



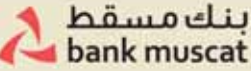
OVER 5,000 VISIT ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES IN AL DAKHLIYAH

More than 5,000 people visited the archaeological sites of Bisya and Salut in the Wilayat of Bahla, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, affiliated with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, during February-December 2023. The Bisya and Salut archaeological site works in the field of scientific research, to complement the efforts of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism. **>A4**



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CABLE

His Majesty the Sultan greets Emir of Kuwait



MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq has sent a cable of congratulations to Sheikh Mishal Al Ahmad Al Jaber Al Sabah, Emir of the State of Kuwait, on the occasion of being sworn in, taking the constitutional oath and assuming the reins of power in the State of Kuwait.

In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his sin-

cere congratulations to Sheikh Mishal, wishing him success in leading the Kuwaiti people to achieve further progress and prosperity.

His Majesty stressed the depth of fraternal relations that bind the two countries and endeavour to consolidate the bonds in a manner that serves the common interests of Oman and Kuwait people. **-ONA**

Kuwait Emir pledges to be 'loyal citizen' for nation and people

KUWAIT: His Highness the Emir Sheikh Mishal Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah yesterday pledged to be a 'loyal citizen' for his nation and people, keen on the interest of the nation, keen on national unity, as well as development, progress and prosperity," His Highness the Emir said in a speech before the parliament after taking the constitutional oath as the 17th ruler of the State of Kuwait.

"Today I have become head of the state and I pledge to the Kuwaiti people through you to be a loyal citizen for this nation and people, keen on the interest of the nation, keen on national unity, as well as development, progress and prosperity," His Highness the Emir said in a speech before the parliament after taking the constitutional oath as the 17th ruler of the State of Kuwait.

"The task is heavy and the oath is great," he added.

His Highness the Emir said

that he was keen on compliance with the constitution and application of law on all and fighting corruption. He also asserted Kuwait's commitment to its Gulf and international obligations.

His Highness the Emir said that executive and legislative authorities have obligations to meet for the nation and citizens, and not to take decisions that would be harmful to the nation, citing unfair appointments, naturalisation which "change Kuwait identity", the amnesty file "and its consequences" and rehabilitation file that were "harmful to our nation, and an evidence of the harm of interest of the nation

He also paid tribute to the late Emir Sheikh Nawaf Al-Ahmad Al-Jaber Al-Sabah who contributed to the development and prosperity of Kuwait. **-Kuna**

BUDGET DRAFT AIMS TO BOOST FISCAL HEALTH, CREDIT RATING

State Council reviewed draft budget to achieve 10th five -year plan and Oman Vision 2040 objectives

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The State Council discussed the report of the expanded economic and financial committee on the draft general budget of the state for the fiscal year 2024 before referring to the Council of Ministers with the recommendations of the State Council and Majlis Al Shura.

During the meeting, State Council Chairman Sheikh



Abdulmalik bin Abdullah Al Khalili, said: "The discussion on draft budget is held under the wise vision of His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tariq for achieving the economic and social objectives of Oman Vision 2040 and the national programmes for enhancement of the financial performance to achieve fiscal sustainability and mitigation of its im-

pacts on the national economy, besides raising the credit rating."

Dr. Dhafir bin Awadh Al Shanfari, Chairman of the Economic and Financial Committee of the State Council, delivered the statement of the expanded economic and financial committee on the draft general budget of the state for the fiscal year 2024.

He pointed out that in reviewing the draft budget, the committee has relied on the methodology established in the State Council while taking into account the remarks/observations of the members and incorporated in the report. He said that the committee has accorded due and utmost care to the remarks and views of the members.

Macro-economic policies

He said that the expanded economic and financial committee stressed the significance of the draft budget within the framework of the macro-economic policies, the objectives of the 10th five -year plan, Oman Vision 2040 and submitted the detailed recommendations within the six pillars of the report reviewed in the session.

The meeting was held during the second session of the first annual convening of the 8th term yesterday in the presence of the Secretary General of the State Council and its members. **-ONA**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN Sayyid Badr, Iran minister hold talks

1 Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, has received a phone call from Dr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The telephonic conversation dealt with developments taking place in the Gaza Strip. **>A2**



WORLD Humanitarian crisis worsens in Gaza

2 In more than two months of devastating bombardment by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF), the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip has deteriorated sharply. Israeli airstrikes have devastated most of the territory's infrastructure and resulted in widespread hunger. **>A7**

MARKET Oman and Austria explore cooperation

3 Dr. Said Mohammed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy, received Dr. Martin Koher, Federal Minister of Labour and Economy of Austria and his accompanying delegation. During the meeting, the two sides discussed means of boosting mutual cooperation and relations. **>B1**

TOURISM

Turkiye's tourist hurdle: Steep visa fee hike dampens holiday spirits of people in Oman



Times News Service

MUSCAT: In the midst of the festive season and the much-anticipated Christmas break, the hearts of residents in Oman are set on planning their holiday getaways to embrace the spirit of celebration and welcome the New Year.

However, a shadow looms over the excitement, especially for those eyeing Türkiye as their destination of choice.

Turkiye has long been a popular attraction for people in Oman seeking a memorable holiday ex-

perience. However, recent developments in visa regulations have cast a pall over these aspirations. Travelers intending to explore the beauty of Türkiye have encountered an unexpected hurdle: exorbitant visa fees.

For those ineligible for the convenient online visa application, the process demands a physical submission at the Turkish Visa Centre in Al Khuwair. The shock sets in when faced with the price tag: A staggering OMR76 per person for a single entry visa.



This revelation has forced many potential travelers, like R. Banerjee, a senior marketing executive with dreams of a winter vacation with his family of four, to reconsider their plans. The prospect of shelling out OMR304 merely for visas is a daunting deterrent.

"It's disheartening to shell out OMR76 for each entry visa," Banerjee lamented. "Türkiye has always been an enticing tourist destination, and I had envisioned

spending Christmas and New Year in Istanbul. The unexpectedly high visa fees have shattered these plans. Such steep costs don't bode well for promoting tourism."

The sentiment resonates among travellers like Mohammed Ashfaq, who recently returned from a captivating week in Istanbul. "Türkiye truly shines as a tourist hotspot, especially this time of the year," he remarked. "However, the steep visa fees, particularly for families, are prohibitive. While my company covered my expenses, taking my

family on a similar trip seems implausible due to the high costs."

Ashfaq's sentiment underscores a broader concern: the stifling effect of these fees on tourism promotion in Turkey. Even tour operators acknowledge the hindrance posed by these exorbitant visa fees in positioning Türkiye as an attractive destination with a senior official, speaking on condition of anonymity, confirming that the steep visa fees has hit them.

A leading Muscat-based travel operator highlighted the marked

decline in bookings for Türkiye since the alterations in visa fee structures earlier in the year.

This shift has notably affected Indian expats due to the intricate and expensive process of obtaining visas for those without specific other visas, dampening enthusiasm for tours to Istanbul.

Further exacerbating the issue are concerns echoed by hotel operators in Istanbul.

They fear that these high visa fees send the wrong message about Türkiye, a country boasting world-renowned landmarks like the Hagia Sophia and the Blue Mosque. This sentiment reflects a growing consensus: the steep visa costs act as a substantial barrier to promoting Türkiye as a tourist-friendly haven.

In the face of these challenges, stakeholders—be it travelers, airline officials, or hotel operators—unanimously agree: the exorbitant visa fees pose a formidable obstacle to positioning Türkiye as an accessible and inviting destination, potentially dimming the allure of its tourism industry, especially during festive seasons.

OMAN

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Asr.....3:10pm

Maghrib.....5:30pm

Isha.....6:46pm

Fajr (Tomorrow).....5:24am

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Tender Number	Tender Name	Deadline for Specifications Request	Deadline for tender bids	Tender Price
22/2023	Supply of Laptops and Microsoft Surface Pro with Accessories	26 Dec 2023	09 Jan 2024	33,500 OMR

Interested companies registered with Tender Board may obtain Tender document from the E-Tendering website: <http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>. The Vendors must provide electronic proposal valid for (120) days and addressed to Social Protection Fund on mentioned website.

CORRESPONDANCE:

1. Tender inquiry : All correspondence pertaining to the TENDER Inquiry must be online at eTendering system (<http://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>)

2. E-Tendering system inquiry: All correspondence pertaining to the e-tendering system technical support must be directed to the following helpdesk email address and phone number:
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CDAA

Fire doused

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Civil Defence and Ambulance Authority (CDAA) has put out a fire that broke out in a truck in the Wilayat of Mudhaibi, North Al Sharqiyah Governorate. No injuries were reported in the incident. The CDAA said that firefighting teams of the department in North Al Sharqiyah were able to extinguish a fire that broke out in a truck in Mudhaibi.

PHONE CALL

Sayyid Badr discusses Gaza with Iranian counterpart

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, has received a phone call from Dr. Hossein Amir-Abdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran. The telephonic conversation dealt with developments taking place in the Gaza Strip, the efforts made to end escalation and the brutal Israeli aggression. It also reiterated the firm Omani-Iranian position of solidarity with the Palestinian people, in their strive to gain all their legitimate rights and achieve a just and comprehensive peace. -ONA

NATIONAL UNIVERSITY

166 doctors receive white coats

SOHAR: The National University of Science and Technology represented by the College of Medicine and Health Sciences in Sohar, organised yesterday the annual ceremony of wearing the white coat for a batch of 166 doctors. Dr. Said bin Hareb Al Lamki, Undersecretary for Health Affairs at the Ministry of Health presided over the ceremony in the presence of a number of officials. Dr. Salim bin Khamis Al Arai-mi, Deputy to Vice Chancellor of the University for Academic Affairs and Research gave a speech in which he pointed to the role of the Ministry of Higher Education, and Innovation, the Ministry of Health and all government sectors in the development of graduates of the University and its mission in the medical field. Professor Mohammed bin Ali Al Shafee, Dean of the College of Medicine and Health Sciences said that the 18th edition of the annual ceremony is a scientific tradition and a symbol of the start of the clinical training. The ceremony included a video presentation on the stages of training in health establishments besides honouring the health establishments and doctors. -ONA

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AL WUSTA

Three expats arrested, four boats seized

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Four unlicensed fishing vessels were seized and three expats were arrested for illegal fishing in Al Wusta Governorate. "The Fisheries Control Department, while inspecting fishing vessels at the fishing port in the Wilayat of Duqm on Monday, December 20, 2023, seized fishing vessels without having licences or number on either side of the boat. "Three expatriate workers were also detained at the Duqm Police Station," the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Water Resources (MAFWR), said in a statement.



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OCCI INITIATIVE

Forum explores role of youth in entrepreneurship, innovation

MUSCAT: Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) yesterday organised an event titled “Youth Enterprise Forum” that focused on means of enhancing and supporting the role of youth in entrepreneurship and innovation.

The forum reviewed the challenges facing entrepreneurial projects in terms of strategic approaches set out by the OCCI to

improve the business climate in Oman and expand the base of economic diversification in line with Oman Vision 2040.

The forum envisaged ways of providing opportunities for young entrepreneurs and innovators to utilise their energies and innovations in supporting the national economy.

The forum introduced a number

of youth projects and presented working papers that highlighted the role of exceptional leadership, performance indicators, human resources planning and means of building commercial identity and developing companies.

