

**HM THE SULTAN GREETES
PRESIDENT OF GABON**

MUSCAT: His Majesty Sultan Haitham bin Tarik has sent a cable of greetings to President Ali Bongo Ondimba, of the Gabonese Republic, on his country's National Day. In the cable, His Majesty the Sultan expressed his heartfelt sentiments and best wishes to President Ondimba and the people of Gabon. — **ONA**



**HIS MAJESTY THE SULTAN GREETES
PRESIDENT OF INDONESIA**

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



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TOP-TIER DOMESTIC FOOTBALL CHAMPIONSHIP

Omantel League kicks off today

Times News Service

MUSCAT: It is kick-off time. The 2023-24 Omantel League, the Sultanate of Oman's top-tier domestic football championship, will kick off today with defending champions Al Nahda taking on promoted Al Shabab, in one of the two matches, on the opening day at the Al Rustaq Sports Complex. The match begins at 8.10pm.

Sur against Al Rustaq

The match will be preceded by the opening game of the season. It will feature former champions Sur against Al Rustaq at Sur Sports Complex at 5.45pm.

The 2023/2024 season will witness the participation of 12 clubs, two less than in the previous years with last season's runner-up and



former winner Al Suwaiq and Mussanah club withdrawing from the league.

The 12 teams participating in the new season are Al Nahda, Seeb, Dhofar, Al Rustaq, Bahla, Sohar,

Sur, Ibri, Al Wahda, Al Shabab, Al Nasr and Oman clubs. The opening week fixtures will conclude on Friday. Al Wahda Club, runner-up in the first division last season, will clash with Salalah giants and

record 11-time champions Dhofar Club at the Sur Sports Complex at 5:45 pm, while another Salalah powerhouse, Al Nasr, will host Bahla at the Al Saada Complex in Salalah at 8:15 pm, and Sohar Club will take on Oman Club at the Sohar Sports Complex (8.15pm).

VAR technology

The new season will have many firsts with the introduction of Video Assistant Referee (VAR) technology, raffle draws for fans offering 12 cars throughout the season, monthly awards for best player, coach, goalkeeper and best team for fair play.

The season will also witness the top six finishers receiving the cash awards with the winning team taking home OMR50,000, a hike in prize-money than last season.

EDUCATION MINISTRY

27,629 students took admission in academic year 2023/2024

MUSCAT: The Higher Education Admission Centre (HEAC) at the Ministry of Higher Education, Research and Innovation has said that a total of 27,629 students received admission in the first allocation for Academic Year 2023/2024 in higher education institutions, scholarships and study allowances within Oman and abroad.

The ministry said that 93 percent of available seats were occupied. Students who received admission are given one week to complete their registration formalities, from 17 August until 23 August 2023, said Dr Hamad Khalfan Al Nu'amani, Director General of the HEAC, noting that the students' registration can be made through HEAC portal and other announced electronic channels.

Giving a breakup, Al Nu'amani said that government higher education institutions accommodated 55.6 percent of the total number of students who received admission, while 42.2 percent of the admissions went to internal study allowances and 2.2 percent to scholarships abroad.

Al Nu'amani pointed out that the HEAC will extend a 'mis-choice serve' to students, offering them an opportunity to amend their preferences, from 28 to 30 August 2023, and contest the vacant seats, provided they meet the terms of the service. The number of scholarship seats offered by private higher education institutions and private sector companies grew by 59.4 percent over the number of such scholarships last year, according to Al Nu'amani. — **ONA**

A'DHAHIRAH GOVERNORATE

Work begins on OMR2.5mn water supply network in Yanqul

YANQUL: Nama Water Services announced the start of a project to construct a water network in Al-Ulou area in the Wilayat of Yanqul, A'Dhahirah Governorate.

The project cost is OMR2.5 million.

Nama Water

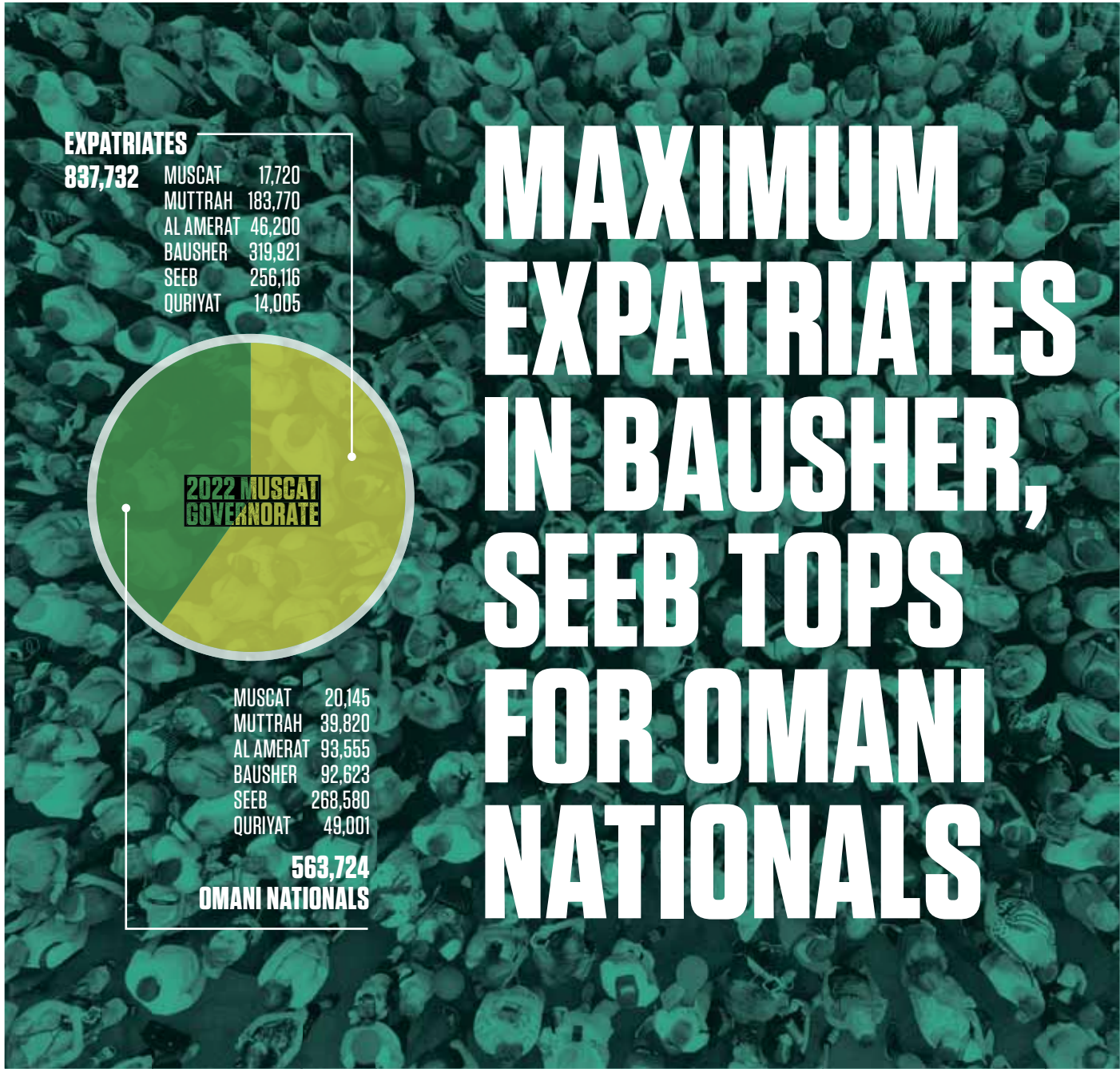
Speaking at a press briefing held at the office of Wali of Yanqul, Eng. Badr Salim Al Rab'aani, Project Manager at Nama Water, said the project is set to be carried out in 18 months, from July 2023 to December 2024.

Al Rab'aani pointed out that the project includes the construction of a 75 km water distribution network, with 700 connections.

Urban expansion

The project is designed to cope with urban expansion, cater to 4,200 beneficiaries, now, and serve as many as 10,000 beneficiaries in future.

The project includes the installation of firefighting nozzles, isolation valves, air valves and pressure control points, as well as culverts for the flow of water in wadis (valleys) and under roads. — **ONA**



MAXIMUM EXPATRIATES IN BAUSHER, SEEB TOPS FOR OMANI NATIONALS



Expatriate population is highest in Muscat Governorate while North Al Batinah recorded the highest number of nationals

MUSCAT: Expatriate population is higher than Omanis in Muscat Governorate at the end of 2022, according to a report in the Statistical Year Book for August 2023 released by the National Centre for Statistics and Information (NCSD).

The 51st issue of the year book, said that the Wilayat of Bausher in the Muscat Governorate had the highest number of expatriates registered with 319,921 while the Wilayat of Seeb had the maximum registered Omanis with 268,580.

The total population of expats at the end of 2022 were 2,066,239 while Omanis were 2,867,611. There was a significant rise of expats from 2021 when there were 1,723,329. The total population of Oman at the end of 2022 was 4,933,850. The population of Oman has already crossed the 5 million mark earlier this year.

Muscat Governorate had the maximum population of expatriates registered with 837,732 while the Omanis in the governorate accounted for 563,724.

The second highest population

of expatriates in the Sultanate of Oman was recorded in Al Batinah North Governorate with 295,460 in 2022, a sharp increase from 231,705 in 2021. The governorate was also home to highest number of Omani population in 2022 with 576,554, edging Muscat, which had 563,724.

The largest gap of the demographic equation in the Muscat Governorate was in the Wilayat of Bausher followed by the Wilayat of Muttrah. Expatriates outnumbered the nationals by 227,298 in Bausher, and by 143,950 in Muttrah.

The emerging suburb of Wilayat of Al Amerat had more Omanis than expatriates as there were 47,355 more nationals in the wilayat with 93,555 Omanis as compared to 46,200 expatriates.

The coastal town of Quriyat had 49,001 Omanis and only 14,005 expatriates. The expatriate population in Muscat Gover-

norate had increased by nearly 80,000 in a year's time with the population recorded in 2021 to be 756,645 as compared to 837,732.

With the Wilayat of Bausher emerging as the major destination for expatriates, one of the leading member of a social club attributed it to a larger availability of new multi-storey buildings, affordable rents and proximity to malls and market and work places.

Sirajul Hoque, Bangladesh Social Club Oman Chairman, told *Times of Oman*: "A large number of Bangladeshi workers stay in Bausher area as several companies have come up in that area in the recent years."

"Hamriya still remains the favourite place for people from Bangladesh but over the recent years, we have seen a large working population more towards commercial areas like Al Khuwair, Ghubra, Azaiba and Ghala," he added. **>A5**

TOP THREE INSIDE STORIES



OMAN Oman-US military drill concludes

1 The joint Oman-USA military drill 'Valley of Fire 2023', concluded yesterday in the Governorate of Dhofar. The drill was conducted with the participation of the Royal Army of Oman and infantry units of the United States Army. **>A5**

OMAN Liquefied hydrogen carrier docks in Oman

2 The Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday received at Sultan Qaboos Port the first liquefied hydrogen carrier ship "Suiso Frontier" as part of the Japanese tanker's regional tour in the Middle East. **>A4**

WORLD



Trump denounces fourth indictment

3 Former US President Donald Trump on Tuesday claimed that he will produce an "irrefutable" report that "should" lead to all charges against him getting dropped, media report said. **>A7**

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Oman Cricket set to launch its new initiative #Cricket4Her in October

The start of the initiative will begin with the hosting of indoor and outdoor softball tournaments for girls and women in October this year

Times News Service

MUSCAT: The national cricket governing body, Oman Cricket, is all set to launch a new initiative focusing on development of cricket among girls and women with #Cricket4Her programme.

Oman Cricket hopes to attract the girls in Oman to play the game and take it up at a competitive level.

The start of the initiative will begin with the hosting of indoor and outdoor softball tournaments for girls and women in October. The indoor softball event begins on October 6 while the outdoor softball tournament will begin on October 19.

Oman Cricket's treasurer and one of the brainchild behind the new initiative, Alkesh Joshi, said: The #Cricket4Her is an exceptionally important programme for Oman Cricket. We hope to revitalise the approach towards women's cricket and the entire OC board and the cricket fraternity are behind this programme.

"The aim is to bring more girls and women to play cricket and we will start the #Cricket4Her programme with the hosting of indoor and outdoor softball cricket tournaments in October. We hope to introduce the girls to hardball



cricket gradually as the aim is to have a big pool of cricket-playing women and girls."

The top OC official revealed that the blueprint of the #Cricket4Her programme has received the approval from the International Cricket Council (ICC) and they "have appreciated the initiative and are delighted with the progress made by Oman Cricket."

tional level."

Elaborating further, OC's chief development officer Duleep Mendis said that "the Cricket4Her programme will establish a pathway for women and girls in cricket across Oman."

He added, "By providing dedicated tournaments, we aim to foster a supportive environment where women and girls can excel in cricket. This pathway will lead the way for talent development, skill enhancement, and the nurturing of a strong and empowered community of women cricketers."

Among the major highlights of the new initiative are the mantra of 4Cs - coaching, competition, commitment and community.

#Cricket4Her will focus on providing coaching and training to women and girls through qualified coaches.

Participants could receive expert guidance and support to enhance their skills and performance.

formance. First-timers will be given special attention by OC coaching staff.

