LET'S TALK
Times OF OMAN

OMAN VISION 2040 IMPLEMENTATION FOLLOW-UP UNIT HOLDS MEETING

Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit on Tuesday held an introductory meeting in Muscat with Governors. During the meeting, the Unit outlined the main aspects of its duties and reviewed ways of enhancing cooperation and partnership with governors' offices with the aim of realising the goals of Oman Vision 2040. >A3

Founded 1975 · Volume 49 No. 51 | 16 Pages · Baisas 200 · Subscription OMR63 | ISO 9001:2008 Certified Company | Chairman/Editor-in-Chief: Mohamed Issa Al Zadjali | Printed & Published by Muscat Media Group

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ISRAEL SEIZES RAFAH CROSSING, CUTS OFF AID ENTRY INTO GAZA

Oman sounds alarm over Israel's persistent military escalation

Oman has called upon the international community to hold Israel responsible for violations and war crimes

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman has expressed deep concern over Israeli forces' continued military escalation, war crimes and genocide against unarmed civilians in the Gaza Strip and the occupied Palestinian territories.

Oman cautioned against the dire consequences of the military operations that the Israeli occupation forces intend to carry out by storming the city of Rafah.

"Such action portends serious catastrophic impacts that may expand the conflict and tension in the region," Oman added.

In a statement issued by the Foreign Ministry, the Sultanate of Oman urged the international community to immediately intervene to stop the war and terminate the ongoing Israeli violations of international law and international humanitarian law.

Oman called upon the international community to hold Israel fully responsible for such violations, war crimes, the policy of starvation and forced expulsion of citizens. It pointed out that all these brutal actions represent "stark crimes against humanity".

Rafah crossing

The Israeli occupation army penetrated into Rafah crossing across the border with the Arab Republic of Egypt and closed it completely, halting passenger movement and the entry of aid into the Gaza Strip.

The occupation vehicles stormed the crossing amid heavy fire on its buildings and occupied it completely, preventing the movement of travellers, especially the sick and wounded, and the entry of humanitarian aid, or the transfer of accumulated aid to the people of the Gaza Strip in the southern and northern regions, which portends famine and real danger to the lives of patients.

Palestinian medical sources confirmed that closing the Rafah crossing condemns cancer patients to death in light of the collapse of the health system in the Strip.

Lifeline

The Rafah crossing is considered the lifeline for residents of the Gaza Strip, and the only land crossing for the entry of aid and the evacuation of the injured. This incursion and tight control over it mean deprivation of food and medical aid. -ONA

Foreign minister, Head of Hamas Political Bureau discuss ceasefire proposal

MUSCAT: Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister, discussed a ceasefire proposal during a phone call with Dr. Ismail Haniyeh, Head of Hamas Movement's Political Bureau, yesterday.

During the conversation, Haniyeh affirmed the movement's acceptance of the proposal and the Palestinian side's support for the proposal in a bid to ease tensions, stop the bloodshed and mutual military operations and secure the return of displaced people to their residences.

The proposal also provides for the release of prisoners and detainees in interrelated stages, the application of binding measures and the realisation of other commitments pledged by both sides, including lifting the siege on the Gaza Strip and allowing the supply of humanitarian and relief aid to the population there.

Proposals welcomed

Sayyid Badr welcomed the proposals and expressed Oman's appreciation for efforts exerted by the Arab Republic of Egypt and the State of Qatar in cooperation with the US administration.

For his part, Dr. Ismail Haniyeh expressed his thanks and appreciation for the Sultanate of Oman's support for the just Palestinian cause. He stressed the importance of continuous communication, constructive dialogue and international efforts to implement resolutions of international legitimacy.

Sayyid Badr, Iranian counterpart review regional developments

Sayyid Badr Hamad Al Busaidi, Foreign Minister and Dr. Hossein Amir Abdollahian, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Islamic Republic of Iran reviewed, through phone call, areas of bilateral cooperation and means of boosting them.

They also exchanged views on regional developments.

— ONA

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES

OMAN

Hotel revenues exceed OMR71.9 million

1 The revenues of 3-5-star hotels in the Sultanate of Oman reached OMR71,907,000 by the end of March 2024, up by 8.3 percent compared to OMR66,395,000 during the corresponding period in 2023, according to statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI). >B1

OMAN

Oman to be guest of honour at book fair

2 Oman will be the guest of honour at the 33rd edition of Doha International Book Fair to be held from 9 to 18 May 2024. The book fair will showcase more than 180,000 titles. >A2

WORLD

Putin sworn in for new six-year term

3 Russian President Vladimir Putin was sworn in for another six-year term in office on Tuesday, after a March landslide victory that outside observers say was heavily manipulated. >A6

DHOFAR

One million tourists likely to visit Khareef this year

Times News Service

DUBAI: As part of the Dhofar Governorate's preparations for the launch of the Khareef Dhofar 2024 activities in cooperation with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism to promote the tourism season, the Dhofar Municipality participated in the Arabian Travel Market 2024 exhibition.

The Arabian Travel Market is being hosted in Dubai, United Arab Emirates from May 6 to 9.

The Khareef Dhofar season saw an increase in visitors last season, with 962,000 visitors compared to 813,000 in 2022. This year's visitor count is expected to exceed one million. Dhofar Governorate is a leading tourist destination for visitors inside and outside the Sultanate of Oman.

During the Khareef Dhofar season, tourists enjoy an exceptional experience that includes nature, relaxation, shopping, entertainment, culture, tourism, and sports activities. Dhofar Governorate boasts natural, tourist, and cultural heritage resources alongside ambitious plans to expand economic opportunities this season and the upcoming ones.

Regarding the prominent activities of the Khareef Dhofar 2024 season, Dr Ahmed bin Mohsen Al-Ghassani, Chairman of Dhofar Municipality, stated during the press conference on the sidelines of the exhibition that this year's activities would start early in conjunction with the astronomical beginning of the Khareef season on June 21 and will continue until the end of the Khareef season on September 20.

"This will provide a three-month duration, double the period previously allocated for Khareef season activities. It is expected to attract more tourists over a longer period, increasing the governorate's capacity to accommodate larger numbers and ensuring smoother traffic flow.

"Activities will be spread across existing and new locations, offering new, thrilling experiences."

On the 'Atin Square' site, Dr. Al-Ghassani explained that the events and activities there will include international events (as a hub for global events) alongside Omani and Arab art concerts, which will be held at Al-Murooj Theatre and other venues.

The Atin Square amusement area will adopt a new, attractive concept this year, featuring a sports challenge field, light and laser shows, and comprehensive visitor services with a unique and distinguished approach.

This season, there will also be a different approach to organise the consumer exhibition.

Dr Al-Ghassani stated that the 'Return of the Past' activities would be held for the first time in the Saada area after updating them to simulate local environments in the Dhofar Governorate and adding new environments from other governorates in the Sultanate of Oman. >A3

OMAN

PRAYER TIMINGS

Dhuhr.....12:08pm
Asr.....3:33pm
Maghrib.....6:43pm
Isha.....8:00pm
Fajr (Tomorrow).....4:06am

Omani-Brazilian Investment Forum focuses on clean energy, food security

Oman and Brazil celebrated the 50th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations on Tuesday

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman and the Federative Republic of Brazil on Tuesday celebrated the 50th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations by organising the Omani-Brazilian Investment Forum, which began in Muscat.

The opening ceremony was held under the auspices of Salim Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism. It was attended by representatives of private sector companies in both countries.

The two-day forum focused on investment, clean energy, re-export, heavy industries, food security and information technology, in addition to exchanging expertise in the fields of research, innovation, agriculture, space and mining.

In a speech on the occasion, Brazilian Minister of Tourism Celso Sabino Oliveira stressed the need to consolidate partnerships in investment and economic sectors. He underlined the importance of highlighting successful commercial experiences and intensifying cooperation between the two sides.

For his part, Pankaj Khimji, Adviser for Foreign Trade and International Cooperation at the Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Investment Promotion, said that the forum "affirms the depth of diplomatic relations between Oman and Brazil. He added that the event constituted an opportunity to showcase Oman's business and investment environment".

A multi-sectoral expo titled "Made in Brazil" showcased the products and services of Brazilian companies and factories.

Explore the potential

It also offered an opportunity to explore the potential of the Omani market and study means of benefiting from Omani free zones and their role in re-exporting goods to countries in Asia, East and North Africa.

During the forum, Omani entrepreneurs held B2B meetings with their Brazilian counterparts. -ONA

MILITARY DELEGATION

Oman, Pakistan review military ties

MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) met in his office at Al Murtafa'a Garrison on Tuesday with Maj. Gen Munir Ud Din, Director General for International Military Cooperation of the Joint Chiefs of Staff of the Islamic Republic of Pakistan and his accompanying delegation.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views and discussed several military matters of mutual interest.

The meeting was attended by Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO), Brigadier Hamid Abdullah Al Balushi, SAF Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning, several senior SAF officers and the Military Attaché of Pakistan's embassy in Muscat.

The Pakistani official also met with Maj. Gen Mattar Salim Al Balushi, Commander of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO), in the presence of Rear Admiral Saif Nasser Al Rahbi, Commander of the Royal Navy of Oman (RNO).

The two sides discussed areas of military cooperation between both sides and a number of matters of mutual interest.

The meeting was attended by Air Commodore Mohammed Amer Al Kindi, Director General of Training and Inspection, several senior RNO officers and the Military Attaché of Pakistan's embassy in Muscat.

Moreover, the guest was also met by Air Vice Marshal Khamis Hamad Al Ghafri, Commander of the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO).

The two sides exchanged views and discussed several military matters of common concern.

This meeting was attended by several senior officers of RAFO and the Military Attaché of Pakistan's embassy in Muscat. -ONA

TO DCO

Oman's envoy to KSA presents his credentials

RIYADH: HH Sayyid Faisal Turki Al Said, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) on Tuesday presented his credentials as Oman's permanent representative to the Digital Cooperation Organization (DCO).

The ambassador presented his credentials when he was received by Deemah Al Yahya, Secretary General of the DCO, at the organization's headquarters in Riyadh, KSA.

The DCO is a multilateral international organization that was established in 2020 with the aim of empowering digital prosperity for everyone through the augmentation of a comprehensive growth in digital economy. -ONA

33RD EDITION

Oman to take part as guest of honour at Doha International Book Fair

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman will be the guest of honour at the 33rd edition of Doha International Book Fair due to be held from 9 to 18 May 2024.

Oman will be represented by the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth, the Ministry of Information, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, the Ministry of Endowments and Religious Affairs, Sultan Qaboos University, civil society institutions (including the "Omani Society for Writers and Literati" and "Memory of Oman National Cultural Centre").

The book fair, themed "Knowledge builds civilisations", will showcase more than 180,000 titles to be exhibited by 515 publishing houses from 42 countries.

Sayyid Said Sultan Al Busaidi, Undersecretary of the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Youth for Culture, said that Oman's participation as a guest of honour at the book fair affirms the depth of bilateral relations with the State of Qatar and the common cultural bonds.

He added that the event provides an opportunity to enlighten visitors about Oman's diverse cultural activities and accomplishments.

The design of Oman pavilion at the book fair was inspired by Al Alam Palace, with its dazzling architectural components and artistic decorations, he added.

The Royal Oman Symphony Orchestra (OCO) will participate in the event by various performances to be staged at the Doha Exhibition and Convention Centre.

Oman's pavilion will include three exhibitions: the first promotes Oman's tourist, cultural and historical landmarks; the second showcases 6 rare Omani manuscripts; and the third is a joint photography exhibition with the Qatar Photography Society.

The pavilion will also showcase products from participating government institutions, a virtual reality (VR) technology show and exhibits from the World List of Intangible Cultural Heritage. -ONA

Which mountain on the Oman-UAE border lends its name to the railway project between the two countries?

'Khalas', 'Khunaizi' and 'Fargh' are varieties of which fruit associated with Omani heritage?

Two violins, one viola, and one cello make up a "String _ _ _ _ _ _"

What is the name given to Taylor Swift's fanbase?

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FRUITFUL EXCHANGE

Sayyid Dr Kamil Fahad initiates Royal Opera House Muscat collaboration with La Fenice of Italy

Times News Service

MUSCAT: In accordance with its mission, Royal Opera House Muscat (ROHM) endeavours to enrich the global cultural landscape through creative collaboration and fruitful exchange with other leading cultural institutions.

To further this aim, HH Sayyid Dr Kamil Fahad Al Said, Secretary General in the General Secretariat for the Council of Ministers and Member of the Board of Directors of Royal Opera House Muscat, recently visited Teatro La Fenice in Venice, Italy.

In the company of HH Sayyid Nazar Al Julanda Al Said, Ambassador of Oman to Italy, HH Sayyid Dr Kamil Fahad Al Said met in Venice with Fortunato Ortombina, General Manager and Artistic Director of La Fenice to enhance collaborative ties and explore possibilities for developing specific projects.

During the meeting, HH Sayyid Dr Kamil Al Said set out the current objectives of Royal Opera House Muscat in the context of the institution's overall vision.

