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LET'S TALK
Times OF OMAN

HM SENDS CONDOLENCES TO KUWAIT

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of condolences to Sheikh Mishal Al Ahmed Al Jabir Al Sabah, Emir of Kuwait on the death of Sheikh Salim Al Ali Al Salim Al Sabah. In the cable, His Majesty expressed his sincere condolences and sympathy to Sheikh Mishal and the bereaved's family, praying to the Almighty Allah to rest his soul in peace in paradise and grant his family patience. — ONA

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Curtain comes down on 2024 Paris Olympic Games **B6**

LABOUR MINISTER DISCUSSES WAYS TO BOOST OMANISATION

Problems faced by business owners of small and medium enterprises were also discussed

SALALAH: The Ministry of Labour on Monday organised a meeting with business owners in Dhofar Governorate to discuss the challenges of the labour market. The meeting elaborated on challenges facing business owners, notably those running small and medium enterprises (SMEs).

It underscored the need to streamline procedures to help establish new projects. It also touched on the issue of Omanisation of some activities, as well as ways to develop the Omani labour market in general.

Held at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah, the meeting was attended by Dr. Mahad Said Ba'owain, Minister of Labour. Dr. Mahad affirmed that the Ministry's "Social Dialogue Committee" has accelerated the pace of action, cooperation and partnership with the three parties to production (the government, employers and workers).

In turn, this led to a rise in production that keeps pace with the global labour market needs.

Dr. Mahad Said Ba'owain, Minister of Labour pointed out that the ministry is engaged in efforts to develop market tools, consolidate backup for private sector institutions and raise incentives for the stabilisation of country's labour market.

Dr. Mahad pointed out the Ministry of Labour is engaged in efforts to develop market tools, consolidate backup to private sector institutions and raise incentives to establishments.

He explained that the Labour Law and pertinent regulations are envisaged to stabilise the labour market and respond to the progress made in the global market.

He said that the current circumstances call for accelerating the efforts, given the challenges and tremendous progress we are witnessing in the markets. The ministry supports the human resource, as it is the true driver of development through the employment initiatives in partnership with the private sector.

Dr. Mahad stressed the importance of the private sector in Dhofar, which is growing rapidly, especially in the tourism sector.

He praised the role of the governorate in strengthening the labour sector and the efforts made by small and medium enterprises and their national cadres working in the private sector for the establishments of companies, and intensifying interest in entrepreneurial projects related to artificial intelligence and supporting training programmes. With ONA inputs

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Real estate deals reach OMR1.4 billion

1 The value of real estate transactions in Oman rose by 0.5% to OMR1,409.6 million till the end of June 2024, compared to OMR1,402.5 million in the same period of 2023, according to the latest data released by the NCSI. >A3

OMAN

Information ministry hosts mediapersons

2 For highlighting the Oman's economic and tourism projects, investment opportunities and cultural heritage, the Ministry of Information hosted international media personnel. >A5

WORLD

Chopper crashes into hotel building

3 A helicopter on an "unauthorised" flight crashed into the roof of a Hilton hotel in the Australian city of Cairns, starting a fire and forcing hundreds of patrons out of the building. >A6

NUMBEO

Oman ranked fourth in the world for quality of life

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Sultanate of Oman has emerged as the top-ranked country in Asia for quality of life, securing the 4th position globally.

In a recent mid-year assessment conducted by Numbeo, Oman is ranked behind Luxembourg, Netherlands and Denmark.

Luxembourg ranks first in the global quality of living index for mid-2024 with 219.3 points.

The Netherlands ranks second with 207.5 points. Denmark ranks third with 205.6 points and Oman ranks fourth with 204 points.

Quality of Life Index provides a comprehensive evaluation of various factors that contribute to the overall well-being and living standards of individuals residing in a particular country or city.

The country's high ranking can be attributed to several elements that significantly impact the quality of life, including purchasing power, pollution levels, housing affordability, cost of living, safety, healthcare quality, commute times, and climate conditions.

Qatar ranked 17th with 182.9 points, UAE ranked 20th with 175.5 points, Saudi Arabia 25th with 170.5 points and Kuwait was ranked 37th in the survey with 152.5 points. The Quality of Life Index, reflecting an estimation of overall quality of life, utilises an empirical formula considering factors such as Purchasing Power Index (higher is better), Safety Index (higher is better), Climate Index (higher is better), Pollution Index (lower is better), House Price to Income Ratio (lower is better), Cost of Living Index (lower is better), Health Care Index (higher is better), and Traffic Commute Time Index (lower is better).

QUALITY OF LIFE INDEX BY COUNTRY

RANK	COUNTRY	INDEX
1	LUXEMBOURG	219.3
2	NETHERLANDS	207.5
3	DENMARK	205.6
4	OMAN	204.3
5	SWITZERLAND	204.0
6	FINLAND	199.9
7	ICELAND	199.7
8	AUSTRIA	190.8
9	NORWAY	189.0
10	SWEDEN	186.7

Most scenic city at night in the world

Recently, Muscat has been ranked as the third most scenic city at night in the world by Travelbag, a company specialising in multi-destination trips. Muscat was ranked behind Dubai and Tokyo, which claimed the top two spots.

The travel company used criteria such as Instagram hashtags, light and noise pollution levels, as well as safety of walking alone at night to determine the top cities in the world during night time.

GAZA DEATH TOLL
as of August 13, 2024

OMAN

PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr....12:17pm
Asr....3:43pm
Maghrib....6:47pm
Isha....8:02pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).... 4:22am

Oman intensifies crackdown on expat workforce, 12,000 arrested

HIGHLIGHTS

- **Inspection:** A dedicated Inspection Unit has been established under the Security and Safety Institution to oversee labour law compliance.
- **Omanisation:** The unit is focused on enforcing Omanisation rates, restricting expats from certain professions.
- **Stronger Enforcement:** The unit has been granted judicial powers to strengthen its enforcement capabilities.
- **Improved Facilities:** Labour care facilities with enhanced security and technology are being developed.
- **Training and Development**: Personnel are undergoing rigorous training to handle inspection and enforcement tasks effectively.

More than 9,700 of these individuals have been deported for violating the Labour Laws

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman is intensifying its efforts to regulate the foreign workforce.

In a significant crackdown, nearly 12,000 illegal workers have been apprehended in the past eight months.

Over 9,700 of these individuals have been deported for violating the Labour Laws.

Retired Brigadier General (Rtd), Said bin Sulaiman Al Asimi, CEO of the Security and Safety Institution, confirmed that the inspection unit has the authority to close sites that deliberately repeat the Omanisation violations, and urged young job seekers to explore the Omanised professions and visit the companies to prove their capabilities in the labour market.

There are many highly paid Omanised professions unlike the common belief in society that Omanisation is limited to professions with limited income.

He also stressed that the unit will continue to repeat inspection and monitoring visits to the Omanised professions for all activities in order to ensure the achievement of governance in accordance with the Omanisation policy.

"Granting the institution the royal trust by Royal Decree No. 18/2024 provided the status of judicial police to some employees of the inspection unit. This is a major addition to the institution's work to activate the labour inspection system to ensure that all parties are committed to implementing government decisions related to Omanised professions and the established Omanisation rates."

This crackdown underscores Oman's commitment to protecting the rights of Omani workers and ensuring fair labour practices within its borders.

MEETING

Oman, Libya review ways to strengthen relations

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the State of Libya discussed means of promoting relations in various areas.

During a meeting held in Muscat on Monday, Sheikh Khalifa Ali Al Harthy, Undersecretary of the Foreign Ministry for Political Affairs and Mohamed Khalil Issa, Deputy Foreign Minister for Political Affairs of Libya discussed the latest political developments in Libya.

The two sides also touched on the most important issues at the regional level.

The meeting was attended by HajerAmr Al-Nami, Ambassador of Libya to the Sultanate of Oman, Dr. Zainab Said Al Qasmi, Head of the Diplomatic Academy and a number of officials from both sides.

-ONA

SYMPOSIUM

Emphasis on impacts of AI on traditional music

SALALAH: A cultural symposium titled "Music, Artificial Intelligence and Modern Technologies" was held at the Sultan Qaboos Youth Complex for Culture and Entertainment in Salalah on Monday.

The symposium was organised by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth as part of the Omani Song Festival. The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Ahmed Mohsin Al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality.

The symposium aimed at debating ways to benefit from technological developments in achieving a balance between preserving cultural heritage and promoting innovative artistic experiences.

It laid emphasis on envisaged impacts of artificial intelligence on traditional music, as well as the role of modern technology in preserving and developing cultural heritage. -ONA

TECHNOLOGICAL DEVELOPMENTS: The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Dr. Ahmed Mohsin Al Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality. -ONA

Recall

Recall Date: 13 August 2024

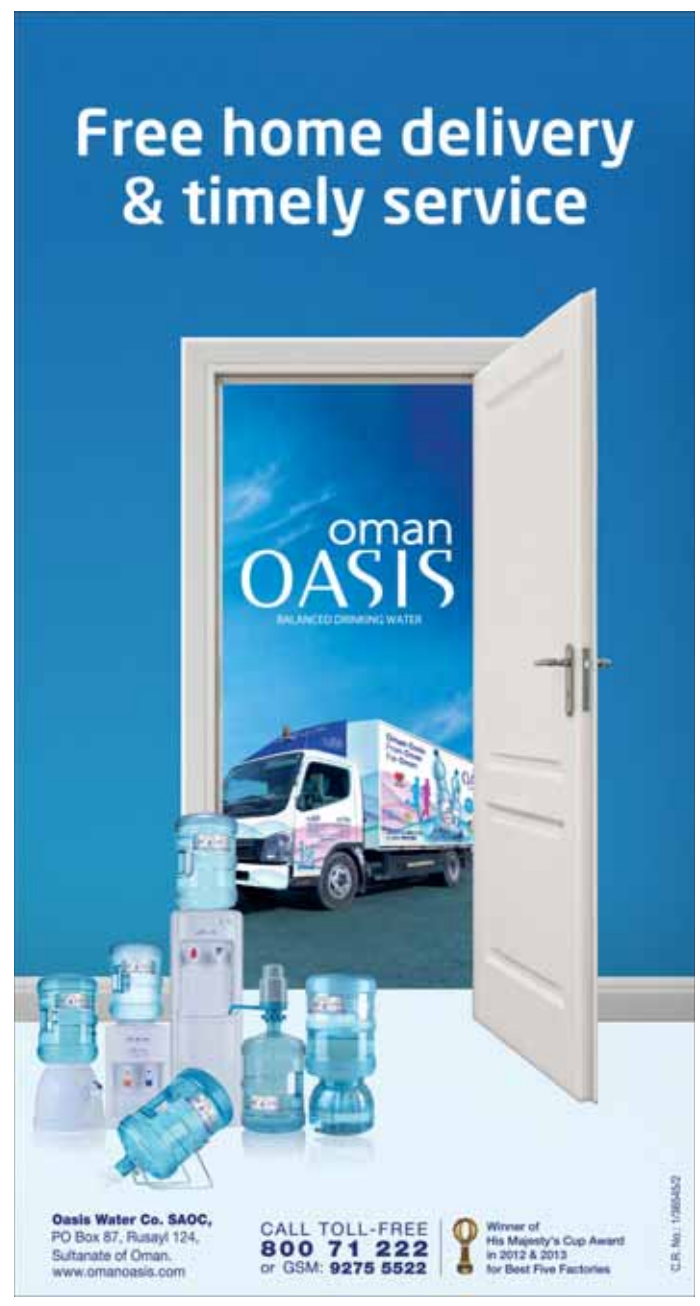
Brand of Commodity	Year of Production	Number of Affected Commodities
Vita-Mix 225 ml and 600 ml blending containers, and blade bases, compatibleml with certain Vitamix® Ascent® and Venturist® Series blenders	From October 2019	14 starter kits

Recall consequence: Vita-Mix has determined that there is a risk that, in a small number of cases, the container can separate from the blade base, exposing the blades and posing a risk of injury from laceration to consumers.

Recall Action: Vita-Mix requests that affected customers immediately stop using the 225ml and 600 ml blending cups and blade bases and contact Vita-Mix to register their details for a repair kit consisting of a protective plastic shroud to attach over the blade base and additional instructional labels.

For information, please call **Vita-Mix at 968 24 116862** (from 10.00-19.00 local time, Monday to Thursday) or go to **BlendingCupBowlRecall.expertinquiry.com**

Vitamix



MUSCAT GOVERNORATE

Search and rescue efforts continue for missing citizens at sea

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In coordination with the Maritime Security Centre, a number of military, security and civilian agencies continue joint efforts in the search and rescue operation for missing fishermen at sea, including the efforts of the citizens' families.