An exhibition held on the sidelines of the forum provided further exposure about youth projects and enterprises. -ONA



WORKSHOP

Ways to promote circular economy in Oman discussed



SEEB: A workshop organised by the Environment Authority in partnership with a number of government and private institutions discussed on Wednesday the reality of the circular economy in the Sultanate of Oman and its impact on various development sectors, and the role of entities in achieving a sustainable circular economy.

In addition it also discussed developing a road map and identifying ways of cooperation to support and promote circular economy industries.

Dr. Mohammed Saif Al Kalbani, Director General of Environmental Affairs at the EA, gave a speech in which he said: “The Sultanate of Oman has paid attention to protecting the environment and preserving its natural resources, as they are one of the basic pillars of the comprehensive

development in its various stages, and this has culminated in making the sustainable environment part of Oman Vision 2040.”

The event included the presentation of a short film on the circular economy prepared by the United Nations Environment Programme, in addition to holding two working sessions, the first on ‘Promoting Sustainable Practices’, in which four working papers were presented that addressed: the circular economy roadmap in the Sultanate of Oman, and the role of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Investment Promotion in the development of industries based on the circular economy, the efforts of the EA to support the transition to the circular economy, and the circular economy complex in Sohar Port and the free zone.

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WILAYAT OF BAHLA

More than 5,000 people visit ancient sites in Al Dakhiliyah Governorate



MUSCAT: The number of visitors to the archaeological sites of Bisya and Salut in the Wilayat of Bahla, Al Dakhiliyah Governorate, affiliated with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, reached more than 5,000 of all ages during the period February-December 2023.

Ahmed bin Mohammed Al Tamimi, Director of the Bisya and Salut Archaeological Site Department at the Ministry of Tourism and Heritage, said: “The Bisya and Salut Archaeological Site is a continuous extension of the diverse cultural heritage in architectural forms, towers, wells, ground cemeteries, marine cemeteries, and rock inscriptions, adding that the site aims to attract and introduce visitors to the historical dimension. It includes three main halls, represented by the Bronze Age Hall, the Iron Age Hall, and the World Heritage Sites Section. These sections contain 344 different artifacts, which were chosen to support the scientific texts in the exhibition hall lists.



These pieces represent the different time periods of human settlement in the region, and highlight the size and nature of economic activities based on agriculture, trade, and mining. These exhibits also vary between tools, stone utensils, pottery, seals, and bronze artifacts.

Al Tamimi stated that the department at the Bisya and Salut archaeological site works in the field of scientific research, to complement the efforts of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism

in surveying, scientific documentation, and periodic follow-up of archaeological sites, adding that the center supervises archaeological missions and provides support to researchers and those interested in the fields of history and archaeology.

Al Tamimi stated that the center’s outdoor spaces allow exhibitions for small and medium enterprises, exhibitions of productive families, plastic arts, and hosting sporting events and various evening parties.



SOUTH AL BATINAH

Construction work at walkway project in Wadi Al Ma’awil begins

WADI AL MA’AWIL: The construction work of the walkway project of the Sheikh’s Room at Afi Village in the Wilayat of Wadi Al Ma’awil, South Al Batinah Governorate kicked off on Wednesday. This project is being developed in partnership with the Office of the Governor of South Al Batinah, the Municipality of South Al Batinah, businessmen and citizens supporting the project in the Wilayat of Wadi Al Ma’awil.

The project, coming up at an estimated cost of OMR46,500 is spread over an area is 1,250 square metres approximately and is expected to be completed by the end of April 2024.

The project links three historic heritage sites/landmarks in the wilayat, which are the Sheikh’s Room Neighbourhood, Al Safalah Fort and Bait Al Ghasham Museum to acquaint the visitors with these heritage

sites, Saud bin Said Al Mawali, Vice Chairman of the Municipality Council in South Al Batinah Governorate and representative of the Wilayat of Wadi Al Ma’awil, said.

SME’s

The project passes through several farms and villages along the pathway, he said, adding that the project on completion would display local products and traditional industries that are common in the Wilayat of Wadi Al Ma’awil besides several products made by the small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

It is worth mentioning that the Wilayat of Wadi Al Ma’awil in South Al Batinah Governorate is famous for hosting several forts, castles and old houses in the villages of the Wilayat.

The new project represents an addition to the current tourism destinations in the Wilayat. - **ONA**



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ENHANCING CULTURAL EXCHANGE

National Museum holds lecture on Moscow Kremlin Museums

MUSCAT: The National Museum, represented by the Learning Centre, organised on Wednesday a lecture on Moscow Kremlin Museums presented by Dr. Elena Gagarina, the General Director of Moscow Kremlin Museums.

The National Museum, by organising this event, aims at enhancing cultural and museum exchange with international museums.

During the lecture, Dr. Gagarina gave a historical overview of the Moscow Kremlin Museums and the ancient buildings it contains that reflect Russian architecture, including historical palaces that were the headquarters of the rulers of Russia in the past.

She also spoke about the Armoury Chamber, Russia's oldest treasury museum, established in 1806 by the decree of Emperor Alexander I. The collections of the Armoury Chamber include ancient state regalia, ceremonial royal robes and coronation dresses and vestments of hierarchs of the Russian Orthodox Church, the largest collection of pieces made by Russian and Western European goldsmiths and silversmiths, including the world's largest collection of Fabergé Easter eggs,



Russian and Oriental arms and armours and a unique collection of royal carriages.

The architectural ensemble of the Moscow Kremlin and the Red Square were included in the World Cultural and Natural Heritage (UNESCO) list in 1990.

Dr. Gagarina also discussed the most prominent efforts of the four

sections of scientific restoration in the Moscow Kremlin Museums including metals, paintings, textiles and paper. She also highlighted other principal activities of museums, including holding exhibitions and cultural programmes, lectures, workshops, and special publications, which in turn enrich the visitor's experience.

It is worth noting that Moscow Kremlin Museums receive about two million visitors every year, and include more than 160,000 objects of art stored in the Moscow Kremlin Museums, and more than 4,000 objects of art are on permanent display at the Armoury. The overall chronological frame of the collection is rather wide – from the end of the 3rd millennium B.C. to the present.

Dr. Elena Gagarina, born in 1959 in the Murmansk region of Russia, earned a PhD in Art History from Lomonosov Moscow State University in 1990. From 1981 to 2001, she worked at the Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts, Moscow, and later became the General Director of the Moscow Kremlin State Historical and Cultural Museum in 2001. – **ONA**



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INVITATION

Morison Muscat, has been appointed as the official liquidator of Sweets of Oman SAOG (The Company) and in that capacity invites interested parties to make an offer for the purchase of the Company on an **"As-is-where-is"** basis. Details of the Company's assets and other relevant information (Referred to as Bid Documents) may be obtained by the prospective buyer after payment of a non-refundable bid fee of OMR 100 (Omani Rial one hundred only). The last date for the Purchase of the Bid Documents is 24th December 2023 which is referred to as the "Closure" date of the offer. After the date of Closure, all those who have purchased the Bid Document will be allowed to make a "site visit", the modalities of which will be provided at a later date.

Bid Documents will be provided to the prospective buyers in an electronic form by email after confirmation of the receipt of the bid fee. Bid fee is to be paid into the following bank account and proof of payment to be attached to the email requesting Bid document. Bank account details are as follows:

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IMPORTANT NOTES:

- Bidders are advised to carefully review the bid document and adhere to the specified terms and conditions.
- The non-refundable tender fee of OMR 100 must be paid before obtaining the bid document.
- Morison Muscat reserves the right to reject any or all bids without assigning any reason whatsoever.

TAX AUTHORITY

Workshop discusses ways to deal with suspected tax evasion

MUSCAT: The workshop organised by the Tax Authority in cooperation with the National Centre for Statistics and Information dealt with the way of handling complaints on suspected tax evasion, definition of the bank transactions and samples of suspected transactions. The workshop also

dealt with the prerogatives of the National Centre for Statistics and Information and the mechanisms of analysis of operations.

It is worth mentioning that the Tax Authority, represented by the Department of Combating Tax Evasion, is making tremendous efforts to curb tax evasion. – **ONA**





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International Companies specialized in the field and registered with Tender Board, may obtain tender documents for the website through the following link: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) against non-refundable fees as mentioned below starting from the date of this announcement and until the end of deadline stipulated below.

Tender Number	Description of Tender	Last date to collect the tender	Tender return date
(PRE/23/186)	Construction of Wadi Al Kabir Square	13/01/2024	30/01/2024
(PRE/23/285)	Consultancy Services for design of Wadi Al Mayh Road	13/01/2024	30/01/2024
(PRE/23/284)	Conducting tests and examinations of the Soil and asphalt layers of roads in Muscat Governorate	01/01/2024	07/01/2024

1. Bidders shall submit their offers electronically.

2. Clarification and Support:

For any inquiries regarding tenders, please visit e-tendering website: (<https://etendering.tenderboard.gov.om>) .

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GREATER COLLABORATION

India, EU discuss avenues for strategic security

NEW DELHI: India's Chief of Defence Staff General Anil Chauhan on Tuesday discussed avenues for EU-India Strategic Security and Defence Cooperation with Chair of the European Parliament Subcommittee on Security and Defence (SEDE) Nathalie Loiseau.

The two also discussed about greater collaboration in the Indo-Pacific, avenues for enhanced

synergy and defence industry co-operation between India-EU, according to defence officials.

Meanwhile, the CDS recently visited Japan, laid a wreath at the Hiroshima Peace Park in remembrance of the victims of Hiroshima, defence officials said.

He also laid floral tributes at the Gandhi Statue, aimed at enhancing peace and tranquillity in

the region. Further, the CDS was also given a detailed brief at the Hiroshima Museum. CDS General Chauhan also visited Japan's Yokosuka Base, strengthening the defence ties between the two countries. He was given an overview of the Japan Maritime Self-Defence Force mission by Vice Admiral Saito Akira, Commander-in-Chief, of the Self-Defence Fleet.

The visit was aimed at reinforcing strategic cooperation while highlighting the growing importance of the India-Japan defence partnership. Chauhan departed from New Delhi for Japan on Sunday (December 10) night to discuss defence ties between the two Asian countries, the Ministry of Defence (MoD) said in an official press release. — **ANI**



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Humanitarian crisis worsens in Gaza

At least 19,000 people have been killed in Gaza since the start of Israel's military offensive

GAZA: In the more than two months of devastating bombardment by the Israel Defence Forces (IDF) in retaliation for the October 7 attacks by Hamas on Israel, the humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip has deteriorated sharply.

Israeli airstrikes have devastated most of the territory's infrastructure and resulted in widespread hunger and homelessness. At least 19,000 people have been killed in Gaza since the start of Israel's military offensive according to the Health Ministry.

More than two thirds of Gaza's 2.3 million inhabitants have been displaced over the past eight weeks, and UN agencies and international organisations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross have reported substantial obstacles in delivering aid to those in need.

On Tuesday, British Foreign Minister David Cameron was set to meet with French and Italian leaders to advocate for what he de-



scribed as "increased coordination across European allies to ensure life-saving aid can get into Gaza to alleviate the suffering of the Palestinian people."

How much aid is reaching Gaza?

After the Hamas attacks on October 7, Israel enforced a "full" blockade on Gaza, further restricting the already limited flow of food, water, electricity, and fuel into the territory. People in Gaza have been heavily reliant on international aid since 2007, when Israel and Egypt began restricting access to the Palestinian territory after Hamas gained control there.