Ortombina took special interest in Royal Opera House Muscat's innovative marketing initiatives, especially the creation of new scents by the renowned perfumer Roja Dove that are redolent of important operas in the performance history of Royal Opera House Muscat, such as Lakmé and Turandot.

New audience development strategies especially designed to engage youth including targeted community and educational outreach programs were of mutual interest for collaboration.

The two opera houses also shared innovative best practices in the technical domain such as cutting-edge stage technologies.

Building on the previous Teatro La Fenice tour in Oman of L'Elisir d'Amore in 2016, the discussion included a focus on future possibilities such as Royal Opera House Muscat hosting another opera title or an orchestra and chorus concert from Teatro La Fenice in the 2025-26 season.

The visit featured a tour of La Fenice, about which His Highness HH Sayyid Dr Kamil Al Said remarked, "Expressing the grandeur of the palatial architecture of Venice, La Fenice is among the world's most famous and magnificent opera houses.Dating from 1792, a sense of timeless beauty and splendour pervades the interior with its intricately artistry and gilded adornment.This wonderful tour set the stage for collaborative discussion and exciting plans for the future.

"On behalf of Royal Opera House Muscat, I would like to express my grateful thanks for this wonderful opportunity to further ties between our two opera houses."

Fortunato Ortombina expressed similar sentiments: "Royal Opera House Muscat has firmly established its status as a premier venue internationally. We take immense pride in the success achieved with our collaborative productions in the past.

"It is truly gratifying to access insights from His Highness Sayyid Dr Kamil Al Said regarding the innovative strategies and initiatives of Royal Opera House Muscat in recent years. We hope that the collaboration between our two institutions continues in the years to come".

Tourism packages for Wilayat of Sur unveiled in Dubai

The Wilayat of Sur is expected to become a major destination for Arab and international tourism

DUBAI: As part of its participation in the Arabian Travel Market (ATM) expo in Dubai, the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism on Tuesday announced the tourism packages of the Wilayat of Sur, the Capital of Arab Tourism 2024.

Dr. Walid Ali El Hennawy, Assistant Secretary-General for Events and Media at the Arab Tourism Organisation, expressed the hope that the Wilayat of Sur would become a major destination for Arab and international tourism. He added that the wilayat boasts a range of diverse marine and environmental tourism features.

He explained that a city that wins the title of "Arab Tourism Capital" usually achieves a rise of more than 50 percent in the number of tourists visiting it.

For her part, Sajda Rashid Al Ghaithi, Director of the Tourism Marketing Department at the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism, said that the tourism packages prepared in cooperation with the national travel operator "Visit Oman" were announced today. She added that the packages would be available on the "Visit Oman" promotional website.

During the event, "Visit Oman" and Oman Airports signed a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with Emirates airlines to promote tourism packages for the Sultanate of Oman in the airline's global operations for the ATM.

-ONA

REALISING THE GOALS

Oman Vision 2040 follow-up unit holds meeting in Muscat

MUSCAT: Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit yesterday held an introductory meeting in Muscat with Governors.

During the meeting, the Unit outlined the main aspects of its duties and reviewed ways of enhancing cooperation and partnership with governors' offices with the aim of realising the goals of Oman Vision 2040.

Emphasis was laid on the application of decentralisation as a key indicator for the development of governorates and sustainable cities.

The meeting was held in the presence of Dr. Khamis Saif Al Jabri, Head of Oman Vision 2040 Implementation Follow-up Unit. It explained the procedures undertaken by the Unit during its follow-up of the implementation of the Vision.

The meeting included visual presentations, including one on a project titled "Institution Indices" that defines the role of each government department in meeting the targets of Oman Vision 2040.

Acting in partnership with government institutions, the Unit developed "Goal Cards" defining the main objectives of the vision and the extent to which they were met. A total of 55 goal cards were approved until the first quarter of 2024, including those pertaining to the governorates.

The meeting also touched on simplifying procedures, facilitating services and developing systems to ensure that the beneficiaries get top quality and prompt services. -ONA

KHAREEF

Dhofar theatre festival to be held

< FROM A1

They will feature traditional arts, heritage markets, diverse artisan products, and live arts and performances that embody Omani culture.

Regarding parks and recreational areas this year, he explained that Awqad Park has been allocated for children, with international villages dedicated to children, amusement areas, entertainment activities, light models, and various restaurants and cafes.

The Salalah Public Park will include sports activities targeting various age groups to support and encourage sports and raise awareness of maintaining physical health.

Dr Al-Ghassani also mentioned that the Dhofar International Theatre Festival will be organised for the first time to promote cultural and literary fields in cooperation with the relevant Omani authorities and will feature international theatre groups.

This season will host spectacular art concerts by elite Omani and Arab artists, offering surprises and performances at a pan-Arab level, some for the first time in Oman.

All relevant authorities in the Dhofar Governorate, represented by the Omani authorities, strive to enhance tourists' experiences during Khareef and other seasons.

Various activities will be organised in Salalah and other states in the governorate, focusing on cultural, commercial, entertainment, and sports activities, along with specialised exhibitions.

The events will also include karting races at the Salalah Celebrations Grounds and 'Drag Race' activities in the Dummar area in the Wilayat of Mirbat.

He also mentioned that Dhofar Municipality, in collaboration with the Ministry of Heritage and Tourism and the Oman Tourism Development Company (Omran), developed many tourist sites such as the Darbat Valley viewpoint, the Mughsail area waterfront, Ain Jarzeez, and the Hamreer viewpoint, as part of efforts to build and improve tourist and natural sites in the Dhofar Governorate.

This participation was under the wing of the Omani Ministry of Heritage and Tourism.

OMAN

STUNNING NATURAL BEAUTY OF MUSANDAM GOVERNORATE IDEAL FOR

MARINE TOURISM

KHASAB: Musandam Governorate is one of the most prominent global destinations for marine tourism due to its great biological diversity and stunning natural beauty.

It is visited by tourists from all over the world for its mountainous terrain and crystal clear sea water, making it an ideal environment for many types of reefs that attract diving enthusiasts.

Majid bin Ali Al Harithy, a diver and photographer, said that coral reefs are a safe environment for many living marine organisms and benthic fish who live and reproduce here.

Due to the availability of many important elements, including food and a suitable place for reproduction, Musandam Governorate is full of nutrient-rich water that attracts abundant marine life to the region.

He added that the coral reefs spreading out from the beaches in Musandam Governorate are one of the most important natural barriers that contribute to protecting the beaches and provide an ideal environment for the reproduction of some marine life and contributes directly to the development of ecotourism.

The number of tourists who visit the governorate is constantly increasing due to the abundance of dolphins, fishes, and the opportunity for diving to explore the depths and enjoy the wonderful views of coral reefs.

He explained that there are many types of coral reefs that are found in Musandam Governorate, notably Pavona and Porites, pointing to the dangers facing these reefs, including: increased fishing puts pressure on natural coral reefs, leading to cracking of the reefs and pollution of the marine environment.

It contributes to the loss of biodiversity and the disappearance of natural beauty. Therefore, degraded areas must be revived and addressed to restore the ecosystem.

Oman, Singapore eye cooperation in IT field

The OCCI delegation gave a presentation on the business milieu in Oman, as well as the incentives and facilities offered to foreign investors

SINGAPORE: A delegation from Oman Chamber of Commerce and Industry (OCCI), met in Singapore's capital city, with several specialists in the fields of information technology and representatives of Singapore's business and manufacturing federations.

The meeting was attended by Anwar Ahmed Muqaibal, Charge d'affaires of the Sultanate of Oman's embassy in the Republic of Singapore.

The delegation visited a company in Singapore's science park. The company specialises in digital transformation and digital government, as well as e-commerce technologies.

During the meeting with the company's officials, members of the delegation highlighted related projects in the field of digital transformation in Oman.

Moreover, the delegation met with members of Singapore's Manufacturing Federation, which specialises in the fields of training, innovation, tackling challenges and attracting investment in the industrial sector.

In this meeting, the OCCI delegation gave a presentation on the business milieu in Oman, as well as the incentives and facilities offered to foreign investors.

Moreover, the delegation's members held B2B meetings with Singaporean counterparts to discuss the possibility of starting joint investment projects. -ONA

MEETING

SAF Chief of Staff receives delegation from Bangladesh National Defence College

MUSCAT: Vice Admiral Abdullah Khamis Al Raisi, Chief of Staff of the Sultan's Armed Forces (SAF) received in his office at Al Murtafaa Garrison on Tuesday a delegation from the National Defence College of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, headed by Lt. Gen Mohammed Saiful Alam, Commandant of the college.

During the meeting, the two sides exchanged views and discussed a range of different topics.

The meeting was attended by Brigadier Hamid Abdullah Al Balushi, SAF Assistant Chief of Staff for Operations and Planning.

— ONA

IN GENEVA

Oman participates in human rights meetings

GENEVA: A delegation from the Omani Human Rights Commission (OHRC) on Tuesday took part in the meetings and conference of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) in Geneva.

The meeting discussed the strategic plan of the Global Alliance, the challenges facing national institutions tasked with human rights and means of enhancing cooperation between regional networks affiliated to the GANHRI.

Oman's delegation, headed by Dr. Rashid Hamad Al Balushi, Chairman of the OHRC, also participated in a meeting of the Executive Committee of the Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions that was held on the sidelines of the GANHRI conference in Geneva.

The meeting studied the programme of the Arab Network for 2024 and reviewed the latest efforts and developments of the Palestinian cause. It expressed support for the Independent Commission for Human Rights in the State of Palestine.

It also discussed means of updating the strategy of the Arab Network for National Human Rights Institutions for the upcoming years.

— ONA

ARAB CONVENTION AGAINST CORRUPTION

Ways to promote integrity and combat corruption discussed at Cairo summit

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman, represented by State Audit Institution (SAI), participates in the Fifth Session of the Conference of the States Parties to the Arab Convention against Corruption, on Tuesday at the headquarters of the Secretariat General of the League of Arab States in Cairo.

The Conference is held with a wide international participation from Anti-Corruption Authorities in the States signatories to the Convention, Representatives of Supreme Audit Institutions and international organisations as well as civil society institutions, universities and professional institutions.

The delegation of the Sultanate of Oman to the session was headed by Sheikh Ghuson bin Hilal Al-Alawi, Chairman of State Audit Institution, accompanied by specialists from the Institution.

He delivered the Sultanate of Oman's speech at the Session, through which he expressed his deep thanks and appreciation to the Secretariat General of the League of Arab States for its generous invitation to State Audit Institution to participate in the conference Fifth Session meetings, praising the efforts made by the Secretariat General to implement the decisions of the Fourth Session and their efforts in preparing for this conference.

He highlighted the firm position of the Sultanate of Oman in standing by the brotherly Palestinian people, and to act with all political and legal means to establish justice and peace and halt the bloodshed of innocent Palestinian people. In addition, he stressed the need for achieving a just and lasting solution in order to restore security, stability and comprehensive peace to the entire region.

The Chairman of SAI pointed out the Sultanate of Oman's keenness to exchange experiences with Arab States to enhance joint Arab cooperation in the field of promoting integrity and combating corruption, as it has a significant impact on achieving comprehensive development at the local and regional levels.

The Sultanate of Oman is also keen to implement the obligations and initiatives resulting from the Arab Anti-Corruption Convention.

He added that the Sultanate of Oman, since its accession to the United Nations Convention against Corruption in 2013, has been keen to achieve the objectives of the Convention and to promote and strengthen the measures aimed at combating and preventing corruption, as well as promoting integrity and sound administrative accountability for public affairs and properties.

The Sultanate of Oman is also working on the implementation of the National Integrity Promotion Plan 2022 - 2030; Which was prepared by surveying and studying regional and international experiences in the field of national strategies, and guided by publications of competent international organisations.

The Chairman of SAI concluded the Sultanate of Oman's speech by stressing that the Sultanate of Oman will continue to support all efforts aimed at combating various forms of corruption and limiting its spread in order to achieve justice, equality and decent living for all Arab peoples. The agenda of the Fifth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Arab Convention against Corruption included many key themes, the most important of which is reviewing the Secretariat General report on the measures taken to implement the decisions issued by the Fourth Session of the Conference of States Parties to the Arab Convention against Corruption and developing views on them.

In addition, the session included reviewing the recommendations issued by the First Session of the team to review the optimal implementation of the Arab Convention against Corruption, held at the headquarters of the Secretariat General of the Arab League in September 2022.

During the session, the States Parties also discussed the recommendations issued by the Second Session of the team to review the optimal implementation of the Arab Convention against Corruption, as well as the recommendations issued by the fifth meeting of the open-ended committee of government experts and representatives of independent bodies in the States parties to the Arab Convention against Corruption, which were held in September 2023.

