focuses is talent development, with an Organization rate of 95 percent across our organization. We believe in investing in the skills and capabilities of our Omani workforce, ensuring their engagement and encouraging them to excel in their roles. This approach helps address the evolving needs of the businesses we support while promoting the professional growth and aspirations of our employees.

Furthermore, Shell Oman has implemented a comprehensive Corporate Social Responsibility program that revolves around strategic themes such as Community and Enterprise Development, Environment and Energy Transition, and People’s Well-being. We design an annual plan with programs and initiatives aligned with Oman Vision 2040, Shell’s Powering Progress strategy, the UN Sustainable Development Goals, and the specific needs of the local community.

By actively engaging with the communities, we demonstrate our commitment to being a responsible corporate citizen. We understand that sustainable business practices go beyond financial success and encompass environmental stewardship, social development, and ethical conduct. By working hand in hand with the communities, we contribute to their well-being and the overall advancement of society.

OMAN'S TRAIL RUNNING CHAMPIONS SHINE AT 2023 UTMB MONT BLANC IN FRANCE



Hamed Al Harthi, Hamdan Al Khatri, and Mohammed Al Shizawi undertook the task of conquering the UTMB Mont Blanc distance, an awe-inspiring 171km of treacherous

Omani trail running champions, Hamed Al Harthi, Hamdan Al Khatri, Mohammed Al Shizawi, and Issa Al Abri, etched their names in history as they conquered the arduous challenges of the 2023 UTMB Mont Blanc. These trail-blazers embarked on a journey that encapsulated the essence of grit and determination, leaving an indelible mark on the world of trail running.

Hamed Al Harthi, Hamdan Al Khatri, and Mohammed Al Shizawi undertook the daunting task of conquering the UTMB Mont Blanc distance, an awe-inspiring 171 km of treacherous terrain, while Issa Al Abri, a force to be reckoned with, ventured into the equally formidable CCC race, encompassing a staggering 100 KM of relentless trails.

Hamed Al Harthi, speaking on behalf of the group, poignantly emphasized the profound honor they felt in representing Oman on the global stage of the UTMB Mont Blanc. Completing the UTMB race wasn't just a personal achievement for Hamed,

it was a triumphant moment for Oman's trail running community. Expressing deep pride in his accomplishment, Hamed Al Harthi stated, "Finishing the UTMB reflects the strong commitment of Oman's trail runners. This shared accomplishment underscores the resilience and dedication of our athletes on the international trail running platform."

Commenting on the tough side of the race, he added, "My UTMB journey proved incredibly demanding. I often refer to this race as 'the mother of all trail races'! The high altitude and harsh cold weather present formidable obstacles, especially given the extensive climbs involved. The final kilometers posed an immense challenge, requiring a concerted focus on nutrition to persevere".

Hamdan Al Khatri faced a setback due to a recent injury prior to the race, yet his unwavering spirit stood strong. He withdrew at 11:41:51 at Lac Combal, acknowledging, "My objective was to gain experience and up-skill while maintaining a steady pace without pushing beyond my limits. It a point I had to call it off, but the



experience has been a profound learning curve and I look forward to the next challenge".

The Omani team's performance was underscored as they crossed the finish line with resounding determination. Hamed Al Harthi finished the 171 km race in 46:12:01, securing a commendable 26th rank within his category. Mohammed Al Shizawi completed the demanding course in 44:11:10.

Meanwhile, Issa Al Abri crossed the finish line of the CCC race with a time of 21:45:17.

The journey of these athletes was accentuated by the unwavering support of the Himam Trail Run Race team, who provided crucial planning and technical assistance. Their collaboration with athletes like Ahmed Al Fahdi, Ali Al Balushi, and Sultan Al Shereiqi exemplifies the collective spirit of

The 2023 UTMB Mont Blanc, a pinnacle in the world of trail running, witnessed victories for the USA's Jim Walmsley and Courtney Dauwalter, underlining the global stature of the event. Spanning from August 28 to September 3, the festival-like atmosphere captured the very essence of the endurance challenge

culture. Spanning from August 28 to September 3, the festival-like atmosphere captured the very essence of the endurance challenge, offering an array of races and encounters that have evolved over time, bringing together athletes from diverse corners of the globe.

This monumental endeavor by the Omani trail running champions aligns with the surge of popularity that trail running is experiencing within Oman.

The nation, endowed with breathtaking landscapes, is fostering a growing community of trail runners who embrace nature's challenges. The immense expanse of the Al Hajar Mountains, a majestic range that stretches over 700 kilometers across the northeastern part of the Arabian Peninsula, presents an ideal playground for trail enthusiasts.

As the UTMB journey culminates, the athletes turn their gaze towards the upcoming Himam Trail Run Race edition scheduled for 23 - 25 November 2023. This unique event, set against the backdrop of Oman's diverse landscapes, spans four distinct wilayats.

From the mesmerising terrains of Al Hamra and the rugged beauty of Al Jabal Al Akhdar to the historical charm of Nizwa and the serene surroundings of Izki, each wilayat offers a distinct tapestry for an unforgettable running experience. Supported by the Governor of Al Dhakhiliya and the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the Himam Trail Run Race embodies the spirit of unity and exploration that Oman champions.



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CR No. 1/28749/14

Discussion on financial disclosure systems

The meetings are organised by the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime at the UN Office in Vienna during the period from 4 to 8 September 2023

VIENNA: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by State Audit Institution (SAI), is participating in the 14th resumed session of the Implementation Review Group (IRG). The 14th Session of the Open-ended Intergovernmental Working Group on Asset Recovery and the 12th Open-ended Intergovernmental experts are meeting to enhance international cooperation under the UNCAC. The meetings are organised by the



United Nations (UN) Office on Drugs and Crime at the UN Office in Vienna during the period from 4 to 8 September 2023. The 14th session includes several key topics, the most important of which is the discussion of the review of the fourth and fifth chapters of the UNCAC pertaining to international cooperation and asset recovery. The topics also include the discussion of the means for using information and communication technology to implement the

Convention and the non-binding guidelines in order to promote multilateral international cooperation to further prevent, identify, investigate and prosecute corruption in times of emergency, as well as responding to and recovery from crisis. Good practices, experiences and challenges related to the establishment of effective financial disclosure systems for concerned public officials, as well as good practices and challenges faced during the inter-

national asset recovery process will be also discussed during the session. On the sidelines of the session, a training course will be held for focal points and government experts participating in the second session of the mechanism for the review of implementation of the UN Convention against Corruption. The participants will be able to learn about the self-evaluation audit methodology, as well as conducting practical exercises in the same area. -ONA

RAINS, WINDS LASH AL BURAIMI

Rains of varying intensity accompanied by active winds and thunder lashed Al Buraimi governorate on Tuesday, resulting in flooding of many wadis. Moderate to heavy rain fell in the wilayat of Mahdah, causing many valleys to overflow. - ONA



WORKING PAPERS PRESENTED



Workshop explores impact of artificial intelligence on society

SALALAH: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology on Tuesday held a workshop on the programme titled 'Future of Artificial Intelligence (AI) and its Impact on Our Society'. The workshop was organised in conjunction with the Office of the Governor of Dhofar at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah. The programme aims at ex-

ploring the developments of AI, the challenges and opportunities it can provide to society and the economy, society's literacy in modern technologies and enlightened public understanding of AI and its uses. Five working papers were presented during the workshop. The first elaborated on the executive programme for AI, advanced technologies and the uses of generative AI, notably in accomplishing daily tasks.

The second paper discussed the Fourth Industrial Revolution and AI technologies and their impact on various sectors. The third working paper means of developing content by means of AI. The fourth paper deliberated the topic of education in the age of AI. The fifth working paper discussed local laws regulating the uses of AI and existing models in this field. - ONA

PROMOTING TOURISM

Encouraging tourist influx in first six months of 2023

<FROM A1 According to the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI), the total number of visitors this year until the end of June 2023 were around 79,034, which included 28,406 Omanis, 3,848 from Saudi Arabia and 45,302 from rest of the world. The government is keen to promote tourism activities in the mountain town and had organised a successful Al Jabal Al Akhdar Festival last month.

The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism along with the Al Dakhiliyah Governorate Office organised the festival, to introduce the cultural heritage and natural beauty of Al Jabal Al Akhdar, in particular, and the Sultanate of Oman in general. The Wilayat of Al Jabal Al Akhdar is one of the favourite tourist destinations for many visitors in the Sultanate of Oman during the summer due to its pleasant weather in summer, and the avail-

ability of various hotel facilities. The wilayat also witnesses an influx of tourists during the summer to participate in activities such as mountaineering, hiking, and enjoying the mild weather. Pomegranates, walnuts, apricots, black grapes and peaches all grow in Al Jabal Al Akhdar and the area is well-known for its rose water extraction done by the farmers that have lived in these terraced villages for hundreds of years.

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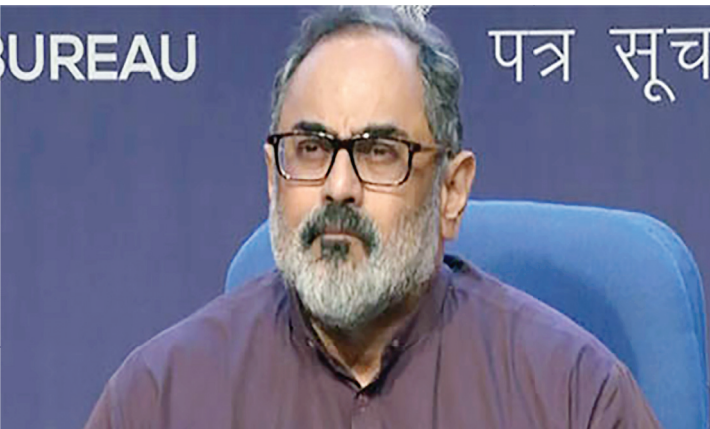
G20 meeting: Consensus reached on use of digital public infrastructure

The minister said that consensus among nations focused broadly on three key areas – digital public infrastructure, cybersecurity and digital skills

NEW DELHI: Indian Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology Rajeev Chandrasekhar has said that G20 Digital Economy Ministers reached a ground-breaking consensus under India's Presidency on how to effectively shape digital public infrastructure (DPI) of the future.