In early November 2023, some aid was permitted to pass through the Rafah border crossing with Egypt. But aid groups repeatedly said the amount was nowhere near enough to stop the ongoing civilian

suffering in Gaza. On December 17, Israel opened the southern Kerem Shalom border crossing between Shalom and Gaza for aid trucks for the first time since the October 7 attacks, with the IDF saying on X, formerly Twitter, that the goal was to "double the amount" of food and medicine reaching Gazans.

Last week, the Israeli government committed itself to transferring "200 truckloads per day of food and humanitarian aid," under the terms of a hostage deal struck in November. During a week-long cease-fire in late November, around 200 aid trucks were crossing through Rafah each day, according to the UN's Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

On December 12, the OCHA reported that about 100 trucks with humanitarian supplies had arrived every day from Egypt since hostili-

ties resumed on December 1.

But aid experts say this still falls far short of what is necessary.

"What we need today is not just 100 trucks or 200 trucks," Philippe Lazzarini, the head of the UN agency for Palestinian refugees, told a press conference in mid-December. "We need meaningful, at scale, uninterrupted and unconditional flow of basic commodities into the Gaza Strip. This is the only way to reverse the negative impact of the siege." Before October 7, an average of 500 truckloads, including fuel and private sector goods, entered Gaza every working day, according to the OCHA.

Recently, videos surfaced on social media, shared by multiple news outlets, showing dozens of Palestinians surrounding trucks transporting water and supplies.

Some of the trucks came to a halt as people climbed onto them,



pulling down boxes of food and water, and either carrying them away or passing them to people in the crowds below.

Approximately half of all Gazans are reportedly experiencing starvation, uncertain about their next meal, Carl Skau, the deputy head of the UN World Food Programme said on December 14.

Besides shortages of food, fuel and water, many of Gaza's buildings have been demolished or severely damaged, leaving hundreds of thousands of displaced people now seeking shelter in squalid, cramped conditions.

According to media reports in early December, around 100,000 buildings, including hospitals, have been damaged by the airstrikes. Hamas' media office claims that at least 61% of Gaza's homes have been demolished.

UN officials have decried the

state of Gaza's hospitals, most of which are no longer functional. According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), not even 12 of the enclave's 36 hospitals are open now, and most of these only partially. The WHO has also reported a spike in illnesses such as diarrhea, chicken pox, meningitis, and other infectious diseases, due in part to the lack of necessities.

"The very basics, they do not have them. One of my colleagues described people lying on the floor in severe pain, in agony, but they weren't asking for pain relief. They were asking for water," said WHO spokesperson Margaret Harris.

Regular disruptions to phone networks and internet connections have also left aid agencies unable to coordinate assistance delivery into Gaza, which is already challenging because of a lack of fuel. — **DW**

STRICTER CONTROLS ON MIGRATION

French MPs pass controversial bill

PARIS: Lawmakers in the French parliament passed legislation on Tuesday that will bring in stricter controls on migration.

President Emmanuel Macron had been facing a rebellion from within his party after the bill won support from the far-right National Rally (RN), led by Marine Le Pen.

But in the end, it passed through the lower house with votes from Macron's centrist coalition and conservative lawmakers.

Interior Minister Gerald Darmanin — who had spearheaded the bill — expressed relief after a large majority voted in favor, meaning it

no longer depended on the support from those far-right lawmakers.

The subject of immigration is a major political plank for the upcoming parliamentary elections. While the passing of the bill would have favored Macron, the support shown by Le Pen — who called the stricter bill "a great ideological victory" for the far right — can also improve her chances in the elections.

Ever since the bill was first submitted, it has seen various amendments toughening the immigration rules, with the left accusing the government of giving in to the pressure from the far right. — **DW**

EUROPEAN UNION

EU agrees to reform law for asylum-seekers

BRUSSELS: EU member states and the European Parliament on Wednesday agreed to a major overhaul of the bloc's laws on handling asylum-seekers and migrants, European Commission Vice President Margaritis Schinas said, describing the deal as a "breakthrough."

European Parliament President Roberta Metsola hailed the deal as a "landmark agreement" on the messaging platform X, formerly known as Twitter.

The aim of the agreement is to reduce the amount of irregular migration to the European Union.

The reform includes provisions for faster vetting of irregular arrivals, the creation of border detention centers and quicker

deportation for asylum seekers whose requests are rejected.

The overhaul also contains a solidarity mechanism to reduce the pressure for southern countries that are seeing large numbers of asylum seekers arriving at their gates.

Under the mechanism, some asylum seekers will be relocated to other EU states, while countries that refuse to take them in will make a financial or material contribution to those that do.

Up to the end of November this year, the EU border agency Frontex had registered more than 355,000 irregular border crossings into the bloc, an increase of 17%. Germany has also welcomed the agreement, with German

Chancellor Olaf Sholz saying it "will relieve the burden on countries that are particularly affected — including Germany."

German Foreign Minister Annalena Baerbock said it was "urgently needed and long overdue."

However, she admitted that not all of Germany's concerns had been addressed in the agreement, saying that Berlin had wanted a "blanket exemption of children and families from border procedures."

Italian Interior Minister Matteo Piantedosi, whose country has seen large numbers of migrants arriving over the Mediterranean by boat over the past years, voiced relief at the deal.

"The approval of the pact is a

great success for Europe and for Italy ... [which] has always played a leading role in order to affirm a balanced solution so that EU border countries, which are particularly exposed to migratory pressure, no longer feel alone," he said in a statement.

Greek Prime Minister Kyriakos Mitsotakis, whose country has faced repeated waves of illegal migration, announced his "satisfaction" with the agreement, calling it "an important response" to Athens' calls for change.

While the agreement has been described as "historic" by several conservative lawmakers, left-leaning politicians have been anything but positive about the reform. — **DW**

AFGHANISTAN

Taliban calls on nations to not use Afghan refugees as 'political tool'

KABUL: Amid the ongoing deportation of Afghan migrants from Pakistan, the Taliban urged the nations not to use Afghan immigrants as a 'political tool' on Monday, according to media report.

Taliban's Deputy Prime Minister for economic affairs, Mullah Abdul Ghani Baradar, criticised certain neighbouring nations for deporting Afghan immigrants and urged them to deal with them lawfully.

The remarks were made by the Taliban officials at an event coinciding with International Migrants Day on Monday, as they highlighted the deportation of thousands of migrants from Afghanistan to Pakistan, Iran, and other nations in recent months.

"The expulsion of our Muslim brothers by the countries is an illegal decision and against fairness and good neighbourliness. The perpetrators failed to achieve the goals that were behind this persecution (expulsion)," he said, according to TOLOnews.

Earlier in November, the Pakistan caretaker government initiated a nationwide campaign to deport illegal foreign nationals, the majority of whom are Afghans. Pakistan's decision prompted criti-

cism from Afghanistan and several other nations, the Pakistani newspaper Dawn reported.

Of the more than four million Afghans living in Pakistan, the Pakistani government estimates that 1.7 million Afghans do not have documents. So far, thousands of Afghans have headed back to Afghanistan through the Torkham and Chaman border crossings.

Meanwhile, the Taliban's Second Deputy Prime Minister, Abdul Salam Hanafi said: "A large number of our brothers and sisters returned to their homeland from different countries; the number of them reaches more than 700,000, who came to Afghanistan in a short time and by force," TOLOnews reported.

On the occasion of International Migrants Day, Khalil Rahman Haqqani, the acting Minister of Refugees and Repatriation, spoke about the reasons behind the nation's unlawful migrations.

"Afghans were tortured by different countries and are present all over the world. Even now, after forty years of sadness and poverty, they destroyed their property, children, culture and customs," Haqqani said, according to TOLO-

news. Earlier in November, the United Nations voiced concern about the welfare of Afghan citizens who have arrived in Afghanistan amid Pakistan's deportation of Afghan refugees and called for the suspension of the expulsion of Afghan refugees, Afghanistan-based Khaama Press reported.

UN called on the Pakistan government to halt the expulsion of more than one million Afghan refugees, at least during the winter season. The United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees stressed that Pakistan should halt the expulsion of Afghan refugees.

Recently, Iran's Interior Minister announced the expulsion of 4,00,000 Afghan migrants from the country.

On the other hand, the Director-General of Foreign Nationals and Immigrant Affairs in Kermanshah province had previously declared the prohibition of Afghan citizens from entering 16 provinces of the country.

Meanwhile, according to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Afghan citizens make up six per cent of the resident population in Iran. — **ANI**



SPORTS

Oman to tee off International Series golf season in 2024

The International Series extends global reach with new markets and over US\$23mn prize funds for new season

MUSCAT: Oman will tee-off The International Series 2024 golf season when it hosts the International Series Oman at Al Mouj Muscat from February 22-25. The US\$2 million event will be the first stop of the ten-tournament schedule for the 2024 season, which will include seven world-class destinations. Boasting an increased prize pool of US\$23 million, the pathway series to the LIV Golf League, sanctioned by the Asian Tour, will once again commence the year in Oman before making further



return journeys to Hong Kong, Indonesia, Morocco, and Qatar. Following the announcement in November of the inaugural International Series Macau presented by Wynn, the US\$5 million PIF Saudi International powered by SoftBank Investment Advisers has also been confirmed as a further addition to the 2024 schedule.

tournaments carrying a minimum US\$2 million prize fund. Rahul Singh, Head of The International Series said: "Competition to host International Series events has been high, with interest coming from around the globe as venues, destinations and stakeholders embrace the new competition and excitement that The International Series has brought since launching in 2022. "We remain committed to our mission of enhancing opportunities for players around the world and an open player pathway into the LIV Golf League and are excited to add some marquee events to the schedule for 2024. "This will be a landmark season for The International Series, and we continue to go from strength to strength. We remain committed to providing a transparent player pathway that enables global golfers to compete in our tournaments and take an opportunity to play over the season for a place in the LIV Golf League. "With our first confirmed dates for the season spanning the Arabian Gulf, China's southern coast, southeast Asia and North

Africa, the schedule underscores our commitment to being a truly International Series." **'Oman a fitting curtain raiser to the season'** Singh concluded: "Oman once again provides a fitting curtain raiser to the season, while Macau breaks new ground for us in a region that has a rich heritage of golf. By returning to Morocco for the first time since our inaugural season, we have compelling proof that our events are an attractive proposition to destinations with world-class golfing pedigree." The following tournaments are confirmed for the 2024 Asian Tour calendar: **February 22-25:** International Series Oman, US\$2mn **March 14-17:** International Series Macau, US\$2mn **July 4-7:** International Series Morocco, US\$2mn **October 31- November 3:** Indonesian Masters, US\$2mn **Nov 28- December 1:** International Series Qatar, US\$2.5mn **TBC:** Hong Kong Open, US\$2mn **TBC:** PIF Saudi International, US\$5mn.