An Omani fishing boat was previously reported missing with two people on board, northeast of the Qurum area in Muscat Governorate.

A joint search and rescue operation was activated in coordination with all concerned authorities. The missing fishing boat was found, while joint search and rescue efforts continue for the crew.

Nepal keen to boost bilateral ties with Oman in all sectors

Both countries need to work together towards realising economic opportunities for mutual benefits

Times News Service

MUSCAT: Nepal is keen to increase its cooperation with Oman in trade, investment, economic cooperation, agriculture, energy, tourism, labour and foreign employment, culture, education as well as direct air connectivity.

Speaking to *Times of Oman*, Foreign Secretary of Nepal, Sewa Lamsal, said that she discussed bilateral relations with several key officials in Oman and expressed their firm commitment to further enhance partnership in mutually agreed areas.

She also said that both countries need to work together towards realising economic opportunities for mutual benefits besides creating more opportunities to promote people-to-people engagement in the Sultanate of Oman.

During her visit, she described Muscat as a beautiful, well planned, peaceful and developed city. "I can track the footprint of the visionary leader of Oman and am very much impressed and wanted to know more about Oman Vision 2040," she said.

She further said that Nepal also has the vision and a road map for the country's future. "We lack timely implementation of them and we have to learn how to deliver results on ground because people's expectations are very high everywhere in the world."

She also said Nepal and Oman have been enjoying excellent bilateral relationships. "Our relationships are founded on utmost friendship and goodwill. We don't have any issues and have friendship and goodwill. Our people are working in Oman and they are very happy."

She also said this is the first ever political and bilateral consultation meeting with Oman. "This is just the beginning and I am happy that I became a part of this historic meeting. In our country's history, it is the beginning and we are planning many other high level visits soon," she added.

The Foreign Secretary of Nepal also is looking for direct connectivity with Oman. Elaborating on this she said, "In the past we used to have direct flights but it was suspended for some time due to COVID."

"But during the meeting I have requested the Omani authorities to resume the flight and have humbly requested the Omani side for setting up of the Omani Embassy in Kathmandu. This will be another important foundation to strengthen our bilateral ties," she said.

She said that people from Oman should explore Nepal more. "They should know how Nepal looks and what is famous in Nepal as the landscape we have is completely different from any other countries."

During her tour, she visited Muttrah Souq, Grand Mosque and National Museum. "I even tried Omani biriyani which is of great taste," she confessed.

The Foreign Secretary Sewa Lamsal also thanked the Government of Oman for providing employment to more than 21,000 Nepalis and emphasised on providing additional opportunities in view of His Majesty's Oman Vision 2040 strategy.

She stressed the need to explore the untapped potential in economic, cultural and educational areas as well as proposed to establish meaningful collaborative partnership in the private sector. She urged the Omani businesses to explore investment opportunities in Nepal in hydropower, tourism and in the green hydrogen sector.

Dornath Aryal, Ambassador of Nepal said that Nepal-Oman Bilateral Consultations Mechanism was established in 2017, and the next meeting will be held in Kathmandu on mutually convenient dates.

FAPI

Studies for more precise imaging of various tumours completed in Oman

MUSCAT: The University Medical City, represented by Radiology and Nuclear Medicine department at Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Center (SQCCCRC), has announced the successful completion of the first Fibroblast Activation Protein Inhibitor (FAPI) PET/CT studies, marking a significant milestone as the first of its kind in the Sultanate of Oman.

The technique is based on injecting the patient with the radiopharmaceutical FAPI intravenously, which targets fibroblast activation protein, prevalent in cancer-associated fibroblasts, after which the patient is imaged in the PET/CT.

This allows for more precise imaging of various tumours. In addition, FAPI PET/CT has promising applications in identifying fibrotic diseases, such as cardiac fibrosis and chronic inflammatory conditions, which expands its diagnostic applications.

"We have successfully completed the first studies of fibroblast-activating protein inhibitors (FAPI) using positron tomography (PET/CT), which demonstrated high quality, starting from radiopharmaceutical preparation to accurate biodistribution during imaging", stated Dr. Khulood Salim Al Riyami, Nuclear Medicine Consultant and Section Head at SQCCCRC.

"In oncology, FAPI PET/CT has the potential to offer detailed insights into tumor biology, enhancing the accuracy of cancer diagnosis and staging. It improves the detection of cancerous tissues and plays a crucial role in treatment planning and opening the gate for future theranostics applications", Dr. Khulood explained.

"We look forward to offering this cutting-edge service to our patients in the near future, further enhancing our capabilities in providing comprehensive and state-of-the-art healthcare and reducing the need for patients to travel abroad for advanced diagnostics, ensuring they receive top-tier care locally", Dr. Rashid Fu'ad Al Sukaiti, Senior Consultant Radiologist, Head of Radiology and Nuclear Medicine Department at Sultan Qaboos Comprehensive Cancer Care and Research Center said.

In his turn, Dr. Khalid Al Baimani, In-charge of SQCCCRC, remarked: "This pioneering study highlights the commitment of the University Medical City and SQCCCRC to innovation and keeping pace with the latest global advancements in medical services, under the UMC's visionary leadership that supports our continuous pursuit of excellence. -ONA

NCSI

Oman's real estate transactions reach OMR1.4bn

MUSCAT: The value of real estate transactions in the Sultanate of Oman rose by 0.5% to OMR1,409.6 million till the end of June 2024, compared to OMR1,402.5 million in the same period of 2023, according to the latest data released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

According to Preliminary statistics issued by the NCSI, fees collected for legal transactions amounted to OMR32.3 million till the end of June 2024, comprising a decline by 3.5% compared to the corresponding period of 2023.

The value of sale contracts reached OMR545.6 million till the end of June 2024, and the number of sale contracts decreased by 0.9% to 32,596 compared to 32,907 in the same period of 2023.

The traded value of mortgage contracts rose by 0.5% till the end of June 2024 to OMR856.7 million compared to OMR852.1 million during the same period of 2023. Meanwhile, the number of mortgage contracts decreased by 16.9% to 10,028 from 12,062 in the same period of 2023.

The value of barter contracts rose by 52% to OMR7.3 million till the end of June 2024 compared to OMR4.8 million in the same period of 2023. The number of barter contracts decreased by 8.3% to reach 671 till the end of June 2024 compared to 732 in June 2023.

The number of title deeds issued by the end of June 2024 decreased by 7% to 109,666 whereas the number of title deeds issued for the GCC citizens rose by 5.2% to 666 compared to 633 till the end of June 2023. -ONA

OMAN

Sur Marine Sports Festival to be organised from 18 August

The tourism value of Sur stems from its historic and cultural role played through its deep-rooted marine history

SUR: The Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the Office of the Governor of South Al Sharqiyah, in cooperation with a number of government departments and private sector establishments, will organise Sur Marine Sports Festival from 18 August to 28 August 2024 at Mokha Beach in the Wilayat of Sur.

The event will be organised as part of the executive programme of Sur as Capital of Arab Tourism 2024.

The event aims to showcase the tourism value of the Wilayat of Sur in particular and the Governorate of South Al Sharqiyah in general. The tourism value of Sur and the South Al Sharqiyah governorate stems from the historic role of the Wilayat of Sur as a cultural communication centre through its deep-rooted marine history.

The festival attracts visitors from within and outside the Sultanate of Oman. The festival would see the holding of Oman Sailing Championship 2024 and its competitions in four categories, including professional and junior sailors and Elka 4 and Elka 6 boats. The event includes kite-surfing, swimming contests, and traditional rowing boat competitions which would provide the festival's visitors with amazing sailing experiences.

The festival also includes an exhibition for SMEs and handicrafts, food trucks and different entertainment activities. -ONA

COMMENTARY

From Salalah to Gwadar: A journey through time and beauty

MOHAMMED ANWAR AL BALUHSI

It was a memorable afternoon when my father, then serving in the Oman Army, took me from our "Um Al Gawaref" camp near Salalah City to Salalah Airport. I was about nine or ten years old, living among brave Omani soldiers in the eighties. They fondly called me a little "Omani Soldier."

Before leaving Salalah, we made a memorable stop at Hafa Bazar, a marketplace that epitomises the charm and culture of the city. This vibrant bazaar, nestled in the heart of Salalah, has long been a hub of activity and a testament to Omani tradition. In the 1980s, Hafa Bazar was a dazzling tapestry of sights, sounds, and scents, offering a unique and unforgettable shopping experience for every visitor.

Walking through the bustling aisles, we were captivated by the rich aromas of frankincense and myrrh that filled the air, mingling with the fragrant spices from various stalls.

The bazaar was alive with the chatter of locals and tourists alike, each drawn to the colourful displays of handmade textiles, intricate silver jewellery. The vibrant atmosphere was a sensory delight, with merchants eagerly showcasing their wares and sharing stories of their craftsmanship.

Hafa Bazar in the eighties had a distinct charm, a blend of traditional Omani heritage and a lively, welcoming spirit. Every corner of the bazaar offered something special, from the exotic perfumes that lined the shelves to the fresh produce that added a burst of colour to the market scene.

It was a place where one could find both everyday essentials and unique souvenirs, each item telling a story of the region's rich cultural tapestry.

Hafa Bazar was more than just a marketplace; it was a vibrant cultural hub that left an indelible mark on our hearts, a beautiful snapshot of Salalah's enduring spirit and timeless appeal. After shopping from Hafa bazar, we landed at Oman Airforce Airport around 5 or 6 pm and drove to "Muaskar Al Murtfaa" Camp. That night, we enjoyed dinner and a movie with the soldiers, making it a delightful experience.

Early the next morning, my father, my elder brother, and I visited Muttrah Souq for some shopping before our trip to Gwadar. We took a "pickup" from Burj Al Sahwa roundabout to Souq Muttrah, with each passenger paying 300 baisas.

On the third day, we flew to Gwadar, where my grandfather greeted us at the airport. Gwadar was breathtaking, with the sea on two sides. In the evening, my grandfather rented a bicycle for me at the beach, costing just two rupees for two hours. I had the time of my life riding it, enjoying the simple, beautiful lifestyle of the eighties.

The streets of Gwadar, with their distinctive houses and the mosque where I prayed, are still vivid in my memory. When a salesman asked if I was from Oman, I proudly replied, "Yes, I am." He warmly acknowledged, "Oman is a good country and beautiful." Gwadar's Omani heritage was evident everywhere. Strolling through the old town, I admired buildings reflecting Omani architectural styles. The Gwadar Fort, a military outpost during Omani rule, stood proudly. The mosque, an architectural gem from the Omani period, showcased the rich history.

A visit to Gwadar is incomplete without tasting the "Gwadari Sweet." We indulged in this local delicacy, relishing every bite. Known for its strategic location, sweets, and fish, Gwadar offered us endless enjoyment. Gwadar shares a rich history with Oman, especially from 1783 to 1958. During Omani rule, Gwadar thrived with infrastructure development, including ports that boosted trade and connectivity. This historical connection is still palpable in the town's streets and architecture, making Gwadar a unique blend of cultures and histories.

Tourism potential of Dhofar highlighted to international media

The gathering, hosted by the Information Ministry, was attended by representatives from prestigious international media institutions

SALALAH: As part of its keenness on highlighting the Sultanate of Oman's economic and tourism projects, investment opportunities and rich cultural heritage, the Ministry of Information hosted a number of international media personnel currently visiting the Governorate of Dhofar.

The programme, which lasts from 2 to 20 August 2024, seeks to attract larger numbers of tourists from Europe, North America, Africa and East Asia.

Sheikha Ahmed Al Mahrouqi, Acting Director General of External Media, said that the programme to host international media professionals in the Dhofar Khareef season 2024, consolidates Oman's presence in the global cultural and tourism arena.

The gathering was attended by representatives from prestigious international media institutions, including Reuters, the Foreign Journalist Association, National Geographic magazine, Chinese TV, Turkish TV, and other media institutions in Italy, Spain, Belgium and Australia, Sheikha added.

She added that the media personnel form two groups that will visit tourist areas, cultural, historical and archaeological sites in Dhofar Governorate, including the ancient city of Samharam, Khor Rori, the Land of Frankincense Museum and Wadi Dokah. The tours will also cover economic areas like Salalah Port and Salalah Free Zone.

The visit, which coincides with different events like the Khareef Dhofar Season 2024 (Dhofar Monsoon 2024), will provide an opportunity to showcase Omani culture and countryside lifestyles.

National Geographic photographer David Rolle said, "Dhofar Governorate, which welcomed us with autumn drizzle and fog, boasts a wide range of natural diversity features, right from dense formations of frankincense trees in Wadi Dawkah to the magnificent Al Mughsyail Beach."