The session concluded by discussing the drafts submitted by the States Parties, represented in a draft resolution on establishing a mechanism for submitting draft resolutions, a draft amendment of the reference framework of the mechanism for reviewing the implementation of the Convention, and a draft Arab protocol supplementary to the Arab Anti-Corruption Convention related to cooperation in the recovery of funds derived from corruption and smuggled abroad, in addition to a draft mechanism for monitoring integrity indicators in the procedures applied in the public sector by analyzing the information provided by the States parties to the Convention, and a draft decision to establish the Council of Heads of Law Enforcement Agencies concerned with integrity and anti-corruption in the States parties to the Arab Convention against Corruption.

On the sidelines of the Conference, His Excellency Sheikh Ghuson bin Hilal Al-Alawi, Chairman of State Audit Institution, met with a number of heads of peer SAIs in the Gulf Cooperation Council States and some brotherly and friendly States, during which they reviewed topics related to audit aspects, areas of promoting integrity and combating corruption, existing cooperation and ways to develop it to serves common interests and sharing of experiences.

It is noteworthy that the Arab Convention against Corruption entered into force in June 2013, and the Sultanate of Oman ratified the Convention under the Royal Decree No. 28/2014 issued on May 21, 2014, out of its belief in the importance of Arab cooperation to prevent and combat corruption.

Full story @ timesofoman.com/oman

MEETING

Oman and Brazil seek to boost tourism cooperation

MUSCAT: Salim Mohammed Al Mahrouqi, Minister of Heritage and Tourism on Tuesday received in his office Celso Sabino Oliveira, Minister of Tourism of the Federative Republic of Brazil and his accompanying delegation.

50th anniversary

The Minister's visit to Oman coincides with marking the 50th anniversary of establishing diplomatic relations between Oman and Brazil. During the meeting, the two officials discussed means of boosting cooperation and relations in the tourism field. The meeting was attended by officials from both sides. — ONA

ECO-INNOVATE OMAN

be'ah launches second edition of EiO programme

MUSCAT: Oman Environmental Services Holding Company (be'ah) announced on Tuesday the launching of the 2nd edition of Eco-Innovate Oman (EiO) programme to train and support entrepreneurs operating in the field of sustainability.

Press conference

This was announced during a press conference held at the headquarters of ba'ah.

EiO empowers Omani stratus to achieve their sustainability visions through a training programme that aims to gear entrepreneurs with skills and basic knowledge to succeed in the green circular economy. — ONA

Ministry of Defence

TENDER ANNOUNCEMENT

The Ministry of Defense invites MOD registered suppliers to participate in the following tender:

Subject	Tender number	Last date for Inquiries	Last date to submit the tender	Tender documnet price
SUPPLY OF PAINTS AND ASSOCIATED ITEMS FOR ROYAL NAVY OF OMAN FOR THREE YEARS	12/2024	24/06/2024	01/07/2024	138 OMR
SUPPLY OF DRY BATTRIES FOR ROYAL ARMY OF OMAN FOR THREE YEARS	13/2024	27/05/2024	03/06/2024	128 OMR

- Tenders documents and terms may be obtained on payment from the office of the Secretary of the Tender Committee, gate No. 14 of MAM Camp between 0900 to 1300 hrs on the working days.
- Payment of Tender documents to be made by using of any Visa Electron Cards or "Visa credit" Cards or through Smart Card issued from all the banks are operated in Oman.

WORLD

BOEING'S SPACESHIP

Starliner's first crew launch to ISS postponed

WASHINGTON, DC: After years of delays, Boeing's Starliner spaceship which was poised for launch on Monday night as part of a first crewed test flight to orbit, was delayed yet again.

Just two hours before scheduled takeoff officials said a safety issue had been identified.

"Standing down on tonight's attempt to launch," tweeted NASA chief Bill Nelson. "As I've said before, @NASA 's first priority is safety. We go when we're ready."

The launch would have marked a significant step for both the American multinational corporation and NASA's commercial outsourcing strategy as Boeing scrambles to compete with Elon Musk's SpaceX for a larger share of lucrative NASA business.

Monday's delay comes as Boeing's passenger jet division remains mired in a safety crisis. Having a second option for trips to the International Space Station (ISS), in addition to SpaceX's Dragon vehicles, has been a NASA priority ever since its last mission in 2011, leaving the US temporarily reliant on Russian Soyuz rockets.

Starliner astronauts Butch Wilmore and Suni Williams are set to take off from Cape Canaveral Space Force Station at 10:34 pm Monday (0234 GMT Tuesday).

Weather conditions were said to be 95% favourable for launch.

The craft will be sent into orbit by an Atlas V rocket made by United Launch Alliance, a Boeing-Lockheed Martin joint venture.

— DW

Times OF OMAN

Printed and published by: Muscat Media Group
Post Box: 770,
Postal Code: 112

Founder: Essa bin Mohammed Al Zedjali
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OATH OF OFFICE

Russia's Putin sworn in for new six-year term

MOSCOW: Russian President Vladimir Putin was sworn in for another six-year term in office on Tuesday, after a March landslide victory that outside observers say was heavily manipulated.

The 71-year-old has quashed all forms of opposition and dissent since gaining power as either president or prime minister at the turn of the millennium.

Putin took the oath of office in a ceremony at the Kremlin in Moscow, with senior Russian politicians and other guests in attendance.

Speaking inside the gilded Saint Andrew's Hall, he addressed a tough period for the Russian nation, which now holds pariah status in the West over its invasion of Ukraine.

"We will pass through this difficult period with dignity and become even stronger," Putin said at his inauguration ceremony.

"We are a united and great nation, and together we will overcome all obstacles, realize everything we have planned, and together, we will win."

Putin said Russia was open to developing relations with other countries that he described as "the world's majority." Meanwhile, he said, the Russian state had to prove resistant to any threats and challenges.

"Serving Russia is a huge honor, responsibility, and sacred duty," he added.

Longest-serving Russian leader since Stalin

Putin has effectively held office for nearly a quarter of a century and is the longest-serving Kremlin leader since Josef Stalin.

Barred by the now-altered constitution from running for a third consecutive term, Putin was appointed prime minister in 2008 by President Dmitry Medvedev, who had served as Putin's premier.

The arrangement, described at the time using the chess term "castling," effectively left Putin in charge as Russia's political leader until he was re-elected president in 2012.

If still in power when his new term expires in 2030, Putin would have been in power longer than any Russian leader since Catherine the Great in the eighteenth century. He would still be constitutionally eligible to run for another six years.

During his time in office, Putin has sought to rebuild Russian power and domination over neighboring countries — particularly those that were part of the Soviet Union.

Meanwhile, exiled Russian opposition leader Yulia Navalnaya called on supporters of her late husband Alexei Navalny to keep up their opposition to Putin. In a video on the day of his inauguration, Navalnaya described the Russian leader as "a liar, a thief, and a murderer." — DW

'As India's global role grows, foreign media influence will increase'

External Affairs Minister Jaishankar said India should accept and prepare itself for countering these 'realities' in the globalised world

> I think we should be aware of it, globalised "Duniya me" we should accept that these are realities and we should prepare ourselves for it. As I said, where there is a need to give answer, we answer it and if there is a need to ignore or find ways of dealing with it. We will do so.
>
> **S Jaishankar**
> India's External Affairs Minister

NEW DELHI: India is becoming bigger and its progress in many ways will shape the rest of the world because of which the rest of the world is trying to influence it in different ways, particularly through the media, External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar said on Tuesday.

In reply to a question at a lecture event in Hansraj College, New Delhi, EAM Jaishankar underscored that it's not necessarily the governments which influence the country, it is often done by the media in the present day.

"You named Al Jazeera. But I will only make one broader point applicable to other outlets, outfits as well. Because we are becoming bigger, because we are doing better, because our progress in many ways will shape the rest of the world, the rest of the world is also trying to influence it in different ways," EAM Jaishankar said.

"They don't have to be governments who are influencing it. Often these are done by media. If you look today, at the kind of comments which are coming out of media, the kind of attempts to shape opinion, to take it in different directions, I think all of these are very much part of an influence game that is going on," he added.

The Minister also said India should accept and prepare itself for countering these 'realities' in the globalised world.

"I think we should be aware of it, globalised "Duniya me" we should accept that these are realities and we should prepare ourselves for it. As I said, where there is a need to give answer, we answer it and if there is a need to ignore or find ways of dealing with it. We will do so," he said.

On Monday, in a stark acknowledgement of foreign powers trying to influence Lok Sabha elections in India, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said that the world is trying to do "more than just giving opinions" and asserted that such endeavours would ultimately remain "unsuccessful".

"I think this opposition will be only till June 4, after that these people will neither have the power nor exist. Only the power of my nation and our radiant democracy will exist. World will watch India's democracy with a new point of view. I can see that there is an attempt that the world is trying to influence our elections. They are not just giving their opinions but trying to influence our elections but they will not be successful," he said.

"People of India will not get influenced. After Emergency, people of India, including the poor, have showed the beauty of India's democracy. Such people will not be successful. The lamp flickers before it extinguishes. This is the flickering, as they know they will soon be left in the dark," he added.

Earlier, EAM Jaishankar slammed Western media, emphasising that they criticise our democracy because they think they are also political players in our election and not because they lack information.

Addressing a forum for nationalist thinkers in Hyderabad, EAM said, "I get a lot of these noises from the Western press and if they criticize our democracy, it's not because they lack information. It is because they think they are also political players in our election."

Further, Jaishankar said that in an article by the Western media, they stated that in such a heatwave in India, why are they holding elections?

"Now I read that article and I wanted to say listen, in that heat my lowest turnout is higher than your highest turnout in the best run," Jaishankar said.

He added that these are games that are being played with us.

— ANI

AQUARABIA

Middle East's largest water-themed park set to open in Saudi Arabia

RIYADH: The Board of Directors of the Qiddiya Investment Company (QIC) announced on Monday the launch of Aquarabia, the first water theme park of its kind in Saudi Arabia and the largest in the region. Located in Qiddiya City, Aquarabia will complement Six Flags Qiddiya City, the city's flagship theme park and the first Six Flags park to be designed and built outside of North America.

Embracing Qiddiya's Power of Play philosophy, Aquarabia will be Saudi's first home-grown water theme park and will draw visitors from across the globe with its twenty-two rides and family-friendly water-based experiences. This includes four world records, including the world's tallest water coaster, the tallest drop body slide, the tallest water slide, and the longest mat racer. Aquarabia will also offer the first underwater adventure ride featuring fully submersible vehicles. Adrenaline lovers will enjoy an extreme watersports zone dedicated to rafting, kayaking, canyoneering, free solo climbing and cliff jumping, as well as the Kingdom's first surf pool. Moreover, Aquarabia will offer immersive, narrative-based design elements and attractions seldom seen in water parks, with its theming based around ancient desert wellsprings and Qiddiya's wildlife seeking an oasis.

Aquarabia will complement Qiddiya City's theme park offering with the previously announced Six Flags Qiddiya City, a thrill park that will push the boundaries of the possible with twenty-eight rides and attractions. Six Flags Qiddiya City will feature five world record-breaking coasters spread across six uniquely themed lands: Sirocco Tower, the world's tallest free standing shot tower ride; Gyropsin, the world's tallest pendulum ride; Spitfire, the world's tallest inverted top hat coaster; Iron Rattler, the world's tallest tilt coaster; and the Falcons Flight, the world's tallest, fastest and longest roller coaster which will run parallel to the F1 track.

Aquarabia and Six Flags Qiddiya City are located within Qiddiya City in an entirely walkable neighbourhood where visitors can find a unique selection of activities and a broad range of hotels, dining options and even a green oasis to unwind and recharge between exhilarating rides and adrenaline-pumping experiences. Through innovative design and infrastructure, visitors will move around effortlessly, minimising journey time and maximising enjoyment. The seamless connection between both new parks is a statement that in Qiddiya City, every moment spent exploring is filled with excitement.

Commenting on the launch, Qiddiya Investment Company Managing Director Abdullah Aldawood said: "This announcement marks a significant milestone for Qiddiya City and for the entertainment, tourism and sports sector. As we keep expanding our entertainment offering, Aquarabia and Six Flags Qiddiya City will fulfil the diverse entertainment needs of our community, contribute to the diversification of our economy and create job opportunities in the tourism sector."

Both parks are currently under construction and will be completed in 2025, with the official opening date to be communicated. Moreover, Aquarabia and Six Flags Qiddiya City will be the first attractions to open for visitors to experience Qiddiya City's entertainment and sports proposition, addressing increasing domestic demand for new immersive entertainment experiences and water-based activities in the Kingdom. Through these groundbreaking attractions, Qiddiya City aims to provide residents with entertainment options while bolstering local tourism and employment as part of Saudi Vision 2030. With a projected total of 10,000 direct and indirect jobs created, Aquarabia and Six Flags Qiddiya City will significantly contribute to the Kingdom's economic diversification and GDP targets.

As a new master-planned destination, Qiddiya City has a rare opportunity to integrate sustainability in every aspect of the development's planning, construction, and operation phases. As such, Aquarabia and Six Flags Qiddiya City are committed to upholding the highest standard of sustainable practices, using innovative technology and design to implement best practices in water use and waste management.