Mendis said: "The programme also lays emphasis on the importance of fostering a competitive spirit among women cricketers. #Cricket4Her aims to develop skills in an action-packed environment, with focus on having fun and being active. The initiative will ensure that cricket is represented in schools/ social clubs/ communities. Girls will be encouraged to take their cricketing journey seriously, committing themselves to regular training, practice, and continuous improvement."

"The initiative also hopes to create a sense of community and aims to nurture a strong and empowered community of women cricketers, coaches, and supporters who share a passion for the game. This community will provide a supportive network for players to thrive and inspire each other."

Mendis added "By focusing on these 4Cs, #Cricket4Her aims to develop a thriving women's cricket ecosystem in Oman, where players can experience growth, empowerment, and success in the sport."

The OC's announcement on the initiative comes weeks after the ICC commemorated the 50th anniversary of the first-ever Cricket World Cup - the first-ever Women's World Cup in June-July 1973. The tournament was two whole years before the first men's Cricket World Cup was contested in 1975.

The global growth of women's cricket is one of the ICC's six strategic priority projects. Part of the mission is to grow the number of women cricket fans and participants in the game worldwide. ICC's commitment to women's cricket was also underlined when it announced recently that there would be equal pay for men's and women's cricket teams at ICC events.

VIA VIDEO CONFERENCING



GCC news agencies' officials hold meet

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Information, represented by Oman News Agency (ONA), chaired the 22nd GCC news agencies' meeting held on Wednesday via video conferencing.

Ibrahim Saif Al Azri, Director-General and Editor-in-Chief of Oman News Agency (ONA), head of the current session, said, "Today's meeting seeks to raise the level of media content provided by GCC news agencies, notably amid the rapid development of news broadcasting technologies."

Artificial intelligence

Al Azri pointed out that artificial intelligence (AI), in particular, is expected to generate more advanced shifts forward in news broadcasting. In his speech during the opening of the meeting, Al Azri laid emphasis on the speedy accomplishment of projects of significance to the goals set out by GCC news agencies.

Al Azri stressed the GCC news agencies' realising the mission entrusted to them in conveying accurate information and con-

solidating credibility among the recipients of news.

Devise new methods

Al Azri stressed the need to develop GCC news agencies' content, improve performance and devise new methods to make this content accessible to GCC, Arab and international audiences in full ease.

He also underscored GCC news agencies' ability to garner influence via interactive platforms that attract various segments of public audience eager to keep pace with news and information on global developments.

The meeting touched on a number of topics, including Oman's proposal to establish a uniform GCC news agencies database and activate a unified account on "X" platform.

It also looked into scopes for developing a schedule to exchange joint news bulletins and launch a joint electronic application, an envisaged GCC News Agencies' Project and unified procurement mechanisms. — ONA



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Oman receives world's first liquefied hydrogen vessel 'Suiso Frontier'

Japan stands as a key strategic partner to the Sultanate of Oman, particularly in the energy domain

MUSCAT: The Sultanate of Oman on Wednesday received at Sultan Qaboos Port the first liquefied hydrogen carrier ship "Suiso Frontier" as part of the Japanese tanker's regional tour in the Middle East.

Eng. Salim Nasser Al Auqi, Minister of Energy and Minerals alongside officials from the sectors of hydrogen, transport and logistics, toured the carrier ship's facilities.

They also toured the hydrogen transfer control room, which was notably augmented with cutting-edge reality technology. This innovative feature displayed the scenarios of transporting liquefied hydrogen on a commercial scale, besides the economic feasibility of transport projects.

Al Auqi said that the visit comes within the framework of getting familiarised with the capabilities of transporting hydrogen and the challenges faced by the carrier. The visit also aims to review the company's future plans in building huge hydrogen carriers to meet increasing international demand during the upcoming stage.

The Minister also pointed out that Oman has come a long way in the hydrogen field and Oman strives to become among the first countries that export green hydrogen to various parts of the world, as well as utilizing green hydrogen in local industries as a substitute for gas.

In his turn, Jota Yamamoto, Ambassador of Japan to Oman said the carrier's visit to Oman contributes to enhancing bilateral relations in all fields, especially in the energy and hydrogen fields. He also underscored the importance of the availability of hydrogen carriers to connect suppliers with the market.

Moreover, the carrier ship "Suiso Frontier" was manufac-

tured by the Japanese company Kawasaki Heavy Industries and it is operated by Shell Japan.

The ship is considered a significant experimental station, notably catalyzing research and development in the hydrogen domain. Suiso Frontier ferries substantial hydrogen volumes, with cargo capacity reaching 1,250 cubic metres. The financial expenditure in the construction of this ship has been appraised at approximately USD 359 million.

Japan stands as a key strategic partner to the Sultanate of Oman, particularly in the energy domain. This strategic partnership was solidified through the signing of a Memorandum of Cooperation in January 2023. This collaboration between Oman and Japan encompasses a spectrum of sectors, including hydrogen, ammonia fuel, carbon recycling, and modern methodologies used in methane production.

Meanwhile, Oman strengthened its position in green hydrogen projects by signing several projects to produce 750,000 tonnes of green hydrogen with an investment value of USD 30 billion in the initial bidding phase.

Oman inaugurated three concession areas within the Governorate of Dhofar within the second bidding phase which are expected to be awarded by the end of the first quarter of 2024. The Sultanate of Oman's future ambitions include producing more than 1 million tonnes by 2030 and 8 million tonnes by 2050. -ONA



The carrier ship "Suiso Frontier" was manufactured by the Japanese company Kawasaki Heavy Industries and it is operated by Shell Japan.

750,000
TONNES OF
GREEN HYDROGEN

Oman strengthened its position in green hydrogen projects by signing several projects to produce 750,000 tonnes of green hydrogen with an investment value of USD 30 billion in the initial bidding phase.



Oman-US military drill ‘Valley of Fire’ concludes

The drill was conducted with the participation of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) and infantry units of the United States Army

SALALAH: The joint Oman-US military drill “Valley of Fire 2023”, concluded yesterday in the Governorate of Dhofar. The drill was conducted with the participation of the Royal Army of Oman (RAO) and infantry units of the United States Army. Other personnel of RAO and the Royal Air Force of Oman (RAFO) also took part in the drill.



Simulation and role-playing tasks of the drill were aimed at providing training in accordance with the RAO training plan to sustain preparedness and achieve the desired national objectives. The drill comes within the context of annual training programmes that aim to exchange expertise in military fields. The concluding event was held under the auspices of Brigadier Abdulkadim Ibrahim Al Ajmi, Commander of the 11th Infantry Brigade. It was also attended by several senior officers of RAO and the US Army.

-ONA

THREE PHASES

Taxi owners urged to use licenced applications from October 1, 2023

MUSCAT: The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology has announced details of a timetable to implement its decision requiring taxi owners to join applications licenced by the ministry. Three timeframes have been set out for the implementation of the plan. The first phase begins on October 1, 2023 and it applies to the

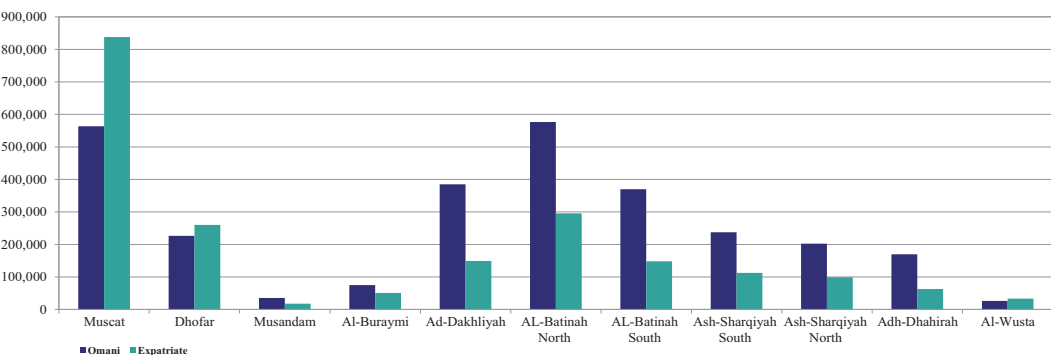
segment of taxi drivers operating in the airports of Oman. **Second phase** The second phase begins on 1 November 2023 and it pertains to taxis serving tourist complexes, hotels, commercial centres and ports. The third phase will start on 1 January 2024 and it is related to general street roaming taxis coloured white and orange.

-ONA



NCSI DATA

Population by nationality/Governorates | 2022



<FROM A1 Al Dhakiliyah Governorate has high Omani population

Dhofar Governorate was the other governorate where expatriate outnumbered nationals. The expatriate population was 260,196 while the Omanis total was 226,173. The governorate has witnessed a sharp rise in expatriates’ of nearly 60,000 over the past two years with 200,512 in 2021 and 201,956 in 2020. The Omanis population was 220,523 (2021) and 215,564 (2020) respectively. In the 11 governorates of Oman, the only other governorate where expatriates outnumbered locals were in Al Wusta Governorate with 33,337 expatriates as compared to 26,121 nationals. Omanis dominated in the other eight

governorates with the maximum recorded population in Al Batinah Governorate with 576,554 as compared to 295,460 expatriates. Al Batinah South Governorate also had significant nationals residing with 370,029 as compared to 147,997 expatriates. Al Sharqiyah South and Al Sharqiyah North also had Omani population of 237,454 and 202,421 respectively. The expatriates population grew in the two governorates from 2021 with 98,811 (76,925 in 2021) in Al Sharqiyah North and 112,294 (90,740 in 2021) in Al Sharqiyah South. Al Dhahirah Governorate recorded 169,902 Omani nation-

als in 2022 while expat numbers were 62,956. Al Dhakiliyah Governorate had a high Omani population of 384,818 whereas expatriates were 148,876 in 2022 and in the north, in the Governorate of Musandam the Omanis accounted for 35,346 while expatriates were 17,878, the lowest number in a governorate in Oman. Al Buraimi Governorate had Omanis total 75,058 while expatriates were at 50,702. For statistical record, the lowest number of expatriates in Oman were recorded in the Wilayat of Muqshin in Dhofar Governorate with 216 followed by Wilayat of Dalkut with 585.

RUSAYL ROAD IN BIDBID

Temporary traffic diversion

MUSCAT: A temporary traffic diversion has been placed on Rusayl Road in Bidbid for those heading to Nizwa, Al Dhakiliyah Governorate. The Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology (MTCIT) launched after midnight of August 15, a temporary traffic diversion on the Rusayl Road in Bidbid for those heading to Nizwa in (Wadi Al-Daboun area) until the completion of the road expansion project. Road users should be careful.

NOTICE

This is to inform all concerned that Mr. Muhammad Jamir Adiong, holder of Philippine Passport No: P9065969B, Resident card No: 126711584, is no more working with our company from July 27th 2023. Therefore, all the concerned are requested to stop dealing with the above named in favor of the company.

If anyone is dealing with him it is at their own risk and company will not take any responsibility hereafter. If anybody has any claim, he/she should report to the company within next 3 working days.

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Submission: The submission of hard copy will be only for Bid Bond & other documents by E-Tendering

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- The Tenderer should enclose a bank guarantee issued by any bank in the Sultanate of Oman for the value of 1% of the bid value and should be valid for (90) days from bid submission date, addressed to Oman Electricity Transmission Company (SAOC). Small & Medium Enterprises are exempted from the submission of 1% of the bid bond.
- Any bid not comply with the required guarantee, will not be accepted.
- OETC is not bound to accept the lowest or any other offers.

Offer: The bid bond should be submitted in Tender Box No. (1) at the company's building before 11:00 am on the assigned date for submission of the Tenders

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US troop admits to illegal entry, says North Korea

Private Travis King expressed a willingness to seek refuge in the North or a third country, state media KCNA reported, saying that he “was disillusioned at the unequal American society”

PYONGYANG: North Korea on Wednesday said a US soldier who had crossed into the country last month has been admitted to illegally entering the North. Private Travis King expressed a willingness to seek refuge in the North or a third country, state media KCNA reported, saying that he “was disillusioned at the unequal American society.” According to the state media



reports, Pyongyang said the US soldier confessed to crossing into the North because of “inhuman maltreatment and racial discrimination within the US Army.” It is the first public knowledge of the incident by North Korea. The soldier entered into the North on July 18 while on a civilian tour of the Demilitarized Zone (DMZ) on the heavily fortified border between the North and South. North Korea said its investigation into King would continue. A spokesperson for the Pentagon said that the US could not verify the comments reported by North Korean state media. The US Department of Defence said it remains focused on King’s safety and his return home. “We remain focused on his safe return. The department’s priority is to bring Private King home, and that we are working through all available channels to achieve that outcome,” a Pentagon spokesperson said, according to Reuters news agency. After a drunken pub brawl, an incident with police and a stay in a South Korean jail, King was being taken to the airport to fly back to Texas, when he broke free. Instead of traveling to Fort Bliss for disciplinary hearings, King joined a DMZ sightseeing trip and crossed over the border in mid-July. He is the first US citizen in five years to be detained in North Korea. -DW

IMPRESSIVE FEAT

Bhutan becomes net zero carbon emission nation

THIMPHU: Bhutan has emerged as a country with impressive net zero emissions and not only curbed its carbon footprints, but has also transformed into a carbon sink, absorbing more carbon dioxide (CO2) than releasing. It reported that the recent report from the World Economic Forum revealed that the eight countries including Bhutan have attained an impressive feat of net zero emissions.

Bhutan is one among the 196 nations that committed to the Paris Agreement during the UN Climate Change Conference focused to restrict global temperature increases to 1.5 degree Celsius above pre-industrial levels, observed The Bhutan Live. Apart from Bhutan, Comoros nestled in the Indian Ocean and Gabon in Central Africa have managed to control the carbon emissions. -ANI

IRREGULAR BORDER CROSSINGS

EU’s migration dilemma: Is sealing borders the solution?