Rolle, who described his visit as "wonderful", toured Al Fazayeh Beach in the Wilayat of Rakhyout (famous for its pristine beaches and crystal clear seawater), Wadi Darbat valley (with its breathtaking waterfalls and velvet green landscape) and Al Hafa Market (which exudes the fragrance of frankincense).

Then, Rolle went all the way to the memorial of the Chinese navigator Zheng He and later toured the archaeological sites in Samharam and Al Baleed (which depict the ancient history of Dhofar Governorate and its people).

For his part, Max Stanton, an e-content creator, said, "This is my first visit to Dhofar Governorate in the autumn season where natural scenery comes to life amid wet weather and moderate temperatures. This encourages tourists to engage in different activities like adventure tourism, treks to centuries-old heritage sites and trips to cultural landmarks and traditional industries' houses."

— ONA

MINISTRY OF EDUCATION

Pact to finance hall at Al Amal School for the Deaf signed

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Education and Mitsui E&P Middle East signed an agreement on Sunday to support and finance the establishment of a sensory and visual interaction hall at Al Amal School for the Deaf in Al Khuwair.

The agreement was signed by Majid bin Said Al Bahri, Undersecretary of the Ministry for Administrative and Financial Affairs, and Nasser bin Ali Al Kindi, General Manager of the company.

The signing of the agreement was attended by Dr. Shanoona Al Habsi, Assistant Director-General for Special Education at the Directorate-General of Special Education and Continuous Learning, Mohammed Al Harbi, principal of Al Amal School for the Deaf, Ashraf Al Harbi, member of the main team of the Initiatives Support Committee, Saja Al Zadjali, Personal Assistant to the General Manager of the company, and Salem Al Harthi, Deputy Director of Operations Department at the company.

The signing of the agreement took place at the Ministry's General Diwan.

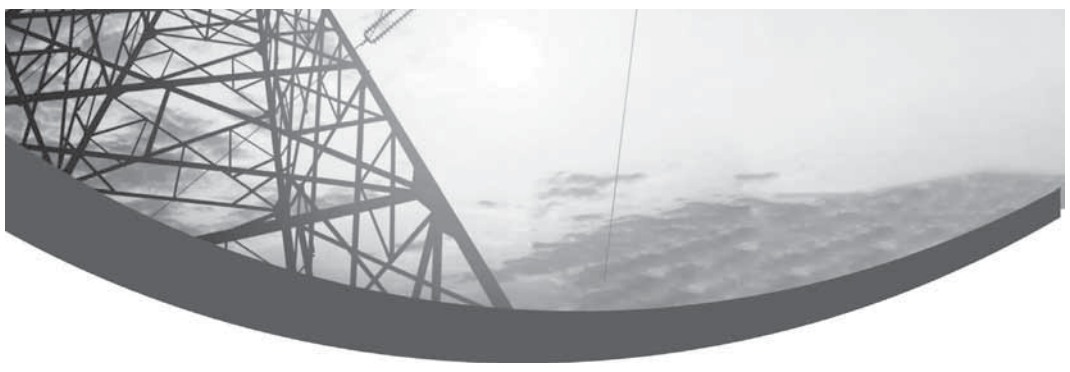
The hall contributes to enhancing the development of sensory skills among students with special needs, and providing a stimulating educational environment for them through the tools and devices it contains.

This in turn contributes to enhancing learning, evaluation, and rehabilitation of people with special needs who suffer from functional disorders.

The Undersecretary for Administrative and Financial Affairs stated: "This agreement stems from the interest of the Ministry of Education in creating a multi-sensory educational environment designed to develop the senses and control sensory stimulation, according to an educational and therapeutic approach for students with special needs in a manner that is consistent with their sensory, cognitive, motor and social abilities, and contributes to improving their concentration and developing their various skills and abilities."

"It is also based on the principle of partnership between the Ministry and private sector institutions that the Ministry has signed this agreement with the company to support and finance the establishment of the hall, which will include many physical therapy tools and equipment, and sensory devices, which have been globally approved as enhanced tools to develop the sensory skills of students with special needs."

"It is hoped that this hall will play a major role in providing this category of students with appropriate communication skills with the surrounding community, making them feel satisfied and psychologically stable, and helping them strengthen their senses. We extend our sincere thanks to Mitsui E&P Middle East for its kind and appreciated efforts and support for the Ministry in this field, stressing the importance of the partnership between the Ministry and private sector institutions, as it has a significant impact on improving the quality of education services," he further added.



TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

Nama Dhofar Services invites the specialized companies to participate and submit their offers for the below said tenders: -

Tender Number	Tender Name	Last Date for Collection of Documents	Time & Last Date for Proposal Submission	Tender Fee (OMR) Including VAT (5%)
DISC/2024/096	UTILITY NETWORK EXTENSION – Lot- 07H/2024	27 August 2024	05 September 2024	105/-
DISC/2024/097	UTILITY NETWORK EXTENSION – Lot- 07H/2024	27 August 2024	05 September 2024	52/500
DISC/2024/098	UTILITY NETWORK EXTENSION – - 07J/2024	27 August 2024	05 September 2024	52/500
DISC/2024/099	11kV & LV NETWORK IMPROVEMENT WORKS OF 2023 IN ZONE-1 &ZONE-2(LOT-10)	27 August 2024	17 September 2024	52/500
DISC/2024/100	Procurement of SMS Engine and Bulk SMS	27 August 2024	17 September 2024	52/500

- To purchase the tender document website via the link or the Barcode below: **https://isupplier.nama.om:4443/OA_HTML/OA.jsp?OAFunc=XXTEN_TENDER_FLOAT_DISC_F**
- Every company wishing to participate in this tender must attach with its bid a bid bond in the form of a bank guarantee from one of the banks operating in the Sultanate of Oman. Any bid that does not contain the bid bond will be disqualified.
- The original bid bond must be submitted in an envelope sealed with red wax and addressed to the chairperson of the minor tender committee and written on outside the Tender name and the Tender number and it should be paced in the tender box in Nama Dhofar Services in Salalah before 10:00 am of the last day for submitting Bids.
- Bids shall be submitted online through using **"isupplier portal"**. No hard copies are accepted.
- The Tender fees are not refundable. However, Tenderers who are holding "Riyada" card issued from public authority for SME development will be exempted from providing the tender fee and the Bid bond.
- The company is not obliged to accept the lowest or any other bid.
- In the event of receipt of the tender document on behalf of another company, the interested purchasers in the above tender document should provide details of the person's name and the company details.

نماء nama
لخدمات ظفار
DHOFAR SERVICES

Dhofar Integrated Services Companys. A. O. C.
CR Number 2185229 ,PO Box 2609
PC 211 ,Salalah - Sultanate of Oman
Phone Number 23232523 ,Fax 23201183
www.dhofarservices.nama.om

WORLD

AUSTRALIA

'Unauthorised' helicopter crashes into hotel

CAIRNS: A helicopter on an "unauthorised" flight crashed into the roof of a Hilton hotel in the north-eastern Australian city of Cairns, starting a fire and forcing hundreds of patrons out of the building as a precaution, authorities said.

The crash took place at around 1:50 a.m. local time on Monday where the pilot was declared dead at the scene.

"The pilot and single occupant of the aircraft was located and declared deceased at the scene, and forensic investigations are underway to formally identify him," Cairns police said in a statement

Police also said that there were no injuries on the ground.

Authorities said the helicopter had been taken from its hangar for an "unauthorized flight," but did not provide further details.

Acting Chief Superintendent Shane Holmes told said it was not known if the man flying the helicopter held a pilot's license or if he worked for the company that owned the craft, Nautilus Aviation. "There is no further threat to the community, and we believe this is an isolated incident," Holmes told reporters. – DW

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Deputy Editor-in-Chief: Anees bin Essa Al Zedjali
Chief Executive Officer: Ahmed Essa Al Zedjali

EDITORIAL: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24813153, E-mail: editor@timesofoman.com
ADVERTISING: Telephone: 24726666, Fax: 24812624, E-mail: advertising@timesofoman.com
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India ups maritime patrolling to prevent any illegal intrusions from Bangladesh

To prevent any hostile act and intrusion, we have beefed up the security, positioned ships, a senior official of Indian Coast Guard said

NEW DELHI: Amid heightened tensions in Bangladesh following the ouster of former Bangladesh PM Sheikh Hasina, the Indian Coast Guard said that security has been beefed up along the international maritime boundary line to prevent any illegal intrusion in India.

Deputy Director General Anupam Rai of the Indian Coast Guard told ANI on Monday that the security has been bolstered to address any potential threats.

"After the political unrest in Bangladesh, Indian Coast Guard has enhanced its patrolling and surveillance along the international maritime boundary line... To prevent any hostile act and illegal intrusion we have beefed up the security, positioned two to three ships...Sunderban Creek areas are being patrolled by our air cushion vessels and interceptor boats," ICG Deputy DG Anupam Rai told ANI.

Areas being closely monitored

He further detailed that the Sunderban Creek areas are being closely monitored with air cushion vessels and interceptor boats. The Indian Coast Guard's coastal surveillance radars at Haldia, Paradeep, and Gopalpur are operating around the clock, scanning the close coasts of India for any signs of illegal activity.

"Till now no illegal activity has been seen but we have very specifically told our ships to board all fishing boats or any vessels that are close to the Indo-Bangladesh International Maritime Border Line (IMBL) or in the creek areas, " he added.

Meanwhile, the Border Security forces have also tightened security along the Indo-Bangladesh international border in response to the ongoing crisis in Bangladesh.

Deployment at border outposts has also been increased, and all surveillance equipment is being utilized to ensure effective monitoring.

The Ministry of Home Affairs has formed a committee, led by the Additional Director General (ADG) of the BSF Eastern Command, to monitor the situation at the Indo-Bangladesh Border (IBB).

The Ministry of Home Affairs has formed a committee, led by the Additional Director General (ADG) of the BSF Eastern Command, to monitor the situation at the Indo-Bangladesh Border (IBB).

In a letter dated August 9, Under Secretary to the Govt of India Smitha Viju said, "It has been decided to constitute a Committee consisting of the following members for the above-mentioned subject a. ADG, BSF, Eastern Command as the Chairman, b. IG, BSF Frontier HQ South Bengal, c. IG, BSF Frontier HQ Tripura, d. Member (Planning and Development), LPAI and e. Secretary, LPAI."

Bangladesh is facing a fluid political situation with Sheikh Hasina, tendering her resignation from the position of Prime Minister on August 5 in the wake of mounting protests.

The protests erupted in early July due to demands for reforming the quota system that reserves civil service jobs for specific groups, including descendants of 1971 war veterans.The unrest in tensified after students opposed a new policy allocating government jobs to descendants of freedom fighters, leading to violence, including attacks on state television headquarters and police booths in Dhaka. – ANI

CONTINUING TENSIONS

Lufthansa extends suspension of Middle East flights

FRANKFURT: The Lufthansa Group is extending its flight cancellations to the Middle East for another week. That includes all flights to and from Tel Aviv, Tehran, Beirut, Amman and Erbil until August 21, the company announced in Frankfurt.

The group's companies will also not be using the airspace over Iraq and Iran.

The suspension is in response to the continuing tensions between Israel and Iran, which have given rise to fears of war in the region spreading far beyond the Gaza Strip.The previous flight suspension was set to last until Tuesday.

The flight suspension applies to all of the group's carriers, including Swiss, Austrian Airlines, Brussels Airlines and Eurowings, and to cargo and passenger aircraft alike. Lufthansa is offering free cancellations to travelers with tickets up to and including August 31.

Other airlines also suspend flights

Air France said it had also extended the suspension of its flights between Paris-Charles de Gaulle and Beirut, as well as flights to and from Lebanon operated by its subsidiary, Transavia France, until next Wednesday due to the security situation in Lebanon.

Air France first suspended flights to Beirut on July 29 after a rocket attack on the Israeli-controlled Golan Heights.

Irish low-cost carrier Ryanair said it was canceling all flights to and from Ben Gurion International Airport outside of Tel Aviv from Tuesday until August 26 "due to operational restrictions which are beyond our control." The airline did not elaborate. — DW

Germany, France, UK demand 'urgent' cease-fire in Gaza Strip

The fighting must end now, and all hostages still detained by Hamas must be released, German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said

GAZA: A joint statement from the leaders of Germany, France and the United Kingdom on Monday called for an immediate end to fighting in Gaza, the release of Israeli hostages and the prevention of further escalation, especially on the part of Iran and its allies.

"The fighting must end now, and all hostages still detained by Hamas must be released," German Chancellor Olaf Scholz, French President Emmanuel Macron and British Prime Minister Keir Starmer said.