SECOND ODI

Sarkar's 169 goes in vain as NZ rout Bangladesh



NELSON: Bangladesh opener Soumya Sarkar's 169-run knock went in vain as New Zealand clinched a seven-wicket victory in the second ODI match in Nelson on Wednesday. After winning the toss, New Zealand asked Bangladesh to bat first at Saxton Oval. Opener Soumya Sarkar (169 runs from 151 balls) was the lone standout batter among his teammates as no other players could cross the 50-run mark in the first inning. The left-handed batter slammed 22 fours and 2 sixes against the Kiwi bowling attack. Soumya's knock also helped him to surpass Tendulkar's milestone for the highest runs in ODIs by a

player from the sub-continent in New Zealand. In 2009, the 'Master Blaster' played an unbeaten 163-run knock against the Kiwis in Christchurch. Wicketkeeper Mushfiqur Rahim (45 runs from 57 balls) played a pivotal role in the middle order and helped the 'Bengal Tigers' put 291 on the scoreboard. Jacob Duffy and William O'Rourke led the Kiwi bowling attack and bagged a three-wicket haul each in their respective spells. Apart from them Adam Milne, Josh Clarkson, and Adithya Ashok picked up one wicket each. In the run chase of 292 runs, Will Young (89 runs from 94 balls) and Henry Nicholls (95 runs from

99 balls) played match-winning knocks to reach the given target. Kiwi opener Rachin Ravindra (45 runs from 33 balls) again proved why he is considered the most talented youngster in recent times. Skipper Tom Latham (34* runs from 32 balls) and Tom Blundell (24 runs from 20 balls) scored the final runs to beat the visitors by seven wickets. Rishad Hossain was the costliest bowler among all as he gave away 62 runs in his 9.2-over spell. New Zealand have already won the three-match ODI series after winning the first two games. However, they will be looking forward to the final game to end the series on a higher note. -ANI

SECOND ODI

Zorzi's maiden ton guides SA to easy win over India

GQEBERHA: A maiden ODI century by Tony de Zorzi and his century partnership with Reeza Hendricks helped South Africa pull off an eight-wicket win over India in the second ODI in Gqeberha on Tuesday. The three-match series is now level at 1-1. In the chase of 212 runs, Proteas openers Reeza Hendricks and Tony de Zorzi gave a great start to SA as they ended the powerplay at 39/0, with Hendricks (12*) and Zorzi (25*) unbeaten. SA reached the 50-run mark in 12.5 overs. Zorzi reached his maiden ODI fifty in 55 balls, with six fours and a six. The Proteas reached the 100-run mark in 21 overs. Hendricks also joined the party, reaching his seventh ODI century in 71 balls, with seven fours. Pacer Arshdeep Singh broke the deadlock, removing Hendricks for 52 off 81 balls, with seven fours. Rassie van der Dussen and Zorzi brought up their fifty-run stand in just 51 balls, bringing Proteas closer to the win. Zorzi reached his maiden ODI hundred in 109 balls, with nine fours and four sixes. A six from



Zorzi helped Proteas reach the 200-run mark in 39 overs and eventually managed to chase down the target, with Zorzi unbeaten at 119*. Earlier, fighting knocks from Sai Sudharsan and KL powered India to 211 in 46.2 overs at St George's Park. Nandre Burger (3/30) was the pick of the bowlers for Proteas. Beuran Hendricks and Keshav Maharaj took two wickets while Lizaad Williams and Aiden Markram got one each.

Put to bat first, India suffered a big blow as Nandre Burger drew first blood in the first over of the inning, removing opener Ruturaj Gaikwad for 4. Burger then removed Tilak Varma for 10 in the over. In the 20th over of the game, Sudharsan brought up his half-century. Captain KL Rahul joined hands with Sudharsan and kept the scoreboard ticking. However, Sudharsan's stay at the crease was cut short by Williams after he scored a fine 62 runs off 83 deliveries. Beuran Hendricks got rewarded for some consistent bowling as he removed Sanju Samson for 12. The left-handed batter, Rinku Singh, then came out to bat and opened his tally with a cracking four off Keshav Maharaj. Captain Rahul also brought up his 18th ODI fifty in 60 deliveries. Shortly after slamming a half-century, Rahul was dismissed by Burger, who bagged his third wicket of the match. Avesh Khan (9) and Arshdeep Singh (18) then tried to take charge. India was bundled out for 211 runs in 46.2 overs. -ANI

FOURTH T20I

Salt powers England to victory

TAROUBA: Philip Salt's century and Reece Topley's three-wicket haul helped England register a 75-run win against West Indies in the 4th T20I match in Trinidad on Tuesday. Salt (119 runs from 57 balls) opened for the visitors and played a fiery knock with 7 fours and 10 sixes. He had a strike rate of 208.77. Skipper Jos Buttler (55 runs from 29 balls) had a crucial partnership with Salt to get the

upper hand in the game. At the end of the first inning, Liam Livingstone (54* runs from 21 balls) pushed England to 267/3. Andre Russell, Jason Holder, and Akeal Hosein were the only wicket-takers. They picked up just one wicket each. In the run chase of 268 runs, England's bowling attack prevailed to stop the Caribbeans at 192 runs. Andre Russell (51 runs from 25 balls), Nicholas Pooran

(29 runs from 15 balls), and Sherfane Rutherford (36 runs from 15 balls) were the only standout batters in the second inning. Topley bagged three wickets in his 3.3 overs and gave away 37 runs. While Sam Curran and Rehan Ahmed picked up two wickets each in the game. The series decider match between West Indies and England will be played on December 21 at Brian Lara Stadium in Trinidad. -ANI

DOMESTIC CRICKET

Crowe defeat BDO to clinch Auditors Cup for second time

MUSCAT: Crowe defeated BDO by eight wickets to clinch the 21st Auditors Cricket Cup for the second time at the Oman Cricket Academy in Al Amerat recently. Playing under floodlights, BDO scored 46/7 in the allotted overs. Captain Abu Hashim top-scored with 20. In reply, Crowe chased down the target in 4.5 overs. Ivan Manjila hit 14 and Rehan Sharif scored 26 runs in just 12 balls. Sharif was named the man of the match award. EY finished as second runner-up. A total of nine teams from Oman took part in the annual event, which is organised by Jazz tournament.

Crowe had previously won the title in 2019. The awards were distributed by chief guest Alkesh Joshi, Oman Cricket treasurer. Also present on the occasion were Davis Kallukaran (Crowe), Bipin Kapur (BDO), Imtiaz Ibrahim (EY), Muhammad Rafay (GT), Noman Rana (KPMG), Yousuf Khan (Moore), Farid Shaikh (Deloitte), Ignesh Lazar (Al Nuha International) and Vishal Dara (PwC). Speaking at the awards ceremony, Crowe's Managing Partner Kallukaran said: "It was a privilege to have Alkesh Joshi as chief guest. As a senior Oman Cricket board member, he is known for his excep-

A total of nine audit firms from Oman took part in the annual tournament

tional contributions to cricket in Oman. He has also played a key role in developing women's cricket." Other individual awards: Player of the tournament: Eldo Babu (Al Nuha International), Best bowler: Kushal (Crowe), Best batter: Ivan Manjila (Crowe), Best wicket-keeper: Jawaid (KPMG), Best catch: Nasir (BDO), Best dressed team: Deloitte.



OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by February 2024 reaching \$78.98, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by \$2.21 from the price of Tuesday, which was \$76.77. - ONA

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,592.64 points, up by 0.47 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.42 per cent at 444.06 points. Aman REIT, up 5.44 per cent, was the top gainer while Barka Desalination, down 6.45 per cent, was the top loser.

Oman, Austria discuss means of boosting mutual cooperation

During the meeting, they also stressed the importance of exerting efforts to enhance economic and social integration between the two countries



MUSCAT: Dr Said Mohammed Al Saqri, Minister of Economy, received in his office yesterday Dr Martin Kocher, Federal Minister of Labour and Economy of the Republic of Austria and his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides discussed means of boosting mutual cooperation and relations. They also stressed the importance of exerting efforts to enhance economic and social integration between the two countries.

Meanwhile, Eng. Said Hamoud Al Maawali, Minister of Transport, Communications and Information Technology also received the Austrian Minister of Labour and Economy.

During this meeting, the two ministers explored means of boosting relations in areas of common interest. They also reviewed mutual cooperation in sectors related to transport, communications and information technology.

Moreover, Muhsin bin Hamad Al Hadhrami, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Energy and Minerals met here yesterday with the Austrian official and his accom-

panying delegation. Al Hadhrami underscored the importance of augmenting trade exchange and joint investment opportunities,

especially in areas of clean energy and green hydrogen. The meetings were attended by several officials from both sides. -ONA

Omani-Austrian Business Forum focuses on ways to enhance cooperation in different sectors

MUSCAT: The Omani-Austrian Business Forum discussed ways to enhance cooperation in various sectors, including tourism, industry, construction, infrastructure, information technology and medical education.

The meeting was organised by Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI) in cooperation with the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion today in Muscat. It also reviewed incentives and investment opportunities in the Sultanate of Oman.

Faisal Abdullah Al Rawas, Chairman of OCCI Board of Directors, said that the forum focused on new projects that the Omani and Austrian sides could undertake jointly to augment the volume of investment and commercial exchange between the two friendly countries.

Al Rawas pointed out that Oman Vision 2040 contemplates investment opportunities in various fields like tourism, industry and food security. The future approaches encourage Austrian companies to utilise available opportunities and incentives that Oman extends to investors, notably at special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities, he said.

Dr Martin Kocher, Federal Minister of Labour and



Economy of the Republic of Austria, commended the depth of bilateral relations.

Dr Kocher stressed the need to expand economic cooperation between the two countries to raise the volume of trade and investment exchange.

The Austrian minister outlined various investment and economic opportunities that,

he said, could be utilised in the fields of industry, green hydrogen and tourism. He pointed out that Oman espouses an ambitious vision in this field and at the same time there is a demand for importing hydrogen into Austria.

The forum included a visual presentation on the most prominent components of the investment, tourism and economic environment in Oman, as well as incentives extended to investors in various sectors.

The forum also provided grounds for meetings between Omani business owners and their Austrian counterparts. The meeting aimed at consolidating cooperation, developing trade relations, exchanging experiences and information and exploring joint cooperation opportunities. -ONA

CAPITAL MARKET AUTHORITY



CMA warns four firms for failure to submit risk assessment forms

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Capital Market Authority (CMA) has issued four decisions warning Iran Insurance Company, Aman Insurance Services Company, Trade Links Insurance Services and Middle East Insurance Services for violating Article 52 of the Anti-Money Laundering and Combating Financing Terrorism Law for failure to submit risk assessment form and institutional controls form. Article 52 allows the regulator to issue a written warning or order to comply with certain instructions or impose a fine not less than OMR10,000 and not more than OMR100,000.

Submitting risk assessment

form and institutional controls form are key requirement that must be submitted to the CMA by insurance and Takaful companies, brokers and agents pursuant to the Instructions on the Implementation of the Provisions of the AML/CFT Law issued vide Decision No. 81/2021.

The risk and institutional controls assessment show the compliance of the company with the processes and policies related to combating money laundering and terrorism financing to measure the risk for each company during the inspection plan as per the resulting risk ratio to identify the type of inspection the CMA would conduct to ensure compliance with AML/CFT laws and regulations.

2024 HOUSEARCH INDEX

Oman ranks among top three global property investment hotspots: Study

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Oman has been ranked among top three global property investment hotspots according to a new study.

"According to the Index's ranking, Oman and Qatar are attracting global investors seeking reliable and stable cash flows as these markets are emerging as attractive alternatives to traditional investment destinations, offering promising opportunities for portfolio diversification," Mark Wilson, Adviser to CEO and Head of Research at Housearch, said.