BRUSSELS: European Border and Coast Guard Agency Frontex expects yet another rise in the number of migrants and asylum-seekers arriving in the EU. In 2022, Frontex recorded some 330,000 so-called irregular border crossings, the highest figure since 2016, when the bloc saw a record number of arrivals. This year, the agency has predicted that irregular border crossings could rise even higher, due in part to the fact that arrivals via the central Mediterranean route to Italy tripled in the spring. Some EU member states and former members like the United Kingdom are therefore trying to adopt stricter laws, regulations and asylum procedures to discourage or deter people from entering their countries. German cities and municipalities are saying that housing and integrating new arrivals presents an overwhelming task. Around a quarter of all asylum applications submitted in the EU are filed in Germany, even though it’s not the country migrants reach first, due to its geographical location. Under EU law, Germany is not technically responsible for processing such applications. Germany’s federal and state governments have therefore agreed to adopt stricter deportation and detention rules for migrants who are obliged to leave the country. Interior Minister Nancy Faeser has, however, so far rejected ramping up checks along the German-Polish border to deter irregular crossings. The German-Austrian border, meanwhile, has seen spot checks for several years, as it lies at the end of the Balkan migration route.

EU states outsourcing asylum processing Other countries such as France,



Austria, the Netherlands and the UK are trying to deter arrivals with tougher measures. Britain, for example, has threatened to outsource asylum processing to Rwanda or hold migrants on ships. While Denmark failed in its attempt at opening an asylum centre in Rwanda, the government has nevertheless made asylum procedures more restrictive in recent years. Denmark has also maintained border checks with Germany for years. Only 180 people apply for asylum in the Nordic country every month. This is very little compared with a country like Austria, for example, which saw between 4,000 and 11,000 applications per month in 2022. Migrants tend to first arrive in EU countries like Italy, Greece, Malta, Cyprus, Croatia and more recently Poland, owing to their geographical location. These states are trying to make it as difficult as possible for migrants to enter in the first place. Some external EU borders, such as the Greek-Turkish frontier along the Evros river, have been effectively shut.

This only leaves the dangerous sea route for reaching the EU, or trying to enter the bloc by plane with a real or forged visa. Sealing off the bloc in this way has been referred to as “protecting the EU’s external borders,” and is supported by EU interior ministers. Italy is trying to make it even more complicated for private rescue ships to bring shipwrecked people to its ports. This approach, too, is supposed to deter migrants. But the Mediterranean country is still struggling to keep migrants from arriving on its shores. That’s why the government wants Tunisia to prevent migrants from boarding EU-bound vessels in the first place. Italy intends to pay Tunisia for holding back migrants, and negotiations over an agreement are underway. The number of people trying to reach Italy from Tunisia increased tenfold this year. Media and various human rights organizations have reported that Greek, Croatian and Polish border guards are resorting to pushbacks to deport newly arrived migrants.

HELICOPTERS

Boeing begins production of Apache for Indian Army



NEW DELHI : Defence major Boeing has said it has started the production of Apache Helicopters for the Indian Army at its state-of-art facility in the US (Mesa, Arizona). The Indian Army’s AH-64E Apache helicopters, renowned for their advanced technology and exceptional performance, are poised to enhance operational readiness and fortify defence capabilities. The production process builds upon an ongoing collaboration with Tata Boeing Aerospace Limited (TBAL), which plays a pivotal role in the manufacturing of AH-64E fuselages at its cutting-edge facility in Hyderabad, India. Earlier this year, TBAL delivered the first AH-64 Apache fuselage to the Indian Army.

“We are pleased to reach yet another significant milestone, highlighting Boeing’s unwavering commitment to support India’s defence capabilities,” said Salil Gupte, President of Boeing India. “The AH-64’s state-of-the-art technology and battle-tested performance will elevate the Indian Army’s operational effectiveness and amplify its defensive capabilities”, read the press release. The company’s accomplishments encompass the successful delivery of 22 AH-64E Apaches to the Indian Air Force in 2020. Boeing entered into a contract to produce six additional AH-64Es for the Indian Army, with deliveries anticipated in 2024. Christina Upah, Vice President of Attack Helicopter Programs and Senior Boeing Mesa Site Ex-

ecutive, emphasized, “The AH-64E continues to be the world’s premier attack helicopter”. The company’s engagement with over 300 local Indian companies, in conjunction with its joint venture focusing on manufacturing key components, reflects Boeing’s vision for a resilient and interconnected aerospace ecosystem in India. With annual sourcing exceeding \$1 billion from India, Boeing’s role as a catalyst for growth extends beyond the technical realm. The company employs over 5,000 individuals within India and collaborates with over 13,000 supply chain partners, fostering community engagement and implementing citizenship programs that touch the lives of over 500,000 individuals. -ANI

PUNJAB PROVINCE

17 killed in Pakistan road accidents

LAHORE: While Pakistan was busy celebrating Independence Day, the Punjab province witnessed a wave of road accidents leaving 17 dead and 1,773 others injured in 1,659 traffic accidents, Dawn reported. Lahore registered the highest number of road accidents. On Monday, Lahore’s major government hospitals witnessed an extraordinary burden on the patients who suffered injuries in road accidents.

According to the official data compiled by the Emergency Service Department (ESD), nine people died, and 1,338 others were injured in road accidents reported all over the province on August 13, a day before Independence Day. The accident and emergency wards of the major government hospitals in Lahore witnessed an extraordinary burden of patients who suffered injuries in road accidents on August 14, as per Dawn. The road accidents during the

celebrations also left several persons disabled for life as the ESD stated that 99 people suffered deep head injuries and 187 others multiple fractures. According to the official data, out of a total of 1,773 injured persons, 850 landed in hospitals with serious and critical wounds, while 891 others suffered minor injuries. Those with minor injuries were provided first aid and treatment by the Rescue 1122 medical teams on the spot.

“A majority (72 per cent) of the accidents involved motorbikes, therefore, effective enforcement of traffic laws and lane discipline were essential to reduce the increasing number of road traffic crashes”, read the ESD report. Furthermore, the analysis showed, 833 drivers, 88 underage drivers, 211 pedestrians, and 710 passengers were among the victims of road traffic crashes, Dawn reported. -ANI



has opposed EU attempts to reform the bloc’s common asylum law. Poland is currently building a fence along its eastern border with Belarus, and Morawiecki wants to hold a referendum on whether the country should block migration in line with EU guidelines. In Poland, immigrants are primarily seen as a political weapon, deliberately sent to the Polish-Belarusian border by Russia.

EU immigration quotas? Thorsten Frei, chairman of the center-right Christian Democrat (CDU) and Christian Social Union (CSU) parliamentary group in the German Bundestag, earlier this summer suggested scrapping the EU’s guaranteed individual right to asylum in favor of an immigration quota. Frei called the existing system unfair, saying that mainly wealthy individuals and strong young men had what it takes to overcome the dangers of migrating to the EU. He said sick or elderly people, women and children were far less likely to successfully cross the Sahara, or get aboard EU-bound vessels. Refugee organizations have pointed out that EU policy makes it very difficult to enter member states, since asylum applications must be submitted on EU soil. That said, those who do make it into the EU can usually stay, even if their applications have been rejected. It’s rare that migrants are deported back to their home country. More than 90% of Syrian and Afghan refugees who reach the bloc can expect to be granted protection status. For many other countries of origin, such as Pakistan or Turkey, the situation is the exact opposite. Here, the rejection rate is above 75%. In most cases, however, rejections do not lead to expulsions. -DW

Migrants caught entering said countries are forcibly returned to the country from which they came, without due process. Yet the authorities in question have denied carrying out pushbacks, or “refoulements,” as they are called, as they are prohibited under European and international law.

Hungary relies on pushbacks to deter migrants Hungary, whose government has said it does not accept any migration, makes no secret of its use of pushbacks. Migrants who have entered the country without documents can be deported without trial. Hungary does this on the basis of a 2015 “emergency law,” though European courts have ruled this practice illegal. The Hungarian government, however, has ignored the rulings, and regards its pushback policy as successful. Last year, just 44 people applied for asylum in Hungary. This is also due to the fact that applications must be submitted to Hungarian embassies. According to the European Council on Refugees and Exiles,

some 150,000 people have been returned from Hungary to Serbia, across the border fence, without much ado. Hungary’s government has said this deterrence works. It, therefore, does not see any point in becoming party to a new EU asylum law that would set out rules for distributing migrants within the bloc, or making payments to those taking them in.

Poland wants to end immigration according to EU rules In the lead-up to Poland’s parliamentary election in October, migration has been a hotly debated issue. The ruling national conservative PiS party has said it wants to prevent immigration to “protect” Poland — even though the country has seen only a small number of migrants apply for asylum. In the first half of 2023, a mere 2,785 applications were submitted, according to EU statistics agency Eurostat. This is a minuscule number in relation to Poland’s population of 38 million people. Nevertheless, Polish Prime Minister Mateusz Morawiecki

Trump denounces fourth indictment

The charges, against the former president, were brought by Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis

WASHINGTON DC: Coming out hard after his fourth indictment, former US President Donald Trump on Tuesday claimed that he will produce an “irrefutable” report that “should” lead to all charges against him getting dropped, *New York Post* reported. This comes after the former President was indicted by the Georgia grand jury in connection with the efforts to overturn the 2020 election results in the Peach State. “A Large, Complex, Detailed but Irrefutable REPORT on the Presidential Election Fraud which took place in Georgia is almost complete & will be presented by me at a ma-



jor News Conference at 11:00 AM on Monday of next week in Bedminster, New Jersey. Based on the results of this CONCLUSIVE Report, all charges should be dropped against me & others - There will be a complete EXONERATION! They never went after those that Rigged the Election. They only went after those who fought to find the RIGGERS! Trump said on “Truth.Social” platform. The charges, against the former president, were brought by Fulton County District Attorney Fani Willis. The raps against him include violating Georgia’s anti-racketeering law, conspiracy, false statements, and asking a public official to violate their oaths of office.

Right after the indictment, Trump denounced the ruling and called the situation a “total shutdown of democracy”. “These monsters, all controlled and coordinated by the DOJ and Radical Left Lunatics, are Criminalizing Political Speech, a total SHUT-DOWN OF DEMOCRACY!” Trump stated on Truth Social. “WITCH HUNT!” he added in a subsequent post. He even called the District Attorney “failed” and “corrupt” and raised speculations of the ruling being “rigged”. “So, the Witch Hunt continues! 19 people were indicted tonight, including the former President of the United States, me, by an out-of-control and very corrupt District Attorney who cam-

paigned and raised money on, ‘I will get Trump.’ And what about those Indictment Documents put out today, long before the Grand Jury even voted, and then quickly withdrawn? Sounds Rigged to me! Why didn’t they Indict 2.5 years ago? Because they wanted to do it right in the middle of my political campaign. Witch Hunt!” Trump stated. He added, “Can you believe it? This failed District Attorney from Atlanta, Fani Willis, where murders and other violent crime soars daily to new record highs, is charging me with 2020 Presidential Election Interference. No, Fani, the only Election Interference was done by those that Rigged and Stole the Election. Those are the ones you should be going after, not the innocent people that are fighting for Election Integrity!” Meanwhile, eighteen alleged co-conspirators were indicted along with Trump in the Georgia case, including his lawyers Rudy Giuliani, John Eastman, Sidney Powell, Jenna Ellis and Kenneth Chesebro, former White House chief of staff Mark Meadows, ex-Justice Department official Jeffrey Clark and the former president’s 2020 Election Day director of operations Michael Roman. **-ANI**

Burj Khalifa lights up in Indian tricolour

DUBAI: The iconic Burj Khalifa was illuminated in the colours of the tricolour on Tuesday on the occasion of India’s 77th Independence Day. Other than the tricolour, the world’s tallest building also showcased quotes of “Happy Independence Day to Mother India” and “Long Live India UAE Friendship”. It also displayed Mahatma Gandhi’s picture along with quotes ‘Har Ghar Tiranga’ and ‘Jai Hind’. Meanwhile, the ruler of Dubai Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum conveyed his greetings to India on Independence Day on Twitter. “As India celebrates its 77th Independence Day, I extend my congratulations to the leadership and the people of this great nation. On this joyous occasion, the UAE reaffirms its commitment to building a future of shared prosperity and growth, elevating our partnership to new heights, and exploring new horizons of political, economic, and cultural relations. Happy Independence Day, Swatantrata Diwas!,” he tweeted. Earlier in July, the Burj Khalifa had lit up in tricolour as a mark of welcome to Prime Minister Narendra Modi who was on a visit to UAE. A leaping skyscraper in Dubai, United Arab Emirates, Burj Khalifa is one of the top attractions to

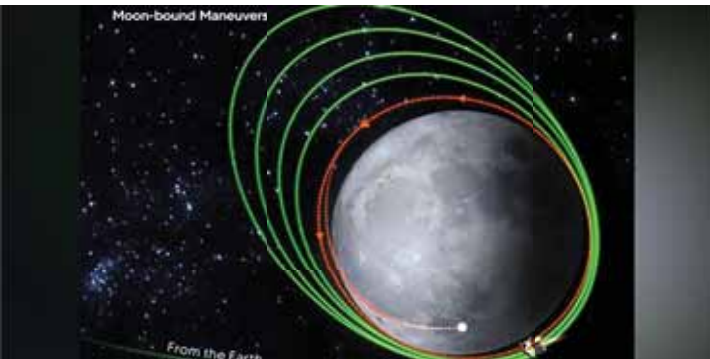


visit in the city. Meanwhile, the 77th Independence Day was celebrated across India with full enthusiasm and a vibrant showcase of culture and diversity. Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed the nation from the Red Fort for the 10th successive time. PM Modi’s address highlighted a range of achievements over the past years, reflecting India’s progress in multiple sectors. **-ANI**