Addressing a press conference here on the outcomes of the meeting, he said that consensus between nations focused broadly on three key areas – Digital Public Infrastructure, cybersecurity and digital skills.

"I want to brief you on one area where the G20 presidency of India has spent a lot of time in talking and gaining wide acceptance, which is the issue of technology and the ongoing growth and the expansion of digital economy...There has been awareness building and consensus around three topics that were on the agenda of the Digital Economy Minister's meeting. The first one is Digital Public Infrastructure, the second is cybersecurity in the digital economy



“

On cybersecurity, the G20 digital economy ministers have had wide-ranging discussions on why it is important for businesses to be protected. Cybersecurity is an important issue for all countries in the world because the digital economy is becoming an increasingly larger component of economic progress and the global economy

Rajeev Chandrasekhar
Indian Union Minister of State for Electronics and Information Technology

and the third is digital skills," the minister said.

India has entered into eight Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) - with Armenia, Sierra Leone, Suriname, Antigua, Barbados, Trinidad and Tobago, Papua New Guinea, and Mauritius offering

them the India Stack and DPI at no cost and with open-source access.

These nations now have the opportunity to adopt and utilise these resources within their borders, further developing their unique innovation ecosystems.

The minister said India is now

a case study, as a nation that employed and deployed technological tools for progress and growth.

"Countries that have lagged behind increasingly see this as a way to follow India's lead in DPIs, an open-source digital infrastructure, and using it to create the same impact that India has. Through these G20 conversations, we have further understood how DPIs are a powerful mechanism for inclusion, especially for countries in the global south," the Minister said.

Apart from DPIs, the minister spoke about how nations have prioritised cybersecurity as well emphasising its importance for a fast-paced growing economy.

"On cybersecurity, the G20 digital economy ministers have had wide-ranging discussions on why it is important for businesses to be protected. Cybersecurity is an important issue for all countries in the world because the digital economy is becoming an increasingly larger component of economic progress and the global economy," he said.

The third point of consensus was digital skills. The Minister said that in a post-COVID digital world, it is necessary for nations to ensure that digital skills are taught and nurtured among the youth.

"Digital skills are increasingly needed in this post-COVID digital world. India's talents are focused on creating digital skills for our youth. This is something that has resonated during this discussion.

Many countries are interested in partnering with each other and with India to create digital-ready, future-ready skill talent to deal with the ongoing challenges in the coming techade," the minister said. He said in the post-Covid increasingly digital world, India's focus is on creating digital skills for youth. – ANI

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Contracts worth over OMR3 million awarded to SMEs

MUSCAT: The value of business tasks awarded to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) through Oman Telecommunications Company (Omantel) stood at more than OMR3 million at the end of the second quarter of 2023.

The business, which benefits 17 SMEs, constitutes an embodiment of ongoing cooperation between the two parties.

As part of this cooperation, the Authority for Small and Medium Enterprises Development (ASMED) and Omantel recently conducted four workshops in different governorates to share business ideas.

As many as 56 entrepreneurs

and owners of SMEs attended the workshops, which were held within the context of the "Supplier Development Initiative" aimed at providing training in the field of specialised contracts, procurements and opportunities to maximise benefits from Omantel business offers.

In December 2022, ASMED signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Omantel, with the prime aim of providing technical and advisory support to small and medium enterprises registered with the Authority, empowering the entrepreneurship sector and maximising in-country added value (ICV).

— ONA

WORLD HERITAGE STATUS

Will Venice be listed as an endangered UNESCO site?

VENICE: For years, there has been discussion about whether or not Venice will lose its UNESCO World Heritage status.

The 45th World Heritage Committee session, to be held in Riyadh from September 10 to 25, 2023, will decide if the lagoon city should be classified as an endangered site. Experts from UNESCO, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), certainly think Venice should be placed on the so-called red list.

Venice's city council prefers not to comment on the issue. And it's not like being moved to the red list would automatically take away Venice's World Heritage status. The move is more like a warning, giving authorities a chance to react and preserve the criteria that made UNESCO bestow the honor on Venice in the first place.

Still, decision-makers in Rome, Italy, have reacted harshly to the prospect of Venice losing its World Heritage status. State secretary for culture Vittorio Sgarbi dismissed UNESCO's warnings as "alarmist," adding that "Venice's preeminence as a world heritage site does not need to be confirmed by anyone."

UNESCO report

A recent UNESCO report said that "human intervention, including continuing development, the impacts of climate change and mass tourism threaten to cause irreversible changes" to Venice. It further found that countermeasures taken by local and national authorities were insufficient. Therefore, UNESCO recommends that Venice be classified as an endangered World Heritage site, as "such inscription will result in greater dedication and mobilisation of local, national and international stakeholders, for the development of effective and sustainable corrective measures that address these long-standing issues."

UNESCO: High-rise buildings tarnish cityscape

According to the report, several construction projects will diminish Venice's appeal, "particularly high-rise buildings which [...] are

likely to have significant negative visual impact." Moreover, "sea level rise, extreme weather events and other climate change induced phenomena are causing deterioration and damage" to the built environment. UNESCO also found that ongoing conversion of hous-

ing into tourist accommodations is damaging the city's cultural and social identity, concluding that "many of these issues [...] which also have a cumulative adverse impact, remain unresolved or only temporarily addressed."

Former Venice mayor Massimo

Cacciari criticised the report, telling Italian news agency Adnkronos: "As if Venice needs UNESCO to be an asset to humanity!"

While he recognised Venice faced problems, he said mass tourism was impacting the lagoon city just as much as Florence and

Decision-makers in Rome, Italy, have reacted harshly to the prospect of Venice losing its World Heritage status. State secretary for culture Vittorio Sgarbi dismissed UNESCO's warnings as "alarmist."

Rome. He added that Italy's economy is reliant on vacationers. "Fortunately, tourism exists," Cacciari said. "Do we want to lose it because UNESCO tells us it's harmful?"

Lidia Fersuoch, who heads Italia Nostra, a non-profit dedicated to protecting Italy's historical, artis-

tic and environmental legacy, disagrees. She approached UNESCO in 2011 requesting Venice be added to the list of endangered sites.

Endangered list is a wake-up call

Venice has been classified as a World Heritage site since 1987, with UNESCO lauding the lagoon city as "a unique artistic achievement." It praises its "incomparable series of architectural ensembles" and highlights that "Venice symbolizes the people's victorious struggle against the elements as they managed to master a hostile nature." The city required considerable architectural skill to build since it consists of 118 small islands.

Endangered list

UNESCO says placing a World Heritage site on its endangered list is not a form of punishment. Instead, this is intended to help "preserve these exceptional places for future generations," as Peter Martin of the German UNESCO Commission told DW. To help this preservation effort, the World Heritage Committee identifies how threats to World Heritage sites can be averted or mitigated, he added. Today, 55 sites are on UNESCO's endangered list.

Liverpool lost UNESCO Heritage Status in 2021

Placing sites on the red list and suggesting measures to retain their UNESCO World Heritage status does pay off, Martin said. One example is Salonga National Park in the Democratic Republic of Congo, which was removed from the endangered list in the summer of 2021 after various protection measures were successfully adopted. Two years earlier, the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem was taken off the red list after extensive restoration work was carried out on the basilica.

World Heritage status has only been completely revoked in three cases: In 2007, Oman's Arabian Oryx Sanctuary was struck off the list, two years later Dresden lost its World Heritage status and Liverpool lost its title in 2021.

— DW

ASEAN: Indonesia and Malaysia urge staying out of global disputes

At the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit, Indonesian President Joko Widodo emphasised the need for a relevant long-term strategy, cautioning against the region becoming an arena for external rivalries



JAKARTA: Indonesia urged Southeast Asia's ASEAN bloc not to become embroiled in major power disputes on Tuesday, addressing concerns over Myanmar and the group's unity.

Southeast Asian leaders are meeting in Jakarta, Indonesia with the Myanmar crisis and China's assertiveness in the South China Sea headlining discussions.

At the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) summit, Indonesian President Joko Widodo emphasised the need for a relevant long-term strategy, cautioning against the region becoming an arena for external rivalries.

"ASEAN has agreed to not be a proxy to any powers. Don't turn our ship into an arena for rivalry that is destructive," Widodo said.

Malaysian Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim echoed the sentiment, saying that the bloc must guard against "divisive" actions from major powers.

The ASEAN summit will be followed by talks with Beijing, Washington and other powers later this week at the East Asia summit hosted by ASEAN leaders, where the US will be represented by Vice President Kamala Harris in the absence of President Joe Biden.

The US attendance highlights its endeavors to counter China's influence, particularly in the South China Sea, a significant global trade route.

US-China rivalry and ASEAN's challenges

While Biden's absence raises questions about US commitment, Harris has emphasized Washington's support for regional allies against any form of intimidation.

This follows her previous visits to countries such as Singapore, Vietnam, and the Philippines, reinforcing the US stance on China's regional actions.

The rivalry between the two

global powers has also exposed fault lines within ASEAN. While countries like the Philippines and Vietnam lean towards Washington, Cambodia is more aligned with Beijing.

US officials and analysts see Beijing's assertiveness in the region as an opportunity for Washington to establish stronger ties with its allies.