"Oman and Qatar's strong showing in our 2024 Index reflects growing investor confidence in the Gulf region as a whole," said Mark Wilson. "With gross rental yields ranging from approximately 6 percent in Qatar to up to 10 percent in some areas of Dubai, these markets offer lucrative opportunities for those seeking stable returns in the current economic climate," he said.

He further added that the United Arab Emirates, particularly Dubai, has long been a beacon for



overseas property investment, renowned for its opulent real estate offerings, favourable business environment, and near-zero tax regime. "The recent influx of entrepreneurs, high-tech startups, and high-net-worth foreigners—especially post-Brexit, as the appeal of London has diminished—has further revitalised Dubai's residential market," he added.

The inaugural 'Housearch In-

vestment Index' released by a leading global online real estate hub Housearch, has spotlighted the Gulf countries, with Oman, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates, notably Dubai, securing premier positions for residential property investment in 2024. This trend underscores the region's allure as a stable and dependable investment haven, particularly amidst the cooling property markets in

Europe and North America due to anticipated "higher-for-longer" interest rates.

The Housearch Investment Index is crafted to assist private real estate investors in assessing the investment attractiveness of residential property markets in 50 countries. The Index takes into account factors such as rental yields, peace and stability ratings, property rights, and economic growth rates. Its 2024 findings reflect a shifting landscape in global real estate investment, with the Gulf countries ascending as key players.

This development presents a noteworthy opportunity for investors looking to diversify their portfolios and tap into emerging markets with high growth potential.

Housearch is a leading global online platform specialising in residential properties, primarily focusing on newly constructed properties sold directly by developers or builders.

Launched in 2022, it features an extensive listing of over 4,000 new properties in popular investment destinations like the UAE, Turkey, and Thailand.

APPOINTMENT

JW Marriott Hotel Muscat appoints Hadi Medawar as Director of Sales & Marketing

Times News Service

MUSCAT: JW Marriott Hotel Muscat announced the appointment of Hadi Medawar as Director of Sales & Marketing for the brand's flagship hotel in Oman, which reopened its doors on Sunday 15 October.

Medawar brings with him 15 years of diverse hospitality and academic experience in sales and

marketing roles, event management and revenue management, with past involvement with pre-opening projects. He adds his leadership, passion, and commitment to quality and service to the JW Marriott Hotel Muscat team, where he will be able to continue to thrive thanks to his strong educational background and industry expertise.

Originally from Lebanon, Medawar

holds a Bachelor's degree in Hospitality and Tourism management, a Master's degree in International Events Management from the Ecole de Management in France and is currently studying for his PhD in tourism from Lebanese University in Beirut. He was also an integral part of the Inter-Continental Hotels Group team, previously working in sales and marketing role.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Aman REIT, up 5.44 per cent, was the top gainer while Barka Desalination, down 6.45 per cent, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,592.64 points, up by 0.47 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.42 per cent at 444.06 points. Aman REIT, up 5.44 per cent, was the top gainer while Barka Desalination, down 6.45 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of OQGN were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 1,330 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR2.47 million, with more than 14.51 million shares changing hands. Out of 43 traded securities, 14 advanced, 10 declined, and 19 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for OMR63,000 while foreign investors were net sellers for OMR59,000, followed by GCC & Arab investors for OMR3,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,434.48 points, down 0.14 per cent. Prices of Ahli Bank, Al Madina Takaful, Sohar International Bank, Bank Muscat were up by

1.28 per cent, 1.21 per cent, 0.99 per cent, 0.37 per cent respectively. Prices of Oman Arab Bank, National Bank Oman were down by 4.69 per cent, 0.35 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,360.18 points, up 0.03 per cent. Prices of National Detergent, Galfar Engineering were up by 0.74 per cent, 0.62 per cent respectively. Prices of Oman Packaging, Raysut Cement, Oman Cement were down by 2.44 per cent, 2.22 per cent, 0.33 per cent respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.52 per cent before closing at 1,564.55 points. Prices of Al Batinah Power, Shell Oman Marketing, Oman Telecom, Phoenix Power, OQ Gas Networks were up by 5.00 per cent, 3.37 per cent, 1.89 per cent, 1.82 per cent, 0.65 per cent respectively. Prices of Barka Desalination, Muscat Gases, Sembcorp Salalah, SMN Power Holding, Oman National Engineering were down by 6.45 per cent, 5.68 per cent, 2.22 per cent, 1.28 per cent, 0.91 per cent respectively.

— United Securities

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES						
Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff%
MSX 30 INDEX	4,592.64	4,568.85	4,592.64	4,571.35	21.30	0.47
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,464.26	7,434.48	7,434.48	7,444.67	-10.19	-0.14
Industry Index	5,360.18	5,340.26	5,360.18	5,358.34	1.85	0.03
Services Index	1,564.55	1,552.87	1,564.55	1,556.50	8.06	0.52
MSX Shariah Index	444.51	442.18	444.06	442.18	1.88	0.42
MSX TR INDEX	6,053.66	6,022.30	6,053.66	6,025.59	28.07	0.47
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,144.87	8,112.38	8,112.38	8,123.50	-11.12	-0.14
SERVICES TR IDX	1,740.55	1,727.55	1,740.55	1,731.59	8.96	0.52
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	5,726.01	5,704.73	5,726.01	5,724.04	1.97	0.03
FIXED INCOME INDEX	991.33	991.33	991.33	991.33	0.00	0.00
Trading Summary						
Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap.	Up	Down	Equal
14,518,036	2,474,568	1,330	23,921,244,458	14	10	19
Sec. Traded						
43						

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20

RON	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
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REGULAR MARKET

OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	51,427	54,807	16	1.060	1.080	1.060	1.080	1.060	0.020	1.887	1.080	1.070	1.080	0.100	810,000,000
OM0000004788	MADINA TAKAFUL	5,000	420	1	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.084	0.083	0.001	1.205	0.084	0.083	0.084	0.100	14,700,000
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	881,405	89,049	9	0.101	0.102	0.101	0.102	0.101	0.001	0.990	0.102	0.101	0.102	0.100	557,724,627
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	621,006	168,609	49	0.270	0.273	0.270	0.271	0.270	0.001	0.370	0.271	0.271	0.271	0.100	2,034,233,604
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	5,000	1,145	1	0.229	0.229	0.229	0.229	0.000	0.000	0.229	0.225	0.229	0.229	0.100	14,015,779
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	28,130	1,575	5	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.000	0.000	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.056	0.100	19,943,129
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	20,000	1,400	2	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.070	0.000	0.000	0.070	0.070	0.071	0.070	0.100	6,300,000
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	23,010	7,501	9	0.326	0.326	0.326	0.326	0.326	0.000	0.000	0.326	0.320	0.326	0.100	212,207,819
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	66,881	20,123	14	0.300	0.307	0.300	0.307	0.308	-0.001	-0.325	0.307	0.300	0.307	0.100	101,577,922
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	4,000	1,132	1	0.283	0.283	0.283	0.283	0.284	-0.001	-0.352	0.283	0.000	0.284	0.100	464,142,818
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVESTMENT	4,000	436	2	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.109	0.110	-0.001	-0.909	0.109	0.109	0.110	0.100	16,350,000
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	100,300	7,706	6	0.077	0.077	0.076	0.077	0.078	-0.001	-1.282	0.076	0.076	0.079	0.100	15,371,941
Total	12	1,810,159	353,903	115												

Parallel Market

OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	17,400	1,688	4	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.092	0.005	5.435	0.097	0.093	0.097	0.100	19,400,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	83,000	1,743	3	0.021	0.021	0.021	0.021	0.020	0.001	5.000	0.021	0.020	0.021	0.100	14,172,636
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	1,765	1,514	1	0.858	0.858	0.858	0.858	0.830	0.028	3.373	0.858	0.858	0.000	0.100	81,510,000
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	3,266	181	2	0.055	0.056	0.055	0.056	0.055	0.001	1.818	0.056	0.054	0.056	0.100	81,905,682
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	2,767	439	3	0.159	0.159	0.158	0.158	0.156	0.002	1.282	0.158	0.156	0.158	0.100	371,245,880
OM0000003265	NATIONAL DETERGENT	1,000	680	2	0.680	0.680	0.680	0.680	0.675	0.005	0.741	0.680	0.680	0.680	0.100	13,600,000
OM0000000072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	10,926,050	1,693,098	1,055	0.154	0.155	0.154	0.155	0.154	0.001	0.649	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.100	671,246,708
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	274,259	43,863	18	0.160	0.162	0.160	0.162	0.161	0.001	0.621	0.162	0.156	0.162	0.100	32,893,904
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	90,448	26,963	29	0.298	0.299	0.298	0.299	0.298	0.001	0.336	0.299	0.299	0.310	0.100	230,289,800
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	33,404	2,754	5	0.082	0.085	0.082	0.085	0.085	0.000	0.000	0.085	0.082	0.085	0.100	7,225,000
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	10,000	500	1	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.050	0.000	0.000	0.050	0.048	0.050	0.100	15,357,316
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	210	410	1	1.950	1.950	1.950	1.950	1.950	0.000	0.000	1.950	1.900	1.950	0.100	174,915,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	108,774	8,267	8	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.000	0.000	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.100	15,656,000
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	300	96	2	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.315	0.315	0.000	0.000	0.320	0.320	0.320	0.100	37,800,000
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	35,000	1,570	4	0.044	0.045	0.044	0.044	0.044	0.000	0.000	0.044	0.041	0.048	0.100	7,704,000
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	65,627	8,531	7	0.128	0.130	0.128	0.130	0.130	0.000	0.000	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.100	6,282,588
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	127,558	12,497	9	0.097	0.098	0.097	0.097	0.097	0.000	0.000	0.097	0.097	0.105	0.100	216,984,444
OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	208	10	1	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.048	0.000	0.000	0.048	0.000	0.049	0.100	12,000,000
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	114,140	2,398	8	0.021	0.022	0.021	0.022	0.022	0.000	0.000	0.022	0.020	0.022	0.100	15,716,939
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	23,600	2,006	2	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.085	0.000	0.000	0.085	0.080	0.085	0.100	40,050,843
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	121,640	15,845	11	0.130	0.133	0.130	0.132	0.135	-0.003	-2.222	0.133	0.131	0.132	0.100	26,400,000
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	114,500	10,086	9	0.090	0.090	0.088	0.088	0.090	-0.002	-2.222	0.088	0.082	0.090	0.100	84,002,332
OM0000001608	OMAN PACKAGING	20,000	4,000	1	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.205	-0.005	-2.439	0.200	0.198	0.000	0.100	6,487,172
OM0000005290	OMAN ARAB BANK	3,878	483	2	0.125	0.125	0.122	0.122	0.128	-0.006	-4.688	0.122	0.122	0.130	0.100	203,668,020
OM0000001179	MUSCAT GASES	212,390	17,173	13	0.087	0.087	0.080	0.083	0.088	-0.005	-5.882	0.083	0.086	0.100	2,490,000	
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	10,000	1,160	1	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.116	0.124	-0.008	-6.452	0.116	0.117	0.135	0.100	8,760,552
Total	26	12,401,154	1,857,985	1,202												

SENSEX AND NIFTY

Indian stock indices touch fresh highs

NEW DELHI: Indian stock indices - Sensex and Nifty - hit fresh highs at the opening bell Wednesday, due to a host of factors including a firm economic growth outlook and strong inflow of foreign investments. The indices had touched their all-time highs last week too.