ORBIT REDUCTION

Chandrayaan-3 completes last moon-bound manoeuvre

BENGALURU: Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO) on Wednesday successfully carried out the final orbit reduction manoeuvre of the Chandrayaan-3 spacecraft, a week ahead of its scheduled landing on the moon. Today’s successful firing, needed for a short duration, has put Chandrayaan-3 into an orbit of 153 km x 163 km, as intended. With this, the lunar bound manoeuvres are completed,” ISRO said today. The spacecraft that was launched from the Satish Dhawan Space Center in Andhra Pradesh’s Sriharikota on July 14 this year is expected to touchdown on the South Polar region of the Moon on August 23. A GSLV Mark 3 (LVM 3) heavy-lift launch vehicle was used for the launch of the spacecraft that was placed in the lunar orbit on August 5 and since then it has been through a series of orbital manoeuvres been lowered closer to the moon’s surface. Today’s fifth and final orbit-reduction manoeuvre was performed from ISRO Telemetry, Tracking and Command Network (ISTRAC) in Bengaluru. With the lunar-bound manoeuvres now concluded, ISRO said that the focus of the Chandrayaan-3 mission shifts towards



the next stages of preparations as the Propulsion Module and the Lander Module gear up “for their separate journeys.” Separation of the Lander Module from the Propulsion Module is planned for August 17. Union Minister Jitendra Singh posted on X, “A step closer towards the MOON! Today’s successful firing, needed for a short duration, has put Chandrayaan3 into an orbit of 153 km x 163 km, as intended. With this, the lunar bound manoeuvres have been completed.” ISRO is attempting to make a successful soft landing on the Moon, which will make India the fourth country in the world to achieve the feat, joining the ranks of the United States, Russia and China. India’s third lunar mission,

Chandrayaan-3, marks the country’s second attempt at a gentle lunar landing. It is a follow-up to Chandrayaan-2, the moon mission that failed in 2019. It will show off India’s complete capability for a secure lunar landing and roaming. The components of Chandrayaan-3 include several electronic and mechanical subsystems designed to ensure a gentle and safe landing, including guidance and control systems, propulsion systems, and navigation sensors. There are also systems for releasing the rover, antennas for two-way communication, and other onboard electronics. Chandrayaan-3’s declared goals include a secure and soft landing, lunar rover wandering, and in-situ scientific research. **-ANI**

SUPPLY CHAIN

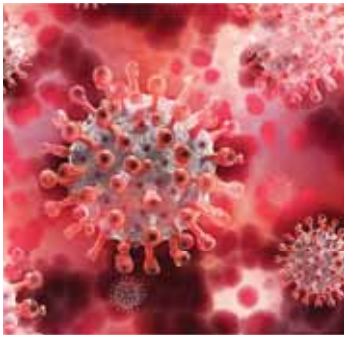
Race hots up for spot on Asia’s chipmaking map

BANGKOK: India and Thailand have engaged in a full-fledged race for semiconductor-manufacturing investment to win a spot on Asia’s chipmaking map, Nikkei Asia reported. As China and the US are engaged in the chip war, India has come out as an alternative option and is also exploring every opportunity to be recognised as a major player in the supply chain. Earlier, on July 28, Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi addressed SemiconIndia 2023 industry event where he showed up the strengths his country has to offer the global chip industry. “Who can be a more trusted partner than the world’s largest democracy?” he asked in a speech. As India moves forward on the path of reform, new opportunities will be created. India is becoming an excellent conductor for semiconductor investments,” PM Modi said addressing the inaugural session of ‘SemiconIndia

2023’ in Gandhinagar, Gujarat. The programme aims to provide attractive incentive support to companies that are engaged in silicon semiconductor Fabs, Display Fabs, Compound Semiconductors/silicon photonics/sensors, semiconductor packaging and semiconductor design. In a bid to make India the next chipmaker industry, the government approved the proposal of Micron Technology Inc. on June 14 for setting up a semiconductor unit with a capital investment of Rs. 22,516 crore (2.75 billion dollars). This manufacturing facility of Micron will manufacture DRAMs, Flash memories and Solid-State Devices, the statement added. According to Nikkei Asia, Taiwan’s Hon Hai Precision Industry, or Foxconn, is reportedly teaming up with American chipmaking equipment maker Applied Materials to produce such machinery in the state of Karnataka. **-ANI**

EG.5

New Covid variant found in Kuwait



KUWAIT: Kuwait’s Ministry of Health announced Tuesday detecting EG.5, a COVID variant belonging to a subset of the virus. In a statement, the ministry noted that the “expected” detection was not “alarming”, as the mutant bug was spotted in around 50 countries. The country’s epidemiological indicators show stability, noted the statement, renewing the call to adhere to prevention guidelines. The EG.5 variant is causing about 17 per cent of the new Covid-19 cases in the country compared to 16 per cent for the next most common lineage, XBB.1.16. **Kuna**

SHAANXI PROVINCE

24 people killed, 3 others missing in China mudslide

XI’AN: The death toll in a rain-triggered rock and mudslide on Friday evening in the suburbs of Xi’an, capital of northwest China’s Shaanxi Province, has risen to 24, with three others still missing. According to the Xi’an municipal emergency management department, the torrential rainfall on Friday caused the mudslide in a village on the outskirts of Chang’an District. Search and rescue efforts are still underway following several rounds of massive searches spanning over 300 kilometres of watercourse. Shaanxi Province is conducting a campaign to screen and prevent risks of geological disasters in the countryside, as well as flooding risks in places such as rivers, lakes, reservoirs, low-lying areas and scenic spots. **-Xinhua**



RESEARCHERS

Scientists name new snake species after Harrison Ford

NEW YORK: Researchers from Germany, the United States and Peru have named a recently discovered species of snake after actor Harrison Ford. Ford famously played Indiana Jones, who himself had some perilous encounters with snakes. And on Tuesday the German Society for Herpetology and Herpetoculture (DGHT) announced the naming of *Tachymenoides harrisonfordi* to recognize the Hollywood actor’s environmental advocacy. Ford’s namesake snake measures 16 inches (40.6 centimeters) in length and is yellowish-brown with scattered black blotches, a black belly, and a vertical streak over its copper-colored eye. “These scientists keep naming critters after me, but it’s always the ones that terrify children,” Ford said jokingly in a statement. “I don’t understand. I spend my free time cross-stitching. I sing lullabies to my basil plants, so they won’t fear the night.” The 81-year-old actor went on to thank researchers for the honor and note the significance of the discovery. “In all seriousness, this discovery is humbling. It’s a reminder that there’s still so much to learn about our wild world — and that humans are one small part of an impossibly vast biosphere,” he said. “On this planet, all fates are intertwined, and right now, one million species are teetering on the edge of oblivion. We have an existential mandate to mend



our broken relationship with nature and protect the places that sustain life.” The snake was discovered in May 2022 by a team of researchers from the United States, Ger-

many and Peru. The only specimen, a male, was discovered sunbathing in a marsh in the Peruvian Andes located some 3,248 meters above sea level.



الاتحاد العماني لكرة القدم

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Times

OF OMAN



THURSDAY, AUGUST 17, 2023

AB

Omantel

LEAGUE

Football 2023-24



11

LAST SEASON'S
TOP SCORER
MOHSIN AL GHASSANI
(SEEB)



1972

FIRST LEAGUE
WINNER
AHLI-SIDAB

132

MATCHES
2023-24 SEASON

12

TEAMS
2023-24 SEASON



NEW FOOTBALL SEASON AIMS TO
ATTRACT FANS TO THE STADIUMS

The 2023-24 Omantel League will feature lot of initiatives, planned by the Oman Football Association, to woo the crowds

MUSCAT: Better facilities for fans, more interactions with fan clubs, host of prizes on offer for supporters are among the various sops that are planned by the Oman Football Association (OFA) to attract more crowds to the stadiums in the forthcoming 2023-24 football season.

The Omantel League, the top-tier domestic football league, will begin today and OFA officials expressed hope that the season will provide a lot of thrills and excitement for the fans.

At a press conference held on the eve of the new season kick-off, Mohammed Al Yahmadi, OFA general secretary and executive director, said: "We had a thorough evaluation of last season and followed up on all observations and proposals to improve our league. From the finalisation of 12 teams in the Omantel League [following the withdrawal of two clubs] to His Majesty's Cup to the organisations of other leagues, there was a thorough study to find ways to better the league in each and every aspect."

Al Yahmadi said that the OFA has worked a lot to ensure the

forthcoming season has greater interaction between the clubs, fans and the OFA. "The OFA has come up with a number of initiatives that will motivate the fans to attend matches. We also will host an end of the season awards night to honour the best player, top scorer, best goalkeeper, best coach, best referee and the most disciplined team."

Qutaiba Al Ghailani, OFA chairman of the competitions committee said: "We expect in the upcoming season of the Omantel League lot of fans in the stadiums. Public attendance has been one of the core areas of attention for the new season. We also hope to see good standard of football being played as a lot of clubs have brought in foreign recruits to boost their strength."

Al Ghailani said: "The national team will also feature in the Asian Cup and World Cup qualifying rounds and we have had good discussions with the clubs on the release of players for the national team during FIFA Days."

Yasser Al Rawahi, head of Omantel League, said that the first registration period for the play-



TOP 5 TITLE
HOLDERS

Dhofar	11
Fanja	9
Al Nasr	5
Al Nahda	4
Al Suwaiq	4
Al Arouba	4

ers began on June 8 and will end on August 30. He said: "The draw of the Tamkeen (First Division) League, consisting of 12 teams, will be held next week. The youth leagues (U20 and U17) will start on September 8 and 9, and the Association Cup matches will start on September 17.



"The prestigious His Majesty's Cup will start in the first week of October, and the Super Cup match will be played in December."

USA to host Oman in a friendly on September 12

Walid Al Numani, director of the national teams, said: "The men's national team will soon begin their preparations for the AFC Asian Cup Qatar 2023 and the FIFA World Cup qualifiers with a domestic camp from September 1-8 under head coach Branko Ivankovic of Croatia."

The camp will prepare the team for the preliminary joint Qualification Round Two for the FIFA World Cup 2026 and AFC Asian

Cup Saudi Arabia 2027 which will begin in November.

Oman, ranked 72nd in the world, will face Kyrgyzstan, Malaysia, Chinese Taipei/Timor Leste in Group D of the joint qualifiers.

Al Numani said that Oman will travel to the USA for a camp which will be held in Minnesota, USA, in September, and play an international friendly match against USA on September 12.

Oman will commence their campaign in the Preliminary Joint Qualification against the winner of Chinese Taipei or Timor Leste on November 16 in Muscat. Later, the Red Warriors will take on Kyrgyzstan in an away game on November 21 in Bishkek before hosting Malaysia in Muscat on March 21, 2024.

Five days later, Oman will take on Malaysia again in an away match in Kuala Lumpur ahead of playing against Chinese Taipei or Timor Leste on June 6, 2024.

Oman team will conclude their qualifying campaign by hosting Kyrgyzstan on June 11, 2024. The group winners from all the nine groups besides the runners-up will advance to the third round of World Cup qualifying. The qualified teams will also make it to the AFC Asian Cup Saudi Arabia 2027.

There will also be a friendly the Palestine team at home on September 6, before the Red Warriors travel to the United States.

Al Numani added: Oman will hold a camp in the United Arab Emirates to prepare for the Asian Cup finals. The camp will include four friendly matches.

DEFENDING
CHAMPIONS



AL NAHDA CLUB

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE PRELIMINARY ROUND

Seeb Club go down fighting in Uzbekistan

MUSCAT: Oman's Seeb Club went down fighting to Uzbekistan's AGMK FC by 1-0 in their AFC Champions League 2023/24 preliminary round tie at the AMMC Sports Complex in Olmaliq, Uzbekistan on Tuesday.

The defeat ended Seeb's hopes of advancing to the next stage. The victory meant AGMK will meet Qatar's Al Arabi SC in the playoffs next week for a place in the group stage.

Both sides started cautiously with AGMK, backed by their fans, slowly taking control of the tight contest. They, however, had to wait till the second half for the only goal of the game, with Khurshid Giyosov's right-footed shot





from the centre of the box finding the back of the net.

The match, however, saw a sour ending for AGMK with Martin Boakye sent off in the 73rd minute

after receiving two yellow cards.

The playoffs next Tuesday will be followed by the group stage draw two days later in the Malaysian capital of Kuala Lumpur.

Week 1 matches
Thursday 5:45pm Rustaq v/s Sur (Sur Sports Complex)
Thursday 8:10pm Al Nahda v/s Al Shabab (Al Rustaq Sports Complex)
Friday 5:45pm Dhofar v/s Al Wahda (Sur Sports Complex)
Friday 8:15pm Al Nasr v/s Bahla (Al Saada Sports Complex)
Friday 8:15pm Sohar v/s Oman (Sohar Sports Complex)

OMAN CRUDE PRICE RISES
The price of Oman oil has decreased, with prices for delivery by October 2023 reaching \$86.09, said Dubai Mercantile Exchange (DME). The DME statement said that the price of Oman oil fell by \$1.10 from the price of Tuesday, which was \$87.19. - **ONA**

MARKET

BUSINESS & FINANCE



MSX INDEX ENDS HIGHER
The MSX index closed at 4,766.39 points, up by 0.07 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.22 per cent at 472.57 points. Takaful Oman, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Al Maha Ceramics, down 10.00 per cent, was the top loser.