China, Myanmar on the agenda

Leaders gathering in Jakarta will be primarily concerned with China's influence in the region and the conflict in Myanmar.

"The eyes of our peoples are on us to prove ASEAN still matters and can contribute towards peace, stability and prosperity in the region," Indonesian Foreign Minister Retno Marsudi said on Monday.

Disputes over the South China Sea have been escalating since Beijing released a map claiming large

parts of the region.

Malaysia, Vietnam, and the Philippines have dismissed China's map claims.

Another topic on the agenda would be to find a position on the situation in Myanmar following the 2021 coup.

A draft communique

A draft communique revealed there is no consensus on Myanmar, according to news agency AFP.

While Indonesia advocates for Myanmar's junta to adhere to a previously agreed plan to halt violence and resume talks, these pushes have seen no results due to the junta's non-cooperation.

Thailand's separate engagements with the junta and imprisoned former leader Aung San Suu Kyi have intensified ASEAN divisions.

What is ASEAN and how significant is it?

The Association of Southeast

Asian Nations (ASEAN) is an intergovernmental body that includes 10 Southeast Asian nations: Brunei, Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Malaysia, Myanmar, The Philippines, Singapore, Thailand, and Vietnam. The alliance represents over 650 million people and collectively boasts the world's fifth-largest economy.

However, former Indonesian Foreign Minister Marty Natalegawa acknowledged that ASEAN is struggling to convince world leaders that it deserves to play a central role in the region.

ASEAN emphasises unity and non-interference, which some argue hinders its response to internal crises like the situation in Myanmar.

"Obituaries on ASEAN actually have been written many times over," Natalegawa said on Monday. "But somehow all those times, ASEAN has been able to reinvent itself and reassert its relevance." — DW

Indian PM to depart for Jakarta today

NEW DELHI: Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi will depart for Jakarta on Wednesday for the 20th ASEAN India Summit and the 18th East Asia Summit scheduled for September 7. The Prime Minister will return late evening on September 7, just before the G20 Summit in New Delhi. "At the invitation of the President of the Republic of Indonesia, Joko Widodo, Prime Minister will visit Jakarta for the 20th ASEAN India Summit and the 18th East Asia Summit scheduled for the September 7," Ministry of External Affairs Secretary (East) Saurabh Kumar said during a special briefing ahead of PM Modi's visit to Jakarta, Indonesia.

The MEA Secretary (East) said: "Prime Minister will depart Delhi on the night of September 6 and return late evening on the September 7. Given that the G20 Summit follows shortly after the ASEAN Summit, it will be a short visit."

Kumar said India appreciates the Indonesian Government for making adjustments to the ASEAN meeting schedule so as to facilitate Prime Minister's program and his early return. — ANI

WAR CRIMES



Oil executives on trial over Sudan war crimes in Sweden

STOCKHOLM: The former CEO of Swedish oil company Lundin Oil, now known as Orron Energy, is going on trial together with the firm's ex-vice president in Stockholm on Tuesday, with both defendants accused of complicity in war crimes committed in Sudan under the regime of Omar al-Bashir.

The two men, Swede Ian Lundin and Swiss national Alex Schreiber, have denied wrongdoing. They risk life sentences if found guilty. The Swedish government had to grant consent for a foreign national to be indicted for crimes committed in another country. However, the Swedish court system can generally prosecute such crimes. The trial follows a 13-year investigation culminating in findings over 80,000 pages. Closing arguments are expected to be delivered in February 2026.

What are the defendants accused of?

The alleged crimes occurred between 1999 and 2003, with the two men accused of asking the Sudanese government to put its military in charge of security at one of Lundin Oil's exploration fields in 1999 in South Sudan.

Prosecutors say this later led to "aerial bombardments from transport planes, shooting civil-

ians from helicopter gunships, abducting and plundering civilians and burning entire villages and their crops."

They argue that the two former executives were complicit because they knew Sudan's government would take control of the area by "military force."

"What constitutes complicity in a criminal sense is that they made these demands despite understanding or, in any case, being indifferent to the military and the militia carrying out the war in a way forbidden according to international humanitarian law," chief public prosecutor Krister Petersson said.

The alleged crimes occurred after Lundin Oil struck oil in 1999 in the "Block 5A" field. Sudan waged war for decades in South Sudan, which won its independence in 2011.

Former President Omar al-Bashir, who ruled Sudan between 1989 and 2019, is wanted by the International Criminal Court in The Hague for genocide and other war crimes.

Prosecutors have asked to confiscate 2.4 billion kronor (€202 million, \$218 million) from Orron Energy. That amount is equivalent to the company's profit on selling its Sudan operations in 2003. — DW

CENTRAL SPAIN

Three dead, 3 missing after heavy rains cause flash flooding in Spain

MADRID: At least three people died and three others were missing on Monday after heavy rainfall caused flash flooding in central Spain.

The storm brought raging winds, lightning and hail to the region over the weekend. It also caused widespread damage, sweeping away cars, uprooting trees and shutting roads, subway lines and high-speed rail links.

In Toledo, around 50 kilometres (31 miles) southwest of the capital, Madrid, helicopters were sent to rescue people trapped on the roofs of their homes.

Three people still missing

Three people died in the countryside around Toledo, where a record of 90 liters of rainfall per square meter was recorded on Sunday.

Police said a young man died after getting trapped in a lift that filled up with water. The body of another man, aged 50, was found in a river near the town of Camarena. A third man died inside a flooded vehicle. Authorities are searching for three people who are

still unaccounted for. Emergency services in the Madrid region said they were called to almost 1,200 incidents overnight.

Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sanchez thanked emergency services for their work and urged people to "continue to behave with caution."

Storm easing

Several subway lines in central Madrid that had been closed due to the flooding were re-opened for service later on Monday. Suspended high-speed train connections between the capital and the southern region of Andalusia also resumed.

The weather service AEMET lowered its alert level for the Madrid region to yellow, down from a maximum red alert on Sunday. It said the storm was moving away from the country late Monday.

Scientists warn that extreme weather such as heatwaves and storms is becoming more frequent and more intense as a result of climate change, caused by the burning of fossil fuels. — DW



SPORTS

ASIA CUP

Fielding sub-par, says Rohit after win over Nepal



KANDY: Following his side's ten-wicket win over Nepal in their Asia Cup match on Monday, Indian skipper Rohit Sharma said that the team's fielding was below-par while the bowling was just okay in the match.

Rohit admitted that the team did not play its best cricket during the two group stage matches as they booked their spot in the Super Fours. Blistering batting display from Shubman Gill and Rohit Sharma helped India defeat Nepal by 10 wickets via the DLS method in a rain-curtailed match in the Asia Cup 2023 here at Pallekele.

"We cannot really look too much into these two games, one was washed out, but luckily we got to bat in the first game and bowl in this one. We have not been at our best. Once we move ahead in the Super Fours, there's no room for complacency. First game, under pressure, Hardik and Ishan got us into a good position. Today our bowling was okay, but fielding was below par," said Rohit.

hit in a post-match presentation.

Coming to the match, India opted to bowl first. Nepal posted a valiant 230/10 in 48.1 overs in their first-ever match against India. Nepal started well with an opening stand of 65 runs between Kushal Bhurtel (38 in 25 balls) and Kushal Bhurtel, who went on to score 58 in 97 balls, with eight fours.

But after the opening stand, Ravindra Jadeja and Mohammed Siraj reduced Nepal to 144/6. But a 50-run stand between Dipendra Singh (29 in 25 balls) and Sompal Kami helped Nepal reach near the 200-run mark.

Jadeja (3/40) and Siraj (3/61) were the pick of India bowlers.

India's chase for a 231-run target was interrupted by rain at 17/0 and the revised target was 145 in 23 overs. Rohit Sharma (74 in 59 balls, with six fours and five sixes) and Shubman Gill (67 in 62 balls with eight fours and a six) made light work of the target, winning the match with 17 balls to go and 10 wickets in hand. - **ANI**

KL Rahul and Thakur in India's World Cup squad

Prasidh Krishna and Tilak Varma are the two players from the Asia Cup squad who missed the cut



KL Rahul

MUMBAI: KL Rahul has been included in India's ODI World Cup squad despite not having played any competitive cricket since May this year. Rahul, India's first-choice wicketkeeper-batter in the format, is currently preparing to fly out to Sri Lanka for the Super Four stage of the Asia Cup after passing a fitness assessment at the National Cricket Academy in Bengaluru on September 4, reported *ESPNCricinfo* on Tuesday.

Middle-order batter Tilak Varma and fast bowler Prasidh Krishna are the two players from the current squad of 17 in Sri Lanka to have missed out, along with Sanju Samson, who is a reserve player at the Asia Cup.

Ishan Kishan has retained his place as the other wicketkeeper-batter in the squad. Kishan underscored his utility by top-scoring with 82, his fourth successive ODI half-century, in India's rained-out Asia Cup opener against Pakistan in Pallekele on September 2.

Despite Kishan's form raising the possibility of him playing as a specialist middle-order batter,

the selectors also picked Suryakumar Yadav in the 15 - Suryakumar, a T20 giant, has middling ODI numbers, an average of 24.22 with two half-centuries in 24 innings, and has confessed to not quite being able to crack the 50-over game.

Rahul, who last played an ODI in March this year, tore a tendon in his right thigh during the IPL and had to undergo surgery in May. He was selected in the Asia Cup squad following extensive rehab at the NCA, but was then ruled out of the first two matches after picking up a fresh niggle.

"We had a couple of fitness issues that we had to look at, but all three [Rahul, Jasprit Bumrah and Shreyas Iyer], who had long-term injuries have come through," India's chief selector Ajit Agarkar said at a press conference.