Sensex was at 71,743.66 points, up 0.43 per cent, while Nifty was at 21,548.95 points, up 0.45 per cent, from their previous day closing, respectively.

India's benchmark Sensex and Nifty posted their longest weekly winning streak in six years last Friday, extending their rally to record highs, on the possibility of an interest rate cut in the US markets in early 2024. The two indices rose over 2 per cent in the week on a cumulative basis.

The strong inflow of funds from foreign portfolio investors (FPIs) lately also supported the stocks to march towards all-time highs. Notably, foreign portfolio investors have again trained their sight towards India, becoming net buyers



in the country's stock market.

Following a cumulative accumulation of Rs 9,001 crore in November, they have again made a beeline to invest in Indian stock markets, with Rs 54,747 crore invested so far in December, data from the National Securities Depository (NSDL) showed.

The latest inflow comes at a time when India reported strong quarterly GDP growth maintaining its fastest-growing major economy tag, inflation in a com-

fortable zone, and political stability in the run-up to General Elections 2024. Before November, FPI participation in Indian stocks was lukewarm and they had turned net sellers. They sold Rs 14,768 crore and Rs 24,548 crore, in September and October, respectively.

Foreign investors typically shift to developing or emerging economies to make money when interest rates are relatively low in advanced economies, let's say here in this case the US.

"Valuations in the mid and small cap segments are excessive. Chasing mid and small caps at these valuations is risky. Going forward, large-caps are likely to outperform. Even if they don't, safety is in large caps. Investors should give importance to safety in this time of optimism," said VK Vijayakumar, Chief Investment Strategist at Geojit Financial Services.

Meanwhile, DOMS Industries, a leading Indian stationery player, had a blockbuster stock market debut. It listed on the bourses with a whopping 77 per cent premium over its IPO issue price.

It listed at Rs 1,400 against its issue price of Rs 790.

"Thus, considering such a premium on listing, allottees who applied for the public offering for listing premium are advised to book profit however investors with long-term view may hold it by keeping a stoploss at 1260. A fresh buy will not be recommended at such a high level," said Shivani Nyati, Head of Wealth, Swastika Investmart Ltd. —ANI

CONSTRUCTION HORIZONS FORUM

Najahi Business Banking displays facilities provided to entrepreneurs and SMEs

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In alignment with its commitment to support small and medium enterprises sector and diversifying its banking services provided in this field, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, represented by Najahi Business Banking Unit, participated in the second edition of the Construction Horizons Forum in North Batinah which titled Tourism and Real Estate Development.

The event was recently organised by the Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry in North Al Batinah Governorate, under the auspices of His Highness Dr Adham bin Turki Al Said, and in the presence of a number of high-profile officials, and representatives of institutions and companies working in the tourism sector and real estate development projects.

Among 24 booths representing a number of government and private institutions, Bank Muscat special booth displayed financial services and facilities provided by Najahi to enable customers to develop and expand their projects.

The forum aimed to shed light on government trends in the field of urban development in the light of Oman's Vision 2040 and the Urban Development Strategy for the governorate of North Al Batinah. It presented projects and job opportunities available in the



tourism and real estate development sectors. Besides, the forum reviewed the most important modern technologies and the possibility of localising them in tourism and real estate development sectors. It presented pioneering experiences in these sectors as well as enhanced communication between businessmen and leading companies to develop cooperation mechanisms.

It also discussed opportunities of cooperation and exchange of experiences between academic institutions and the industrial sector in the field of tourism and real estate development.

The bank is keen to be present at diverse events and activities aimed at supporting the small and medium enterprises sector, believing in the importance of

this sector and the vital role it plays in advancing comprehensive development within Oman Vision 2040.

Through the dedicated booth, the attendees were briefed about the bank's financing products designed to support entrepreneurs. Attendees also got acquainted with the facilities provided by "Najahi" Business Banking to the small and medium enterprises sector, the role it plays, and other banking services and facilities it provides to companies.

Bank Muscat is one of the leading financial institutions that attach great importance to the small and medium-sized enterprises sector. "Najahi" Business Unit has been hailed by customers for its exceptional financial services it provides, as it enables

customers to develop and expand their businesses in line with the development goals of the Sultanate aiming to diversifying sources of income and supporting Omani youth. "Najahi" was designed to meet the requirements of entrepreneurs and MSMEs by providing the necessary support during their initial stages. It offers a range of benefits like POS devices, debit and credit cards, online banking services and collateral-free financial facilities.

Bank Muscat is proud of all the positive results achieved by "Najahi" and the high demand it receives from entrepreneurs. Business projects supported by Najahi represent a range of sectors including retail, hospitality, industry, tourism, mining and agriculture sectors.

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TIPS TO SUPPORT YOUR METABOLIC HEALTH IN THE NEW YEAR



Good metabolic health is the backbone of great overall health. Unfortunately, many Americans misunderstand what metabolic health is and are not aware of its importance.

A recent poll from Metavo/Harris Poll Study reveals that nearly three in four North Americans have experienced at least one issue related to metabolic health in the past year, while only 52% have heard, read or seen information on metabolic health issues.

What's more, only 30% of North Americans know that metabolic health is not the same as gut health, and many falsely believe that metabolic issues mostly occur in those who are overweight.

"This knowledge gap plays a factor in why many health issues related to metabolic health, such as brain fog, food cravings and energy slumps, often go unaddressed," says Dr. Paul Spagnuolo, associate professor in the Department of Food Science at the University of Guelph, whose research includes finding new ways for people to proactively support their metabolic health.

Issues related to metabolic health can take a toll on your mental wellbeing, your ability to perform your job, and even your social life and personal relationships, making it critical to nip them in the bud. To improve your metabolic health and feel your best in 2024, consider these tips:

1

GET ACTIVE

Whether you're hitting up the gym for a weight training session or simply going for a longer walk during your day, daily physical activity is recommended to support your metabolic health. Find activities, daily movement and workouts you enjoy and stick with them.

2

PRIORITISE PROPER SLEEP

Maintaining proper sleeping habits can help to keep your insulin and hormone levels balanced.

3

FUEL OFTEN

Fueling more frequently can boost your metabolism. Being sure to eat smaller portions at regular, consistent times every day and drinking plenty of water can also help improve metabolic health. Set alerts on your phone, or even use a hydration app, to help you remember to drink up.

4

EXPLORE SUPPLEMENTS

Consider taking a daily supplement designed to support metabolic health and activate metabolism naturally, like Metavo. Featuring the proprietary avocado compound Avocatin B, also known as AvoB, Metavo Advanced Glucose Metabolism Support activates your metabolism naturally at the cellular level.



This knowledge gap plays a factor in why many health issues related to metabolic health, such as brain fog, food cravings and energy slumps, often go unaddressed

Dr. Paul Spagnuolo
Associate Professor,
Department of Food Science,
University of Guelph

"Having a flexible metabolism at the cellular level enables the body to properly metabolize fats, proteins and carbs to help improve insulin sensitivity, glucose tolerance and energy," says Dr. Spagnuolo, whose research led to the development of Metavo.

The brand also carries Metavo Advanced Weight Support, a supplement featuring clinically proven ingredients that help burn fat, support weight loss, and provide increased energy, as well as Metavo Advanced Weight Support Meal Replacement Powders, which are designed to be the perfect "metabolic" meal, with 20 grams of complete protein and whole food vitamins and minerals. These supplements can complement GLP-1, or other medications that treat obesity and diabetes. Plus, there is Metavo Glucose Metabolism Support with Berberine, which targets metabolic inflexibility to increase insulin sensitivity, support healthy glucose metabolism, cardiovascular support and more. To learn more, visit www.metavo.com.

When it comes to metabolic health, consistency is key. In the New Year, resolve to make physical activity, healthy eating, proper sleep and the right supplements a regular part of your routine.

-StatePoint



SPORTS

Man City trounce Urawa Red, reach Club World Cup final

English giants outplay Japanese club 3-0 to set up summit clash with Brazil's Fluminense in the 2023 Club World Cup

RIYADH: Manchester City's players have a once "in-our-lifetime" opportunity when they face Brazil's Fluminense in the Club World Cup final, says manager Pep Guardiola.

Guardiola's team swept past Urawa Red Diamonds 3-0 in Tuesday's semi-final to set up a meeting with the South American champions on Friday in Saudi Arabia, *BBC Sport* reported.

City are looking to become the fourth English club to win the title after Manchester United, Liverpool and Chelsea.

"The players know how important it is for the club," said Guardiola.

"To be in this final, you have to do incredible things like win the Champions League. This may be the only time we play this in our lifetime.

"We are there. We will try to win a title we don't have and finish the circle."

The Spaniard has previously won the competition twice while Barcelona boss and once during



his three-year tenure at Bayern Munich.

And the odds of him adding to that collection seem short given the manner in which City comfort-

ably defeated the Asian champions Urawa.

The Japanese club displayed plenty of defensive resilience until defender Marius Hoibraten



turned Matheus Nunes' cross into his own net on the stroke of half time.

However, after the break it was a different story, with Mateo Ko-

vacic quickly adding City's second - running through the heart of an absent Urawa defence to latch on to Kyle Walker's pass and lift his effort past goalkeeper Shu-

saku Nishikawa. Portugal midfielder Bernardo Silva added City's third before the hour mark, guiding an effort low into the bottom right corner after his international team-mate Nunes had a shot blocked by Nishikawa.

In truth, City's margin of victory could and should have been more with Nunes, Jack Grealish and second-half substitutes Oscar Bobb and Julian Alvarez all failing to convert good opportunities when well placed.

Brazil's Fluminense had beaten Al Ahly 2-0 in the first semi-final played on Monday and City's victory ensures the 13th meeting between the champions of Europe and their South American counterparts in the showpiece match since 2005.

City on course to close the circle

After winning the Premier League, Champions League, FA Cup and UEFA Super Cup, Guardiola had spoken about this competition as an opportunity to "close the little circle and win all the trophies" possible.

And his team will be undoubted favourites when they face their opponents from Rio de Janeiro later this week in a match being played at the King Abdullah Sports City, north of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia.

Fluminense should, though, at least represent a step up in class from Urawa, who were defensively disciplined until they fell behind but struggled to build any sort of attacking momentum to chase the game.

And even despite the continued absence of the prolific Erling Haaland and midfield playmaker Kevin de Bruyne, there was a formidable look to the Blues as they close in on a fifth trophy of the calendar year. - Agencies

GERMAN BUNDESLIGA

Muller extends contract with Bayern until June 2025



MUNICH: Bayern Munich midfielder Thomas Müller has signed a one-year contract extension until June 2025 on Tuesday.

The German, 34, has spent his whole career at Bayern, making 684 senior appearances since his debut in 2008.

Club president Herbert Hainer said: "Bayern has been shaped by many people, and there will never again be a player like Thomas Müller."

Müller has won 12 German Bundesliga titles, the Champions League twice, six German cups and eight German Supercups.

Bayern trail league leaders Leverkusen by four points, although they have a game in hand.

EFL CUP: QUARTER-FINALS

Chelsea enter semi-finals

LONDON: Newcastle United's Kieran Trippier endured a Stamford Bridge nightmare as Chelsea reached the EFL Cup semi-finals after a penalty shootout 4-2 win on Tuesday.