The three leaders, all considered major supporters of Israel, called on Iran and its allies, such as Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Houthis in Yemen, "to refrain from attacks that would further escalate regional tensions and jeopardize the opportunity to agree to a cease-fire and the release of hostages."

Cease-fire calls amid rising tensions

The 10-month-long conflict has seen repeated calls for cease-fire negotiations, but the only success so far has been a one-week truce agreed back in November.

Monday's renewed call comes after a deadly Israeli airstrike killed more than 90 people sheltering in a school that had been set up as a refuge for displaced people.

Almost 40,000 Palestinians, mostly women and children, have been killed in the conflict, according to the Health Ministry in Hamas-run Gaza. Meanwhile, fears that the conflict may erupt into an all-out regional war continue unabated.

The killing of Hamas leader Ismail Haniyeh in Iran's capital, Tehran, at the end of July was followed by comments from Iran vowing to respond to what it called an Israeli attack. In response, the US has pledged to bolster Israel's defences, with reports that Defence Secretary Lloyd Austin has ordered the deployment of a guided-missile submarine to the region and told the USS Abraham Lincoln aircraft carrier strike group to sail more quickly.

Scholz, Macron and Starmer warned that whoever escalates the conflict "will bear responsibility for actions that jeopardise this opportunity for peace and stability. No country or nation stands to gain from a further escalation in the Middle East."

UNRWA humanitarian relief assistance

The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA) confirmed on Monday that it will continue to provide humanitarian relief assistance in the Gaza Strip despite the major challenges it faces.

According to a statement by the agency, UNRWA spokeswoman Enas Hamdan said that the UN agency currently runs 10 health centres and 100 mobile medical points to meet the needs of the population in the Gaza Strip.

She added that the humanitarian situation in the Strip is worsening due to the lack of aid and the continued Israeli bombardment, which makes the daily lives of civilians more difficult.

Hamdan affirmed, "The residents of the Gaza Strip are living in catastrophic conditions with the absence of safe places and even the areas that are claimed to be safe are crowded with displaced people and lack basic facilities.

Australian Foreign Minister says Israel must comply with international humanitarian law

Australian Foreign Minister Penny Wong condemned the horrific massacre that targeted the Al-Tabi'een school in the Daraj neighborhood of Gaza City, which resulted in the killing of 100 civilians.

The school, which was housing displaced families, was hit by Israeli warplanes while residents were performing the dawn prayers.

Wong affirmed that Israel must comply with international humanitarian law, stressing the need for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

Palestinian detainee subjected to mistreatment, torture inside the Israeli prison of Ramla

The lawyer of the Palestinian Prisoners Society (PPS) and the Detainees and Ex-Detainee said on Monday that the Israeli prison of Ramla continues to oppress the detainees, ignoring their health condition and deliberately using their injuries and illnesses as a weapon to torture and kill them slowly.

The lawyer of the Authority, who visited the Ramla prison hospital yesterday, said that the 36-year-old Jihad Burqan from the city of Jerusalem is at risk of losing his sight due to not being given the injections in addition to his suffering from diabetes and kidney problems.

"As a result of the deliberate medical negligence and depriving the detainee Burqan of his medication, he suffered a severe health deterioration."

— WAFA

CLIMATE TARGET

Can we learn from Sweden how to cut emissions?

STOCKHOLM: Sweden seems to have found the recipe to growing its economy while protecting the climate.

"You don't need to reduce welfare to reduce your climate impact," said Mattias Goldmann, founder of the Swedish 2030-secretariat, who works towards Sweden reaching its climate target for the national transport sector.

Sweden outperforms all other European countries when it comes to reducing net greenhouse gas emissions, according to the European Environment Agency.

The country already emitted five times less carbon dioxide, or CO2, per capita than the European average back in 1990. Since then, Sweden has reduced its net greenhouse gas emissions by another 80%, while the average reduction in the EU has only been 30%.

What's most stunning, though, is that Sweden, a heavily industrialised country which produces steel, cement and cars, managed to clean up its act — while also growing its economy twofold.

So how do you successfully decarbonise an economy while still growing it?

Investing in clean energy sources

The Scandinavian country has some natural advantages. 70% of Sweden is forest land. And forests are very useful when it comes to reducing greenhouse gas emissions because they remove CO2 from the atmosphere.

The country is also blessed with a great deal of wind, as well as mountains, streams and lakes — perfect for renewable energy.

But it wasn't just hitting the natural resources jackpot that got the country to where it is now. Sweden realised its natural potential early on and started investing in renewable energy sources much earlier than many other countries.

"Sweden has had hydropower for more than a century," according to Goldmann.

They also cut out fossil fuels from their energy mix back in the 1970s, when the global oil crisis hit. When countries were looking for other sources of energy, Sweden substantially built out nuclear energy.

Today, almost 70% of Sweden's electricity comes from renewables, especially hydropower and wind. The rest of its electricity demand is met by nuclear power. This means their greenhouse gas emissions for electricity production are almost zero right now.

"So, they are almost not using any fossil fuels for producing electricity. If you compare it with other countries, that's a whole other world," said Jorre De Schrijver, an energy expert from the European Environment Agency.

Decarbonising heat production

And it's not just electricity that's now produced without fossil fuels in Sweden — that also goes for heating and energy-intense industrial processes.

So, what was the trick there?

The first step was that Sweden invested in district heating systems early on, which are more efficient. This means that instead of having a heater in each home, you build big, centralized heaters that are connected to many houses and industrial areas through insulated pipes and underground infrastructure.

"You need the government and the private sector to work together to provide this infrastructure," said Asa Persson, who advises the Swedish government on climate policy and rates its performance.

It's also quite expensive — just think of all the piping you need to lay across entire neighborhoods. Nonetheless, the government decided to go for this approach early on and stuck with it.

"They saw the benefits of having these bigger system solutions. Sweden as a cold country had a real incentive to have a sort of energy efficient and sort of rational heating system in place to serve inhabitants," said Persson.

The good thing about district heating is that you can shift the fuels that such a system uses. In the past, Sweden relied on fossil fuels like oil and coal. But since the 1990s, the country attached particular importance to the development of renewable energy and energy efficiency, investing in the use of energy, especially wood fuels. Today, 97% of the heating in Sweden comes from biofuels and burning waste.

"Sweden managed to reduce emissions from electricity and heating by 70% in the last 30 years. So that also shows that big, bold changes are possible," said Persson.

Strong policies: giving people and businesses incentives

And these big, bold changes didn't come out of thin air. Sweden has implemented clear climate policies since the 1990s, such as introducing one of the world's first — and by now one of the world's highest — carbon taxes, charging individuals for the carbon dioxide they emit.

"There's a clear message for us: either we do something that's bad for the environment and we have to pay the tax, or do we do something that's better and we're not taxed," said Goldmann.

A 2019 empirical case study found that the Swedish carbon tax had a significant impact on CO2 emissions: it was responsible for a 6% decline of emissions from transport in an average year.

And it sped up the changes in the energy and heating sector by giving people and businesses the incentive to invest in renewable energy instead of fossil fuels.

While people many other countries would revolt against any new tax, acceptance in Sweden has been high.

"There has been support for environmental and climate policy for a long time in Sweden, and the country has also prided itself for being a leader in that regard," said Persson.

This is true across the political spectrum. In Sweden, seven out of eight parties agreed back in 2017 on the world's most stringent climate target: to be net zero by 2045.

"It's a world leading target that gave business and citizens a strong belief that this is actually going to continue happening and that I can invest in it knowing that even with the change of government, it will still stand," said Goldmann.

While Sweden has taken some major steps to slash emissions, not all sectors have been successfully decarbonized yet. Transport and agriculture are currently Sweden's largest sources of emissions.

And it's especially the transport sector that's currently Sweden's biggest problem child.

Following the energy crisis caused by Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Sweden's conservative government rolled back some important policies. It lowered petrol and diesel taxes by a quarter, which means Sweden now has among the lowest prices on diesel and gasoline in Europe. — DW

Full story @ timesofoman.com/world

SPORTS

2024 Paris Olympics: Memorable moments

A spectacular, star-studded live show closed out the Paris Olympics in style

PARIS: After 18 days, 329 gold, silver and bronze medals and countless storylines, the 2024 Olympics drew to a close on Sunday with a high-budget closing ceremony.

The occasion began in earnest when Leon Marchand, the French swimmer who became the most-decorated athlete of the Games with four gold medals and a bronze, picked up the Olympic Cauldron as a choir sang an Edith Piaf number.

As Marchand appeared on the big screen, the crowd in the Stade de France showed their appreciation, before a significant proportion of the 10,500 or so athletes who appeared at the Games entered the arena.

Among the flag bearers were Algeria's Imane Khelif and Taiwan's Lin Yu-ting. Both boxers were the subject of much controversy, abuse and misinformation, about their gender.Laura Lindemann und Max Rendschmidt carried the flag for Germany.

As is traditional, the winners of the marathon were awarded their medals on stage but, in a small break with that tradition, this time it was the women. Sifan Hassan of the Netherlands took gold while Tigst Assefa of Ethiopia and Hellen Obiri of Kenya were presented with silver and bronze respectively.

There was plenty on show, with performers dancing, flying through the air and lifting Olympic rings from the ground.

At one point, a piano was suspended in mid-air and, at another, 'The Golden Voyager' represented by a figure clad in gold, clambered atop a mountain of people. According to organizers, the "character is inspired by references from French history, including the Spirit of the Bastille."

Music in the stadium came from French acts Phoenix and Air, with cameos from Angele, Kaminsky and Vannda as fireworks lit up the night sky. Later, American artist H.E.R. performed the US national anthem the Star Spangled Banner as part of the handover for the next Games, set to take place in Los Angeles in 2028.

In true Hollywood style, as the song ended, actor Tom Cruise abseiled in to the arena to exchange high fives with the US team, take the Olympic flag from gymnast Simone Biles and speed away with it on a motorcycle. A video showed him delivering it to LA with the help of athletics great Michael Johnson and a few other familiar faces. California natives Red Hot Chili Peppers, Billie Eilish, Snoop Dogg and Dr. Dre provided the music from Venice Beach. -DW

USA-China-Japan occupy top three spots

PARIS (ANI): USA ended the Paris Olympics 2024 at the top of the medal tally with a total of 126 medals, including 40 gold medals, 44 silver and 42 bronze medals on Sunday. In second place is China, who ended their campaign with 40 gold, 27 silver, and 24 bronze medals, making it a total of 91 medals. The third place was bagged by Japan, who took home 20 golds, 12 silver and 13 bronze medals, which is a total of 45 medals.

The Indian contingent finished at the 71st spot, with a silver medal and five bronze medals to their name, bringing home a total of six medals. A contingent of 117 Indian athletes pursued medals and sporting glory at the marquee event. -ANI

WEATHER

Trinidad Test drawn, South Africa lament missed opportunity

PORT OF SPAIN: South Africa captain Temba Bavuma was left to lament Trinidad's inclement weather as his team finished five wickets short of victory during the first Test against the West Indies.

The teams lost play to rain on all five days of the Port of Spain Test, with a total of 142 overs lost overall across the match as both South Africa and the West Indies missed an excellent opportunity to rise the ICC World Test Championship standings.

The match finished as a draw under fading light at Queen's Park Oval on Sunday, with the West Indies finishing 97 runs short of an unlikely win and South Africa failing to take the final five wickets that would have delivered 12 World Test Championship points to the victor.

Positive result

The draw was the first in men's Test cricket in more than 12 months and sees South Africa remain in seventh place on the World Test Championship standings with a 26.67 win-loss percentage and the West Indies stay in ninth at 20.83 per cent.

South Africa had tried their best to force a positive result by declaring at 173/3 prior to lunch on the final day, but yet another rain delay and dogged innings of 92 from Alick Athanaze foiled any hopes the Proteas had of clinching the victory.

"We tried our best to get a result in our favour. But the wicket didn't break up as much as we expected. In the end, it was a good, competitive game of cricket. We went in with an extra batter as a cushion. As batters, we will like to be a bit more ruthless and convert those fifties into hundreds.," Bavuma said as quoted by ICC.

"We lost time because of the weather. With the bowling resources we had, we tried our best. Keshav and Kagiso (Rabada) supported by others, a little more time and things could have been different," the right-hand batter added.

West Indies captain Kraigg Brathwaite took plenty of positives from the performance of his side, especially with the efforts of some of his batters.

All of the West Indies' top three got starts in the first innings and Athanaze impressed in the second innings as he went agonisingly close to recording his maiden Test century.