"KL is looking good. We feel this gives us the best balance to try and do well. With KL, he was part of the camp in Bangalore, he looked really good there, and has got over his niggle. He played a couple of games over the last two days. I think he kept for 50 overs and batted for around 50 overs too, so he looks good and we're happy to have him."

Bumrah will lead the pace attack that includes Mohammed Siraj and Mohammed Shami, as well as fast-bowling allrounders Hardik Pandya and Shardul Thakur. Kuldeep Yadav is the frontline wrist-spinner, with Axar Patel and Ravindra Jadeja the left-arm spin-bowling allrounders. The squad doesn't

have a specialist off-spinner.

While the deadline to submit the World Cup squad to the ICC is September 5, teams can make changes until September 28 without needing approval from the ICC. This gives India three more ODIs against Australia after the Asia Cup to give players such as Rahul and Iyer more game time. India open their World Cup campaign on October 8, when they take on Australia in Chennai.

India's squad: Rohit Sharma (capt), Shubman Gill, Virat Kohli, Shreyas Iyer, KL Rahul (wk), Ishan Kishan (wk), Suryakumar Yadav, Hardik Pandya (vice-capt), Ravindra Jadeja, Axar Patel, Kuldeep Yadav, Shardul Thakur, Jasprit Bumrah, Mohammed Shami, Mohammed Siraj. - **Agencies**

ICC ODI WORLD CUP

Fit-again Maharaj makes it to South Africa's squad

JOHANNESBURG: Keshav Maharaj has completed a remarkable recovery from an Achilles' rupture sustained in March and has been included in South Africa's 15-player World Cup squad, which will be led by their regular ODI skipper Temba Bavuma.

Maharaj was expected to be sidelined for the rest of the year after sustaining the injury in a Test against West Indies but returned to action at the weekend, for South Africa's final ODI

against Australia and has been declared fit for the tournament.

Maharaj is one of two frontline spinners, alongside Tabraiz Shamsi. Aiden Markram provides a third spin option. All three players are making their World Cup debuts alongside five other first-timers: Temba Bavuma, Anrich Nortje, Marco Jansen, Sisanda Magala, and Reeza Hendricks.

A notable name in South Africa's World Cup mix is right-arm pacer Gerald Coetzee, who made



his international debut earlier this year. In his two ODIs appearances to date, Coetzee has taken five wickets, including a three-wicket haul on his ODI debut.

The pace attack will be spearheaded by Kagiso Rabada and includes the likes of Anrich Nortje and Lungi Ngidi among other fast-bowling talents.

De Kock to retire from ODIs after World Cup

South Africa opener Quinton de Kock has announced a sudden retirement from ODIs which will be effective after the upcoming World Cup in India in October-November.

De Kock's retirement was announced minutes after Cricket South Africa (CSA) named him in the World Cup squad of 15.

South Africa squad: Temba Bavuma (capt), Gerald Coetzee, Quinton de Kock, Reeza Hendricks, Marco Jansen, Heinrich Klaasen, Sisanda Magala, Keshav Maharaj, Aiden Markram, David Miller, Lungi Ngidi, Anrich Nortje, Kagiso Rabada, Tabraiz Shamsi, Rassie van der Dussen. - **Agencies**

FOOTBALL FRIENDLY

Oman take on Palestine

MUSCAT: The national football team will meet Palestine in a international friendly match at the Sultan Qaboos Sports Complex on Wednesday. The match kicks off at 6.45pm. Branko Ivankovic's Red Warriors will travel to USA on Friday for another international friendly match against the hosts USA in Minnesota on September 12.

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE FALLS

The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by November 2023 reaching \$89.21, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by 20 cents from the price of Monday, which was \$89.41. - **ONA**

MARKET BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,727.22 points, down by 0.64 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.35 per cent at 468.70 points. Oman Arab Bank, up 7.14 per cent, was the top gainer while Dhofar Cattle Feed, down 9.09 per cent, was the top loser.



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Oman's oil exports hit 178.9mn barrels



The total condensate production rose by 6.6 percent to reach 48,902,100 barrels

MUSCAT: The total quantities of Oman's crude oil exported as of the end of July 2023 stood at 178,956,300 barrels. The average oil price is calculated at \$80.5 per barrel. Oil production hit 223,544,500 barrels.

Data released by the National

Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI) showed that the total crude oil production dropped by 1.5 percent to reach 174,642,500 barrels. The total condensate production rose by 6.6 percent to reach 48,902,100 barrels. The average daily oil production hit

1,054,500 barrels as of the end of July 2023.

China topped the list of countries importing Oman's crude oil with 163,187,900 barrels, followed by Japan with 5,845,400 barrels, India with 2,716,200 barrels, followed by Korea with 1,951,600. Crude oil exports to other countries stood at 5,275,100 barrels.

Local production

The total local production and imports of natural gas stood at 30,914.5 million cubic metres at the end of July 2023, constituting a rise of 1.4 percent against

the 30,485.4 million cubic metres reported during the corresponding period in 2022. Natural gas usage by industrial projects stood at 18,102.1 million cubic metres.

Oilfields used 7,865.4 million cubic metres of natural gas whereas power generation plants used 4,794.6 million cubic metres of natural. Industrial estates used 152.5 million cubic metres of natural gas.

Production of non-associated natural gas including imports stood at 24,713.3 million cubic metres whereas production of associated gas stood at 6,201.2 million cubic metres. - **ONA**

RBI GOVERNOR

UPI has become backbone of digital payments in India

NEW DELHI: The Unified Payments Interface (UPI) has revolutionised India's digital payment ecosystem and played a pivotal role in driving financial inclusion by bringing millions of unbanked individuals into the formal financial system, said RBI Governor Shaktikanta Das.

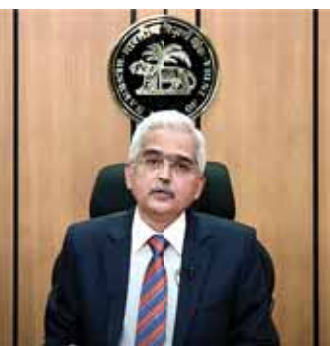
The RBI Governor was delivering the keynote address at the Grand Finale of the G20 Tech-Sprint 2023 here.

Das said, "A landmark example of our commitment to innovation is the UPI, which has been a game changer for India's digital payment ecosystem. It has helped to drive financial inclusion by bringing millions of unbanked individuals into the formal financial system".

Governor Das shared that in August 2023, the total number of transactions on the UPI platform exceeded an impressive 10 billion transactions, solidifying its position as the backbone of digital payments in India. He further noted that more than 70 mobile apps and over 50 million merchants across India now accept UPI payments.

In his address, Das commended India's thriving startup ecosystem, its vibrant talent pool, and the unwavering commitment to digital transformation. India, he emphasised, is focusing on leveraging technology to bridge gaps, empower individuals, and promote financial inclusion.

The RBI Governor said, "Tech-Sprint 2023 resonates profoundly with India's commitment to innovation. With its robust startup



ecosystem, vibrant talent pool and unwavering commitment to digital transformation, India is now focusing on the way technology can be harnessed to bridge gaps, empower individuals and promote financial inclusions".

Governor Das highlighted the rapid expansion of digital technologies in India over recent years, citing their transformative impact on the country's financial system. He noted that India's robust digital public infrastructure, including Aadhaar, affordable internet access, and widespread mobile phone services, has enabled more people, regardless of their location or social status, to access financial services.

"The past few years have seen rapid expansion of digital technologies in India having a transformative impact on our financial system. Today more and more people have access to financial services regardless of their location or social status weighing to the robust digital public infrastructure like Aadhaar, affordable internet and mobile phone services," said Das. - **ANI**

MINISTERIAL CONFERENCE

Abu Dhabi meet to provide an opportunity for boosting global food security: WTO

GENEVA: The WTO's 13th Ministerial Conference (MC13), to be held in Abu Dhabi in February 2024, will provide a unique opportunity to ensure that trade contributes to strengthening global food security, said Deputy Director-General Jean-Marie Paugam on 4 September.

Speaking at the International Conference on Agricultural Trade Policy in Beijing, Paugam noted MC13 can be a defining moment for a more food secure and sustainable future and urged WTO members to work together to overcome the stalemate in agriculture negotiations.

Unique opportunity

"When trade ministers meet next February at the WTO's ministerial conference in Abu Dhabi, they will have a unique opportunity to ensure that trade contributes to strengthening global food security. Abu Dhabi can be a defining moment for a more food secure and sustainable future.

"Trade can, and must, help us respond to the food security and sustainable development challenges we face, and the time is now," he said.

Climate disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, and economic downturns, he added, have undermined a decade of progress in combatting malnutrition in the world.

Climate disasters, the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, and economic downturns, said Deputy Director-General Jean-Marie Paugam, have undermined a decade of progress in combatting malnutrition in the world

The UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, led by Dr QU Dongyu, estimates that up to 783 million people faced hunger in 2022. And — despite historic progress in China — hunger is still on the rise throughout Africa, Western Asia and the Caribbean.

Nearly 600 million people are expected to face hunger by the 2030 target date for ending hunger and malnutrition from the Sustainable Development Goals.