Steps to reform international climate finance discussed

Those assembled at COP28 Presidency meet agreed that they will come to COP28 with recommendations on a new framework for international climate finance, as well as a definitive roadmap on how to implement the recommendations



ABU DHABI: A two-day meeting of world-leading economists and finance leaders convened by the COP28 Presidency has delivered consensus on the key next steps needed to establish a new framework for international climate finance and to drive progress at COP28 and beyond to COP29 and COP30.
World-leading economists from

the Independent High-Level Expert Group (IHLEG) met with figures from leading global institutions, including the World Bank, IMF, ECF and IFC, the COP28 and COP27 Presidencies and UN Climate Change High-Level Champions for two days of talks in Abu Dhabi on August 15-16.
Those assembled agreed that they will come to COP28 with recommendations on a new framework for international climate finance, as well as a definitive roadmap on how to implement the recommendations.

Particular areas of focus for the new framework will include addressing debt distress in vulnerable countries, and the role of the private sector in delivering increased finance. Here, the group recognised that although private finance flows are growing, they need to grow much faster to meet the \$2.4 trillion total investment estimated to be needed annually by 2030 to address climate change in emerging markets and developing economies.
The roadmap will be designed to guide all institutions - UN

agencies, the IMF, WB, regional MDBs, national governments and the private sector - around short and long-term plans to achieve the Paris Agreement. Agreement on the roadmap at COP28 will allow leaders across the public, private and third sectors to drive forward a clear plan of action on international climate finance.
All those in the meetings were unanimous in their agreement that finance is fundamental to enabling the delivery of solutions to enable the transition to a net-zero, climate-resilient future. They also agreed

that the primary focus of their work would be to rapidly increase international climate finance between now and the end of the decade to support emerging markets and developing economies' mitigation and adaptation initiatives.
Dr Sultan bin Ahmed Al Jaber, Minister of Industry and Advanced Technology and COP-28 President-Designate, opened the meetings with a clear call to action for those attending to deliver "a detailed action-oriented framework and tangible recommendations that lead to real results".
Following the meeting, he commented, "For too long, climate finance has divided the international community and held back progress in tackling climate change and supporting countries most impacted by it. But climate finance is the issue that lies at the core of the COP28 agenda because finance is how we transform goals into reality."
Lord Nicholas Stern, co-chair of the IHLEG, said, "These meetings have proved to be very fruitful, in large measure due to the leadership of Dr Sultan and the support from his team. We are all in no doubt of the urgency of the challenges, of the scale of the problems that we must tackle, and of the global action necessary to rise to these challenges. This is a moment where all stakeholders must step up, including the MDBs, their

shareholders, and the private sector. We will continue to work with the COP28 Presidency to drive forward in the weeks ahead."
Dr. Vera Songwe, co-chair of the IHLEG, also noted, "Over the last few months every corner of the world has been hit by a climate event. We must act fast, collectively and at scale to turn these climate disruptions into a growth opportunity for people and the planet. The IHLEG group, the COP28 president and all the esteemed colleagues gathered here agree that raising the \$2.4 trillion will not be sufficient if we do not accelerate implementation. I look forward to a COP28 that will deliver impact."
Kristalina Georgieva, Managing Director of the International Monetary and also in attendance, stated, "The IMF is committed to ensuring climate policy support and finance are reaching those most in need, and I am thankful to the leadership of COP28 for convening this important meeting today. We look forward to partnering with all stakeholders in the lead-up to COP28 and working to drive stronger partnerships between the public and private sectors for climate success."
The IHLEG develops and presents policy options and recommendations to enable the public and private investment necessary for the delivery of the ambitions of the Paris Climate Agreement. -**WAM**

STATISTICS



Dutch economy enters recession as inflation bites

AMSTERDAM: The Dutch economy has entered a recession as it shrank 0.3 per cent on a quarterly basis in the second quarter, a first estimate published by Statistics Netherlands on Wednesday showed.
The euro zone's fifth largest economy shrank for the second consecutive quarter, after a 0.4 per cent contraction in the first three months of the year.
According to Reuters, economic growth in the Netherlands had been almost 5 per cent per year in 2021 and 2022 in a quick recovery from a COVID-19 slump.

The first recession since the pandemic was driven by a drop in consumer spending and exports, as surging inflation drove up food prices and energy bills in the Netherlands and its trading partners.
Consumer spending fell 1.6 per cent, while exports were 0.7 per cent lower than in the first three months of the year.
Inflation in the Netherlands has dropped since hitting a peak of 14.5 per cent in September last year, but was still relatively high at around 6 per cent in the second quarter of 2023. -**BNA**

OIL PRICES

Oil steadies as China fears counter tighter US supply

LONDON: Oil prices stabilised on Wednesday as investors weighed worries about China's embattled economy against tighter supply in the United States.
Brent crude futures edged up 20 cents to \$85.09 a barrel by 0831 GMT, while US West Texas Intermediate crude (WTI) crept 18 cents higher to \$81.17 a barrel, Reuters reported.
Both benchmarks fell more than 1 per cent in the previous session to their lowest since August 8.

Sluggish
China's sluggish economy is in focus, after retail sales, industrial output and investment figures failed to match expectations, fueling concern over a deeper, longer-lasting slowdown in growth. -**BNA**

SURVEY



Chinese logistics companies see business environment improving

BEIJING: About 70 percent of the logistics companies surveyed by the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing have seen an improving business environment in the country.
The survey analyses the business environment for logistics companies

from 10 aspects, such as fiscal and financial environments.
Over 60 percent of the state-owned logistics enterprises surveyed reported better business conditions than in 2022. Nearly 50 percent of the private logistics companies surveyed considered

their business improving. According to the survey, the most significant challenges are fierce market competition, high operating costs, and insufficient market demand. However, the survey shows that most companies are confident of meeting their annual targets. -**Xinhua**

ACQUISITION

Hyundai Motor signs agreement to acquire GM's plant in India

SEOUL: Hyundai Motor Co. has signed a deal to acquire General Motors Co.'s plant in India to strengthen its presence in the rapidly growing automobile market.
The acquisition of GM's Talegaon plant in the western state of Maharashtra is aimed at preemptively preparing to meet the rising demand for electric vehicles in India, the world's most populous country, Hyundai Motor said in a statement, according to South Korean News Agency (Yonhap).
Hyundai Motor didn't provide the value of the deal.
Hyundai will complete the acquisition process this year after obtaining approval from the Indian government and satisfying other requirements for the takeover.
The carmaker plans to start production in the 130,000-unit-a-year Talegaon plant in 2025, to gradually expand the production volume by upgrading facilities, the statement said.
GM stopped selling cars in India in 2017. The Talegaon plant, established in 2008, has an annual production capacity of 130,000 units and 160,000 engines, with the pro-



duction of export models continued at the plant till late 2020.
In 2022, India emerged as the world's third-biggest automobile market with sales of 4.76 million vehicles after China with 23.3 million units and the United States with 14.2 million units.
India's passenger car market is expected to grow to over 5 million

units in 2030 from the current 3.8 million units. One million vehicles to be sold in India in 2030 are widely expected to be electric models.
Hyundai made its entry into the Indian market in 1998, producing the Santro at its Indian plant in the southeastern coastal city of Chennai. Hyundai has two plants

in India with a combined output capacity of 760,000 units a year, and 150,000 units of them are being exported.
The maker of Sonata sedans and Santa Fe SUVs ranked second after Maruti Suzuki India Ltd. in terms of market share in India in 2022. Its sales rose 9.4 percent on-year to over 550,000 units last year. -**BNA**

BRITISH POUND

Pound rises as UK inflation data supports case for more rate hikes

LONDON: The British pound was set for its biggest one-day rise against the dollar in a week-and-a-half on Wednesday, as latest UK inflation numbers reinforced bets that the Bank of England will likely hike interest rates again.
Consumer price inflation slowed to 6.8 per cent in July. But core inflation, which strips out volatile food and energy prices, remained at 6.9 per cent in July, flat versus the June reading, and higher than economist expectations for a reading of 6.8 per cent, Reuters reported.
Services inflation picked up to 7.4 per cent from 7.2 per cent in June. Sterling was last up 0.3 per cent against the dollar at \$1.2736 and set for its biggest one-day



jump since August 7.
It rose 0.1 per cent against the euro, with the single currency last buying 85.75 pence.
"Core inflation remains stubbornly high at 6.9 per cent and is now slightly above the headline level," said Oliver Blackburn, Multi Asset Portfolio Manager at Janus Henderson Investors. -**BNA**

MARKET

MSX index ends higher

Takaful Oman, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Al Maha Ceramics, down 10.00 per cent, was the top loser



MUSCAT: The MSX index closed at 4,766.39 points, up by 0.07 per cent from previous close. The Sharia Index ended down by 0.22 per cent at 472.57 points. Takaful Oman, up 10.00 per cent, was the top gainer while Al Maha Ceramics, down 10.00 per cent, was the top loser. Shares of SMN Power Holding were the most active in terms of number of shares traded while Oman Telecom were the most active in terms of turnover.

A total number of 538 trades were executed during the day's trading session, generating turnover of OMR3.4 million, with more than 10.1 million shares changing hands. Out of 51 traded securities, 10 advanced, 19 declined, and 22 remained unchanged. At the session close, foreign investors were net buyers for OMR273,000 while GCC & Arab investors were net sellers for OMR149,000, followed by domestic investors for OMR124,000 worth of shares.

Financial Index closed at 7,774.53 points, down 0.14 per cent. Prices of Takaful Oman, Global Financial Investments, Ominvest were up by 10.00 per

cent, 1.72 per cent, 0.53 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Batinah Development Company, Al Sharqia Investment, Al Madina Investments, United Finance, Al Anwar Investment were up by 5.26 per cent, 2.74 per cent, 2.38 per cent, 1.64 per cent, 1.21 per cent respectively.

Industrial Index closed at 6,031.56 points, down 1.4 per cent. Prices of Gulf Mushroom Products were up by 1.33 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Maha Ceramics, Dhofar Cattle Feed, Al Anwar Ceramics, Jazeera Steel Products were up by 10.00 per cent, 9.88 per cent, 4.17 per cent, 0.37 per cent respectively.

Services Index was down by 0.1 per cent before closing at 1,658.75 points. Prices of Shell Oman Marketing, Renaissance Services, Ooredoo, Oman Telecom were up by 5.35 per cent, 1.55 per cent, 1.34 per cent, 1.00 per cent respectively. Prices of Al Maha Marketing, Al Jazeera Services, Muscat Desalination, Sharqiyah Desalination, Abraj Energy were up by 5.62 per cent, 4.96 per cent, 2.22 per cent, 0.77 per cent, 0.34 per cent respectively. — United Securities

OMAN STOCKS

MUSCAT
STOCK
EXCHANGE

INDICES

Index	High	Low	Value	Prev. Value	Diff	Diff %
MSX 30 INDEX	4,772.47	4,757.96	4,766.39	4,763.26	3.13	0.07
FINANCIAL INDEX	7,790.53	7,771.77	7,774.53	7,785.07	-10.54	-0.14
Industry Index	6,089.19	6,018.53	6,031.56	6,117.04	-85.48	-1.40
Services Index	1,669.15	1,655.88	1,658.75	1,660.37	-1.62	-0.10
MSX Shariah Index	477.05	468.67	472.57	473.63	-1.06	-0.22
MSX TR INDEX	6,280.48	6,261.38	6,272.48	6,268.35	4.12	0.07
FINANCIAL TR IDX	8,500.90	8,480.43	8,483.44	8,494.94	-11.50	-0.14
SERVICES TR IDX	1,842.54	1,827.88	1,831.06	1,832.84	-1.78	-0.10
INDUSTRIAL TR IDX	6,504.77	6,429.29	6,443.21	6,534.52	-91.31	-1.40

Trading Summary

Volume	Turnover	Trades	Market Cap	Up	Down	Equal	Sec. Traded
10,100,377	3,399,541	538	23,947,845,090	10	19	22	51

SHARE PRICE BULLETIN FOR WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 16

ISIN

SECURITY NAME

VOLUME

TURNOVER

TRADES

OPEN PRICE

HIGH

LOW

CLOSE PR

PREV. CLOSE

DIFF (RD)