Callum Wilson's 16th-minute goal looked to be sending Newcastle into the last four until substitute Mykhailo Mudryk pounced on the veteran defender's error deep into stoppage time to send the game to spot-kicks.

The 33-year-old, who has suffered a dip in form recently, then fired Newcastle's second penalty wide and once keeper Djordje Petrovic saved Matt Ritchie's spot-kick Chelsea had gone from the despair of contemplating defeat to the sheer elation of a place in the last four.

It was cruel on Trippier, such an influential figure under manager Eddie Howe, but his fatal indecision on a header gave Chelsea that lifeline which Mudryk gratefully accepted.

Cole Palmer, Conor Gallagher, Christopher Nkunku and Mudryk were all on target for Chelsea but only Callum Wilson and Bruno Guimarães scored penalties for Newcastle, who suffered fresh disappointment after their Champions League exit.



The draw for the semi-finals takes place after Liverpool vs West Ham on Wednesday night, with the first leg of those ties being played in the week commencing 8 January.

Fulham win on penalties

Marco Silva hailed "special player" Tosin Adarabioyo after the defender scored the winning spot-kick as Fulham beat Everton 7-6 on penalties to reach the EFL Cup semi-finals for the first time.

Centre-back Tosin stepped up in sudden death, after Idrissa Gueye struck the post, and rolled home to send the Cottagers through to a first domestic semi-final in 22 seasons.

Silva's men had a smash-and-grab win at Goodison Park in the

opening game of the season and they went home to London victorious once again.

The opener came four minutes before half-time and went down as a Michael Keane own goal, with the Everton defender diverting the ball into his own net from Antonee Robinson's cross.

Everton searched for an equaliser in the second period and Jack Harrison fizzed a long-range drive just wide before substitute Beto headed in from close range with nine minutes remaining.

The game went to penalties, with Bobby De Cordova-Reid seeing his effort saved by Jordan Pickford and Amadou Onana's having a weak effort kept out by Bernd Leno, before Tosin sent the travelling fans into raptures. - Agencies

PREMIER LEAGUE

Nuno appointed as Forest manager



LONDON: Nottingham Forest have appointed Nuno Espirito Santo on a two-and-a-half-year contract to replace Steve Cooper.

Cooper was sacked on Tuesday after two years, with Forest having lost five of their past six league games and sitting 17th in the table.

Former Wolves and Tottenham manager Nuno was sacked by Saudi Pro-League club Al Ittihad in November. The 49-year-old's first match in charge will be Saturday's home Premier League game against Bournemouth.

Nuno spent four years at Wolves, guiding the club to pro-

motion from the Championship in his first season before consecutive seventh-placed finishes in the Premier League, while they also reached the Europa League quarter-finals.

The former goalkeeper left Molineux in the summer of 2021 to join Spurs, but was sacked after less than four months in charge after a run of five defeats in seven games.

He joined Al Ittihad in July 2022 and led the Jeddah-based side to the Saudi title last season, but was dismissed 12 games into the new campaign after a run of poor results. - Agencies

OMAN CRICKET

Glam Homes-OCT Ruwi match ends in a tie

MUSCAT: Glam Homes and OCT Ruwi match ended in a thrilling tie in an Oman Cricket A Division at Al Amerat recently.

Batting first, OCT Ruwi scored 236/9, thanks to a half-century by Majid Al Balushi. Mohammed Al Balushi's quickfire 40 helped the team cross the 200-mark. Masud Parvez, Rana Zeeshan and Usman Ali picked two wickets each.

Glam Homes' reply was led by Dileepa Srilal, who hammered a 117-ball 100 but failed to take his team home as he was dismissed in the last over of the match to leave the match tied. Shoaib Al Balushi and Zubair Al Balushi picked three wickets each.

In another A Division match, Bank Muscat routed TECS by seven wickets.



L-R: Usman Ali Shah, Ajay Hirlekar, Ali Hussnain of Bank Muscat

Batting first, TECS were restricted to 158 in 45.1 overs. Saud Haroon Khan top-scored with 49. Ajay Hirlekar picked four wickets while Ali Hussnain scalped 3 wickets. Bank Muscat's Usman Ali Shah single-handedly powered his

team to win with a 101-ball 103. The bankers reached the target in 33 overs.

Brief scores: OCT Ruwi 236/9 in 50 overs (Majid Al Balushi 64; Masud Parvez 2/29) tied with Glam Homes CT 236 in 50 overs



Dileepa Srilal of Glam Homes

(Dileepa Srilal 100; Zubair Al Balushi 3/28). TECS 158 in 45.1 overs (Saud Haroon Khan 49; Ajay Hirlekar 4/33) lost to Bank Muscat 160/3 in 32.4 overs (Usman Ali Shah 103; Abdul Malik 2/14).

TURKISH SUPER LIG

Istanbulspor walk off pitch in protest

ISTANBUL: A Turkish top-flight game was suspended after Istanbulspor's president withdrew his team from the pitch in protest at a refereeing decision in their match against Trabzonspor on Tuesday.

The incident came on the day Turkish football resumed, a week after it was suspended when a referee was punched. Trabzonspor were leading 2-1 after Paul Onuachu's header in the 68th minute. But Istanbulspor claimed they should have had a penalty prior to their opponents' second goal being scored.

President Ecmel Faik Sarıalioğlu went down to the pitch and withdrew his players in



protest in the 73rd minute.

Some Istanbulspor players tried to persuade the president to reconsider his decision with Ivory Coast defender Simon Deli pictured kneeling in front of him.

"It is a sad day for football. We will wait for the football federation's decision from now on," Trabzonspor coach Abdullah Avcı said.

BankDhofar expands reach with new Mina Al Fahal branch

Located in Al Qurum, the new branch aims to provide convenient, modern banking facilities with personalised customer service to its customers

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its efforts to be closer to the customers, BankDhofar recently celebrated the official opening of a new branch in Mina Al Fahal (service branch). This step reflects BankDhofar's tireless endeavour to be closer to its customers throughout the Sultanate of Oman and provide them with the best banking experience.

The branch's official inauguration was attended by Haifa Al



Khaifi, Finance Director & Oil and Gas Board Secretary and attended by Abdul Hakeem Omar Al Ojailli, CEO of BankDhofar, alongside key members of the executive management team, and notable community figures.

Located in Al Qurum, the new branch aims to provide convenient, modern banking facilities with personalised customer service to

its customers. With the inauguration of this branch, BankDhofar reinforces its commitment to supporting the growth and development of the local economy, while catering to the evolving needs of customers across the nation.

With its prime location which is easily accessible, the branch offers a wide range of services to its customers except for cash services.



The new branch is designed to provide convenient banking experience to its customers.

Currently, BankDhofar's national wide network consists of more than 100 branches including Maisarah and three corporate branches. The network also includes more than 300 ATMs, CDMs, FFMs and MFKs.

BankDhofar customers may access financial services through its branches network across the Sultanate, including account management, deposits, loans, foreign exchange, trade finance, investment solutions, and more. In addition to a wide network of ATMs, CDMs & FFM around the Sultanate that work round-the-clock with high efficiency. For added customer convenience, the bank offers smart

banking at the fingertips through its Mobile Banking App.

Customers may conduct a wide range of instant mobile banking services through the award winning App. The services include instant transfer 24/7 to any local bank account, cardless cash, and Instant International money transfer service with Western Union, among other services.

33RD AUDI QUATTRO CUP



Al Mouj Golf holds Audi Quattro Cup final

MUSCAT: Al Mouj Golf was chosen as the venue for the 33rd Audi Quattro Cup final which took place from November 10-13, joining a prestigious list of courses that have hosted the final of the world's largest amateur golf tournament.

Spanning 38 countries, 470 tournaments and 50,000 participants, the tournament was down to 31 teams of two representing 29 nations, featuring both male and female golfers.

Japan led the scoreboard in Group A with a strong 76 points while Australia set the pace in Group B with 80 points. In close competition, Switzerland in Group A trailed with 59 points, while Italy in Group B had 68 points. Representing Oman were Lynn Casey and Danny Renihan.

Nasser Al Sheibani, CEO of Al Mouj Muscat, said: "The selection of Al Mouj Golf for the 33rd Audi Quattro Cup Final is a testament to our internationally recognised course, ranked #2 in the MENA region and among the world's top 100. This decision also marks a significant milestone for sports tourism in Oman, advancing the Sultanate's sporting ambitions regionally and globally."

He added, "It was a great pleasure welcoming the teams from around the world to Al Mouj Golf

and playing our part in showcasing Oman in all its beauty, hospitality and traditions."

Dominik Kaenel, International Sports Marketing Audi AG, said: "In choosing the venue for the Audi Quattro Cup final, we immediately selected Al Mouj Golf upon our first visit. The course is well-maintained greens and fairways exceeded our expectations, offering a tranquil environment. Additionally, the remarkable hospitality and warmth of the local people was extraordinary, making our experience truly exceptional."

Open to any Audi car owner, each year, 600 national finals are held worldwide, with the winner from each qualifier tournament securing a chance to represent their country in the global final. Since 1991, the number of tournaments and golfers participating around the world has surged, demonstrating the tournament's growing popularity.

Previous finals have been held at legendary golfing locations including the Belfry in England, Fancourt in South Africa, K Club in Ireland, Mission Hills in China, the Earth Course at Jumeirah Golf Estates in Dubai, Quivira in Los Cabos, Mexico, and Marco Simone Golf Club in Rome, Italy (venue of the 2023 Ryder Cup).

SCRATCH AND WIN CONTEST

Makkah Hypermarket unveils 31st anniversary celebration with delightful gift giveaway

MUSCAT: In a spectacular celebration of its 31st anniversary, Makkah Hypermarket is set to dazzle shoppers in Oman with a 10-day Scratch and Win contest, commencing on December 21. The hypermarket, renowned for its extensive presence in interior regions, expects around 70 percent of its shoppers to be Arabs.

During a press conference held at the Golden Tulip Hotel on Tuesday, Executive Director Sinan Muhammed announced the grand event, stating, "Everyone is a winner in this event. Every customer making purchases of OMR 10 or more will receive a voucher, and the scratch card holds the key to exciting prizes. This inclusive initiative ensures that each shopper gets a gift, with every voucher containing a delightful surprise."

Makkah Hypermarket, committed to customer satisfaction, plans to distribute over 400,000 gifts during the festive period, promising a thrilling shopping experience for all.

Sinan Muhammed emphasised that the contest not only serves as an expression of gratitude but also guarantees a diverse range of gifts



For every customer, regardless of their shopping preferences.

From December 21 to December 31, shoppers can participate by scratching off cards provided at the checkout counter, revealing a myriad of prizes, including air conditioners, washing machines, and phones.

Managing Director Mammotty reflected on the milestone, stating, "As we commemorate 31 years of serving our community, it is with great pleasure that we announce the Scratch and Win contest. This is our way of expressing gratitude to our valued customers who have played an integral role in building this retail kingdom across Oman, Saudi Arabia, and India."

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SPONSORS

Oxy Oman hosts 2nd edition of Oxy Ultramarathon

MUSCAT: Oxy Oman employees and representatives recently attended and participated in the 2nd edition of the Oxy Ultramarathon.

The event was exclusively sponsored by Oxy Oman, and organised in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth.