"I am happy with our batting group. The guys are quite positive, I am proud of the batting unit. We believed we could get those runs. It wasn't going to be easy, We need to keep going from strength to strength. The pitches are a bit slower in the Caribbean. For me, it's about adjusting when to go slow and when to accelerate," Brathwaite said.

"It's all about belief and planning and bat as per the plan. Alick showed us that today. Hodge was good in England. His plan was the sweep and he struck to it, even though he got out to a sweep," the 31-year-old added. The second and final Test commences in Guyana on Thursday. -ANI

MARKET
BUSINESS & FINANCE

OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by October 2024 reaching $78.72, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by $1.26 from the price of Friday, which was $77.46. - ONA

MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER

The MSX index closed at 4,686.19 points, up by 0.57% from previous close. The Sharia Index ended up by 0.09% at 445.18 points. Oman Packaging, up 5.26%, was the top gainer while Al Anwar Ceramics, down 3.85%, was the top loser.

Terms to convert LLCs into joint stock companies to be announced

Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, stressed that the issuance of Royal orders to launch an initiative to convert LLCs into CJSCs, an effort undertaken by the government, was aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the new firms which, constitute the largest volume in Omani economic structures

> This initiative provides flexibility in management, speed in performance and ease of trading in shares. The step would also augment the confidence of investors, creditors and customers in the sustainability of the transformed companies
>
> **Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef**
> Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion said that it would shortly announce the procedures and requirements needed for converting limited liability companies (LLCs) into closed joint stock companies (CJSC) in response to Royal directives and new economic regulations.

Qais bin Mohammed Al Yousef, Minister of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, stressed that the issuance of Royal orders to launch an initiative to convert LLCs into CJSCs, an effort undertaken by the government, was aimed at ensuring the sustainability of the new firms which, he said, constitute the largest volume in Omani economic structures. The step would also help enhance audit, governance, disclosure and transparency in dealings, Al Yousef added.

In a statement to the Oman News Agency (ONA), the minister said that this initiative provides flexibility in management, speed in performance and ease of trading in shares. He said that the step would also augment the confidence of investors, creditors and customers in the sustainability of the transformed companies. He added that the ministry seeks to facilitate the conversion of LLCs into CJSC by simplifying procedures.

For his part, Dr. Saleh Said Masan, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion for Commerce and Industry, stressed that the Royal blessing for adopting capital market development procedures serves the development of the commerce and industry sector in the Sultanate of Oman.

Launching the initiative to encourage the conversion of LLCs into CJSC provides an opportunity for companies' growth, more flexibility in decision-making, more confidence among those dealing with the transformed companies and more sustainability in the status of the firms that would last for generations to come. -ONA

ACHIEVEMENT

Global Space and Technology secures CAA licence for Unmanned Technology Centre

MUSCAT: The Global Space and Technology Company announced that it has got a licence from the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) for the Unmanned Technology Centre to provide various services related to drone technologies and unmanned vehicles. Among the most important services are training, equipment supply, maintenance, specialised assembly, and installation, and conducting experiments according to the customer needs.

The training programmes include comprehensive and specialised training in the use of drones and unmanned systems, as well as granting licences to operate them to be a drone pilot. Additionally, the programmes focus on developing skills in aerial photography, software technologies, reconnaissance, geological surveying, GIS (Geographic Information Systems) analysis programs, among others.

The centre also offers advanced workshops for specialists and experts, providing in-depth training in drone design and engineering, equipping participants with the necessary practical and scientific expertise. The centre provides its services to the government, security, and military sectors, as well as to the commercial private sector and hobbyists.

Engineer Bahiya Hilal Sultan Al-Shuaibi, the founder and CEO of the Global Space and Technology Company Sayed, "We are pleased with this achievement, which represents a significant step towards realising our vision of enhancing Unmanned technology sector. We extend our thanks to the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) for their support and for granting us this license. The Unmanned Technology Centre is a crucial turning point in the development of the drone and unmanned Arial system in the region, keeping pace with global developments and meeting the rapid growth locally and in the regional markets. This centre also provides a scientific and practical environment in the field of Unmanned technology (aerial, land, and sea) and related systems and experiments, granting trainees with the licenses to operate them to be a drone pilot. The centre aims to have partnerships with specialised global institutions and attract investments in drone manufacturing, with the goal of transferring knowledge and technology to the region. The company always works to push the boundaries of innovation by offering high-quality and distinctive products and services that support advanced technology."

The Unmanned Technology Centre is one of the projects of "ZONE 88", a subsidiary of the Global Space and Technology Company, which was recently announced as a scientific and economic area focused on space sciences and advanced technologies, located in the Special Economic Zone at Duqm in the Sultanate of Oman.

The area includes five global projects: the Space habitat Centre, the Commercial Space Launch Area, the Unmanned Technology Centre, the Artificial Intelligence and Advanced Technology Testing Area, and the Ground Station. These projects aim to enhance the space and technology industries, attract global investments and scientific research, and build a sustainable knowledge economy in the region.

CENTRAL BANK OF OMAN

Treasury bills worth OMR35mn issued

MUSCAT: The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) raised OMR35 million by a way of allotting treasury bills on Monday.

The value of the allotted treasury bills amounted to OMR30.63 million, for a maturity period of 91 days. The average accepted price reached OMR98.763 for every OMR100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR98.750 per OMR100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.96136 per cent and 5.02350 per cent, respectively.

The value of the allotted Treasury bills amounted to OMR 4 million, for a maturity period of 182 days. The average accepted price reached OMR 97.485 for every OMR 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR 97.485 per OMR 100. The average discount rate and the average yield reached 5.04382 per cent and 5.17394 per cent, respectively.

The value of the allotted Treasury bills amounted to OMR 0.37 million, for a maturity period of 364 days. The average accepted price reached OMR 95.295 for every OMR 100, and the minimum accepted price arrived at OMR 95.295 per OMR 100.

The average discount rate and the average yield reached 4.71793 per cent and 4.95086 per cent, respectively.

Treasury Bills are short-term highly secured financial instruments issued by the Ministry of Finance, and they provide licensed commercial banks the opportunity to invest their surplus funds. The Central Bank of Oman (CBO) acts as the Issue Manager and provides the added advantage of ready liquidity through discounting and repurchase facilities (Repo).

It may be noted that the interest rate on the Repo operations with CBO is 6.00 per cent while the discount rate on the Treasury Bills Discounting Facility with CBO is 6.50 per cent.

Furthermore, Treasury Bills promote the local money market by creating a benchmark yield curve for short-term interest rates. Additionally, the government may also resort to this instrument whenever felt necessary for financing its recurrent expenditures. -ONA

36TH EDITION

Duqm Economist Magazine showcases key investments and projects at Sezad

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) has released the 36th issue of the Duqm Economist Magazine. This issue highlights numerous projects and investments within the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Sezad) and the free zones in Salalah, Sohar and Al Mazyunah, as well as in the industrial cities.

The magazine's editorial highlights the efforts of the authority in attracting various types of investments. These efforts form the foundation for the success of economic diversification policies, as part of Oman Vision 2040, which is considered the primary platform for investments in the Sultanate of Oman.

The magazine dedicated a feature article under the headline "Corporate commitment to health and safety procedures is a priority to ensure a safe environment." In an interview with the magazine, Engineer Ahmed Harib Al Balushi, Director of the Authority's Compliance and Environmental Affairs Department, emphasized that the health and safety of workers are top priorities in the economic zones, free zones, and industrial cities.

He noted that preventive measures help eliminate or reduce workplace accidents and injuries, improve working conditions, and increase worker productivity. All these factors contribute directly to enhancing the work environment, fostering competitiveness and transparency, and creating an attractive investment environment.

The magazine included several topics, one of which is "More than 80 services are provided by the one-stop shop for investors." The Authority explained that these one-stop shops play a crucial role in enhancing the business environment and impact the economic landscape by offering an encouraging environment for innovation, research, and development. This leads to improved efficiency and productivity in companies located in these areas. The magazine also highlighted positive indicators and ongoing opportunities in SEZAD, which is experiencing significant economic momentum and rapid growth.

The magazine, spanning 116 pages in both Arabic and English, discusses the Central Fruit and Vegetable Market (Silal) at Khazaen Economic City, which boosts the wholesale trade sector in the Sultanate of Oman. The Khazaen Economic City emphasized that the market serves as a national and international platform for marketing, exporting, importing, and re-exporting vegetables and fruits. It also acts as a marketing outlet for local agricultural products from producing agricultural companies and local farmers.

The issue covers various topics, including growth indicators, performance metrics, and diverse economic articles. It highlights incentives, facilities, and investment opportunities in the economic, free, and industrial zones of the Sultanate of Oman through infographics and various designs across its pages.

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Oman Packaging, up 5.26%, was the top gainer while, Al Anwar Ceramics, down 3.85%, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,686.19 points, up by 0.57% from previous close. The Shariah Index ended up by 0.09% at 445.18 points.

Oman Packaging, up 5.26%, was the top gainer while, Al Anwar Ceramics, down 3.85%, was the top loser. Shares of Bank Dhofar were the most active in terms of number of shares traded as well as in terms of turnover.

A total number of 606 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of RO 1.93 million, with more than 12.51 million shares changing hands. Out of 47 traded securities, 13 advanced, 11 declined, and 23 remained unchanged. At the session close, domestic investors were net buyers for RO 188K while GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for RO 110K, followed by foreign investors for RO 78K worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,611.93 points, up 0.54%. Prices of Bank Dhofar, Ahli Bank, Al Sharqia Investment, United Finance, Al Madina Investments were up by 3.90%, 3.33%, 2.74%, 1.75%, 1.72% respectively. Prices of Oman Arab Bank, Sohar International Bank, Bank Muscat were down by 1.35%, 0.75%, 0.40% respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,865.41 points, down 0.19%. Prices of Oman Packaging, Galfar Engineering, Al Maha Ceramics, Gulf International Chemicals were up by 5.26%, 2.16%, 1.97%, 1.45% respectively. Prices of Al Anwar Ceramics, Gulf Mushroom Products, Jazeera Steel Products were down by 3.85%, 0.91%, 0.72% respectively.

Services Index was up by 0.06% before closing at 1,812.14 points. Prices of OQ Gas Networks, Oman National Engineering, Barka Desalination, Renaissance Services were up by 1.42%, 0.90%, 0.79%, 0.53% respectively. Prices of Al Suwadi Power, Sembcorp Salalah were down by 1.32%, 0.96% respectively.— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,693.42	4,656.67	4,686.19	4,659.47	26.72	0.57
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,637.76	7,567.71	7,611.93	7,571.07	40.86	0.54
Industry Index	5,887.49	5,861.58	5,865.41	5,876.46	-11.05	-0.19
Services Index	1,812.75	1,802.06	1,812.14	1,811.06	1.08	0.06
MSX Shariah Index	446.55	444.79	445.18	444.79	0.39	0.09
MSX TR INDEX	6,523.11	6,472.03	6,513.06	6,475.93	37.13	0.57
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,677.28	8,597.69	8,647.93	8,601.52	46.42	0.54
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,792.76	6,762.87	6,767.29	6,780.03	-12.75	-0.19
SERVICES TR IDX	2,109.42	2,096.97	2,108.70	2,107.45	1.25	0.06
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	1,069.10	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
12,513,801	1,925,496	606	24,410,993,614	13	11	23	47