DIFF %

LAST PR

LAST BID

LAST OFFER

PAR VALUE

MARKET CAP

REGULAR MARKET

OM0000003125	GLOBAL FINANCIAL INVESTMENT HO	93,885	5,539	5	0.059	0.060	0.059	0.059	0.058	0.001	1.724	0.059	0.059	0.060	0.100	11,800,000
OM0000003224	RENAISSANCE SERVICES	266,761	104,751	39	0.380	0.400	0.380	0.394	0.388	0.006	1.546	0.394	0.385	0.410	0.100	93,145,970
OM0000003968	OOREDOO	1,086,824	407,770	68	0.374	0.377	0.372	0.377	0.372	0.005	1.344	0.377	0.409	0.377	0.100	245,405,975
OM0000003026	OMAN TELECOM	1,917,248	1,938,069	50	1.005	1.015	1.005	1.015	1.005	0.010	0.995	1.015	1.105	1.015	0.100	761,250,000
OM0000001533	OMINVEST	255,000	97,310	10	0.380	0.384	0.380	0.380	0.378	0.002	0.529	0.380	0.380	0.384	0.100	253,978,962
OM0000001483	NATIONAL BANK OMAN	83,062	27,728	2	0.298	0.298	0.298	0.298	0.298	0.000	0.298	0.298	0.327	0.298	0.100	484,532,014
OM0000001749	OMAN CEMENT	6,000	2,100	2	0.350	0.350	0.350	0.350	0.350	0.000	0.350	0.350	0.350	0.375	0.100	115,805,449
OM0000002796	BANK MUSCAT	764,108	215,065	40	0.282	0.282	0.281	0.282	0.282	0.000	0.282	0.310	0.282	0.310	0.100	2,116,803,971
OM0000004768	MADINA TAKAFUL	28,800	2,449	5	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.086	0.000	0.000	0.086	0.085	0.087	0.100	15,050,000
OM0000002176	JAZEERA STEEL PRODUCTS	17,000	4,590	2	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.270	0.271	-0.001	-0.369	0.270	0.269	0.271	0.100	33,722,449
OM0000003398	SOHAR INTERNATIONAL BANK	1,215,214	130,298	33	0.107	0.108	0.107	0.107	0.108	-0.001	-0.926	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.100	491,138,665
OM0000002374	UNITED FINANCE	38,800	2,328	3	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.061	-0.001	-1.639	0.060	0.060	0.060	0.100	21,367,638
OM0000002440	AL SHARQIA INVESTMENT HO	15,000	1,065	2	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.073	-0.002	-2.740	0.071	0.071	0.071	0.100	6,390,000
OM0000002168	AL ANWAR CERAMIC	25,650	5,930	6	0.236	0.236	0.230	0.230	0.240	-0.010	-4.167	0.230	0.216	0.230	0.100	50,600,000
OM0000002226	ALJAZEERA SERVICES	110,420	25,397	4	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.242	-0.012	-4.959	0.230	0.230	0.230	0.100	14,076,983
OM0000003000	AI MAHA PETROLEUM PRODUCTS MARKETING	2,850	2,918	2	1.024	1.024	1.024	1.024	1.085	-0.061	-5.822	1.024	1.024	1.040	0.100	70,656,000
OM0000004248	SMN POWER HOLDING	2,345,000	175,110	131	0.078	0.078	0.072	0.072	0.079	-0.007	-8.861	0.072	0.072	0.072	0.100	14,373,763
OM0000005005	ALMAHA CERAMICS	100	26	1	0.261	0.261	0.261	0.261	0.290	-0.029	-10.000	0.261	0.261	0.315	0.100	14,355,000
Total	IS	8,281,742	3,148,454	405												

Parallel Market

OM0000004776	TAKAFUL OMAN	55,383	2,946	4	0.048	0.055	0.048	0.055	0.050	0.005	10.000	0.055	0.048	0.055	0.100	13,750,000
OM0000002275	SHELL OMAN MARKETING	100	95	1	0.946	0.946	0.946	0.946	0.898	0.048	5.345	0.946	0.898	0.946	0.100	89,870,000
OM0000002287	GULF MUSHROOM PRODUCTS	314	72	1	0.229	0.229	0.229	0.229	0.226	0.003	1.327	0.229	0.222	0.229	0.100	10,480,368
OM0000008868	THE PEARL REEF	2,500	297	4	0.124	0.124	0.118	0.119	0.118	0.001	0.847	0.118	0.118	0.124	0.100	50,547,655
OM0000001020	OMAN CHEMITE	100	495	2	4.950	4.950	4.950	4.950	4.950	0.000	0.000	4.950	4.801	4.950	1.000	14,850,000
OM0000001160	NATIONAL GAS	2,092	190	1	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.091	0.000	0.000	0.091	0.088	0.100	0.100	7,735,000
OM0000001178	MUSCAT GASES	25,000	3,000	1	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.120	0.000	0.000	0.120	0.000	0.000	0.100	3,600,000
OM0000001897	MAJAN COLLEGE	2,000	214	1	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.107	0.000	0.000	0.107	0.000	0.107	0.100	6,930,000
OM0000002804	ASAFPA FOODS	76,000	23,246	10	0.308	0.320	0.307	0.320	0.320	0.000	0.000	0.320	0.300	0.320	0.100	38,400,000
OM0000003521	GALFAR ENGINEERING & CONTRACTING	556,000	91,646	19	0.166	0.166	0.164	0.164	0.164	0.000	0.000	0.164	0.164	0.165	0.100	33,288,777
OM0000003661	VOLTAMP ENERGY	20,000	2,600	2	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.130	0.000	0.000	0.130	0.120	0.130	0.100	10,582,358
OM0000004420	BANK NIZWA	555,182	53,297	17	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.000	0.000	0.096	0.096	0.096	0.100	214,747,481
OM0000004925	ALBATINAH POWER	50,400	1,361	3	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.000	0.000	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.100	18,221,961
OM0000004983	AL SUWADI POWER	37,600	1,015	4	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.027	0.000	0.000	0.027	0.026	0.027	0.100	19,288,971
OM0000005260	OMAN ARAB BANK	50,000	7,100	3	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.000	0.000	0.142	0.142	0.142	0.100	237,056,220
OM0000005963	PHOENIX POWER	11,468	688	1	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
OM0000008710	BARKA DESALINATION	413	55	1	0.133	0.133	0.133	0.133	0.133	0.000	0.000	0.133	0.128	0.132	0.100	10,044,426
OM0000002572	OMAN OIL MARKETING	20,000	19,960	1	0.998	0.998	0.998	1.000	-0.002	-0.200	0.998	0.990	0.998	0.100	61,153,450	
OM0000008934	ABRAJ ENERGY SERVICES	74,044	21,673	22	0.293	0.293	0.292	0.292	0.293	-0.001	-0.341	0.292	0.290	0.296	0.100	224,898,400
OM0000004669	SHARQIYAH DESALINATION	5,000	645	1	0.129	0.129	0.129	0.129	0.130	-0.001	-0.769	0.129	0.000	0.129	0.100	12,616,479
OM0000001772	ALANWAR INVESTMENT	63,740	5,254	10	0.083	0.083	0.082	0.082	0.083	-0.001	-1.205	0.082	0.082	0.088	0.100	16,892,000
OM0000007084	MUSCAT CITY DESALINATION	110,620	9,775	7	0.089	0.089	0.088	0.088	0.090	-0.002	-2.222	0.088	0.088	0.088	0.100	13,688,435
OM0000001962	AL MADINA INVESTMENT HOLDING	5,548	227	2	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.041	0.042	-0.001	-2.381	0.041	0.040	0.042	0.100	3,485,000
OM0000007910	AMAN REAL ESTATE	12,900	1,212	3	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.094	0.099	-0.005	-5.051	0.094	0.094	0.102	0.100	18,800,000
OM0000002366	AL BATINAH DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT HO	110	10	1	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.090	0.095	-0.005	-5.263	0.090	0.086	0.090	0.100	270,000
OM0000001301	DHOFAH FOODS AND INVESTMENT	800	58	1	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.073	0.081	-0.008	-9.877	0.073	0.073	0.080	0.100	14,430,415
Total		1,797,314	247,232	123												

RUSSIA'S CENTRAL BANK

Russia hikes interest rates to stop ruble's fall

MOSCOW: Russia's central bank hiked its key interest rate to 12 per cent on Tuesday.

The 3.5 percentage point rise represents a bid to fight high inflation and the sharp depreciation of the nation's currency against the US dollar and the euro in recent weeks.

The Bank of Russia announced its decision after holding an extraordinary meeting, which came after the ruble plummeted below a psychologically important mark of 100 rubles for \$1 (€0.92).

The bank has blamed declining foreign trade for the currency's weakness, and attributed higher inflation to heavier government expenditure and labour shortages caused by the costly Ukraine war effort.

"Inflationary pressure is building up," the bank said in a statement on Tuesday, adding that demand has exceeded the country's ability to expand economic output. "Consequently, the pass



OVERWEIGHT

PEOPLE’S BRAINS HAVE DIFFERENT ‘APPETITE CONTROL CENTRE’: STUDY

Researchers have shown that the hypothalamus, a crucial part of the brain that regulates appetite, differs in the brains of obese and overweight individuals from those of people who are of a healthy weight.

The findings provide additional support for the connection between brain structure and eating habits and body weight.

According to recent estimates, there are over 1.9 billion overweight or obese people in the world. Nearly two-thirds of adults in the UK are overweight or obese, according to the Office for Health Improvement & Disparities.

This raises a person's risk of contracting a variety of illnesses, such as type 2 diabetes, heart disease, stroke, cancer, and worsened mental health.

Our genetic make-up, the way our hormones are regulated, and the environment in which we live are just a few of the many vari-

ables that affect how much and what kinds of food we eat. It is not entirely clear what happens in our brains to signal when we are hungry or full, but studies have shown that the hypothalamus, a tiny area of the brain the size of an almond, plays a crucial role.

Dr Stephanie Brown from the Department of Psychiatry and Lucy Cavendish College, University of Cambridge, said: “Although we know the hypothalamus is important for determining how much we eat, we actually have very little direct information about this brain region in living humans. That’s because it is very small and hard to make out on traditional MRI brain scans.”

Animal studies provide the bulk of the evidence for the hypothalamus’ function in controlling appetite. These demonstrate the existence of intricately interconnected pathways in the hypothalamus, where various cell populations work in

concert to signal when we are hungry or full.

To circumvent this, Dr Brown and colleagues used a machine learning-based algorithm to analyse MRI brain scans from 1,351 young adults with a range of BMI scores. They were looking for variations in the hypothalamus when comparing people who are underweight, healthy weight, overweight, and obese.

In a study that was just published in *Neuroimage: Clinical*, the team discovered that young adults who were overweight or obese had significantly larger hypothalamus overall volumes. In fact, the team discovered a strong correlation between the hypothalamus’ volume and body mass index (BMI).

These volume differences were most noticeable in the hypothalamic subregions that regulate appetite by releasing hormones that balance feelings of hunger and fullness.

One possibility is that the change is related to in-

flammation, even though the exact significance of the finding is unclear, including whether the structural changes are a cause or an effect of the changes in body weight.

Previous animal studies have demonstrated that a high-fat diet can result in hypothalamic inflammation, which then leads to insulin resistance and obesity. Three days of a diet high in fat are sufficient for mice to experience this inflammation.

Other studies have shown that this inflammation can raise the threshold at which animals are full – in other words, they have to eat more food than usual to feel full.

Dr Brown, the study’s first author, added: “If what we see in mice is the case in people, then eating a high-fat diet could trigger inflammation of our appetite control centre. Over time, this would change our ability to tell when we’ve eaten enough and to how our body processes blood sugar, leading

us to put on weight.”

Inflammation may explain why the hypothalamus is larger in these individuals, the team says. One suggestion is that the body reacts to inflammation by increasing the size of the brain’s specialist immune cells, known as glia.

Professor Paul Fletcher, the study’s senior author, from the Department of Psychiatry and Clare College, Cambridge, said: “The last two decades have given us important insights about appetite control and how it may be altered in obesity. Metabolic researchers at Cambridge have played a leading role in this.

“Our hope is that by taking this new approach to analysing brain scans in large datasets, we can further extend this work into humans, ultimately relating these subtle structural brain findings to changes in appetite and eating and generating a more comprehensive understanding of obesity

Lionesses roar into first final

England outplay co-hosts Australia in the Women's World Cup semi-final to set up title clash against Spain

SYDNEY: England stormed into the 2023 FIFA Women's World Cup final for the first time as they spoiled co-hosts Australia's party on a historic evening in Sydney with a 3-1 win on Wednesday. Silencing a sell-out crowd at Stadium Australia with their victory, the Lionesses became the first English side since 1966 to reach the final on the world stage. It caps a sensational two years under manager Sarina Wiegman as England, crowned European champions for the first time last year on home soil, showed their superiority and know-how to see off an Australia side spurred on by a nation who have been inspired by the Matildas' success. Ella Toone gave England the lead in the first half with a superb first-time strike which sailed into the top corner, *BBC Sport* reported. The Lionesses controlled proceedings until the second half when Australia threw everything at them and star striker Sam Kerr - starting her first match of the tournament - struck a 25-yard stunner over goalkeeper Mary Earps' head to make it 1-1. But England, as they so often do, found a way back into the game when Lauren Hemp pounced on a defensive error to restore their lead, before Alessia Russo made sure of victory late on to set up a final with Spain on Sunday.



Build-up to this semi-final has dominated every aspect of Australian life this week as cities across the country became absorbed in 'Matildas Mania'. Fans were queuing outside fan parks in Sydney five hours before kick-off, train stations were decorated in yellow and green balloons, shops sold out of merchandise and newspapers had the players' faces plastered over their front and back pages. All focus was on the co-hosts' attempts to create history, but England quietly went about their business and arrived in Sydney ready to compete in their third successive Women's World Cup semi-final. Their experience of handling big occasions was evident from the first minute as they disrupted

Australia's rhythm and made every attempt to frustrate the crowd, taking their time over throw-ins and breaking down dangerous counter-attacks. It worked for large parts but when Australia fought their way back into the game through Kerr, England had to find another way - and they did. Backs against the wall, England's defence, who have been magnificent throughout the tournament, stepped up to make blocks, tackles and head away relentless balls into the box. Hemp and Russo's flourishing partnership up front ultimately decided the game when they combined late on and England's celebrations at full-time were initially subdued. They have created history but



this is a team of winners and they have not finished yet. England's plan to stifle Australia's intensity and quick counter-attacking football worked a treat. From the first minute they

showed they were not afraid to play with physicality, going in hard in 50-50 challenges and doing all it took to bring down Kerr and prevent her getting a run at England's defence.