This figure represents 119 million more people than would have been the case without the pandemic and the war in Ukraine, according to the FAO's latest SOFI report, on the State of Food Insecurity and Nutrition in the World. - **WAM**



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MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Oman Arab Bank, up 7.14 per cent, was the top gainer while Dhofar Cattle Feed, down 9.09 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,727.22 points, down by 0.64 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.35 per cent at 468.70 points. Oman Arab Bank, up 7.14 per cent, was the top gainer while Dhofar Cattle Feed, down 9.09 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 345 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR1.5 million, with more than 5.37 million shares changing hands. Out of 48 traded securities, 6 advanced, 26 declined, and 16 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for OMR319,000 while GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for OMR227,000, followed by foreign investors for OMR92,000

worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,758.00 points, up 0.25 per cent. Prices of Oman Arab Bank, National Bank Oman, Bank Muscat were up by 7.14 per cent, 0.68 per cent, 0.36 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Madina Investments, Oman United Insurance, Bank Dhofar, United Finance, Al Anwar Investment were up by 6.82 per cent, 3.57 per cent, 2.29 per cent, 1.70 per cent, 1.27 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,818.30 points, down 1.28 per cent. Prices of Gulf International Chemicals, Al Maha Ceramics were up by 4.11 per cent, 1.79 per cent respectively. Prices of Dhofar Cattle Feed, Construction Materials, Jazeera Steel Products, Al Anwar Ceramics, Oman Cables Industry were up by 9.09 per cent, 7.27 per cent, 5.66 per cent, 2.91 per cent, 1.05 per cent respectively. — **United Securities**

OMAN STOCKS

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INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,790.00	4,703.11	4,727.22	4,757.62	-30.40	-0.64
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,818.98	7,668.11	7,758.00	7,738.65	19.31	0.25
Industry Index	5,894.03	5,818.30	5,818.30	5,894.03	-75.74	-1.28
Services Index	1,651.46	1,636.24	1,636.24	1,651.46	-15.22	-0.92
MSX Shariah Index	470.33	468.70	468.70	470.33	-1.62	-0.35
MSX TR INDEX	6,306.61	6,192.21	6,223.96	6,263.98	-40.03	-0.64
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,531.95	8,367.32	8,465.40	8,444.33	21.07	0.25
SERVICES TR IDX	1,823.95	1,807.14	1,807.14	1,823.95	-16.81	-0.92
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,296.29	6,215.39	6,215.39	6,296.29	-80.91	-1.28

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
5,379,611	1,504,845	345	23,741,449,762	6	26	16	48

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 5

	ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RD)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
REGULAR MARKET																	
	OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	708	202	1	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.285	0.280	0.005	1.786	0.285	0.280	0.308	0.100	15,675,000
	OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	130,815	37,938	8	0.290	0.298	0.288	0.298	0.296	0.002	0.676	0.298	0.290	0.300	0.100	484,532,014
	OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	1,034,196	289,364	39	0.280	0.281	0.279	0.281	0.280	0.001	0.357	0.281	0.280	0.282	0.100	2,109,297,574
	OM0000003000	AI MAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MARKETING	3,220	3,259	3	1.012	1.012	1.012	1.012	0.000	0.000	0.000	1.012	0.000	1.012	0.100	69,828,000
	OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO	2,139	124	1	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.000	0.000	0.058	0.058	0.061	0.100	11,600,000
	OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	325,000	133,250	28	0.410	0.410	0.410	0.410	0.410	0.000	0.000	0.410	0.404	0.410	0.100	96,928,100
	OM0000003968	OOREDoo	175,934	67,546	15	0.383	0.385	0.382	0.385	0.385	0.000	0.000	0.385	0.383	0.384	0.100	250,613,529
	OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	40,000	2,733	5	0.069	0.069	0.068	0.068	0.068	0.000	0.000	0.068	0.068	0.070	0.100	13,575,221
	OM0000002226	ALAJAZEERA SERVICES	100	23	1	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.225	0.226	-0.001	-0.442	0.225	0.000	0.225	0.100	13,770,961
	OM0000001539	OMINVEST	45,048	17,574	5	0.390	0.398	0.390	0.398	0.400	-0.002	-0.500	0.398	0.390	0.398	0.100	266,008,440
	OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	44,821	4,706	2	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.106	-0.001	-0.943	0.105	0.105	0.106	0.100	15,750,000
	OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	464,632	48,653	15	0.106	0.106	0.104	0.105	0.106	-0.001	-0.943	0.105	0.104	0.108	0.100	574,128,293
	OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	16,043	1,364	9	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.086	-0.001	-1.163	0.085	0.085	0.088	0.100	14,875,000
	OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	69,963	89,946	15	1.001	1.002	1.000	1.001	1.017	-0.016	-1.573	1.002	1.001	1.009	0.100	750,750,000
	OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	70,000	4,060	3	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.059	-0.001	-1.695	0.058	0.056	0.058	0.100	20,655,383
	OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	103,856	17,759	2	0.171	0.171	0.171	0.171	0.175	-0.004	-2.286	0.171	0.171	0.175	0.100	512,376,096
	OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	25,800	5,163	11	0.201	0.204	0.200	0.200	0.206	-0.006	-2.913	0.200	0.200	0.210	0.100	44,000,000
	OM0000001087	OMAN UNITED INSURANCE	15,848	4,279	5	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.280	-0.010	-3.571	0.270	0.267	0.280	0.100	27,000,000
	OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	5,500	1,425	2	0.260	0.260	0.250	0.250	0.265	-0.015	-5.660	0.250	0.250	0.266	0.100	31,224,490
Total	19		2,593,523	729,367	170												
Parallel Market																	
	OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	452,532	65,422	7	0.140	0.150	0.140	0.150	0.140	0.010	7.143	0.150	0.140	0.144	0.100	250,411,500
	OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	100	8	1	0.078	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.073	0.003	4.110	0.076	0.069	0.076	0.100	1,596,000
	OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	2,250	203	1	0.960	0.990	0.960	0.990	0.990	0.000	0.000	0.990	0.990	0.993	0.100	7,650,000
	OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	100	12	1	0.123	0.123	0.123	0.123	0.123	0.000	0.000	0.123	0.123	0.123	0.100	3,690,000
	OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	150,100	26,269	8	0.175	0.192	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.000	0.000	0.175	0.175	0.182	0.100	41,190,057
	OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	4,463	3,981	2	0.892	0.892	0.892	0.892	0.892	0.000	0.000	0.892	0.892	0.900	0.100	84,740,000
	OM0000003281	TAMGER FINANCE	40,800	3,672	1	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.000	0.000	0.098	0.098	0.098	0.100	23,745,153
	OM0000003321	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	31,000	4,901	2	0.159	0.161	0.158	0.161	0.161	0.000	0.000	0.161	0.156	0.160	0.100	95,680,818
	OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	383,714	37,553	14	0.098	0.099	0.097	0.098	0.098	0.000	0.000	0.098	0.097	0.099	0.100	219,321,397
	OM0000008710	BANKA DESALINATION	59,500	7,601	6	0.125	0.128	0.125	0.128	0.128	0.000	0.000	0.128	0.128	0.130	0.100	9,666,816
	OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	151,575	44,339	30	0.294	0.294	0.292	0.293	0.294	-0.001	-0.340	0.293	0.292	0.293	0.100	225,668,600
	OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	27,000	6,022	7	0.224	0.224	0.223	0.223	0.224	-0.001	-0.446	0.223	0.221	0.223	0.100	10,305,773
	OM0000004148	RAYSUT CEMENT	200,400	30,130	13	0.151	0.151	0.150	0.150	0.151	-0.001	-0.662	0.150	0.150	0.159	0.100	30,000,000
	OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	600	1,172	3	1.900	1.979	1.900	1.979	2.000	-0.021	-1.050	1.979	1.870	1.960	0.100	17,516,300
	OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	221,850	17,302	14	0.079	0.079	0.077	0.078	0.079	-0.001	-1.266	0.078	0.077	0.077	0.100	16,068,000
	OM0000008609	THE PEARL REEF	2,000	240	1	0.151	0.150	0.149	0.150	0.150	-0.002	-1.839	0.150	0.150	0.000	0.100	50,972,425
	OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	7,218	657	7	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.093	-0.002	-2.151	0.091	0.091	0.098	0.100	14,155,086
	OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	105,500	10,122	9	0.096	0.096	0.095	0.095	0.098	-0.003	-3.061	0.095	0.090	0.096	0.100	90,684,331
	OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	5,582	348	2	0.064	0.064	0.062	0.062	0.064	-0.002	-3.125	0.062	0.061	0.064	0.100	90,681,235
	OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	107,001	2,569	7	0.025	0.025	0.024	0.024	0.025	-0.001	-4.000	0.024	0.024	0.025	0.100	17,145,782
	OM0000004947	OMAN REIT FUND	24,000	3,985	5	0.082	0.088	0.082	0.085	0.088	-0.003	-4.494	0.085	0.082	0.088	0.100	40,050,843
	OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	45,500	1,866	7	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.044	-0.003	-6.818	0.041	0.041	0.044	0.100	3,485,000
	OM0000001368	CONSTRUCTION MATERIAL INDUSTRIES	43,207	2,161	4	0.050	0.052	0.050	0.051	0.055	-0.004	-7.273	0.051	0.051	0.050	0.100	3,187,500
	OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	63,100	1,515	7	0.025	0.025	0.023	0.023	0.025	-0.002	-8.000	0.023	0.023	0.024	0.100	15,522,411
	OM0000001301	DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	11,000	860	3	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.066	-0.006	-9.091	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.100	11,860,615
Total	25		2,140,092	270,605	163												

KAMCO INVEST REPORT

GCC equity markets see first decline in three months

Times News Service

MUSCAT: GCC equity markets witnessed its first decline in three months taking cues from the worst monthly performance in global equity markets this year, according to a new report.

"Despite a second half recovery, the MSCI World index was down 3.6 percent during August-2023 after a hawkish Fed led to fears of higher for longer rates with some economists even pricing in another rate hike this year and the first cut deep into next year," Kamco Invest said in its Monthly GCC Market Report.