The water theme park will use recycled water for the park's irrigation and cooling, and thanks to specialized filters, will be able to reduce water waste by up to 90% and minimize energy consumption. Moreover, Six Flags Qiddiya City also aims to recycle operational waste targeting more than 80% diversion from landfill.

The unveiling of Aquarabia follows the announcement of many exciting entertainment, sports, and cultural attractions in Qiddiya City, including the world's first multi-use Gaming and Esports District, the multi-sports Prince Mohammed bin Salman Stadium, the motorsport track and the Dragon Ball theme park. — SPA

Gaza Strip death toll from ongoing Israeli aggression surpasses 34,780

Sources added that at least 78,204 others have also been injured in the onslaught. At least 54 people were killed and 96 others were injured in Israeli attacks that took place in the last 24 hours, they added

GAZA: The Palestinian death toll from Israel's deadly aggression against the Gaza Strip since October 7th, 2023, has now surged to 34,789, medical sources confirmed on Tuesday.

Sources added that at least 78,204 others have also been injured in the onslaught.

At least 54 people were killed and 96 others were injured in Israeli attacks that took place in the last 24 hours, they added.

The sources said that many victims are still trapped under rubble and on the roads as rescuers are still unable to reach them.

UNRWA says catastrophic hunger will get worse

RAMALLAH, Tuesday, May 7, 2024 (WAFA) – The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) has on Tuesday warned that the humanitarian response across the Gaza Strip will be stopped if relief and fuel supplies are consistently blocked from entering through the Rafah crossing.

The Agency took to X to say that should these supply routes be disrupted, the already dire hunger that many people in Gaza, particularly in the north, are experiencing, will worsen.

"Continued interruption of the entry of aid and fuel supplies at the #Rafah crossing will halt the critical humanitarian response across the #GazaStrip," UNRWA said. "The catastrophic hunger faced by people especially in northern #Gaza will get much worse if these supply routes are interrupted."

Fuel stock allocated for Gaza's humanitarian operations 'sufficient for one day only'

The United Nations said on Tuesday that its stock of fuel allocated for humanitarian operations in the Gaza Strip is sufficient for only one day, due to the closure of the Rafah border crossing with Egypt by the occupation authorities.

A spokesman for the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) told journalists that "we have a very small stock, enough for about one day," explaining that fuel enters through Rafah only, and that this "stock is for the entirety" of the humanitarian operation in Gaza.

'Israeli operation in Rafah inconsiderate,' says President of the UNGA

Dennis Francis, President of the United Nations General Assembly, said that he's deeply concerned over the Israeli invasion of Rafah, a city where over one million displaced Palestinians are sheltering and already in most dire conditions, calling the operation 'inconsiderate.'

Francis took to X to say that 'nothing can justify' the Israeli military invasion in Rafah.

— Agencies

WESTERN CAPE PROVINCE

Five killed as building collapses in South Africa

GEORGE (South Africa): Five people were killed and 49 others remained missing after a multi-storey building collapsed in the South African city of George, according to media report.

The building collapsed on Monday, following which rescue missions are underway.

Around 26 people have been rescued since the building collapsed in the Western Cape province around 2 pm local time (8 a.m. ET) on Monday, George Municipality said in a statement.

"Three teams of rescue personnel are currently working on three different areas within the site of the collapsed building," the statement said, reported CNN.

— ANI

HEAVY EXPLOSIONS REPORTED

Israel's Rafah assault leaves Gazans stranded

GAZA: The spontaneous celebrations on the streets of Gaza didn't last long on Monday night.

Shortly after Hamas had announced that it had accepted a cease-fire deal proposed by Egypt and Qatar, heavy explosions were reported in the eastern part of Rafah, where the Israeli army had ordered people to evacuate immediately on Monday morning.

Late on Monday, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's Office said that the cease-fire proposal fell short of Israel's demands and that the war cabinet had agreed to continue the operation in Rafah.

Officials suggested that Hamas had agreed to a different proposal to the one Israel had negotiated. Nevertheless, Israeli officials said they would send a delegation to continue talks with the mediators.

On Tuesday morning, a military official confirmed that Israeli troops had launched what they described as a targeted operation in certain areas of eastern Rafah and were controlling the Palestinian side of the Rafah crossing.

The gateway to Egypt remains the only option for Palestinians to leave the territory and is one of the main crossings for aid to enter Gaza.

The fast-moving developments left many in Rafah confused and fearful. Ghada Rafiq, 30, whose family was heading to Khan Younis, hoped that an Israeli ground operation would still be averted.

Desperate Gazans with nowhere to go

"The thought of returning to a tent with no water and minimal services is frightening," Rafiq told DW by phone. "Where will we go? What are we going to do? We desperately want a cease-fire and a truce. I pray to God for a quick cease-fire agreement and for the army not to enter Rafah."

The day had begun with devastating news for the thousands of people sheltering in the eastern neighborhoods of Rafah. In the early hours of the morning, the Israeli military had dropped leaflets and sent recorded phone messages to people in eastern Rafah, ordering them to leave the area and relocate near Al-Mawasi on the western shore of the Gaza Strip.

On Monday morning, a military official told foreign journalists that the evacuation was "limited" and that the army had ordered some 100,000 people in specific neighborhoods to move to "an expanded humanitarian zone" near the coastal road.

Thousands of Gazans on the move again

For months, the threat of an imminent Israeli ground offensive has hung over Rafah and its residents. Soon after, people began to leave, packing their belongings into cars or on donkey carts. Others simply walked with a few bags in their hands on this unseasonably cold and rainy day. Once again, thousands were on the move, exhausted by months of bombing and displacement.

Rafiq was one of them. She awoke on Monday morning to the sound of her mobile phone ringing. "It was a recorded message from the Israeli army ordering us to evacuate eastern Rafah. We live in the al-Janina neighborhood, east of Rafah, one of the areas designated for evacuation," she said.

The young Palestinian woman is from northern Gaza and, like many others, has been displaced several times in the past seven months after the Israeli military ordered people to leave the area.

— DW

INDIA LOK SABHA ELECTIONS

60.97% voter turnout recorded in Phase 3

NEW DELHI: The voter turnout was recorded at approximately 60.97 per cent across the 11 States/Union Territories in the third phase of Lok Sabha elections, according to the latest data issued by the Election Commission of India (ECI).

Assam recorded the highest voter turnout of 75.01 per cent and the lowest was recorded in Maharashtra, where it was 53.95 per cent.

Voting percentages for other States participating in the third phase of the Lok Sabha polls as per latest data are- Bihar --56.55 per cent, Chhattisgarh--66.94 per cent, Goa -- 74.00 per cent, Gujarat--56.21 per cent, Karnataka--66.80 per cent, Madhya Pradesh--62.79 per cent, Uttar Pradesh--57.04 per cent and West Bengal--73.93 per cent.

Union Territory Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu recorded 65.23 per cent voter turnout, as per the latest data.

In this phase, more than 1300 candidates, including around 120 women, are in the fray. A total of 17.24 crore voters are eligible to cast their franchise in this phase at 1.85 lakh polling stations.

Prominent leaders

Prominent leaders contesting Tuesday's poll battle included Union Home Minister Amit Shah, former Madhya Pradesh chief ministers Shivraj Singh Chouhan and Digvijaya Singh, Civil Aviation Minister Jyotiraditya Scindia, Union Health Minister Mansukh Mandaviya, Samajwadi Party leader Dimple Yadav, and NCP (SP) leader Supriya Sule, among others.

In the 2019 general election, the BJP won 72 of the 93 seats that go to the polls on Tuesday.

Voting will not take place for Jammu and Kashmir's Anantnag-Rajouri Lok Sabha seat on Tuesday as the Election Commission of India (ECI) has postponed the polling to the sixth phase to be held on May 25. Originally, voting was scheduled to be held on 94 Lok Sabha seats in the third phase.

Meanwhile in Dharwad, The proprietors of an ice cream shop in the Hubbali city of Dharwad decided to offer ice creams free of cost as part of an awareness campaign to promote voting for the ongoing Lok Sabha elections.

The awareness campaign with the initiative 'Cast Vote and Eat Ice-Cream Free' was organized in Hubballi city on Tuesday.

The ice cream seller checked the inked fingers of the customers before offering them the free frozen treats.

The Lok Sabha elections are being held across seven phases, from April 19 to June 1. The counting is scheduled for June 4. — ANI

Specially-abled man casts vote with his feet

KHEDA: In any democratic country, the right to vote is one of the most important rights of a citizen. During the third phase of Lok Sabha voting, people of all ages and sections participated enthusiastically.

A unique sight was seen in Nadiad, a town located in Kheda district of Gujarat, where a young man named Ankit Soni, who lost both his hands due to an electric shock 20 years ago, cast his vote with his feet on Tuesday.

After casting a vote at a polling booth in Nadiad, he said that he has been voting for the past 15 years with his feet and urged people to come out and vote.

"I lost both my hands due to electric shock 20 years ago. After that, With the blessings of my teachers and guru, I started drawing. After that, I started writing... I did my graduation, CS. I have been voting for the past 15-20 years with my feet. I appeal to people to come out and vote," he told ANI.

Voting commenced on Tuesday morning for 25 of the 26 parliamentary seats in Gujarat in the third phase of Lok Sabha elections. BJP has won the Surat seat uncontested.

The third phase of polling is taking place on 93 Lok Sabha seats across 11 states and union territories.

The states and union territories where the elections are being held in this phase are Assam (4), Bihar (5), Chhattisgarh (7), Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu (2), Goa (2), Gujarat (25), Karnataka (14), Maharashtra (11), Madhya Pradesh (8), Uttar Pradesh (10) and West Bengal (4). The BJP has bagged the Surat seat unopposed.— ANI

SECURITY SERVICES OFFICIAL

Poland finds spy devices in government meeting room

WARSAW: A Polish security services official on Tuesday said that devices had been located and taken apart in a government meeting room that was about to be used by ministers.

It was unclear how long the devices had been there, the official said declining to speculate on who had planted them.

"The State Protection Service, in cooperation with the Internal Security Agency, detected and dismantled devices that could be used for eavesdropping in the room where the meeting of the Council of Ministers is to be held on Tuesday in Katowice," spokesperson Jacek Dobrzynski wrote on X, formerly Twitter.

"The services are conducting further activities in this matter," he added.

The Cabinet was meeting in Katowice, a southwestern Polish city where Prime Minister Donald Tusk was attending an economic conference.

Dobrzynski told Poland's TVN24 television that the equipment could register both audio and video. "It's tough to say whether these were devices installed years ago and not discovered earlier" or installed more recently, he said.

The Cabinet normally holds a weekly meeting in Warsaw but held it in Katowice because of the conference.

Who might be behind the wiretaps?

The discovery comes as Poland and other NATO members find themselves increasingly targets of Russian espionage in the wake of Moscow's invasion of neighbouring Ukraine. — DW

SPORTS

Surya's explosive ton guides MI to fourth win of season

Mumbai Indians rout Sunrisers Hyderabad by seven wickets at Wankhede

TODAY'S MATCH

Sunrisers Hyderabad
vs
Lucknow Super Giants
Hyderabad, 6pm

MUMBAI: A brilliant counterattack by Suryakumar Yadav (SKY) and Tilak Varma following a quick loss of wickets powered the Mumbai Indians (MI) to a seven-wicket win over Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in their Indian Premier League (IPL) game at Wankhede Stadium on Monday.

MI are at the ninth spot with four wins and eight losses, giving them eight points. SRH are at fourth spot with six wins and five losses, giving them 12 points.

In the run-chase of 174 runs, the five-time champions Mumbai were off to a poor start as they lost their top-order of Ishan Kishan (9), Rohit Sharma (4) and Naman Dhir (0) to the pace trio of Marco Jansen, Pat Cummins and Bhuvneshwar Kumar as the hosts sank to 31/3 in 4.1 overs.

The duo of Suryakumar and Varma took it upon themselves to rebuild the innings as they reached their 50-run stand in 27 balls. Halfway through the innings, MI were 84/3, with Suryakumar (33*) and Tilak (19*) unbeaten.

Suryakumar reached his fifty, his fourth this season, in 30 balls, with five fours and three sixes.

In the remaining six overs, MI were left with 46 runs to chase at 128/3, with Suryakumar (66*) and Tilak (28*) unbeaten. The duo brought up their century partnership in just 62 balls.

MI reached the 150-run mark in 16.1 overs. In the final three overs, MI needed just seven runs. Suryakumar blasted Cummins for two fours and a six on the final three balls of the 17th over to reach the score of 96. He then hit Natrajan for a huge six in the 18th over's second delivery, to finish his innings unbeaten at 102* in 51 balls, with 12 fours and six sixes.

MI ended their innings at 174/3 in 17.2 overs, with Varma also unbeaten at 37 in 32 balls, with six fours.

Earlier, Hardik Pandya and Piyush Chawla's three-wicket hauls restricted SRH to 173/8.

Batting sensation Travis Head (48) and skipper Pat Cummins (35*) were the two highest run scorers for Hyderabad.