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR MONDAY, AUGUST 12

REGULAR MARKET

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIYA INVESTMENT HO.	742,260	55,448	25	0.073	0.075	0.073	0.075	0.073	0.002	2.740	0.075	0.075	0.076	0.100	6,750,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	6,000	343	2	0.057	0.058	0.057	0.058	0.057	0.001	1.754	0.058	0.057	0.058	0.100	20,655,383
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	765,225	108,229	168	0.141	0.143	0.140	0.143	0.141	0.002	1.418	0.143	0.143	0.143	0.100	619,279,221
OM0000001152	OMAN NATIONAL ENGINEERING & INVT	73,170	8,195	2	0.112	0.112	0.112	0.112	0.111	0.001	0.901	0.112	0.112	0.113	0.100	16,800,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	25,000	9,385	2	0.375	0.377	0.375	0.377	0.375	0.002	0.533	0.377	0.367	0.377	0.100	89,126,570
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	300	101	1	0.335	0.335	0.335	0.335	0.335	0.000	0.000	0.335	0.000	0.335	0.100	223,902,418
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	1,817	727	2	0.401	0.401	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.000	0.000	0.400	0.400	0.420	0.100	132,349,084
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	2,000	1,634	1	0.817	0.817	0.817	0.818	0.818	0.000	0.000	0.817	0.817	0.000	0.100	77,710,000
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	300	120	1	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.400	0.000	0.000	0.400	0.400	0.430	0.100	48,000,000
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	183,173	183,171	28	0.998	1.000	0.998	1.000	1.000	0.000	0.000	1.000	0.998	1.000	0.100	750,000,000
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	221,348	16,391	7	0.074	0.075	0.074	0.075	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.073	0.075	0.100	15,000,000
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	1,500	433	3	0.289	0.289	0.288	0.289	0.289	0.000	0.000	0.288	0.280	0.288	0.100	188,122,882
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	163,354	12,415	12	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.000	0.000	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.100	13,300,000
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	22,760	1,684	7	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.074	0.000	0.000	0.074	0.074	0.075	0.100	49,941,670
OM0000007811	MUSANDAM POWER	61,000	15,860	4	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.260	0.000	0.000	0.260	0.250	0.260	0.100	18,301,400
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	419,934	125,673	43	0.299	0.301	0.298	0.300	0.300	0.000	0.000	0.300	0.300	0.301	0.100	231,060,000
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	672,277	169,348	27	0.252	0.252	0.250	0.250	0.251	-0.001	-0.398	0.250	0.250	0.252	0.100	1,876,599,266
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	14,400	4,003	6	0.279	0.279	0.277	0.277	0.279	-0.002	-0.717	0.277	0.277	0.278	0.100	34,596,735
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	1,273,855	170,085	18	0.134	0.134	0.133	0.133	0.134	-0.001	-0.746	0.133	0.124	0.134	0.100	741,773,754
OM0000004735	SEMBCORP SALALAH	229,500	23,639	6	0.103	0.104	0.103	0.103	0.104	-0.001	-0.962	0.103	0.101	0.104	0.100	98,320,911
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	126,000	9,450	13	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.076	-0.001	-1.316	0.075	0.075	0.080	0.100	53,580,476
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	49,300	8,673	14	0.175	0.181	0.175	0.175	0.182	-0.007	-3.846	0.175	0.175	0.175	0.100	38,500,000
Total	22	5,054,473	925,006	392												

Parallel Market

ISIN	SECURITY NAME	VOLUME	TURNOVER	TRADES	OPEN PRICE	HIGH	LOW	CLOSE PR.	PREV. CLOSE	DIFF (RO)	DIFF %	LAST PR	LAST BID	LAST OFFER	PAR VALUE	MARKET CAP
OM0000001608	OMAN PACKAGING	110	22	1	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.200	0.190	0.010	5.263	0.200	0.190	0.200	0.100	6,487,172
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	3,150,000	504,000	2	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.160	0.154	0.006	3.896	0.160	0.154	0.160	0.100	479,416,230
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	70,000	10,850	1	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.155	0.150	0.005	3.333	0.155	0.155	0.164	0.100	364,196,907
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTG	634,087	89,734	64	0.141	0.143	0.141	0.142	0.139	0.003	2.158	0.142	0.142	0.152	0.100	28,824,075
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	1,500	231	3	0.152	0.155	0.152	0.155	0.152	0.003	1.974	0.155	0.155	0.158	0.100	8,525,000
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	1,819,421	107,346	41	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.058	0.001	1.724	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.100	5,015,000
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	11,000	760	2	0.069	0.070	0.069	0.070	0.069	0.001	1.449	0.070	0.069	0.075	0.100	1,470,000
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	112,450	14,281	8	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.127	0.126	0.001	0.794	0.127	0.120	0.129	0.100	9,591,294
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	247,167	25,846	22	0.104	0.106	0.104	0.106	0.106	0.000	0.000	0.106	0.104	0.106	0.100	9,010,000
OM0000002036	MUSCAT THREAD MILLS	17,353	1,735	3	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.100	0.000	0.000	0.100	0.100	0.102	0.100	1,639,411
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	10,300	2,670	6	0.234	0.260	0.234	0.260	0.260	0.000	0.000	0.260	0.234	0.269	0.100	41,600,000
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	1,355	466	2	0.344	0.344	0.344	0.344	0.344	0.000	0.000	0.344	0.344	0.350	0.100	28,002,546
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	302,535	31,664	7	0.105	0.105	0.104	0.104	0.104	0.000	0.000	0.104	0.104	0.105	0.100	232,643,115
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	450,000	61,650	1	0.137	0.137	0.137	0.137	0.137	0.000	0.000	0.137	0.137	0.000	0.100	13,398,896
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	145,200	8,514	10	0.058	0.059	0.058	0.058	0.058	0.000	0.000	0.058	0.058	0.060	0.100	84,830,885
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	2,000	144	2	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.000	0.000	0.072	0.072	0.079	0.100	11,199,629
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	20,451	4,479	3	0.221	0.221	0.219	0.219	0.221	-0.002	-0.905	0.219	0.215	0.221	0.100	10,022,710
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	21,000	3,077	3	0.147	0.147	0.146	0.146	0.148	-0.002	-1.351	0.146	0.146	0.147	0.100	243,733,860
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	312,500	20,317	13	0.066	0.066	0.065	0.065	0.066	-0.001	-1.515	0.065	0.064	0.065	0.100	31,904,365
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	5,000	575	1	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.115	0.117	-0.002	-1.709	0.115	0.115	0.000	0.100	58,431,908
Total	20	7,333,429	888,361	195												

OIL PRICE

Oil continues to rise, holds on last week's gains

BEIJING: Oil prices rose for a fifth consecutive session today, extending gains from last week's more than 3 per cent rise, as US recession fears eased while geopolitical tensions in the Middle East supported prices.

Brent crude futures climbed 22 cents, or 0.3%, to $79.88 a barrel, while US West Texas Intermediate (WTI) crude futures rose 36 cents, or 0.5%, to $77.20.

Brent ended last week up more than 3.5% on the week, while WTI gained more than 4%, on supportive economic data and increased hopes of a US interest rate cut.

Gold prices steady

Gold prices held steady yesterday, with investors awaiting key US inflation data due later this week to gauge the size of the Federal Reserve's likely interest rate cut in September 2024.

Gold futures

Spot gold was little changed at $2,425.94 per ounce, and US gold futures slipped 0.3 per cent to $2,464.80. The US producer price index (PPI) is due today (Tuesday), followed by consumer price index (CPI) after tomorrow (Thursday).

As for other precious metals, spot silver fell 0.6 per cent to $27.29 per ounce, platinum edged 0.1 per cent higher to $923.20, and palladium was nearly unchanged at $905.00. -ONA

DATA

India's retail inflation softens and aligns with RBI's 4% target

NEW DELHI: Breaching 5 per cent in June, the retail inflation rate in India softened drastically in July. According to data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on Monday, retail inflation or Consumer Price Index in July was at 3.54 per cent.

In June, taking a departure from the moderation it witnessed in the past months, it rose to 5.08 per cent, pushed by rising food prices.

In July, there was a sharp decline in the year-on-year inflation rate based on the All India Consumer Price Index (CPI), which is the lowest in the last 59 months.

Year-on-year inflation rate based on the All India Consumer Price Index (CPI) number is 3.54 per cent (Provisional) for the month of July, 2024. The corresponding inflation rate for rural and urban is 4.10 per cent and 2.98 per cent, respectively.

Food inflation for July 2024 is the lowest since June 2023. Year-on-year inflation rate based on All India Consumer Food Price Index (CFPI) number is 5.42 per cent (Provisional) for the month of July, 2024. The corresponding inflation rate for rural and urban is 5.89 per cent and 4.63 per cent, respectively.

Rising food prices continued to be a headache for Indian consumers with the inflation rate in the food segment almost doubling year-on-year in June.

The food inflation had almost doubled to 8.36 per cent in June, versus 4.63 per cent reported same month of 2023.

Food prices continue to remain a pain point for the policymakers in India, who wish to bring retail inflation to 4 per cent on a sustainable basis. But today's inflation data shows the inflation has aligned with the intended target.

Annual retail inflation in May was at a 12-month low of 4.75 per cent, marginally down from 4.83 per cent in April. The retail inflation or Consumer Price Index, in December last year was 5.7 per cent, and since was moderating.

The retail inflation in India was in RBI's 2-6 per cent comfort level but was above the ideal 4 per cent scenario.

Inflation has been a concern for many countries, including advanced economies, but India has largely managed to steer its inflation trajectory quite well. The eased month-on-month retail inflation, barring June, came on the heels of RBI having maintained the status quo in the repo rate for the ninth straight occasion.

Barring the recent pauses, the RBI has raised the repo rate by 250 basis points cumulatively since May 2022 in the fight against inflation. Raising interest rates is a monetary policy instrument that typically helps suppress demand in the economy, thereby helping the inflation rate decline. The repo rate is the rate of interest at which the RBI lends to other banks. -ANI

GAME-CHANGER

China's data industry on fast track to digital future

BEIJING: With its far-reaching impact across various sectors, the data industry is rapidly evolving into a game-changer in China, contributing to the country's economic growth and digital transformation. Last year, the total amount of data generated nationwide reached 32 zettabytes, equivalent to the digital resources of over 10 million national libraries, according to the National Data Administration (NDA).

Emerging from the application of data technology to develop products and services, the data industry is an industrial form that spans a broad range of digital activities, including data collection, storage, processing, management, application, circulation and transaction. As the once abstract concept of "big data" has been widely integrated into business practices, it has unlocked significant opportunities for companies to enhance efficiency and expand their market reach.

The market size of China's database industry exceeded 52 billion yuan (about $7.28 billion) in 2023, and it is expected to reach 93.03 billion yuan by 2028.

This growth is complemented by the data transaction sector, which has experienced stable and rapid expansion in recent years. In 2022, the overall market size of data transactions reached 87.68 billion yuan, accounting for 13.4 percent of the global data market, and is projected to surpass 500 billion yuan by 2030, the industry data showed.

Contributing to this vibrant growth, in the past decade the number of data-driven businesses in China has surged from 110,000 to over 1 million. These enterprises play no small part in maximising the value of data elements and driving further expansion and innovation across the data industry.

"In this new development stage where data has become a novel factor of production, we are witnessing the emergence of new production factors, new dataspace, and new infrastructure, as well as the rise and evolution of new industry forms," said Zhang Xianghong, a professor at Beijing Jiaotong University. -Xinhua

LIFESTYLE

OROPOUCHE FEVER

The European Center for Disease Prevention and Control issued a risk assessment for Oropouche virus, citing 19 imported cases into the region

"GIVEN THE GOOD prognosis for recovery, the impact is assessed as low," wrote the European Center for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC) in a Threat Assessment Brief on August 9, 2024 — but that's specifically for the European region, which has so far only seen imported cases of Oropouche virus.

Of the 19 reported cases in Europe, all are thought to have been imported by travellers who had visited Cuba or Brazil.

It was in the Brazilian state of Bahia where the first two people died from Oropouche fever, the country's health ministry reported July 25, 2024. The two women, who were both under the age of 30 years, had no comorbidities but had experienced symptoms similar to dengue fever.

Brazil's health ministry said that until now: "There have been no reports in the world's scientific literature of deaths from the disease."

Up to late July, Brazil had recorded 7,236 cases of oropouche fever in 20 states, most of which, however, were recorded in Amazonas and Rondônia. In 2023, Brazil recorded about 840 cases.

Oropouche is common in Latin America and the Caribbean. The virus was first detected in Trinidad and Tobago in 1955. But it has been detected in Europe.

Italy reported its first-ever case of Oropouche in June 2024. It was also the first case ever to be detected in continental Europe.

The patient diagnosed in Italy had recently returned from a trip to the Caribbean, Italian newspaper Il Messaggero reported, citing public health authorities.

How does Oropouche fever spread?

Oropouche virus disease is transmitted through the bites of infected midges and mosquitos. Although the disease has long been circulating in Central and South America and the Caribbean, some countries have seen a sharp rise in diagnosed cases this year.

The disease is spreading to other countries that have never detected cases of Oropouche fever before. On June 11, the WHO reported the first-ever outbreak in Cuba.

"This is the first detection of the disease [in Cuba], therefore, the population is likely highly susceptible and there is significant risk of additional cases being detected," the report noted.

Symptoms similar to dengue

Oropouche fever is caused by the Oropouche virus, which is transmitted most often through the bite of the Culicoides paraensis midge.

There is no evidence of human-to-human transmission of the disease — to date.

Symptoms of the disease are similar to dengue and typically start between four and eight days after the bite. The onset is sudden, and symptoms usually include fever, headaches, pain, chills, joint stiffness and sometimes nausea and vomiting.

Most patients recover in about seven days. According to the WHO, severe cases are rare.