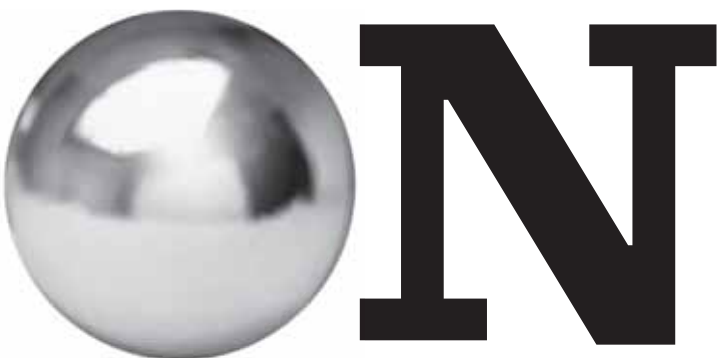
Weak data coming from China also affected sentiments across the board got exacerbated by the probability of a continued rate hike by the ECB in September-2023. China's economic activity continued to slide with manufacturing activity contracting for the fifth consecutive month as government reforms and new targeted policies are yet to have a meaningful impact on markets and sentiments, it added.



The MSCI GCC Index witnessed a slightly steeper decline of 3.8 percent during the month led by a fall in four out of seven exchanges, including in Saudi Arabia. The decline came despite oil seeing gains for the third consecutive month on supply cuts and steady demand data.

M

N



LIVE



SOURCE



ENERGY



DESIGN



SCIENTISTS



Read headline from bottom to top

WALES: Scientists have developed an energy source which could allow astronauts to live on the Moon for long periods of time.

The Nasa-led Artemis Program hopes for an outpost on the Moon by around 2030, BBC news reported.

Bangor University has designed nuclear fuel cells, the size of poppy seeds, to produce the energy needed to sustain life there.

Prof Simon Middleburgh from the university said the work was a challenge - "but it was a fun one".

The Moon, which is seen by some to be the gateway to Mars, contains a lot of valuable resources needed for modern technology.

The hope is that it could be used as a springboard to reach the planets beyond.

The Bangor team, which is a world leader on fuels, works with partners such as Rolls Royce, the UK Space Agency, Nasa and the Los Alamos National Laboratory in the US.

Prof Middleburgh from the Nuclear Futures Institute said the team hoped

to fully test the nuclear fuel "over the next few months".

On parts of the Moon, temperatures plummet to astonishing lows of -248C because it has no atmosphere to warm up the surface.

Bangor University is a major player in the quest to generate another way of producing energy and heat to sustain life there.

The researchers have just sent the tiny nuclear fuel cell, known as a Trisofuel, to their partners for testing.

This Trisofuel cell could be used to

power a micro nuclear generator, created by Rolls Royce.

The generator is a portable device, the size of a small car and "something you can stick on a rocket," Prof Middleburgh said.

That will now be fully tested and put through forces similar to being blasted up into space, ready for a Moon base in 2030.

He added: "You can launch them into space, with all the forces... and they'll still function quite safely when they're put onto the Moon." -**GNA**

SPORTS



Al Harthy all set for Japan debut

Omani star to race in round six of FIA World Endurance Championship at Fuji Speedway with his teammates, Michael Dinan and Charlie Eastwood

MUSCAT: Omani motorsports star Ahmad Al Harthy will make his debut in Japan when he competes in the six-hour race of the round six in the FIA World Endurance Championship (WEC) at the Fuji Speedway on September 10.

Returning after the summer break, Al Harthy and the Oman Racing with TF Sport squad of Michael Dinan and Charlie Eastwood, will be in action with the free practice sessions on September 8 ahead of qualifying the next day.

The track time during Friday and Saturday assumes significance for Al Harthy as this would be his debut at the spectacular track, situated in the foothills of Mount Fuji.

Al Harthy, a two-time GT World Challenge Europe Endurance Cup Pro-Am champion, is looking forward to racing at one of global motorsport's most exciting challenges around the 4.5-kilometre (2.8-mile) circuit.

Round six is the penultimate event of Al Harthy's maiden WEC campaign.

The trio are hoping to return to the podium battle in the Oman Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, OQ, Omantel and MHD-ITICS liveried No.25 Aston Martin Vantage GTE.

The trio finished third at Belgium's Spa-Francorchamps in April, and then a remarkable run-

ner-up place in the 24Hr Le Mans in France in June, a season-best finish.

The trio finished seventh in round five at Monza in July following disparity in top speed between the Aston Martin and the rival Porsche and Ferrari entries despite some excellent driving.

With hopes the Balance of Performance gradings will be on a par with those Oman Racing had to work with at Spa and Le Mans, Al Harthy is as focused and committed as ever to delivering his absolute best in Fuji, a 'bucket list' track for any international racing driver.

Going into the sixth event of the season Al Harthy and Oman Racing

are third in the respective championship standings.

Al Harthy said: "It's been a long break from action. I'm more excited than ever to be racing again at the weekend and especially with my first ever visit to Fuji. It's an incredible track, with so much history in global motorsport, and it really is going to be a privilege to race there in FIA WEC. Even though we've not been racing for the past two months, the team has been busy working hard behind the scenes.

"Monza was a disappointment with the speed differential we experienced, especially off the back of two incredible weekends at Spa

and Le Mans. We really are hoping to be able to battle on a level footing again with our main rivals at Fuji. With only two races to go in our first season in FIA WEC, it's a very important time as we try to push for a top three championship finish."

2023 FIA World Endurance Championship GTE Am Driver Standings:

- 3rd Ahmad Al Harthy / Michael Dinan / Charlie Eastwood, 65pts

2023 FIA World Endurance Championship GTE Am Team Standings:

- 3rd Oman Racing with TF Sport, 65pts

US OPEN: MEN'S EVENT

Zverev sinks Sinner to set up clash with Alcaraz



NEW YORK: Germany's Alexander Zverev came through the longest match of this year's US Open to beat sixth seed Jan-nik Sinner and reach the quarter-finals on Monday.

Zverev, seeded 12th, clinched a 6-4, 3-6, 6-2, 4-6, 6-4 win at 01:39 in New York and plays top seed Carlos Alcaraz next. The 2020 runner-up missed last year's hard-court Grand Slam event because of a serious ankle injury.

"This is one of the best moments of my career after the injury and the comeback," said Zverev.

Earlier, third seed Daniil Medvedev beat Australia's Alex de Minaur to set up a quarter-final with fellow Russian Andrey Rublev.

Eighth seed Rublev knocked out Britain's Jack Draper earlier on Monday before his close friend



Medvedev fought back to win 2-6, 6-4, 6-1, 6-2 against 13th seed De Minaur.

Zverev, 26, became the final man to book his place in the last eight, coming through a gripping contest against Italy's Sinner, which lasted four hours and 41 minutes.

"I guess I can say I'm back. This is what I live for," said Zverev.

Earlier on a humid night in New York, 2021 champion Medvedev came through in what he called "brutal" conditions.

"Some people are better with

the heat, some people worse. I feel like I'm not the best one in this case," said Medvedev.

Spain's Alcaraz continued his defence of the title by registering a 6-3, 6-3, 6-4 win over world No. 61 Arnaldi.

Alcaraz was formidable on Arthur Ashe Stadium, hitting 31 winners as he booked his spot in the quarter-finals with a win in one hour and 59 minutes. Alcaraz has now won 15 of his past 16 matches at the US Open and is a strong favourite to defend his title.

US OPEN: WOMEN'S EVENT

Jabeur, Pegula knocked out

NEW YORK: Third seed Jessica Pegula and Wimbledon finalist Ons Jabeur suffered frustrating defeats in the fourth round at the US Open on Monday.

American Pegula, who had been one of the favourites for the title, put in an error-strewn performance in a 6-1, 6-3 loss to compatriot Madison Keys.

Despite her success on the WTA Tour, the 29-year-old has yet to go beyond the quarter-finals at any Grand Slam.

Last year's runner-up Jabeur lost 6-2, 6-4 to China's Zheng Qinwen. Qinwen, 20, reached the first Grand Slam quarter-final of her career and will face Belarusian second seed Aryna Sabalenka next.

Sabalenka, a semi-finalist at Flushing Meadows in 2021 and 2022, won 6-1, 6-3 against Russian 13th seed Daria Kasatkina.

The Australian Open champion, 25, will become the new world No.1 at the end of the tournament following Iga Swiatek's exit in the last 16.

Jabeur was left heartbroken after losing a second Wimbledon final in July and has struggled with illness during her time in New York.



"No matter what the tournament is, you always take a great lesson," said 29-year-old Jabeur.

"I know that I can dig deep. Maybe I'm tough with myself today because I couldn't get that warrior mood on. It's just disappointing."

This marked Zheng's debut win against a top 10 player and her first time reaching the final eight of a Grand Slam event.

"Right now, I just feel super happy and excited to play in the

big stadium and had a really good performance today," said Zheng during her on-court interview at the Louis Armstrong Stadium after her win. "I love the name 'queen Wen'. Come on, it's queen," Zheng remarked when asked about her popular nickname.

Keys will now face Wimbledon champion Marketa Vondrousova, who had to fight back to see off spirited American Peyton Stearns 6-7 (3-7), 6-3, 6-2. - Agencies

SPAIN'S MEN TEAM

Spain football chief's behaviour 'unacceptable'

MADRID: Spain's men's players have condemned the "unacceptable behaviour" of federation president Luis Rubiales.

Rubiales, 46, has been widely criticised after he kissed player Jenni Hermoso on the lips following Spain's Women's World Cup final win last month.

Rubiales has repeatedly refused to resign over the kiss, which Hermoso said was not consensual.

The men's side have expressed their "regret and solidarity with the players whose success has been tarnished".

"We want to reject what we consider unacceptable behaviour on the part of Mr Rubiales, who has not lived up to the institution he represents," said forward Alvaro Morata in a statement on behalf of the Spain squad.

"We firmly and unequivocally stand on the side of the values that this sport represents.