Opener Head and Abhishek Sharma (11) shared a 56-run partnership. However, MI pacer Jasprit Bumrah made the first breakthrough after he removed Abhishek in the 6th over. Before reaching the 100-run mark in the 13th over, SRH lost four more wickets as they struggled at 96/5.

The batters failed to stay on the crease for a longer time after the MI bowling attack kept on taking wickets. In the end, a late charge from Cummins (35*) helped the team reach a competitive total.

Brief scores: Sunrisers Hyderabad 173/8 (Travis Head 48, Pat Cummins 35*, Nitish Reddy 20; Hardik Pandya 3/31, Piyush Chawla 3/33) lost to Mumbai Indians: 174/3 in 17.2 overs (Suryakumar Yadav 102*, Tilak Varma 37*, Bhuvneshwar Kumar 1/22).- ANI

Done this after a long time, says SKY

MUMBAI: After playing a match-winning knock against Sunrisers Hyderabad (SRH) in the Indian Premier League (IPL) 2024 on Monday, Mumbai Indians' (MI) batter Suryakumar Yadav (SKY) said he has done this after a long time.

Suryakumar played an unbeaten 102-run knock from 51 balls at a strike rate of 200. He hammered 12 fours and 6 sixes.

Speaking after the match, Suryakumar pointed out that he has fielded for 20 overs and batted for 18 overs so there's no need to worry about his injury.

"I have done this after a long time. I fielded for 20 overs and batted for 18 overs, only tired (nothing else to worry about.) I feel it was the need of the hour for me. I went out to bat, and needed someone to bat till the end. When the ball stopped seaming, I played all my shots that I practiced in the nets. I feel the intent would have been the same, I would have definitely played in the same pattern," said Suryakumar.

Suryakumar took home the 'Player of the Match' honour. - ANI

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OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES

The price of Oman oil has increased, with prices for delivery by July 2024 reaching $84.08, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil rose by 15 cents from the price of Monday, which was $83.93. - ONA

MSX INDEX ENDS LOWER

The MSX index closed at 4,778.59 points, down by 0.27 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 1.08 per cent at 448.37 points. Barka Water & Power Company, up 8.93 per cent, was the top gainer while Al Jazeera Services, down 8.20 per cent, was the top loser.

Oman hotel revenues exceed OMR71.9mn

The NCSI data indicate that the rise is attributed to the increase in the total number of hotel guests by 12.1 per cent to reach 598,128 by the end of March 2024 compared to 533,790 by the end of March 2023

MUSCAT: The revenues of 3-5-star hotels in the Sultanate of Oman reached OMR71,907,000 by the end of March 2024, up by 8.3 per cent compared to OMR66,395,000 during the corresponding period in 2023, according to statistics issued by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSI).

The data indicate that the rise is attributed to the increase in the total number of hotel guests by 12.1 per cent to reach 598,128 by the end of March 2024 compared to 533,790 by the end of March 2023. Meanwhile, the accompany rate went up by 2.2 per cent.

The number of Omani guests increased by 2.3 per cent to reach 189,275, while GCC guests went down by 2.7 per cent to stand at 32,283. The number of European guests increased by 23.9 per cent to reach 217,284.

Moreover, the number of guests from America reached 19,521 (up by 13.4 per cent), while African guests reached 2,735 (down by 7.7 per cent). Asian guests went up by 21.6 per cent to reach 79,415, while guests from Oceania reached 8,661. - ONA

OUTSTANDING RETURNS

ahli Global Equity Fund achieves returns of 17.1% in 2023 and 6.2% in first quarter of 2024

Times News Service

MUSCAT: ahlibank announced exceptional returns of 17.1 per cent in 2023 and 6.2 per cent in the first quarter of 2024 for its flagship, ahli Global Equity Fund. Regulated by the Financial Services Authority (FSA) and registered with the Muscat Stock Exchange (MSX), the Fund provides a unique platform for investors to gain exposure to GCC and global markets, while also providing diverse investment opportunities for clients from different sectors

Launched in 2013, the ahli Global Equity Fund caters to investors seeking long-term capital appreciation through investing in a diversified portfolio of high-quality businesses.

Most notably, over the past three years, the fund has generated excellent returns without any losses, boasting a Net Asset Value (NAV) of OMR 0.851 at the end of the first quarter of 2024. It recorded a return rate from March 2023 to March 2024 of 22.1 per cent, with a 3-year average annualised return of 13 per cent.

The Fund stands out as the top performer among its peers. Moreover, its coverage extends to global markets, with a keen focus on the GCC region in particular. Investments include stocks of companies from the United States and China. Furthermore, the Fund covers various sectors, including the manufacturing industry, banking and financial services, real estate, telecommunications, consumer sector, IT, energy sectors, and many more.

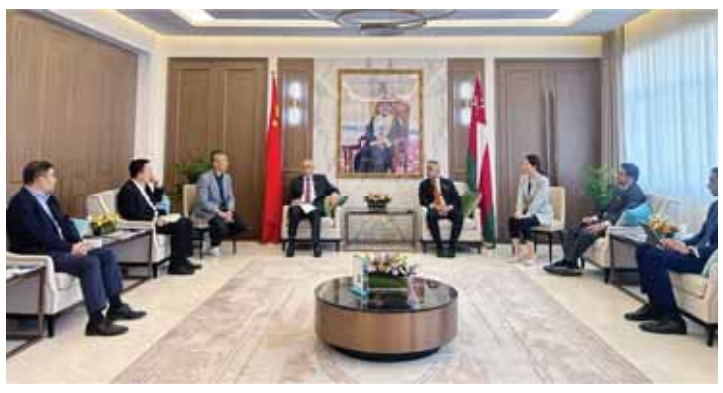
Hanaa Al Kharusi, Chairperson of ahli Global Equity Fund, stated, "I would like to take this opportunity to thank our stakeholders for their support in our endeavours as we strive to deliver and add value. We will maintain our efforts as we continue to grow our shareholder base and Assets Under Management (AUM) even further. Since the Fund's inception, our commitment remains true in creating an exceptional standard for growth. The success of the Fund stands as a testament to ahlibank's resolute dedication to providing the best to its discerning clientele. As Partners in Excellence, we welcome all who are interested in or seeking investment opportunities."

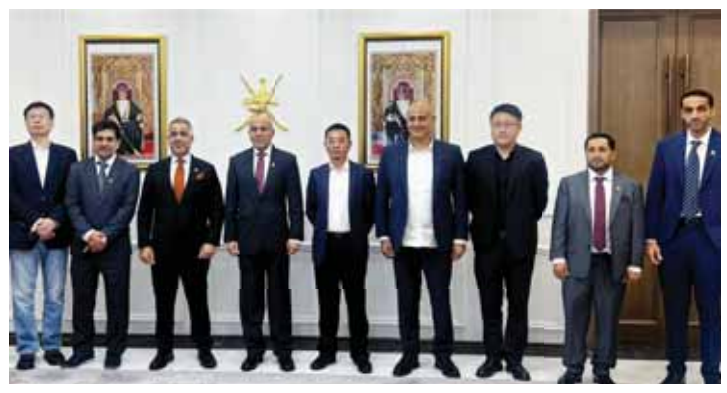
The ahli Global Equity Fund is managed by a team of professionals with expertise in capital markets and equity investment management. Interested parties can invest a minimum of 1,000 units, requiring less than OMR 1,000 as the minimum investment threshold, and can invest an incremental 100 units for the Systematic Investment Plan (SIP). The Fund also invests in Initial Public Offerings (IPOs) to provide excellent returns. As part of its long-term strategy, the Fund invests in internationally listed stocks, hence garnering a sustainable competitive advantage.

ahlibank remains resolute in its dedication to assisting investors make the best decisions. Its portfolio of products and services and network of branches across the Sultanate of Oman exemplify its efforts to cater to the diverse needs of its customers.

ATTRACTING INVESTMENT

Opaz delegation explores means of boosting strategic economic partnership with China





BEIJING: A delegation from the Public Authority for Special Economic Zones and Free Zones (Opaz) held several meetings in Beijing with a number of Chinese businesspeople from companies operating in the fields of green industries, iron, technology, modern information technology and chemicals.

The Opaz delegation is headed by Eng. Ahmed Hassan Al Dheeb, Deputy Chairman of Opaz.

The meetings came within the framework of attracting and localising quality investments in Oman.

During those meetings, investment opportunities in Oman's special economic zones, free zones and industrial cities were showcased. The country's infrastructure and the incentives offered to investors were also highlighted.

The meetings were attended by Nasser Mohammed Al Busaidi, Ambassador of the Sultanate of Oman to the People's Republic of China.

Further, the authority's delegation also participated in the Omani-Chinese Investment Forum organised by the Embassy of the Sultanate of Oman in the People's Republic of China to introduce the investment environment in Oman.

The agenda included visits to a number of specialised Chinese companies and factories, and viewing the experiences of Chinese companies in targeted fields.

The visit is part of Opaz's strategy to strengthen economic cooperation, attract international investment, create new strategic partnerships, and share technology, expertise, and experiences.

Opaz's delegation comprises representatives from the Special Economic Zone at Duqm (Sezad), the Public Establishment for Industrial Estates (Madayn) and "Invest Oman" lounge. -ONA

REPORT

Mena region leads global growth in luxury travel

Times News Service

DUBAI: The Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region has emerged as one of the main regions driving growth in affluent travel, recording high spending, while also displaying an appetite for sustainable eco-luxury and meaningful cultural experiences.

Mastercard's latest report, 'Affluent Travel: A Middle East Perspective', released during the Arabian Travel Market 2024, unpacks some of the key trends.

The appetite for new experiences in unexplored destinations, micro-trips and 'bleisure' will likely drive the growth of the global luxury travel market, which is expected to grow by 7.9 per cent (CAGR) between 2024 and 2030, according to Grand View Research. While the world awaits the emergence of the first trillionaires, high-net-worth travellers contribute approximately 36 per cent of the global spend on travel as stated in a Jones Lang LaSalle study.

"At Mastercard, we are committed to connecting people to their passion for travel. This report gives a great snapshot of how high-net-worth individuals choose to travel, and it's wonderful to see sustainability, cultural immersion and purpose as key considerations, along with quality accommodation, seamless technology and loyalty benefits. We will continue to harness the power of partnerships with leading industry players to come up with innovative solutions that unlock access to a whole new world of unparalleled travel experiences," said Amnah Ajmal, Executive Vice President of Market Development EEMEA, Mastercard.

As per YouGov research, over a third (36 per cent) of luxury travellers say they want to experience different cultures. The combination of business and leisure, or 'bleisure', is also resulting in more remote work trips as digital nomads change the face of travel. Affluent travellers are almost twice as likely as the global average to have taken a vacation as an extension to a business trip. Furthermore, Marriott Bonvoy's research also showed that solo travel is being embraced, with 70 per cent of respondents in the UAE and 69 per cent in Saudi Arabia saying they've travelled solo.

Seeking out sustainable credentials and authentic eco-luxury

Affluent consumers are keen adopters of the conscious travel trend and place a premium on the authenticity of eco-luxury experiences. These include associating with travel brands that support local communities. Globally, one in 10 consumers have stayed in luxury eco-friendly accommodation in the last three years, compared to five of 10 among 18–34-year-old affluents. According to Euromonitor, a sizeable 38 per cent of luxury seekers are willing to pay between 30 per cent and 50 per cent more for sustainable travel features such as energy-efficient services. A quarter would pay even more to find less carbon-intensive transport.

Meaningful experiences over material things

The YouGov report notes that this discerning segment places more emphasis on experiences than on physical goods. More than half of affluent travellers, compared to 43 per cent of the global total, prioritise meaningful travel experiences over shopping and souvenirs. Close to a quarter say that they are willing to pay more for a remote destination experience, customised tours to connect with local culture and eco-friendly resorts.

Personalisation, privacy and pampering

Luxury travellers are prioritising unique personalised experiences over location. However, they also want their money's worth in the form of exemplary customer service and pampering. Quality luxury accommodation is a high priority, with 27 per cent saying they would pay more for villas and chalets in secluded and private locations and 21 per cent happy to splurge on luxury stays on a private island. Younger affluent travellers are more likely to pay more for Michelin-starred or unique gourmet experiences. According to Marriott Bonvoy research, light, air, temperature, and sound in future hospitality spaces guided through digital concierges will recognise and respond to guests in real-time, based on mood, schedules, and health requirements.

High-spending loyalty supporters

Based on the average spend per card by the origin market, GCC travellers are among the highest spenders. According to a 2023 Mastercard Economics Institute report, Kuwaiti tourists, for instance, spend an average of $3,390 per card in Paris, five times as much as their American counterparts.

High-net-worth individuals are also power users of loyalty schemes and membership cards – 34 per cent versus the overall average of 24 per cent. Exclusive airport lounges, as well as priority check-in and boarding, are among the most used perks of loyalty membership, highlights the Euromonitor report.