Keira Walsh set the tone with a crunching tackle on Kerr within two minutes and Alex Greenwood later came sliding in on the Chelsea striker, earning herself a yellow card, to prevent a dangerous break. With each tackle came a ripple of boos from the home fans, while Earps was in no rush to get things going again on goal-kicks. It was England who controlled things early on - although both teams created a few chances - as they had 70 percent of the ball in the opening 15 minutes. Their control did not really waver as the first half wore on and the crowd became increasingly frustrated, whistling as England enjoyed prolonged periods of possession and passed through Australia's press. By the time the break arrived with England leading, the deafening roar which had greeted the players on their entrance had turned to polite applause as the Australians were still processing Toone's superb strike. The second half was a different story, however. Kerr's sensational equaliser was followed by a dangerous strike from Cortnee Vine which called Earps into action. Kerr headed another chance over the bar, while Russo and Lucy Bronze came close at the other end for England. However, it was the Lionesses who were more ruthless, keeping their composure in the big moments and delivering when it mattered. They will go into the final in Sydney full of confidence having overcome every hurdle so far in the tournament. But this has also been a World Cup to remember for the Matildas, who hope to change the perception of women's football in this country forever. It will be hard to ignore their impact and they were given a warm applause on a lap of honour at full-time. - Agencies

PAKISTAN FAST BOWLER

Wahab Riaz retires from international cricket

LAHORE: Pakistan fast bowler Wahab Riaz announced his retirement on Wednesday from international cricket, officially ending a 15-year career for his country. In reality the announcement is a formality, as Wahab had not played an international match for Pakistan in over two years, last appearing in a couple of white-ball games at the end of 2020. As is the norm now, he will continue playing franchise cricket. "I have been speaking about my retirement plans for the past two years, that 2023 is my target to retire from International cricket, and I feel more comfortable now than ever that I have served my country and National team to the best I could have," Wahab said in a press statement. He added: "After an incredible journey, I've decided to retire from international cricket. Big thank you to PCB, my family, coaches, mentors, teammates, fans, and everyone who supported me." Wahab's career has taken an unexpected turn of late, having been named the caretaker sports minister of the Punjab province in January this year. He has forged a solid T20 career, most notably with Peshawar Zalmi in the PSL. He ended up playing 27 Tests, 91 ODIs and 36 T20Is for Pakistan, taking 83 Test wickets at an average of 34.50, 120 in ODIs at 34.30 and 34 T20I wickets at 28.55. - ANI

LEAGUES CUP

Messi scores again, Miami enter final



FLORIDA: Lionel Messi shrugged off an injury scare to score his ninth goal in six games as Inter Miami beat Philadelphia Union to reach the Leagues Cup final on Tuesday. The Argentine World Cup winner scored Miami's second goal in a 4-1 victory, a day after rolling his ankle in training. Josef Martinez, Jordi Alba and David Ruiz scored for Miami, with Alejandro Bedoya on target for the hosts. Miami will now play Nashville SC in Saturday's final. The result also means Miami qualify for the CONCACAF Champions Cup regional tournament next season, which may open up a route into FIFA's expanded

Club World Cup in 2025. "Our goal was to qualify for international competition next season and we've done that," said Miami boss Gerardo Martino. "Now we have to prepare to win this tournament, which makes us feel very motivated and confident." Miami's sixth consecutive win since Messi's introduction to their team in July gives the 36-year-old the opportunity to prepare for the 42nd final of his career in the World Cup-style knockout tournament containing teams from Mexico and Major League Soccer in the US. Nashville will host the match after booking their place in the showcase affair with a 2-0 win over Monterrey. - Agencies

ENGLAND SKIPPER ENDS RETIREMENT

Stokes returns for England

LONDON: Ben Stokes, England's Test captain and hero of their 2019 World Cup triumph, has reversed his decision to retire from 50-over cricket ahead of the team's defence of their title in India this autumn, and will make his comeback for the men's ODI squad in the forthcoming series against New Zealand. Stokes, 32, stood down from the 50-over format last summer, claiming that it was unsustainable for him to give his best across all three formats of the game, and that the "England shirt deserves nothing less" than 100 percent commitment. He has duly been named in a 15-man squad that Luke Wright, England's national selector, confirmed is the line-up that they intend on taking to India in October, where their campaign will get underway against the same opponents, New Zealand, in a rematch of their epic final at Lord's in July 2019. "It wasn't really a case of changing his mind," Wright said. "He was always interested in coming back. It wasn't a case of needing to beg him or anything like that, he was always keen. Once his body was in a good place and he'd had a rest, he was really keen to play. We're delighted from our point of view and I'm sure England fans and everyone can be absolutely delighted." Stokes will, however, feature as a specialist batter given the chronic knee injury that hampered his allround role during the Ashes.



Although England do not have to name their provisional World Cup squad until September 5, with scope for further changes until September 28, Stokes is set to be one of nine survivors from the 2019 tournament, with Jonny Bairstow also in line for his first white-ball internationals since breaking his leg in September last year. However, with another of the 2019 heroes, Jofra Archer, not yet fit for a recall despite England's hopes that he could feature in the World Cup's latter stages, the notable call-up is for Surrey's Gus Atkinson, a fast bowler who was clocked at 95mph for Oval Invincibles in the Men's Hundred last week. The notable absentee from England's World Cup plans is Harry Brook, their rising star across formats. With Jason Roy trusted to continue his return to form after a fallow 18 months, and Joe Root's expertise against spin making him a banker for Indian conditions despite hav-

ing not played white-ball cricket since July 2022, Brook will have to make his case from the T20I squad instead. Rehan Ahmed, Adil Rashid's likely successor as England's premier leg-spinner, is also in the T20I squad, as is Hampshire's uncapped pace bowler, John Turner. Josh Tongue is also included in the 20-over set-up, and can expect a chance to make another England debut after his breakthrough summer with the Test squad. **ODI squad:** Jos Buttler (capt), Moeen Ali, Gus Atkinson, Jonny Bairstow, Sam Curran, Liam Livingstone, Dawid Malan, Adil Rashid, Joe Root, Jason Roy, Ben Stok, Reece Topley, David Willey, Mark Wood, Chris Woakes. **T20I squad:** Jos Buttler (capt), Rehan Ahmed, Moeen Ali, Gus Atkinson, Jonny Bairstow, Harry Brook, Sam Curran, Ben Duckett, Will Jacks, Liam Livingstone, Dawid Malan, Adil Rashid, Josh Tongue, John Turner, Luke Wood. - Agencies

ARJUNA AWARDEE



Former India football captain Habib passes away

NEW DELHI: Former India football team captain Mohammed Habib, passed away on Tuesday, in his residence in Hyderabad after a long illness. The 'Bade Miya' of Kolkata football, as he was popularly known during his playing days, is survived by his wife and three daughters. Born on July 17, 1949, the former India captain represented the country in 35 international matches, and scored 11 goals in the process, after making his debut against Thailand in the Merdeka Cup at Kuala Lumpur in 1967.

Habib etched his name in the folklore of Indian football in 1970, when he played an integral part in the bronze medal-winning run in the Asian Games in Bangkok. He further followed up by helping India become the joint winners of the Pesta Sukan Cup with South Vietnam in 1971. Habib played international football till 1975. He was conferred the Arjuna Award for his contribution to the game. On the domestic front, Habib switched over from Hyderabad to Kolkata in 1966 when he joined East Bengal.

For the next 18 seasons, he played for all three top Kolkata clubs - East Bengal, Mohun Bagan and Mohammedan Sporting - with distinction and soon grew into a legend of Indian football. He had the rare distinction of scoring the winning goals in three Durand Cup finals in the span of seven seasons for East Bengal. For Mohun Bagan, he was the key performer when Pele's Cosmos Club played against the Green and Maroon brigade in an exhibition club in Kolkata. Habib scored a goal in the 2-2 draw.

Habib was one of the few players to win the triple crown (winning the IFA Shield, Durand Cup and Rovers Cup in the same season) for both East Bengal and Mohun Bagan in 1972 and 1977, respectively. Habib became a successful coach once he decided to hang up his famous No.10 jersey in 1982. Having joined as the coach at Tata Football Academy in Jamshedpur, he was instrumental in producing a number of footballers, who went on to don the national team colours. Later, he coached Mohun Bagan and Mohammedan Sporting, too. - ANI

BankDhofar expands its reach in Dhofar with new Sahalnoot branch

The strategic opening coincides with the Khareef season, marking the addition of the 98th branch to BankDhofar and Maisarah's expansive network across the Sultanate of Oman

MUSCAT: Reinforcing its efforts to be closer to its customers, BankDhofar recently celebrated the official opening of a new branch in Sahalnoot within the Dhofar Governorate.

The strategic opening coincides with the Khareef season, marking the addition of the 98th branch to BankDhofar and Maisarah's expansive network across the Sultanate of Oman.

The branch's official inauguration was attended by Sheikh Mohammad Saif Al Busaidi, Wali of Salalah and attended by Abdul Hakeem Omar Al Ojaili, CEO of BankDhofar, alongside key members of the executive management team, and notable community figures.

Amjad Iqbal Al Lawati, Chief Retail Banking Officer at BankDhofar, expressed his enthusiasm, stating, "We are delighted to establish our presence in Dhofar Governorate, capitalising on the Khareef season's influx of citizens, residents, and tourists. The inauguration of our 98th branch in Sahalnoot aligns with our strategy to bring our services closer to customers, inviting them to explore the offerings at the new branch. As part of our ongoing commitment, we anticipate further branch openings across various governorates, exemplifying our dedication to providing an exceptional banking experience."

The inauguration of the Sahal-

noot branch marks a milestone in BankDhofar's expansion initiative, with several new branches planned for unveiling in the upcoming months. The bank's expansion aims to cater to customers across the Sultanate, in addition to the comprehensive services provided by its existing 98 branches, as well as its two business branches. Situated conveniently for accessibility, the Sahalnoot branch offers an extensive array of banking services, meticulously designed to ensure convenience and customer satisfaction.

BankDhofar customers may access financial services through its branches network across the Sultanate, including account management, deposits, loans, foreign exchange, trade finance, investment solutions, and more. In addition to a wide network of ATMs, CDMs & FFM around the Sultanate that work round-the-clock with high efficiency. For added customer convenience, the Bank offers smart banking at the fingertips through its Mobile Banking App. Customers may conduct a wide range of instant mobile banking services through the award winning App. The services include instant transfer 24/7 to any local bank account, cardless cash, and Instant International money transfer service with Western Union, among other services.



TEXTILE MILLS

Naseejoman revolutionises dishdashas with modern technological enhancements

MUSCAT: Naseejoman, the flagship brand of Oman Textile Mills (OTM), has been at the forefront of innovation in traditional wear, catering to the ever-evolving needs of modern Omani men.

With over three decades of expertise, Naseejoman has re-engineered the traditional Dishdasha using cutting-edge expertise that includes stain-free technology that allows its wearer to maintain a pristine look effortlessly.

Faseem P. P., Chief Marketing Officer of Oman Textile Mills, says: "Our commitment to excellence and innovation has driven us to push the boundaries of traditional men's wear. With the incorporation of modern technological enhancements, such as stain-free technology, we aim to not only preserve the rich cultural heritage of the Dishdasha but also adapt it to the lifestyle of the modern Omani men, providing unparalleled comfort and convenience."

Naseejoman's finest Thobe and Dishdasha fabrics cater to the unique preferences across the GCC. With a diverse range of blends and colours, including an extensive collection of white fabrics, Naseejoman leads the way in contemporary dishdasha fashion that is true to its heritage. Whether it's light or heavy, soft or stiff, silky or textured, Naseejoman's pro-



cesses ensure to meet the varying demands of its customers, offering a truly bespoke experience.

Naseejoman's extensive range of blends for Thobe and Dishdasha include 100% cotton, 100% polyester (SpunxSpun, SpunxFilament, etc.), and cotton-rich blends, catering to the diverse tastes of its esteemed customers. In addition, their 100% polyester white Gotrah, available in various widths, has garnered immense popularity among the Arab community, setting new standards of excellence in design and finish.

At the heart of Naseejoman's success lies OTM's state-of-the-art manufacturing facility in Rusayl, Muscat. Explaining the stringent manufacturing process, Devraj Mehta, Factory Manager, Oman Textile Mills – says,

"Equipped with cutting-edge European and Japanese production lines, including the coveted Shuttleless Projectile Looms, the facility guarantees top-notch craftsmanship and quality. Moreover, the in-house design and technical team offers a bespoke service to create co-branded textile products personalised to meet each customer's unique requirements."

In addition, it also boasts advanced dyeing and finishing machines, screen and digital printing technologies in its Process House, and specialized machinery for high-value embellishments, including computerized embroidery, crystal embossing, gold foiling, and flock printing.

With an annual processing capacity of 6 million meters, OTM

continues to elevate the fashion experience, while delivering on its deep-rooted commitment to craftsmanship and maintaining its well-deserved reputation as a leader in the textile industry.

Further, the company implements Quality Management standard of ISO 9001: 2015 and Environmental Management System (EMS) of ISO 14001: 2015 standard. They ensure compliance with all relevant environmental legislations and regulations while promoting environmental protection and pollution prevention. This includes suitable treatment of effluents, efficient and safe handling and storage of products, waste minimization and recovery, and safe disposal of wastes. Oman Textile Mills also prioritises energy saving and resource conservation.