"Spanish football must be a driv-



ing force for respect, inclusion, and diversity and must set an example with its behaviour both on and off the field."

Luis de la Fuente, head coach of the men's team, last week asked for "forgiveness" after initially applauding a speech in which Rubiales said he would not resign.

De la Fuente added he would not step down from his job.

After Spain's 1-0 victory over England at Sydney's Stadium Australia on 20 August, Rubiales also grabbed his crotch while celebrating in the VIP area, with Queen Letizia of Spain and her 16-year-old daughter standing nearby.

He has been provisionally suspended by world governing body FIFA and Spain's national sports tribunal (TAD) has opened a mis-

conduct case against him.

On 1 September, Rubiales acknowledged he had "made mistakes" but repeated his belief that the kiss was consensual.

He added: "I will continue to defend myself to prove the truth."

After calling a press conference, Morata read out the statement alongside fellow senior players Marco Asensio, Cesar Azpilicueta and Rodri.

"We want to convey, once again, our pride and heartfelt congratulations to the women's national team for winning the World Cup in Sydney," he said.

"It's a historic milestone filled with significance that will mark a before and after in Spanish women's football, inspiring countless women with an invaluable triumph.

"Therefore, we want to express our regret and solidarity with the players whose success has been tarnished." - Agencies

SEASON-LONG DEAL

Defender Ramos returns to Sevilla after 18 years

SEVILLE: Spanish defender Sergio Ramos has made a return to Sevilla after 18 long years, signing a season-long deal with the club.

"Sevilla FC and Sergio Ramos have reached an agreement for his incorporation into the Sevilla squad. This is the return of the youth centre back, who returns home almost two decades after leaving, at just 19 years old, for Real Madrid," said a statement from the club issued on Monday.

Ramos represented Sevilla at youth level (1996-2003), reserve team (2003-04) and then the main team (2004-05). He made 39 appearances for the senior side, scoring two goals.

Following this, he signed with Spanish giants Real Madrid in 2005 and had a glorious 16-year run in the club. He scored 72 goals for the club in 469 appearances. He won five La Liga titles,



two Copa Del Rey titles, four Spanish Super Cup titles with the club at the domestic level. He also captured Europe's top prize, the UEFA Champions League, four times with Real Madrid. Three UEFA Super Cup titles and four FIFA Club World Cup titles are among his other accomplishments with the club that made him a legend.

Ramos signed with Paris Saint Germain in 2021. He won two Ligue 1 titles with the club. - ANI

Bank Muscat announces winners of Green Sports programme for 2023



This year too, the winning teams will benefit from the bank’s support in providing natural as well as artificial turf for football pitches, lighting systems and water desalination equipment

MUSCAT: Green Sports Programme, one of Bank Muscat’s leading Corporate Social Responsibility programmes, continues to record positive achievements in the field of supporting the sports and youth sector.

Bank Muscat announced the names of the 20 winning teams for this year’s 12th edition of Green Sports. Since its inception in 2012, the programme has so far benefited 183 teams with over 50,000 members across the Sultanate of Oman. This year too, the winning teams will benefit from the bank’s support in providing natural as well as artificial turf for football pitches, lighting systems and water desalination equipment.

Twenty winners from different Governorates across the Sultanate will benefit from the bank’s flagship CSR programme this year. The winners include: Suwaiq Sports Team from Suwaiq, Al Marsa Sports and Cultural Team from Sohar, al Tawun Sports and Cultural Team from Saham, Al Tadamon Sports and Cultural Team from Jalan Bani Bu Hassan, Al Wahra Sports and Cultural Team from Ibri, Al Shubaika Sports and Cultural Team from Al Rustaq, Al Falaj Sports and Cultural Team from Al Khaboora, Al Samoud Sports and Cultural Team from Bidiya, Itihadlmti Sports and Cultural Team from Izki, Al-Baz Sports Team

from Samail, Al Hazm Sports Team from Bahla, Blida Sports and Cultural Team from Shinas and Al Shati Sports Team from Al Musanaah for Lighting System. In addition, Al Itihadalharbi Sports team from Jalan Bani Bu Ali, Al Sadd Cultural and Sports Team from Wadi Bani Khalid, Al Ettifaq Sports Team from Quriyat, Wadi Al-Tayyeen Sports and Cultural Team from Dema w al taen, Al Raheeb Sports Team from Sur, Kamazar Sport Team from Khasab and Hayy Sports Team from Mahoot who shall receive support for artificial or natural turf.

Spread of green spaces

On this occasion, Talib Saif Al Makhmari, Manager, Community & Media Relations, Bank Muscat, said: “Since its inception, Green Sports programme contributed immensely to the development of sports facilities for a number of local sports teams across Oman, thereby contributing to the spread of green spaces in these governorates.

“Bank Muscat is keen to continue developing such programmes to further enhance the positive

results achieved especially to the younger generation. I would like to congratulate all the winners for this year’s edition and we wish them all the best.”

The programme annually receives excellent participation by sports teams from across the Sultanate. This year, 124 teams have competed, thereby asserting the program’s success and popularity among Omani youth.

The bank ensures to strengthen cooperation and partnership with local sports teams through this leading programme and to work closely with the teams throughout the different stages of the project.

The Green Sports programme reaffirms the bank’s commitment to providing ample opportunities for young Omanis to develop their talents. It goes a long way in developing the sporting skills and talents of Omani youth, thereby leading to all-round development of the sport. It is worth mentioning that the football fields developed as part of the Green Sports programme serve as a gathering venue for social activities for children and youth.



COFFEE

Nespresso reveals exclusive new coffee variety N°20, a taste innovation 20 years in making

MUSCAT: Nespresso has announced the launch of N°20, a new and bespoke coffee cultivated exclusively for its superlative taste to surprise and delight coffee drinkers and the culmination of 20 years of research and dedication.

Born of a dream to create the ultimate cup of coffee in response to consumers’ increasingly discerning palates and penchant for rare and high-quality varieties, Nespresso’s coffee team began by identifying the finest Arabicas from its Coffee Collection Catalogue.

Since 2003, Nespresso’s coffee masters have worked tirelessly to create this high-quality Arabica coffee plant and identify the ideal terroir in which the new variety would flourish.

The result is a coffee which boasts an exquisite taste profile, featuring enticing orange blossom aromas and fresh citrus notes. N°20 is Q certified by the Coffee Quality Institute, an independent non-profit organisation that designates high standards of quality in the coffee industry.

A decades-long quest for perfection

Taking inspiration from generations of farmers who have traditionally cross-planted coffee varieties to create more resilient plants,

Nespresso’s experts decided to use this common practice in their quest for taste perfection. Once they settled on a combination which yielded this high-quality taste, the team set about looking for the ideal environment to plant the variety.

After experimental plantings in Colombia, Nicaragua and Indonesia, N°20 was eventually found to thrive best in the soil of the Cauca and Caldas regions of Colombia. There, the coffee was grown by just 59 farmers who collectively planted and cared for one million coffee trees of this new and unique Arabica variety.

In keeping with Nespresso’s commitment to making coffee a force for good, the 59 farmers who cultivated the new variety are all part of the Nespresso AAA Program and were consequently paid a premium as a reward for their investment in sustainable high quality.

Guillaume Le Cunff, CEO of Nespresso, said: “N°20 is the embodiment of Nespresso’s values: an obsession with perfection and a determination to innovate. Twenty years of dedication has resulted in an exquisite taste unlike anything that coffee-lovers have tried before. I’m thrilled to be able to share this labour of love with people – its quality is a true testament to what decades of passion can produce!”



Nespresso Riedel glasses have been crafted for coffee tasting.

Karsten Ranitzsch, Head of Coffee at Nespresso, said: “They say good things are worth waiting for, and that’s certainly true when it comes to N°20. Notes of orange blossom, accompanied by rich flowery and fruity aromatics and a bright, citric acidity combine to create a coffee with a rare, elegant and subtle personality. Developed with

creating the perfect taste front of mind, N°20 is guaranteed to delight even the most discerning drinker.”

N°20 is a seasonal coffee, meaning that coffee lovers can enjoy its elegant and aromatic profile for a limited amount of time each year. To fully enjoy its rare and refined taste, Nespresso recommends that the subtle flavours of N°20 be best

enjoyed as an espresso.

As it is a limited edition with a limited volume, it will initially launch in Nespresso Original capsules in 2023, before becoming available in Vertuo capsules next year.

Nestlé Nespresso SA is the pioneer and reference for highest-quality portioned coffee. The company works with more than

140,000 farmers in 18 countries through its AAA Sustainable Quality™ Program to embed sustainability practices on farms and the surrounding landscapes. Launched in 2003 in collaboration with the NGO Rainforest Alliance, the program helps to improve the yield and quality of harvests, ensuring a sustainable supply of high-quality coffee and improving livelihoods of farmers and their communities.

In 2022, Nespresso achieved B Corp certification - joining an international movement of 4,900 purpose-led businesses that meet B Corp’s high standards of social and environmental responsibility and transparency.

Headquartered in Vevey, Switzerland, Nespresso operates in 81 countries and has over 13’000 employees. In 2021, it operated a global retail network of 802 boutiques. For more information, visit the Nespresso corporate website: www.nestle-nespresso.com.