As wealth migrates to younger generations, Millennials (aged 30 to 44 years) now comprise the highest percentage of luxury seekers, followed by Gen Z (aged 15 to 29). Within the GCC, however, Gen X (aged 43 to 58 years) is expected to make the highest contribution to travel growth, according to Arabian Travel Market.

While much of the world is still catching up to pre-pandemic travel levels, MENA is the only region to show airport arrivals at 22 per cent above 2019 numbers. According to the World Tourism Barometer, specific destinations such as Qatar (+90 per cent) and Saudi Arabia (+56 per cent) have contributed to this surge.

MARKET

MSX index ends lower

Barka Water & Power Company, up 8.93 per cent, was the top gainer while Al Jazeera Services, down 8.20 per cent, was the top loser

MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,778.59 points, down by 0.27 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 1.08 per cent at 448.37 points. Barka Water & Power Company, up 8.93 per cent, was the top gainer while Al Jazeera Services, down 8.20 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of Sohar International Bank were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Bank Muscat were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 764 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR3.22 million, with more than 18.62 million shares changing hands. Out of 54 traded securities, 10 advanced, 21 declined, and 23 remained unchanged. At the session close, GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for OMR393,000 while domestic investors were net buyers for OMR387,000, followed by foreign investors for OMR5,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,707.29 points, down 0.42 per cent. Prices of Ominvest were up by 0.54 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Madina Investments, Dhofar Insurance, Ahli Bank, United Finance, Global Financial Investments were down by 2.90 per cent, 2.38 per cent, 1.82 per cent, 1.67 per cent, 1.43 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 5,882.32 points, up 0.04 per cent. Prices of Oman Cables Industry, Oman Flour Mills, Galfar Engineering were up by 2.11 per cent, 1.33 per cent, 1.21 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Maha Ceramics, Voltamp Energy, Oman Cement, Raysut Cement, Gulf Mushroom Products were down by 4.71 per cent, 1.67 per cent, 1.33 per cent, 0.81 per cent, 0.44 per cent respectively.

Services Index was down by 0.34 per cent before closing at 1,824.93 points. Prices of Barka Water & Power Company, Oman Education & Training, National Gas, Abraj Energy, Oman Telecom were up by 8.93 per cent, 2.78 per cent, 1.22 per cent, 1.01 per cent, 0.09 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Jazeera Services, Al Batinah Power, Al Suwadi Power, Renaissance Services, Ooredoo were down by 8.20 per cent, 1.30 per cent, 1.27 per cent, 0.79 per cent, 0.33 per cent respectively.

— United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT STOCK EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,794.60	4,777.85	4,778.59	4,791.67	-13.08	-0.27
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,747.33	7,701.20	7,707.29	7,739.64	-32.35	-0.42
Industry Index	5,917.17	5,862.42	5,882.32	5,879.97	2.35	0.04
Services Index	1,831.29	1,824.93	1,824.93	1,831.21	-6.28	-0.34
MSX Shariah Index	453.72	448.18	448.37	453.26	-4.90	-1.08
MSX TR INDEX	6,652.70	6,629.46	6,630.49	6,648.64	-18.14	-0.27
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,782.29	8,729.99	8,736.89	8,773.56	-36.67	-0.42
SERVICES TR IDX	2,116.02	2,108.67	2,108.67	2,115.93	-7.26	-0.34
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,827.00	6,763.84	6,786.80	6,784.09	2.72	0.04
FIXED INCOME INDEX	1,068.20	1,068.20	1,068.20	1,068.20	0.00	0.00

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
18,623,293	3,216,840	764	24,395,012,240	10	21	23	54

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR TUESDAY, MAY 7

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
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	647	243	2	0.375	0.375	0.375	0.375	0.373	0.002	0.536	0.375	0.375	0.375	0.100	250,637,035
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	37,740	40,032	14	1.060	1.062	1.059	1.062	1.061	0.001	0.094	1.062	1.050	1.059	0.100	796,500,000
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	444,861	120,357	20	0.270	0.272	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.000	0.000	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.100	439,005,516
OM0000001681	OMAN EMIRATES HO.	768,224	63,827	31	0.084	0.084	0.083	0.084	0.084	0.000	0.000	0.084	0.083	0.084	0.100	10,237,500
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	33,800	6,145	7	0.182	0.182	0.180	0.180	0.180	0.000	0.000	0.180	0.180	0.189	0.100	39,600,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	1,440	431	1	0.299	0.299	0.299	0.299	0.299	0.000	0.000	0.299	0.280	0.299	0.100	37,344,490
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	5,579,815	759,039	63	0.135	0.137	0.135	0.136	0.136	0.000	0.000	0.136	0.126	0.138	0.100	758,505,493
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	2,500	820	1	0.328	0.328	0.328	0.328	0.328	0.000	0.000	0.328	0.328	0.339	0.100	65,480,477
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	179,288	14,531	6	0.082	0.082	0.081	0.082	0.082	0.000	0.000	0.082	0.080	0.082	0.100	14,350,000
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	6,000	1,794	4	0.299	0.299	0.299	0.299	0.299	-0.001	-0.333	0.299	0.299	0.310	0.100	194,632,325
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	2,951,298	775,398	61	0.263	0.263	0.261	0.262	0.263	-0.001	-0.380	0.262	0.262	0.262	0.100	1,966,676,030
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	322	121	1	0.377	0.377	0.377	0.377	0.380	-0.003	-0.789	0.377	0.377	0.390	0.100	89,126,570
OM0000002549	BANK DHOFAR	2,000	316	1	0.158	0.158	0.158	0.158	0.160	-0.002	-1.250	0.158	0.152	0.163	0.100	473,423,527
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	22,155	8,197	5	0.370	0.370	0.370	0.370	0.375	-0.005	-1.333	0.370	0.370	0.370	0.100	122,422,903
OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO.	1,783,735	123,063	54	0.070	0.070	0.068	0.069	0.070	-0.001	-1.429	0.069	0.068	0.069	0.100	13,800,000
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	89,446	5,277	3	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.059	0.060	-0.001	-1.667	0.059	0.059	0.060	0.100	21,011,511
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	3,817	639	2	0.169	0.169	0.162	0.162	0.170	-0.008	-4.706	0.162	0.155	0.168	0.100	8,910,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	11,047	2,628	4	0.240	0.241	0.235	0.235	0.256	-0.021	-8.203	0.235	0.237	0.240	0.100	14,383,004
Total	18	11,918,135	1,922,858	280												

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
OM0000003141	BARKA WATER AND POWER	133,200	38,447	15	0.284	0.305	0.284	0.305	0.280	0.025	8.929	0.305	0.291	0.305	0.100	48,800,000
OM0000002580	OMAN EDUCATION & TRAINING INV.	1,750	840	1	0.480	0.480	0.480	0.480	0.467	0.013	2.784	0.480	0.480	0.513	0.100	33,600,000
OM0000008447	OMAN REIT FUND	10,000	760	3	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.076	0.074	0.002	2.703	0.076	0.074	0.081	0.100	37,303,565
OM0000001707	OMAN CABLES INDUSTRY	130,000	314,264	26	2.370	2.499	2.370	2.420	2.370	0.050	2.110	2.420	2.420	2.420	0.100	217,074,000
OM0000001400	OMAN FLOUR MILLS	5,000	2,280	2	0.456	0.456	0.456	0.456	0.450	0.006	1.333	0.456	0.000	0.450	0.100	71,820,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	2,655	220	1	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.083	0.082	0.001	1.220	0.083	0.081	0.082	0.100	7,055,000
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	2,525,794	426,858	119	0.166	0.170	0.166	0.168	0.166	0.002	1.205	0.168	0.168	0.168	0.100	34,101,723
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	246,586	73,982	30	0.299	0.303	0.298	0.301	0.298	0.003	1.007	0.301	0.301	0.301	0.100	231,830,200
OM0000001301	DHOFAR FOODS AND INVESTMENT	200	15	1	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.075	0.000	0.000	0.100	14,825,769
OM0000001590	MUSCAT FINANCE	5,000	245	1	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.049	0.000	0.000	0.049	0.048	0.049	0.100	15,050,170
OM0000002028	GULF INTERNATIONAL CHEMICALS	7,428	652	5	0.084	0.090	0.082	0.090	0.090	0.000	0.000	0.090	0.086	0.090	0.100	1,890,000
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	4,676	3,741	4	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.000	0.000	0.800	0.800	0.800	0.100	49,020,000
OM0000002648	NATIONAL FINANCE	60,000	9,900	2	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.165	0.000	0.000	0.165	0.000	0.165	0.100	94,661,206
OM0000002804	ASAFFA FOODS	7,000	2,590	6	0.370	0.370	0.370	0.370	0.370	0.000	0.000	0.370	0.361	0.370	0.100	44,400,000
OM0000003281	TAAGEER FINANCE	6,470	679	2	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.105	0.000	0.000	0.105	0.104	0.105	0.100	28,464,502
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	502,035	49,702	7	0.100	0.100	0.099	0.099	0.099	0.000	0.000	0.099	0.097	0.100	0.100	221,458,350
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	3,000	390	3	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.000	0.000	0.130	0.122	0.130	0.100	217,023,300
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	117,473	7,048	8	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.000	0.000	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.100	87,756,088
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	567	54	1	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.000	0.000	0.096	0.093	0.000	0.100	19,200,000
OM0000009072	OQ GAS NETWORKS	957,172	136,030	98	0.142	0.143	0.141	0.142	0.142	0.000	0.000	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.100	614,948,597
OM0000002267	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	30,915	6,944	9	0.225	0.225	0.224	0.224	0.225	-0.001	-0.444	0.224	0.224	0.247	0.100	10,251,539
OM0000001418	RAYSUT CEMENT	209,723	25,720	28	0.124	0.124	0.122	0.122	0.123	-0.001	-0.813	0.124	0.124	0.124	0.100	24,400,000
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	849,000	74,712	20	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.089	-0.001	-1.124	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.100	18,128,000
OM0000004933	AL SUWADI POWER	136,400	10,639	13	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.079	-0.001	-1.266	0.078	0.078	0.078	0.100	55,723,695
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	315,344	23,967	19	0.076	0.077	0.076	0.076	0.077	-0.001	-1.299	0.076	0.075	0.076	0.100	51,291,445
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	60,541	17,766	19	0.291	0.300	0.291	0.295	0.300	-0.005	-1.667	0.295	0.292	0.295	0.100	24,013,811
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REIF	68,000	8,074	6	0.119	0.119	0.118	0.118	0.120	-0.002	-1.667	0.118	0.118	0.118	0.100	59,956,218
OM0000002200	AHLI BANK	33,000	5,346	5	0.162	0.162	0.162	0.162	0.165	-0.003	-1.818	0.162	0.162	0.165	0.100	380,644,509
OM0000001095	DHOFAR INSURANCE	10,800	2,227	2	0.210	0.210	0.205	0.205	0.210	-0.005	-2.381	0.205	0.205	0.210	0.100	22,378,798
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	204,880	13,807	14	0.067	0.068	0.067	0.067	0.069	-0.002	-2.899	0.067	0.067	0.075	0.100	5,695,000
Total	30	6,644,609	1,257,900	470												

PARTNERSHIP

Oasis Water and OAB forge strategic alliance to transform payment solutions

MUSCAT: Oasis Water Company and Oman Arab Bank announced the formalisation of a strategic partnership aimed at reshaping the landscape of payment solutions.

The signing ceremony occurred at the OAB Corporate Office, symbolising a transformative step forward for both organisations within the rapidly evolving financial technology sector.

This ground-breaking partnership heralds a new era of enhanced payment experiences for Oasis Water customers through the integration of Oman Arab Bank's cutting-edge payment gateway solutions. By leveraging Oman Arab Bank's advanced expertise in financial technology and robust payment infrastructure, Oasis Water Company is poised to streamline transactions, amplify efficiency, and deliver a secure and seamless payment journey to its clientele.

The collaboration between Oman Arab Bank and Oasis Water Company underscores a shared commitment to customer satisfaction and innovation. Together, they aim to introduce a range of new features and functionalities that optimise the entire payment process, reaffirming their dedication to delivering excellence in service.

N.S.S. Subramanian, Chief Operating Officer of Oasis Water stated, "Our partnership with Oman Arab Bank marks a significant milestone for Oasis Water Company. By integrating OAB's cutting-edge payment gateway, we are poised to revolutionise our payment processes, offering our customers a more convenient and secure method of conducting transactions. We believe this collaboration will reinforce our position as the leader in the Bottled Water Industry within the Sultanate of Oman."

Commenting on the partnership, Khalid Al Amri, Chief Retail Banking Officer from Oman Arab Bank expressed excitement, stating, "We are delighted to embark on this strategic journey with Oasis Water. As a leading financial institution, Oman Arab Bank is steadfast in providing innovative solutions that empower businesses and individuals alike. Through this collaboration, we extend our state-of-the-art payment gateway services to Oasis Water's esteemed customers, ensuring a seamless and secure transactional experience."