Mohammed Ibrahim Al Balushi, Head of HR at Oman Textile Mills – says, "As an Omani company, we are proud to be the go-to brand not just for locals but also those in the GCC and the region. This is a testament to trustworthiness of our work force and technical expertise. It has allowed us to build strong relationships with our target customers in our men's wear, women's wear and workwear & uniforms, who expect only the most reliable and innovative solutions from us."

CULINARY EXPERIENCE

Hormuz Grand Muscat's Junior Sous Chef's baked papillote fish and Mediterranean vegetables



MUSCAT: Junior Sous Chef, Chef Ye Aung, joined the Hormuz Grand Muscat, a Radisson Collection team, in 2020. Boasting over 12 years of industry experience, Chef Ye Aung possesses an exceptional palate, skilfully marrying flavours and textures to craft unforgettable culinary experiences.

An adept sushi specialist, his culinary journey is adorned with accomplishments from prestigious establishments like Rixos Premium Dubai and Muscat Airport Oman. Proficient in kitchen operations, ingredient mastery, and crafting exceptional sushi varieties, he's dedicated to orchestrating culinary moments that captivate the senses.

His journey underscores precision, innovation, and meaningful connections with peers and patrons alike.

Hailing from Myanmar, Chef Ye Aung epitomises culinary excellence while upholding time-honoured traditions. Infused with creativity and meticulousness, each dish he creates becomes a harmonious masterpiece of taste and culture, delighting both the eye and the palate.

Baked papillote fish and Mediterranean vegetables tian is one of his dishes infused with creativity



and meticulousness.

Ingredients

- 160g Humors fish
- 80g potato tourné
- 30g zucchini
- 10g eggplant
- 20g onion
- 20g tomato sauce
- 2 pcs lemon wedge
- Thyme

Preparation

Season the Humors fish with salt and ground pepper olive oil.

Grilled all vegetables and arranged them under the fish.

Dress with tomato sauce.

Wrap with baking paper and placed in oven 190°c to 20 min.

AT SELECTED BRANCHES

Bank Muscat continues extra working hours for opening children's saving accounts

MUSCAT: In emphasis of its customer-centric vision and commitment to enhancing its products and services to be delivered to customers through simplified processes, Bank Muscat, the leading financial service provider in the Sultanate of Oman, continues the extra working hours at selected branches across the Sultanate, until 31 August, from 3pm until 6 pm from Sunday to Thursday, to allow customers to open saving accounts for children seamlessly.

Therefore, in consideration of the fact that Bank Muscat is always committed to providing the best banking solutions and services catering to the diverse needs of its customers, the announcement of extra working hours came to emphasise the importance of encouraging children to embark on saving habits at an early age and prepare themselves for a financially secure future.

Bank Muscat's announcement of extra working hours covers 39 branches across the Sultan-

ate's various governorates. These branches are in Al Mahaj Al Amerat, Madinat Al Nahda, Al Khoudh, Muscat City Centre, Qurm, Mabela, Mabela Industrial, Oman Avenues Mall, Jibroo, Seeb, Azaiba Round About, Al Wadi Al Kabir, Al Hail, Markaz Al Bahja, Bausher, Quriyat, Al Kamil, Jaalan Bani Bu Ali, Sur Al Afiah, Sinaw, Bidiya, Ibra, Musanna, Al Washil-Rustaq, Barka Souq, Al Bidaya, Bat'ha Hilal- Suwaiq, Tharmad, Saham Corniche, Shinas, Falaj Al Qa-

bail, Sohar, Al Khaboura, Dereez, Izki, Firq, Samail, BahlaSouq, Ibri Jubail, Salalah 23rd July Street, Taqa, and Al Buraimi- Main Road.

Children's Saving accounts are characterized with features including no fee on the minimum balance, life insurance cover, and parents' ability to access their children's accounts through the Bank's mBanking App. Customers who would like to open children's saving accounts may visit the nearest Bank Muscat branch.

ROUND-UP

REDTAG announces fun-filled Back-to-School extravaganza in Oman

REDTAG has announced a 40% discount on the specialised 'Back to School' collection and scheduled a fun-filled extravaganza, including magic shows, face painting for kids, goodie bags and mascots, on August 24 in Oman to celebrate and embrace the return of a new academic year

MUSCAT: REDTAG, the Middle East's leading value-fashion and homeware brand, has announced a fun-filled extravaganza in Oman to celebrate and embrace going back to school for the new academic year. The free-entry event includes magic shows, face painting for kids, goodie bags and mascots, along with a limited-period 40% discount on the specialised 'Back to School' collection launched in July. Parents and children can attend the Back-to-School (BTS) event in Oman on August 24 between 7-10pm at the REDTAG outlet on Al Khuwair Street, Muscat. The events have been scheduled strategically to maximise access to shoppers of all age groups, noted Shehbaz Shaikh, Chief Retail Officer, REDTAG. "Going back to school has always



been a bittersweet feeling, with an uneven mixture of curiosity, a desire for newness, and despair over concluding holidays. By launching fun apparel and accessories, REDTAG aspires to beat those blues and add to the reasons to go back to school with joy. "As the summer break enters its final leg, we wanted to sweeten the pot further. That idea has resulted in an attractive discount on the BTS collection and our biggest-ever extravaganza," Shehbaz added. REDTAG launched purpose-designed apparel, character-wear, and accessories in its latest BTS collection. In line with its "Let's Play" theme, the Back to School ensemble included wide-ranging character-wear with impressions

of Barbie, Batman, Spider-Man, CoComelon, Sonic the Hedgehog, and more on tees, shirts, and co-ord sets for boys and girls. For seniors, REDTAG embraced "quiet fashion", designing neutral graphics and prints from popular shows such as Friends. On the accessories front, the BTS collection was dominated by eye-catching character backpacks, especially trolleys. The backpack bundles with matching lunch boxes, pouches, lunch bags, and water bottles, in sets of three, four and five, struck a chord with BTS shoppers. "We are elated by the overwhelming response to this year's Back to School collection. Its success encouraged us to build an extravaganza around it and provide

a discount for good measure. We hope to reprise our BTS events with greater pomp and splendour every year," Shehbaz Shaikh announced. Customer-centric launches and initiatives have defined REDTAG's strategy in recent years. Hyper-convenience services such as 'Anytime-Anywhere Exchange', 'Find Your Size', 'Fashion Stylists', and 'Free Home Delivery' are a testament to that customer-first approach. With several such first-to-market services in the Middle East and its tiered loyalty program — RT Rewards — which boasts over 15 million members, REDTAG continues to cement its position as the leading value fashion and homeware brand in the region.



JOYFUL ACTIVITIES

Omantel brings people together in Khareef Dhofar

MUSCAT: Omantel, the leading provider of integrated telecommunication services in the Sultanate of Oman, participates in Khareef Dhofar (monsoon season) with several community initiatives and activities as part of its strategy for corporate social responsibility. These initiatives are aimed at engaging with the local community and visitors in the region and contributing to the promotion of sustainability programmes for all segments of society in the Sultanate of Oman. Omantel's initiatives for this year are part of the "To Dhofar" campaign launched by the company to showcase its presence in the region as a technology sponsor, along with other corporate social responsibility initiatives. These initiatives include involving individuals with visual impairments, orphans, and children with Down's syndrome in collaboration with associations representing these groups in Dhofar in various interactive activities. Additionally, Omantel focuses on environmental programs, participating in volunteer efforts for awareness-raising, tree planting, and nature care in collaboration with various community groups. As part of Omantel's corporate social responsibility strategy, we are focusing on engaging people with special needs within the com-



munity and developing their technology skills. Therefore, Omantel has organised a training course for individuals with visual impairments in partnership with Al Noor Association for the Blind in Dhofar. The programme aimed to enhance digital literacy for this group and enable them to benefit from technology through specialised training program on the use of smartphones. The participants received iPhones which are equipped with built-in applications and programs tailored for the visually impaired. The programme focused on three main areas: familiarisation with smart devices and their

features for the visually impaired, adjusting individual settings, and training on writing, editing, copying, and pasting text on iPhones. Furthermore, Omantel's corporate social responsibility team organized a workshop on robots and technology for children in collaboration with Bahja Omani Association for Orphans and Kidsity Oman Company. The workshop aimed to involve orphaned children in various initiatives to make them feel part of the community and enhance their technological knowledge. The children learned about robotics, its components, building and programming their

robots, as well as various sensors and their functions. The workshop also focused on developing problem-solving skills through algorithm development and implementation. Through these programmes, Omantel aims to enhance the skills of participants in using the latest digital technologies to assist them in their daily lives. The company also seeks to enable the visually impaired and orphans to communicate and integrate into the digital community, encouraging people with special needs to engage with high-quality technologies in various fields. In support of the environment

in Dhofar, Omantel participated in a cleaning campaign involving children with Down syndrome in collaboration with Al Wafa Social Center, and Luban Land Volunteering Team. The campaign aimed to promote environmental awareness and reduce littering and vandalism in the region. This annual commitment towards the environment in Dhofar is part of Omantel's sustainability strategy, reflecting the company's leading role in telecommunications and technology in Oman. As part of Omantel's environment initiatives, the company organized a tree planting initiative

in collaboration with Luban Land Volunteering Team to engage orphaned children from the Bahja Omani Association for Orphans in planting a number of trees to enhance the love for nature and the environment among young children and raise awareness about the positive impact of tree on the environment and our health. It is worth mentioning that Omantel launched its marketing campaign "To Dhofar" to strengthen the efforts made by the Dhofar Municipality during the Khareef season, providing entertainment and accompanying activities for the public.



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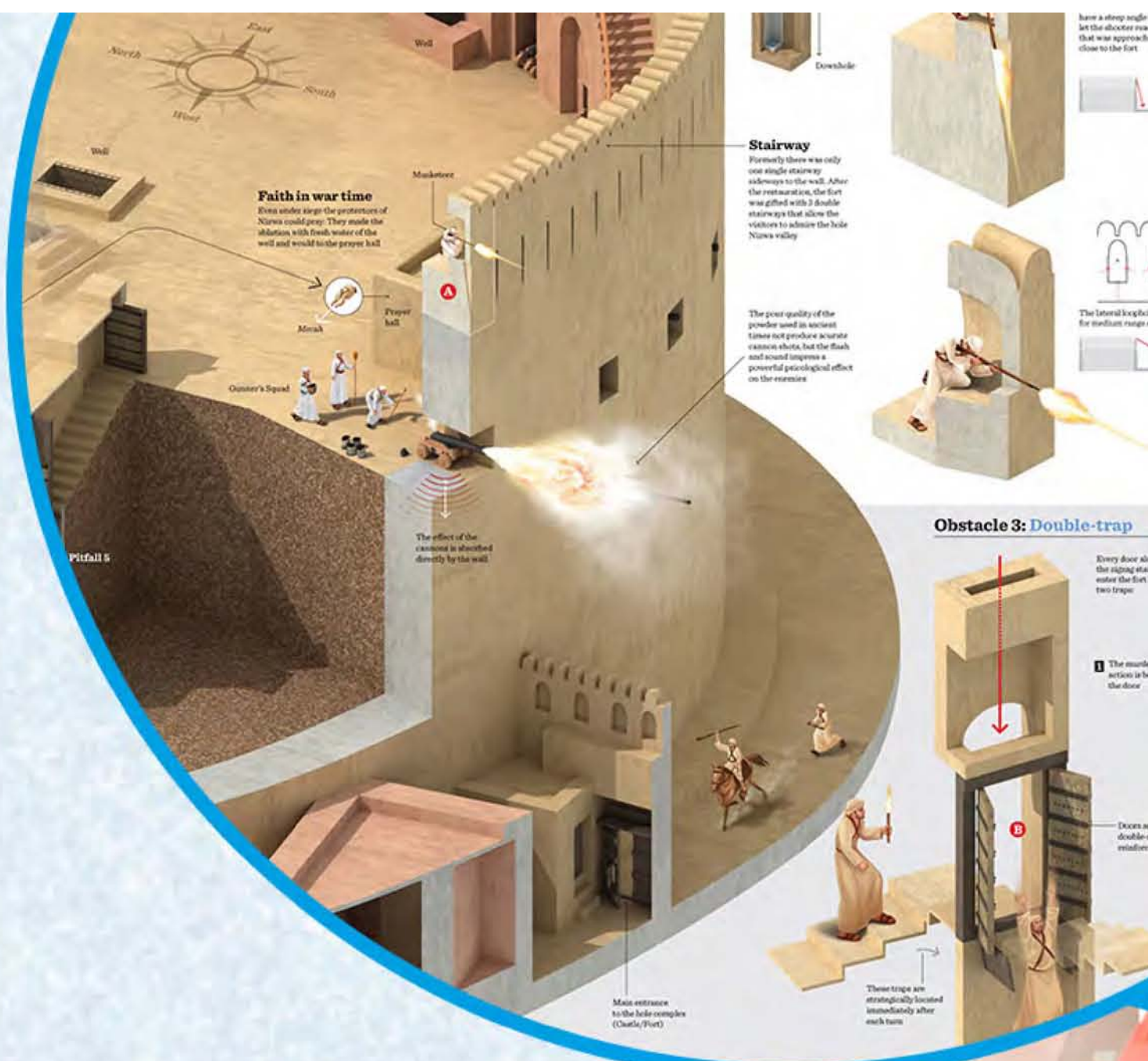


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