CQI is a non-profit organization working internationally to improve the quality of coffee and the lives of people who produce it. CQI is also the only third-party green coffee quality verification and certification in speciality and fine coffee that is globally recognised. More info can be found here: www.coffeeinstitute.org

ROUND-UP

Diamonds as perfect gift now emerges as ideal investment choice

Industry first initiative by Malabar Gold & Diamonds protecting the interests of the customer reaffirms the brand’s customer centric approach

MUSCAT: Spending vs. saving has always been a dilemma for customers when it comes to buying jewellery. For years now, gold jewellery was the only article that served both as a value-appreciating adornment and a reliable investment. Even though diamond jewellery remained as attractive as ever, questions about its exchange value held customers back from considering it a reliable investment. That has all changed with the new policy introduction from Malabar Gold & Diamonds, one of the world’s leading jewellery retailers that gives customers 100% value on diamond exchange. Now, customers wishing to exchange their diamond jewellery for either gold or diamond jewellery can do so at full value of diamonds, without any loss, making it as lucrative an investment option as gold. “Diamond jewellery has always been aspirational. Over the years, there has been an increasing preference for diamond jewellery as a gift, especially amongst Gen Z and Millennial customers. However, the one thing that was always a concern regarding diamond jewellery was its value as an investment compared to gold jewellery. Providing 100% value for diamond jewellery, upon exchange, is our way of negating these concerns to make diamond jewellery the perfect gift as well as a reliable investment that holds value,” said



Shamlal Ahamed, Managing Director – International Operations, Malabar Gold & Diamonds. “We want to revolutionise the diamond jewellery retail, taking into consideration the concerns we identified during the research conducted on jewellery lovers and

their resistance to buying diamond jewellery. Giving new meaning to the phrase, “A Diamond is Forever”, this policy change was crafted to protect the value of the diamond jewellery among the new era of jewellery lovers. Ever since our inception in 1993, Malabar Gold &

Diamonds has always been at the forefront of introducing customer-centric and transparent policies aimed at protecting customer interests and this new policy on diamonds further testifies this,” commented Abdul Salam KP, Vice Chairman, Malabar Group.

The new policy comes in addition to the unique and customer centric policies named ‘Malabar Promises’ offering customers complete peace of mind with initiatives like transparent price tag indicating gold weight, stone weight, net weight and stone charges of the respective jew-

ellery, tested and certified diamonds ensuring 28-point quality check of global standards, guaranteed buy-back, 100% value on gold exchange, 100% 916 hallmarked jewellery, assured lifetime maintenance, ethical and responsible sourcing, fair price policy & fair labour practices.

HOLISTIC APPROACH

The missing piece of the puzzle: Hydrogen will complement sustainable mobility in the Middle East

Dr. Hamid Haqqparwar,
Managing Director,
BMW Group Middle East

MUSCAT: The world is at a crossroads. At the precipice of a climate-affected future, it is imperative to determine the way forward with responsible and sustainable choices. The Paris Agreement was a significant milestone in the fight against climate change, yet only one aspect of the collective action required to address this global challenge.

A crucial part of the narrative in creating a climate viable world lies in creating emission-free mobility, and the journey might be closer than we think. As the world shifts towards alternative energy sources, hydrogen-powered cars hold immense promise for transforming our mobility landscape and creating a sustainable future, and our region is poised to become a prominent driver in this transformative change.

When it comes to emission-free mobility, hydrogen is a key missing piece in the puzzle. As a clean and efficient energy carrier, hydrogen can be produced using renewable sources, such as wind and solar



power, ensuring a sustainable production cycle and a reduction of emissions. The International Energy Agency (IEA) has recognised the significant potential of hydrogen as an energy source for the future, particularly in the context of global activities geared toward the energy transition. We can forge ahead by embracing the infinite possibilities of hydrogen. As the lightest chemical element in the universe, hydrogen has the unique ability to help us overcome our dependency on finite natural resources, paving the



way for a more sustainable future. In order to release energy, hydrogen is combined in the fuel cell with oxygen and turned into water vapor with the help of a catalyst. Fuel-cell electric vehicle technology thus has the potential to play a significant role in decarbonising the mobility sector. From the sands of Middle East, a green revolution is set to rise. In the region, we are uniquely and strategically positioned to lead the global green hydrogen market, replete as we are with abundant renewable resources, geographical

convenience and major ongoing infrastructure investments. With more than 50 green hydrogen projects in the region, as stated by a MEED report in November 2022, places the region at the forefront of achieving net-zero carbon emissions by 2050, putting regional and global climate goals in forward drive. Even as the region is taking proactive steps to diversify its energy portfolio and embrace sustainable solutions, forward-thinking automotive companies are leading the charge towards a hydrogen revolution.

Conscious of our role in society, we have been pioneering emission-free technologies for over four decades at the BMW Group, treading a clear path to become climate neutral by 2050. As a strong advocate of circular economy principles, part of which comprise resource efficiency and waste reduction, we’re seeking to reinforce our commitment to sustainability through the cutting-edge BMW iX5 Hydrogen, which offers outstanding long-distance capabilities, rapid refuelling times and zero tailpipe emissions — truly revolutionising our approach to mobility. This aligns perfectly with the Middle East’s commitment to improving air quality and mitigating the impact of transportation on the urban environment.

Hydrogen, when used as an energy carrier, presents other remarkable advantages. It can be stored and transported efficiently, making it a flexible, reliable energy solution and creating a virtuous cycle of sustainable energy production and consumption. As we embark on a new era of mobility, we must adapt and evolve. By lining up fuel-cell-powered electric vehicles (FCEVs)

alongside battery electric vehicles (BEVs) for the future, BMW Group is helping bridge the gap between conventional and sustainable transportation options. To make feasible the adoption of hydrogen as a viable and sustainable fuel option for passenger vehicles, we are currently evaluating the possibility of mass production of hydrogen-powered vehicles in the second half of this decade. As we look down the road, the future of mobility in the MENA region appears bright, aligning with its renewable energy potential and with hydrogen fuel cell technology poised to play a pivotal role in achieving a cleaner, greener and more sustainable world. By focusing on the potential of hydrogen as a sustainable energy source, companies like BMW Group are not only paving the way for transportation options but also promoting a holistic approach to conservation. Driving this vision of an environmentally responsible future will ensure that our roads are filled with vehicles that not only exemplify advanced technology but also contribute to a healthier planet for generations to come.





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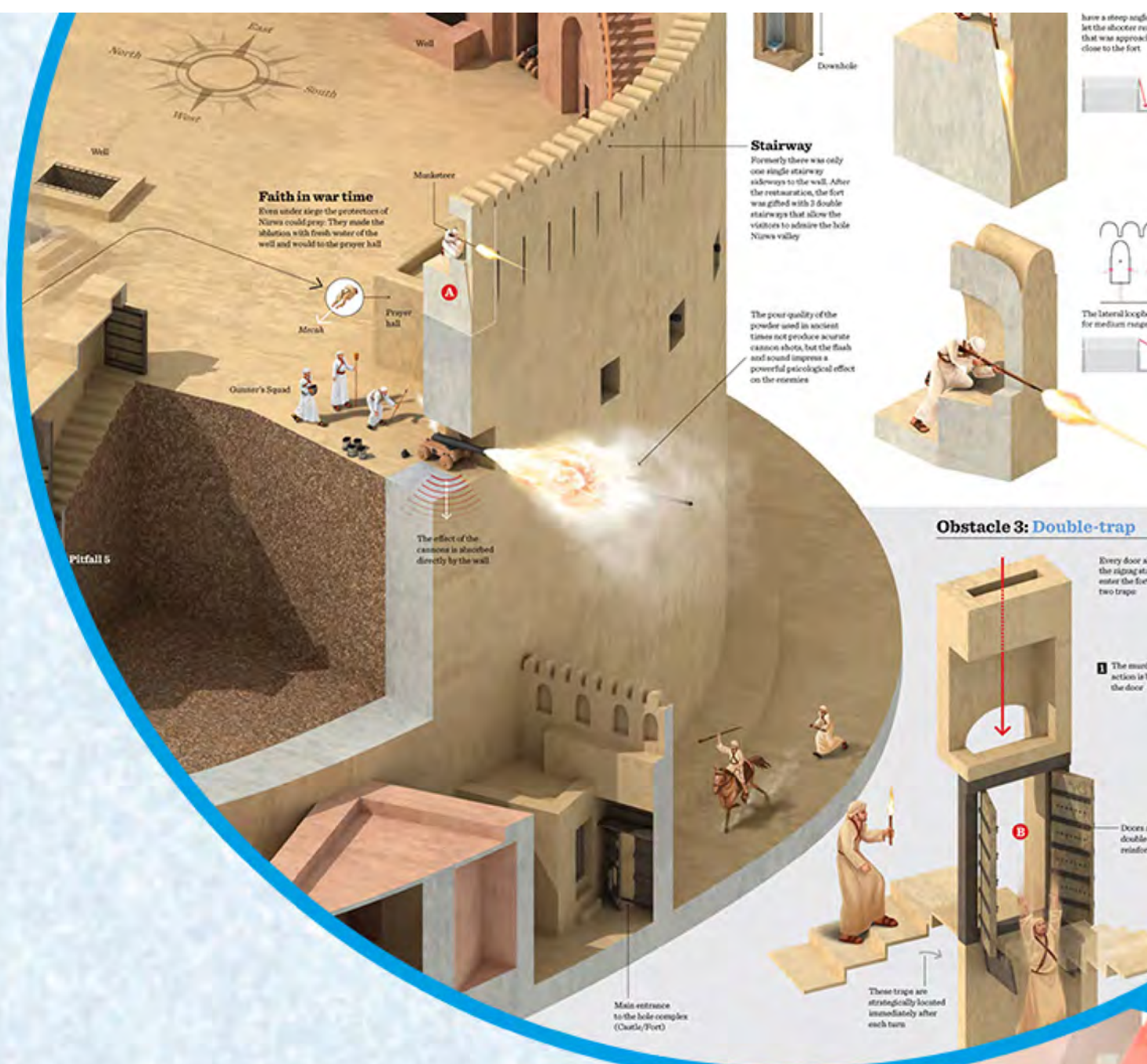
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