The marathon event was held over a 3-day period in Wadi Al Khoudh, Muscat Governorate, with over 1,100 participants turning out for the races, including Oxy employees and their families. The event consisted of a 50km marathon, a 10km race, and a children's race for different age groups. The event also hosted a dedicated race for individuals with disabilities.

The closing ceremony for the 2nd Oxy Ultramarathon was held on the third day of the event under the auspices of the Azzan bin Qassim Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism for Tourism. Steven Lauer, President and General Manager of Oxy Oman, attended and represented the company at the awards ceremony.

"We're excited to collaborate with the Ministry of Culture, Sports, and Youth to host the Oxy Ultramarathon for the second time, as



Oxy Oman continues to champion community engagement and well-being through our social responsibility initiatives. We're especially thrilled to witness the enthusiasm and sportsmanship of participants from diverse backgrounds, including our own employees and families. We hope that the event empowers

people towards active living, and continues support for sports development and excellence in Oman," said Lauer.

In 2021, Oxy Oman hosted the first edition of Oxy Ultramarathon, where over 1100 participants attended the event held at Wadi Bani Auf, Al Batinah South Governorate, to encourage the community to participate in more sporting activities, and to promote Oman's natural beauty and mountain terrain.

This sponsorship falls under Oxy Oman's umbrella of strategic partnerships and continuous collaboration with key stakeholders, and is part of Oxy Oman's endeavour and long-term commitment to support programs that enhance economic growth and sustainable development and that yield positive impacts in the neighbouring communities.

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AHLIBANK INITIATIVE

Ahli Cares team organises blood donation campaign



MUSCAT: In line with its holistic approach to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), ahlibank, through its 'ahlicares' initiative recently hosted a blood donation drive at its headquarters in Wattayah.

The event was conducted in collaboration with the Central Blood Bank in Bausher. This campaign comes in line with the bank's strategic goals to achieve sustainability and raise awareness on the importance of donating blood and contributing to saving lives.

The bank's social responsibility and efforts towards enhancing individuals' health are aligned with its strategic objectives to achieve sustainability and enhance society's well-being. The campaign saw an impressive turnout from donors, as many employees and customers participated in the event

and contributed to the bank's efforts aimed at promoting health awareness initiatives and enhancing employee engagement.

Emphasising the sentiments posed during the event, Jumana Al Hashmi, Head of Marketing and Corporate Communications at ahlibank, said, "The success of the blood donation campaign is a testament to ahlibank's commitment to leaving a positive impact in the communities it serves. We are keen to adopt such initiatives under our ahli cares umbrella on an annual basis, to encourage social responsibility and motivate our employees and the public to make change and contribute to enhancing the health of individuals to achieve sustainable community development, as health is one of the most important pillars of the bank's social responsibility, and

supports its strategy to achieve environmental, social and institutional sustainability."

"I would like to extend my heartfelt gratitude to all blood donors, this initiative is considered one of the many in the field of social responsibility in the health sector, which the bank organises annually intending to support a culture of volunteer work, enhance human values, and leave a positive, sustainable impact. ahlibank supports these endeavours, as our role is not limited to providing an exceptional banking experience to our customers, but extends to leaving a positive impact on the community in which we work," she added.

Ahli cares' CSR initiatives at ahlibank complement the government's socio-economic development efforts.

ROUND-UP

Saud Bahwan Group unveils Chery Automotive brand in Oman

During the event, the guests were invited to experience Chery Automobile's recent introductions - The Tiggo 8 Pro Max SUV, Tiggo 4 Pro SUV and the Arizzo 6 Pro sedan

MUSCAT: Under the patronage of His Highness Sayyid Fahr bin Fatik Al Said, Saud Bahwan Group unveiled the Chery Automotive brand in Oman.

Attending the occasion were Li Lingbing, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China to the Sultanate of Oman, Shen Xiantian, General Manager, Middle East and North Africa, Chery Automobile and other senior management officials from Chery Automobile.

Commenting on this momentous occasion Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Managing Director - Corporate, Saud Bahwan Group, said, "Today, we herald a momentous occasion, the grand launch of Chery Automobile here in Oman. For us at Saud Bahwan Group, Chery Automobile symbolises new-age designs, quality and inspiring technology. The brand Chery is much more than just vehicles. It is about a passion to listening to customer desires and employing everything it takes, to bring those desires into reality. Owning a Chery vehicle will definitely be a valuable and memorable experience."

Speaking about the partnership between Saud Bahwan Group and Chery Automobile he said, "We are extremely delighted to partner Chery Automobile on this visionary journey. We are also happy to know that recently Chery Automobile was awarded the first place in the 2023 J. D. Power China Initial Quality Study among Chinese brands. We eagerly look forward to serving our customers with some of the finest high quality products with the support and assurance from Saud Bahwan Group. We also look forward to continued guidance & support from the Management at Chery Automobile to drive the brand to be among the top automotive brands in Oman. We are all set to usher in a delightful and memorable experience for our valued customers."

Later in the evening, Shen Xiantian, General Manager Middle



East and North Africa, Chery Automobile, in his keynote address highlighted Chery Automobile's product strengths and the association with Saud Bahwan Group. He said, "The collaboration between Chery and Saud Bahwan Group represents another meaningful annotation in the continuation of this longstanding friendship in the new era. We are all dedicated to bring Omani consumers more technological, more sustainable and smarter automotive products and services."

"Chery was founded in 1997 and it is a technology-oriented company, with five R&D centres around the world, more than 10 overseas factories, and over 1,500 dealerships and service centres. We have the strongest engine technology among Chinese brands, consistently securing the JD Power China New Vehicle Quality award for multiple years. Our products are exported to over 80 countries and regions, earning the trust of 12 million consumers worldwide. With global sales expected to reach nearly 2 million units this

year, maintaining the first position car export for 22 consecutive years among all Chinese brands. We are confident that Chery will soon become the top 10 car marker worldwide. Saud Bahwan Group is a crucial strategic partner for Chery, and through years of honest business practices, has gained widespread popularity and trust among consumers in the Oman market. Today, we join forces in a strong alliance and are full of confidence in the future. I believe that with the trust and support of our friends present here, Chery can undoubtedly achieve success in the Omani market."

Sharing interesting information about the Chery range, Sajdin Osmanovic, Exterior Design Director, Chery Automobile, said, "The TIGGO8 PRO MAX, TIGGO4 PRO, and ARRIZO6 PRO represent the latest achievements of Chery in terms of automotive technology design and performance and will bring a completely new driving experience to consumers in Oman. Continuing the high-end positioning of the TIGGO 8 family,

TIGGO 8 PRO MAX is a luxury and commercial SUV with both forceful powertrain and advanced technology launched for the urban new middle-class elites. Designed by a team of top international designers, TIGGO 8 PRO MAX perfectly interprets the design concept of Life in Motion. Tiggo4 Pro is the first product of the Chery Pro family. It is also a global model created by Chery by integrating the latest design power intelligent technologies with the latest processes.

The most remarkable feature of Tiggo4 Pro is the integration of dynamic and stylish appearance. Luxurious comfortable interior and smart configurations. The Arizzo 6 Pro features a new family front design with a sophisticated and graceful interior. It is equipped with 10.25-inch LCD instrument and HD central control screen which highlights its high end and intelligence. Besides it possesses NVH super quiet space 360-degree panoramic image and wireless mobile phone mapping CARPLAY which brings user-friendly and comfort driving experience.

During the event, the guests were invited to experience Chery Automobile's recent introductions - The Tiggo 8 Pro Max SUV, Tiggo 4 Pro SUV and the Arizzo 6 Pro sedan.

The Tiggo 8 Pro Max SUV is equipped with Superior ADAS with 12 Point Coverage, Panoramic Sunroof, All-Wheel Drive, 540 Panoramic Image, 9 Airbags, 12.3 Inch Dual Screen Design with Wireless Carplay/ Android Auto, Front Radar, 8 Way Electric Memory Driver Seat Adjustment and 2.0 Litre Turbocharged engine. The Tiggo 4 Pro SUV is equipped with 10.25 inch Central Screen with Wireless Carplay/ Android Auto / Apple Play, 18 Inch Alloy Wheel, 360 Panoramic Image, 6 Speakers, 6 Way Electric Driver Seat Adjustment, Electric Sunroof, Fast Wireless Fast Charging, 4 Airbags and a 1.5 Litre Turbocharged engine.

The Arizzo 6 Pro Sedan is equipped with 10.25 inch Dual Screen Design / Android Auto/ Apple Play, 18 Inch Alloy Wheel, Superior ADAS with 6 Point Cov-

erage, 360 Panoramic Image, 6 Airbags, Electric Sunroof, 6 Way Electric Driver Seat Adjustment, Air Purifier PM 2.5, Ambient Lighting, Fast Wireless Fast Charging, Ventilated Front Seats, 6 Speakers and 1.5 Litre Turbocharged engine.

Fascinated by the stylish, feature-rich and technology packed vehicles a customer remarked, "These all-new introductions from Chery are indeed very impressive and thrilling. There is so much technology and features available, it is indeed pure value for money. I am also very delighted to know that Saud Bahwan Group is extending all the support to make the entire ownership period hassle-free and satisfying. Apart from that, I am also very impressed that Chery has also recently received the 2023 J. D. Power China Initial Quality Study Award. This demonstrates Chery's commitment and dedication towards making high quality vehicles that are the perfect travel partners."

The brand new Chery range is now available for viewing at the Chery showroom at Wattayah.

MODERN COLLEGE OF BUSINESS AND SCIENCE

MCBS makes history with first PhD programme in Business Administration nationwide

MUSCAT: In a pioneering move that sets the standard for academic excellence, the Modern College of Business and Science (MCBS) announced establishing the country's first Doctor of Philosophy (PhD) program in Business Administration. The First Cohort of Students joined in the Fall of 2023.

Dr. Muneer Al Maskari, Executive Chairman, said: "The launch of Oman's first PhD programme in Business Administration is a testament to our commitment to excellence in education and research. This programme will be pivotal in advancing business knowledge and preparing future leaders both in industry and aca-



demia. This milestone further solidifies MCBS's commitment to advancing academic excellence and fostering innovation."

This groundbreaking programme redefines doctoral education in busi-

ness studies. The PhD in Business Administration at MCBS is poised to shape the future of business research, leadership, and innovation. The programme encompasses a rigorous curriculum, cutting-edge

research opportunities, and a commitment to fostering the next generation of thought leaders.

Some of the program's key features include the interdisciplinary approach of the PhD programme,

which encourages collaboration across business disciplines to address complex challenges. The programme offers a comprehensive and innovative curriculum to provide Ph.D. candidates with a strong foundation in business theory, research methodologies, and practical applications.

A distinguished faculty of leading scholars and seasoned practitioners will guide students through their doctoral journey, offering mentorship and expertise. Students engage in research that directly impacts the business world, contributing to advancing knowledge and best practices. With a focus on international business issues, the programme

equips students to navigate the complexities of an interconnected business landscape.

Dr. Moosa Al Kindi, Dean of MCBS, added: "We are excited to embark on this journey of intellectual discovery with our inaugural cohort. The PhD program will provide a unique platform for students to contribute to the forefront of business scholarship."

How to apply

Prospective candidates interested in pursuing a PhD in Business Administration MCBS can find detailed application information on the official MCBS website: <https://www.mcbs.edu.om/doctorenltry/>





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