There is no specific vaccine or antiviral treatment available for the disease. Climate may play a role in spread of Oropouche

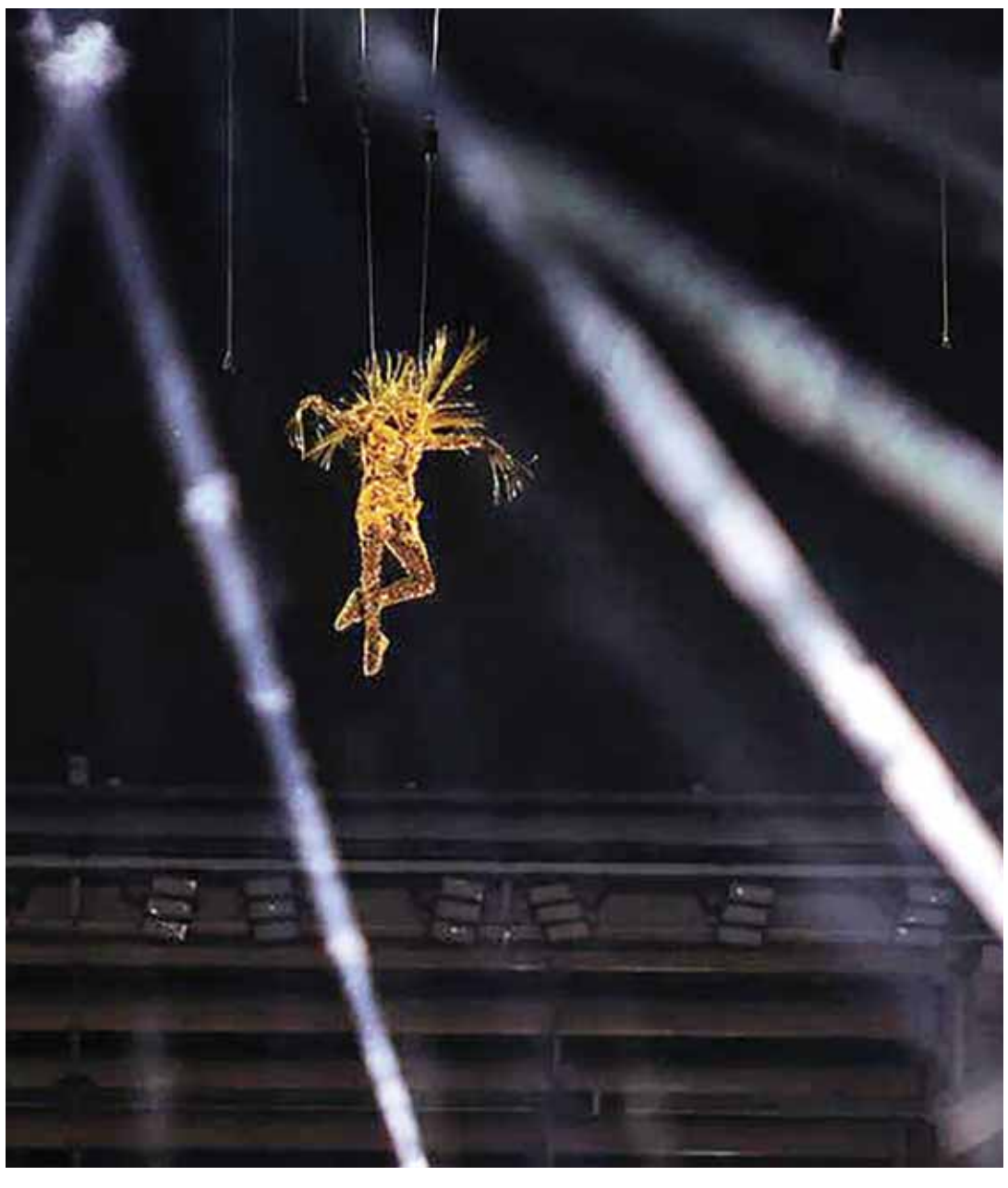
Oropouche fever is an understudied illness, as the authors of a May 2023 paper published in the journal Infectious Diseases of Poverty noted. As a result, the disease's epidemic potential and areas of likely spread remain "unexplored."

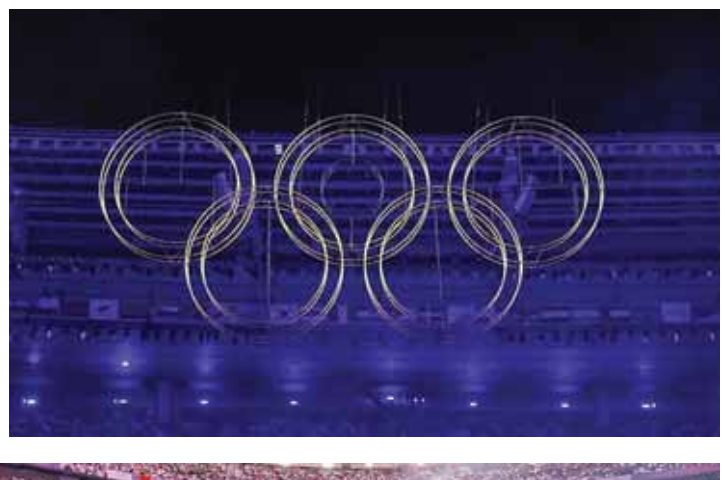
Although most cases of Oropouche fever thus far have been linked to tropical climate conditions, the authors noted that the lack of available data makes it difficult to draw precise conclusions. For example, some outbreaks have occurred outside the tropical conditions typically associated with transmission events.

Although much remains unclear about the virus and its spread, the authors also noted that vegetation loss and deforestation appear to be associated with outbreaks of the disease. -DW

IN PICTURES

CURTAIN COMES DOWN ON PARIS OLYMPIC GAMES





Experience luxury with affordable EMIs on Changan's premium models

Potential buyers can now experience unparalleled luxury and advanced technology at affordable monthly payments

MUSCAT: Arabian Gulf Automobiles and Equipment (AGAE) has announced the introduction of low EMIs on a range of Changan's premium models, making luxury more accessible than ever.

Potential buyers can now experience unparalleled luxury and advanced technology at affordable monthly payments. This initiative underscores Changan's commitment to delivering premium vehicles with exceptional value, ensuring that owning a luxury car is within reach for many.

Changan vehicles are renowned for their premium features and advanced technology, providing an elevated driving experience. The models included in this offer are the new CS75 Plus, CS95 MCA, CS35 Plus, CS85 Coupe, New Eado Plus and Entry level sedan Alsvin. Each model embodies Changan's dedication to quality, performance, and innovation.

Low EMI options

Customers can now own the new CS75 Plus 2.0 Turbo 8AT 2WD Luxury for just OMR 150 per month. The 7Seater 4WD CS95 2.0 Turbo 8AT-4WD Royal is available at an attractive EMI of OMR 181 per month. The CS35 Plus 1.4 Turbo 7 DCT can be owned at OMR 109 per month. The CS85 2.0 Turbo 8AT 2WD Luxury is offered at OMR 148 per month. The new Eado Plus 1.5L Turbo Sedan 7DCT is available at an affordable EMI of OMR 110 per month. While the Alsvin 1.5L Sedan 5 DCT AT-Technology can be owned for OMR 64 per month, the Hunter pick-up (1.9L Turbo Diesel Engine, 150 hp, 4WD, 6-speed MT and 4WD, 6-speed AT) is OMR 124per month.

These attractive EMI options are based on a 20% down payment and a loan tenure of six years, subject to credit approval by banks. The offer is exclusively for personal vehicle purchases and is subject to the terms and conditions set by the lender.

Changan CS75 Plus

All-new Changan CS75 Plus 2024 model is celebrated for its sportiness, luxurious comfort, and advanced safety features. Equipped with a powerful 2.0-litre turbo engine, the CS75 PLUS delivers 224 hp and 360 Nm of torque. Its optimized 8-speed automatic transmission provides a perfect balance of dynamic performance and advance safety features. Automatic parking is unique feature which is very exciting to watch, just checkout!

Changan CS957-Seater 4WD

Renowned for its luxury and family-friendly design, the seven-seater Changan CS95 4WD revolutionizes the driving experience. The 2024 model, featuring an AISIN 8 AT transmission, ensures reliable quality, smooth shifting, and excellent fuel economy. With a range of updates, the latest CS95 offers an enhanced driving experience that blends sophistication and functionality, appealing to both discerning individuals and families.

Changan CS35 Plus

The Changan CS35 Plus is an exceptional crossover designed with precision to deliver unmatched confidence and style. With muscular fender flanges, elegant roof rails, and eye-catching LED headlamps, it offers an engaging driving experience. It combines interactivity, safety, and performance, making it the ideal choice for anyone seeking a contemporary and exhilarating drive.

Changan CS85

The sporty Changan CS85 merges sleek coupe aesthetics with robust SUV capabilities. The Changan CS85 2WD blends luxury and performance, offering an unrivaled driving experience with its dynamic handling and stylish design. The premium CS85 Coupe SUV stands out with its striking appearance, exceptional quality, and cutting-edge technology.

Changan Eado Plus

The all-new Changan EADO Plus is a stylish and sophisticated sedan designed to exceed expectations. Its sleek and modern exterior design, spacious and comfortable interior, and a suite of advanced technology features make it a standout in its class. Equipped with 1.5 Turbo Engine mated with 7 speed dual clutch transmission.

Changan Alsvin

The ChanganAlsvin boasts an energy-efficient 1.5-litre engine combined with a 5-speed dual-clutch transmission. It offers an array of key features and cutting-edge technology, fulfilling long-awaited desires in the entry-level segment. Features include a sunroof, 7" touchscreen, rearview camera, Bluetooth, cruise control, TPMS, push start button, and daytime running lights.

Changan Hunter

Boasting class-leading power and excellent ground clearance, the Changan Hunter pick up delivers unmatched capability for the farm and construction sector. With SUV-like interiors and excellent seating comfort, it ensures a pleasurable drive. The double cabin pick-up offers a 2.4L turbo gasoline engine with 210 hp, available in both 2WD and 4WD. A 1.9L turbo diesel engine with 150 hp is also available in 4WD. Changan Hunter stands out with its 'power to perform'.

A spokesperson for AGAE said, "Our new low EMI options make it easier for customers to own a premium vehicle, bringing Changan's luxury and advanced technology within reach of a broader audience. We are excited to offer this opportunity and are confident that potential buyers will appreciate the exceptional value and driving experience that Changan vehicles provide."

He added, "Changan's dedication to customer satisfaction and delivering high-quality vehicles is unwavering. We encourage potential buyers to visit Changan showrooms for test drives and more information on these exciting offers."

KNOWLEDGE-INTENSIVE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

ahlibank announces new batch of 'HIMAM'

MUSCAT: As part of its goals to empower Omani youth through knowledge-intensive development programs, ahlibank has opened its doors for the 10th batch of graduates in its flagship program, HIMAM.

Through this unique program, the Bank aims to develop the skills of the participants and refine their abilities, empowering them to achieve professional success in the banking sector. The HIMAM development program has been highly successful since its inception, as it has enabled Omani youth with the needed skills to begin professional careers in the prosperous banking sector of the Sultanate of Oman.

Since its launch in 2015, the HIMAM program at ahlibank has successfully employed many of its graduates. It is worth mentioning that applicants for this program undergo rigorous testing criteria and measures that qualify them for participation. The personality tests, leadership skills assessments, and employment interviews have been meticulously designed to ensure the selection of the most competent graduates in the job market. These tests and interviews aim to comprehensively and fairly evaluate the technical and soft skills of the applicants.

The HIMAM program aims to develop the administrative and leadership skills of young individuals. Through professional training courses and guidance, the HIMAM program enhances the graduates' skills in banking, with the assistance of managers, trainers, and specialists in the field. The program also boosts the graduates' self-confidence and focuses on the essential requirements for employment in the market. ahlibank launched the HIMAM program in 2015, and since then, it has been able to train a large number of ambitious Omani youth. Graduates enrolled in the HIMAM program have been able to embark on successful professional careers, qualifying them for significant positions and roles in various banking sectors.

At the forefront of its operations, ahlibank is committed to enhancing the capabilities of Omani youth. The HIMAM program contributes to increasing the Omanisation rate by preparing a new generation of young individuals for a bright and prosperous future in the Sultanate. It also aligns with the government's vision of promoting and improving the local economy. The bank has launched various programs and initiatives aimed at supporting talents and human resources that exhibit qualities of sound leadership, innovation, and excellence. To achieve the objectives of Oman Vision 2040, the bank continues its journey to become a thriving centre for banking services with a reliable and highly efficient team.

PAVING WAY FOR PROMISING SUSTAINABLE FUTURE

Bank Nizwa hosts Sustainability Workshop

MUSCAT: In line with the vision of enhancing the understanding and implementation of sustainability principles in educational institutions, Bank Nizwa, the leading and most trusted Islamic bank in the Sultanate of Oman, recently hosted a comprehensive Sustainability Workshop at the Modern College of Business and Science.