MONETARY POLICY

US Fed reluctance to cut rates makes easing harder for emerging markets

WASHINGTON: The monetary policy pursued by the US Federal Reserve is casting its shadow on global markets, including emerging markets, after the US central bank's recent decision to keep high interest rates unchanged.

Federal Reserve Chairman Jerome Powell had previously acknowledged the impact of US monetary policy on global markets, despite noting that the current cycle does not cause the same amount of turmoil as previous cycles.

The Wall Street Journal said that "Central banks in Brazil and Mexico that led the global fight against inflation could now be stuck with steep interest rates due, in part, to the US Federal Reserve's reluctance to cut." The Fed left the federal funds rate unchanged at 5.25% to 5.5%, pointing out that it is unlikely to cut before economic data show inflation is moving toward the central banks 2% target.

In a report, the newspaper explained that emerging-market central banks managed to tame price increases by raising borrowing costs much earlier and higher than their peers in the developed world. But the Fed's decision to keep rates at high levels is curbing their ability to loosen financial conditions, weakening their currencies and could hamstring their economies if borrowing costs take longer to fall.

Chief Latin America economist for Goldman Sachs in New York Alberto Ramos said that as the Fed delays rate cuts, it would leave a lot less wiggle room for these banks and they may need to reduce the pace of monetary easing.

Global investors tend to move dollars out of riskier countries and into US assets unless the difference between their respective interest rates is wide enough to compensate for the added risk, the Wall Street Journal pointed out. Brazil's central bank will meet to decide on rates on Wednesday, followed the next day by its Mexican counterpart.

Brazil's central bank has indicated it would cut rates by a half percentage point for the seventh consecutive time, but domestic problems and delayed Fed cuts is supporting forecasts that the central bank would slow the pace of easing.

"While Brazil and Mexico are seeing economic output grows this year, in part due to government stimulus, tight Fed policies could be a headwind for their economies," the newspaper said.

The Brazilian real has weakened more than 4% this year against the dollar as the outlook for the Fed pivot changed. The Mexican peso has retreated around 3.5% from a nearly nine-year high reached in April.

Meanwhile, Indonesia's central bank is "ready for the worst" and will provide more support for the rupiah if needed, the head of its monetary management department has said, according to the *Financial Times*.

The monetary departments executive director Edi Susianto told the newspaper that the Bank of Indonesia was prepared to intervene in the currency market, as it did last month when the rupiah hit multiyear lows, but would not rely solely on intervention.

Japan and Vietnam also intervened to support their currencies while the central banks of Malaysia and South Korea have said they are prepared to do so. - ONA

LNG FUTURES TRADING

India prepares for summer LNG demand

NEW DELHI: In the wake of rising demand and geopolitical tensions, liquefied natural gas (LNG) futures traded volumes experienced a notable surge in April, marking robust activity in anticipation of the summer season.

Amidst these dynamics, India, a significant player in the LNG market, continues to see an upward trajectory in its LNG imports, driven by various sectors including power, industry, and transportation.

According to data from March 2024, India's total LNG imports, including long-term and spot purchases, stood at 1.9 million metric tonnes (MMT), amounting to $1113 million. For the fiscal year 2023-24, India's cumulative LNG imports reached 23.3 MMT, valued at $13266 million.

Forecasts suggest a further 7-8 per cent increase in LNG imports in 2024, fuelled by burgeoning demand and ongoing infrastructure development initiatives.

India's ambitions to elevate its LNG import capacity align with its goal to raise the share of natural gas in its energy mix to 15 per cent by 2030, up from the current 7 per cent. This move aims to reduce reliance on more polluting fossil fuels such as coal and oil. -ANI

ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

Apple to employ AI in photo editing

WASHINGTON: Apple intends to develop the "Photos" editor in its operating systems through adding some artificial intelligence (AI) features that allow users to make advanced modifications to photos.

According to what Apple Insider reported, citing sources in the company, the "Clean Up" feature will be one of the most prominent of these new features, and it is scheduled to replace the current "Retouch Tool" in the Photos editor.

The new cleaning tool will provide enhanced editing capabilities and advanced options to remove objects inside images and fill the void they leave without negatively affecting the images. Users will be able to select elements in images via a brush tool whose size can be adjusted, to allow objects to be easily removed according to their size.

This feature will be similar to features announced by other companies, such as Google, which offers the same tool in its Photos editor called "Magic Eraser", and the Generative Fill feature offered by Adobe in Photoshop, Express, and Firefly applications in order to remove objects with high efficiency based on AI.

Apple is expected to announce some of the advantages of AI in conjunction with the announcement of new iPad devices.

It is expected that Apple will first reveal the features associated with iPad devices, while it may postpone the announcement of all the new features that it has developed until the developers' conference at the beginning of next June, in which the company will reveal all new versions of its operating systems. - ONA

LIFESTYLE

RESEARCHERS FIND HOW EYE ULTRASOUNDS HELP IN DETECTING BRAIN SHUNT FAILURE IN CHILDREN

SHUNT FAILURE IS LIFE THREATENING, AND CHILDREN WITH SHUNTS TYPICALLY UNDERGO MULTIPLE COMPUTED TOMOGRAPHY AND MAGNETIC RESONANCE IMAGING SCANS PER YEAR, EXPOSING THEM TO EXCESSIVE RADIATION AND SEDATION.

A recent study suggests that using an ocular ultrasound in the emergency room could help detect children with brain drainage tube failure quickly and safely.

Research presented at the Pediatric Academic Societies (PAS) 2024 Meeting in Toronto.

A ventricular shunt is a small plastic tube that is surgically placed to drain excess fluid and relieve pressure on the brain. Ventricular shunts are used on children to treat hydrocephalus, a disorder caused by improper brain fluid drainage or absorption from tumors, brain bleeds, and other sources. According to specialists, within two years following implantation, about 30% of shunts break, become misplaced, or become clogged, and an additional 5% fail annually after that.

When a patient visits the emergency department for potential shunt failure, their symptoms are often nonspecific, including headache, vomiting, and fatigue, according to researchers. Shunt failure is life threatening, and children with shunts typically undergo multiple computed tomography and magnetic resonance imaging scans per year, exposing them to excessive radiation and sedation. A backup of fluid causes the optic nerve sheath to swell, which researchers can measure with eye ultrasound.

THE STUDY FOUND THAT COMPARING THE DIAMETER OF THE OPTIC NERVE WHEN A PATIENT IS SYMPTOMATIC TO THE DIAMETER WHEN THEY ARE WELL CAN HELP DETERMINE IF A SHUNT IS BLOCKED.

"The research team is interested in finding ways to lessen radiation exposure and expedite diagnosing shunt failure in the emergency department," said Adrienne L. Davis, MD, MSc, FRCPC, pediatric emergency medicine research director at The Hospital for Sick Children (SickKids) and presenting author. "The study uses patients as their own controls by measuring the optic nerve when well and sick--a strategy that individualizes this test for every patient and recognizes that every patient with a shunt has a unique degree of shunt dependence and ability to tolerate high brain pressures."

The researchers studied 76 pairs of eye ultrasounds of nearly 60 children presenting to the Toronto hospital's emergency department with potential shunt failure. Researchers note that while findings are promising, results require further confirmation in a larger population of children with shunts across North America. -ANI

SPORTS

Olise nets twice as Crystal Palace trounce Man United

With only one win in seven games, Man United have slid down to eighth spot in the Premier League table

LONDON: Crystal Palace sealed a first league double over Manchester United with a rampant 4-0 win at Selhurst Park on Monday.

Michael Olise ran 20 yards under no challenge to eventually slot beyond Andre Onana to put Oliver Glasner's side in the lead after 13 minutes, *BBC Sport* reported.

Jean-Philippe Mateta surged beyond Johnny Evans to finish emphatically for his sixth goal in a row on home turf.

Tyrick Mitchell tapped in from close range after a fine cross by Adam Wharton in the 58th minute and French youngster Olise capitalised on a Casemiro mistake to power a strike beyond a wanting Onana.

From the first minute, Glasner's men looked full of intent against a United side who failed to turn up at Selhurst Park.

As a defensive unit, United put in one of the worst performances of the season with Casemiro and Evans becoming their 14th centre back partnership this campaign.

Eberechi Eze and Olise were given the freedom of the pitch to control the play and caused United trouble on numerous occasions.

Erik ten Hag's side threatened in a couple of moments with Casemiro twice having goals ruled out - the first for a foul on Dean Henderson and the second for offside.

Odsonne Edouard almost rubbed further salt in the wounds but his injury-time effort struck the upright.

With title-chasing Arsenal next up, United must greatly improve to avoid another thrashing.

At one stage in the season, Ten Hag's side looked as though they could put pressure on Aston Villa for a Champions League spot.

That dream is long gone and United are now at risk of missing out on qualifying for any European competition next season.

They must either finish seventh in the Premier League to secure Europa Conference League football or beat Manchester City in the FA Cup final to seal a Europa League place.

One win in seven has seen United slide down the table into eighth and their fixtures do not get any easier with league leaders Arsenal visiting Old Trafford on Sunday.

A defeat by this scoreline can be hugely damaging but for those United fans who made the trip to Selhurst Park on a Bank Holiday Monday, it is the manner in which the players seemingly looked disinterested that will hurt the most. - Agencies

Worst defeat, says ManU manager Erik Ten Hag

LONDON: Manchester United manager Erik Ten Hag insisted that he is the right man for the job but also admitted that their 4-0 loss against Crystal Palace on Monday was their "worst defeat".

After the loss, some sections of fans demanded Ten Hag's sacking. The Dutch manager was quizzed about the team's performance and whether he was the right man to lead the Red Devils.

"Absolutely," Ten Hag said when asked by Sky Sports if he was the right person for the job.

"If the right players are available, we have a good squad. We miss almost the whole backline and then we have problems. I will keep fighting. I prepared the team in the best way I could. It was not good enough, I have to take responsibility for that but I will find energy and prepare them for Sunday's game," Ten Hag added.

While talking about the performance, Ten Hag didn't hold back from expressing his disappointment to watch his players get outplayed by the opposition.

"It is very disappointing. Under-performing. The worst defeat. We should have done better. We are aware, as a team performance, we were not correct, making big mistakes and not following the plan and the script and the rules we have," Ten Hag said.

"There was one issue but also on the left side, two players were doubling up on one player. That's very poor defending," he added. - ANI

DIVING STAR

Great Britain's Daley to take part in fifth Olympic Games

LONDON: Tom Daley will compete at a fifth Olympics in Paris this summer after he was confirmed in Team GB's diving team on Tuesday, *BBC Sport* reported.

Daley, 29, took time away from the sport after winning gold at the last Olympics but will compete in the 10m synchronised platform event with Noah Williams.

The pair won silver at the World Championships in February following Daley's return last December.

"No one else in the world would take two years out and be as good as he is," said Williams, 23.

It was widely believed Daley planned to retire from diving during his hiatus but he opted to return after son Robbie said he wanted to see his father compete at an Olympics.

His comeback began at the British National Diving Cup in December before he and Williams sealed Great Britain's spot in the 10m synchronised event in Paris with their world silver earlier this year.

They also won gold at a World Cup event in Berlin in March.

Williams and Daley competed together for the first time in December

Daley, who has won one Olympic gold and three bronze medals, was 14 when he competed at his first Olympics in 2008 - an event Williams watched as an eight-year-old.

"My first memory of diving in general is at my grandad's house and he turned the tele on and it was him [Daley] in Beijing in a handstand," said Williams, who also competed at the Tokyo Olympics but failed to make the final of the individual event.

"He said 'that's that young kid everyone is talking about' and then he turned it off and said diving is boring anyway. I didn't even get to see the dive."

In Tokyo, Daley partnered Matty Lee but Lee will miss this summer's Games after undergoing spinal surgery. - Agencies

FORMULA ONE

Lando Norris' maiden win was 'a long time coming'

MIAMI: Lando Norris said his first Formula 1 win on Sunday was "a long time coming" after his Miami Grand Prix victory, *BBC Sport* reported.

The Briton, 24, pulled away to win from championship leader Max Verstappen, after taking advantage of a safety car period to pit for tyres and retain the lead.

His victory came in his 110th grand prix start and after previously finishing on the podium 15 times without winning, which was an F1 record.

"A long day, a tough race, but finally on top so I'm over the moon," said McLaren's Norris. "I'm so happy for my whole team. I've finally been able to deliver for them."

Norris, who has driven for McLaren since his F1 debut as a 19-year-old in 2019, was eliminated at the first corner in the Miami sprint race on Saturday.

He came close to victory during the 2021 Russian Grand Prix but lost the lead with four laps to go after being caught out by a late rain shower.

In Miami, he showed good pace all weekend in a McLaren that featured several upgrades.

"What a race. It's been a long time coming but finally I've been able to do it," he added.

"I'm just really proud. I mean, a lot of people doubted me along the way.

"I've made a lot of mistakes over the last five years, my short career, but today we put it all together so this is all for the team."

It is McLaren's first victory since the 2021 Italian Grand Prix when Daniel Ricciardo took the win ahead of Norris.

Three-time world champion Verstappen, who has won four times while dominating the season so far, finished nearly eight seconds behind Norris and said the Briton was "flying".

He added: "I'm very happy for Lando. It's not going to be his last one. He definitely deserves it today." - Agencies

FIA WORLD ENDURANCE CHAMPIONSHIP

Oman's Al Harthy aims for podium finish at Spa

MUSCAT: Weeks after producing a podium finish at legendary Imola circuit in Italy, Oman's Ahmad Al Harthy hopes to continue the momentum with another podium finish at the upcoming FIA World Endurance Championship, to be held at Spa-Francorchamps in Belgium on May 11.

The famed circuit is a personal favourite of Al Harthy as the Omani star has some memorable victories at the venue over the years.

Fresh from a memorable second place finish last month in Italy with team-mates Maxime Martin and Valentino Rossi, Al Harthy is determined to keep the impetus and challenge for more silverware at Spa.

Going into race three of the FIA WEC season, which will take place this Saturday, the BMW M4 GT3 trio – currently fourth in the LMGT3 standings – are focusing on mounting a similarly strong bid to that delivered last time out.

Al Harthy has been impressive in qualifying in his first season with BMW and will be determined to once again qualify for the all-important Hyperpole 'shoot-out'.

Round three of the FIA WEC season at Spa is expected to deliver positive result for Team WRT's No.46 entry.

Al Harthy is well aware of the strength of opposition within LMGT3 and isn't underestimating the challenge which awaits at Spa.

Al Harthy said: "Spa is such an amazing track and we've enjoyed so much success there over the years. It's almost a second home for me in my racing career. I absolutely love competing at Spa and I really am looking forward to being there for the first time with BMW and the WRT guys. I know everyone is going to do a fantastic job as always.

"We come into the weekend off the back of an amazing result in Imola. It was a fantastic race and both Maxime and Vale did a really incredible job in the car. I was so happy with my performance in the first two hours, and we were strong in qualifying and Hyperpole as well, so I really do hope we can continue that momentum, continue to push and build on the great start to the season."

Opening practice ahead of round three of the FIA WEC Season at Spa-Francorchamps will begin on Thursday with session two following later. On Friday, the third practice session will take place in the morning with qualifying beginning later in the day.

The 6 Hours of Spa-Francorchamps will be held on Saturday.

IN PICTURES

China Cultural Centre in Belgrade opens to public
This picture shows the statue of Confucius in front of the China Cultural Centre in Belgrade, Serbia. The centre covers an area of 6,000 square metres. Xinhua

Denim expo kicks off in Bangladesh
A visitor views products at a denim exposition in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Xinhua

Rain petition ceremony held in Mexico City
People participate in a rain petition ceremony at the Cuicuilco archaeological zone, in Mexico City, Mexico. Xinhua

Torch relay cauldron for Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games
This picture released by the Paris 2024 Organising Committee shows French designer Mathieu Lehanneur posing for a photo next to the torch relay cauldron and the torch he has designed for the Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games. Xinhua

2024 Fashion Art Toronto's Fashion Week
A model presents a creation at the 2024 Fashion Art Toronto's Fashion Week in Toronto, Canada. Xinhua

One dead after huge tree collapses in Kuala Lumpur
This picture shows a damaged car following the collapse of a huge tree in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia. One person was killed in the incident. Xinhua

East Africa floods affect 750,000 people, more than 235 dead
An engineer works on a power line pole in Nairobi, Kenya. UN humanitarians said that nearly 750,000 people were affected by flooding in eastern Africa, with 234,000 displaced and more than 236 killed. Xinhua

ROUND-UP

'GOLD AWARD'

Toyota honours Saud Bahwan Automotive as Best Distributor in the Middle East and Central Asia

MUSCAT: Recently, Toyota Motor Corporation bestowed upon Saud Bahwan Automotive the esteemed 'Gold Award' for their exceptional performance as the 'Distributor in the Middle East & Central Asia'. This recognition underscores Saud Bahwan Automotive's commitment to excellence across various domains such as Sales & After-Sales, Customer Centric Initiatives, Carbon Neutrality, and Best-in-Town Activities, among others.

The award was presented by Masaru Shimada, General Manager, Middle East and Central Asia Division, Toyota Motor Corporation.

Accepting this prestigious accolade, Abdullah Mohamed Bahwan, Managing Director – Corporate, Saud Bahwan Group, expressed profound gratitude, stating, "We are delighted to receive the Gold Award for being the Best Distributor in the Middle East. It is an honour for which we are grateful to our valuable customers who have always patronized us. Without them, an achievement like this wouldn't be possible. We will continue to do our best in all our endeavours and offer distinctive experiences that customers will cherish for long."

Extending his appreciation to Toyota Motor Corporation for this esteemed recognition, he added, "We would like to thank Toyota Motor Corporation for their unwavering support and invaluable guidance. Thank you for being there at every step of our journey."

Toyota holds a special place in the hearts of the people of Oman, becoming a household name over the years due to its inspiring Japanese quality and advanced engineering prowess. At Saud Bahwan Automotive, customer satisfaction has always been paramount. Significant investments have been made in state-of-the-art facilities across the country and a nationwide network of branches, ensuring that Toyota customers in Oman are always in close proximity to a Saud Bahwan Automotive facility. This commitment is bolstered by innovative marketing strategies, robust after-sales support, and extensive customer care activities.

Moving forward, Saud Bahwan Automotive remains dedicated to delivering exceptional overall customer experiences and achieving high levels of customer satisfaction.

Mövenpick introduces new culinary adventures

Three new F&B outlets, Amoun, The Butcher House and Dates & Co, now open in Ghala Heights

MUSCAT: Mövenpick Hotel & Apartments Ghala Muscat marked the brand's debut in Oman with a contemporary five-star property strategically located in Ghala Heights.

Besides being a preferred stopover for domestic and international travellers to experience the renowned Swiss hospitality in a genuinely Omani setting, Mövenpick also promises to soon become a must-visit destination for all types of culinary adventurers and foodies, with the opening of three outstanding F&B outlets – Amoun, The Butcher House and Dates & Co and The Watchtower which is yet to open.

"These outlets blend Mövenpick's own 70+ year's tradition of Swiss hospitality with inspirations from the Sultanate's rich culture and heritage," said Arshad Mahmood, GM Mövenpick. "I'm convinced that our guests will keep coming back for more, once they get a taste of the variety of classic and foodie-fusion culinary journeys we have prepared for them."

The hotel's flagship outlet, Amoun, is an all-day dining destination. The international menu consist of classic unpretentious tastes, like slow-roasted meats, authentic sourdough pizzas, succulent cheese boards, all topped-off with chocolates and ice cream for dessert.

With its name it derived from the word: Oman, the ambience at Amoun is an inspired homage to the nation's heritage with hints of local history — Arabian pottery, Portuguese tiles, and a vibrant Zanzibari colour palette punctuating the dine-in space. Another welcome surprise is the shelves of expertly curated Omani cookbooks, locally-sourced honey, dates, and handmade baskets that act as conversation-starters. These shelves invite patrons to indulge in some authentic curio-shopping following a soul-satisfying meal.

"Amoun is a place for familiarity and togetherness, where conversations can take centre-stage. It can also be an inspiring backdrop for celebrations and thematic parties as well," Arshad opined.

The Butcher House is a unique interpretation of a classic steakhouse. It is a truly experiential space, with table-side theatrics by culinary artists, skilfully blended beverages to complement each dish, and even a music playlist curated for its eclectic taste. The outlet prides itself on sourcing only the freshest, most wholesome produce. Here, patrons can acquire the chef's own Butcher House custom-made ingredients if they wish to.

The Butcher House's earthy ambience is accentuated by a medley of aromas and flavoursome energy, making it a great spot for solo dining as well as special occasions.

Rounding off the trio is, Dates & Co, offering a truly intimate space for conversations, with its playful & informal cafe ambience, and discreetly attentive service. This F&B outlet — serving a range of coffees and fresh mixers, indulgent Omani dates-inspired pastries and mouth-watering desserts — exemplifies Mövenpick's flair for delivering both memorable moments and culinary excellence.

Mövenpick Hotel & Apartments Ghala Muscat has recently introduced its ice creams and signature coffee and will shortly also implement its world famous 'Chocolate Hour' with Swiss chocolate treats for guests to complete the spectrum of one-of-a-kind F&B experiences.

OMAN ARAB BANK

Parents can now open and manage their child's finances remotely with OAB's innovative children's accounts

MUSCAT: Oman Arab Bank (OAB), a prominent financial institution in Oman, has introduced a new feature to make financial management for families easier. With the advanced mobile banking (MB) and internet banking (IB) platforms provided by OAB, parents can now open and manage their children's accounts entirely online. This convenient and secure solution eliminates the need for parents to visit the bank, saving them valuable time and effort.

OAB's Children's Accounts offer two options for parents to choose from, depending on their child's financial journey.

The first option is the Child Savings Account, which comes with real-time transaction tracking and a complimentary debit card (subject to eligibility). This account is designed to help parents guide their children in making everyday purchases and responsible spending decisions. The second option is the Child Fixed Deposit Account, which encourages long-term saving habits with competitive interest rates. This account is ideal for future educational goals or dream vacations.

OAB offers more than just financial management options. It provides parents with tools and resources to help their children develop good financial habits from an early age. With the help of the easy-to-use MB and IB platforms, parents can keep track of their child's spending activity, encourage saving habits, and even discuss financial concepts using real-time account activity.

To improve the experience, every child's account comes with a complimentary debit card. OAB prioritises transparency by offering a straightforward fee structure that eliminates maintenance charges for these accounts.

Oman Arab Bank's commitment to innovation and customer-centric services is reflected in this initiative, reinforcing its position as a leader in Oman's banking sector. The Children's Accounts not only simplify parental financial oversight but also engage the younger generation in a fundamental understanding of money management.

VARIOUS ACTIVITIES

Corporate Social Responsibility initiatives at Europcar Oman and Bahrain

MUSCAT: Europcar Oman & Bahrain, a leading mobility services company, announced its continued support to the Oman Cancer Association (OCA) through various Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) activities planned for 2024. The company takes great pride in delivering outstanding experiences to their customers and believes it is only possible due to their hardworking diligent team members. So when it comes to supporting CSR causes their staff initiatives take first preference.

Türkiye Hamad Saud Al Mawli is one such dedicated staff who is passionate about the cause of cancer elimination. Being a member of OCA herself and supporting their programs, Europcar decided to step in and take it further. These initiatives aim to raise awareness about cancer, provide support to cancer patients and their families, and contribute to the overall well-being of the community.

At Europcar Oman & Bahrain various activities involve employees, their families, customers, and partners to foster a sense of community and provide an opportunity to raise awareness about the causes the company supports.

An iftar gathering during the holy month of Ramadan, participation in the annual walkathon organised by the OCA etc. are a few such get-togethers.

Europcar also plan to arrange screening vans at their office premises that will offer free cancer screenings to its staff, their families, customers, and partners encouraging early detection of cancer and promoting a culture of proactive healthcare within the community.

Recognizing the challenges faced by cancer patients and their families, Europcar has offered a dedicated bus service from their accommodation to the hospital. This service will ensure that patients and their loved ones have a convenient and comfortable means of transportation during their treatment journey. By alleviating the logistical burden, Europcar aims to provide much-needed support towards this.

"We, at Europcar Oman & Bahrain, have various activities planned throughout the year that will bring together our employees, their families, customers, and partners. Being a company that is passionate about our Corporate Social Responsibility we continue our support for the Oman Cancer Association (OCA). Recently the team visited Dar Al Hanan - the Oman Cancer Association (OCA) facility and have pledged our support through various activities. Seeing them through demonstrates what we can do towards enhancing society in our own way. Our dedicated team members are the driving force behind our commitment to CSR causes, and we take immense pride in their initiatives," said Nitin Sapre, the CEO of Europcar Oman and Bahrain.

During the Europcar Annual Staff Event a ceremonial cheque was handed over to representatives of the association, symbolising Europcar's commitment to supporting the OCA's noble endeavours. The funds will be utilized by the OCA to further enhance their efforts towards providing medical aid, and supporting cancer patients and their families.

Recently the team visited Dar Al Hanan - the Oman Cancer Association (OCA) facility. Dar Al Hanan was established with a noble mission: to ensure that children diagnosed with cancer, regardless of their location have access to the vital treatments and care they need. Recognizing the challenges faced by families residing outside Muscat, OCA embarked on a journey to provide free accommodation, meals and transportation services to patients and their families, allowing them to focus solely on their recovery journey.

As a "Home Away from Home," Dar Al Hanan offers a sanctuary where young patients and their families can find comfort and support during their challenging times. From infancy to the age of 13, they receive round-the-clock care and assistance, ensuring that no child misses out on the opportunity to receive life-saving treatments. The Europcar Oman & Bahrain team, were deeply moved by the visit, witnessing firsthand the dedication and compassion of the OCA team and reaffirmed its commitment to supporting initiatives that make a meaningful difference in the lives of those facing adversity.

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