The insightful session, led by Tahani Al Alawi, Deputy Manager of Sustainability and CSR at Bank Nizwa, emphasized the importance of adopting sustainable practices within the educational system to instill values of environmental consciousness and community care among students. Mr. Mohammed Al Sajari, Head of Sharia Structure at Bank Nizwa, further enriched the workshop with his expertise on the integration of sustainable practices within Sharia principles.

Aimed at fostering environmental awareness among educators, the workshop was attended by Dr. Moosa Al Kindi, Dean of the Modern College of Business and Science, as well as employees of the college, and staff from various educational institutions across the region, reflecting a collective commitment to sustainability. The event provided a platform for attendees to exchange ideas, discuss challenges, and explore innovative solutions for sustainability in the education sector.

Commenting on the occasion, Ahmed Al Waily – Head of Marketing, Corporate Communications and Sustainability said, "At Bank Nizwa, we are committed to driving sustainability endeavours not just within our operations but also in the communities we serve. It is crucial for educational institutions to implement sustainable practices within their processes and impart this knowledge to younger generations, preparing them to be agents of change. Through these sessions, we seek to raise awareness about the multifaceted nature of a truly sustainable future, highlighting the enduring impact our actions today will have on the environment, the community, and the nation's socio-economic health of tomorrow."

Echoing the statement, Dr. Moosa Al Kindi, Dean of Modern College of Business and Science, stated, "We are immensely grateful to Bank Nizwa for conducting this enlightening workshop on sustainability for our staff and members of the education sector. As our nation emphasizes sustainable practices, we are committed to ensuring generations to come inherit a healthy planet and enjoy a bright future. At the Modern College of Business and Science, we actively pursue sustainability initiatives, like this collaboration with Bank Nizwa, that create tangible impacts and foster lasting change within our community."

Bank Nizwa has been at the forefront in the realm of sustainability, effectively demonstrating the synergy between Islamic finance and sustainable development. In late 2023, the bank became the first to offer Sharia-compliant sustainability-linked financing to individuals and corporates. This milestone followed the launch of its inaugural sustainability report, which outlined the bank's forward-thinking strategy for achieving the goals outlined in Oman Vision 2040. Furthermore, the bank was the first Islamic banking institution to offer eco-friendly credit and debit cards to customers.

Through initiatives such as this sustainability workshop, Bank Nizwa continues to chart a course of sustainable change and improvement, driving balanced socio-economic advancement within the country. Furthermore, the bank seeks to inspire the youth to embrace the pivotal responsibility of working towards a prosperous future for the nation, while preserving our precious planet.

12TH LOCATION WORLDWIDE

Hakkasan to bring world-renowned modern Cantonese dining experience at The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort

MUSCAT: Hakkasan, the award-winning Cantonese dining concept by Tao Group Hospitality, will be opening its 12th location worldwide in October at The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort. Bringing an alluring ambiance and innovative flavors to Oman, the restaurant will combine high-end design, modern techniques and Chinese influences to create a unique, unforgettable experience.

The opening of Hakkasan at The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort will herald a new dimension of modern, yet timeless flavors to Oman's flourishing gastronomy scene. Since its establishment in 2001 in London, Hakkasan has garnered a reputation for exceptional dining experiences, with recent Michelin accolades for Hakkasan in Dubai and Abu Dhabi. The menu, an inventive interpretation of authentic Cantonese cuisine, will feature signature dishes like Grilled Chilean Seabass and Crispy Duck Salad, crafted with the finest ingredients and time-honored techniques.

"We are delighted to bring to life Hakkasan's philosophy of ancient gastronomy reimagined for the modern day at The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort. We promise to deliver an intriguing blend of contemporary Cantonese cuisine and an atmosphere shrouded in mystery that will truly captivate guests," said Noah Tepperberg, Co-CEO of Tao Group Hospitality. "Hakkasan's Cantonese heritage is at the heart of everything we do. We honor tradition but through worldly experience, look for ways to push the boundaries of luxury and strive for excellence and quality which extends to every touch point."

Tarek Mourad, General Manager of The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort, added, "It is with great excitement that we welcome Hakkasan and its exceptionally-talented team to our resort. This partnership further enriches and expands our range of exquisite culinary offerings, reinforcing The St. Regis Al Mouj Muscat Resort as a must-visit dining destination for both locals and visitors from all corners of the world."

Hakkasan will offer artfully-crafted encounters that balance the best of the past with the breathtaking innovation of the future. This vision of elegance is meticulously realized by Hakkasan's dedicated team, who continually endeavor to conceive unforgettable memories, and inspire new stories. The soon-to-be-opened Muscat location will epitomize this signature style, providing guests with immersive, multi-sensory dining experiences.

The restaurant's renowned interior design, originally conceptualized by Christian Liaigre, will combine fashionable aesthetics with classic Chinese elements, evoking a seductive sense of intimacy, glamor, and vibrant energy. Inside Hakkasan, exclusivity, darkness, and anticipation set the stage, where each guest feels like a star in a movie. These addictive qualities will entice guests to keep escaping to Hakkasan time and time again.

ROUND-UP

Nissan stirs up excitement with 'Feel Patrol' series, teasing all-new Nissan Patrol's global debut

Join global Nissan executives in a captivating six-part series as they unveil key features of the All-New Nissan Patrol, leading up to its grand reveal

MUSCAT: As anticipation builds for the global premiereof the all-new Nissan Patrol, Nissan, officially distributed in Oman by Al Hashar Automotive, has launched the 'Feel Patrol' video series – a captivating six-part exploration that celebrates the legacy of the iconic SUV while offering an exclusive first look at its seventh generation.Hosted by Nissan executives, this series marks the brand's first official sneak peekinto the all-new Patrol, blending heritage with cutting-edge innovation.

The series kicked off Episode 1: Feel Patrol - The Global Story (youtube.com)with Guillaume Cartier, Chairperson, Nissan AMIEO, taking viewers on a whirlwind tour of the Patrol's 70-year evolution – from rugged off-roader to premium SUV. Packed with exclusive insights and memories, itsetsthe stage for an epic journey into thedesign, innovation, engineeringand craftsmanship that define the Nissan Patrol.

Each weekly episode features a special 'Part by Part' segment, providing fans and automotive enthusiasts with a sneak peek of the All-New Patrol ahead of its eagerly awaited global launch.

A highlightof the 'Feel Patrol' series is its exploration of the Patrol's impact and popularity as an SUV that has conqueredterrains and captured hearts worldwide. A dedicated episode pays homage to the Patrol's iconic legacy in the Middle East – where it has become a symbol of cultural heritage and remains the most cherished Nissan nameplate in the region.

Thierry Sabbagh, Divisional Vice President, President Middle East, KSA - Nissan, INFINITI, said, "The Patrol has long been a cornerstone of our lineup in the Middle East, and we are very excited to bring our customers and fans along for the ride with the 'Feel Patrol' series.

"We wanted to not only celebrate the Patrol's remarkable heritage and highlight the passion and dedication behind delivering a world-class product, but also provide an exclusive preview of the All-New Patrol as we gear up for its global debut. We are eager for audiences from around the world to explore and connect with the stories and innovations that make this series truly special."

The world premiere of the all-new Patrol is set totake place in Abu Dhabi on 3 September, marking a significant milestoneas it is revealed from the Middle East to the world. Dive into the excitement with the'Feel Patrol' series, including the "Part by Part" segments, on the Nissan YouTube channel.

CAMPAIGN

Save big this August with NBO's credit card cashback and discounts at Oman Oil

MUSCAT: In its ongoing endeavor to deliver greater value to its loyal customers, National Bank of Oman (NBO) has launched an exclusive campaign in partnership with Oman Oil Marketing Company, running from 1 August to 31 August 2024.

During this special one-month campaign, all NBO credit card customers will enjoy a remarkable 20% cashback on their first transaction at Oman Oil along with a 20% discount on hot and cold beverages at Café Amazon. This initiative underscores NBO's commitment to delivering exceptional value and rewards to its customers.

Maha Al Raisi, Assistant General Manager and Head of Retail Products at NBO, said: "At National Bank of Oman, we are always looking for ways to provide added value and rewards to our customers. We are delighted to partner with Oman Oil Marketing Company for this exclusive campaign. This campaign offers tangible benefits such as significant cashback rewards and attractive discounts, ensuring that our customers can enjoy complete value and savings on their everyday expenses, thereby making their experience with NBO even more rewarding. Don't miss out on this fantastic opportunity to earn rewards and enjoy great discounts!"

The 20% cashback, credited as equivalent reward points, is available to the first 3,000 customers who make a qualifying purchase, with a maximum cashback of RO 3 per customer. Additionally, as part of this limited-time promotion, NBO credit cardholders can enjoy a 20% discount on hot and cold beverages at Café Amazon.

NBO credit cards also help our customers save every time they shop, with cashback in form of rewards & NBO offers.

Customers can enjoy complementary chauffer service to and from airport, lounge access, 50% discount on Vox cinema and many such offers.

Through this exciting offer, NBO ensures significant benefits to both its existing and new customers, reinforcing its dedication to enhancing the customer experience and fostering strong partnerships with leading brands such as Oman Oil Marketing Company.

FOURTH SHOWROOM

Saud Bahwan Group expands Chery's presence with new showroom in Salalah

MUSCAT: Saud Bahwan Group recently celebrated the grand opening of Chery's fourth showroom in Oman, in Salalah. The event was honoured by the presence of Sheikh Mohammed Saif Al Busaidi, Wali of Salalah, along with distinguished guests from both public and private sectors.

At the occasion, a representative from Saud Bahwan Group remarked, "Chery's presence in Oman is steadily growing, which is evident in the increasing number of Chery vehicles on the road today. Chery's commitment to quality, engineering and performance provides our customers with true value for their money."

Emphasising the Group's dedication to Omanisation, the representative added, "Saud Bahwan Group has always been at the forefront of providing talented Omanis with numerous opportunities to excel. We have invested significantly in facilities that support the Chery brand in Oman, many of which are operated by outstanding Omani employees. These employees are passionate about their roles and are achieving impressive milestones in line with the Group's objectives."

The event featured a showcase of Chery vehicles, giving customers the chance to get up close with their favourite models and learn more about their high-quality build, advanced features and cutting-edge technology.

Chery's range in Oman includes an impressive line-up of the TIGGO8 PRO MAX, TIGGO4 PRO, and ARRIZO6 PRO. The TIGGO8 PRO MAX and TIGGO4 are powerful SUVs known for their subtle ambient lighting and unmatched fuel efficiency. The sedan-styled ARRIZO6 PRO boasts a sleek design, impressive interiors, and advanced safety and usability features, all contributing to an unparalleled driving experience.

Customers are now welcome to visit the new Salalah showroom to experience Chery vehicles firsthand. The showroom is equipped with modern amenities, product displays and a dedicated sales and marketing team ready to meet customer needs.

Kantar and Google jointly released the 2023 Chinese Global Brand Builders. Chery is ranked as the best Chinese global brand builder in cars and 14th in the overall list and its brand power has achieved strong growth.

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

EMPOWERING YOUNG INNOVATORS

MCBS students selected for Huawei's Seeds for Future flagship programme

MUSCAT: Huawei's "Seeds for the Future" is a leading corporate social responsibility initiative aimed at inspiring global talent to shape the future. This flagship programme selects outstanding young individuals worldwide for intensive training, competitions, and ongoing alumni activities focused on digital technology.

Participants explore industry innovation, engage in cross-cultural exchanges, and develop entrepreneurial skills while gaining insights into cutting-edge technologies like 5G, cloud computing, AI, and IoT. The programme enhances local ICT competencies, promotes knowledge transfer, and contributes to a sustainable technological landscape.

MCBS announced that three of its exceptional students have been selected to be among the top 10 members of the Oman national team, competing against peers from other institutions. The three students are: Ahlam Al Mughairi - Finance, Omair Al Kindi - Information Security, Raghdaa Al Balushi –Information System.

These students were selected and became part of the Omani national team after successfully navigating multiple rounds of rigorous testing, evaluation, and interviews, competing against peers from other Omani higher education institutions.

The Oman national team will compete at the regional level in Uzbekistan against teams from other countries. Successful teams will then advance to the international finals in China. At this stage, teams will pitch their innovative ideas, with the top-performing team receiving a substantial fund of $100,000.

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The Campaign will run from August 13th to August 15th. The offer is valid only while stocks last. VAT will be applicable on the above prices. The vehicles shown are for illustrative purposes only. Specifications are subject to change without notice.

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